Play and Cultural Transformation:
Designing for Reflexive Agency in Participatory Performance

James Andrew Harper

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics, Newcastle University

April 2020

Abstract

This thesis presents a theorisation of the culturally transformative potential of play in participatory performance, exploring how play can promote reflexivity and enhance participants' creative volition. It examines how play designs can respond to the cultural particularity of players, enabling them to express agency in relation to issues of personal concern; it considers the relationship between participant-led documentation and pedagogy, as memories of play feed into ongoing learning, and it interrogates the aesthetics of space and time in play, investigating how a perceptual shift beyond the immediacy of here and now might support reflexivity that expands players' creative capacity to engage in culturally transformative experiences. The thesis includes discussion of research-led applications of live action role-play practices in several projects undertaken by the author during 2017-2018. It is situated in the field of performance but applies insights on play from game studies and fine art, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Lev Vygotsky's theories of learning and Baruch Spinoza's theory of affects. This thesis contributes to knowledge in participatory performance by presenting design methods that respond to participants' cultural particularity, drawing on habitus as a conceptual tool for exploring the dispositions of players as the source material for play frameworks. It proposes flexible design structures that foreground the co-creative agency of players and foster culturally transformative potential through intersubjective exchange. The thesis investigates how participant-led documentation in the embodied memory of recurring play activities can support further transformative possibilities through ongoing learning. Lastly, it explores spatio-temporal reflexivity in play, utilising Spinoza's concept of affective *potentia* to propose aesthetic strategies that enhance participants' perceptual range and strengthen their capacities for self-determined action. Cumulutively, these investigations yield a theoretical model of participatory performance design termed *anchorage-leverage*, which applies an aesthetics of spatio-temporal reflexivity to support participants in transcending the limitations of their habitus and playing with potential transformations in cultural values and practices.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my supervisors, Dr Helen Freshwater and Dr James Ash for their calm guidance throughout this project.

Thanks to Andy Pawlby for supporting my early attempts in interactive drama and big thanks to Clay Ewing and Lien Tran for supporting my Churchill Fellowship at University of Miami. I'm super grateful to Malachy Orozco and Adam James for helping me find my way to the Larpwriter Summer School and I'm deeply thankful to the organisers, Martin Nielsen, Sasha Karalevich, Aslaug Ullerud, Tatiana Smoliak, Erlend Sand Bruer and Sasha Franskevich for inspiring me with the possibilities of play.

Regarding work undertaken in this study, I'm grateful to Hugh Chapman, Mridu Thanki, Santhosh Chandran, Jason Keen, Eveleen Hill and Judith McDonagh for helping arrange the Haringey projects. Big thanks to Dan Ball for offering time and space at Theatre Delicatessen for Playground and thanks to Chloe Ting and Alex Sazonova for organising the Trumpington project and also to Thomas Eke for supporting the work at Peartree Bridge.

On a personal level, I'm grateful to Heidi Niemi for being generally patient during this process and supportive when things got difficult. Massive thanks also to my sister, Catherine, for sage advice and for passing on an inspirational quote from our Dad, which is included at the bottom of the page. Lastly, and most importantly, thanks go to my parents, Des and Olga, the most passionate players and pedagogues that I have known.

"While research attempts to answer questions about problems, the fundamental essence of research is really to question, and not to answer. This paradox is at the heart of research; we question not only to obtain answers, but we question also to generate further questions."

- Ruth Ludemann, *Image*, 11:2 (1979).

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Play is an essential component in the social construction of human cultures. This is the core argument of historian Johan Huizinga's seminal account of game play, *Homo Ludens*. Huizinga's book discusses the culture building function of play from ancient Greece onwards, when, in his argument, agonistic contests enabled social structures to emerge and solidify as the strong triumphed over the weak and determined dominant cultural norms.[1] Although Huizinga's narrative of play in human culture appears to be resolutely conservative, many artistic practitioners have used play as a means of transforming, rather than simply reaffirming, cultural values. In the 1960s, Situationist International originated playful creative strategies to overcome passive consumption of cultural artefacts in what Guy Debord termed 'The Society of the Spectacle'.[2] Similarly, Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre invited spectators to claim newfound agency as a *spect-actors*, by stepping into the action with the aim of changing pre-determined outcomes of the drama to overcome the oppression exercised by those in power.[3]

The influence of practitioners like Boal and movements like Situationist International have continued to resonate in the twenty-first century, inspiring artists to apply playful forms of participation to make audience members active agents in artworks. Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* describes forms of practice that emerged in the 1990s which sought to establish spaces of social conviviality as the site and substance of the work. This marked a decisive shift away from viewing art as an object, to reconceive it as 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context'.[4] The emphasis on placing audiences within the

[1] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1949), pp. 30-31.
[2] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay Press, 2009).
[3] Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. by Charles A. McBride, Maria Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer (London: Pluto Press, 2000).
[4] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), p. 113.

work as participants has also impacted on theatre practice. Various forms of participatory theatre have emerged in the United Kingdom over the last two decades, inviting direct interaction between audience members and performers, frequently placing all involved in the same physical space and provoking playful actions through which audience-participants might affect the performance and its outcomes. Prominent companies within this emerging field of practice include Punchdrunk, a London-based company, formed in 2000, who have become internationally renowned purveyors of immersive theatre works that place audiences within fictional worlds; Blast Theory, a Brighton-based company formed in 1991 who are known for producing 'pervasive' games,[5] merging digitally mediated play, dramatic performance and navigations of real-world spaces; and Coney, a London-based company, formed in 2006, who pursue playfulness in interactive performance.

Following on from the innovations in playful participation that are noted above, this study investigates how play can be applied in performance contexts to create the potential for cultural transformation, with a specific focus on the creative practice of live action role-play, or larp as it is more commonly referred to. Larp is a form of creative practice that has evolved from fantasy role-play games, with Nordic larp emerging in the 1990s as a specific sub-category based on role-play cultures in the Nordic countries.[6] As key characteristics of Nordic larp have developed through practice and theoretical discourse, connections between fine art traditions and Nordic larp practice have been identified. Game studies theorist J. Tuomas Harviainen details extensive commonalities between the Happenings of artist Allan Kaprow and larp, such as the production of a written script, or score, that provides instructions to guide participatory action, the absence of an audience, and the emergent space of possibility contained within the structure of the work.[7] Similarly, artworks described under the banner of

[5] Matt Adams, 'Uncle Roy All Around You', in *Pervasive Games: Theory and Design*, ed. by Markus Montola, Jaakko Stenros and Annika Waern (London: Elsevier/Morgan Kaufmann, 2009), pp. 231-234.

[6] Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros, eds., *Nordic Larp* (Stockholm: Fëa Livia, 2010).

[7] J. Tuomas Harviainen, 'Kaprow's Scions', in *Playground Worlds: Creating and Evaluating Experiences of Role-Playing Games*, ed. by Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros (Jyväskylä, Finland: Ropecon, 2008), pp. 216-231.

relational aesthetics can be seen as similar to play activities, through their provision of social, co-creative spaces of affectivity that are bounded from the prevailing rules of the external world.[8] This study is premised on the belief that there is fertile scope for hybridising play with other artistic forms, combining larp methods with fine art and theatre practices to make performances that give participants a creative stake in the work and invite them to apply their agency in exploring possible transformations of cultural values.

1.1 Primary and Subsidiary Research Questions

Despite the growing prominence of artistic forms that promote playful participation, several theorists have questioned the purportedly emancipatory nature of participatory art practices. Art historian Claire Bishop argues that such artworks often seek to impose a collective consensus on their participants[9] while theatre scholars like Sophie Nield and Helen Freshwater have suggested that interactive performance forms can often exert intimidating control on participants[10] that functions as a form of governmentality.[11] In light of these challenges to the notion that participation in artistic contexts can be emancipatory, this study explores how applications of play in participatory performance might foreground participant agency to enhance the potential for generating culturally transformative experiences. Consequently, the primary question that this thesis addresses is as follows:

> *How can the design, enactment and documentation of play in the context of participatory performance create the potential for transformations of cultural values?*

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[8] Mary Flanagan, 'Playful Aesthetics: Toward a Ludic Language', in *The Gameful World: Approaches, Issues, Applications*, ed. by Stefan P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), pp. 249-271 (p. 261).
[9] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), pp. 25-26.
[10] Sophie Nield, 'The Rise of the Character named Spectator', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 18:4 (2008), 531-544 (p. 534).
[11] Helen Freshwater, '"You Say Something": Audience Participation and *The Author*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 21:4 (2011), 405-409 (p. 406).

To clarify the intent of my primary question, I will now unpack its constituent parts to formulate three subsidiary questions. Firstly, if the culturally transformative potential of play is of primary concern, it is necessary to ask who the players are, what their pre-existing cultural values might be and what cultural transformations (if any) they might wish to pursue. This study investigates the cultural particularity of players as a means of designing participatory performance works that invite them to actively reflect upon their cultural values, which yields the first of my subsidiary research questions:

> *How may the cultural particularity of participants inform the design of play in participatory performance works?*

Secondly, this research investigates how play in participatory performance is documented and how these records might make a secondary, but no less significant, contribution to its culturally transformative potential. Specifically, I address the importance of documentary records in ongoing learning processes and explore how play design methods might be taught to enable players to become designers of their own play experiences. This pedagogical work combines an exploration of how play experience can be recorded with investigation of how such records might be folded back into further learning experiences for new players, to address a second subsidiary research question:

> *How can play documentation and play design pedagogy further the culture building potential of play in the context of participatory performance?*

Thirdly, if play, as a mechanism of cultural transformation, is under investigation, there must be an examination of what play is. Fundamentally, the act of play can be viewed as an endeavour to make an impact on the material fabric of the world.[12] This marks play as an aesthetic process, as players attempt to manipulate the world around them and experience the

[12] Thomas S. Henricks, *Play and the Human Condition.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 24.

sensory satisfactions of doing so.[13] I contend that the essential materials of aesthetic experience are space and time[14] and this study explores how compositions of space and time in play might promote critical reflexivity that enhances players' potential to manipulate and reorder the forms of sensory experience that they have encountered, along with the cultural constructions that are bound up in them. This yields the third of my subsidiary research questions:

> *How can the aesthetic compositions of space and time in the play of participatory performance promote reflexive agency?*

Having presented my primary research question and elaborated the constituent parts of it, the remainder of this introduction provides an overview of the methods I have used to carry out this study, the theoretical works that have stimulated my enquiries, the structure of this thesis and the contributions to knowledge that my findings offer to scholarship and practice in participatory performance.

1.2 Sites of Research & Methods of Creative Practice

The primary and subsidiary questions that I have articulated have been addressed through research-led practice in participatory performance. This study is situated within performance studies, but my practice applies the creative methods of game design, participatory art and live action role-play in the Nordic tradition. Having trained as a theatre director at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, where the methods of theatre practitioner Constantin Stanislavski provide the foundation of actor training, my approach to making performance is, to a large extent, Stanislavskian. This approach centres upon attentiveness to the 'given circumstances' of dramatic scenarios, which are, essentially, the contextual details of where the action happens, when it happens, and the identities of the characters

[13] Chris Bateman, 'The Aesthetic Motives of Play', in *Emotion in Games: Theory and Praxis*, ed. by Kostas Karpouzis and Georgios N. Yannakakis (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), pp. 3-20 (p. 15).
[14] Jacques Rancière, 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 28:1 (2005), 13-25 (p. 13).

involved. This combines with the supposition that characters, like the real-world humans they typically represent, act in pursuit of objectives and try to overcome obstacles to fulfil these desires.[15]

Stanislavski's core concept of the 'given circumstances' is not only useful with regard to dramatic performance, it also provides fertile parallels, I suggest, with processes of system analysis that underpin the work of many game designers. In contrast with dramatic structures that typically present linear, pre-determined narratives, however, games are premised upon the agency of players and an inherent uncertainty of outcome. Consequently, given that this study is concerned with the culturally transformative possibilities that participatory performances might offer, the application of game design methods based on systems analysis is relevant in conferring enhanced create agency to participants that enables them to drive emergent performance narratives. A system can be simply defined as a set of interrelated parts that combine to form a complex whole, which is comprised of *objects* (the active agents within the system), the *attributes* of those objects (their enabling and disabling qualities), their *internal relationships* and their inhabited *environment.*[16] My contention is that dramatic scenarios can be seen to function in the same way that game systems operate: there is an environmental context containing a range of objects with various attributes that interact to generate emergent phenomena (or narratives). Similarly, in the same way that the systems of games include rules that limit player action and tools with which players can pursue their goals, dramatic scenarios contain implicit or explicit social rules that frame permissible and transgressive actions, and affordances that enable characters to pursue their objectives. These corollaries between dramatic structures and game structures are pertinent to this enquiry because if game play is to be successfully applied in participatory performance contexts that function as drama, identifying commonalities between these creative forms can arguably support productive hybridisation.

[15] Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[16] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 50-51.

Having briefly discussed the structural commonalities between drama and games, it is necessary to offer a distinction between games and the primary focus of this study: the practice of play. In his book *Man, Play and Games*, sociologist Roger Caillois builds on the earlier work of Huizinga by distinguishing games from play, using the terms *ludus* and *paidia* to define games as structured, rule-bound activities and play as a more open-ended manifestation of playfulness. Caillois foregrounds the idea that games (*ludus*) tend to be strongly characterised by explicit rules and the pursuit of concrete goals. Play (*paidia*), by contrast, tends to have looser, implicit rules with more of a focus on intrinsic enjoyment rather than goal-orientated action.[17] This distinction is important in considering the development of live action role-play. Whereas early forms of larp tended to feature detailed rule sets (stemming from the heavily rule-based design of the acclaimed fantasy role-play game, *Dungeons & Dragons*), as players began to explore the possibility of playing out fantasy narratives in a fully embodied fashion, the structures of rules have given way to more *paidic* forms of play. Subsequently, Nordic larp has become characterised by relatively loose design structures with an increased emphasis on the creative activity of players.

In setting out my applications of Nordic larp practice in this study, three aspects of this emerging art form are particularly important. Firstly, in contrast to spectatorial art works which are created by an artist and interpreted by an audience, larp is a co-creative activity, combining a framework offered by designers and the creativity of participants who play the work into actuality and without whom the work could not exist.[18] Secondly, larp typically does not have a conventional audience and, as a result, it must be considered as an aesthetic experience rather than an art object.[19] Thirdly, larp in the Nordic tradition values reflexivity by emphasising a conceptual frame, or *magic circle* (to borrow a term from

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[17] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. by Meyer Barash (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 27-35.
[18] Jaakko Stenros, 'Nordic Larp: Theatre, Art and Game', in *Nordic Larp*, ed. by Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros (Stockholm: Fëa Livia, 2010), pp. 300-315 (p. 303).
[19] Jaakko Stenros, 'Aesthetics of Action', *Jaakko Stenros: researcher, player, writer* (2013) <https://jaakkostenros.wordpress.com/2013/10/28/aesthetics-of-action/> [accessed 2 May 2019].

Huizinga), that separates the world of play from ordinary reality[20] and invites players to actively reflect on how the play activity might relate to the world outside the magic circle.[21] In considering larp as a form of play that might be culturally transformative, these principles are important because they establish player experience as the locus of aesthetic value and foreground the primacy of player agency in creating performance narratives of emergent uncertainty. The focus on reflexivity also emphasises the value of critical reflection that connects play experiences to wider cultural contexts, with the possibility that players might seek to effect some change in these contexts, however small, as a result of their play.

The practical components of this research were undertaken through a range of creative activities of varying length and complexity and I will now introduce the basic elements of these projects, which are described in detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The first project, which serves as the main focus of Chapter 4, was conducted with elderly service users of an adult day care centre at Haringey Community Hub in the Wood Green area of North London. Between June 2017 and March 2018, I worked with service users over several phases of activity to gather their stories and apply this research in developing a range of play activities with a primary focus on individual and collaborative story-making. This was coupled with a similar project, also discussed in Chapter 4, with elderly residents of two Sheltered Housing schemes in the London Borough of Haringey (at Cranley Dene in Highgate and Clements House in Tottenham) which took place over shorter periods between November 2017 and March 2018. The project which serves as the focus of Chapter 5, entitled Playground, was conducted as a pedagogical initiative with a group of interdisciplinary artists at Theatre Delicatessen, a creative workspace in central London. Over the course of twelve weekly sessions between March and May 2018, I worked with participants on explorations of games, larp and interactive performance, leading to the development of four original works, designed by participants. Chapter 6 draws upon a wider range of practical projects. The first of these was a week-long residency in September 2017 at Trumpington Community Orchard on

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[20] Huizinga, p.10.
[21] Stenros, 'Aesthetics of Action'.

the outskirts of Cambridge, during which I ran small-scale role-play experiments and undertook exploratory walks around the local area with the volunteers who managed the orchard as a community space. The second project was a three-month residency between June and August 2018 at the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes, organised by Arts for Health, Milton Keynes. In this project, I worked with small groups of local residents to create role-play activities that responded to the features of their environment. The final chapter also describes a second pedagogical project that followed the initial Playground, in which four of the original participants worked with me to facilitate a second iteration for a new group, which took place at Theatre Delicatessen over three weekends in September and October 2018. The latter part of the chapter offers a case study discussion of *Migrations of Cool*, a street-game about the role of artists in gentrification that I created during a residency at the Arebyte Gallery in the Hackney Wick area of East London in July 2017, which was played by small groups of artists.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

As I have previously indicated, claims for the emancipatory potential of participatory art have been challenged by scholars of fine art and performance and the philosophy of Jacques Rancière has provided an important point of reference for critiques of this kind. His book *The Emancipated Spectator* delivers a sceptical analysis of the ambition to empower spectators by shaking them out of their supposedly passive state. Instead, Rancière proposes that the spectator does not need to be emancipated since she is always actively observing and interpreting the work before her.[22] Consequently, her autonomous perception and interpretation enables her to make her own meaning without being held in thrall to the artist's intention.[23] This proposed disjuncture between artistic intent and

[22] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2009), p. 13.
[23] I use the female pronoun here because Rancière does so in his discussion of the emancipated spectator.

spectatorial autonomy is described by Rancière as the 'aesthetic cut', a radical departure from the idea that an artwork expresses artistic intention to an observer, towards a vision of interpretive emancipation that cannot be controlled by authorial hegemony.[24]

The concept of the aesthetic cut forms a core component of Rancière's wider argument that the 'representational regime', in which artistic intention imposes itself on an audience through communicative signification, should be rejected. His alternative proposal is for an 'aesthetic regime' that preserves the autonomy of both the artwork and the spectator so that artistic *poiesis* (the making of an art work and the intentions that stimulated it) does not impinge upon the autonomous freedom of spectatorial *aisthesis* (the process by which audience members interpret the work in question).[25] Rancière's argument for emancipated spectatorship links with his theorisation of the 'redistribution of the sensible'. This term can be described as an interpretive reordering of the forms and concepts that are perceptible through the senses. In other words, the sensible, or everything that can be perceived through sense, can be redistributed, escaping hierarchical distributions enacted by figures of power. By way of example, Rancière discusses the writing of the nineteenth century joiner Gabriel Gauny who, whilst laying the floor in the house of his higher-class employer, observes the scene before him and imagines himself to be the occupier, suspending the labour of his arms to enjoy gazing out of his window. According to Rancière, this action effects a redistribution of sensible forms since the 'divorce between the labouring arms and the floating gaze introduces the body of a worker into a new configuration of the sensible; it overthrows the "right" relationship between what a body "can" do and what it cannot'.[26] Essentially, Rancière's contention is that Gauny's gaze reappropriates the sensible forms of his immediate environment, enabling him to escape his hierarchical designation as a 'worker' to claim, albeit temporarily, a social role that does not belong to him.

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[24] Rancière, *Emancipated*, p. 82.
[25] Rancière, *Emancipated,* pp. 69-70.
[26] Rancière, *Emancipated*, p. 71.

Rancière's scepticism towards the artistic impulse to offer participatory agency provides an important provocation for this research. In contrast to his emphasis on autonomous spectatorship of art, which implies a relatively isolated perceptual position for each individual, the epistemological framework of this study is social constructionism. This system of knowledge posits that our sense of reality is shaped by intersubjective exchanges between individual human subjects that lead to the emergence of shared cultural values. In other words, the social construction of culture involves a reciprocal relationship between individuals and the social groupings in which they participate, whereby individuals have their personal values and practices shaped by relational exhanges, whilst simultaneously impacting the collective cultures of social constellations.[27] Consequently, this thesis offers a consideration of cultural transformation that combines the individual and the collective, interrogating how social agents sculpt their cultural particulars in relation with one another, progressively constructing and reconstructing the shared cultural values of social groups as they do so.

The work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu provides a valuable lens through which the social construction of culture can be analysed. Bourdieu's field theory proposes that individuals are equipped with various forms of capital which can be applied in fields of social experience, and his key concept of *habitus*, which can be described as the ability of agents to deploy their capitals in a specific field, offers a theoretical tool for understanding how conditioning factors enable and constrain individuals in the social contexts that they occupy.[28] Regarding the first of my subsidiary research questions, which focuses on how play can be designed in response to the cultural particularity of players, I have found Bourdieu's concept of habitus to be extremely useful in considering how the capitals and cultural vantage points of individuals might be transformed through play. A key aspect of field theory, which stands in opposition to Rancière's focus on autonomy, is

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[27] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1991).
[28] Michael Grenfell, 'Working with *habitus* and *field*: The logic of Bourdieu's practice', in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: settling accounts and developing alternatives,* ed. by Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 14-27.

that it is relational. In other words, although human beings may be born with certain genetically innate characteristics, relational exchanges in social groups are fundamental in progressively shaping their habitus.[29] Consequently, the notion that relationality might progressively alter the habitus suggests that cultural changeability may be enabled by play as individuals forge new relational connections and thereby develop new capitals.

There are strong corollaries between field theory and the previously articulated system analysis which lies at the heart of many game design processes. In the same way that systems in games contain *objects* with *attributes* and *internal relationships* within an inhabited *environment*, a field serves as a conceptual context (environment) for agents (objects) with capitals (attributes) who engage in relational exchanges (internal relationships) that condition how their habitus can be applied to pursue goals. A common criticism of Bourdieu's theory is his apparent tendency to affirm social determinism,[30] but his work does acknowledge that disruptions to habitual patterns can serve as triggers for possible habitus alteration.[31] Again, this is mirrored in systems theory by the concept of resilience, which describes the moment when a system, placed under strain, can undergo a radical transformation and fundamentally re-order its relational composition.[32] By combining field theory with systems thinking, therefore, it is possible to conceive flexible game frameworks in which disruptions might lead to resilience and relational reconfiguration. This, in turn, might precipitate an altered process of social construction, prompting changes in individual perceptions of social reality that open the potential for the transformation of shared cultural values within social groups.

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[29] Diane Reay, 'From the theory of practice to the practice of theory: working with Bourdieu in research in higher education choice', in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: settling accounts and developing alternatives*, ed. by Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 75-86.
[30] Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'The Reality of Reduction: The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu', in *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction and the Problem of Reason* (London: Verso Books, 1995), pp. 128-217 (pp. 146-186).
[31] Reay, pp. 79-80.
[32] Carl Folke, 'Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social-ecological systems analyses', *Global Environmental Change*, 16:3 (2006), 253-267.

The second of my subsidiary research questions is focused on the relationship between documentation and pedagogy and the philosophy of Jacques Rancière has offered a useful provocation in approaching this question. Rancière's theories of education make the radical claim that all students must be considered to have equal intelligences that are also considered equal to that of the pedagogue. This proposition is geared towards a vision of emancipated studentship that frees students from pedagogical inculcation by a teacher, enabling them to form their own interpretations of the world,[33] in the same way that the emancipated spectator forms her own interpretation of an artwork. This notion of an *a priori* assumption of equality as the basis for emancipated learning can be problematised, however, by assessing the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose studies of play in childhood learning suggest that development cannot occur in conditions of equality. In his discussion of environmental factors, he argues that a child's learning is necessarily enabled and constrained by the relative capacities of other individuals in their vicinity. With regard to parental influences, Vygotsky describes the presence of a fully developed adult as the 'ideal form' from which children acquire knowledge through imitative performance. In the absence of this ideal form, the child will simply fail to develop, even if they have no impediments to their physical or mental faculties.[34] In other words, the child will only develop new capabilities by imitating other individuals with greater, or diversified, capacities, which suggests that an inherent inequality of capital affordances is fundamental to learning.

The imitative nature of learning that Vygotsky articulates foregrounds the value of relational sociality in education. Whereas Rancière asserts that autonomy prevents the hierarchical ranking of differing levels of intelligence,[35] Vygotsky's theories suggest that learning cannot take place without social interactions that enable imitative performances. The

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[33] Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. by Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).
[34] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'The Problem of the Environment', in *The Vygotsky Reader*, ed. by René van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner, trans. by Theresa Prout and René van der Veer (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), pp. 338-354 (p. 349).
[35] Rancière, *Emancipated*, p. 11.

fundamental importance of relational sociality lies at the heart of Vygotsky's influential concept of the zone of proximal development, which offers a model for understanding the degree to which an individual can learn independently and the degree to which they must have the support of others to develop specific capabilities.[36] The zone of proximal development has proved extremely useful in approaching the practical work linked to my second subsidiary question, offering a framework for considering how social play provides a context for co-creative learning, as players engage in collaborative performances and develop new capacities through relational connectivity. Beyond his emphasis on the relational sociality and implicit inequality of learning processes, Vygotsky's work on the function of language has been influential in this study. He argues that as children develop, their use of language progresses from external use (for verbal communication with others) towards internal use,[37] as individuals, effectively, talk to themselves. The inner voice is significant in the context of play, because it provides a tool for individuals to interpret their actions and Vygotsky argues that the development of internal language use marks the point at which individuals are able to think conceptually, beyond the concrete limitations of their immediate surroundings.[38] In the context of a study about the culturally transformative potential of play, therefore, the internal voice can be understood as a vital component of reflexivity, through which players can volitionally adapt their individual perspectives and practices to reshape the social construction of cultures.

The third of my subsidiary research questions further interrogates the issue of reflexivity, exploring how aesthetic compositions of space and time in play might support the reflexive agency of players. This question is, again, stimulated by Rancière's philosophy, specifically his concept of the redistribution of the sensible which visualises an aesthetic, and concurrently

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[36] Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, ed. by Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner and Ellen Souberman, trans. by Alexander R. Luria, Martin López-Morillas, Michael Cole and James V. Wertsch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 84-91.
[37] Lev S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, ed. and trans. by Alex Kozulin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 86-88.
[38] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'The Problem of the cultural development of the child', in *The Vygotsky Reader*, ed. by René van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner, trans. by Theresa Prout and René van der Veer (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), pp. 57-72 (pp. 58-59).

political, reordering of the sensible forms that dismantles hierarchically organised power structures. Given that this project investigates how play might enable cultural transformation, the notion of pursuing a redistribution of the sensible through play is highly attractive, seemingly offering scope for profound change through reordering of the sensible forms that make up the world. I contend, however, that Rancière's combined emphasis on equality and autonomy undermines his radical, emancipatory intent. The *a priori* assumption of equality expunges the variable capitals that individuals have acquired over time. Moreover, the emphasis on autonomy appears to undermine the relational social space that is fundamental to learning. Consequently, I argue that Rancière's theory offers an aesthetics of immediacy, emphasising the kairos of instantaneous time and an isolated space that is limited to what is immediately proximal. This spatio-temporal immediacy limits transformative potential by excluding depth perspective on time beyond the present and curtailing intersubjective relationality in space. In response, I have drawn upon the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza to develop an alternative theoretical framework for my enquiries, based on the pursuit of rational reflexivity in spatio-temporal perception.

Spinoza's theory of affects asserts that the primary endeavour of all humans is to persevere in being, leading them to seek out 'joy' through emancipatory affects that increase their powers of action and avoid the 'sadness' of disabling affects that diminish it.[39] Spinoza asserts that although we are most strongly affected by events in the spatio-temporal present, our power of acting is aided by the rational endeavour to seek out a broader plurality of affects. Essentially, the ability of beings to persevere is grounded in their power, or *potentia*, to be affected and to affect others in a great many ways.[40] The process of giving and receiving a diverse range of affects depends, I suggest, on a social relationality that enables affective exchange between beings of differential capacities, in clear contrast with Rancière's valorisations of equality and autonomy. Regarding spatiality, whereas Rancière's emphasis on autonomy suggests a relatively isolated

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[39] Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 31.
[40] Sharp, p. 107.

space, Spinoza's advocacy of maximising the diversity of affects that an individual can receive implies an expansion of relational social space. In other words, as space becomes increasingly expansive, enabling varied affective connections, the *potentia* of the beings receiving these affects also expands. Regarding temporality, Rancière's focus on equality necessarily elides the implicitly unequal cultural particulars that are drawn from past experience, which seems to expunge the prior subjectivity of individuals. By contrast, Spinoza asserts that the power of rational thought depends on the ability of individuals to think beyond the present to combine mental images of past and future[41] in what I conceive as a *depth* perspective on time, which again provides an increased diversity of affects that strengthens the power of action. Taken together, this spatio-temporal analysis contrasts an aesthetics of immediacy, in the case of Rancière's work, with temporal depth and a more expansive spatial horizon in the case of Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza's ideas have subsequently informed my practical work, prompting me to construct activities in which participants can transcend spatio-temporal immediacy by reflexively imagining past and future, and forging a wider array of intersubjective connections to strengthen their reflexive agency. My contention is that play is an affect engine, and although there are clearly forms of agonistic play that can produce disabling affects, the enabling affective exchanges which occur in many types of play can enhance the *potentia* of beings, diversifying their power to affect social others in a great many ways and increasing the potential for transformations to occur in the shared cultural values and practices of social groups.

In sum, the theories of Bourdieu, Vygotsky and Spinoza provide the conceptual impetus for this study, combining the structural aspects of social conditioning that define the habitus, valuable psychological insights on the impact of environmental factors in processes of learning, and the more corporeally focused notion of affect. By pursuing the insertion of Spinozist philosophy within the parameters of Bourdieu's theories, I start from the premise that although conditioning factors of environmental context shape

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[41] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometric Order*, ed. by G.H.R. Parkinson, trans. by Andrew Boyle and G.H.R. Parkinson (London: Everyman Classics, 1992), p. 183, part IV, prop. LXII.

the habitus of individuals, deterministic reproduction of the existing structures of social groups is not inevitable. Rather, I contend that the affective diversification advocated by Spinoza, which builds new forms of relationality and disrupts ossified patterns, can lead beings towards a reflexive recognition of their potential to undertake a diverse range of affective actions that can transform social constellations and reshape the the ongoing construction of human cultures.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Having described the theoretical frameworks that have informed my research, this section outlines the structure of this thesis with a brief articulation of my main findings. I begin with a chapter reviewing recent relevant literature and creative practice in theatre and performance, game studies, play anthropology and fine art. Although this study is situated within performance studies, I argue that understandings of participatory performance can be strengthened by greater awareness of how games are designed as systems that combine structural constraints alongside affordances that enable player agency and emergent narrative potential. Explorations of play anthropology also suggest that an appreciation of play as a function of human development can support applications of playful activities within participatory performance works, while discussions of participatory art promote a reconceptualization of aesthetic value, emphasising the experiential qualities of the work, rather than its properties as an art object.

Following my review of literature and creative practice, a chapter on methodology sets out my approach to this study as research-led practice in participatory performance. This chapter considers recent works on practice research in the arts, supplemented with insights from Participatory Action Research in the social sciences that provide valuable ideas for working co-creatively with participants to design, enact and document research activities. It is important to stress at the outset that I do not consider my work to be a form of PAR, but I have used PAR theories to define my approach in contrast to more stratified models of research in which concepts

are tested *on* participants, rather than being developed through collaboration *with* them. This chapter also articulates my use of creative practice as a *method* of research rather than a research outcome. In other words, my practical activities are described as methods for stimulating theoretical insights that yield a research output which is presented in written form.

The remainder of the thesis comprises three extended chapters that detail specific stages of my research. Chapter 4 discusses my projects with elderly service users at Haringey Community Hub and residents of the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes, linking the practical work with Bourdieu's concept of habitus to consider the possibility of designing play in response to the cultural particularity of participants. Chapter 4 also considers the potential (and limitations) of field theory and a systems-based game design approach in making works that invite players to interrogate their existing cultural values. Chapter 5 focuses on the Playground project alongside analysis of Vygotsky's pedagogical theories, prior to a consideration of the role of performance documentation in ongoing learning processes. My discussion of play documentation problematises the ways in which documentations of art (and research) are often instrumentalised by the artist/researcher to serve their own agenda instead of enabling participants to represent their own experience. I subsequently offer alternative propositions for how documentation through memory and performative reiteration might promote player agency and further the culturally transformative potential of play. Chapter 6 includes descriptions of practical work undertaken at Trumpington Community Orchard, Peartree Bridge, Hackney Wick and in the second iteration of the Playground project, with a specific focus on how aesthetic compositions of space and time in play can strengthen the *potentia* of players. Discussions of these projects focus on reflexive agency in play, describing my endeavour to create diverse spaces of affective exchange and my explorations of how the spatio-temporal aesthetics of play might enhance opportunities for a culturally transformative redistribution of the sensible.

1.5 Contributions to Knowledge

The primary contribution to knowledge that this study makes is the presentation of an alternative to the aesthetics of immersion in participatory performance. In contrast to the immediacy of space and time that is valorised by some scholars of immersive theatre,[42] I argue for an aesthetics of spatio-temporal reflexivity. In making this argument, it is not my intention to dismiss the immediate pleasures of play, but my research suggests that an expanded perspective on space combined with depth perspective on time can prompt reflexive thinking that enables individuals to encounter a wider affective diversity that strengthens their power of action. My considerations of spatio-temporal reflexivity yield a conceptual model for play design that I term *anchorage-leverage*. This model is based on the propostion that although the constraints of habitus can anchor individuals within ossified patterns of activity, a more reflexive perspective on space and time can enhance their affective capacities, enabling them to leverage alterations in their cultural values and practices. With regard to play design, this study contributes new ideas on how participatory performance might move away from linear structures that impose narrative pre-determination. My investigations explore system-based approaches that make player agency and emergent uncertainty central to the design of games, but rather than seeing systems as top-down impositions of a designer, I propose a model of participant-led design in which the players themselves bring systems into formation from the ground-up. This is a model of play design which, ultimately, views the artist as a framework provider within which the content and form of play can emerge from player creativity.

A core focus of this study is designing play in response to the cultural particularity of players and this contributes new ideas on how aesthetic value in participatory art is perceived. I argue that, in contrast with conventional art theories that focus on the properties of art objects, the subjective experience of players is the locus of aesthetic value in participatory works. Consequently, with regard to the documentation of such

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[42] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

works, I propose that players can take the lead in self-documentation, since their experience of the work is fundamental to its aesthetic value. My focus on participatory self-documentation suggests a further contribution to knowledge in the relationship between performance documentation and pedagogy. In the same way that this study questions the hegemony of the singular artist, I question forms of education that privilege the mastery of the pedagogue. By arguing for participant agency in the recording or remembering of play, I propose a cyclical process of participatory culture whereby players can become designers of their own experiences and subsequently apply self-documentations of play to teach methods of play design to others. In other words, by inviting players to claim agency in recording their experience and passing these records on to others, the culturally transformative impact of play can expand to create a wider circle of players and potential play designers.

1.6 Summary

In sum, this thesis questions how the play of participatory performance play can offer emergent potential for cultural transformation. My practical research, informed by existing knowledge in performance studies, game studies and fine art, and stimulated by theoretical insights from Bourdieu, Vygotsky and Spinoza contributes new ideas for how play might be designed in response to the habitus of players, investigating how strategies of spatio-temporal reflexivity might enable them to transcend the anchorage of established cultural values and leverage transformations in the aesthetic and political composition of their world. My discussion of documentation assesses how the recording or remembering of play experiences might impact upon the ongoing social construction of cultural values, while explorations of play pedagogy question how the tools of participatory art can be disseminated by players to further the culturally transformative potential of play. My epistemological foundation of social constructionism asserts the primacy of intersubjective exchanges in shaping the cultural values of individuals within social groups. Although such exchanges might reaffirm ossified perspectives and practices, I contend that

the pursuit of spatio-temporal reflexivity in play can diversify the affective *potentia* of players and support conscious awareness of their resilient changeability. By cultivating reflexive perspectives on space and time, I propose that the play of participatory performance might enhance the potential for reshaping individual perceptions of the world, whilst simultaneously strengthening the capacities of individuals to transform the cultural values of wider social groups, so that players, as active agents, can claim a stake in constructing their collective futures.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature and Creative Practice

This study is concerned with the culturally transformative potential of play in participatory performance. The current chapter contextualises this research within the theatre and performance culture of the United Kingdom, which has seen a proliferation, over the last two decades, of various types of interactive and immersive theatre that invite audience members to become active participants in the work. The emergence of these artistic forms has led to increased attention on how participation in performance might confer creative agency to audience members. Considerations of games and play are often used to describe how interactive performances reconceive audience members as players,[1] but I suggest that understandings of games and play can be productively expanded to inform participatory performance designs that enhance the creative agency of participants. In my discussions of works by theatre scholars including Gareth White, Adam Alston, Josephine Machon and Rose Biggin, alongside the previously cited companies, Punchdrunk, Blast Theory and Coney, I suggest that participatory theatre practitioners and scholars tend to view audience participation in theatre in terms of interaction with fixed performance structures, often retaining a focus on linear narrative designs that limit participatory agency. I subsequently discuss ideas from game studies and play anthropology to supplement these debates. Drawing on the work of game studies theorists including Jesper Juul and Mary Flanagan and play scholars Brian Sutton-Smith and Thomas Henricks, I argue that understandings of player agency in games, and the exploratory possibilities of *paidic* play, can enhance the potential of participatory performance to offer culturally transformative opportunities.

In addition to considering games and play, this chapter discusses theories of participatory aesthetics that have emerged in fine art discourse from writers such as Grant Kester and Falk Heinrich. I argue that insights

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[1] Alysia Judge, '"Playable shows are the future": what Punchdrunk theatre learned from games', *The Guardian* (2019) <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2019/feb/08/playable-shows-are-the-future-what-punchdrunk-theatre-learned-from-video-games> [accessed 8 February 2019].

from participatory art can shift the attention of participatory performance scholarship from the aesthetics of immersion and the aesthetics of the art object towards an understanding of aesthetic experience that is sensory, agential and reflexive. This focus on reflexivity, alongside participatory agency, serves to expand the prevalent emphasis on sensory immersion in participatory performance, which can, I suggest, undercut the ability of participants to exercise reflexive criticality, and thereby impinge on their agential capacities. In sum, this review of literature and creative practice sets out an approach to participatory performance that foregrounds the insights of games and play scholars in creating works that support participatory agency, combined with an experiential aesthetics informed by fine art scholarship that promotes the abilities of participants to reflexively generate their own sense of meaning as the makers and interpreters of the work.

2.1 Play in Theatre and Performance Studies

The expansion of participatory forms of performance has been accompanied by a growing recognition that performance scholars and practitioners often disregard the particularity of audience members. Helen Freshwater argues that the audience is often viewed, not as a collection of individuals, but as a relatively undifferentiated bloc,[2] while Matthew Reason claims that artistic intentions continue to dominate analyses of performance so that 'despite the development of reader or spectator focused discourses, there remains a tendency to value intention over reception in a manner that results in an erasure of actual spectators'.[3] Gareth White also argues for increased attention to the particularities of audience members in participatory theatre, recognising that aspects of social conditioning will necessarily define the types of participation that audience members can be invited to engage in. Referencing Pierre Bourdieu's theories, he argues that individual audience members have a 'horizon of participation' that limits the

[2] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[3] Matthew Reason, '*Participations* on Participation: Researching the "Active" Theatre Audience', *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 12:1 (2015), 271-280 (p. 275).

cultural affordances they bring into the theatre.[4] In other words, the habitus of any audience member is central in shaping the kind of participation they can undertake, with some individuals holding a broad horizon that equips them with a wide range of participatory affordances, while others possess a more limited horizon that might constrain participation. White is quick to resist the accusation that Bourdieu's ideas imply social determinism, however, and makes a compelling argument that it is possible for audience-participants to apply tactical variations within structural constraints to find new kinds of emergent potential. Drawing on the writing of social scientist Sharon Hays, he argues that social structures in specific fields, like the field of theatre, are in continuous dialogue with the agency of individuals:

> Agency explains the creation, recreation and frustration of social structures; agency is made possible by the enabling factors of social structures at the same time as it is limited within the bounds of structural constraint.[5]

White's proposition is that the structural conditioning that shapes the habitus does not preclude agency, it enables it, equipping individuals with a range of tools, or capitals, with which they can negotiate variable pathways within the limitations of the systems they occupy.

A prominent feature of White's argument for agential flexibility within structure is his focus on the importance of intersubjective exchange in the social experience of theatre. His proposal is that the subjectivity of audience members is both the material and the medium of participation as individuals express their subjective viewpoints in their relational engagements with other individuals.[6] White's emphasis on intersubjective exchange is elaborated by discussion of Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of *autopoiesis* within the theatre experience. Fischer-Lichte claims that members of an audience generate self-perpetuating affects in what she describes as an 'autopoietic feedback loop', whereby individuals are affected by the experience and affect others, which in turn produces new affective responses

[4] Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 56-59.
[5] Sharon Hays, 'Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture', *Sociological Theory*, 12:1 (1994), 57-72 (p. 62), cited in White, *Audience Participation*, pp. 53-54.
[6] White, *Audience Participation*, p. 25.

in a continuous chain of intersubjective responsiveness.[7] White's application of Fischer-Lichte's ideas is useful, for my purposes, because in contrast to Rancière's insistence on isolated perceptual autonomy for the emancipated spectator, he promotes the notion that the theatre is fundamentally social. In a recent article, he argues that whereas Rancière primarily values singular responses of the spectator to an equally singular 'pure text' and 'appears to object' to intersubjective 'encounters with other intelligences',[8] in the social event of theatre, the subjectivity of individuals is shaped 'in the environment and in relation with other people'.[9] This focus on the importance of intersubjectivity is shared by Nicola Shaughnessy, whose discussion of mirror neurons in the audience experience makes a convincing case that, within the social space of theatre, individuals receive and generate affects in relation with each other.[10] Subsequently, this will inevitably create some alteration in their habitus and some alteration, however small, in their potential to find agential flexibility within the constraints of their horizon of experience.

The notion that structure can coincide with (and indeed support) agency in participatory performance is a concept that performance scholars often appear to discount. In a recent article about National Theatre Wales' outdoor promenade production *For Mountain, Sand & Sea*, Kirsty Sedgman appears to draw a dichotomy between the freedom for audiences to make 'open-ended explorations' and the constraints of 'structural limitations', creating an impression that the more structured a participatory work is in its design, the less agency an audience participant will have.[11] By contrast, Sruti Bala offers an account of the balance between structure and agency in describing applications of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre practices. Citing Michel De Certeau, who champions 'tactics' as flexible 'ways of operating'

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[7] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 38-39, cited in White, *Audience Participation*, pp. 161-162.
[8] Gareth White, 'Theatre in the "Forest of Things and Signs"', *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, 4:1 (2016), 21-33 (p. 27).
[9] White, 'Theatre in the "Forest of Things and Signs"', p. 23.
[10] Nicola Shaughnessy, *Applying Performance: Live art, socially engaged theatre and affective performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 13.
[11] Kirsty Sedgman, '"Ladies and Gentlemen Follow Me, Please Put on Your Beards": Risk, Rules and Audience Engagement in National Theatre Wales', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 27:2 (2017), 158-176 (pp. 159-160).

within the constraints of governmental 'strategies',[12] Bala argues that binary oppositions between 'bad' top-down organisation and 'good' bottom-up participation are overly simplistic, claiming that it is possible for agential flexibility to be found in spite of structural constraints.[13]

In considering how participatory performance might support the agency of participants, Boal's methods are important since they have served as an inspiration for many practitioners, including myself, to pursue a participatory approach. His book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, is premised on a robust critique of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, setting out an argument that his theatrical theories rhetorically reinforce dominant ideologies through emotionally manipulative strategies that guide the perceptions of spectators.[14] Boal's response to this rhetorical coercion was the creation of Forum Theatre, which invited spectators to become *spect-actors* in the drama by stepping into scenes of oppression and attempting to change them. Although there is much to applaud, I suggest, in this emancipatory intent, I see a limitation in Boal's Forum Theatre approach (which remains among the most widely used of his techniques) because it is focused on changing outcomes in the narrative of a protagonist,[15] utilising a somewhat reductive problem/solution binary.[16] This focus on the protagonist's journey as they seek to overcome a problem is limiting as it elides the complexity of social systems in which multiple agents (all of whom are their own protagonist) pursue a wider multiplicity of desires.[17] Consequently, despite the fact that it can produce variable outcomes, Forum Theatre remains fixed in a linearity,

[12] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), p. xix.
[13] Sruti Bala, 'The Art of Unsolicited Participation', in *Performing Antagonism: Theatre, Performance & Radical Democracy,* ed. by Tony Fisher and Eve Katsouraki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 273-287 (pp. 283-284).
[14] Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. by Charles A. McBride, Maria Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. xi-xxi.
[15] Doug Paterson, 'Putting the "Pro" in Protagonist: Paulo Friere's Contribution to Our Understanding of Forum Theatre', in *'Come Closer': Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. by Toby Emert and Ellie Friedland (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 9-20 (pp. 14-15).
[16] Raphi Soifer, 'Last-Minute Theatre: Bringing Boal Behind Bars', in *'Come Closer': Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. by Toby Emert and Ellie Friedland (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 129-140 (pp. 131-132).
[17] Paul Dwyer, 'Though This Be Madness…? The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy', *Applied Theatre Reseacher / IDEA Journal*, 8 (2007), 1-12 (pp. 7-9). <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.600.1109&rep=rep1&type=pdf
> [accessed 1 July 2019].

rather than allowing for a more dispersed series of performance actions driven by a broader plurality of players.

In a similar vein to the constricting linearity of Forum Theatre, I suggest that many contemporary theatre makers who invite audiences to become players encounter similar limitations in their design approach, with a tendency to remain fixed in linear narrative structures. Gareth White, for example, proposes that participatory theatre makers can be understood as 'procedural authors' who construct a sequence of interactive episodes, then invite audience members to engage in a performative 'process' that sets the authored procedure into action.[18] Procedural authorship can be understood as a series of pre-authored units of performance within which there are gaps that invite various forms of audience interaction. White's clearest articulation of procedural authorship is drawn from a detailed description of his own work as a facilitator of a theatre workshop about bullying in schools with the London-based theatre in education company Armadillo Theatre.[19] His account of this workshop sets out the combination of pre-scripted scenes, performed by professional actors, alongside interactive sections in which the students are invited to take on the basic role of children in the playground. As the 'procedure' is enacted as 'process', it becomes clear that the participatory action of the students is carefully orchestrated to lead towards a pre-determined conclusion in the narrative, which suggests that standing up to bullies with physical aggression never solves the problem. What is striking about this account of procedural authorship is the fact that White is open about its rhetorical intentions, and although it could be argued that dissuading children from responding to bullying with violence is laudable, the clearly rhetorical structure of a procedural authorship that uses audience participation to reach a pre-determined ending seems analogous to the rhetorical strategies of Aristotle, as described by Boal. Effectively, what is at stake here is the fundamental question of participatory agency. White's discussion of this topic is problematic, in my view, as he suggests that agency in participatory theatre is about the feeling of being

[18] White, *Audience Participation*, p. 31.
[19] White, *Audience Participation*, pp. 65-71.

able to pursue an intention or goal.[20] In other worlds, according to White, if participants, like the children in the fictional playground scenario, have the impression that they can achieve something within the framework of the drama, they have agency, even if the design structure of procedural authorship precludes this. There appears to be a disjuncture, therefore, between White's arguments for agential variability in his discussion of Bourdieu's field theory, alongside Fischer-Lichte's concept of autopoietic feedback loops, and his own theory of procedural authorship, which offers only qualitative variability and the appearance of agency within a linear narrative design that is quantitatively pre-determined.

The tension between the semblance of agency and the actual preclusion of it is common, I argue, in contemporary interactive theatre practices. In a recent article describing their acclaimed piece, *Hotel Medea*, Persis Jade Maravala and Jorge Lopes Ramos describe forms of 'interactive gameplay' that participants are invited to engage in, such as hide and seek, which is played by audience members whilst pretending to be Medea's children. Although this play might be extremely enjoyable, it is questionable as to whether it can be agential play, since the outcomes of the game cannot change anything within the fixed linearity of the Greek myth. Irrespective of how well the children hide, they cannot escape death, because fate has pre-determined it. Consequently, it is apt that Maravala and Ramos share White's argument that agency is a matter of perception. They state that they are seeking to provide audiences with 'the *experience* of agency as opposed to *actual* agency…the real sensation of empowerment, even if they don't actually shape the narrative',[21] which again presents a vision of agency in participatory performance that is limited.

If Gareth White's procedural authorship suggests a rhetorical affirmation of the cultural values of the author(s) through the enactment of a pre-determined procedure by members of an audience, Adam Alston suggests that a relatively subtle rhetorical affirmation of dominant values is

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[20] White, *Audience Participation*, p. 64.
[21] Persis Jade Maravala and Jorge Lopes Ramos, 'A Dramaturgy of Participation: Participatory Rituals, Immersive Environments, and Interactive Gameplay in *Hotel Medea*', in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance*, ed. by James Frieze (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 151-169 (p. 167).

produced by immersive theatre practices. He argues that immersive works in the United Kingdom often implicitly affirm neoliberal ideology by inviting audience members to become productive consumers through their participation in the event.[22] Alston offers the example of Punchdrunk, who have, in his view, become exemplary creative entrepreneurs through a range of private collaborations.[23] He also claims that this entrepreneurial spirit has fed into the company's artistic output, as audience-participants are invited to be productive and consume the vast array of delights within their immersive worlds through entrepreneurial exploration.[24] The overlap of performance and commerce is also neatly articulated in a recent article by Meghan O'Hara which suggests, in discussing the work of Punchdrunk, that the productive consumption of audiences extends beyond the performance itself. O'Hara argues that the invitation to purchase artefacts from concluded productions perpetuates the experience of the work and also serves to advertise the company that created it as audience members display purchased artefacts as mementos.[25] O'Hara's argument that audience members are co-opted into the commercial operations of Punchdrunk resonates with Alston's suggestion that the company's work can be seen to exploit the affective labour of its audiences. He argues that the scenography of Punchdrunk productions provides richly affective landscapes, but goes on to claim that the affects which are produced by audience participants are, effectively, appropriated as aesthetic material, becoming part of the scenography to be consumed by other immersants.[26] A striking example of affect appropriation can be found in *The Black Diamond*, Punchdrunk's collaboration with Stella Artois Black, in which audience-participants were invited to playfully explore an immersive party world whilst consuming the branded beverage, effectively turning the audience of productive consumers, in Alston's view, into unpaid brand ambassadors.[27]

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[22] Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetics, Politics and Productive Participation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[23] Alston, *Beyond Immersive*, pp. 121-126.
[24] Alston, *Beyond Immersive*, p. 129.
[25] Meghan O'Hara, 'Experience Economies: Immersion, Disposability, and Punchdrunk Theatre', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 27:4 (2017), 481-496 (p. 492).
[26] Alston, *Beyond Immersive*, pp. 157-158.
[27] Alston, *Beyond Immersive*, pp. 125-127.

An even more stark example of potentially exploitative practices can be found in the immersive performance work of Secret Cinema, a London-based company, formed in 2006 by Fabian Riggell, who stage highly popular screenings of films within interactive performance environments. In an article on Secret Cinema's immersive screening of *Moulin Rouge*, media studies scholar Helen Kennedy describes how audience members in possession of a lower cost ticket, described as 'creatures of the underworld', were required to perform certain actions within the event. Kennedy states that the 'creatures' were instructed prior to the screening that 'they must be compliant with the instructions and must not break any of the rules of engagement and participation' and that if they failed to comply, they would be asked to leave, which effectively turns their participation into unpaid performance labour.[28] Alston's interest in affect appropriation has also led him to analyse the work of Secret Cinema. In his recent article, 'Tell No One' (which is the central marketing slogan of the Secret Cinema brand), he argues that the culture of secrecy is commodified and spectacularised, creating a sense of exclusivity (which is reflected in the ticket price). Alston subsequently suggests that audience members are implicitly invited to perform their exclusivity by sharing the secret (the title of the film in question) which immediately co-opts them into the marketing strategy of the company.[29]

Despite the fact many immersive works seem to appropriate the affective labour of their audiences, Alston maintains, drawing on the ideas of Jacques Rancière, that audience-participants can preserve their emancipated autonomy by engaging in an introspective manner with the affects that occur in their bodies and embodied brains.[30] Similarly, Keren Zaiontz, in her consideration of narcissistic participation in the work of Punchdrunk, suggests that even if participants are aware that they might be exploited by the design of the work, they are willing to acquiesce provided

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[28] Helen W. Kennedy, '"Join a cast of 1000s, to sing and dance in the Revolution": the Secret Cinema "Activist" brand and the commodification of affect within "experience economies"', *Participations*, 14:2 (2017), 682-696 (p. 691).
[29] Adam Alston, '"Tell no-one": Secret Cinema and the Paradox of Secrecy', in *Performance and Participation: Practices, Audiences, Politics*, ed. by Anna Harpin and Helen Nicholson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 145-163 (p. 153).
[30] Alston, *Beyond Immersive*, pp. 55-56.

that they are able to pursue individuated one-of-a-kind experiences.[31] The autonomous introspection and narcissistic self-absorption that Alston and Zaiontz describe contrast sharply with the highly social descriptions of intersubjective exchange articulated by Gareth White. Whereas White discusses the potential of participants to take affective action towards each other, Alston's discussion of affect focuses much more on the affects that autonomous individuals receive and appears to omit recognition of the social and intersubjective aspects of participatory performance, which are vital, for my purposes, in considering how alterations of the habitus might occur.

The valorisation of autonomous experience in immersive theatre is further evidenced by Daniel Schulze's analysis of the form. He argues that in a world that appears to be increasingly superficial, immersive theatre audiences seek out what appear to be 'authentic' experiences. Whilst recognising that immersive experiences are often highly orchestrated and frequently impose stringent controls on participant agency, Schulze claims that this creative form is 'the "absolute fake" that is able to deliver "the real thing"',[32] arguing that the feeling of apparent authenticity can be arrived at through the individual experience of sensory affects,[33] much like Alston's emphasis on introspective experience. The point that I wish to make here is less a matter of what is 'real' and what is 'fake' but rather the tendency of Alston and Schulze to prioritise singularised subjectivity. As I have argued in relation to Spinoza's philosophy, *potentia* is strengthened by affective diversification through intersubjective exchange. Consequently, although it might seem appealing to seek individual emancipation or 'authentic' experiences through autonomous engagement with immersive works, ultimately, in my view, an autonomous break can only weaken participant agency.

In contrast to the arguments for autonomous, subjective experience that are noted above, Jospehine Machon argues that immersive theatre is a

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[31] Keren Zaiontz, 'Narcissistic Spectatorship in Immersive and One-on-One Performance', *Theatre Journal*, 66:3 (2014), 405-425 (p. 425).
[32] Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 31, cited in Daniel Schulze, *Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance: Make it Real* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 140.
[33] Schulze, p. 176.

highly communitarian art form that offers democratic agency to its participants.[34] Machon claims that immersive theatre has become popular in contemporary arts culture because of the alienating impact of all-pervasive technology in our lives. In response to this alienation, she suggests that immersive theatre promotes intimacy and immediacy, offering the affective richness of haptic tactility. Drawing upon the work of Nicolas Bourriaud, who proposed 'relational aesthetics' in the late 1990s as a term to describe art works of social conviviality that escape technological alienation, Machon argues that immersive works create an 'interstice', separated from the dehumanising effects of the everyday world.[35] However, the use of the term interstice implies the creation of a space of alterity with a different set of rules, which assumes a clear framing, so that individuals who enter the interstice are aware that they are entering a separate, alternative environment. Machon, though, is keen to emphasise that works of immersive theatre frequently blur the boundaries between fictional construction and reality, referencing Allan Kaprow's argument that 'the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps as indistinct as possible'.[36] In my view, this indistinctness in the boundary between an immersive world and the 'real world' runs counter to the notion of an interstice, since it impedes the ability of participants to distinguish between 'real world' rules and the alternative rules in the interstitial space. Consequently, I suggest that this can have a disabling impact, creating uncertainty about what the participatory affordances are and where the limits of participation might lie.

Within the interstice of immersive theatre, Machon claims that there is profound potential for political transformation as individuals enter a form of *communitas*,[37] a term most closely associated with Victor Turner's description of the transition of individuals into an unstructured collective

[34] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p 144.
[35] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), pp. 16-17, cited in Machon, pp. 121-122.
[36] Allan Kaprow, 'Excerpts from "Assemblages, Environments & Happenings"', in *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. by Mariellen R. Sandford (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 235-254 (p. 235), cited in Machon, p. 31.
[37] Machon, p. 150.

through ritual performance.[38] Machon uses communitas to describe what she sees as a democratic communitarianism in immersive theatre. In discussing Machon's work, however, Schulze states that 'she remains vague as to what kind of communitas she means and in what way this communitas is established'.[39] He goes on to question the value of communitas, arguing that the uniform collectivity of masked audience members in Punchdrunk works is redolent of a 'herd of zebras, suddenly turning in one direction'.[40] The claim that the collectivism of immersive work equates to democratic practice is also contested by Anna Wilson's discussion of Punchdrunk's work. She identifies a paradox between the apparent freedom of individual spatial navigation and the collective homogeneity imposed by the company's use of masks,[41] resonating with Schulze's claim that masked audience members 'are no longer subjects who are free to voice their thoughts…they are a silent, scenery-like, exploring mass'.[42]

The apparent loss of individuated subjectivity in the 'exploring masses' that function as audience-participants in many immersive theatre works can be further explicated by Elias Canetti's writing on the dangers of crowd activity. Canetti uses the term *discharge* to describe the moment when individuals are subsumed into the crowd, casting off their individual subjectivity to become part of the mass.[43] This loss of subjectivity may be desirable in certain contexts, particularly in ritual processes, as described by Turner, but I contend that communitas, with its requirement for de-individuation of participants and its emphasis on the immediacy of action in the present moment,[44] impedes the potential for reflexivity. For Machon, immediacy, both in temporal and spatial terms is central to the aesthetic appeal of immersive theatre, and she references the total theatre strategies of

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[38] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 166-167.
[39] Schulze, p. 162.
[40] Schulze, p. 150.
[41] Anna Wilson, 'Punchdrunk, participation and the political: democratisation in *Masque of the Red Death*?', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 36:2 (2016), 159-176 (p. 166).
[42] Schulze, p. 162.
[43] Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. by Carol Stewart (New York: Continuum, 1960), pp. 17-19.
[44] Turner, *Ritual Process*, pp. 99-100.

Antonin Artaud[45] to valorise the sensation of '*praesence*' in intimate proximity to the performance and with a sense of instantaneous engagement with the action.[46] Schulze points out, however, that 'in this state of "deep involvement" traditional mechanisms of distance or even critical reflection begin to diminish or may even become obsolete'.[47] Consequently, the aesthetics of immediacy in immersive theatre, as described by Machon, limit the ability of participants to critically reflect on the action they are engaged in through subjective, recursive consideration of what has gone before, what is happening now and what they may wish to do in future.

Having thought through several aspects of immersive theatre practice, the remainder of this section considers the argument that immersive works offer participant agency and politically transformative potential through their similarities with games. In her discussion of productions by Punchdrunk, Machon claims that:

> Audience-participant-performer interactions, although carefully staged and in many ways pre-determined, allow diverse decisions to be taken and thus invite an exciting variation of interpretations to be made. As this suggests, affiliations between gaming practice and immersive theatre can clearly be drawn in Punchdrunk's work.[48]

It is difficult to make a correlation between the immersive theatre of Punchdrunk and gaming practice, however, because whereas games are built upon the notion of quantitative uncertainty of outcomes,[49] Punchdrunk performances are not susceptible to structural change led by participant actions, so there can be no uncertainty of outcome. In a 2014 interview with the Guardian newspaper, Punchdrunk director Felix Barrett gave a neat summary of the extent of agency that is afforded by the company's works. In describing his production, *The Drowned Man*, Barrett commented that 'rather than an audience member creating their own narrative, they are

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[45] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. by Victor Corti (London: Calder and Boyars, 1993), cited in Machon, pp. 29-30.
[46] Machon, pp. 43-44.
[47] Schulze, p. 134.
[48] Machon, p. 62.
[49] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 174-175.

peeling back layers of story archeologically',[50] which illustrates that although audiences are free to explore and uncover pre-prepared narratives that are architecturally embedded in the space, there is no affordance for them to influence the dramatic action that unfolds.

There are other companies that Machon includes under the immersive theatre banner who do, arguably, offer greater creative volition to participants through game-like practices, such as Coney and Blast Theory, but my experience of recent works by these companies has suggested that the story worlds they present tend to remain fixed, with little susceptibility to structural change through participant actions. In Blast Theory's *Operation Black Antler*, for example, participants are invited to assume the role of undercover police operatives, finding out information about the activities of a far-right political group, but although there is huge qualitative variability in the interactions that can occur, these interactions cannot change anything. The only concrete, constitutive action that players can take at the end of the event is to decide, through a group vote, whether to place the group under permanent surveillance. Recent work by Coney offers a somewhat different example, with works such as *Remote*, which employs a digitally mediated 'Twine' narrative structure in the mode of a Choose Your Own Adventure story. Although the design of this work does allow for quantitative variability in outcomes, the provision of agency is limited to binary choices, again through group voting, in a bifurcating narrative tree which remains linear and fixed.

Aside from Machon's work, several other theatre scholars have suggested that there are links between immersive theatre and gaming practice because immersive works, like some video games, require players to 'hunt clues' that reveal the 'hidden story'.[51] In describing her game-like experience of Punchdrunk's *Masque of the Red Death*, Rosemary Klich

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[50] Felix Barrett, interviewed in Thomas McMullan, 'The immersed audience: how theatre is taking its cue from video games', *The Guardian* (2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/may/20/how-theatre-is-taking-its-cue-from-video-games> [accessed 2 May 2019].
[51] Rosemary Klich, 'Playing a Punchdrunk Game: Immersive Theatre and Videogaming', in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance*, ed. by James Frieze (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 221-228 (p. 224).

describes her experience of clue hunting as a form of 'epistemic immersion', a term coined by game studies scholar Marie Laure Ryan, which refers to the sense of being immersed in a mystery story and caught up in 'the desire to know'.[52] Similarly, Lindsay Brandon Hunter cites game studies scholar Janet Murray's description of narrative immersion in games and links this to the immersive audience experience of 'looking for clues that will alert them to puzzles, which, when solved, yield information which can be assembled to form the game narrative'.[53] The common theme of these examples is the idea that immersive works can be described as games because they are similar to puzzles in which latent content is excavated and revealed. This approach is rooted firmly in a textual paradigm, however, in the sense that there is a latent text to be decoded, in contrast to games in which agential play is generative of emergent game states.

In considering the question of agency in game-like participatory performance, the distinguishing features of games that game studies scholars have sought to identify are instructive. Greg Costikyan describes games as 'state machines' in which the system of interrelated parts that makes up the game responds to player action to generate new game states. He contrasts state machines with puzzles, such as crosswords, arguing that although the play activity of tackling problems and making choices about which problem to solve first will have experiential variability, the fundamental structure of the puzzle does not change:

> The solution to a logic puzzle is contingent on the clues provided. The only uncertainty involved is in the solver's ability to sort through the contingencies; or to put it another way, a puzzle is static. It is not a state machine. It does not respond to input. It is not uncertain and it is not interactive.[54]

This assessment of the agential limitations of puzzles could equally be applied to the participatory performance works described above. In *Operation*

[52] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'From Narrative Games to Playable Stories: Towards a Poetics of Interactive Narrative', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 1 (2009), 43-59, cited in Klich, p. 224.
[53] Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), cited in Lindsay Brandon Hunter, 'Integrating Realities Through Immersive Gaming', in *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance*, ed. by James Frieze (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 93-102 (pp. 95-96).
[54] Greg Costikyan, *Uncertainty in Games* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 14.

Black Antler, the only uncertainty is in the participant's ability to follow the trail of clues that the actors provide, uncovering the latent story in the same way that the concealed words of a crossword are uncovered. Similarly, the bifurcating narrative trees employed by Coney are based on the release of pre-existing narrative content as players deliver collective votes, in contrast to the emergent generation of new game states through player action. Viewed in these terms, to paraphrase Costikyan, these works are not state machines. They do not respond to input. They are not uncertain, and they are not interactive. Essentially, the design structures that these pieces employ are not responsive in the manner of game systems and, therefore, they are best described as puzzles to be explored and unravelled rather than games of emergent possibility.[55]

The limited agency conferred by many immersive theatre works is highlighted by the work of Rose Biggin, who questions the assumption that participatory performance, in general, is necessarily empowering. She suggests that 'empowerment' through participation can function as an 'orthodoxy' that is often 'applied reductively and uncritically'[56] and goes on to suggest that immersive works often ignore the particularities of individuals, citing Chris Goode's claim that this type of work can exclude 'those with less confidence or less mobility or who simply aren't accustomed to a sense of access-all-areas entitlement'.[57] With regard to the experience of immersion itself, Biggin, like Schulze, notes that being subsumed within a fully immersive world can impede critical reflexivity, acknowledging that 'immersion…is characterised by a diminishing of the spectator's ability to (or their desire to attempt to) form a distanced, critical perspective…in favour of a more immediate, emotional, visceral reaction to the work'. As a result of the occlusion of reflexive potential caused by immersion, she claims that there is a 'tension between this effect and the idea of audience

[55] Jamie Harper, 'Meaningful Play: Applying game and play design practices to promote agency in participatory performance', *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 15:2 (2019) [page numbers unavailable].
[56] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 36, cited in Rose Biggin, *Immersive Theatre and Audience Experience: Space, Game and Story in the Work of Punchdrunk* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 8.
[57] Chris Goode, *The Forest and the Field: Changing Theatre in a Changing World* (London: Oberon, 2015), p. 283, cited in Biggin, p. 18.

empowerment'.[58] Biggin develops her arguments on the effects of immersion by suggesting that immersive environments can create a sense of the sublime, as audiences are overwhelmed by the scale of total sensory experience.[59] This idea is affirmed by Schulze who suggests that an immersive world 'in its seemingly endless dimensions is subjectively experienced as sublime, thus creating both pleasure and fear'.[60] Essentially, the impression that both writers create is that the immersive sublime is geared towards leaving the spectator awestruck, with a 'reverend gaze' that, in Biggin's view, implies 'coercion or control rather than empowerment'.[61]

In the context of the arguable disempowerment of participants in immersive works, Biggin gives a thorough account of how games function through the application of game mechanics that afford player agency and generate responses from the game itself. She argues that 'a more interactive game isn't necessarily the one with the flashier graphics, but the game that responds the most to the player. What matters is how the player can affect the outcome'.[62] Subsequently, she offers a delineation between responsive games and 'static puzzles',[63] (affirming my previous argument that puzzles should be seen as distinct from games) and suggests that because Punchdrunk's immersive works often deploy puzzle-like structures they are 'not particularly "interactive" at all' since 'audience members are not invited to influence, change or complete anything'.[64] Despite going to great lengths to offer a wide-ranging and clear articulation of ideas generated by game studies scholars, Biggin concludes that the lack of interactivity offered by many immersive works is less important than the experience of immersion:

> When considering immersive theatre production, what matters is less how interactive a production actually is at any given moment, and more the question of how it manipulates various modes of interactivity to allow for the experience(s) of its audience.[65]

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[58] Biggin, p. 34.
[59] Biggin, p. 35.
[60] Schulze, p. 171.
[61] Biggin, p. 35.
[62] Biggin, p. 70.
[63] Biggin, p. 72.
[64] Biggin, p. 90.
[65] Biggin, p. 94.

She goes on to present arguments against the application of game methods in immersive theatre, arriving at the suggestion that the use of 'gaming mechanics' in immersive environments 'may overpower any sense of narrative discourse, rather than allowing a participant to find narrative elements embedded within them'.[66] This leads her to suggest, with regard to one of Punchdrunk's recent projects, that 'immersion in narrative is ultimately the most powerful or long-standing effect of the project, story being foregrounded rather than the ludological aspects of gameplay being the ends in itself.'[67] Ultimately, therefore, Biggin's conclusions reaffirm the textual paradigm that conceives immersive theatre experiences, not as interactive games, but as exploratory uncoverings of pre-authored narrative. Although Biggin's work has many admirable components, therefore, raising awareness of games in theatre and performance studies to a high level, her work omits a consideration of games as systems that hold emergent narrative potential.

In sum, this review of participatory performance within Theatre Studies suggests that understandings of how to design for participant agency can be expanded. Many of the authors cited identify the rich sensory experiences that participation in theatre contexts can offer and also note the importance of considering the particularities of audience-participants, but there is scope for further investigation of how the design of participatory performance might serve participant volition and invite transformative action. Gareth White provides a compelling argument that agential flexibility within conditioning factors of structural constraint can be found through intersubjective processes that build relational connections and offer new tactical possibilities. His proposition of procedural authorship appears to maintain authorial hegemony, however, setting out a deterministic design structure that affords only qualitative variability within a quantitatively fixed structure. Adam Alston's analysis of the implicit neoliberal rhetoric at play in the experience economy of immersive theatre is equally compelling, but his tendency to affirm introspection, linking with Rancière's ideas of

[66] Biggin, p. 165.
[67] Biggin, p. 168.

autonomous perception and interpretation, seems to limit participatory agency to individualised self-transformation.

In contrast with Alston's emphasis on autonomous introspection, Josephine Machon's discussion of communitas in immersive theatre presents a positive vision of democratic communitarianism, but I argue that being subsumed by the aesthetics of immersive immediacy undercuts individuated subjectivity and critical reflexivity with the result that participant agency is restricted. Most significantly, for my purposes, Machon's discussion of game-like features in immersive theatre suggests quite a narrow understanding how games are designed and how they afford agency to players. Rose Biggin's work makes a significant contribution towards remedying this limitation, but her argument that narrative immersion matters more than interactivity sets up an oversimplified dichotomy between narrative experience and player agency in participatory performance. This ultimately leads to a return to the textual paradigm that treats immersive theatre works as narrative puzzles filled with latent content that is to be archeologically uncovered, rather than emergent systems of narrative possibility that foreground the generative agency of players. There is fertile scope, therefore, to offer new ideas on how ludic strategies might be applied in participatory performance to promote agency and the potential for cultural transformation. Consequently, the following section considers insights from game studies and play anthropology to propose an approach to participatory performance design that foregrounds the creative agency of participants in games and the potential of play to expand the capacities of its players.

2.2 Play in Game Studies and Anthropology

Game Studies is a relatively new subject of academic enquiry, having emerged as a discrete field at the turn of the twenty-first century,[1] but theorists in this new area of study have sought to build upon the work of

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[1] Espen Aarseth, 'Computer Game Studies, Year One', *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research*, 1:1 (2001) <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/editorial.html> [accessed 4 May 2019].

earlier scholars of games, including the previously cited Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois. Caillois' work has been particularly influential, since he, unlike Huizinga, attempted to delineate games and play, using the term *ludus* to describe games as organised, rule-bound structures and *paidia* to describe more unstructured, playful activities. This distinction between games and play has been a major concern for game studies theorists, with much debate between ludologists, who argue that this new field should focus on the designed structures of games, and narratologists, who prefer to place attention on narratives of play experience.[2] The early development of game studies was marked by the approach of narratology, through which scholars attempted to analyse games as texts. Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck* analysed interactive narrative exploration in the new internet age, whereby computer users could navigate flexible narrative pathways with the selective click of a mouse.[3] Similarly, Espen Aarseth's *Cybertext* conceptualised games as 'ergodic' literature in which players take 'non-trivial action' in defining their journey through a hypertext narrative.[4] Marie Laure Ryan's *Narrative as Virtual Reality* also argued for the centrality of narrative in creating immersive experiences,[5] leading towards the formulation of the previously cited concept of 'epistemic immersion' through which readers of interactive narratives become engrossed in the fictional world by pursuing and uncovering latent narrative content.[6] The early years of the new millennium saw sustained challenges to this textual paradigm in game studies, however. Ludologists such as Gonzalo Frasca argued for games as simulations that could model social scenarios and allow experimentation within them, rather than as a form for storytelling,[7] while Katie Salen and

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[2] Espen Aarseth, 'A Narrative Theory of Games', in *Proceedings of the Foundations of Digital Games Conference* (2012), pp. 129-133. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Espen_Aarseth/publication/254006015_A_narrative_theory_of_games/links/57fb37a708ae280dd0bf9983/A-narrative-theory-of-games.pdf> [accessed 9 May 2019].

[3] Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

[4] Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 1.

[5] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[6] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'From Narrative Games to Playable Stories: Towards a Poetics of Interactive Narrative', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 1 (2009), 43-59.

[7] Gonzalo Frasca, 'Rethinking agency and immersion: video games as a means of consciousness raising', *Digital Creativity*, 12:3 (2001), 167-174 (p. 174).

Eric Zimmerman's comprehensive book on game design, *Rules of Play*, offered a detailed account of how games function as complex systems.[8]

Building on the work of these writers, Jesper Juul, a prominent proponent of the ludological approach, draws a valuable distinction between two types of games: games of progression and games of emergence. Juul argues that games of progression are composed of sequences of play challenges which lead through a pre-authored, or *embedded*, narrative sequence towards the completion of the game. Games of emergence, by contrast, are based on a set of rules which combine in response to player actions to generate new game states and emergent variability in how the narrative of the game will unfold.[9] The comparison of games of progression and games of emergence is useful in considering applications of game play in participatory performance because it offers two radically different approaches to narrative design. Arguably, since performance makers often wish to craft a story experience for audiences, they tend to create games of progression which leads from one challenge to the next, in a linear fashion, towards some narrative denouement, but this linearity of progression has clear connections to the Aristotelian pre-determination that I have previously problematised.

Although Juul's distinction between progression and emergence is set in opposition to narratological analyses of games, a ludological, systems-based approach is not incompatible with flexible narrative development. Gonzalo Frasca makes precisely this point when he argues that although the rules that compose the structure of a game are fundamental, games can indeed create valuable narratives.[10] Similarly, C. Thi Nguyen suggests that although games are not narratives in themselves, they can produce narratives, stating that whereas 'the audience of a narrative is told and interprets the story…the player of a game enacts and creates a story'.[11]

[8] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 152-168.
[9] Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 5.
[10] Gonzalo Frasca, 'Ludologists love stories too: notes from a debate that never took place', *Proceedings of the 2003 DiGRA Conference* (2003) <https://www.ludology.org/articles/frasca_levelUP2003.pdf> [accessed 4 May 2019].
[11] C. Thi Nguyen, 'Philosophy of Games', *Philosophy Compass*, 12:8 (2017), 1-18 (p. 4).

Consequently, my consideration of games investigates how game design can invite players to create emergent narratives and I argue that emergence in this context arises from the variability that is inherent in complex systems. As I have argued previously, in my consideration of the similarities between Bourdieu's field theory and systems thinking, the constraints that systemic structures impose on agents need not be viewed as inevitably repressive. Rather, the active agents in a system, with their various attributes, or capitals, can form variable relational connections that confer new capitals that offer emergent potential for transformative action.

Despite my positive appraisal of the possibilities of applying systems thinking in the design of participatory performance, much recent work in game studies has pointed out that systematised play runs the risk of enforcing instrumentalised activity that rhetorically reinforces the ideas of the designers. In his analysis of 'persuasive games', Ian Bogost argues that designers often create forms of 'procedural rhetoric' that lead the player through pre-determined steps towards desired conclusions.[12] This rhetorical approach to games has become an increasing concern for many authors who note the increasing 'gamification' of culture. Phil Wilkinson's 'A Brief History of Serious Games' charts the progression of instrumentalised play from ancient Greece, citing Plato's argument that 'one should regulate children's play. Let them always play the same games, with the same rules…that way you'll find that adult behaviour and society itself will be stable'.[13] Wilkinson subsequently discusses the emergence of games as educational tools, as described by Clark Abt's book, *Serious Games*,[14] leading towards more commercially focused applications of game strategies.[15] Jamie Woodcock and Mark Johnson focus more squarely on contemporary gamification of work as a 'new mode of governmentality', making the argument that 'if agents can be encouraged towards increased production for their own sake (as they

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[12] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 2-46.
[13] Armand D'Angour, 'Plato and play: taking education seriously in ancient Greece', *American Journal of Play*, 5:3 (2013), 293-307 (p. 299), cited in Phil Wilkinson, 'A Brief History of Serious Games', in *Entertainment, Computing and Serious Games*, ed. by Ralf Dörner; Stefan Göbel, Michael Kickmeier-Rust, Maic Masuch and Katharina Zweig (Cham: Springer Press, 2016), pp. 17-41 (p. 24).
[14] Clark Abt, *Serious Games* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).
[15] Wilkinson, p. 34.

perceive it), then the needs of management (production) can be met'.[16] Given the potentially instrumental nature of system-based play in both serious games for educational purposes and commercial applications of gamification, many scholars have chosen to turn away from a ludological approach towards more unstructured forms of *paidic* play. Sebastian Deterding, for example, contrasts games that function as highly structured simulation models with play activities that are 'dressed up' to resemble a fictional world. This notion of 'dressing up' is suggestive of an imaginative, emotional and qualitative form of play experience that foregoes any attempt to create quantitative rules[17] and I will now explore this kind of activity through discussions of play by anthropologist Brian Sutton-Smith and sociologist Thomas Henricks.

Sutton-Smith's highly influential book *The Ambiguity of Play* is focused on the ways that play is culturally appropriated to serve various rhetorical narratives that seek to instrumentalise it for ideological purposes. His project is to illustrate how acts of play often rebel and resist rhetorical appropriation, however, with specific emphasis on the 'hidden scripts' of secret childhood play that are often perverse, cruel and phantasmagorical.[18] In contrast to previous studies of such play which, in his account, claim that children re-enact troubling aspects of their lived experience as a way of coping and adapting to their circumstances, Sutton-Smith suggests that phantasmagorical play goes beyond mimetic representation or simulation to allow players to explore more exaggerated emotional states:

> Children give their play a structure, which is based on experiencing, in a safe way, the intense and even potentially disturbing emotional relationships of actuality or fantasy. This play is not based primarily on a representation of everyday events – as many prior investigations have supposed – so much as it based on a fantasy of emotional events.[19]

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[16] Jamie Woodcock and Mark R. Johnson, 'Gamification: what it is, and how to fight it', *The Sociological Review*, 66:3 (2018), 542-558 (p. 546).
[17] Sebastian Deterding, 'Make Believe in Gameful and Playful Design', in *Digital Make-Believe*, ed. by Phil Turner and J. Tuomas Harviainen (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), pp. 101-124 (p. 110).
[18] Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 160-172.
[19] Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, p. 158.

This notion that play is about creating an emotionally exaggerated version of reality in a safe space of experimentation is neatly exemplified by Sutton-Smith's article 'The Kissing Games of Adolescents in Ohio' in which he argues that a traditional kissing game (like 'Spin the Bottle'):

> …allows for the expression of given impulses but at the same time safeguards players by putting limits on the way in which these impulses can be expressed. That is, the game allows the player to grow along the lines that he desires, but it safeguards him against the danger of risking too much. The game is essentially an adventure of a non hazardous kind.[20]

The 'growth' that can be occasioned by play in non-hazardous contexts can be linked to Sutton-Smith's analysis of dreams as a form of play. Drawing on the work of neurobiologist Antonio Damasio, he claims that dreams serve to keep the brain 'labile', building neural connections during sleep that take human beings beyond the limited horizon of their lived experience, preventing the mind from becoming ossified by simple repetition of a relatively narrow range of existing knowledge.[21]

Sutton-Smith extends his idea of dream play as a means of generating cognitive flexibility by arguing that children's fantasy play (during their waking hours) is geared towards finding labile flexibility through an exploration, and exaggerated extension, of their lived experience that dismantles the constituent parts of the world as they know it and reassembles these parts in myriad reconfigurations:

> It takes the world apart in a way that suits their own emotional responses to it. As such, their play is a deconstruction of the world in which they live. If the world is a text, the play is a reader's response to that text. There are endless possible reader responses to the orthodox text of growing up in childhood. There is an endless play of signifiers of which children and all other players are capable. All players unravel in some way the accepted orthodoxies of the world in which they live.[22]

The argument that play promotes a labile and flexible exploration of potentialities is at the heart of Sutton-Smith's overall theory of play which he

[20] Brian Sutton-Smith, 'The Kissing Games of Adolescents in Ohio', *Midwest Folklore*, 9:4 (1959), 189-211 (p. 208).
[21] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error* (New York: Grosset-Putnam, 1994), cited in Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, pp. 61-62.
[22] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences', in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), cited in Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, p. 166.

terms *adaptive variability.* This theory posits that play occurs as a form of enactive subjunctivity, which refers to action that optimistically projects desired future results,[23] allowing humans (and other animals) to reconfigure existing knowledge of the world in flexible new ways in order to adapt, not to the present realities of their environment, but rather in preparation for possible futures that may transpire in a limitlessly uncertain world.[24]

Sutton-Smith's theory of play as adaptive variability is a vital concept for my investigation of play as a culturally transformative practice because it offers, I contend, a strong link between the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Baruch Spinoza which form the primary theoretical foundations of this study. Just as Bourdieu's habitus describes the capitals possessed by individuals and the ability of individuals to deploy them, play is composed of knowledge gained through sense perception and the capabilities that players have developed through lived experience. Rather than seeing habitus and a limited range of existing play affordances as deterministic restrictions, however, the theory of adaptive variability suggests that play can enable players to reconfigure elements of the world as they know it in new forms of affective relationality, expanding their *potentia* to affect and be affected in a great many ways and enhancing their capacities to persevere as they proceed into uncertain futures. A useful example of the play of adaptive variability can be found in Sutton-Smith's discussion of ritual performances which involve both reiteration of existing cultural practices and innovative developments that reconfigure cultural norms to imaginatively project how a community might function in potential futures. He argues that innovation within rituals enables deviation from, and reversal of, traditional roles, 'so that each person can become the joker in the pack, the card who can be all the cards'.[25] In other words, drawing on the terminology of Bourdieu and Spinoza, I suggest that the habitus can be provisionally reconfigured through play to expand the affective *potentia* of individuals and their ability to reconstitute their culture and their world.

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[23] Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, p. 198.
[24] Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, pp. 221-224.
[25] Victor Turner, 'Comments and Conclusions', in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. by Barbara A. Babcock (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p. 287-288, cited in Sutton-Smith, *Ambiguity*, p. 210.

Thomas Henricks builds upon the work of Sutton-Smith by providing further insight into the psychological motivations of play. Henricks proposes that players seek to impose their will upon the world, attempting to transform it in some way, with a 'consummatory' attitude that values the intrinsic enjoyment of action in the present moment,[26] and he claims that this activity creates *ascending meaning* by opening up new possibilities for experience and understanding.[27] Alongside the creation of ascending meaning, however, he proposes that play-like activities can be applied within non-play contexts to solidify, rather than expand, the cultural understandings of the society in question, in a process that he terms *descending meaning.*[28] For example, Henricks claims, in contrast to Sutton-Smith, that ritual is the opposite of play, arguing that such activity, though it may appear to be playful, is geared towards the reinforcement of existing cultural values.[29] This view is affirmed by Deterding's discussion of the Amish ritual of *rumspringa*, in which young men spend a year in the world outside their community, with the implicit aim of reaffirming their conviction that the Amish way of life is better than the lifestyles of the modern world.[30] Henricks also argues, with regard to the communitas of festival gatherings, that ascending meaning is curtailed by assimilation into the crowd,[31] while work is also described as an activity of descending meaning, despite the apparently playful nature of many enjoyable work activities, since it is focused on the instrumentalised use-value of the products of labour.[32]

Henricks' discussion of play as work is particularly pertinent to deployments of play-like activities in participatory performance. For example, if we consider a footballer, messing around with a ball in a playground, for no other reason than the desire to impose their will on the world by controlling the ball and enjoying the consummatory experience of expanding

[26] Thomas S. Henricks, *Play and the Human Condition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), pp. 43-44.
[27] Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 50.
[28] Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 76.
[29] Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 55.
[30] Sebastian Deterding, 'The Ambiguity of Games: Histories and Discourses of a Gameful World', in *The Gameful World: Approaches Issues, Applications,* ed. by Stefan P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), pp. 23-64 (p. 25).
[31] Henricks, *Human Condition*, pp. 59-60.
[32] Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 53.

their capacities, who is suddenly transported into the context of a professional match in a packed stadium, the activity arguably changes from play into **P**erformance work.[33] Subsequently, in this new setting, extrinsic rewards, like public adulation or financial gain may surpass the intrinsic rewards of manipulating the ball. Similarly, a participant in an interactive theatre piece cannot play for the sake of their own intrinsic enjoyment if they are required to **P**erform, or work, for the extrinsic reward of spectatorial approbation, or to assist in facilitating the success of the production in question. A clear example of the transition from play to **P**erformance can be found in the recent rise of professional esports, in which video game players complete for substantial cash prizes whilst being watched by large numbers of spectators, both live and online. Tom Brock discusses this gaming phenomenon in relation to Caillois' argument that play must be a free activity that is entered into voluntarily,[34] arguing that the professionalisation of digital gaming can create non-voluntary play in which players are required to spend vast quantities of time repetitively practicing play actions in order to **P**erform successfully and win prize money.[35]

Henricks' model of ascending/descending meaning can be linked with a distinction between two different motivational states that may be experienced in play: *telic* and *paratelic*. Jaakko Stenros states that telic motivation pursues the fulfilment of extrinsic rewards which can include financial reward or spectatorial adulation, while paratelic motivation pursues the intrinsic rewards that are inherent in the play activity itself.[36] This delineation of telic and paratelic motivation has an important bearing on Sutton-Smith's theory of adaptive variability and the possibility that play

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[33] I apply a capitalisation of **P**erformance to indicate a distinction between performance (with a small p) that is focused on the intrinsic experience of the activity in question and **P**erformance (with a capital P) that is focused on extrinsic rewards. In other words, whereas play that is undertaken for its own sake can be described as performance, play that is geared towards some extrinsic objective, beyond the activity itself, can be described as **P**erformance with a capital P.
[34] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 159, cited in Tom Brock, 'Roger Caillois and E-Sports: On the Problems of Treating Play as Work', *Games and Culture*, 12:4 (2017), 321-339 (p. 322).
[35] Brock, pp. 327-328.
[36] Jaakko Stenros, 'Behind Games: Playful mindsets and transformative practices', in *The Gameful World: Approaches, Issues, Applications*, ed. by Stefan P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2014), pp. 201-222 (p. 203).

in participatory performance might facilitate it. I contend that in instances when a participant is subjected to the observation and judgement of external spectators in a theatrical context they may become more of a **P**erformance worker, rather than a player, and if a **P**erformance worker is required to pursue the telic motivation of extrinsic reward in the form of spectatorial approval, they are more likely to display their relative mastery of pre-existing skills and knowledge. This conflicts with the exploratory play of ascending meaning, which is more likely to occur, I suggest, in instances of paratelic play that are motivated by intrinsic rewards.

The distinction between paratelic and telic motivation raises an important issue about the extent to which game play should be seen to exist autonomously, in a separate sphere to everyday life. Theorists such as Huizinga and Caillois are insistent that play must be autonomously focused on the intrinsic rewards of the activity, with Huizinga's 'magic circle' serving as the conceptual barrier that ensures this separation from external considerations.[37] It is important to stress, however, that although I have argued that play in pursuit of intrinsic rewards is more likely to yield experimental discoveries, this need not imply that play must retain total autonomous separation from the outside world. Stenros argues that players continually shift between paratelic and telic motivational states[38] and he makes a compelling case that the magic circle should be seen as permeable so that it can function both as an interstice of playful experimentation, but also as a space that feeds the results of such experimentation back into the everyday reality.[39] The connection between the inside and the outside of the play space is important in linking the expansion of potential that might occur in play with 'real world' action. Consequently, rather than seeing the magic circle of play as a fully liminal space, I suggest that it is more

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[37] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1949), p. 10.
[38] Michael J. Apter, 'A Structural-Phenomenology of Play', in *Adult Play: A Reversal Theory Approach*, ed. by John H. Kerr and Michael J. Apter (Amsterdam: Sweets and Zeitlinger, 1991), pp. 13-30 (p. 21), cited in Stenros, 'Behind Games', p. 203.
[39] Jaakko Stenros, 'In defence of a magic circle: the social, mental and cultural boundaries of play', *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, 1:2 (2014), 147-185. <http://todigra.org/index.php/todigra/article/viewFile/10/27> [accessed 9 May 2019].

productive to view it as a 'liminoid' interstice[40] so that the play that occurs can be understood to take place simultaneously in the real world and in the imaginary world of the game. Conceiving the play space as a liminoid interstice recognises that it is a strictly temporary space of alterity in which new possibilities may be tested then potentially carried back to the 'real world'.

Thomas Henricks affirms a balanced perspective between the inside and outside of play, arguing that unstructured play that is focused on intrinsic motivations tends to become structured so that it can become accessible to others who are initially outside the magic circle.[41] In other words, *paidic* play that occurs autonomously does not need to remain in an isolated bubble of intrinsic, paratelic motivation. According to Henricks, play is given a structure so that the magic circle can open out to incorporate a wider heteronomy and, in considering the culturally transformative potential of play, the question of the relative autonomy or heteronomy of play is of essential concern. Although the experimental potential of play is heightened, I contend, when players pursue paratelic motivation without consideration of telic rewards of the external world, if these experimental discoveries are to be shared with the external world, it must be possible for the magic circle to open its borders to a wider heteronomy.

Elaborating on the divergence between autonomous and heteronomous play, Henricks links his discussion of intrinsically motivated play with Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow', a state of being which occurs when an individual is engaged in an activity that is challenging enough to generate arousal and interest but not so challenging that they experience anxiety or frustration.[42] In this state, according to Csikszentmihalyi, the task at hand is enjoyable to undertake and becomes engrossing, to the point where 'goals lose their substance and reveal themselves as mere tokens that justify the activity'. Essentially, 'the doing is

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[40] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publishing, 1982), pp. 44-45.
[41] Thomas S. Henricks, 'Reason and Rationalisation: A Theory of Modern Play', *American Journal of Play*, 8:3 (2016), 287-324 (p. 310).
[42] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1991), pp. 48-67, cited in Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 31.

the thing' and, through the intrinsic enjoyment of doing, 'there is little distinction between self, environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future'.[43] These descriptions of the intrinsic motivations of flow activity are strongly suggestive of autonomous action, but in the same way that I have argued that play cannot exist solely in an autonomous bubble, I suggest that flow need not be seen as antithetical to telic motivations. For Csikszentmihalyi, the experience of flow is most likely to be found in activities that 'are part of a structured life's purpose'.[44] This creates the sense that there is 'good' flow in productive, healthy activities, as opposed to 'bad' flow in activities that are seen as a waste of time, like playing video games.[45] This clearly suggests that telic motivations of a 'structured life's purpose' cannot be dispensed with, which implies that a flow state cannot be considered as entirely autonomous and based solely on intrinsic motivation.

Beyond the question of whether fully autonomous, intrinsic motivation in flow is possible, the fact that flow invites a loss of self-awareness and loss of one's sense of time, prompts me to problematise it in the same way that I have questioned communitas and the immediacy of '*praesence*' in Josephine Machon's account of immersive theatre. My contention is that a flow state, despite being highly gratifying, appears to preclude the possibility of critical reflexivity, which I argue is a key aspect of the culturally transformative potential of play. Instead, I find greater value in Greg Costikyan's proposal of 'interrupted flow' as an objective of play design, which can combine the intrinsic rewards of a flow state with the critical value of reflexivity:

> Many games benefit precisely from *jarring* the player *out* of any sense of flow. Puzzle games are one example. Upon completing one puzzle and encountering the next, a player of this sort of game is not likely to feel 'I am in the zone, I am master of this. I react and do the next thing with preternatural ease' – rather, he is likely to think 'Holy crap, what

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[43] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 'A Theoretical Model for Enjoyment', in *The Improvisation Studies Reader: Spontaneous Acts*, ed. by Rebecca Caines and Ajay Heble (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 150-162 (p. 151).
[44] John Hamon Salisbury and Penda Tomlinson, 'Reconciling Csikszentmihalyi's Broader Flow Theory with Meaning and Value in Digital Games', *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, 2:2 (2016), 55-77 (p.69). <http://todigra.org/index.php/todigra/article/view/34> [accessed 9 May 2019].
[45] Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 'Television Addiction is no mere metaphor', *Scientific American*, 286:2 (2002), 74-80, cited in Salisbury and Tomlinson, pp. 64-65.

> do I do now?' That is, he is immediately jarred *out* of anything like a flow state and forced to grapple with new problems, to *think* about what he must do next.[46]

In other words, in contrast to valorisations of flow as a state of being that sets an individual in an autonomous bubble of intrinsic motivation with little reflexive consideration of the outside world, I contend that interruptions to flow can be conducive to useful critical thinking, prompting reflexive consideration of how the actions within the magic circle of play might relate to wider social circumstances.

Like Costikyan, game studies theorist Mary Flanagan affirms the value of reflexivity, calling for a radical game design that promotes critical, reflexive consideration of the world through play. For the purposes of this study, Flanagan's references to applications of play in art are of particular interest. She cites the work of the Dadaists and Surrealists, describing their use of chance procedures to dismantle the hegemony of the artist and invite the audience to share in meaning making[47] and her account of the Situationist *dérive* also articulates the endeavour to promote playful transgressions that challenge conventional ways of navigating urban space.[48] Similarly, her descriptions of works of the Fluxus movement, such as Fluxus kits, which offered unperformable sets of instructions for the use of apparently random selections of objects, are suggestive of forms of play that 'open everyday life to more careful examination, rendering social movements as acts of exchange, or opportunities to critique larger situations'.[49]

Flanagan links her advocacy of reflexive criticality in playful art with contemporary digital games, referencing *Darfur is Dying*, a serious game designed by students at the University of Southern California about refugees in Sudan attempting to survive by foraging food and water whilst simultaneously trying to avoid the Janjaweed militia. She comments that whereas mainstream commercial games attempt to create a flow state of challenge and satisfaction as players find the balance between their play

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[46] Greg Costikyan, *Uncertainty in Games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), pp. 25-26.
[47] Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 127-138.
[48] Flanagan, *Critical Play*, pp. 194-197.
[49] Flanagan, *Critical Play*, p. 101.

skills and the tasks within the game, *Darfur is Dying* 'sobers feelings of accomplishment, and allows players to feel the distance between a game and the real-world situation'.[50] Flanagan's approach to the aesthetics of reflexivity is strongly apparent in a recent article comparing digital and non-digital iterations of a collaborative two-player game about public health strategies for disease control. The results of the study in question showed that, in the digital game, players' focused immersion within the digital interface led them to play the game faster, with less conversation between collaborators on the implications of their next move. Flanagan's assertion is that the aesthetic framing of the non-digital version of game, in which players had to manipulate pieces on a physical game board, resulted in slower play which fostered a greater degree of reflexivity through dialogue.[51] A similar point is made in Evan Torner's analysis of table-top role-play games. Torner argues that this form of collaborative storytelling promotes reflexivity because the design format transparently shows its mechanisms in contrast to more immersive forms of play:

> A self-reflexive TTRPG is one that, in the written text or play-as-text, renders conscious and unfamiliar these performances and the mechanisms that produce them. They expose the machinery, whilst keeping it running.[52]

In other words, in much the same way that Bertolt Brecht exposed the machinery of theatre to audiences as a means of generating defamiliarization and critical reflexivity,[53] a non-immersive approach in play that interrupts flow can be conducive to reflexive thought.

My argument for reflexivity in play is strongly influenced by a belief in asymmetry as a factor of design that promotes emergent instability and the

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[50] Flanagan, *Critical Play*, p. 246.
[51] Mary Flanagan and Geoff Kaufman, 'Playing the System: Comparing the Efficacy and Impact of Digital and Non-Digital Versions of a Collaborative Strategy Game', *Proceedings of the 1st International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG* (2016), pp. 1-16 (pp. 11-13). <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/71a7/1bfee85c46bf3ea3a1818a96064af1b3b9f0.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2019].
[52] Evan Torner, 'The Self-Reflexive Tabletop Role-Playing Game', *GAME: The Italian Journal of Game Studies*, 5:1 (2016) <https://www.gamejournal.it/torner-the-self-reflexive-tabletop-role-playing-game/> [accessed 5 May 2019].
[53] Bertolt Brecht. 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), cited in Torner.

critical thinking of players. For example, in his critique of *Hex*, a strategy board game that is played on a hexagonal grid, Costikyan states:

> In a perfectly symmetrical game like *Hex*, all players strive for identical goals, with identical starting capabilities, and it is therefore typically straightforward to determine the degree to which an action benefits yourself and/or injures other players. The symmetrical nature of the game means that, all things being equal, players' analytic paths tend to follow the same line. The moment a degree of asymmetry is introduced, players come to value the actions available to them differently, and analysing play requires them to try to understand what and why other players are doing what they are doing.[54]

Costikyan's argument, building on his proposal of interrupted flow, is that asymmetrical design promotes a stronger recognition of difference, which heightens the affective sensitivity of players and leads to a reflexive consideration of divergent avenues of potential action.[55] Vittorio Marone also applies the concept of asymmetry in his description of play contexts that are open to a plurality of participants, arguing that 'dynamic asymmetry…can lead to a spontaneous evolution of roles, from peripheral to central, from reader to author and from player to designer'.[56] Similarly, Thomas Markussen and Eva Knutz claim that 'participation in art as in ordinary life is never symmetrical or equal; it will always rely on an asymmetrical distribution of control'.[57] Markussen and Knutz do not frame this inequality as negative, however. Instead, they point to the capacity for asymmetrical social play 'to increase resilience in the players by reconfiguring the social relationship between them'[58] so that they can 'play imaginatively with alternative identities, forbidden identities and even identity switching'.[59]

As I have previously suggested in my discussion of Bourdieu's field theory and complex systems, variability of potentialities (and a reflexive awareness of this variability) can be generated by the development of new relational connections. Similar arguments are made by Nick Crossley who

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[54] Costikyan, p. 89.
[55] Costikyan, pp. 90-91.
[56] Vittorio Marone, 'Playful Constructivism: Making Sense of Digital Games for Learning and Creativity Through Play, Design, and Participation', *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, 9:3 (2016), 1-18 (p. 11).
[57] Thomas Markussen and Eva Knutz, 'Playful Participation in Social Games', *Conjunctions: Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation*, 4:1 (2017), 1-20 (p. 9).
[58] Markussen and Knutz, p. 3.
[59] Markussen and Knutz, p. 7.

references George Herbert Mead's work on role-play to concretise his ideas on how people develop reflexive awareness of their potential to develop new capacities. According to Mead, in Crossley's articulation, individuals become aware of their own 'self' by 'adopting the role of another in relation towards their "self"'.[60] Subsequently, the ongoing absorption of the perspectives of others enables them to reflexively alter their habitual dispositions:

> Perspectives are constantly coming into contact, affording agents a new viewpoint upon their self and generating new synthetic and hybrid cultural forms which can never achieve taken-for-grantedness. We are creatures of habit, for Mead, but we are equally conversational agents and our conversational tendencies, whilst rooted in habit, tend to disturb at least some of our sedimented repertoires of action, bringing them into view for us. Tradition and culture lose some of their grip upon us by virtue of our experientially-rooted awareness of their relativity.[61]

Mary Flanagan makes similar arguments to those offered by Crossley, calling for works of critical play as interstitial sites of relational affectivity. For example, she describes Ariana Souzis' *Cell Phone Free Temporary Autonomous Zone*, inspired by the Temporary Autonomous Zones advocated by anarchist writer Hakim Bey,[62] in which participants create a space of sociality that is free from mobile phones to create an interstice that deviates from the normative behaviour of constant engagement with digital devices. According to Flanagan, this type of interstitial space, which is clearly framed as (partially) separate from the 'real world', can create emergent possibility through asymmetry, enabling participants to form new types of relational connection that destabilise their subjectivity.[63] Following Flanagan's arguments, I suggest that game-based interstices have the potential to expand the affective *potentia* of players who play within them as new relational connections confer new capitals. Reflexive awareness of this expanded affective power can, in turn, be generated through interrupted flow

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[60] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967), cited in Nick Crossley, 'The networked body and the question of reflexivity', in *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body*, ed. by Dennis Waskul and Phillip Vannini (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 21-34 (p. 28).

[61] Crossley, p. 30.

[62] Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), cited in Flanagan, *Critical Play,* pp. 211-213.

[63] Flanagan, *Critical Play*, p. 213.

that combines the intrinsic enjoyment of play with critical reflection on possible connections between the space of play and the outside world.

Having discussed a number of perspectives in theatre studies on how play can enhance the creative and political agency of audiences in participatory performance, this review of game studies and play anthropology provides useful insights into processes of game and play design that might enhance potential for cultural transformation. Jesper Juul's analyses of games of progression and games of emergence highlights the importance of understanding systems thinking in game design, looking beyond the limitations of linear progression in favour of emergent variability. Highly structural ludological approaches tend to focus less on the social and emotional aspects of play, however, and I have discussed anthropological accounts of play activities to address this shortcoming, focusing on Brian Sutton-Smith's theory of adaptive variability, which suggests that play functions as a method of reconfiguring emotional experiences of the world to prepare more diverse capacities for uncertain futures.

Thomas Henricks builds on Sutton-Smith's work by illustrating how the motivational states of players shape the play actions that emerge, with telic motivations that pursue extrinsic rewards tending towards the descending meaning of cultural consolidation, as opposed to intrinsically motivated play that tends towards ascending meaning and culturally transformative potential. In discussing intrinsic motivation in play, I have problematised Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, given that it suggests a diminishment of subjective self-awareness and the ability to exercise reflexivity. The arguments of Mary Flanagan and Greg Costikyan provide useful alternatives to flow, however, proposing the design of interstitial play spaces characterised by asymmetry, which offer potential for destabilising the subjectivity of players, interrupting flow and prompting reflexive considerations of how the play activity might relate to a wider world. Although these analyses of games and play offer useful insights into game design, the psychological motivations of play and the politically iconoclastic potential that play might hold, they lack a thorough consideration of the aesthetics of play experience. Consequently, the final section of this chapter

discusses applications of play in participatory art with the aim of setting out arguments for an experiential aesthetics of playful participatory performance.

2.3 Play in Fine Art

Alongside the rapid expansion, in recent decades, of participatory forms of theatre and performance, in fine art contexts, participatory works have gained increasing prominence since the 1990s, following Nicolas Bourriaud's proposal of relational aesthetics as a conceptual approach to practices that foreground social relations between participants as the substance of the artwork. In linking Bourriaud's ideas with play, Mary Flanagan claims that 'rather than encountering a work of art that may have been formerly perceived as a visual experience, Bourriaud's art consumer contributes his whole body, complete with its history and behaviour and is no longer an abstract physical presence'. This leads her to propose that in playful art practices, 'the dynamic relationships between actors…form their own unique aesthetic that is performative and social'.[1] The notion that the sociality of participatory art constitutes a new aesthetic has been challenged, however, by Claire Bishop, who suggests that the pursuit of a collaborative 'social bond' creates a damaging focus on social 'equality' rather than aesthetic 'quality':

> Instead of supplying the market with commodities, participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change…but the urgency of this social task has led to a situation in which socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond.[2]

In other words, Bishop argues that social and political efficacy are the criteria upon which participatory works are judged, at the expense of aesthetic evaluation, a point which resonates with Miwon Kwon's critical

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[1] Mary Flanagan, 'Playful Aesthetics: Toward a Ludic Language', in *The Gameful World: Approaches, Issues, Applications*, ed. by Stefan P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), pp. 249-271 (pp. 258- 259).

[2] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), pp. 12-13.

view that it is necessary to 'break through the halo-like armature of do-goodism' that shields community-based artists from 'incisive analysis and criticism'.[3] Bishop also claims that participatory strategies have been appropriated by neoliberal movements, affirming Adam Alston's correlation of neoliberalism and productive participation in immersive theatre. She suggests that under the public arts funding policies of the New Labour government in the United Kingdom, public participation in the arts has been valorised as a means of remedying 'social exclusion', but she argues that, far from seeking to genuinely help people from deprived backgrounds, this is geared towards fostering self-sufficiency amongst communities who had previously relied on the state.[4] Essentially, then, Bishop views participatory art either a means of creating enforced neoliberal self-sufficiency or enforced communitarianism, both of which impose a false consensus that constrains the interpretive freedom of participants and ignores questions of artistic quality.

Bishop's ideas are strongly influenced by Jacques Rancière's views on the autonomy of art and she argues that art should express the singular autonomy of the artist, rather than focusing primarily on socially ameliorative aims.[5] She claims that the tendency of 'socially engaged' participatory art to pursue consensus makes participants so sensitive to anything potentially discordant that they self-censor disruptive impulses, leading to bland homogenisation.[6] Her response to this is to advocate a 'fidelity to singularised desire' in the work of artists, arguing that:

> Instead of obeying a super-egoic injunction to make ameliorative art, the most striking, moving and memorable forms of participation are produced when artists act upon a gnawing social curiosity without the incapacitating restrictions of guilt.[7]

Bishop's contention is that guilt-free artistic practice enables artists to create provocative works that, instead of seeking ameliorative consensus,

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[3] Miwon Kwon [No Reference Given], cited in Patricia Phillips, 'Points of Departure: Public Art's Intentions, Indignities, and Interventions', *Sculpture*, 17:3 (1998), 18-25 (p. 22).
[4] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 13.
[5] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 29.
[6] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 26.
[7] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 39.

generate an antagonism which she sees as holding greater potential for the radical redistribution of the sensible that Rancière envisages.

In setting out her arguments for antagonism, Bishop praises the work of artists whose work directly displays an antagonistic quality, suggesting that this functions as provocation for lively political debate. A prominent example can be found in Santiago Sierra's *250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People*, in which the artist tattooed a two and half metre line on the backs of a group of young unemployed Cuban men.[8] In considering this work and Bishop's positive appraisal of it, Jason Miller comments that 'aesthetically rendered exploitation is presumed to be not only qualitatively distinct from exploitation as such, but ethically privileged, insofar as it is in the bigger business of raising awareness via artistic production'.[9] Miller expresses scepticism towards the idea that this type of work raises any increased awareness of exploitation, but he goes further to challenge some of the theoretical presuppositions of Bishop's approach. In addition to the work of Rancière, Bishop has been strongly influenced by Chantal Mouffe's political philosophy of agonistics,[10] which proposes that radical democracy must stage contests between differing ideologies rather than seeking a consensus that neutralises political discord.[11] As quoted by Miller, however, Mouffe is careful to point out that agonism should not be equated with a destructive antagonism that presumes to be politically revelatory:

> This perspective, while claiming to be very radical, remains trapped within a very deterministic framework according to which the negative gesture is, in itself, enough to bring about the emergence of a new form of subjectivity; as if this subjectivity was already latent, ready to emerge as soon as the weight of the dominant ideology would have been lifted. Such a conception is, in my view, completely anti-political.[12]

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[8] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 222.
[9] Jason Miller, 'Activism vs. Antagonism: Socially engaged art from Bourriaud to Bishop and beyond', *Field: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, 3 (2016), 165-183 (p. 173).
[10] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso Books, 1985), cited in Claire Bishop 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110 (2004), 51-79 (pp. 65-72).
[11] Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso Books, 2013).
[12] Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?', in *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, ed. by Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Cork: National Sculpture Factory, 2006), pp. 149-171 (p.162), cited in Miller, pp. 173-174.

Similarly, although Bishop sees her approach to art criticism as being closely aligned to Rancière's philosophy, Stephen Corcoran argues, in contrast to Bishop's proposal of antagonism between rival positions, that Rancière's approach 'has nothing to do with the forms of struggle associated with the supposed divide between friend and enemy'.[13] Tony Fisher also queries Bishop's position and points out that agonistic confrontation may, in fact, tend towards conservative reaffirmation of dominant values, rather than offering radical political potential:

> The catharsis induced by the trial of tragic drama, as intended by Aristotle, is grasped precisely as an agonic trial: one must experience 'the conflict of opposites', one must learn that to 'cure an evil' one must empty 'evil' for only in this way can the spectator learn to mitigate its effects, and be led to a sense of 'due proportion'.[14]

Consequently, despite the fact that her theories are intended to align with the radical redistribution of the sensible that is called for by Jacques Rancière's philosophy, the antagonistic confrontation that Bishop calls for may be more likely to reinforce dominant ideologies, as agonistic contests expel dangerous extremes to create the 'mean' of 'due proportion', in line with Aristotelian virtue.[15]

By focusing on the guilt-free autonomy of the artist who follows their singularised desire in producing antagonistic works, Bishop creates a vision of participatory art in which the agency of participants is of limited importance compared with the agency of the artist. She proposes that participants in art function as a kind of 'living currency', suggesting that human bodies and their affective labour may be used as material by the artist.[16] Bishop claims that it is justifiable for artists to use participants' bodies and cultural identities as material because this naturally coincides with the practices of 'a service industry that increasingly relies upon the

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[13] Steven Corcoran, 'Editor's Introduction' in Jacques Rancière, *Dissenus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 1-24 (p. 6).
[14] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. 60, cited in Tony Fisher, 'Performance and the Tragic Politics of Agon', in *Performing Antagonism: Theatre, Performance & Radical Democracy,* ed. by Tony Fisher and Eve Katsouraki (London: Springer Press, 2017), pp. 1-24 (p. 11).
[15] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. by Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 30-31.
[16] Pierre Klossowski, *La monnaie vivante* (Paris: Editions Joëlle Losfeld, 1994), cited in Bishop, *Artificial*, pp. 234-236.

marketing of certain qualities in human beings'.[17] Leaving aside, once again, the ethical disquiet that this might cause, I contend that Bishop's tendency to view participants in art as material components in the artist's composition is symptomatic of a persistent reluctance to move beyond the aesthetic concept of the art object. Bishop's focus on the primacy of the art object is made clear through the numerous examples she provides of works in which participants **P**erform and are observed by spectators, such as *La Familia Obrera* by Argentinian artist Oscar Bony, who hired a working-class family and displayed them on a plinth in an art gallery.[18] In my view, such work ought not to be described as participatory art at all, since it is concerned with spectatorship of performative objects, with no consideration of what the work might mean to the participants involved. Essentially, Bishop does not examine the important aesthetic distinction between **P**erformance that is displayed for the extrinsic reward of spectatorial approval and participatory play that is geared solely towards the experience of participants. Notions of experiential aesthetics are gaining increased recognition, however, as neuroscientific advances highlight the fundamentally aesthetic nature of human perception. For example, in a recent article on the cognitive neuroscience of aesthetic experience, Ellen Dissanayake and Stephen Brown critique the tendency of traditional art criticism to focus solely on the aesthetic affects generated by art objects, arguing that:

> It is important to emphasise that the efficacy of the arts in terms of human behaviour is dependent upon the production and perception of ALL TYPES of emotions and not just object-based emotions. We suggest that one of the most significant (and understudied) emotions that drives the arts is social affiliation, an emotion of strong reward value.[19]

Bishop does discuss a small number of participatory works that do not function as performative objects to be viewed by spectators, but there is less emphasis on the value of 'social affiliation', which appears to disregard the aesthetic affects that such social exchanges might produce. For example, she

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[17] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2007), p. 444, cited in Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 231.
[18] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 113.
[19] Ellen Dissanayake and Stephen Brown, 'The arts are more than aesthetics: Neuroaesthetics as narrow aesthetics', in *Neuroaesthetics*, ed. by Martin Skov and Oshin Vartanian (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 43-56 (p. 52).

criticises *Sanctuary*, a piece about members of a community suffering from housing inequality by The Blackie, a community arts group in Liverpool, because of its polemical political agenda and because she finds it to be artistically chaotic, with several improvised performance actions occurring simultaneously.[20] What Bishop does not focus on, however, is the possibility that, in the absence of spectators, aesthetic value in this piece might come from the affective experience of participants, through an autopoietic feedback loop of intersubjective exchange, without any concern for how the performance action might be viewed by external audiences.

In contrast to her criticism of the highly social work of The Blackie, Bishop reserves her most positive critique for works that allow participants to go their own way, in keeping with Rancière's arguments for the singular autonomy of the emancipated spectator. In her discussion of artists working in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s, she compellingly argues that forced collectivisation prompted many artists to turn towards more introspective and personal work. Her account of the Collective Actions Group in Moscow is particularly vivid, describing works like *Ten Appearances*, which invited ten people, each holding an unravelling spool of white thread, to walk away from each other across a snowy field. The creator of this work, Andrei Monastyrsky, describes it as an 'empty action' and, according to Bishop, he appears resolutely opposed to ascribing meaning to the work.[21] In the apparent emptiness of the experience, it is left for participants to create their own meaning, which would seem to provide an exemplary case study of Rancière's emancipated spectatorship, with an 'aesthetic cut' that precludes the imposition of authorial intention, inviting autonomous perception and interpretation. I would like to call attention, however, to what I see as a paradox in Rancière's vision of singular autonomy in aesthetic perception. In discussing the work of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière argues for the autonomous freedom of students, like the participants in *Ten Appearances*, to explore the world and form their own

[20] Bishop, *Artificial*, pp. 183-184.
[21] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 159.

opinions. He also valorises the refusal of the schoolmaster, like Monastyrsky, to impose his own viewpoint, so that:

> Instead of attempting to teach them his knowledge, he orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen. To verify and have it verified.[22]

The apparent contradiction that emerges from this, however, is that although the students are autonomous in their explorations, they need to verify the perceptions of others and have their own perceptions verified, which implies intersubjective exchange, not emancipation through autonomy. Similarly, despite the seemingly isolated participatory experience in *Ten Appearances*, Bishop acknowledges that this work inspired numerous written hermeneutic analyses by participants which were meticulously collected together in book form and distributed to the ten people who enacted the work.[23] Consequently, although the subjective interpretations of participants will have been widely divergent, the fact that the artwork included a gathering together of these interpretations implies a form of reflexive dialogue on the substance of the experience which should, in my view, be considered as a major feature of its experiential aesthetic value.

In contrast to the arguments for artistic autonomy offered by Bishop, Grant Kester presents a vision of participatory art that is founded upon dialogue and intersubjective exchange. Rather than viewing participatory action as material to be manipulated and objectified by the artist, as Bishop claims, Kester argues that the artist of participatory work should be seen as a 'context provider',[24] framing interstitial spaces of collaborative action, designed in response to the cultural particularity of those who play within them. The notion that the artist can create contexts for creativity, as opposed to fashioning art objects, has grown in popularity since the emergence in the 1990s of 'new genre public art', a term originated by American artist Suzanne Lacy to describe socially engaged art projects that

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[22] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2009), p. 11.
[23] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 159.
[24] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 1.

were designed in opposition to the creation of public art sculptures in social spaces.[25] This trend runs in parallel with relational aesthetics, as described by Nicolas Bourriaud, but Kester's work is set in opposition to Bourriaud's approach, proposing 'dialogical art' as an alternative term.[26]

Kester argues that although many works described under the banner of relational aesthetics pursue the laudable aim of creating social conviviality to overcome what Bourriaud describes as 'the general mechanisation of functions' caused by technology that 'gradually reduces the relational space',[27] they often appear to disregard the specificity of social sites and the people who occupy them. For example, Kester references Rikrit Tiravanija's relational work *Tomorrow is Another Day* which involved the reconstruction of the kitchen of the artist's New York apartment in a gallery space, which was subsequently made available to participants for cooking, eating and conversing. Following its initial iteration in the United States, this piece was transposed to a gallery in Cologne at a time when the local police were in the process of driving out a settlement of homeless people near the gallery. In Kester's account, the enactment of this work at this time, and in this particular context, drew strong criticism from local artists, one of whom claimed that:

> They act as if they are being so generous in making this room available when really they are doing nothing at all. It is a meaningless statement. At the same time they are making this grand gesture, fifty homeless people are being ordered to clear out of the camp and go. It fits perfectly with the rhetoric of globalism, with its empty platitudes and its commitment to image over real change.[28]

Kester is quick to point out that Tiravanija cannot be blamed for the eviction of the homeless community near the art gallery but he argues, nonetheless, that this project 'suggests the difficulties faced by artists who claim a

[25] Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (San Francisco: Bay Press, 1994).
[26] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 10.
[27] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), p. 17.
[28] Stefan Roemer, *Tomorrow Is Another Day: A Video Criticism of Rikrit Tiravanija's Exhibition "Tomorrow Is Another Day" at the Kölnischer Kunstverein*, trans. by Grant Kester (Cologne: Kölner Videomagazin N-TV, January 1997), cited in Kester, *Conversation*, p. 105.

dedication to dialogue but ignore the (political, social and cultural) context in which dialogue is situated'.[29]

Whereas works of relational aesthetics seem to provide participatory encounters of instantaneous immediacy, with less consideration of context, the dialogic works that Kester promotes emerge from 'extended dialogue and personal interaction with the groups and individuals involved'.[30] For example, he identitifies *Concerning Our Present Way of Living* by Stephen Willats as a piece that was based on a deep investigation of the social, educational and political contexts of participants living on a housing estate in Whitechapel, East London. Kester claims that this contextual engagement gave the artist an important insight into the habitus of the people involved and suggests that Willats' approach 'shifts the focus of art from the phenomenological experience of the creator fabricating an exemplary physical object to the phenomenological experience of his co-participants in the space and routines of their daily lives'.[31]

Although Kester's vision of dialogical art is firmly grounded in a context responsive approach, he also recognises the value of artistic projects that create interstitial spaces of alterity, in a similar vein to Mary Flanagan's positive appraisal of interstitial play. This is evident in his description of the untitled boat trips created by the Austrian art collective, WochenKlausur, in which politicians, journalists, political activists and sex workers from the city of Zurich went on a series of excursions on Lake Zurich to talk about the problem of drug addiction in relation to prostitution. For Kester, these boat trips created a temporary environment that allowed figures of political power to 'communicate outside the rhetorical demands of their official status'.[32] Consequently, this art event can be understood as an interstice, functioning as 'an open space where individuals can break free from pre-existing roles and obligations, reacting and interacting in new and unforeseeable ways'.[33] The emphasis on interstitial separation in the temporary environment of the boat does not imply autonomous dislocation of artistic practice from

[29] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 105.
[30] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 22.
[31] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 91.
[32] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 2.
[33] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 6.

everyday life, however. The interstice created by the boat trips enabled participants to partially leave behind the constraints of their habitus, and temporarily occupy alternative social positions in an alternative social space, but the content of the dialogical exchanges that occurred retained a clear connection to the lived experience of those involved.

The notion of a link between a partially separate artistic space with the heteronomy of everyday life connects with my previous arguments that play spaces are framed by a permeable magic circle. This point is affirmed by Sruti Bala''s discussion of the physical and conceptual spaces of participatory art, in which she asserts that:

> They are not located outside social reality, in a safely cordoned area marked as an aesthetic space, wherein they may reflect or represent the world outside, undisturbed or untouched by it; rather, these two dimensions are porous, connected by a vector shuttling between them, not merely transposing ideas from one dimension to the other, but affecting and translating each of them in the process.[34]

Consequently, although Kester proposes, with regard to WochenKlauser's work, that the 'ritual and isolation of the boat trip' was integral to 'the demand for self-reflexive attention',[35] I suggest, following on from Bala's arguments, that the transitional movements into and out of the liminoid interstice are key to its potential for promoting reflexivity. Entering the interstice offers scope for the formation of new relational connections that can enable individuals to transcend the limitations of their habitus, but I suggest that, ultimately, the potential for cultural transformation depends on reflexive consideration of how the activity within the interstice might relate to the 'real world'. Essentially, therefore, I argue for the construction of participatory art spaces that afford a degree of separation from everyday life, in line with Ellen Dissanayake's argument that the 'making special' of art is key to its efficacy,[36] whilst retaining a connection to the wider context in which the work is situated.

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[34] Sruti Bala, *The Gestures of Participatory Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 2.
[35] Kester, *Conversation*, p. 111.
[36] Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 51-63.

Kester's model of dialogical aesthetics solidifies the idea that aesthetic value in participatory art can be based, not on the art object, but on the intersubjective exchange of participants and the transformative opportunities that this might present. In the context of research that focuses on play, however, it is necessary to expand participatory aesthetics beyond a relatively narrow focus on discursive interaction and consider a broader range of activities through which individuals are affected and affect others. Christina Albu, for example, provides compelling arguments for the substantial affective exchanges that occur between audience-participants through the simple act of looking together. Albu argues that 'empathetic relations prompted by visual encounters can be as important in triggering intersubjective exchanges between people as invitations to perform similar activities, such as dancing or eating together'.[37] Albu develops her ideas by discussing mirror neurons, offering the suggestion, in a similar vein to Nicola Shaughnessy's work in a theatre context, that 'viewers contemplate the potential for interaction or for empathetic connection with co-participants who are simultaneously engaged in acts of affective, perceptual and behavioural mirroring', leading to a kind of relational reflexivity that she terms 'affective attunements'.[38]

Albu's linkage between affect and reflexive thought shares similarities with Falk Heinrich's account of the aesthetics of participatory art, which affirms Kester's belief that aesthetic value need not be considered as a characteristic of an art object. Heinrich argues for an understanding of beautiful experiences, setting out a tripartite theory of 'performative beauty' that unites sensory affects, agency and reflexivity in three, separate, but linked, actions: *to do, to act* and *to perform.*[39] *To do* refers to the sensory experience of taking physical actions and the affective satisfaction that such actions can produce. *To act* refers to actions that are taken to express agency in some transformation of objects in the world. *To perform* refers to the reflexive understanding of what these actions might mean in broader

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[37] Christina Albu, *Mirror Affect: Seeing Self, Observing Others in Contemporary Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p. 12.
[38] Albu, pp. 23-24.
[39] Falk Heinrich, *Performing Beauty in Participatory Art and Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 1.

contexts. Taken together, Heinrich argues that in participatory art contexts, *to do / to act / to perform* can yield the sentiment of performative beauty as 'an experienced unity in action that combines reflection, sense perception and agency'.[40]

Heinrich's tripartite theory of participatory aesthetics is strongly influenced by the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey, who argues that aesthetics is a combination of phenomenological experience, evaluation and semantic meaning making.[41] This link to Dewey's ideas sets Heinrich's aesthetics firmly against the notion that art should exist in autonomous separation from everyday life and he affirms this view by stating that 'aesthetic judgements cannot be executed in a vacuum external to systems of personal and societal values'.[42] Heinrich's combination of sensory experience, agential action and reflexive meaning making also challenges Rancière's concept of an 'aesthetic cut' between *poeisis* (as making) and *aisthesis* (as interpretive evaluation).[43] In participatory art, according to Heinrich, because the participant is both the maker and evaluator of their aesthetic experience, they simultaneously combine *poeisis* and *aesthesis* in their actions and reflections.[44]

The inclusion of reflexivity as a vital component of Heinrich's concept of 'performative beauty' is extremely valuable in considering the design of play that has culturally transformative potential. I have questioned the tendency of immersive theatre to undercut critical thinking through the application of a powerful sensory affects and Heinrich offers a similar critique, delineating Renaissance art, which sought to draw a sharp distinction between reality and fiction, and Baroque art which aimed to overwhelm critical reflection. He argues that 'the baroque theatre was a place of spectacle where the creation of sensory affects by means of the stage

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[40] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 6.
[41] John Dewey, *Late Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), cited in Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 3-33.
[42] Falk Heinrich, 'Participatory Aesthetics: The Function of Imagination', in *An Old Melody in a New Song: Aesthetics and the Art of Psychology*, ed. by Luca Tateo (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), pp. 87-102. (p. 90).
[43] Rancière, *Emancipated*, p. 70.
[44] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 18.

machinery and constantly shifting set designs triggered the spectator's senses'[45] and claims that 'the baroque arts aimed at overwhelming the audience on sensory levels' so that 'reason was displaced by the senses'.[46] Heinrich carries this analysis of Baroque art forward to challenge immersion as an aesthetic value in participatory art because it de-individuates its participants, undercutting their capacity for subjective reflection as they are overwhelmed by sensory stimuli. He references Oliver Grau's discussions of the immersive environment of the Dionysian Revel Room in which all walls are painted with images of revelry, not as representations, but as sheer presence. Grau argues that 'the core of the Bacchic rites' consisted of 'physical and psychological immersion of the individual in the god to attain fulfilment' and suggests that such strategies trigger 'a regression of consciousness'.[47] Heinrich subsequently compares Dionysian immersion with the total theatre strategies of Antonin Artaud, whose work is, as I have previously mentioned, valorised by Josephine Machon in her discussion of immersive theatre:

> Immersion is associated with Dionysian formlessness and elimination of the reflective subject…Nietzsche tells us that the god of wine and ecstasy devours his devotees by wresting their reflective subjectivity from them. In the same vein, the theatre visionary Antonin Artaud conjured the devastating will of powerful presence (sheer action) on stage by destroying the semiotic veil of appearance.[48]

Heinrich's aversion to these immersive strategies is shared by Albu. In her account of participatory artworks that include mirrors and reflective surfaces she suggests that the literal pursuit of reflexivity is geared towards subverting 'the desire for complete immersion in visual spectacle' in favour of 'self-scrutiny and collective attunement' as individuals watch themselves watching others. The productive consequence of such 'self-scrutiny', for Albu, is that audience-participants are challenged to 'explore the potential

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[45] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 60.
[46] Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 221, cited in Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 60.
[47] Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 27, cited in Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 58.
[48] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 61.

for self-transformation and acquire critical distance from the social or political systems in which they are entangled'.[49]

These critical analyses of immersive strategies make a powerful case against sensory immersion as an aesthetic value in participatory art and an equally strong case for the value of reflexivity. Although Albu downplays the importance of language in the participatory works that she considers, for Heinrich the semiotic aspect of reflexive meaning making that occurs in 'to perform' is extremely important, resonating with my earlier discussion of Lev Vygotsky's idea that internal language use is a vital aspect of higher psychological processes. Heinrich argues that 'no work of art can do without a semiotic layer that allows for meaning affirmation by establishing a relation (and a difference) between the artwork and the surrounding world of which it is part'[50] and although this is a rather sweeping statement that should not be accepted uncritically, I see value in Heinrich's emphasis on the semiotic layer of meaning making. Essentially, the *poiesis* of participatory action generates simultaneous *aisthesis* through the application of representational signs in the form of internal language and I suggest, drawing on Vygotsky's theories, that this ability to think with words is integral to the development of abstract concepts that enable participants to connect their embodied experience with the abstract elsewhere that is the surrounding world.

In the same way that Vygotsky asserts that abstract thought is essential for creative imagination, Heinrich emphasises 'agential imagination' as the mechanism that 'condenses sense perceptions into possible representations, thus opening up a range of possible actions and their anticipated results'.[51] In considering this revelation of potentiality within a participatory artwork, Heinrich draws on Martin Heidegger's concept of *the clearing*, which involves an *unconcealment* of truth or meaning.[52] For Heinrich, the unconcealment of a clearing in digitally mediated participatory art involves agential action within responsive systems that provide feedback

[49] Albu, p. 258.
[50] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 68.
[51] Heinrich, 'Participatory Aesthetics', p. 93.
[52] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), cited in Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, pp. 52-53.

to the participant on the results of their actions, unfolding an awareness of further potentialities.[53] This unconcealment also involves a movement beyond the immediacy of perceiving *what* is being represented by the system towards a perception of the 'hypermediacy' of *how* the system operates.[54] In other words, a shift from the immediacy of perception and action in the here and now to the hypermediacy of perceiving *how* the system functions generates the unconcealment of meaning and a conscious awareness of future potentialities.

The shift from immediacy to hypermediacy directly connects with my arguments for a shift from an aesthetics of immersion towards an aesthetics of reflexivity. In contrast to immersive practices which seek to create a sensation of the sublime that leaves spectators awestruck by the magnitude of sensory overload, hypermediacy enables participants to effectively see through the sublime in the same way that Brecht sought to expose the mechanisms of theatrical illusion so that audiences could penetrate and fathom the complex social systems being represented.[55] Consequently, I contend that Heinrich's insistence on reflexive criticality, in addition to the sensory immediacy of 'to do' and 'to act', reaffirms my argument for interrupted flow that intermittently punctuates the intrinsic enjoyment of play with reflexive considerations of meaning that are related to the wider world in which play is situated.

Building on the accounts of participatory aesthetics offered by Heinrich and Kester, I argue that live action role-play exemplifies an approach to participatory art that foregrounds the creative agency of participants and productively situates the locus of aesthetic value in their reflexive considerations of subjective experiences. In his treatise on the aesthetics of action in Nordic larp, Jaakko Stenros argues larps are rule-bound and emergent,[56] and although the constraints of rules might seem to

[53] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 76.
[54] Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, p. 56.
[55] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), p. 141.
[56] Jaakko Stenros, 'Aesthetics of Action', *Jaakko Stenros: researcher, player, writer* (2013) <https://jaakkostenros.wordpress.com/2013/10/28/aesthetics-of-action/> [accessed 2 May 2019].

limit player agency and emergent possibility, my discussion of Bourdieu's field theory in relation to system design in games shows that structural constraints, far from precluding emergence, are, in fact, the contextual substance of it. In other words, the rules that frame live action role-play designs produce an emergent variability of outcomes as players are prompted to adapt to the explicit or implicit rules of the fictional context and apply their agency to create unpredictable narratives that build upon structural constraints.

In the same way that Kester's discussion of dialogical art focuses on the experiential value of intersubjective exchange, larp is a fundamentally co-creative activity that necessarily draws upon the subjectivities of players, and thereby their habitus, in enacting the work.[57] Preparatory workshops are common in larp practice, for example, enabling players to express their subjective agency in developing the culture of play in advance of the play activity itself.[58] Above all, the intersubjective process of playing larps is done for the intrinsic reward of aesthetic experience, without the presence of an audience. Consequently, according to Stenros, larp ought not to be viewed as a commodifiable art object composed of players' affective labour.[59] Stenros also suggests that the practices of Nordic Larp place a strong emphasis on reflexivity. Although early manifestos of larp valorised total immersion so that players could become one with their character,[60] more recent thinking has expressed the need to maintain reflexive awareness of the 'steering' that players exercise during play by holding onto an ongoing sense of their subjectivity as players, together with an awareness of how they apply their subjectively in manipulating the character being played.[61] Similarly, the

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[57] Markus Montola, 'Role-Playing as Interactive Construction of Subjective Diegeses', in *As Larp Grows Up: Theory and Methods in Larp*, ed. by Morton Gade, Line Thorup and Mikkel Sander (Copenhagen, Knudepunkt, 2003), pp. 82-89.
[58] Jaakko Stenros, 'What Does "Nordic Larp" Mean?', in *The Cutting Edge of Nordic Larp*, ed. by Jon Back (Stockholm: Knutpunkt, 2014), pp. 147-156 (p. 151).
[59] Jaakko Stenros, 'Nordic Larp: Theatre, Art and Game', in *Nordic Larp*, ed. by Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros (Stockholm: Fëa Livia, 2010), pp. 300-315 (p. 305).
[60] Mike Pohjola, 'Manifesto of the Turku School', *The Turku School of Roleplaying* (1999) <http://mikepohjola.com/turku/manifesto.html> [accessed 2 May 2019].
[61] Markus Montola, Jaakko Stenros and Eleanor Saitta, 'The Art of Steering: Bringing the Player and the Character Back Together', in *The Knudepunkt 2015 Companion Book*, ed. by Charles Bo Nielsen and Claus Raasted (Copenhagen: Rollespilsakadameit, 2015), pp. 106-117.

evaluative process of the *runda* in which facilitators conduct structured debriefs once players have made the liminal transition out of the magic circle is clearly conducive to reflexivity, inviting players to critically reflect on their play experiences and how they might relate to the wider world.[62]

In sum, understandings of larp as a rule-bound, emergent activity can enable participatory performance makers to apply the methods of game design to create flexible, non-linear narrative structures, while the co-creative qualities of larp can help practitioners to move beyond the aesthetic logic of the autonomous art object and embrace the experiential aesthetic of intersubjective play. Additionally, in contrast to the valorisation of sensory immersion, larp illustrates that clear framing of the activity as an interstitial construction promotes a reflexivity that enables players to critically evaluate their play experience in a wider context.[63] Consequently, I contend that there is fertile scope for applying the insights of Nordic larp, which can be seen as a form of creative practice that is simultaneously theatre, art and game,[64] in considering how the play of participatory performance might offer cultural transformative possibilities.

2.4 Summary

In this review of literature and creative practice, I have argued that the theory and practice of participatory performance can benefit greatly from deeper understandings of playful participation drawn from game studies, play anthropology and fine art. Although many theatre makers have sought to employ participatory methods in their work to depart from the coercive determinism of Aristotelian linear narrative, interactive performance structures often give an appearance of narrative variability and agency that is not delivered in actuality. My analysis of game studies has suggested that there are fruitful understandings to be drawn from distinguishing between

[62] Simo Järvelä and Karete Jacobsen Meland, 'Beyond Play: Functions and design of debriefs', in *Once Upon a Nordic Larp…Twenty Years of Playing Stories*, ed. by Linn Carin Andreassen, Simon Brind, Elin Nilsen, Grethe Sofie Strand and Martine Svanevik (Oslo: Knutepunkt, 2017), pp. 109-116.
[63] Stenros, 'Aesthetics of Action'.
[64] Stenros, 'Nordic Larp: Theatre, Art and Game'.

games of progression, which reaffirm procedural determinism, and games of emergence that apply systems thinking to open broader spaces of possibility in play. By applying a fuller understanding of how games function as responsive systems, I contend that participatory performance makers can enhance the creative volition that is offered to participants as co-authors of emergent play narratives.

Beyond the issues of narrative design and participant agency, contemporary participatory performance in the United Kingdom has focused strongly on the creation of immersive environments. As I have argued in my analysis of Josephine Machon's work, however, the pursuit of immersion can undermine reflexivity through its focus on strategies of sensory affect that generate the immediacy of presence in the now-moment, rather than a recursive and reflexive awareness of action over time. As Heinrich, Kester, Flanagan and Albu suggest, reflexivity is important in enabling participants in an artwork to engage in meaning making and, for my purposes, given my primary aim of investigating the culturally transformative potential of play, reflexivity is essential. It is important to state that my promotion of reflexivity does not imply a rejection of the immediate pleasures of play. Rather, my interest is in combining the immediacy of action with intermittent punctuations of reflexive thinking that enable participants to connect their play with the wider world in which it is situated.

Perhaps the most contentious issue raised in this chapter is the tendency to view participatory art works through the critical paradigm of the art object. Claire Bishop's discussion of participation in art focuses strongly on how the activity might be viewed and aesthetically evaluated by a secondary audience, while Adam Alston's argument that the affective labour of audience-participants is appropriated as aesthetic material to be consumed by other audience members suggests a vision of immersive theatre as a landscape of living art objects. In order to move beyond the normative primacy of the art object, I contend that a deeper understanding of play, with specific attention to the aesthetics of play, is required. As Thomas Henricks has suggested, play as ascending meaning tends to be concerned with the intrinsic enjoyment of the activity, while play activities

that pursue telic rewards of extrinsic motivation often become more like work. In other words, participatory play that serves the work of producing an art object is, arguably, no longer play and I have argued that the loss of intrinsic motivation in favour of extrinsic goals is likely to result in a display of existing capacities, diminishing the play of *adaptive variability* through which players repurpose their knowledge of the world in preparation for uncertain futures. In contrast to Bishop's focus on the art object, Kester's work reifies the notion of aesthetic experience and his emphasis on intersubjective exchange as a source of aesthetic value provides a strong response to Rancière's notion that an emancipatory redistribution of the sensible is to be found through autonomous perception and interpretation. Rather, in Kester's view, culturally transformative potential lies in the creation of interstitial works that respond to the habitus of participants, but also enable them to partially relinquish the constraints of habitus, to reshape their subjectivities by forming new relational connections with others.

To conclude, by drawing on the insights of game studies to design participatory performances as responsive systems, I contend that participatory agency and emergent narrative potential can be enhanced, and by reconceiving participatory performance as an aesthetic experience, rather than an art object, I suggest that players are more likely to engage in the exploratory play of adaptive variability that enables the development of new capacities. Fundamental to the culturally transformative potential of play, I suggest, is the ability of players to exercise reflexivity, and I argue that this is supported by adopting a critical perspective towards the aesthetics of immersion. Following the theory of 'performative beauty' offered by Falk Heinrich, I suggest that combination of sensory affects in the embodied play of *to do* with the agency of *to act* in a system of emergent possibility, together with the reflexivity of *to perform*, allows players to experience the intrinsic enjoyment of play, but also interrupt their flow and critically reflect on their activity, supporting their awareness of the adaptive variability that their play might enable and enhancing the potential for cultural transformations to occur.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This study is an investigation of the culturally transformative potential of play, conducted through research-led practice, in which engagement with theoretical material stimulates practical work that informs a retheorisation of ludic possibilities in participatory performance. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the practical methods that I have used in the various stages of this research, outlining my creative applications of games, larp and interactive performance. In addition to analysing methods of artistic research, this chapter considers the insights of social scientists on forms of Participatory Action Research which foreground the possibilities of collaborative enquiry between academics and public participants. Given that my practice is inherently participatory, certain ideas from PAR have been useful in formulating a methodology that seeks to promote the agency of participants and the culturally transformative potential of play. I also discuss the issue of how arts practice might be documented, as a foundation for my argument for participant-led self-documentation of play activities. Although my research is based in creative practice, artistic outputs do not serve as the research outcome of this enquiry. Instead, my practical work has informed the theorised engagement with participatory performance that is presented here. This chapter considers recent scholarship on the relationship between theory and practice in planning, conducting and evidencing arts-based practice research in order to contextualise my methodological approach.

3.1 Practical Methods of Participatory Research

In this section, I offer an introduction to the creative methods used in the various practical research activities undertaken in this study. It is important to stress that this retrospective articulation should not create the impression that there were fully fixed plans at the outset of each practical project. All projects placed me in unfamiliar situations, to greater or lesser extents, and despite my prior artistic experience, in all cases I was

challenged to develop new methods to meet the variable capacities and interests of participants. Effectively, my practical methods have evolved in collaboration with the people involved, prompting me to adapt pre-existing skills to formulate context-appropriate strategies. In pursuing a collaborative approach, theories of Participatory Action Research have been useful, since PAR explicitly aspires to challenge hierarchies of knowledge production, which distinguish the transcendent researcher from the participants who are treated as objects to be studied. In contrast, PAR is founded on the belief 'that human beings are dynamic agents capable of reflexivity and self-change, and an epistemology that accommodates the reflexive capacities of human beings within the research process'.[1] In their critique of 'research as usual',[2] Sarah Kindon and colleagues argue that researchers typically begin a project by identifying a problem or theme that meets their personal interests. Subsequently, they seek out communities of participants upon whom research can be conducted to address the questions they wish to investigate.[3] Aside from the hierarchical nature of this approach, the identification of communities of interest seems to presume a degree of homogeneity, with all individuals in the study being viewed through the lens of the research theme in question. From a PAR standpoint, this presumption of relative homogeneity in communities is problematic because 'if we understand community and commons to be processes and social relations rather than bounded and discrete entities, our participatory research would not so much search for these discrete entities but facilitate processes constitutive of community and commons'.[4]

The ideas noted above, despite being unrelated to artistic research, have informed my thinking in designing, playing and analysing play activities. Rather than seeking to create playful participatory performance works that express my own interests, my work has sought to develop a

[1] Sarah Kindon, Rachel Pain and Mike Kesby, eds., *Participatory Action Research: Connecting People, Participation and Place* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 13.
[2] Kindon, Pain and Kesby, p. 12.
[3] Kindon, Pain and Kesby, p. 1.
[4] Kevin St. Martin and Madeleine Hall-Arber, 'Environment and development: (Re)connecting community and commons in New England Fisheries, USA', in *Participatory Action Research: Connecting People, Participation and Place*, ed. by Sarah Kindon, Rachel Pain and Mike Kesby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 51-59. (p. 53).

dialogical engagement with participants that informs play designs, so that the enactment of play and its evaluation can enable players to critically reflect on issues of concern in their own lives. It is important to be explicit that the sites in which I have carried out practical work have not been sought out deliberately to interrogate any specific thematic interests. I have simply taken up opportunities that appeared to offer scope for useful research, irrespective of potential thematic content. In other words, rather than pursuing pre-planned thematic priorities that required the targeting of specific sites or social groups, I have responded to the issues that participants wished to address and adapted my methods to provide context appropriate play activities that could most effectively support their creative explorations.

A centrally important aspect of my practical work has been a continual attentiveness to the physical and emotional safety of research participants. My project received ethical approval from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University in March 2017, but in addition to formal ethical procedures, such as the use of participant consent forms, I have solicited the consent of participants on an ongoing basis. The Nordic larp practices that have informed my practical approach place strong emphasis on player safety, foregrounding the importance of transparency in telling players what the activity will entail so that they can give informed consent when opting-in to the event. Despite having given initial consent, however, ongoing consent is not assumed. Instead, players are given mechanisms through which they can opt-out of the activity or even halt it entirely.[5] Borrowing from the safety techniques of Nordic larp, in all the exercises, role-plays and games that are described in this thesis, players were told, at the outset, what the activity would involve and that they could opt-out of it at any time, for whatever reason, with no questions asked. Additionally, players were told that if, at any point, they were uncomfortable with the content of the play activities they could call a halt to them immediately. Given the fact that many of the exercises undertaken included

[5] Simo Järvelä, 'The Golden Rule of Larp', in *The Foundation Stone of Nordic Larp*, ed. by Eleanor Saitta, Marie-Holm Andersen and Jon Back (Gråsten, DK: Knutpunkt, 2014), pp. 169-175.

personal stories from the lived experience of participants, it is important to emphasise that their consent was continually requested so that they could withdraw from, and stop, any activities that created physical or emotional discomfort.

3.1.1 *Haringey Projects*

In the Haringey projects, which are the focus of my discussions in Chapter 4, the physical and mental infirmity of participants and the limited English language affordances of some individuals meant that the range of practical activities that I could attempt was quite limited. My first priority was to investigate the habitus of participants with the aim of using this contextual research as a precursor to designing system-based games modelling their fields of social experience. My approach in exploring the habitus of participants was to apply Constantin Stanislavki's methods of 'given circumstances' analysis,[6] focusing on three key questions in establishing the contextual circumstances of scenarios from participants' lived experiences: WHERE? WHEN? WHO? In practical terms, this involved asking participants about meaningful places, times and people in their lives, in a process that I have termed 'habitus mining'. Essentially, habitus mining can be understood as an endeavour to excavate the cultural particularities of individuals by gathering stories of their experiences to progressively build a picture of how their capital affordances have shaped their life trajectory. In critically reflecting on 'habitus mining' as a method, I have recognised that a person's habitus cannot be seen merely as a body of latent content that can be extracted by the researcher. Instead, I have found it more productive to view this process as a dialogic construction, or forging, of insights into the habitus of individuals. Nonetheless, habitus mining through dialogue has remained a useful concept in considering how play can be designed in response to the cultural particularities of participants.

[6] Constantin Stanislavksi, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 43-44.

Following the habitus mining, I attempted to use the material generated in a process of system analysis as the basis for game design. A system analytic game design approach seeks to identify the active *objects* in a system, their *internal relationships* and their *attributes* as the basis for creating goals and game mechanics that drive play action, together with rules that constrain it. Progressing from habitus mining to system design proved to be difficult, however, because the life experiences of the participants were incredibly divergent, making it difficult to create games that could meaningfully model the wide diversity of experiences that they had told me about. Consequently, my play design approach changed to focus on more open-ended *paidic* activities, influenced by methods of larp. Larp in the Nordic tradition includes a broad plurality of approaches, but it frequently seeks to create loose frameworks whereby designers offer prompts for player creativity rather than orchestrating fully realised systems of play. Larps will often include preparatory workshops that lead players through a sequence of actions that establish general understandings of what the activity will entail, prior to more detailed co-creation of aspects like scenography, character roles and relations to cumulatively meet the 'hierarchy of needs' that enable players to take part in collaborative story-making.[7] Play theorist Marjukka Lampo describes the co-creative development of larp as an 'ecological' approach whereby players receive a series of stimuli within the conceptual frame of the scenario and generate responses that co-construct the fabric of play. Lampo describes this co-creation process as a kind of 'meshwork' that is emergent rather than prescribed by the designer.[8]

In practical terms, my play workshops have asked participants to create fictional scenarios by imagining places and characters through drawing, storytelling or the arrangement of objects, in much the same way

[7] Abraham Maslow, 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50:4 (1943), 370-396, cited in Maryia Karachun, Yauheni Karachun, Olga Rudak and Nastassia Sinitsyna, 'The Workshop Pyramid', in *Once Upon a Nordic Larp…Twenty Years of Playing Stories*, ed. by Linn Carin Andreassen, Simon Brind, Elin Nilsen, Grethe Sofie Strand and Martine Svanevik (Oslo: Knutepunkt, 2017), pp. 105-108.
[8] Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 80-82, cited in Marjukka Lampo, 'Ecological Approach to the Performance of Larping', *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 5 (2016), 35-46 (pp. 36-37).

that larp workshops invite players to build their scenarios of play. I then offered sequences of prompts to invite participants to enact an intersubjective 'interweaving' of their contributions to create emergent stories, in line with Lampo's description of the 'meshwork' concept.[9] For example, following the early habitus mining, which focused primarily on places that were meaningful for participants, I created collaborative story-making exercises in which players responded to locations that others had described, creating fictional characters in these contexts and narrating their actions.[10] One participant, Yamini,[11] discussed the rural environment of her upbringing in Tanzania and described the mango plantations near where she lived. Subsequently, I sourced a picture of a mango field in Tanzania and invited another player, Ravi, to invent a character in this location. He then imagined a farmer and built upon a detail in the picture (the presence of water pipes) to describe his hopes for rain and the fear that the crop would fail if the land became too dry. Yamini then completed the story by narrating a journey to the market with a relatively meagre crop. Effectively, play processes of this kind provided a series of stimuli that invited players to create the contexts for their play, translating the 'given circumstances' from players' lived experience into new sets of fictional circumstances for imaginative story-making.

3.1.2 *Playground Projects*

Unlike the Haringey projects, the Playgrounds, which are described in Chapters 5 and 6, did not involve in depth 'habitus mining' of participants' life experiences. Instead, the projects sought to interrogate the artistic habitus of those involved by considering the creative forms that they had previously employed (from interactive theatre to art installations) and inviting them to experimentally adapt their methods through exposure to techniques of game design, larp and interactive performance. The workshops

[9] Lampo, p. 43.
[10] See Appendix B.5 for the structure of the *Journey Dialogue* play exercise.
[11] Throughout this thesis, I use pseudonyms for participants to maintain confidentiality. The pseudonyms have been selected to give an indication of participants' cultural backgrounds. Names included in footnotes are written in inverted commas to maintain the reader's awareness that the name given is a pseudonym.

were typically split into two halves, with the first half featuring the playing of an activity that I had designed, followed by the setting of a design task in the second. The work on game design focused on system analysis, challenging participants to interrogate real-world systems and convert the contents of their analyses into simple, rule-based games. Conversely, experiments with larp design asked them to loosen their artistic grip by designing stimuli for player action rather than orchestrating it. Lastly, work with interactive performance tasked the groups with creating simple dramatic scenarios in which audience-participants were endowed with generic roles that fulfilled a function in a pre-prepared performance.

In developing interactive performance works in the Playground project, I set participants the task of creating fictional scenarios in which social groups, faced with some kind of dilemma, invited 'visitors' (to be played by the audience members) to engage with the group and play some role in helping them to resolve the issue.[12] For example, one group created an interactive performance that focused on a living 'fatberg' (a congealed mass of fat found in sewer systems) and its baby, who were faced with eviction by the local council from their subterranean home. Audience members were given the role of members of the public, who were invited by council officials to engage in a consultation exercise which involved visiting the fatbergs in their sewer and making decisions about their fate. Clearly, this role was highly generic and served primarily as a stimulus for the performance of internal conflicts between the council staff (played by the designers of the piece) on what to do with the fatbergs. In approaching this type of interactive performance design, I was transparent with participants about my personal preference for creative forms offering greater degrees of participant agency, but many participants came from interactive theatre backgrounds (and wished to develop their skills in this area), so I felt that it was important to explore a variety of approaches beyond my own preferences. In response to the range of performance methods that the Playgrounds investigated, towards the end of each project, participants were invited to compare and contrast the various forms they had encountered and select those that they

[12] See Appendix B.22 for the structure of the 'Visitors' play design exercise.

were most interested in employing to create original pieces of participatory performance work.

3.1.3 *Trumpington, Peartree Bridge & Hackney Wick Projects*

The Trumpington and Peartree Bridge projects, which are discussed in Chapter 6, were both focused on exploring the subjective attitudes of participants towards their local areas. As such, I wanted to investigate the habitus of those involved, but rather than conducting in-depth interviews in preparation for play designs, I sought to conduct 'habitus mining' through play itself. Drawing again on methods of larp workshop design, I invited participants to describe places and people in their actual environment and use these descriptions as stimuli for inventing fictional scenarios. In one exercise in the Peartree Bridge project, participants were invited to imagine the most important places in the neighbourhood and build abstract representations of them by placing objects on blankets to symbolise locations like the bus stop or convenience store. Each player then imagined a character in a location that someone else had created. Subsequently, the role-play involved character rotation so that each participant played all the roles within the fiction, offering the opportunity to occupy multiple viewpoints on issues of concern in the area.[13] In reflecting on the exercise, which featured a quite optimistic story of creating a community garden collective, one participant, Lysbeth, commented on the value of adopting alternative viewpoints in relation to her negative views on the area:

> *This town never brought me any happiness, but it was interesting because different people can have different feelings about the same subject. I find this place is a depressing place, but you might not think it's depressing. You might think it's an interesting place…Its interesting, it really is. It gets our imagination going…I'm always moaning that nothing ever happens, but here we've done it.*[14]

This example is illustrative of my approach to creating role-play activities in which players could actively reflect on their feelings about the neighbourhood within fictional frames that enabled them to express their

[13] See Appendix B.10 for the structure of the *Overcoding* play exercise.
[14] 'Lysbeth', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (4 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge4'.

views a little more freely than they might ordinarily have felt able to. In the same way that the Haringey projects used sequences of prompts to generate intersubjective story invention, a key focus in the design of the activities in Peartree Bridge was the collaborative overlap of participant subjectivities. Essentially, this challenged participants, many of whom did not know each other, to take the creative material originated by their partners and build upon it to create palimpsest story formations that encouraged them to engage with alternative perspectives that might defamiliarize their outlook.

The final section of Chapter 6 includes discussion of *Migrations of Cool*, a street-game that I designed during a residency at the Arebyte Gallery in the Hackney Wick area of East London.[15] Unlike the other projects in this study, this work was not founded on extended engagement with participants in a particular site. Instead, I explored Hackney Wick by walking and conducting online research to design a system-based game about the role of artists in processes of gentrification, linking with Hackney Wick's status as a regeneration hotspot. The game was played twice by small groups of artists and engaged their artistic habitus by inviting them to create fictional artist collectives as part of a pre-game workshop process. In addition to creating these artistic character roles, they were asked to create fictional property development companies. Subsequently, the game play challenged them to periodically switch between their artist and property developer roles with the aim of stimulating a reflexive oscillation between different perspectives on the urban space. Despite the fact that my endeavour to apply system-based game design in the Haringey Community Hub project proved to be problematic, my discussion of *Migrations of Cool* maintains the value of systemic thinking in play. The creation of a system-based game that simulated the interconnections of property development, artistic activity and residential housing estates challenged participants to experiment with various strategies for how artists might interact with their environments, either by collaborating with local groups, participating in the community engagement initiatives of property developers or by seeking to create independent zones of autonomous artistic activity.

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[15] See Appendix B.7 for the rule set of *Migrations of Cool*.

To summarise this section, my methods in this study have built on my existing knowledge of theatre, game design and larp, but my creative techniques have had to give way, to greater or lesser extents, to the requirements of particular sites of research and the people within them. I see great value, however, in an instability of methods, or 'methodological bricolage', whereby the researcher responds to new contexts and devises new methods as and when they are needed.[16] Rather than maintaining a rigid adherence to existing artistic forms, therefore, this study has sought to develop new methods that are generative of unpredictable practical outcomes and equally unpredictable ideas.

3.2 Politics & Aesthetics of Performance Documentation

The question of how practice might be documented is a core concern of practice research methodologies in the arts. In this section, I outline arguments for and against different forms of performance documentation, prior to setting out my argument that if the aesthetic value of participatory performance lies in participants' experience, participatory arts researchers might usefully promote participant-led self-documentation, so that the people at the heart of the work can play a central role in documenting it. A common refrain of performance scholars is that documentation of performance is a betrayal of its ephemeral liveness and given that the live experience of play is central to my practical work, I have also taken a cautious approach to documenting my practice. The challenge of creating 'recordable' knowledge in the context of postgraduate practice research in performance is highlighted by Angela Piccini and Caroline Rye who suggest that 'unless praxis can be directly experienced, assessment is typically made by way of documentation that always inevitably (re)constructs the practice such that the thing itself remains elusive'.[17] Aside from the difficulty of

[16] Matt Rogers, 'Contextualising Theories and Practices of Bricolage Research', *The Qualitative Report*, 17:48 (2012), 1-17 (p. 6).
[17] Angela Piccini and Caroline Rye, 'Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation', in *Practice-as-Research in performance and screen*, ed. by Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 34-49, cited in Robin Nelson, ed., *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 5.

effectively capturing and archiving the ephemeral event of live performance, there is a troubling tendency to revere archives as bastions of authoritative knowledge. Matthew Reason suggests that performance archives can be constructed and excavated by researchers in ways that reaffirm imbalances of power. He references Helen Freshwater's suggestion that 'the temptation of making a claim to the academic authority conferred by undertaking "proper research" may prove irresistible for the researcher utilising archival material', and argues that 'allure of archive' might cause researchers to disregard the power dynamics that lead to the inclusion of certain archival documents (and the voices they contain) to the exclusion of others.[18] For example, the potential power imbalance of the archive is readily apparent in the documentary practices of artist Marina Abramović, as discussed in a recent article by Adriana Disman. Disman describes how, in her performance work *The Artist is Present*, Abramović made it mandatory for each audience member to be photographed when visiting the performance installation, which effectively 'conscripted' them into the artist's archive, leaving each person 'objectified' as a 'performing product'.[19]

Despite the political issues at stake in archival construction and despite the fact that documentation can never hope to perfectly replicate a performance, I do not advocate an outright avoidance of documentary recording of performance, because without some trace of the live event, performance disappears and becomes unknowable. The issue of documentation of participatory art has been highlighted by Claire Bishop who complains that a secondary audience has no way of understanding a work that they were not directly involved in if there is no photographic evidence to view.[20] I argue, however, that it is important to question the use of photographic documentation of play in participatory performance, not only because there is a substantial difference between the experience of play

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[18] Helen Freshwater, 'The Allure of the Archive', *Poetics Today: International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication*, 24:4 (2003), 729-758 (pp. 731-735), cited in Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 42-47.
[19] Adriana Disman, 'Performance Art, Pornography and the Mis-spectator: The Ethics of Documenting Participatory Performance', *Canadian Theatre Review*, 162 (2015), 46-51 (p. 50).
[20] Claire Bishop*, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), pp. 5-6.

and its pictorial depiction but also because of the political partiality of those who control the camera. Theorists of image-based qualitative research have highlighted how the producers of photographs and films can manipulate perception through the strategic orchestration of what is included, and omitted, from an image. A clear example can be found in Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* documentary, which shows a family of crofters 'laboriously transforming a rocky field into soil using seaweed'.[21] What the film-maker does not show, however, according to a subsequent film, *How the Myth Was Made: A Study of Robert Flaherty's Man of Aran*, is that next to the rocky field are perfectly good portions of farm land which 'belonged to absentee owners, a complication with which Flaherty simply did not wish to deal'.[22] Essentially, the myth-making of the hardy, indomitable *Man of Aran* is the result of highly selective filming practices that intentionally omit the full picture.

In the context of participatory arts research, the partiality of a researcher using a camera to document the activity is problematic because it is likely that they will seek out images that meet their specific interests and, potentially, the ideas that they wish to affirm. This hierarchical loading of documentary agency in the photographic tools of the researcher has been challenged by proponents of PAR who have sought out alternative examples of participant-led documentation. For example, Donald Snowden's *Fogo Island Project*, a pioneering participatory video initiative conducted with the inhabitants of Fogo Island, Newfoundland in 1967, is described by Geoffrey Hume-Cook and colleagues, who argue that:

> By putting community researchers behind as well as in front of the camera and by facilitating a process of community feedback on the films produced, research participants became 'meaning makers' who explored and worked to change their own 'realities' through the production and analysis of video products.[23]

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[21] Brian Winston, '"The Camera Never Lies": The Partiality of Photographic Evidence', in *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers,* ed. by Jon Prosser (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 1998), pp. 60-68 (p. 63).
[22] Winston, p. 63.
[23] Geoffrey Hume-Cook, Thomas Curtis, Kirsty Woods, Joyce Potaka, Adrian Tangaroa Wagner and Sarah Kindon, 'Uniting people with place using participatory video in Aotearoa / New Zealand: a Ngᵃti Hauiti journey', in *Participatory Action Research: Connecting People, Participation and Place*, ed. by Sarah Kindon, Rachel Pain and Mike Kesby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 160-169 (p. 161).

Reason notes, however, that the presence of cameras in a performance context materially affects the artwork being performed, suggesting that 'the camera tends to exert a sort of authority that shapes a situation it is intended to simply reveal or fix'.[24]

In discussing the attractions of video as a documentation tool, Reason suggests that it is relatively accessible, cheap and portable, offering the promise of immediacy, 'with the production process being close, direct and instant, which in turn favours an aesthetics, an ideology of immediacy'.[25] This point is affirmed by Jonah Westerman who argues that mediatized capture of performance is ironically now a pre-condition for its 'liveness' and immediacy. In other words, performance and document are now seen as the same thing, with the result that 'the moment of creation lasts forever, projected into the future, secured by the form of the document'.[26] I argue that in video and photographs, immediacy refers not only to the 'nowness' of the image but also the clarity of the information it holds. Viewed in these terms, the aesthetics of immediacy promise direct access to the now-moment of the performance action being represented and a direct depiction of the material substance of this action, which is described by Roland Barthes as the 'studium' of the image.[27] This kind of immediacy threatens to undermine a principle which is extremely important, I contend, in any research enquiry: reflexivity. Immediacy in time holds the viewer of an image in a perpetual now-moment which can limit a reflexive comparison between the 'now' and that which has preceded it or the future that may follow on from it. Similarly, the immediacy of space that exists in the mimetic image limits reflexivity since the studium offers immediate, uncomplicated discernibility. Robin Nelson claims that the incompleteness of the photographic image as a depiction of a performance event 'effectively draws attention to the device of

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[24] Douglas Rosenberg, *Video Space: A Site for Choreography*, Dziga Vertov Performance Group (2002) <www.dvpg.net/docs/videospace.pdf> [accessed October 2005], cited in Reason, *Documentation*, p. 82.
[25] Reason, *Documentation*, p. 77.
[26] Jonah Westerman, 'Practical Histories: How We Do Things with Performance', in *Histories of Performance Documentation: Museum, Artistic and Scholarly Practices*, ed. by Gabriella Giannachi and Jonah Westerman (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1-12 (p. 9).
[27] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Cape, 1981), pp. 25-28.

construction rather than presuming immediacy'.[28] I argue, however, that the constructedness of a documentary image can only be foregrounded if the producer of the image intentionally avoids creating the immediacy of the now moment and the immediacy of readily discernible content. Consequently, I have opted not to use video or photographic cameras to document my practical work, not because the camera lies, but because it appears to tell the immediately discernible truth.

In contrast with the apparent lucidity of photographic documentation outlined above, Reason makes what I see as an extremely productive proposition in theorising performance documentation with his idea of an archive composed of detritus.[29] Whereas the immediacy of the photographic image purports to display authoritative depictions of performance, detritus creates a fragmentary picture that invites the viewer to look beyond the immediacy of discernible objects, enabling greater reflexivity and a space of possibility for emergent meaning to be generated:

> The idea of detritus as archive is also not so far from the state of all archives: but the archive as detritus turns around the presumptions of neutral detachment, objectivity, fidelity, consistency and authenticity: instead claiming partiality, fluidity, randomness and memory.[30]

In considering the idea of an archive of detritus, I see strong parallels with the literary and theatrical theories of defamiliarization, or estrangement, propounded by, respectively, Viktor Shklovsky[31] and Bertolt Brecht,[32] which suggest that the familiar should be made strange to prolong perception and require a greater level of perceptive and imaginative effort from the viewer or reader. A positive valuation of documentary detritus that exceeds immediate discernibility can be found in Yvon Bonenfant's discussion of 'plethora' in documentation. Bonenfant suggests that such excess, 'is impossible to distil, refine, or simplify…without cheating it of its complexity – not just in artistic

[28] Nelson, p. 86.
[29] Reason, *Documentation*, p. 53.
[30] Reason, *Documentation*, p. 54.
[31] Viktor Skhlovsky, 'Art as Device', in *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader*, ed. and trans. by Alexandra Berlina. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 73-96 (p. 80).
[32] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 143-145.

but also in research terms'.[33] She goes on to claim that plethoric excess can be extremely valuable as 'layers and layers of contrasting types of data can be plundered, juxtaposed, rearranged, viewed at new angles, listened to, touched and otherwise sensed and cognitively processed in order to suggest new sets of assertions and observations'.[34]

In addition to assemblages of defamiliarized material items that invite imaginative constructions of meaning, memory is an important aspect of the flotsam and jetsam of detritus. Reason acknowledges the fallibility of testimony, citing Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham who argue that 'surely the very ephemerality of individual memories should make it suspect as a reliable record of a performance truth'.[35] He subsequently retorts, however, that 'if we value performance in terms of its time-based transience, its disappearance, then memory must be a more appropriate site for any trace or afterlife than the frozen and unchanging archive'.[36] It is important to add that the archive of detritus can also contain embodied memory. Diana Taylor's concept of 'the repertoire' which refers to 'a treasury, or inventory' of embodied knowledge that can be transmitted through 'performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge'[37] suggests that archives need not be seen solely as collections of documentary items. Rather, the 'repertoire' archive is something that is performed (or played) into (re)existence. This notion that performance itself can serve as documentation of prior performances can be linked to the PAR concept of 'participatory snowballing'.[38] This effectively involves the reperformance, in new contexts,

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[33] Yvon Bonenfant, 'PAR produces plethora, extended voices are plethoric, and why plethora matters', in *Performance as Research: Knowledge, Methods, Impact*, ed. by Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude and Ben Spatz (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 224-248 (p. 224).
[34] Bonenfant, p. 242.
[35] Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham, 'More-and-Less-Than: Liveness, Video Recording and the Future of Performance', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 16:1 (2000), 88-96 (p. 91), cited in Reason, *Documentation*, p. 50.
[36] Reason, *Documentation*, p. 51.
[37] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 20.
[38] Maria Stuttaford and Chris Coe, 'Participatory learning: opportunities and challenges', in *Participatory Action Research: Connecting People, Participation and Place*, ed. by Sarah Kindon, Rachel Pain and Mike Kesby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 188-195 (p. 191-193).

of behaviours that were enacted during the original research, and I argue in Chapter 5 of this thesis that the reperformance of the Playground project, in which four of the original participants returned as co-facilitators of Playground 2, offers an example of 'participatory snowballing' as a form of embodied documentation of prior performances.

In the context of participatory art, I contend that the documentation of performance through the embodied memory of participants productively shifts the balance of power in documentation from artistic hegemony towards greater participant agency and also reconfigures the locus of aesthetic value in the work. My practice in participatory performance conceives aesthetic value as being located in the subjective experience of participants and, in this study, I have attended to participant experience by inviting players to verbally reflect on their play activities, making audio recordings of these conversations. Central to my approach, however, is the promotion of participant agency and I have investigated how participants might document their own experience as subject agents, rather than solely being documented from the viewpoint of the artist-researcher. Participant-led self-documentation has taken the form of embodied memory, but it has also included other forms of detritus like written notes, drawings and diagrams that have helped participants record or remember their experience in ways that meet their interests. Making this argument for a fragmentary archive of participant-led self documentations raises questions, however, regarding the possibilities and limitations of using participatory arts documentation to evidence a research enquiry. Consequently, the last section of this chapter questions whether practice and its documentation should necessarily be expected to serve as evidence, within a broader consideration of the relationship between theory and methods in planning and conducting arts-based practice research.

3.3 Reconceiving Theory, Methods & Evidence in Practice Research

In this section, I set out an approach to research-led practice which views theoretical investigation as a stimulus for exploratory methods that generate new ideas, which can then be presented in written form. My

arguments respond to Robin Nelson's tripartite theory of artistic practice research which comprises 'know-that' (existing knowledge that can form a conceptual framework for research), 'know-how' (the practical skills of the artist-researcher) and 'know-what' which refers to the insights drawn from praxis.[39] Within Nelson's proposed triumvirate of knowing is the premise that if practice is to be considered as research, it must be underpinned by a 'conceptual framework' of know-that, which defines the research questions that the practice seeks to answer.[40] The value of theoretical concepts as stimuli for practical research is also articulated in Hazel Smith and Roger Dean's advocacy of 'research-led practice':

> Our experience of postgraduate supervision…convinced us that practitioners who were uncomfortable with research (particularly theory) often benefitted from exposure to it early on in their degrees and that, in some areas, this was more likely to create a paradigm shift in their thinking when working outwards from creative practice.[41]

This description of a 'paradigm shift' in the thinking of the postgraduate artist-researcher accurately maps onto my own experience. In my case, theoretical explorations have significantly expanded my imaginative sense of what my practice could be, so although my work is based in practice I see my practical work as research-led practice, with theory influencing an emergent exploration of play in participatory performance that draws on my previous creative 'know-how' but also departs into unknown artistic territory.

The foregrounding of scholarly research as a primer for creative work that is offered by Smith and Dean might seem to align with Nelson's combination of conceptual frameworks with the artistic activity of know-how. I argue, however, that there is a significant difference between theory that stimulates practical exploration and know-that which *frames* (and thereby, potentially, constrains) the know-how of the artist-researcher. Nelson argues that although the know-how of artist-researchers should be flexible, it is important for them to retain a clear sense of *why* they are applying their

[39] Nelson, pp. 40-47.
[40] Nelson, p. 65.
[41] Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, eds., *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 9.

creativity. In other words, the theoretical framework (know-that) which is used to establish the 'problem solving' task of the research, should maintain a consistent position in the mind of the artist-researcher as they consider the practice in which they are engaged.[42] This emphasis on consistent awareness of theoretical frameworks in practice research is problematised by Simon Grennan who argues that 'the "creative production" researcher is motivated by the desire for practical activity per se, rather than by the desire to frame and solve problems to an adjudicated template'.[43] Similarly, Baz Kershaw argues that 'the more rigorously consistent the research design, the greater may be the chances of missing out on producing reflexive results'.[44]

In challenging consistency as a value in artistic research, I am not advocating the abandonment of clearly defined questions as the core of the enquiry. My concern is that although Nelson gives a positive of appraisal of variability within the know-how of method, this variability appears to remain bounded and restricted by an overly consistent know-that of established theoretical knowledge. By contrast, my theoretical investigations have provoked an exploration of new practical methods that can be described as 'not-know-how'. In conducting my research, I have found myself in settings for which I have been unprepared (having never previously worked with elderly people, for example) and I have been required to devise new and untested methods to meet the requirements of unfamiliar contexts. Consequently, it has not been possible to maintain consistency in the application of these methods or a consistent linkage with the theoretical frameworks that prompted their creation. Essentially, my proposition of exploratory 'not-know-how' is an argument for the value of abductive enquiry, as opposed to a deductive model of research. In his discussion of practice documentation, Nelson uses a mathematical equation as a metaphor, arguing that 'presentation of process as evidence....is similar to

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[42] Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books/Perseus, 1983), p. 69, cited in Nelson, p. 65.
[43] Stephen Scrivener, 'Reflection in and on action and practice in creative-production doctoral projects in art and design', *Working Papers in Art and Design*, 1 (2000), cited in Simon Grennan, 'Arts Practice and Research: Locating Alterity and Expertise', *The International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 34:2 (2015), 249-259 (p. 252).
[44] Baz Kershaw, 'Practice as Research through Performance', in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, ed. by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 104-124 (p. 117).

showing the workings, rather than simply the conclusion of a mathematical calculation'. Nelson acknowledges that 'the difference, perhaps, is that the mathematical problem also has an answer while an arts practice is not analytic in this way'[45] but this analogy does suggest a somewhat positivistic impulse to view practical know-how as a means of deductively solving a problem or proving a theoretical hypothesis. By contrast, artist and scholar Graeme Sullivan highlights the limitations of deductive enquiry in creative practice:

> Recent studies in cognitive neuroscience offer tantalising evidence that 'insight' is a consequence of precisely the opposite approach to the thinking advocated by the clinical model of inquiry that promotes progressive focusing, the elimination of confounding variables and distractions and exercising control. It is this attention to detail that is framed by prior knowledge that can limit creative links that may lead to insightful outcomes.[46]

This emphasis on the restrictions imposed by 'prior knowledge' is particularly useful, for my purposes, in proposing research-led practice that is based in not-know-how. I argue that although theoretical investigation prompts artistic action, this need not form a rigid frame of prior knowledge that limits the unpredictable creative possibilities inherent in not-know-how. Instead, my theoretical investigations have provided a springboard into an exploration of practical methods that are informed, but not constrained, by prior knowledge.

Having described an approach to research-led practice in which exploratory practical activities are stimulated by theoretical investigation, I will now consider the role of practice within the overall research enquiry, setting out an argument for practice as a method that yields insights which can be presented in a theoretical research outcome. Nelson argues that although artist-researchers may see practical outputs as central to their research, the research enquiry is something broader, incorporating documentation of practice and complimentary writings.[47] This separation of

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[45] Nelson, p. 63.
[46] Graeme Sullivan, 'Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research', in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, ed. by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 41-64 (p. 48).
[47] Nelson, pp. 34-37.

a research enquiry from an artistic output resonates with the work of Ben Spatz who argues for a delineation between research practice and artistic outcomes that have a public performance dimension. In discussing his work with actors in training who complained about their studio-based scene study because 'no one would see it', he exclaims:

> *No one would see it.* As if seeing were the only way to be transformed by technique. As if the enactment of technique in one's own body could not be just as transformative as seeing it practiced by someone else – or even more so.[48]

The central point of Spatz's argument is that the persistent focus on the production of performative outcomes that are presented to audiences neglects the transformative potential of practice (without an audience) as an ongoing means of creating knowledge. I am attracted to the proposal that the outcome of practice research in the arts need not focus predominantly on an artistic output. In my practice, the locus of aesthetic value lies in the subjective experiences of participants rather than in a performative art object that is to be scrutinised by external observers. It follows from this that if my practice were to be considered a research outcome, the impact of this outcome would be limited to a relatively small number of participants and even if documentations of their experiences were widely disseminated, the particular thematic content of these experiences might have little relevance for secondary audiences. Consequently, my documentation of practical research activities has been limited to making audio recordings of participant reflections on play experiences with no attempt to create lucid renderings of the play itself. These audio recordings should not, I suggest, be seen as documentary representations of play. Rather, they stand as traces of my research enquiry which are connected to (but distinct from) the play experiences that have been recorded or remembered by players in ways that meet their own purposes. Essentially, in this study, the participants and the researcher were engaged in two interrelated (but distinct) activities: the participants engaged in play and self-documented their experience in whatever ways they saw fit, while I, as the researcher, created records of the

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[48] Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 7.

practical explorations of my enquiry, not as authoritative representations of performative outputs, but as traces of the evolution of my research.

The distinction between methods of practical exploration and performance outputs is considered in the latter chapters of Nelson's book by several contributors who provide alternative views on the place of practice within a research enquiry and I have found it beneficial to consider a question for artist-researchers on this issue, posed by Annette Arlander:

> It could be useful to try to choose whether you use your artistic practice as data (as in qualitative research), as method (as in some types of practice-led research) or as research outcome (as in most practice as research).[49]

My response to this range of options has been to reconceive my practice as a *method* which yields participatory experiences that stimulate the development of new theories of participatory performance and play design that can be articulated in the research outcome of a written thesis. Given that my practice is a method of research rather than a research outcome, I now want to question the notion that arts practice and its documentation must serve to evidence the research enquiry. As I have previously articulated, Nelson advocates a hybrid approach that combines the conceptual frameworks of know-that with the variability of practical know-how, leading to know-what which combines the previous two aspects of his tripartite theory. According to Nelson, this approach:

> While fully recognising the importance of close-up, tacit, haptic, know-how seeks a means to establish as fully as possible an articulation of 'liquid knowing'…into the know-what of shared and corroborated knowledge, in turn resonating with the harder know-that of established conceptual frameworks.[50]

Nelson's reference to 'resonance' forms a key aspect of his theorisation of practice research with the aim of lifting praxis out of the instability of 'liquid knowing' so that the tacit can become more explicit by establishing resonances between know-what and know-that. I contend, however, that despite his claims to the contrary, Nelson's emphasis on resonance leans

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[49] Annette Arlander, 'Artistic Research in a Nordic Context', in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, ed. by Robin Nelson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 152-162 (p. 162).
[50] Nelson, p. 60.

towards a positivistic pursuit of knowledge whereby theoretical propositions are tested in practice and confirmed or disconfirmed, leading to documentation data that are used as proofs in theorising the know-what. Essentially, the aspiration to produce resonance suggests a cycle of practice research that aims to go full circle in the manner of a mathematical QED. Indeed, the very concept of using 'data' to prove a hypothesis is contestable. Svend Brinkmann, for example, problematises the assumption that data are 'givens' that the researcher collects to solve a problem linked to pre-existing theory. Rather, he argues, drawing on John Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, that knowing is always a relational construction that follows from a 'breakdown' of understandings based on familiar routines.[51] This leads Brinkmann to challenge deductive thinking in favour of abductive enquiry in which we 'stumble upon' new ideas rather than harvesting data to confirm or challenge existing concepts.[52] Similarly, Pil Hansen contests the givenness of data arguing that:

> Phenomena are believed neither to exist ontologically in and of themselves nor to be accessible through objective methods of observation; they emerge relationally, through active and embodied engagement which is also how they are accessed.[53]

Hansen subsequently argues for a 'methodological mutability' that is prepared to make 'a radical dismissal of documentation, analysis, synthesis, or other forms of knowledge extraction' and challenges the model of research in which data are used as proofs of theoretical propositions by suggesting that 'if hypotheses are used, they are abductive jumps or kick-starters of a process, not theories to be proven right or wrong'.[54]

Brinkmann and Hansen's ideas are valuable, for my purposes, because they affirm my desire to avoid the collection of documentation data to prove pre-existing concepts. In my practical work, the know-that of

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[51] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960 [1929]), cited in Svend Brinkmann, 'Doing Without Data', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20:6 (2014), 720-725 (pp. 721-722).
[52] Brinkmann, p. 723.
[53] Pil Hansen, 'Research-Based Practice: Facilitating Transfer across Artistic, Scholarly and Scientific Inquiries', in *Performance as Research: Knowledge, Methods, Impact*, ed. by Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude and Ben Spatz (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 32-49 (p. 33).
[54] Hansen, p. 36.

existing conceptual frameworks has not retained a clear and consistent linkage with know-how as is the case in Nelson's theory. The paradigm shifting theoretical works that I have encountered have served, as Hansen suggests, as 'kick-starters' to enter the unstable territory of not-know-how that merges my prior creative expertise with new forms of practice, but the theories that have provoked my experimental methods have not functioned as rigid conceptual frames. Instead, I have operated in the mode of the 'abductive tool-user, the bricoleur'[55] and, given the creative instability that I have encountered in the process of devising new methods, it has not been possible (or desirable) try to sustain conscious, consistent links with the know-that which instigated my practical explorations. Furthermore, rather than using documentation data to generate know-what that resonates with the pre-existing know-that, the accumulated documentary traces that my practical projects have produced have served to catalyse wholly new ideas. In other words, 'data' created through practice does not need to prove the coherence of pre-existing theoretical propositions or even serve as evidence to support answers. Instead, it is the ideas, gained through the practical experience of abductive enquiry, that enable insightful responses to research questions.

3.4 Summary

To conclude, my methodology has drawn on theoretical sources to generate experimental methods that provide the impetus for a theoretical research outcome. The insights I have drawn from Participatory Action Research have provided useful stimuli for my practical approach, prompting me to pursue flexibility in my applications of games, larp and interactive performance in order to respond to the capacities and interests of participants. Similarly, the emphasis in PAR on enabling participants to represent their own experience to claim a stake in knowledge production and meaning making has informed my approach to practice documentation,

[55] Brinkmann, p. 722.

foregrounding the agency of participants in remembering and recording their activities in ways that suit their own purposes.

Although my research is based in practice, I have approached my practical work as a method of generating a retheorisation of play in participatory performance, rather than as a research output. Subsequently, I have not sought to create authoritative representations of play performances that function as evidential proofs. Instead, the documentation that I have gathered has functioned as a form of stimulus (like the practice itself) for the generation of new ideas that can be articulated in a research outcome that is presented in writing. In sum, my methodology has used theoretical concepts as a springboard for an exploratory practice that yields new theoretical propositions for how the play of participatory performance might support culturally transformative potential.

Chapter 4. Habitus & Systems:

Play Design & Cultural Particularity

This study is concerned with the question of how the design of play can afford agency to players so that they might explore possible transformations in their cultural values and practices. If the culturally transformative potential of play is under investigation, I suggest that there must be a consideration of the specific cultures that might be transformed. Similarly, since play involves, at the most fundamental level, a wilful attempt on the part of the player to exercise their powers in imparting some influence on the world[1] and will, necessarily, be conditioned by the variable nature of the powers they possess, it is important to assess the relative powers with which players might enact such transformation. These considerations of the variable powers of players and the cultural contexts that their play might alter lead to the first of my subsidiary research questions, which concerns how play can be designed with specific reference to the capacities of players and the social contexts that they occupy:

> *How may the cultural particularity of participants inform the design of play in participatory performance works?*

In addressing this question, I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's field theory which can be summarised as an analytical approach to describing the relative powers of agents in specific domains of activity. At the heart of field theory is the concept of habitus which can be understood as the combined capitals that agents possess in a field, their dispositions, and their practices within it.[2] Bourdieu's theories have stimulated a process that I have termed 'habitus mining', through which I have investigated the cultural particularity of participants as the basis for the design of play activities. The methods I

[1] Thomas S. Henricks, *Play and the Human Condition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 24.
[2] Karl Maton, 'Habitus', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), pp. 49-65.

have employed in habitus mining have been inspired by Constantin Stanislavski's process of 'given circumstances' analysis which excavates dramatic texts for contextual details of place, time and character identity.[3] It must be acknowledged that people's lives cannot be viewed as texts like the plays that Stanislavsky analysed, but by asking participants about places that they have experienced, times they have lived through and biographical details about themselves, I have developed a picture of their positioning in social fields, the temporal progression of their lives, and the capitals and practices that have formed and reformed their habitus.

In the same way that given circumstances analysis yields insights into the habitus, I have secondarily applied the process of system analysis (drawn from my knowledge of game design) to seek insights on the fields that participants have operated within. System analysis resonates closely with a field analytical approach because it focuses on the active objects in the system (the subject agents), their internal relationships (relational connections) and their attributes (capitals) to create a broader picture of how the system (like the field) functions. In this chapter, I discuss my applications of given circumstances analysis and system analysis in a project with elderly service users of an adult day care centre at Haringey Community Hub and two additional projects of shorter durations with residents of Sheltered Housing schemes in Haringey. Through my description of these projects, I argue that given circumstances analysis is an effective method for investigating the cultural particularity of participants, reaffirming the value of habitus as a theoretical and practical tool. I also suggest, however, that system analysis and the field theoretical approach have limited applicability as models for play design when working with diverse participant groups because they tend to impose reductive simplicity on varied experiential phenomena.

In my critique of field theory, I discuss recent work that problematises Bourdieu's tendency to describe fields as autonomous entities that exist in

[3] Constantin Stanislavksi, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 43-44.

relative isolation from a wider heteronomy of influences.[4] I also draw upon the work of game studies scholar Ian Bogost, who makes similar criticisms of the totalizing nature of systems theory which, in his view, conceives systems as closed structures governed by immutable rules. In contrast to visions of autonomous systems, Bogost proposes an alternative model of analysis, *unit operations*, which focuses on how systems (both digital and otherwise) can be understood as the cumulative outcomes of relational connections between discrete entities at a local level, rather than macro-configurations that are organised in a top-down fashion.[5] The theory of unit operations is useful in thinking about play design and cultural particularity, offering a model for considering the habitus as being founded on small-scale relational connections which progressively build the wider social systems within individuals' horizons of experience. Building upon Bogost's ideas, my approach has been to invite play with the objects within the experiential horizon of players so that they might reconfigure the units of their experience to enable potential transformations of cultural values.

In describing my practical work, I argue that intersubjective heteronomy is an important aspect of the transformative potential of play, fostering potential habitus alteration as different subjectivities overlap and influence each other. Whereas Jacques Rancière insists on autonomy for the emancipated spectator,[6] I suggest that autonomous isolation promotes cultural ossification by cutting individuals off from the relational connections that might enable them to develop new capacities. By contrast, through reference to the works of Gareth White, Grant Kester and Shannon Jackson, all of whom argue against autonomous separation of art (and artists) from the everyday life of audiences, I argue in favour of work that foregrounds heteronomous exchanges between artists and participants and within participants groups themselves. My contention is that heteronomy in participatory art can be conducive to cultural transformation as individuals

[4] Eric Mangez and Georges Lienard, 'The field of power and the relative autonomy of social fields: the case of Belgium', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 181-198.
[5] Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 3-4.
[6] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2009), pp. 14-16.

are brought into relation with things that are unfamiliar, opening potential for the cultural particularities of the habitus to be transformed.

Despite taking a critical stance towards Bourdieu's field theory and systems thinking, in the latter part of the chapter, I set out an alternative approach to fields and systems that views them, not as autonomous entities that present static and closed visions of the world from top-down perspectives, but as flexible assemblages that emerge from the ground-up. In making this argument, I draw on the work of theorists who reconceive fields as heteronomous networks that invariably overlap and thereby open the possibility for new relational connections that can enable their agents to adapt and change. With regard to systems, I discuss the works of Niklas Luhmann and Gregory Bateson to argue that systemic thinking in play and art is an integral part of the human ability to exercise reflexivity and think in abstract terms to visualise new possibilities beyond the concrete materiality of immediate surroundings. In sum, this chapter sets out an argument for designing play in response to cultural particularity that foregrounds habitus as a conceptual tool for engaging with participant subjectivities. Subsequently, by setting the habitus of individuals in relation with the cultural particularity of others, new systems of play can emerge as ground-up assemblages, in contrast to top-down models of system design. My argument proposes that a combined focus on habitus as the source material for play and reflexivity as a core component of aesthetic value in the play experience itself can support the development of play designs that offer potential for habitus alteration and cultural transformation.

4.1 Habitus Mining & Play Design

In this section, I offer examples of how the process of habitus mining, based on a reappropriation of given circumstances analysis, served as a method for investigating the cultural particularity of participants as a precursor to the design of play activities in my practical work. Stanislavski's concept of the given circumstances is, fundamentally, a form of literary analysis whereby the reader can examine the contextual details that are

‘given’ by the author. In the opening stage direction of Anton Chekhov’s, *The Cherry Orchard*, for example, we gain a huge amount of information:

> *A room which is still known as the nursery.*[7]

This sentence tells us something of where we are: in a room, which used to be a nursery, but is no longer used for this purpose. It also gives information on time: there was once a child (or children), but they are no longer here; and it suggests that the people of this place perhaps enjoyed a relatively high degree of privilege since they had the luxury of a nursery as their living space. As this example shows, small amounts of material can yield substantial insights on where events have happened, when they have happened, and the identities of the people involved.

In my conversations with participants at Haringey Community Hub, small anecdotes were often extremely revealing. The most fundamental aspect of given circumstances analysis, as is illustrated by the stage direction above, is place and, in approaching the habitus mining process, investigations of place were my starting point. By issuing the simple invitation: ‘*Tell me about a place that really matters to you*’, I was able to glean significant insights into the cultural particularity of participants. Mr Ganguly told me about the English-speaking boarding school that he attended in Mussorie, in the Himalayan foothills of Northern India, and recalled the pleasure of travelling by train to his home in Delhi through the snowy mountains, while Ravi described the field of grass at the edge of the sugar cane plantation in Mauritius where, as a boy, he cut fodder for the cows on his small family farm. These simple descriptions of place immediately open a vista on the differing capital affordances of these two individuals and foreground a consideration of the times in their lives that particularly mattered to them. Yamini described the beach in Tanzania where she and her school friends used to go for short holidays, travelling on a lorry and singing Bollywood songs along the way, and described attending Pitman’s College, a school for secretarial skills in central London. In linking these two spaces together, the educational capital conferred by the latter

[7] Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, trans. by Michael Frayn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1978), Act One, p. 1.

indicates a trajectory in which she was able to migrate from Tanzania to the United Kingdom as a matter of choice:

> *London for further education. Education here and go back home, but then I stayed here. Political situation was not good at all. Not at all. And my mum wrote to me not to come back. And I stayed here…I didn't want to go back home because of the coloured people you know? I don't like coloured people.*[8]

By contrast, Mrs Jadeja, a very elderly woman with whom I communicated via the translations of Indu, one of the Community Hub staff, gave more partial descriptions of places that nonetheless illuminated a trajectory influenced by weaker capital affordances. In responding to an invitation to describe something she liked about where she grew up, she said:

> *(Mrs Jadeja speaks)*
>
> Indu: *She grew up in a village in India. She enjoyed farming and the cows. She didn't go to school.*

Subsequently, in describing her journey when coming to the UK for the first time, she said:

> *(Mrs Jadeja speaks)*
>
> Indu: *She came from Kampala by plane and she left everything behind there.*[9]

This statement was then elaborated upon by Yamini who said: *'She came exodus. Prime Minister Idi Amin. They chuck out all Indians without British passport you know?'* giving a strong indication that Mrs Jadeja's emigration was, unlike her own journey (which was volitionally shaped by her educational capital), not voluntary, a result, perhaps, of weaker capitals that offered less volitional choice.

As the above examples illustrate, descriptions of places revealed substantial detail about the capitals of individuals and how these capitals shaped their trajectories through space and time. Consequently, as Cristina Costa and Mark Murphy argue, habitus is not only a theoretical concept, it can also serve as a method of research, enabling the researcher to devise

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[8] 'Yamini', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community, London (21 August 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub25'.

[9] 'Mrs Jadeja', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (24 July 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub11'.

‘mechanisms through which social agents’ dispositional schemas can be identified within the fields in which they originate or transform’.[10] The question that follows, however, is how play can be designed in response to the knowledge gleaned from this process and the following section describes my attempt to design a game (as the final play activity of the Haringey Community Hub project) through a system analysis of the information drawn from habitus mining.

4.2 Limitations of Field Theory & System-Based Game Design

As I have suggested in the introduction to this chapter, there are strong commonalities between field theory and a system analytic approach to game design. In the same way that fields are composed of the relational connections between subject agents whose habitus influences their ability to take actions within a specific domain of activity, system analysis in game design focuses on the active objects in systems, their internal relationships and their attributes. These details are subsequently translated into game mechanics (the levers with which players can influence the system in pursuit of goals) and rules to constrain the play action. In this section, I argue that field theory is useful in considering cultural transformation because it is fundamentally relational, in the sense that the attributes of objects in the field are determined by their relational connections with other objects. It follows that if agents in a field are able to establish new relational connections, they may also acquire new capitals that enable transformative opportunities. I also critique field theory, however, since it tends to visualise fields as autonomous spheres of activity which can impose a reductive simplicity on the phenomena that are represented. Similarly, with regard to my game design work, I suggest that my attempts to apply field theory as a game design approach proved problematic for my endeavour to create play in response to cultural particularity by eliding the complexities of participants’ lived experiences.

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[10] Christina Costa and Mark Murphy, ‘Bourdieu and the Application of Habitus across the Social Sciences’, in *Bourdieu, Habitus and Social Research: The Art of Application*, ed. by Christina Costa and Mark Murphy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 3-17. (p. 8).

Field theory is founded on the notion that the relations between objects determine their properties. In contrast to Aristotelian substantialism, which holds that the qualities of objects 'do not depend on the object's relation to the environment' but rather 'inherently belong to the object, regardless of its setting, at all times',[11] Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez argue that the concept of a field foregrounds the idea that it is the relational connections between objects that illuminate their qualities and behaviour:

> Only a set of relationships on which a system is based, and which is to be found in each particular configuration, truly gives access to the object. From this standpoint, it is not so much the properties of an object or a configuration, as the network of (cor)relations that is woven between them and other neighbouring formations that is the object of analysis.[12]

Phenomenological thinkers subsequently adopted the concept of the field as part of 'gestalt' theory which proposes that sensory percepts should be understood as relational configurations of stimuli. In the description of John Levi Martin and Forest Gregg, gestalt theorists argued that:

> The way to understand our actual empirical, phenomenological experience would be to investigate how we captured such whole forms ('Gestalts') as unified objects of experience (and not as aggregates or syntheses)…for the objects we perceive – or at least their character as quality bearing objects – are themselves structures, and structures are sets of relations.[13]

Drawing on the insights of gestalt theorists, Bourdieu's conception of the field is fundamentally relational. Rather than viewing the habitus as a set of innate characteristics held by an individual, it is a structure of relations which emerges as agents are endowed with capitals through their connections with other agents in the field.

For Bourdieu, an agent's capital endowment is expressed as a position in the field, typically conceived as a stratified distribution of positions based

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[11] Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez, 'Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-35. (p. 3).
[12] Hilgers and Mangez, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[13] John Levi Martin and Forest Gregg, 'Was Bourdieu a field theorist?', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 39-61 (pp. 41-42).

on hierarchies of capital.[14] In addition to field position, he argues that movement in the field can be effected through the agent's disposition (the desire to alter or conserve field position) and position-takings (the actions that agents take to alter or conserve field position). Consequently, 'rather than seeing social agents as particles, mechanistically pushed and pulled by external forces'[15] Hilgers and Mangez argue, citing the collaborative work of Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, that:

> They [social agents] are…bearers of capital, and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) of capital, they have the propensity to orient themselves actively either towards the conservation of the distribution of capital or towards the subversion of that distribution.[16]

A key aspect in determining whether an agent can subvert the distribution of capital in a specific field is the degree of correspondence between field position, disposition and position-takings. If there is a high level of correspondence, whereby the agent is disposed to maintain their position, the distribution of capital will not change. If there are gaps between position, disposition and position-takings, however, whereby the agent is disposed to take up an alternative position and takes actions to do so, there is the potential for transformation of capital distributions in the field.[17] In the context of a study about the culturally transformative potential of play, the notion of correspondence between position, disposition and position-taking is significant, suggesting that the cultivation of gaps in correspondence might open a space of possibility for emergent changeability. Similarly, in system-based games, emergent potential can be explored by players as they actively orient themselves, according to their disposition, towards new relational connections, or position-takings, in pursuit of goals, continually reordering the game state in the same way that field positions may change.

[14] Tony Bennett, 'Culture, Power, Knowledge: Between Foucault and Bourdieu', in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: settling accounts and developing alternatives*, ed. by Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 102-116.
[15] Hilgers and Mangez, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[16] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 108-109, cited in Hilgers and Mangez, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[17] Louis Pinto, 'The Field: a Leibnizian perspective in sociology', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 102-118 (p.110).

As I will now suggest, however, a field theoretical approach to play design can have the undesirable effect of reductively compressing the complexity of cultural particularities into a simplified system, which might limit, rather than promote, the potential for culturally transformative play.

In the early stages of the Haringey Community Hub project, it quickly became apparent that it would be difficult to employ a field analytical or system-based approach to game design, owing to the radically disparate life trajectories of the participants. Even though all participants were of southern Asian heritage and might be perceived from an external perspective as being a relatively homogenous group, the actuality was markedly different, with strong religious differences emerging between Muslims and Hindus in response to the London Bridge terror attack in June 2017, for example. In my considerations of how the participant group could be conceived as a 'community' the predominant thought that occurred to me was that they were all immigrants, having arrived in the United Kingdom from various countries that had been part of the British Empire. When I posed the question of what the participants had in common with each other, however, none of them identified immigrant status as a commonality. The most concrete proposition in response to this question came from Mr Ganguly who said: *'We're all disabled. We all have some things that we can't handle properly. That's the obstacle with us'*.[18] Following Mr Ganguly's suggestion, it would have been possible to analyse the day care centre in its function as a facility for elderly people. This would have forced me to define participants according to their disabilities, however, focusing my attention on issues that the participants were relatively uninterested in discussing (old age and disability), foregoing consideration of the many things that they were enthusiastic about discussing from other points in their life trajectory.

As I have indicated in my brief description of some of the outputs from the habitus mining process, the participants had moved through a wide variety of social fields over time. Given the enormous diversity of field effects within the lived experience of individuals, it was extremely difficult to design

[18] 'Mr Ganguly', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (14 August 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub22'.

a game system based on a field analytic approach that could meaningfully engage the diverse cultural particularities of all participants. I did, however, design a board game, which I called *Islands*, as the final play activity of the overall project, which attempted to offer a play system that might be meaningful for all participants.[19] The system of the game was strongly influenced by the stories of Ravi, undoubtedly the most conversant of the participants, who had discussed in detail his childhood experiences of growing up in Mauritius, working on his small family farm, going to school, getting qualifications as a mechanic then emigrating to England to work in the Vauxhall car plant, before starting his own auto repair business. The core themes of Ravi's stories (education, work, social life, and coming to the UK) were broadly shared by all participants, so basing the game on these components seemed to offer some prospect that players' engagement with the game might connect with aspects of their own habitus.

The game centred on three children growing up in a village on a small island. One child had a big family farm, one child had a small family farm and the third child had no farm. Correspondingly, the child with the big farm had a high level of economic capital, while the child with no farm had lower economic capital. These levels of economic capital also corresponded with levels of educational capital, since the richer children could afford to skip work on the farm to go to school. Counterbalancing economic capital was cultural capital in the form of 'friendship' tokens which initially ranked the poorest child as the most popular in the village and the richest child as the least popular. Each round of play consisted of a three-way choice that the players could make on behalf of their character avatar. They could choose to go to school which increased their educational capital, they could choose to play at the seaside to increase their popularity (which brought the benefit of being able to call in 'favours' from friends), or they could choose to work, which boosted economic capital, with the added twist that the poor child could only work on the farms of his neighbours, earning money for them alongside earning their own money. This basic structure was repeated as the children progressed to adulthood and, depending on their capital

[19] See Appendix B.4 for the rule set of *Islands*.

affordances, moved to the town to pursue further education or higher-waged occupations, or emigrated to the 'big island' in search of the same things on a larger scale.

As a representation of field theory in the form of a game, I suggest that *Islands* was a successful piece of design, presenting a trio of agents with basic relational connections (based on monetary exchange and the popularity stakes of friendship) and an initial set of positions that could be altered according to players' dispositions and the redeployment of the capitals that their characters held. The game also created the development of a relatively clear *doxa* (Bourdieu's term for the dominant ideology of a field),[20] based on the notion that increased educational capital enables advanced employment and increasing economic capital which, in turn, enables more leisure time that can increase popularity and happiness. In critically reflecting on the game, however, I suggest that the synergies between the system design employed and field theory might be seen as limitations, at least in this instance. The most obvious criticism that can be levelled at field theory is that its hierarchical approach to capitals seems reductively axiomatic. This can be seen in Bourdieu's models of artistic fields in which high economic capital (combined with low cultural capital in the case of artists who 'sell out') sits at one pole, with high cultural capital (combined with low economic capital in the case of experimental artistic innovators) at the other.[21] This polarity seems to mirror my own axioms of the rich but unpopular child contrasting with the poor but popular one. The issue with such axiomatic frameworks is that they treat position and position-taking in quantitative terms, and although quantitative action is a core feature of many games, in the context of a study about play and culture, the elision of qualitative factors of the habitus seems unfortunate. This qualitative limitation was reflected in a comment made by Ravi after he had played the game, when he described it as a relatively simplistic *'parabole'*, with general play actions that were *'comme ci, comme ca'* in

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[20] Frédéric Lebaron, 'Bourdieu in a multi-dimensional perspective', in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: settling accounts and developing alternatives*, ed. by Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 142-150.
[21] Hilgers and Mangez, 'Introduction', pp. 11-12.

contrast to the qualitative specificity of actions in real-life '*that put the dot on the i*'.[22]

The sentiments noted above resonate with the work of Bernard Lahire who criticises Bourdieu's analysis of the literary field because it treats the production of literary works in computational terms, with little reference to the qualities of the work itself:

> What is the specificity of aesthetic products? The answer that consists in saying that 'literature' is what literary institutions consider as such, that 'art' is whatever is put in an art gallery, that 'science' is whatever is published in a scientific journal, is clearly inadequate. While this tautology is useful in underlining the instrumentalization by the social world of the meaning of acts or of the products of these acts, it does not answer the question of what characterises these different symbolic constructions of the real.[23]

In other words, Bourdieu's theory operates in reductively quantitative terms, whereby any work of art in an art gallery equates to a +1 output of artistic production. According to Lahire, Bourdieu gives scant consideration to the qualitative variability of how the work might be received, leading him to argue that 'this way of conceiving the consumers prevents one from grasping the plural appropriations of the same works'[24] since the field theoretical model treats all reception of art work in an art gallery as a computational +1 output, disregarding the divergent views that different people may have had of it. In a similar vein, Georgina Born argues that 'Bourdieu insistently refuses to address the art object and its aesthetic properties' claiming that 'any concern with the substantive meaning and power of particular aesthetic traditions is evacuated in favour of a synchronic focus on the agonistics of position-taking'.[25]

Aside from criticisms of the reductively axiomatic and quantitative nature of field theory, for my purposes, the most significant critique of Bourdieu's work is his tendency to view fields as autonomous objects of

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[22] 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (19 March 2018). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub42'.
[23] Bernard Lahire, 'The Limits of the Field: Elements for a theory of the social differentiation of activities', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 62-101 (p. 88).
[24] Lahire, p. 93.
[25] Georgina Born, 'The social and the aesthetic: For a post-Bourdieuian theory of cultural production', *Cultural Sociology*, 4:2 (2010), 171-208 (p. 179).

analysis that are neatly bounded from external influences. Lahire discusses Bourdieu's argument that the French literary field gained autonomy through figures such as Flaubert, whose work was only influenced by other members of the literary field, without being subject to forces from outside it. He points out, though, that Flaubert was only able to exercise the autonomy of the total writer, and thereby help establish the autonomy of the literary field, because he was independently wealthy with no family ties, allowing him to devote himself to writing with no distractions. By contrast, the vast majority of writers who populate the literary field do not enjoy such privileges and are required to take other jobs to earn a living. Consequently, the literary world cannot be seen as autonomous when large numbers of its agents are influenced by economic forces from outside the field.[26] The salient point that emerges from this analysis of struggling writers is that field theory, in its endeavour to define fields of activity as autonomous entities, fails to account for the broad plurality of influences from outside a field that impact the habitus of agents and the capitals that they can deploy within it. Lahire comments that it is 'impossible to proceed as if journalists, footballers, philosophers or jurists could be reduced to their being-as-member-of-a-field'[27] and yet, as Hilgers and Mangez suggest, Bourdieu, through the development of a field theoretical approach that privileges autonomy, 'gives the impression of having studied relatively isolated societies, circumscribed in one territory' in which agents are defined by their function in the activity that the field seeks to represent.[28]

A focus on the autonomization of fields is problematic, in my view, because as fields become more autonomous and less susceptible to outside influences, the doxa of the field becomes stronger, which in turn prompts subject agents to more fully embrace the *illusio*, or 'commitment to the stakes of the game'[29] being played within it. Consequently, as agents in increasingly exclusive and isolated fields commit to the doxa, it is arguably

[26] Lahire, pp. 79-80.
[27] Lahire, p. 74.
[28] Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez, 'Afterword: theory of fields in the postcolonial age', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 257-273 (p. 268).
[29] Pinto, p. 112.

more likely that existing capital distributions, governed by the dominant ideology, will be consolidated. This subsequently reduces the potential for gaps between field position, disposition and position-taking and thereby reduces the possibility for agents to actively reorient themselves to challenge or subvert the distribution of capitals and effect alterations to their habitus. This idea is discussed by John Postill who criticises Bourdieu's focus on the internal stabilisation of fields. In Postill's account, Bourdieu downplays the possibility of change by suggesting that discrete fields are usually only altered by disruptions from outside that create a 'hysteresis effect', whereby individuals are forced to adapt their practices in the midst of a disorientating set of new conditions.[30] Yang Yang shares Postill's critical view of field autonomy, arguing that Bourdieu's focus on change through external disruption disregards the possibilities of internal transformation within fields through proactive agency and reflexivity. Yang argues that Bourdieu appears to see reflexivity as the sole preserve of the sociologist rather than 'lay agents' and claims that his focus on change through hysteresis is excessively pessimistic since it emphasises disorientation as the primary effect of disruptions, with the probable effect of exacerbating the difficulty that agents face in achieving transformations within the field.[31] In short, Bourdieu's emphasis on the tendency of fields to seek increased autonomization points towards cultural ossification and deterministic reproduction of the doxa. Consequently, despite my positive valuation of habitus as a conceptual tool for designing play in response to cultural particularity, applying Bourdieu's wider field theory in relation to game design has proved problematic in my investigation of potential cultural transformations through play.

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[30] John Postill, 'Fields: Dynamic configurations of Practices, Games and Socialities', in *Thinking Through Sociality: An Anthropological Interrogation of Key Concepts*, ed. by Vered Amit (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 47-68.
[31] Yang Yang, 'Bourdieu, practice and change: Beyond the criticism of determinism', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46:14 (2014), 1522-1540 (pp. 1530-1531).

4.3 Unit Operations: An Alternative to Totalizing Systems

Having problematised my own field theoretical approach in creating a system-based game design in response to the habitus mining process at Haringey Community Hub, this section addresses criticisms levelled at systems theory for emphasising the closured nature of system operations, presenting an alternative approach that draws Ian Bogost's concept of unit operations. Bogost's theory serves as a useful framework for considering play design in response to cultural particularity, emphasising how systems can emerge from the ground-up, through local relational connections that create flexible assemblages. In contrast to the ossified rigidity of autonomous fields, therefore, I propose that a unit operational approach offers a theoretical basis for play design in which players can apply their cultural particulars in relationally assembling the structures of their play.

In contrast to systems theoretical approaches, which Bogost describes as closed, static and totalizing,[32] unit operations, in his definition, are 'an arrangement of discrete, interlocking units of meaning'.[33] This offers a clear distinction between system operations that 'reductively affirm the principle of an organising system' and unit operations that 'articulate connections between nodes in networks' and 'build relations'.[34] The contrast between unit operations and system operations is given concrete expression in Bogost's discussion of the human genome project which he criticises as being illustrative of the limitations of a totalizing, systematized view of human life:

> As scientists learn more about the human genome, they increasingly realise that no skeleton keys exist for human pathology…biology has entered a post-genomic phase, recognising that knowledge about the individual genes themselves is not very useful. Instead, scientists seek to understand the functions between individual genes and how the complex configurations of genetic functionality underlie complex behaviour.[35]

[32] Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), p. 6.
[33] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. ix.
[34] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 8.
[35] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, pp. 3-4.

Essentially, Bogost's proposition is that understanding the relational connections between individual genes is more fruitful than seeking to construct a universal system view, and he goes on to argue that 'the human genome project attempts to account for humanity as a holistic system operation rather than as a complex, discursive set of unit relations'. As such, 'it serves as an example of a unit operational model interpreted or forced into the format of a system'.[36] Moving beyond genetic biology, Bogost investigates cultural instances of unit operations and finds value in the figure of the flâneur, whose wandering of the city contains innumerable points of decision that function as discrete units:

> The decision points faced by the flâneur far exceed mere cartographic decision; he chooses not only which streets, alleys, and arcades to traverse, but also which tobacconist to visit, which passers-by to watch or ignore, which carriage to take, which puddle to step in or avoid. The work of the flâneur is constituted of these individual unit operations, some of which he considers as he traverses the city, some of which critique themselves for him based on the emergent effect of actions taken by all the other individuals in the vicinity.[37]

In considering the unit operations of genes alongside the cultural units of the flâneur's city wandering, Bogost arrives at the concept of the meme as an elementary unit of culture that can be understood in parallel with the biological units of genes:

> Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm and eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the memepool by leaping from brain to brain.[38]

Subsequently, as memes spread and grow into wider cultural networks, they form the 'memeplex', which can be understood as a 'kind of cultural unit cluster in which memes encapsulate themselves into the social systems we perceive and participate in'.[39]

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[36] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 44.
[37] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 75.
[38] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 192, cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 45.
[39] Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 306, cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 45.

The notion of memes as units of cultural expression that contribute to the memeplex of cultural networks provides a framework for thinking about the ways I have worked with participants in the habitus mining process. Each question or creative invitation from me provided a decision point for participants to express units of cultural meaning and the relational connections between these fragmentary units have cumulatively formed pictures of the memeplex, or cultural networks, that the participants have moved within. Bogost is careful to point out, though, that these networks need not be seen as systems that are impermeable to change. He references Martin Heidegger's concept of 'enframing', which can be understood as the way that human actions become constrained by rigidified patterns, to argue that unit operations, by contrast, are not deterministically fixed, but rather resist enframement through ongoing reconfigurations.[40]

The idea of unit operational reconfiguration can be exemplified by the play activities that I designed in the second phase of my project at Haringey Community Hub. Having gathered many stories from participants in the habitus mining process, I invited them to create fictional re-orderings of units of their lived experience.[41] Working with Mr Ganguly, for example, I began by showing him photographic images of places that he had told me about and he selected an image of the Himalayan foothills of Mussorie, the place where he had attended boarding school as a boy. I then invited him to imagine a fictional character and offered a sequence of prompts as stimuli for further units of the story:

> JH: *So, the school in Mussorie. Now, I'd like you to imagine an invented character that goes to the school.*
>
> Mr Ganguly: *Things have changed over there – it's all changed now. I don't know what's going on there. I was there – English Standard school. I was there in the 50s.*
>
> (He laughs)
>
> JH: *Maybe just start with the name? The name of a person.*
>
> Mr Ganguly: *Alan.*

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[40] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1977), p. 32, cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, pp. 6-8.

[41] See Appendix B.14 for structure of the *Pathways* exercise.

> JH: *Okay, so now I'd like you to imagine taking Alan to a completely new place. It could be a beach, a village or the city?*
>
> Mr Ganguly: *No beaches over there. There are villages. No cities. Down there in the plains – there is a religious place on the plains. If he goes from my place – the school – he has to go down – like – those days, my time – you go down the hill. Ways of going down – there's a shortcut you take. You take the shortcut and you go down to the bus station. From there – then go all the way to Deradun. Station called Deradun. From there take a train – then go to Hardwa. Rishikesh. Historical place. Go on tour there to the temple or go for shopping.*
>
> JH: *And now I'd like you to imagine another person who he meets there. It could be a friend, a relative of someone that he works with?*
>
> Mr Ganguly: *John – friend of his. They study together. Came on the same train. He lives in Hardwa. He shows him round the lakes and the religious places in Hardwa then he takes him up the hill. There's a rope bridge where you can go.*
>
> JH: *And what happens next? Is there a decision that Alan makes or a request that he makes of John?*
>
> Mr Ganguly: *He goes there – stays in a hotel. There's a café over there – he can have his meal. He can't request from John…I wouldn't do that myself. It's hard to go to someone's house. If you're not shy – if you're really not afraid to stay in someone's place you can. But I wouldn't do that.*[42]

In this story-making exercise, Mr Ganguly was invited to recalibrate his memeplex through fictional invention, but as is apparent from the excerpt above, he strongly projected his cultural particularity (which I would characterise as modest, impeccably polite, with a keen sense of decorum) onto the character of Alan.

In reflecting on his play experience, I asked Mr Ganguly what it was like to create an imagined story and whether he preferred to invent things that were close to his experience or different from it. In reply, he said: '*Not difficult to imagine. I can make it up also – I gave you another name, but I've got a friend who lives there. It's one of the things I know. I can explain for myself about the school – that's my experience I had'*. This clearly indicates that Mr Ganguly preferred not to take up the unpredictable pathway of the flâneur in his story and instead chose to navigate familiar pathways. This example, which might be read as an instance of 'enframement', in the sense

[42] 'Mr Ganguly', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (4 December 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub34'.

that Mr Ganguly remained within a familiar pattern, exemplifies the challenge of designing play that might be culturally transformative for persons like Mr Ganguly, who was, in my estimation, a man of highly fixed habits. In considering this challenge, Bogost's interest in *bricolage*, a term borrowed from anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, offers a valuable concept for designing play that escapes the enframement of adherence to habitual patterns of activity by suggesting a process in which a scattered plurality of memes might be combined to create innovative new assemblages:

> The bricoleur is a skilful handy-man, a jack-of-all-trades who uses convenient implements and ad hoc strategies to achieve his ends. Unlike the engineer, the scientific thinker who strives to construct holistic, totalizing systems from the top-down, the bricoleur performs his tasks from spare parts, from odds and ends. The scientist strives to create events by means of structures, whereas the bricoleur seeks to create structures through events.[43]

If Mr Ganguly stands for the engineer in the work at Haringey Community Hub, I would suggest that Ravi might stand for the bricoleur. In the same way that bricolage involves deviating from normative patterns of production to create new structures, the stories that Ravi shared during the habitus mining process suggested a similar flexibility that enabled him to apply his capitals in surprising and often transgressive ways. In describing his experience of cutting grass for the cows on his small family farm, Ravi mentioned that the took the opportunity to do a bit of *'fiddling'* by stealing sugar cane from the plantations owned by the '*barons'*.[44] He also played the same story-making exercise through which Mr Ganguly had narrated the journey to Hardwa, inventing a story in which two friends, Tom and Rosé, arranged a group expedition to hunt crabs then decided to steal the catch from the others and split it between themselves despite the bad reputation it would earn them, yielding the moral lesson that '*people are cheeky! You have to get rid of them'*.[45] Similarly, in his description of Empire Day, his school sports day festival, he talked about winning the wheelbarrow race by picking

[43] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 22, cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 49.
[44] 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (7 August 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub19'.
[45] 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (4 December 2017) See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub31'.

his partner off the ground and running with him because he was moving too slowly. Mr Ganguly was listening to the wheelbarrow race anecdote and called out *'That's cheating! Should have been disqualified!'* but the bricoleur replied: *'I done something special!'*[46] This momentary overlap of Ravi and Mr Ganguly says much about their respective cultural particularities, with Mr Ganguly's fidelity to rules contrasting with Ravi's apparent relish for innovative rule-breaking. Rather than characterising their interrelation as an antagonistic clash between two divergent subjectivities (the engineer and the bricoleur) I will move on, shortly, to give an account of some of their intersubjective exchanges during play, exploring the possibilities for adaptive reconfiguration of subjectivities that these exchanges provided.

In considering the potential of reconfiguring subjectivities, Bogost's discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizomatic nomadism is instructive. The rhizome, in Bogost's account, is based on a 'plant growth model, according to which growth spreads by non-hierarchical tubers instead of hierarchical roots'.[47] In Deleuze and Guattari's use of this term, bodies move according to free-form attractions along a rhizomatic structure between different plateaus, or territories, in a process that they term 'deterritorialization':

> Deterritorialization is the up-rooting of a thing along the vector of a rhizome that decodes it, or changes the circumstances and actions affecting it. Deterritorialization leads to a reterritorialization in which the thing is reimplanted and reincoded in a new circumstance. This recoding is called an 'overcoding'; it creates a new insertion of the object into a different level or assemblage, from which it can again uproot and reconstitute itself.[48]

The concepts of deterritorialization and overcoding are useful in the context of intersubjective play as they offer a theoretical framework for considering the possible reconfiguration of subjectivities in response to the influence of another body. This can be seen as the creation of a palimpsest, whereby an

[46] 'Mr Ganguly' and 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (14 August 2017) See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub22'.
[47] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 140.
[48] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations,* p. 141.

initial textual imprint is deterritorialized and overcoded by another imprint that forms a new assemblage.

In practical terms, I argue that deterritorialization and palimpsestic overcoding are common features of the intersubjective exchanges that occur in role-play activities and I will now offer an example stemming from my work with Ravi and Mr Ganguly.[49] To begin the activity, I showed the two participants four images relating to stories that the other person had told and invited each of them to pick the image that they found the most interesting. Mr Ganguly picked a picture of a plane on a runway at the airport in Mauritius, relating to Ravi's stories of leaving his country and moving to the UK to work in the Vauxhall car plant as a mechanic, while Ravi picked an image of King's Cross station, where Mr Ganguly had worked as a platform manager for twenty-five years. I asked both players to restate the circumstances of their stories then invited them to imagine a fictionalised version of the other person's story. Working with Mr Ganguly's story, Ravi invented a character called Michael and, following my prompts, described his hopes and fears as follows:

> *He supervisor of the platform. He hope for everything goes safe, safely. He watches the train coming in – stop in the right place then give the order. He fears accident – somebody may fall in the line. When the train coming.*

Ravi subsequently carried on the story, developing it based on the premise that a woman had, in fact, fallen onto the train tracks:

> *He will pull anyone in danger and report it to the office…He may think about this event – think about it all day. An accident like this can get to your head…If I am Michael, I would explain to people whatever happened. What I see. I see the woman fall on the line – because some old women when they walk – they get giddy and miss their step…I don't think Michael alone could pull her out. So, I don't believe – he won't be able to save her.*

At this point, Mr Ganguly interjected by saying: '*Michael can't go on the lines'*, but Ravi continued and concluded the story, speaking in Michael's voice:

[49] See Appendix B.1 for the structure of the *Deterritorialization* play exercise.

> *I don't think I can carry on that job. The woman badly bruised or maybe dead. Maybe if I lift she fall again and then the woman get hit many time – badly bruised or broken bones. Maybe dead.*

When Ravi was finished, Mr Ganguly commented:

> *Good story but, the main thing is – let me finish – that Michael can't go on the lines. He's not allowed to go on the lines. He has to get the trains stopped and there'll be people. Someone else has to get on the lines and take over. He's not responsible for it.*

Mr Ganguly's response is symptomatic of a tendency to reaffirm codified rules and norms of behaviour (which are clearly necessary for the safe functioning of busy railway stations). Despite the fact that he attempted to pull Ravi's dramatic story back towards more normative ways of operating, however, within the social contract of the role-play activity he allowed Ravi to modify his story and deterritorialize the central character (implicitly a version of Mr Ganguly himself) enabling Ravi to enact a (provisional) overcoding of his subjectivity as a result.

Following on from the King's Cross play exercise, My Ganguly enacted an overcoding on Ravi's story, which, in the original version, involved moving to the UK, working in the Vauxhall car plant, making friends, borrowing money from them and spending it in the attempt to generate a social life in a new country. In reworking this story, however, Mr Ganguly invented a character called Philip (implicitly a version of Ravi) whom he steered on a much more careful path:

> *His future hope is a graduate degree – he wants to be an engineer – to proceed on after. But he needs experience by training. He's scared of women. He doesn't like them. He doesn't want to spend money in that respect. He wants to build himself up and later settle down.*

Essentially, both these examples of intersubjective role-play invited the players to deterritorialize the subjectivity of their role-play partner, creating palimpsest characters that merged the subjectivity of the original person with the subjectivity of the player who constructed the fictional version. When I asked Ravi and Mr Ganguly what it was like to create these imaginative reconstructions of true stories, they said:

> Mr Ganguly: *It's quite nice. Very interesting. Honestly speaking, I enjoy it. I like talking – making some stories out of facts.*

Ravi: *I would say the same. Whatever we have invented – I invented it because I invented on facts of life.*[50]

Though they may have been enjoyable, it cannot be claimed that these overcodings were culturally transformative, but I would suggest that the willingness and enthusiasm shown by these players to have the cultural memes of their life experience reconfigured by another subjectivity is indicative of a potential for habitus alteration.

Having developed the method of palimpsest character hybrids in the Haringey Community Hub workshops, I made further explorations of this process in the Haringey Sheltered Housing scheme workshops and one particular exercise stood out as a clear example of overcoding, yielding some interesting reflections from the participants.[51] The exercise began with an invitation to tell a story about an adventure from their own experience (an invitation which I also offered to myself, on this occasion). My story was of a solo hiking trip in the west of Ireland during which I got stuck on the top of a mountain on a dark and misty day. Once everyone had told their story, the stories were passed on to another person who was invited to change some aspect of the contextual circumstances and then progress the narrative. One participant, Beryl, built on my initial story by inventing a new circumstance concerning a silent stranger who rescued the hiker and brought him to a derelict barn to shelter for the night. In the morning, though, the man was gone. At this point, the stories were passed on again and another participant, Tony, added the new circumstance that when the hiker found his way to the road, he discovered that his car was gone, and that the road was reduced to a dirt track. It subsequently transpired, in a short role-play between Tony (playing the role of an old man on the road) and myself, that the hiker had somehow been transported to the year 1794.

In reflecting on the story-making exercise outlined above, Beryl expressed a number of ideas on the creative tensions (but also opportunities) of having her story reconfigured by others:

[50] 'Mr Ganguly' and 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (27 November 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub30'.

[51] See Appendix B.12 for the structure of the *Palimpsest Storymaking* exercise.

I don't know – it makes me realise that your imagination can really work. Start with a part that's absolutely true then building it up on imagination. Everyone has imagination. Children use it. As we get older – this doesn't happen – but we do have it.

Subsequently, when I asked her what it was like to manipulate someone else's story and have her own version of it manipulated in turn, she said:

It was exciting – again your imagination comes into it. I'd already got this stranger, then Tony brought the kibosh. Tony brought it. It was because it threw a spanner into it – and now my mind's ticking round – how can I bring Tony's story into you? 1794! Many versions of the same story. Could've had a dream – fallen and knocked your head – and now you think you're in Tony's place in 1794.[52]

Finally, I asked her if she would like to bring the story back to her version and she said: *'I would like to bring it back – but I'm curious with where he's gonna come to'.* In reflecting on this exercise, I suggest that it shows a similar engineer/bricoleur tension as was evident in the play between Mr Ganguly and Ravi. Beryl renovated my story but seemed to experience some shock at Tony's overcoding of her version. Ultimately, though, she appeared to view Tony's '*spanner'* as a productive intervention in stimulating further imaginative challenge and potential.

Following on from these descriptions of the practical work in the Haringey projects, I conclude this section by summarising the value I have drawn from Bogost's theory of unit operations in approaching play design in response to cultural particularity. Bogost's central proposition, in contrast to systematized approaches, is to view unit operational structures as flexible networks that emerge from local relational connections between distinct units of meaning. Relating these ideas to my practical work, I see clear value in conceiving habitus mining, not as a simple extraction of latent content by the researcher, but as a unit operational approach in which participants are invited to express cultural memes that construct a picture of their memeplex which can inform play designs that are responsive to cultural particularity. Central to Bogost's project is the notion that the networks formed by unit operations are flexible configurations that can be reconfigured, and his applications of bricolage and deterritorialization offer conceptual tools for

[52] 'Beryl', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Cranley Dene Sheltered Housing Scheme, London (17 January 2018). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCranleyDene2'.

thinking about how intersubjective play strategies might enable participants to enact overcoding on each other's subjectivities, reconfiguring their habitus and playing with the possibility of cultural transformation.

4.4 Artistic Heteronomy & Aesthetic Strategies of Play Design

The concept of unit operations sets out a heteronomous approach to system formation in the field of game studies, in contrast to the autonomy of closed systems, but debates between autonomy and heteronomy are even more prominent in performance studies and fine art. In this section, I argue for the value of heteronomy in participatory art as a means of bringing participants into contact with the unfamiliar, enabling them to adapt their subjectivities by widening the horizons of their cultural particularity. Conventional aesthetic theories separate the creations of the autonomous artist from the disinterested reception of the autonomous viewer,[53] based on the view that 'art is art because it is somehow detached from the world'.[54] My analysis of autonomous fields suggests, however, that the exclusion of outside influences strengthens the doxa of dominant ideology. Consequently, I contend that the autonomous production and reception of art is likely to consolidate the pre-existing habitus of the artist and spectator and promote cultural ossification, since neither can be altered in the isolated cocoon of their singular, autonomous experience. By contrast, the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey offers a clear rejection of artistic autonomy and suggests the transformative potential of integrating art with the experience of everyday life. In his discussion of Dewey's theory, Gareth White argues that 'far from needing to defend the autonomy of art, Dewey's "esthetics" places art at the centre of human life, and its possibilities for fulfilment and change'.[55] This affirms my belief that even apparently inconsequential creative activities (like playing games) can be considered as 'consummations'

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[53] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. by J. H. Bernard (New York: Dover Philosophical Classics, 2005 [1914]), cited in Gareth White, *Applied Theatre: Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), pp. 30-31.
[54] White, *Applied Theatre*, p. 34.
[55] White, *Applied Theatre*, p. 44.

of aesthetic experience.[56] For example, on one occasion during the Haringey Community Hub project, Ravi observed me practicing a type of cricket delivery called a 'carrom' ball, which involves flicking the ball out the hand with the knuckle of the middle finger. This led him to describe the traditional Indian game of Carrom, which involves flicking circular discs in the endeavour to cannon them into holes on the game board. It subsequently transpired that the Community Hub had a Carrom board, creating a kind of performance event as Ravi taught me how to play. In addition to playing, however, the event stimulated further conversation on the games (such as marbles) that participants had played during childhood and I suggest that this episode can be seen as a valuable 'consummation' of aesthetic experience for those involved.

Grant Kester, like White, is critical of the notion of autonomy in art and he sets out a robust critique of artistic autonomy as 'the isolation of the artistic personality in a sequestered zone of autonomous self-reflection'.[57] In contrast to visions of artistic autonomy, Kester describes a range of artistic practices that foreground heteronomous engagement with the conditions of lived experience in specific sites and the cultural particularity of people within them. For example, he describes the *AA Project* of Argentinian art collective Ala Plástica, who worked with communities in the Rio de la Plata region of the country to 'recover local knowledge of the region's topography, habitats and cultural and agricultural traditions'.[58] Kester subsequently describes the outcomes of this work as forms of situated knowledge which he terms 'métis':

> Métis is differentiated from episteme – knowledge that is generic, repeatable, and codifiable – a techne or technical know-how. It has the implication, instead of a form of knowing rooted in the specific conditions of a given site and the aggregated wisdom of the inhabitants of that site over time.[59]

[56] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Pedigree, 1980 [1935]), cited in White, *Applied Theatre*, p. 9.
[57] Grant Kester, *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 20.
[58] Kester, *The One,* p. 142.
[59] Kester, *The One*, p. 143.

The concept of 'métis', as described by Kester, decisively foregrounds a heteronomous production of 'knowing' through a ground-up process of intersubjective exchange between participants. Although the work of Ala Plástica is deeply embedded in the cultural particulars of a specific site, however, Kester also emphasises the value of setting the work 'sufficiently apart from quotidian social interaction to encourage a degree of self-reflection, and calling attention to the exchange itself as creative praxis',[60] which highlights the importance of a degree of differentiation between the project and normal life, in order to facilitate critical thinking. The notion that heteronomous participatory art might usefully offer a degree of separateness from normal life is, again, redolent of the ideas of Dewey, who argues that although art should be integrated into everyday experience, it must also function as '*an* experience' in order to register an impact with those who participate in it. In other words, art experiences must be experienced as somewhat special in contrast to quotidian normalcy.[61]

An example of '*an* experience' in the Haringey Community Hub project can be found in an activity I designed called *Journey to the Centre of the Earth.*[62] This was a simple game that involved a game board composed of pictures related to the stories that participants had told me. Each player had to move their counter around the board to collect mini-images of objects that related to larger images of locations that they had talked about. Effectively, each player had to match the relevant object image with the relevant location image. Once they had collected the object and moved it to the right location, they were invited to tell their story to the other players. This performance action functioned as '*an* experience' by offering opportunities for participants' experiences to be recognised by the group, rather than simply being told to me as an individual. In reflecting on the game, Yamini, who was frequently marginalised due to her mental infirmity which often resulted in quite volatile behaviour, seemed to appreciate taking part in an activity that brought her into relation with others. When I asked her to describe her play experience, she said: '*yes, very interesting. Various places. Various*

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[60] Kester, *The One*, p. 28.
[61] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), pp. 35-40.
[62] See Appendix B.6 for the rule set of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth.*

ornaments. Various countries. From one country to the next. Fruit, light, everything included'.[63] The insight that can be gleaned from this example is that, in contrast to her usual isolation within the group, the sense of occasion that the game created seemed to function as '*an* experience', which invited Yamini to engage with others and be recognised by them in ways that were not ordinarily available to her.

The balance between heteronomy in art that embraces embeddedness in the everyday, alongside a degree of separation from quotidian normalcy, is further interrogated by Shannon Jackson, who challenges ideas of artistic autonomy by referencing artworks that consciously call attention to the wider support structures that enable their very existence. She offers a detailed account of the practice of American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles whose 'maintenance works' focus on everyday practices of household labour and public sanitation to highlight the fact that no artwork can stand alone from the materiality of everyday life. Such work, in Jackson's view, is politically radical because it sets out a vision of human freedom that rests, not on individual autonomy, but on a recognition of heteronomous interdependence so that 'to avow the supporting acts that sustain and are sustained by social actors is to avow the relational systems on which any conception of freedom rests'.[64] Jackson's most vivid account of Ukeles' work, in my view, is of her performances of domestic labour, including acts of childcare and household chores which were an integral part of the artist's family life and, subsequently, became the focus of her art. Aside from the political aspect of this heteronomous overlap of art and everyday life, Jackson identifies important aesthetic implications of making domestic labour into performance art. She references the Situationist practice of *détournement*, in which familiar objects are repositioned in unfamiliar contexts, suggesting that this aesthetic estrangement can be applied in order 'to make you aware that the objects and institutions you thought to be

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[63] Yamini', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community, London (4 September 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub29'.
[64] Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 36.

natural were really only historical: the result of change'.[65] Building on these ideas, Jackson claims that, in Ukeles' work, the heteronomous overlap of domestic labour with art gallery contexts generated a similar type of estrangement, arguing that 'the transcontextualized move from the field of the household to the field of art sought to defamiliarize and thereby counter everyday assumptions of personal independence'.[66] Jackson's arguments present heteronomous art as being aesthetically significant because the collision of people and practices from diverse contexts enacts a defamiliarization that offers scope for linking ordinary sensory experience with critical reflection on wider social structures. This has the consequence, I suggest, of enhancing the potential of art to generate cultural transformation as audiences or participants reconsider what had been viewed as simply natural and instead view it as contingent and changeable.

The aesthetic potential of defamiliarization (set in contrast with the aesthetics of immersion) has been an important part of my investigations of how to design play in response to cultural particularity and I will now articulate the aesthetic strategies that I have explored in my work at Haringey Community Hub and the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes. In the first phase of the Community Hub project, when I was gathering stories in the habitus mining process, I decided to explore methods that employed different sensory affects. To do this, I sourced photographic images that related to places that participants had told me about and found audio clips to create soundscapes to match the pictures.[67] I then invited participants to look at the picture whilst listening to the soundscape and offered them the option to talk and elaborate on their stories. Working with Mr Ganguly, I showed him a picture of a train passing through a snowy landscape in the mountains of northern India, along with a soundscape of a train clanking along the tracks, which mapped onto the stories he had told about travelling home from boarding school in the winter. As he looked at the picture and listened to the sounds, this is what he said:

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[65] Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 58, cited in Jackson, p. 82.
[66] Jackson, p. 93.
[67] See Appendix B.19 for structure of the *Sound and Image* exercise.

Looks like – reminds me of the snow – the snow all over. I love it – on the train. It reminds me of my school days… I'm delighted. I'm happy…you can make a trip on the train. Through the hillsides. And have a good holiday.[68]

From my perspective, it seemed clear that Mr Ganguly had been quite moved by this experience, but although he had apparently found it very gratifying, in my reflections on the activity I realised that I had unwittingly applied immersive strategies, providing rich sensory affects that had the effect of offering passive satisfaction rather than prompting active, generative imagination.

In contrast with my accidental application of immersive aesthetics, I tested a radically different approach by bringing a variety of random (but recognisable) objects for participants to play with. My invitation was for them to pick out three objects that they liked or felt some connection with and then tell me whatever they were imagining.[69] What was notable about this activity was that the relative abstraction of space, with an inchoate jumble of objects, seemed to leave a greater space of possibility (in contrast to the immersive completeness of the sound and image combination) for participants to creatively express their cultural particularity. This was particularly evident with individuals who found it difficult to engage in imaginative play activities. In working with Yamini, for example, she often struggled to create imaginative narratives. In one activity, I invited her to imagine a journey to Zanzibar (a place which was close to where she grew up but which she had never visited),[70] but she said '*I can't imagine. It's very difficult. How can you visualise? You can't visualise without seeing - unless you live in a world of fantasy. You can't fantasise like that*'.[71] By contrast, in the object play, having selected a ball of string and a plant pot she seemed more able to make imaginative constructions:

Yamini: *The pot is for the plants….in the spring time, put the seeds in the garden and grow like this. All those plants. With the space. All that space.*

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[68] 'Mr Ganguly', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (14 August 2017). See Apppendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub23'.
[69] See Appendix B.16 for structure of the *Random Objects* exercise.
[70] See Appendix B.14 for structure of the *Pathways* exercise.
[71] Yamini', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community, London (4 December 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub35'.

JH: *What plants will you grow?*

Yamini: *Flowers. Roses.*

JH: *And what's the string for?*

Yamini: *The string is for crochet.*

JH: *Ah, you crochet?*

Yamini: *I used to.*

JH: *What will you do first?*

Yamini: *The planting of seeds.*

JH: *Okay. So, you plant the seeds. And then you wait?*

Yamini: *Then crochet. Crochet is something like luxury time. To fill your time, like a luxury. