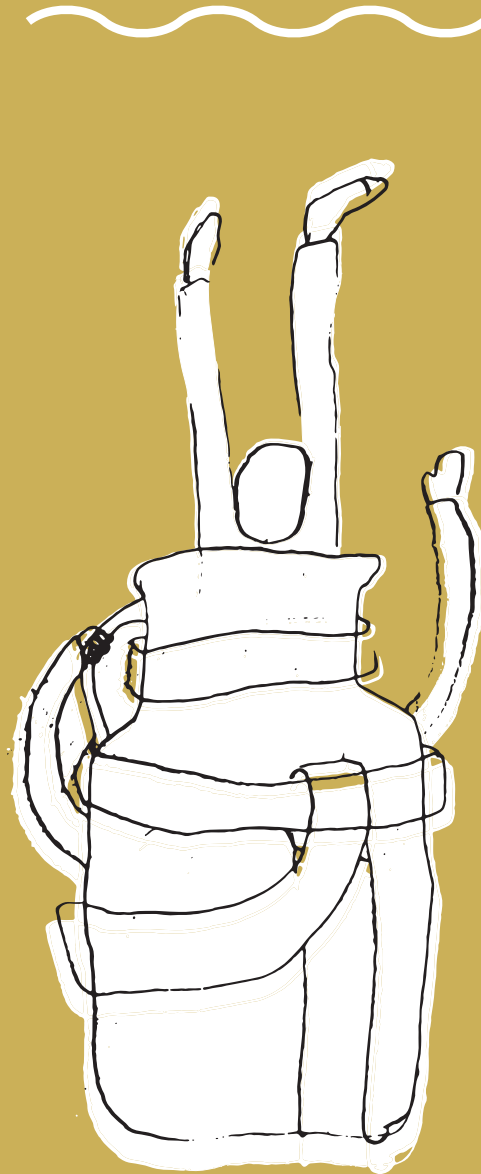# EU citizens living through the pandemic in post-Brexit UK: a visual tour of felt emotions.

RUGGERONE, L. and HACKETT, C. (eds.)

2023

EU citizens living through the pandemic in post-Brexit UK

A *visual tour of felt emotions*

edited by
Lucia Ruggerone and Charlie Hackett

preface

This digital book presents the results of a research study conducted by the editors in 2021-22 and funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant. The study, entitled Living through the pandemic in post-Brexit Britain: emotional damage and forms of resilience among middle-aged European citizens, explored the emotions and feelings that European citizens in the UK experienced in relation to Brexit and the lockdown periods imposed during the Covid-19 pandemics. It involved the production of artworks by the participants followed by conversations with them. This book features their creative products as well as the narrations they provided about their feelings.

Thank you to the participants for devoting their time to take part in this project; we hope that in presenting these results we will have rightly interpreted your thoughts and emotions. Thanks also to Bart for his assistance with the social media communication and the dissemination of the research products and to Anke for organising the documents and the day-to-day running of the study.

contents

About the Study

In September 2021 we were awarded a grant by the British Academy to conduct a study on the emotional well-being of EU citizens living in the UK and with care responsibilities both in the UK and in Europe. We wanted to understand their emotions and feelings during the periods of lockdown, which added to the sense of vulnerability already engendered in this population by the new Brexit rules coming into force between 2020 and 2021.

Our emphasis was less focused on their political stances and views and more on the affective, emotional states that these restrictions might have created for them. To achieve this aim, we used an art-based qualitative methodology: participants were asked to produce some form of art-work (a drawing, a collage, a photograph, an assemblage or even a piece of music) and were then interviewed by the team remotely on Zoom.

We interviewed 25 participants living in Scotland and England, with one participant in Wales and one in Northern Ireland. We focused on middle-age EU citizens, as they represent a "sandwich generation" of individuals who are likely to have attachments and affective bonds both in the UK and in their European home country.

For them, the frustration caused by the inability to provide effective in person care for older people "at home" caused a sense of guilt and added to an already heightened vulnerability caused by Brexit. We wanted to understand the feelings engendered by the double whammy of Brexit and Covid and to explore if and how they were able to cope, emotionally and practically, with their situation and changed citizen status. We were also interested to understand if and how their definition of "home" and of "being at home" had changed in the wake of the two major events affecting their lives in the last two years.

We analysed 25 artworks + interviews in parallel. Of the 25 participants: 6 are Italian, 3 French, 2 German, 3 Spanish, 2 Czech, 4 Polish, 1 Hungarian, 1 Bulgarian, 1 Danish, 1 Swiss/Italian, 1 Latvian.

In all the phases of this project the team worked together and contributed to producing the results that are presented in this book. However the whole study has only been possible thanks to our participants, who devoted their time to do their amazing artworks and to speak to us in rather long interviews about their feelings and moods around Brexit and the lockdowns. We hope that in presenting our results we will have rightly interpreted their thoughts and feelings by making their voices heard.

www.eunationalsstudy.com

The Methods and the Analysis

The study used an art-based approach method combined with in-depth unstructured interviews. For the initial exploration we asked the participants to produce a piece of artwork representing the dominant mood they experienced during the lockdown and we then used this as a stimulus or guide for the interviews. We found that asking participants to produce an artwork facilitates the communication about emotional states that might not emerge from the interview alone.

Importantly the production of artwork allows the participant to take the lead in the research. Our participants productions include collages, drawings, photos, a video, with one of the participants selecting a piece of classical music to represent their mood and feelings during lockdown.

A brown envelope filled with a mixture of art materials that could be used by our participants was sent to all of them in advance of our discussion and, although this was not used by all, it created a kind of dialogue. *(see p.5)*

All of the interviews took place on Zoom, which worked incredibly well, as participants felt more at ease in their own environment and perhaps less intimidated to say what they felt. The long interviews elicited by the artwork always expanded beyond the discussion of the art piece into a range of topics connected with the research focus, with a few participants stating that they found the interviews therapeutic.

The analysis was conducted in parallel with artworks and interview transcripts: when we were reading the transcripts or listening to the recordings, we constantly referred back to the artworks.

The Practice of Artwork

For our study we wanted our participants to create artworks as part of the methodology. At the time of our study the Covid epidemic was still quite bad and for health and safety reasons we came up with the idea of sending our participants a large brown envelope filled with art materials to their homes. This was also a nice way of reaching out with items that were quite special and fun. We explained to our participants that they did not have to use the art-package contents and could use other means to create their artwork if they liked, it was completely up to them. If they decided not to use it, they could give it away or do what they wished with it.

The contents of the art pack:

We decided to put a mixture of art related stuff in the art-package, some of which was quite traditional such as coloured paper, coloured corrugated card, coloured foam sheets, felt-pens, a glue stick. We also put bits and bobs for making collages such as letters, sticky hearts, Blu Tack, googly eyes, coloured fluffy balls, coloured feathers, coloured pipe cleaners, sticky shapes, etc. We also put surprize objects in, that were a bit off the wall to give that feeling of being different and able to express oneself in a non-conformist way, examples being a stainless-steel Scourer, cotton wool balls, a Lego man, Lego bricks, beads, some string, a rubber glove and more.

emotions

The aim in this study was to discover the emotions that the participants experienced during the lockdown periods in their new (and diminished) citizenship status. In the analysis we identified some recurrent themes that the participants used to describe their feelings and moods during that period. These themes were conveyed through their artwork and narrated in the conversations with the researchers.
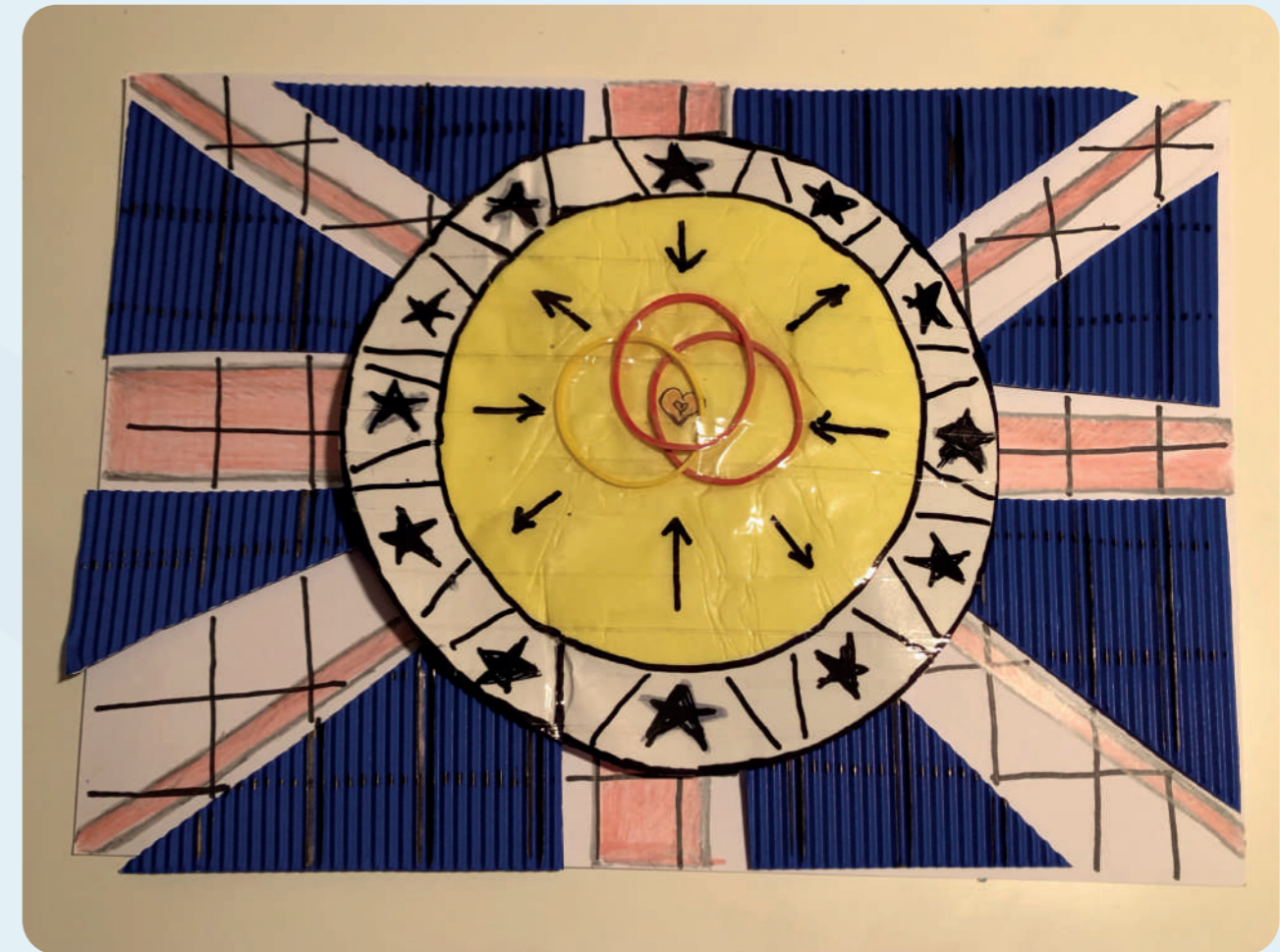
Love

