

Jorella Andrews on Radical Description



By Jamie Straw

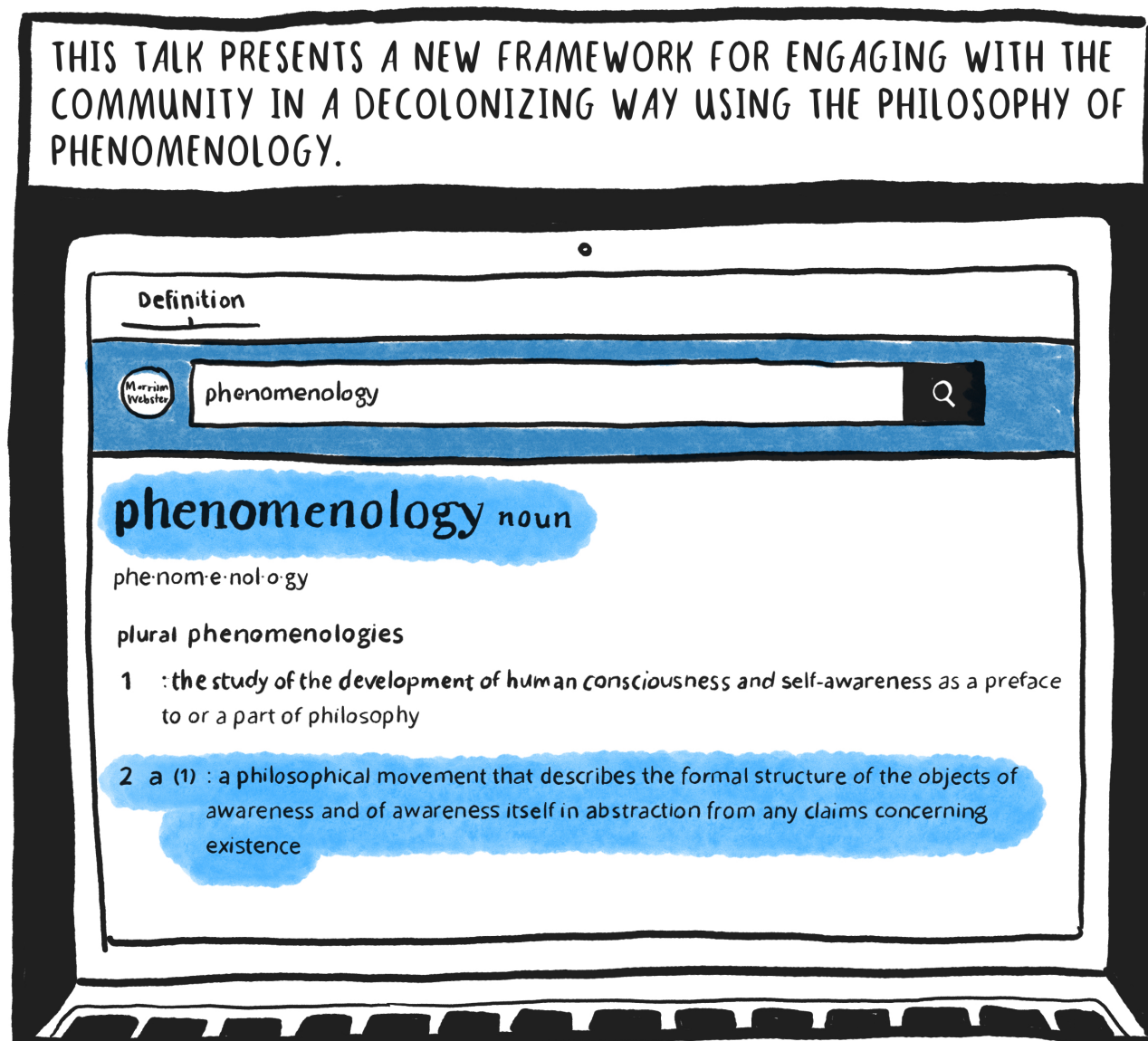
RADICAL DESCRIPTION

RESPONSE BY JAMIE STRAW

LED BY JORELLA ANDREWS, PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON GOLDSMITHS, RADICAL DESCRIPTION: HOW TO DO IT AND WHY IT MATTERS WAS A HYBRID EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE ON NOVEMBER 17TH, 2022 AS PART OF THE VCS FORUM SERIES. PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED BOTH IN-PERSON AT THE CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND OVER ZOOM.



THIS TALK PRESENTS A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY IN A DECOLONIZING WAY USING THE PHILOSOPHY OF PHENOMENOLOGY.



PHENOMENOLOGY FOCUSES ON BODILY PERCEPTION AS A BASIS FOR ENCOUNTERING THE WORLD AND MEANING MAKING.



Perception is the interrogative thought which lets the perceived world be rather than posit it, before which things form and undo themselves in a sort of gliding beneath the yes and no.

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY
EMINENT PHENOMENOLOGIST


PROFESSOR ANDREWS INTRODUCES A METHODOLOGY SHE FREQUENTLY EMPLOYS CALLED INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA).

EMERGENT THEMES	ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT	EXPLORATORY COMMENTS

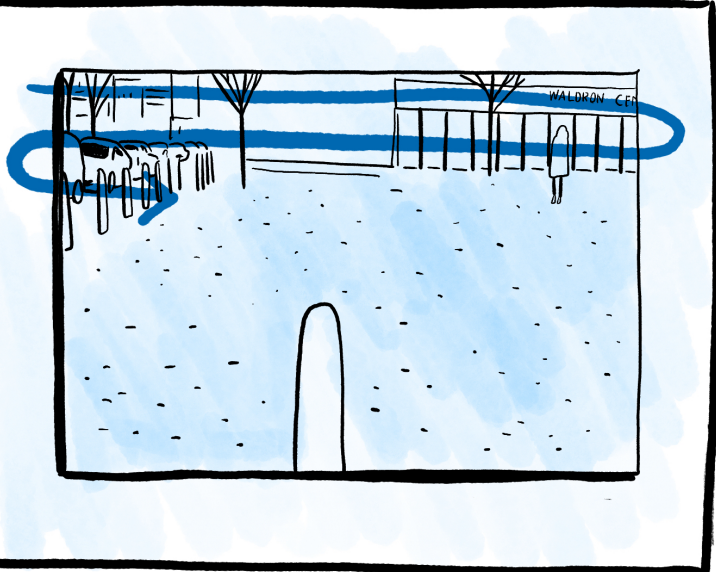


THIS IS AN IPA GRID.

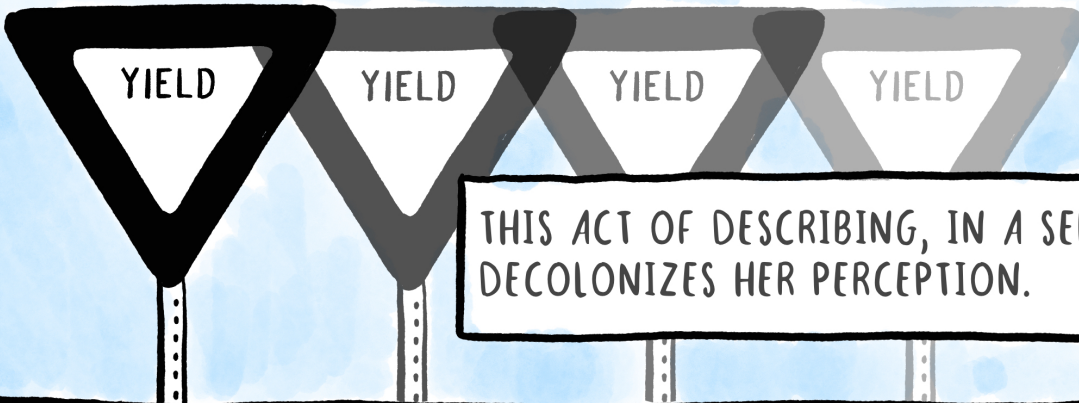
USED MOST EXTENSIVELY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR INTERVIEWING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS, ANDREWS ADAPTS ITS USE FOR IMAGES, SPECIFICALLY IMAGES OF HER COMMUNITY.

THEMES	ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS
		

I place the image into an IPA grid and scan it visually from top to bottom, writing down what I notice section by section.



ANDREWS DISCOVERED THAT ENGAGING WITH IMAGES THIS WAY SLOWS HER DOWN; UNCOVERS PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS AND BIASES; AND ALLOWS THE IMAGE, AND BY EXTENSION THE SITE, TO, IN PHENOMENOLOGICAL TERMS, "SELF-SHOW."



THIS ACT OF DESCRIBING, IN A SENSE, DECOLONIZES HER PERCEPTION.

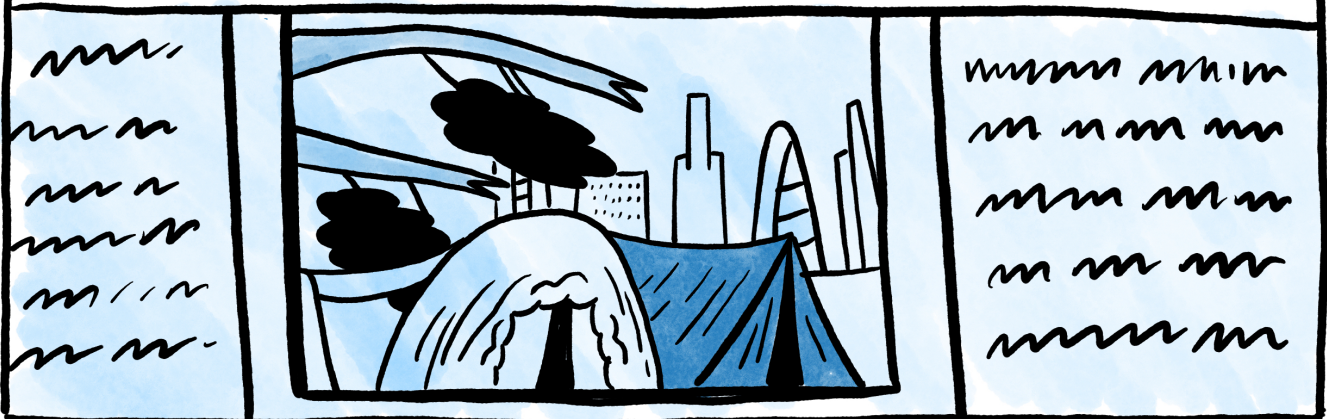
ANDREWS DESCRIBES AN EXAMPLE FROM A PUBLIC GREEN SPACE THAT SHE OVERSEES IN INNER-CITY LONDON.



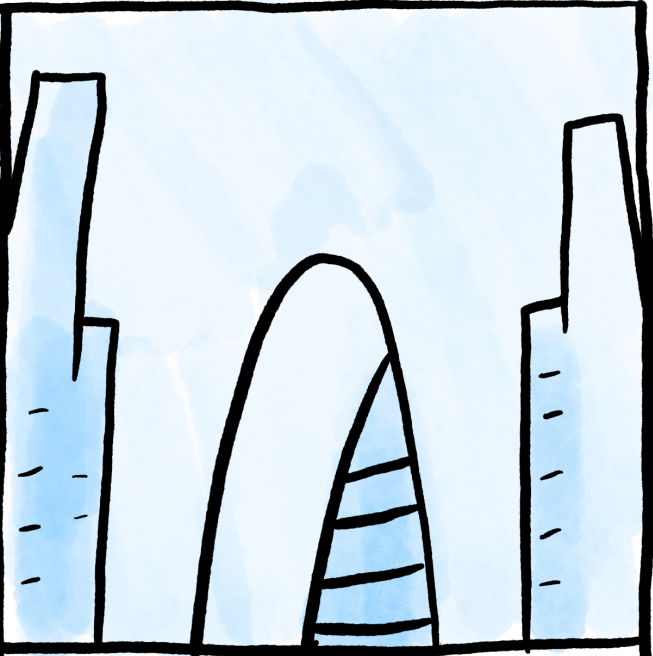
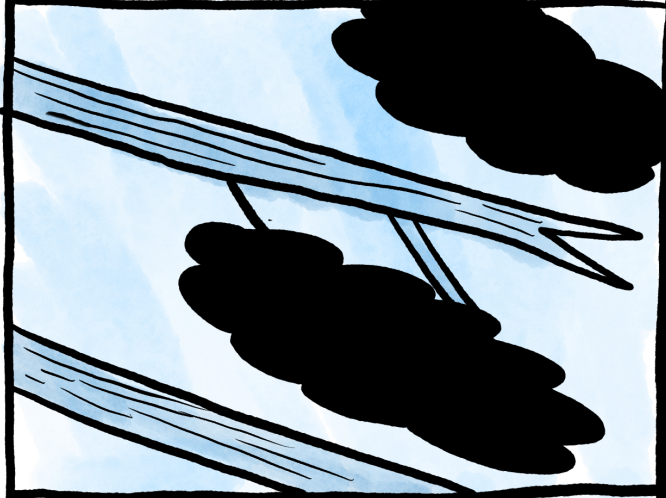
OFTEN HOUSELESS PEOPLE WILL SET UP TENTS IN THE PARK AND MISUSE THE GREEN SPACE, WHICH POSES A CHALLENGE FOR ANDREWS AS A CARETAKER.



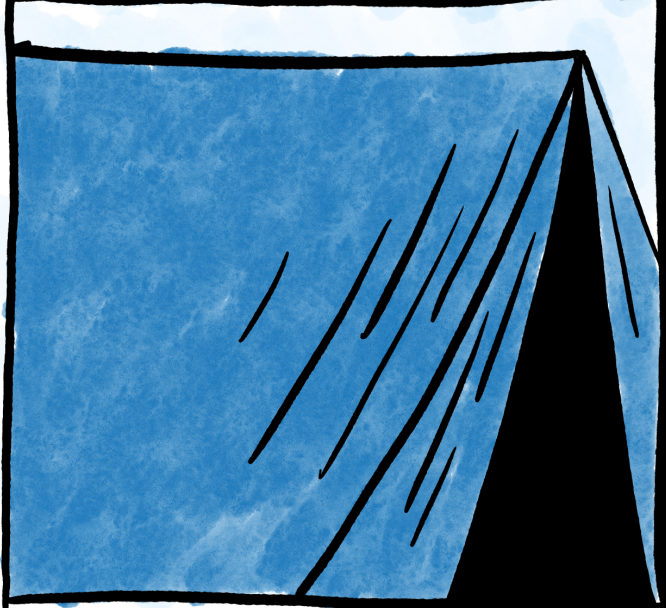
ANDREWS TOOK A PICTURE OF THE SITE AND PLACED IT IN AN IPA GRID.



IN THE COURSE OF HER ANALYSIS,
SHE NOTICED SOMETHING NEW...



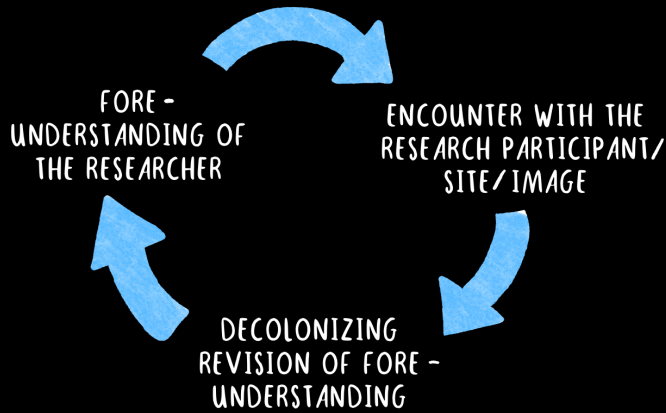
... A BANNER SOMEONE HUNG
BETWEEN TWO TENTS THAT
APPEARED TO BE A MEMORIAL
FOR A CHILD WHO HAD DIED.



SHE REFLECTED THAT BY SPENDING TIME WITH THIS IMAGE
PHENOMENOLOGICALLY, SHE GAINED A NEW APPRECIATION FOR THE
HUMANITY OF THE PEOPLE THAT SHE HAD THOUGHT OF IN SUCH A
CHALLENGING WAY PRIOR.



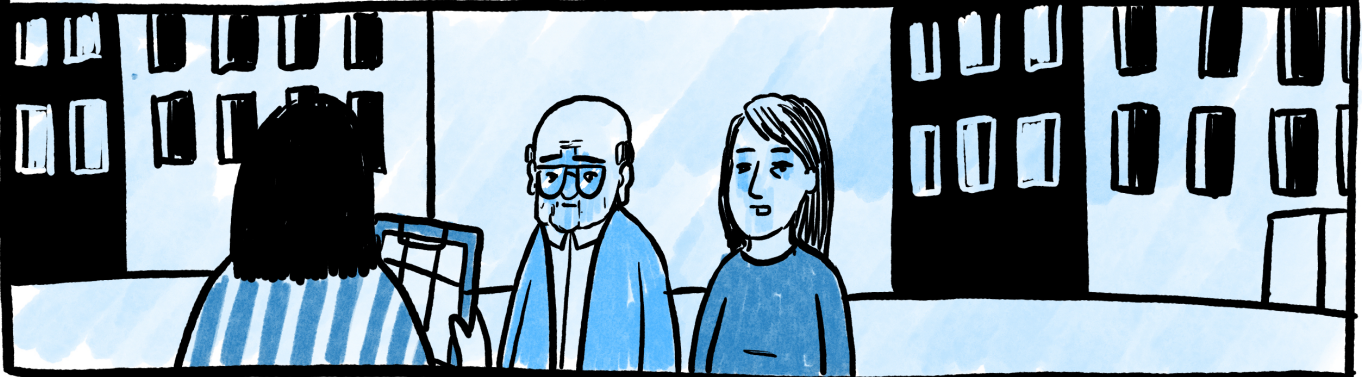
PROFESSOR ANDREWS AIMS FOR NON-COERCIVE, DECOLONIZED CHANGE-MAKING.



COULD THIS RESEARCH METHOD SERVE AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE COLONIZING EFFECTS OF GENTRIFICATION?



I IMAGINE CONDUCTING IPA ANALYSES WITH IMAGES OF THESE SITES AND INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO ENVISION AND CO-CREATE CHANGE IN DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES.



DESCRIPTION MAY AT FIRST GLANCE SEEM INNOCUOUS, BUT PROFESSOR ANDREWS ENCOURAGES US TO CONSIDER THAT SPENDING TIME WITH PRELIMINARY PROCESSES IS EXACTLY WHAT WE NEED TO BE NON-COERCIVE AND DECOLONIZING IN OUR APPROACH TO CHANGE-MAKING.



Description teaches me how to attend and to attend involves positioning oneself in service of another, and of a self-showing world.

Jamie Straw (she/they) is a comics creator based out of northeastern Pennsylvania. They are a second year graduate student in CCA's MFA in Comics program. Her work is wide-ranging, but often focuses on the environment and social issues.