Nostalgia

Torn

Anger

Sadness & Grief

Boredom

Guilt

Love

The emotion of love is mentioned by the participants in various contexts. It is also often represented in their artworks by the heart used as a symbol of love. When the heart is broken, it symbolises lost love or grief. Some talk about their heart being broken as a consequence of Brexit and the lost love for the UK, the 'home' that rejected them. By contrast some participants stress the importance of their home during lockdown and they represent their feeling of loving family life and protection with the picture of a heart.


Simona

"there's a heart which is my child which is the most important in my life and that I've cared for during the pandemic. It was a very hard time with him during the pandemic but still love him very much. So he's there and this is also a symbol of love. During the pandemic we all discovered something that was precious to us... in the background you can see the UK flag. For me it's a very meaningful legacy with the UK. I'm not a British citizen, but it was liberating for me to leave Italy in 2014 after my separation and being able to travel... once I arrived in Bristol I found the place where I want to live. This place has everything that I really want. For me the UK is a big big change. My child was finding his happiness and he was much relaxed here"

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Erika

"I felt very split (after the Brexit vote), I started almost splitting into two halves... The metallic stuff coming out of the split face represents the huge mess of disbelief and anger and hurt and upset caused by the referendum results... The broken heart is being held together by a string and a safety pin... still held together and still beating"
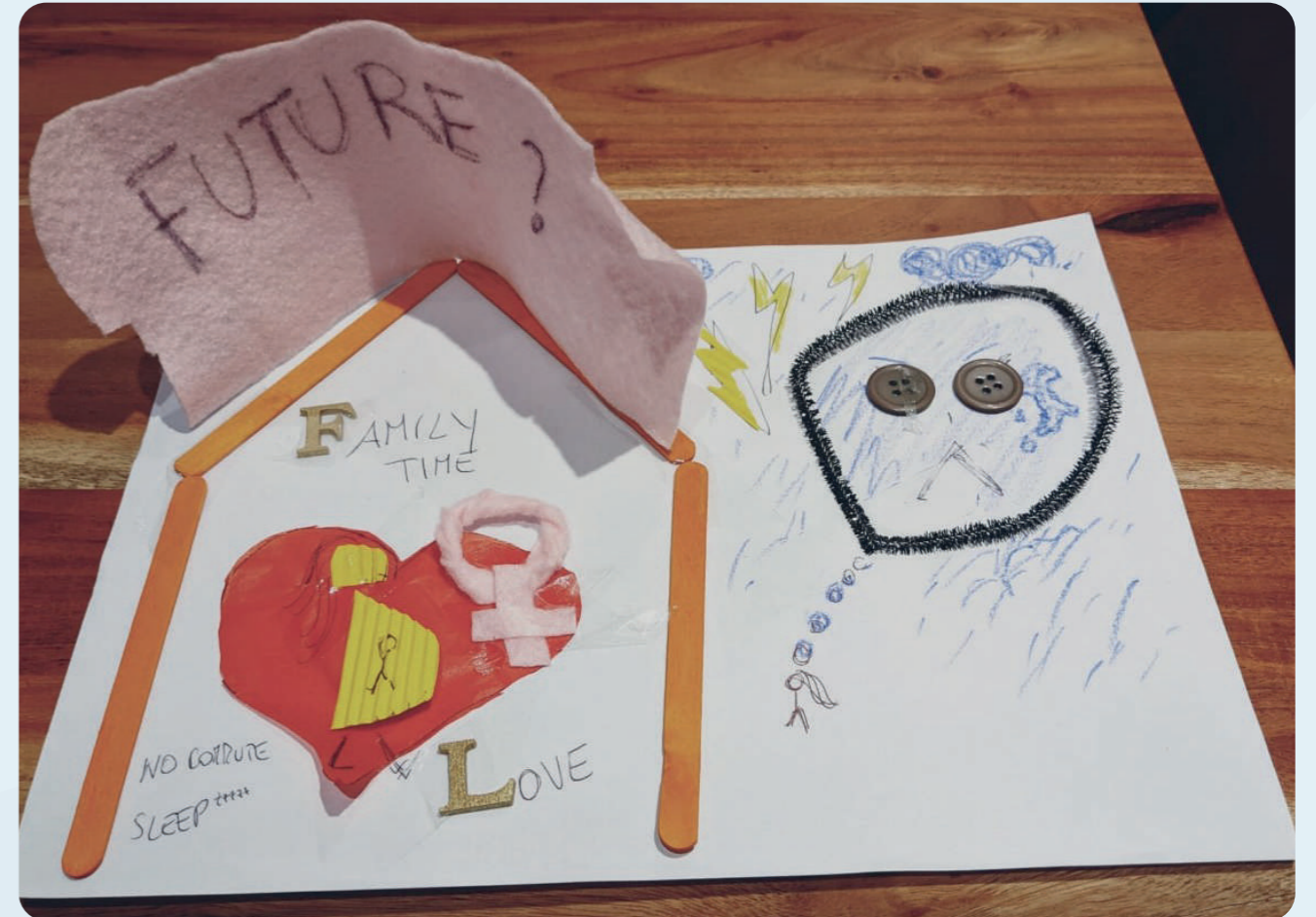
Lisa

"This is my house so that's, you know, a home. A house slash home because of course during lockdown we were locked in basically in my very small apartment in... but also it felt quite protected because my partner was at home... it was lots of family time, lots of love because we felt like we re-connected"

Sandra

"The two red question marks are the halves of my heart, and on the left hand side of the picture, in the woman's figure there is just a hole where my heart should sit whole. But it's actually ripped out and half here and half there... it's been pulled out"

Nostalgia

The sense of displacement caused by Brexit and the isolation from Europe caused by the lockdown periods has led many of our participants to interrogate themselves on the meaning of 'home', leaving many very ambivalent about where 'home' might be for them. In some of the artworks produced, houses or specific rooms are pictured, sometimes to signify a sense of entrapment (due to lockdown), many times to hint at the nostalgia they feel for their original home that has never before seemed so far away. Sometimes the home is depicted as unreachable, perched on mountains that cannot be climbed or situated far away across deep, dangerous waters that can no longer be crossed.


Ulli

"It's a very cute little village (in Germany) but right next to this is an old monastery with an old chapel, that's where we got married so it is very picturesque. The river there, that river is very close to my parents house so when I was little that's where I walked, well not quite every day... The kids swim there in the summer so yeah again it's a sort of place with a lot of meaning."
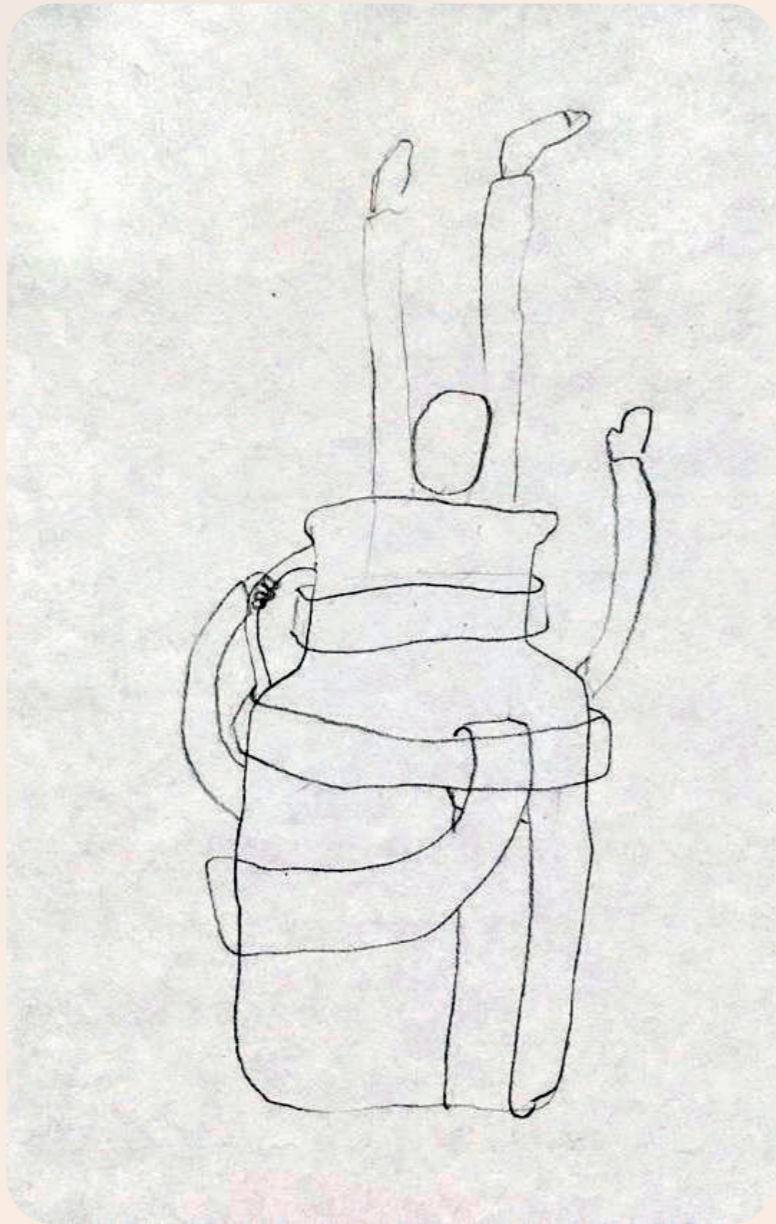
Lili

"mug for me, is the home, is the comfort, yeah it's a homeliness but at this point you just getting tired of always being at home... so I tried to draw here a body and not a face, just a body that represents how my thoughts going around and because they don't have an outlet, another person to have them on, you know they became something that just goes... [sigh] goes around in circles and tangles but doesn't lead anywhere and that's what the elongated body is and this whole knotted up, tangled up stick..."
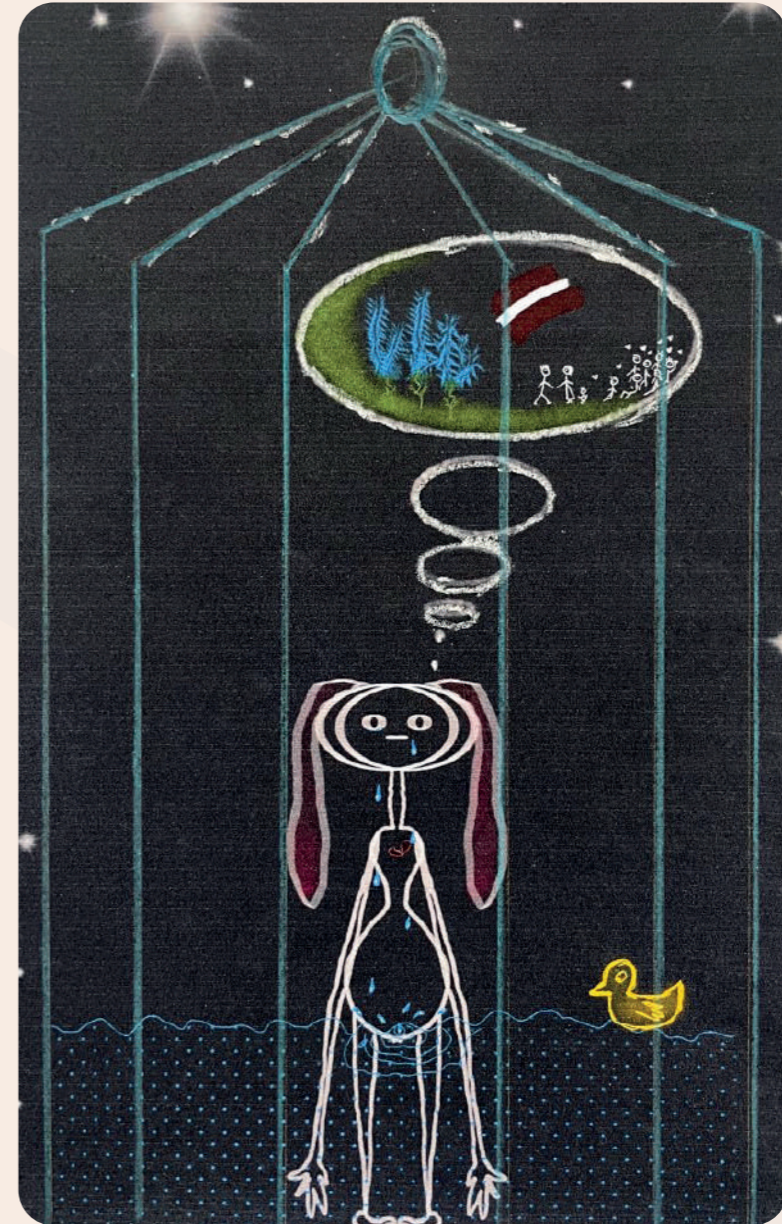
Ilma

"That's a cage, like trapped in a cage and it's kind of, well, a golden cage because comparing to others we were in a very good situation like we could be at home with our kid but at the same time you feel like you are trapped... my home country is green, you are out in nature... and I think I didn't realise that before... how much I need the feeling that you are home... with the kid I started to feel like I wanted to feel like home and I don't feel like home here and at least there you have people that makes this feeling like you feel at home."

Torn

This has been a recurrent theme in our participants' artwork and interviews. They talk of cracks across their heart, but also cracks across their whole beings and/or cracks in their lives and their sense of identity, caused by Brexit and/or the impossibility to see their families in Europe during the lockdown periods.

Ulli

"Brexit for me was a total nightmare and still is but also Covid did not exactly improve that or you know made it a lot worse. That feeling of, you know, before that I could travel back and forth as often as I wanted, family would come to visit and suddenly that all wasn't possible... I've got loads and loads of Uncles and Aunties everywhere. Not just in Germany but also Italy and France... sometimes felt I'd rather be in Germany, I'd rather be with them and I guess particularly with the whole Brexit rhetoric"

Andrea

"Before Brexit the sea was a geographical feature of my life but neutrally so yeah and it was also, yeah it was a conduit, it was a passage, it was a link between bits of landmass. I have completely changed my perspective on the sea now, it has become a source of conflict... the north of England has been my home that's where I've given birth, that's where I've buried my partner... but... I've got family living in Germany, I've got friends, I've got a home in Italy, I've got friends living in France, I've got..."

Corinne

"When I go there (France) I just I don't know, take it all in and keep it all in until I go home and take it all in again. Because this is home as well... there are lot of grey areas, it's a lot more complicated... Because I don't have a family here, there is a lot more space for me to be part of peoples life and make people part of me. So the tree is the roots that [sigh] I get to go back to, well I get to when I go back home."

Anger

Speaking about their first reaction to the Brexit referendum results, in June 2016, many of the participants said they were angry for a variety of reasons. They were angry with the UK, especially with England where the majority voted to leave, because they felt rejected by a country they had chosen as their home and where they invested so much of their energies and skills. Some of them also pointed out that they were angry because Brexit revealed that many people in the UK were two-faced: nice and kind on the surface but contemptuous and bigot in the background. It is almost like the referendum results brought to the fore the secret sentiments of a nation that despises foreigners and cherishes its insularity, both geographical and cultural. Some participants also spoke of the exceptionalism inherent in the British psyche, and this too was sometimes a cause of anger. But there was anger for some also during lockdown, due to the feeling of being trapped in their house and desperately isolated and also anger at oneself for not coping well with the 'new life', particularly with the home schooling of children.

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Corinne

"feel like I was cracking from the inside. It really did feel like that, like I wasn't whole or strong and it felt that... what I like about myself I couldn't find anymore and I was all broken. So even at night I would wake up and... So the red as well is the blood, the pain, it's everything that's raw, the rage, the anger, it's all of that, the black is all the negativity... I am completely surrounded and stuck in it. I just, I'm full of it and I contribute to it, I am making it"
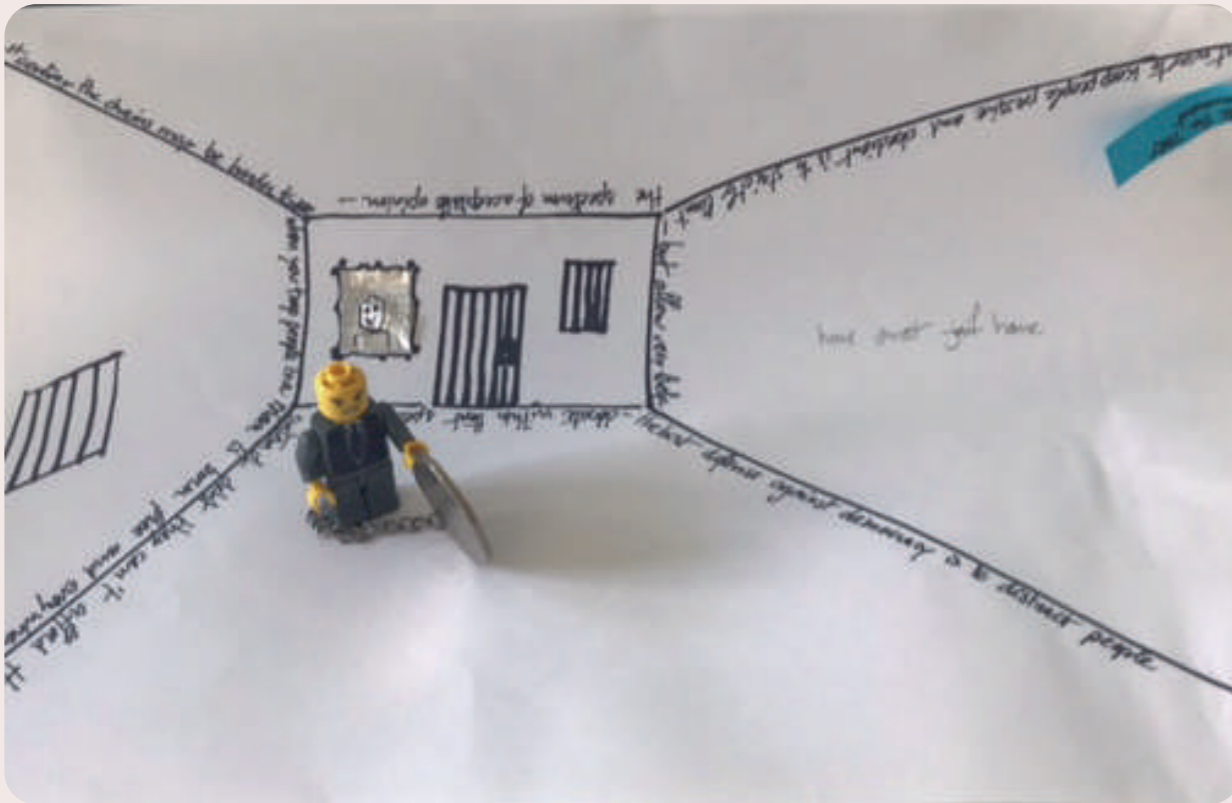
Pierre

The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.

"I would say, you allow people to talk about meaningless things. You let them debate it very very actively and actually it stops them from asking the right questions. I think it's the same thing that the Tory government is doing. We have a lot of things happening that people are not aware of. Law's being passed but not being mentioned in any media"

Erika

"I found it quite sort of challenging initially, thinking how do I really sum up the enormity of how I felt... it kind of sparked just this massive feelings inside which I think that metallic stuff that actually represents... honestly I could not believe it and I think that picture there is just this huge mesh of disbelieve and anger and hurt and upset and people not understanding"

Sadness & Grief

There are many ways in which the participants told us they were experiencing sadness. The pandemic and related lockdowns certainly brought about a downbeat atmosphere for many, with its weight impacting more heavily on the citizens who were already 'sad' about Brexit and the feeling of rejection caused by it. When the pandemic kicked in and lockdown started, the sadness became a greyness, a gloom pervading people's life and compounding their sense of fear and uncertainty about the future. This is related to a sense of grief which was felt by the participants in various contexts relating to the pandemic and Brexit. For example, the realisation that they might not see their elderly parents again, the home schooling of children and the feeling of being unwanted in the UK.

Marek

"There is, you know plenty of metaphors like the chains you know… you know we can't travel, the lockdown the empty benches you know people are ill or dying you know, the paler light, which is sort of blurry you know the life is gotten gloom and not happy all the time. The perspective for the railing is a point for somewhere, you don't actually know where it going so I thought maybe this photo would be good, pick up some of the moods… it was particularly difficult for us, we couldn't actually see our parents and our kids couldn't see their grandparents. [sounding upset] Also we live in a flat. We don't live in a house with a garden so the lockdown was more difficult"

"after Brexit the atmosphere toward people from European Union was not the best you know. So all combined together, the last two years were pretty hard [sounding very upset] and this is maybe why I pulled this picture"

Rada

"It was one of those heatwave April days where actually it's nice and warm... we didn't go out and I was really really depressed [sadness]. I was really depressed so I just thought I'll just take this photos. I had no intention to share with anyone what so ever [surprise] and it's just one of this [laughing] artistic spurts...we keep in touch online, it's not great. My husband actually we went to Italy, when was it, I can't remember, last year. Yes because we've skipped that one because we moved from England to Scotland yes. So we went last year so it was slightly better but again we keep in touch using whatsapp and messenger and it's sad"

Adina

"So this resembles the old gas lamps in Prague... we went for a walk one winter... I've seen this lamp, you know, and I loved it and with the Scottish flag, I- at that time it was very shortly after the Brexit deal... and I suddenly felt that, where are we going?... Like there's something brighter behind us but we're heading into darkness. Cause nothing was so clear for, with the settlement status and all these things...We couldn't go home again"
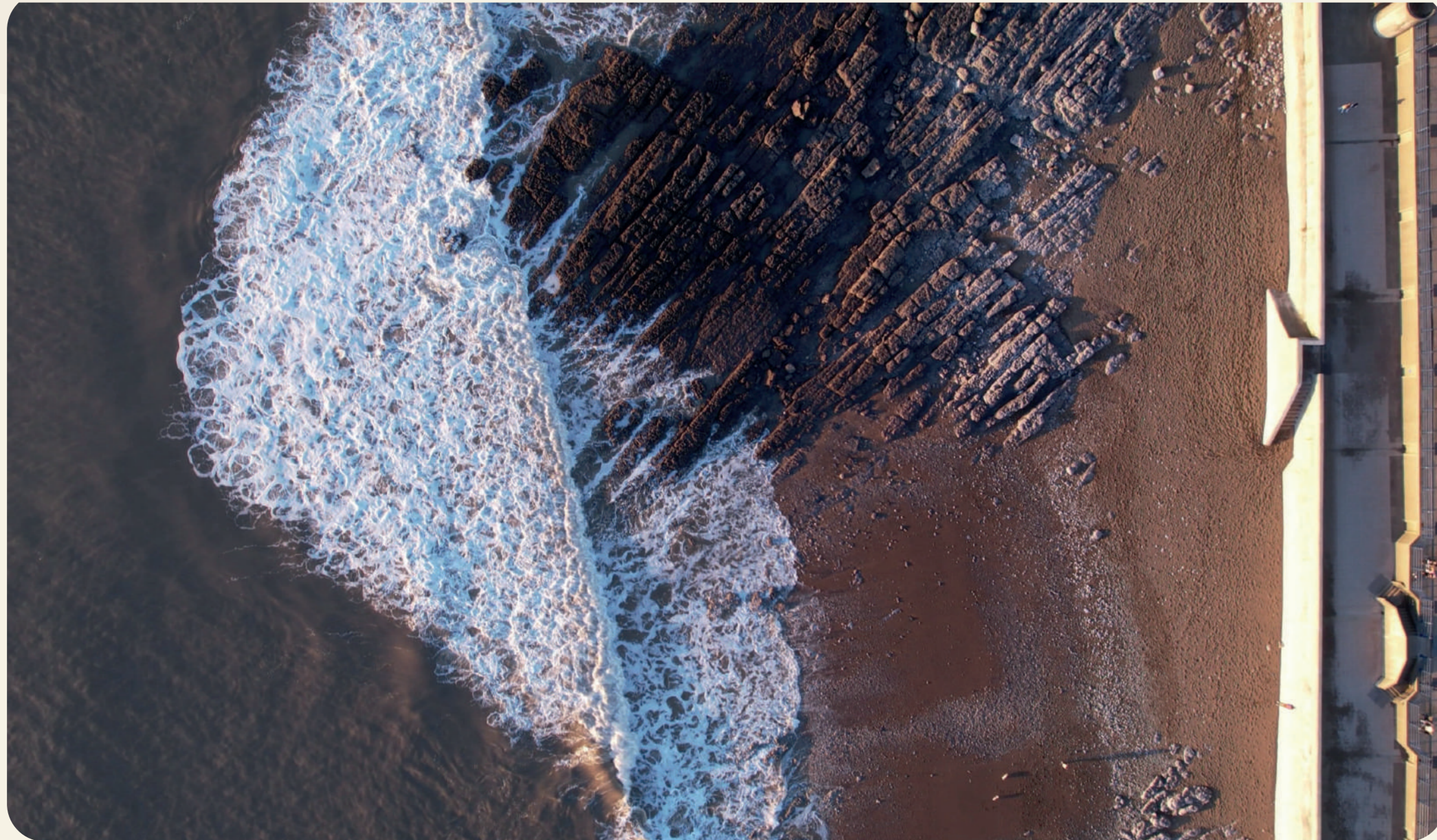
Ian

"I think there's plenty of people get a bit depressed because of the whole Covid crisis in the world and buying a drone was kind of like escape for me because when I wanted to go out, whenever I was going everything was closed... I wanted to get out of my house because I was feeling pretty depressed sitting at home all the time and just being limited and locked by the government" Uncle's death from Covid in Poland "put me in full depression...I did not go out for six months, didn't even go to the shops. It was pretty dark"

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Boredom
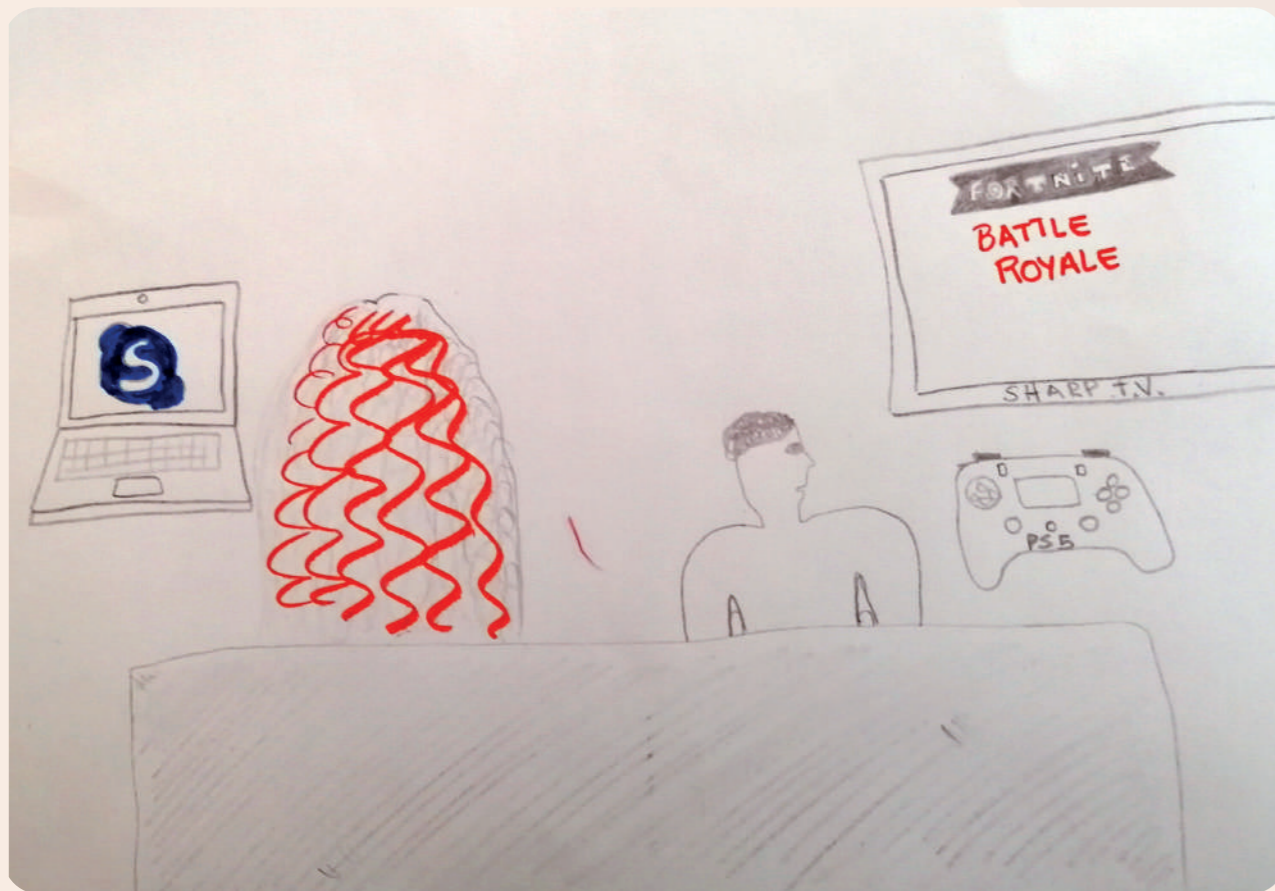
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The isolation and lack of social contact brought about by the lockdown restrictions caused some participants to experience extreme boredom and lose sense of purpose. Although daily chores could salvage sanity, in some cases, they also caused low mood and helplessness in some.
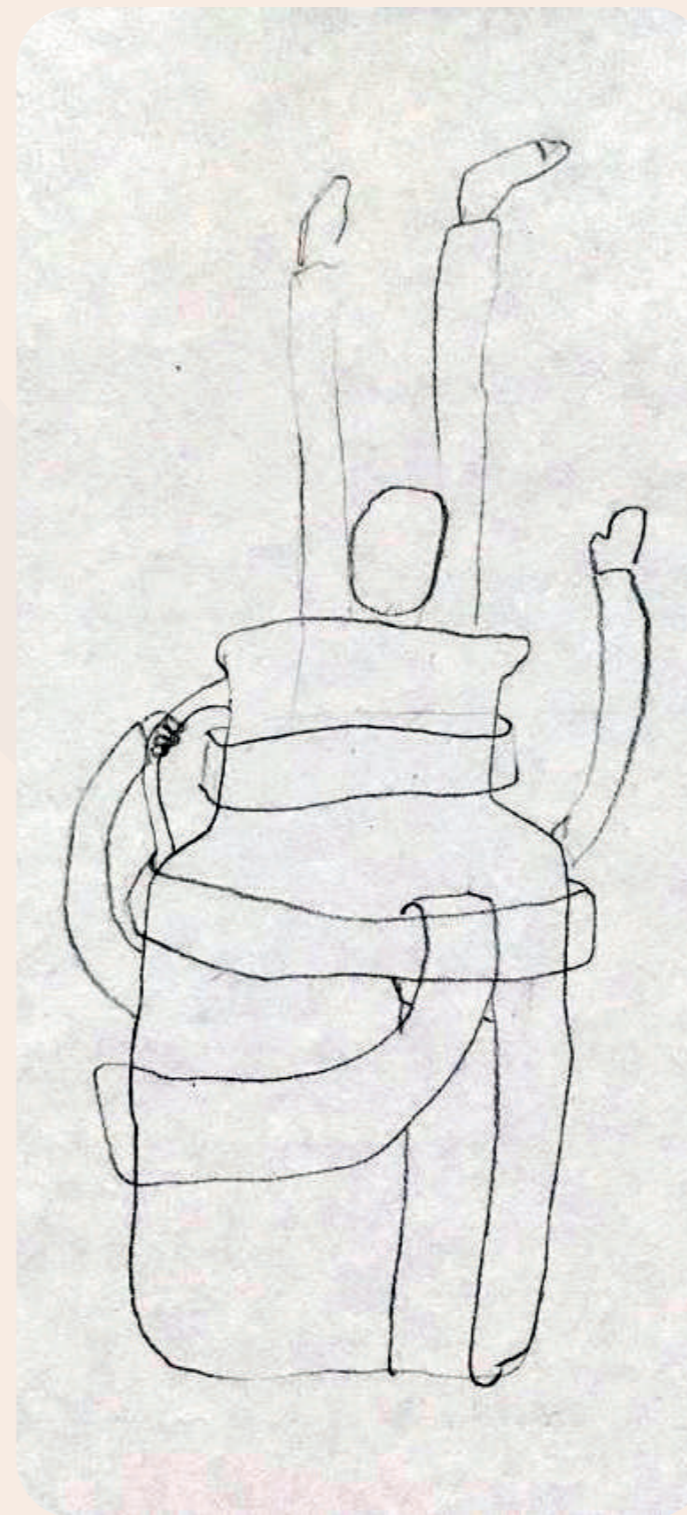

Clara

"that's the triviality of life. It's the stuff, the manual tasks, the mindless tasks that can also save you sometimes because it gives you a sense you know. On Fridays, I clean the bathroom, do the dusting, vacuum cleaning, on Saturdays I clean the kitchen, on Sundays I change the sheets so it's these little markers that you have during the week that helps you keep your sanity... but... tomorrow is going to be the same story and suddenly life is absurd, life is absolutely moronic. There's no sense, no rhyme or reason whatsoever... life looses all meaning"

Maria

"That was literally our life for nine months. Sitting in the couch, playing video games and I was twenty four seven with my friends on Skype. They are in Spain and that was like our life for nine months literally. I ordered food on the internet, we never go out for nine months... I cooked a lot for the first month but after some time I get tired of that. I didn't want to cook or we didn't want to do anything. We were bored and tired of being home with no friends or family"

Lili

[her thinking] "goes around in circles and tangles but doesn't lead anywhere and that's what the elongated body is and this whole knotted up, tangled up stick. It really is just, my thoughts. So it didn't need a face it was... urm... yeah... It was just this... urm... Something that didn't yield any product, that kind of thought process but just urm a bit of urm... [sigh] Going around, becoming a bit compulsive, becoming a bit unproductive. I mean I had lots of young people, my sons and my sons friends who were all socially stuck in separate places or at home or in some kind of accommodation and then some of them became quite compulsive over the Covid you know. Have to have their things really tidily, shoes to the angle and everything, pencils everything's tidied up. It's just... you know"
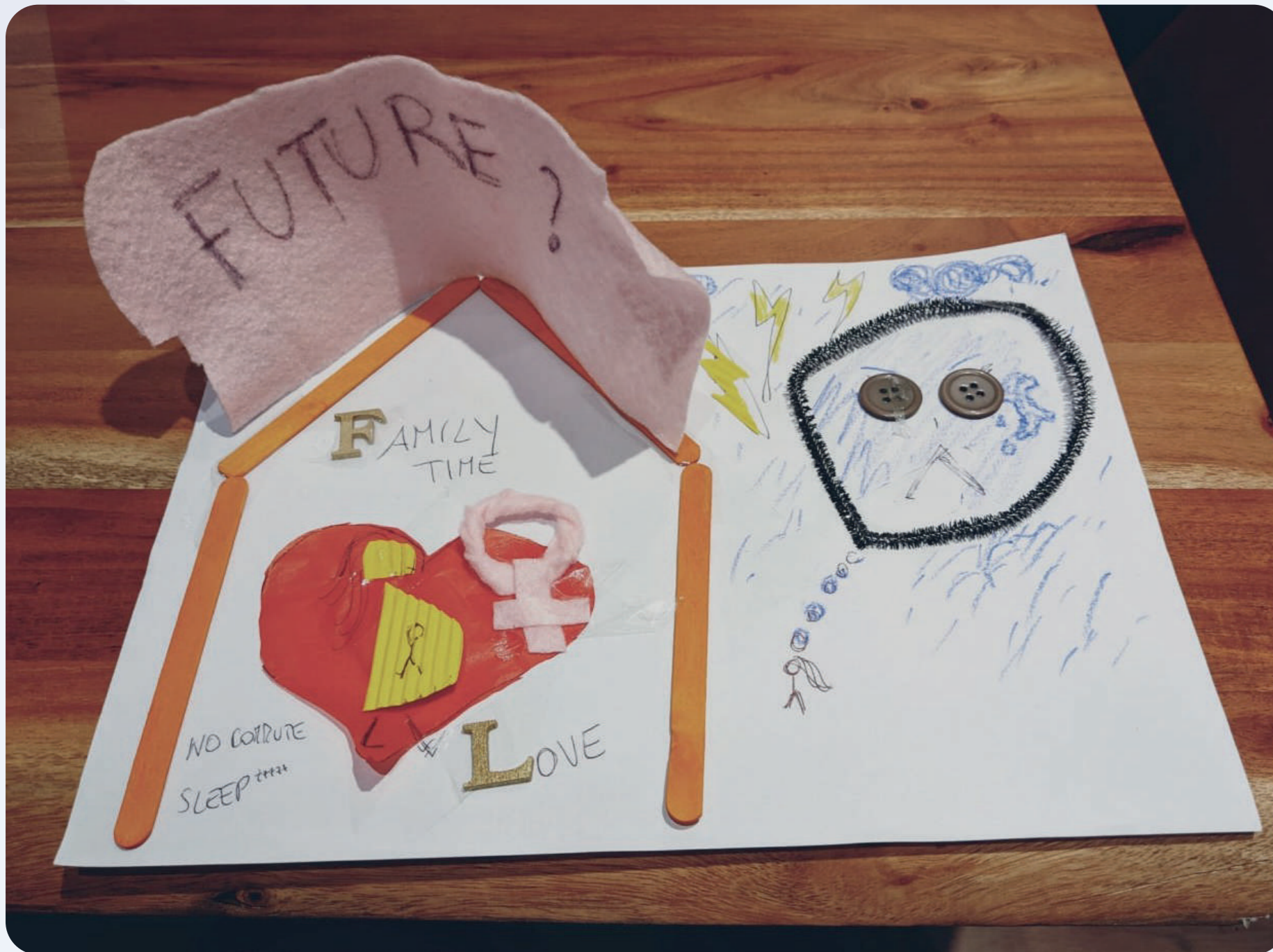
Guilt

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Some of our participants felt a sense of guilt for quite different reasons in relation to the Covid pandemic and Brexit. Some were feeling self-hatred for not being able to help the family members in the required way, some others felt guilty because they were enjoying lockdown while other people were suffering.

Corinne

the headphones they're because I just couldn't stand the world around me anymore. I mean around me, my own voice, my reactions to son's not wanting to work but being on the screen all the time... I'm tired of hearing myself telling them that they need to work more, ok they've done a bit but that's not enough. I don't know I felt like I had nothing, I was struggling to find something nice to say and so that's where this self hatred as well, because it was also negative that I just didn't like, yeah, the vibes that I was giving, the sound of what I was saying, the tone of voice and I would put those headset on and put my music on and try to feel better with the music or have a good cry with the music.

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Lisa

"So I felt guilty because I knew many people were not having positive experience from lockdown and I did at the beginning and also when I got pregnant, to be fair, because then there was the second lockdown in winter and I was pregnant and no one could go out and no one could drink so I felt like my fomo... was actually fine because like ok I'm stuck at home I can't do anything... Then of course [sigh] it was very hard at the same time because I'm Italian so my whole family was in Italy, my parents are 80,... So right hand side that's the dark side so the little men is me and my huge thinking."

colours

The use of colour by artists to help express stories, feelings and emotions, mood, the significance of people, objects, and things and to create a sense of place is seen throughout the history of art going back to primitive times.

The participants as artists in this study have used colour within their multimedia artwork to express a variety of emotions, from love to danger and more. They used colour in many different ways to highlight and point out things that were significant: for example, Covid and the bureaucracy of settled status represented as orange-coloured bombs raining down from the sky. They used significant colours such as a red heart that related to strong passions or black as a melancholic colour to signify negative feelings and used the flag colours to express their sentiment in relation to national identity, patriotism, and home.
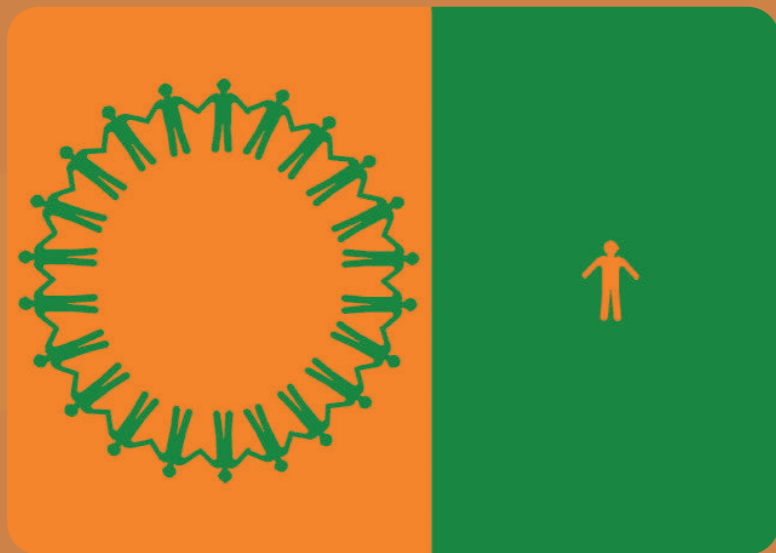
Two artists used black and white to signify a sense of place; the home as a prison, in one case, and a photograph of a harbour with a grey and dull mist to signify the doom of the pandemic, in the other. They also used tones of colours to represent the sea; navy and turquoise to express a cold Brexit channel between the UK and Europe and a warm Mediterranean Sea that reminded them of being back home in Italy. One participant specifically used no colour in her drawing to represent nothingness as a bleak time and no joy.

Orange

Zofia: "Yes, and I was playing with the collage so the orange usually it's taken as joyful, it's uplifting, green is something that cools down, holds us down, relax ourselves. So, I was playing that in a way of comparison, how we could find ourselves in a different environment".

Researcher: "There's more orange than there is green I think, maybe the colour thing I don't know but why is that"?
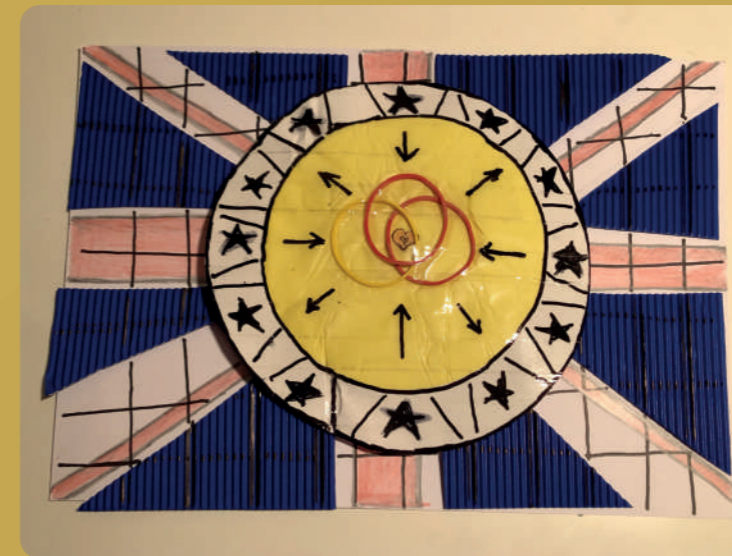
Zofia: "I am ambivalent, I'm neither extrovert nor introvert so I'm both of them. So maybe that's why I just used two colours in here"

Yellow

Researcher: "Can I ask Simona why have you got one yellow band and the other two are red? Is that just because you got that in the pack?."

Simona: "I'm not sure, no no I had more I could choose different colours but I thought I'm not sure about this symbol, because it was certainly me, my child and his father. I'm not sure if to me and my child together because sometimes we were like oh like. I was called like a symbiotic mum but I don't feel like I'm a symbiotic mum so I would say that the two red are the men and the yellow I am the woman"
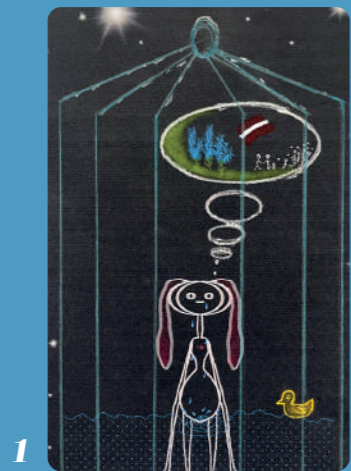
Blue

Ilma *(fig. 1):* "In Latvian culture, the blue colour represents hope or longing, and there is even one poet who lived more than a hundred years ago, and he wanted to be buried in a blue coffin just because it symbolised the hope and that's why there's blue flowers"

Sandra *(fig. 2):* "I was already stuck that was a fact, right? I was here and there was this huge blue dark barrier, this to me represents physically the tunnel, the water. It represents the sea of words and nonsense and confusion".

Researcher: "The blue, the turquoise"?

Sandra: "That's it. That's the warm and inviting Mediterranean piece of the sea. It's not this blue dark thing".

Red

Researcher: "I'm very intrigued by these red lines".

Corrine *(fig. 1):* "So the red as well is the blood, the pain, it's everything that's raw, the rage, the anger, it's all of that. That's what I was full of".

Researcher: "Can you tell us as well, interested in the colours, the way you put colours together. The red and blue, does that signify anything"?

Erika *(fig. 2):* "Yeah, the Danish colours are red and white of course and the Scottish colours are blue and white, and the UK, the British colours are red, blue, and white so that's very much a conscious choice of those colours and no other colours".

Green

Researcher: "I love your drawing so much. there's green in the speech bubble at the top, the kind of dream or whatever to get back to Latvia. You see below you're really sad, so it's kind of like a heaven and hell thing?".

Ilma (*fig. 1*): "Well green is life, right?"

Researcher: "Green is life yeah."

Ilma: "Life there and the country is green as well so. For me it has associations with you just go out in nature. Forests, everything you just feel free."

Andrea (*fig. 2*): "So the little bits of green tissue paper spoke to me. I had a kind of sense when whichever side I'm on [chuckling] the grass is always green on the other, yep. So, the big green bits there and by that I mean, and I never had that sense of having the other side because it was the same side and now I'm sitting there as I said, I'm sitting in Europe, or I'm sitting here and I look across the divide and I want to be there".
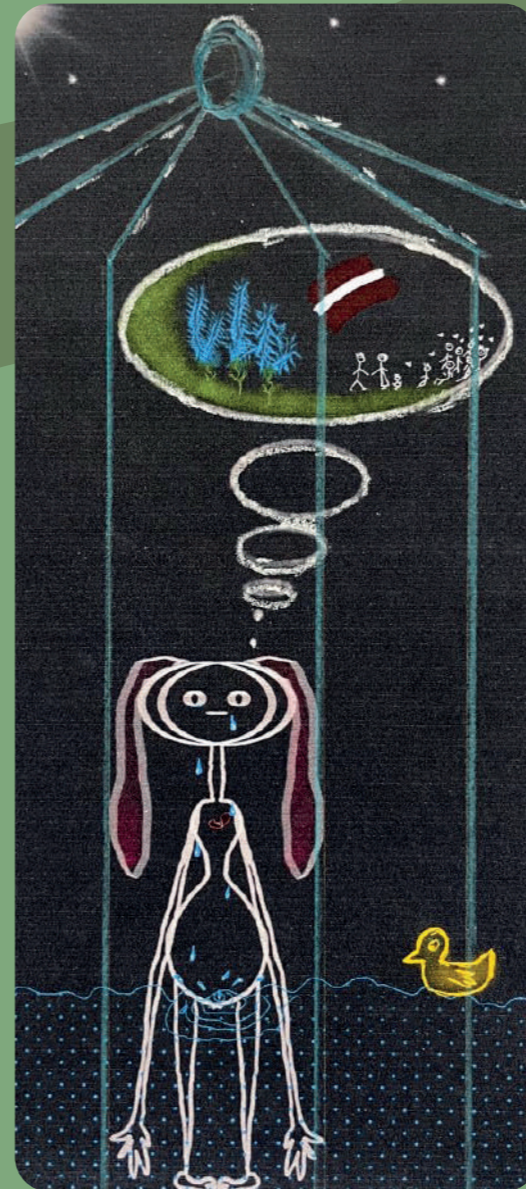
Andrea: "I said the grass is always greener, the bottom half there is not in British bit because between the green bits is a bit of black bin liner as well which is the dark clouds that is, or the dark bit that emerges between the green grassy bits of saying. I really, really hate what Britain has become. I used to love living here".

Zofia (*fig. 3*): Print of person on green & Orange

Zofia: "Yes, and I was playing with the collage so the orange usually it's taken as a joyful, it's uplifting, green is something cools down, holds us down, relax ourselves."

Researcher: "Can I ask you another question like, your picture is like a flag. That's been divided into, well a line down the centre, well it's not quite the centre. There's more orange than there is green I think, maybe the colour thing I don't know but why is that?"
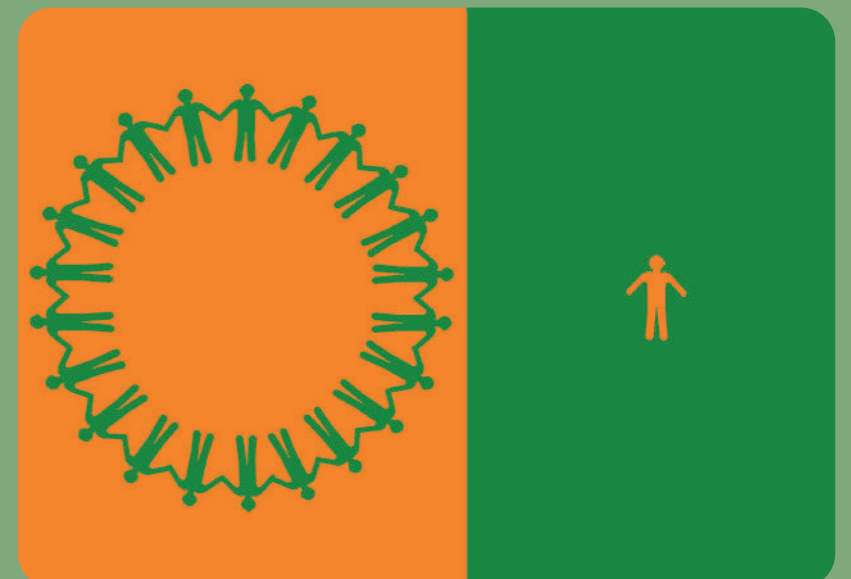
Zofia: "I was trying to reach that joyfulness. You know like that extrovertism which is, I am ambivalent, I'm neither extrovert or introvert so I'm both of them. So maybe that's why I just used two colours in here."

Black & White / no colour

Some of the participants specifically used no colour or black and white in their artworks to create emotive feelings such as loneliness, sadness, or dark times. One participant changes his photograph which was originally in colour to black and white or grey tones to give a sense of gloom.

No Colour -

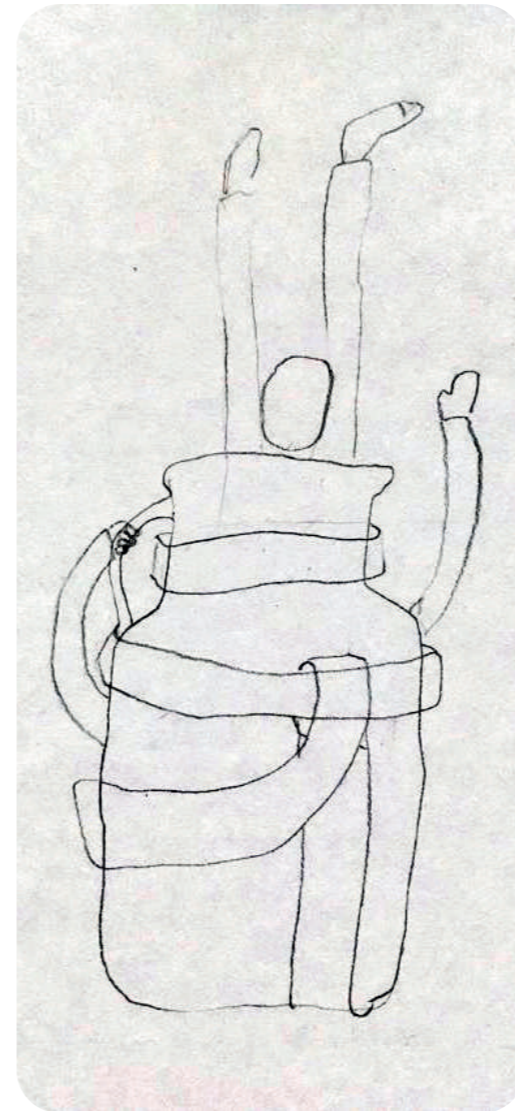**Researcher:** "Lili can I ask why you didn't put any colour in your drawing. You're drawing there's no colour in it"?

Lili (fig. 1): "I mean for me colour is joy and there's not much joy in this drawing. It doesn't express any... It's quite a bleak drawing. I would say it's quite a bleak feeling that it expresses so... Erm...Yeah just missing... Company, socialising. I think we were all the same, aren't we? I mean probably most of us"

Black & White -

Marek (fig. 2): "The photo was originally taken in colour but then I saw it and I thought what about if I tried to make it black and white and it was much stronger. It was like places of grass, green. The black and white it just everything like in shades of grey you know so it was much stronger. My inner feeling was probably this loneliness"

Researcher (fig. 3): "Another thing I've noticed about your drawing is that you've used no colour it's very black and white. I mean obviously because it's a prison thing but is that like purposeful or"?
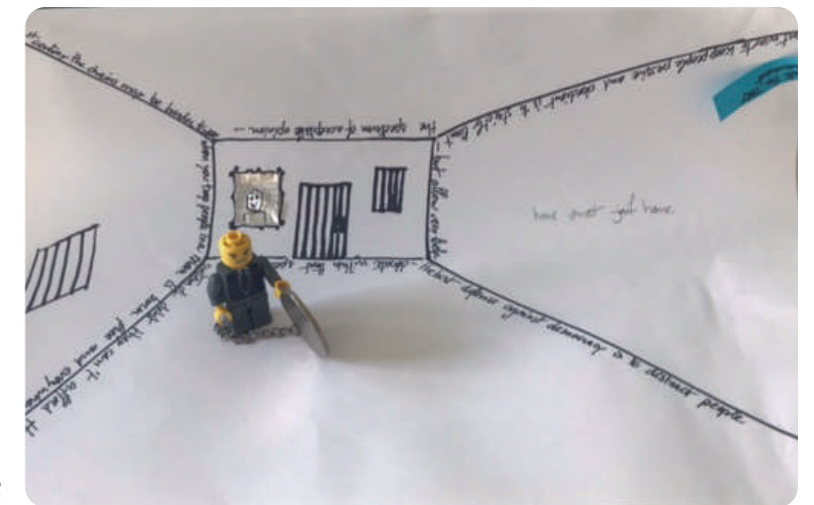
Pierre (fig. 3): "No, it's really no need to depict a colourful house. The point I was making is it's a jail and there's nothing really colourful about it"

1

2

3

symbols

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While our participants expressed their feelings artistically and verbally, in their artwork they often made use of symbols which represent important aspects of their experience during the lockdown in post-Brexit Britain. Elements that punctuated their everyday lives or frequently recurred in their thoughts during the long days where social contacts and activities had to be suspended and the world seemed to have stalled. Some of these symbols are directly linked to emotions and powerfully illustrate the mood the participants were experiencing and/or the emotions that the events had triggered for them.

↘

flags
hourglass & calendar
prison & cages
stones, computers & face masks
damocles' sword

flags

1   *2*   *3*

Some of the pictures feature flags: the European, the UK and two other countries national flags. Interestingly, one picture is a flag, which is for the participant symbolic of both Brexit and the lockdown

Zofia *(fig. 1)*

"So the circle will be for the Europe, for the joy for the coming together…while the UK is represented on the right as isolated…
I think that isolation is significant as well in that picture and resonates with the isolation we all experienced in lockdown."

Louis *(fig. 2)* + Ilma *(fig. 3)*

In both pictures the flags represent national identity and hint to a sort of nostalgia. Especially in Ilma's picture, the country of origin is the land of daydreams, a land which is green and provides hope.

"Life there and the country is green as well so. For me it has associations with you just go out in nature. Forests, everything you just feel free."

hourglass & calendar

1   *2*

Some of our participants said that lockdown made them think about the sense of time, although their perceptions of time were different.
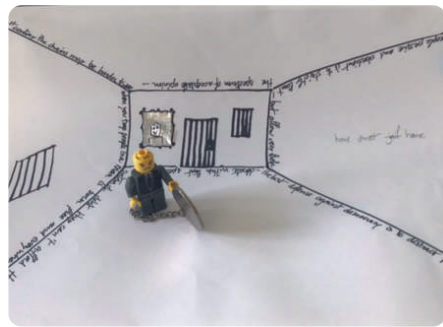
Corinne *(fig. 1)*

For Corinne, time is lost during the lockdown: "time… It just keeps flowing, no matter what we do It's going. So even if it's slow, that's what I mentioned earlier, it's going and never coming back."
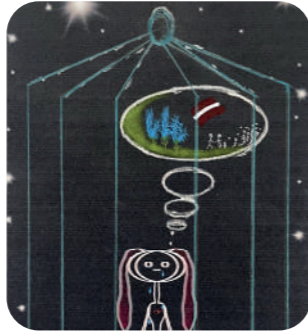
Franco *(fig. 2)*

For Franco, "this Wednesday 8 April which actually was the worst day in terms of death in the first wave which is actually what made me realise that this is not going away anytime soon. It's like if time yes was moving forward because of doing writing, doing a lot of stuff, teaching online and so on… but then it was not passing in the same way that it used to pass. So time was not progressing in the way it used to progress before."

prison & cages

1 *2* *3*

Lockdown and Brexit both contribute to a sense of entrapment that is visualised by some in the form of constrained spaces, cages and chains, to represent lack of freedom to move.

Pierre *(fig. 1)*

"houses are just prisons. In in many senses... this whole feeling that we're tied to our houses and this kind of usual ties that you have in life that are meaningless... I think there was a bit of an idea behind that we don't have the freedom and you kind of the whole lockdown issue, probably made me think more about this"

Ilma *(fig. 2)*

"That's a cage, like trapped in a cage and it's kind of, well, a golden cage"

Marek *(fig. 3)*

"During the pandemic you know we couldn't go where we wanted so people were chained to their flat, home, garden, work you know and it also has a meaning for the Brexit you know. Maybe even stronger during Brexit. It was felt like you were being detached from the rest of the Europe"

stones, computers & face masks

1 *2* *3*

These are mostly symbols of the lockdown, when walking in nature became a life line for those who could straddle in the countryside, while others, living in cities, were confined to their flats spending time mostly glued to a screen. And, of course, the mask, the passport to go in the vicinity of other human beings at a time when the proximity was both longed for and feared.

Hanna *(fig. 1)*

"Nature was a big part of the lockdown so as you see on the pictures you have ants and flowers and bees and the little shells but you can also see some stones from the beach I've collected from the beach during the lockdown and in this picture they represent all the challenges so like anxiety, stresses erm, fear.

they are two laptops ok. So the first one on the right, so it's just a laptop with a little, imagine a zoom call, the little icons, you couldn't see students... they all have the story so they're all little daisies you can see on the second part of the screen. You can see a laptop with the little daisies. So behind the screen there is a person with feelings."

Ulli *(fig. 2)*

"When I was walking the dog every day and all over the woods where I walk the dog these stones were appearing... These just started appearing in the woods, somewhere in the middle of the wood where I was walking the dog and I started photographing them because I also had a friend here in Scotland who had a bad accident and was in hospital and I was messaging her every day"

Rada *(fig. 3)*

"For me mask was like novelty and I hated it...I couldn't breathe, it was itchy and it now represents everything that I hated at that time. Being inside locked, when it's beautiful day with mask on"
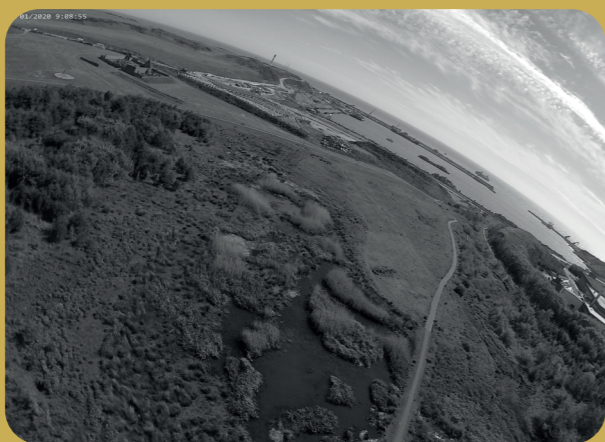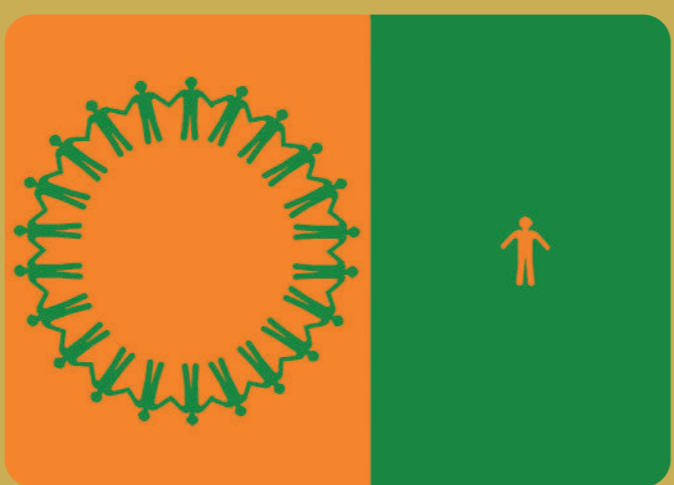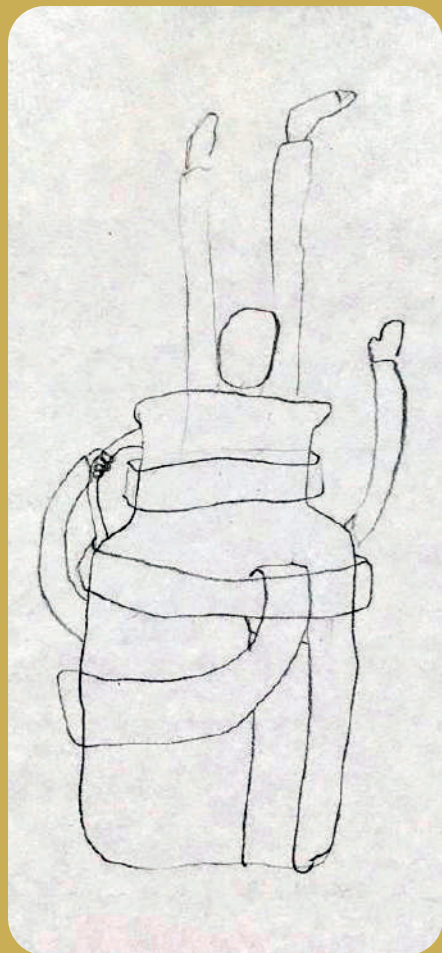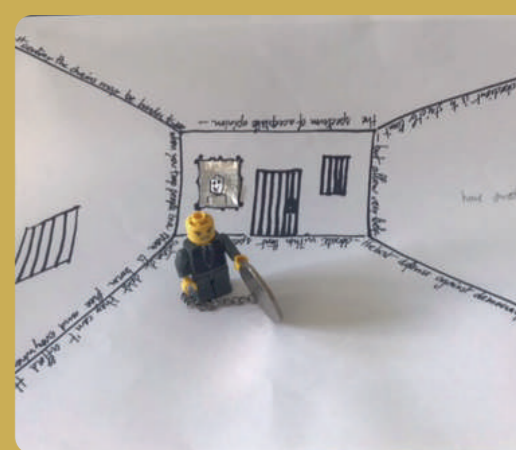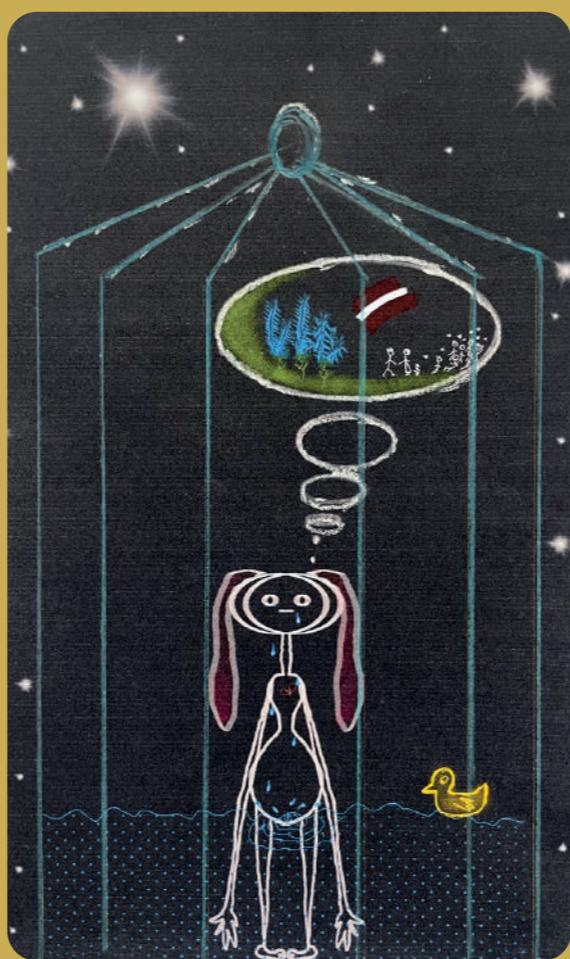
damocles' sword

This symbol appears only in one of the pictures in our study. However, it is a powerful symbol of anxiety and precariousness. It is featured in Corinne's artwork hanging over her family, in France. Damocles' sword is the sense of impending doom, the feeling that something really bad might happen any moment to the person bearing it over their head.

Corinne

"Basically you're not safe at all and this sword could fall at any time. It's like you know it's going to fall... this represents my dad and my dad was a, he would say to me he's had enough and now he's just waiting for the end... I don't even call him because I can't face the idea that his voice is not going to be good or his breathing is not going to be good... So I said that to him when he said I can feel it, I can feel it's the end. I was like please can you wait can you hold on, can you get all your strength and wait for me to come and see you. So this is the left picture and it's fine at the moment"
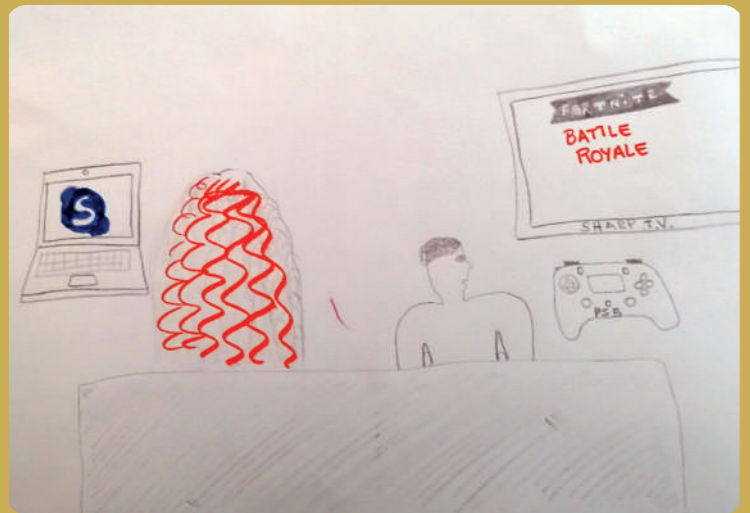
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April 2020

FUTURE ?

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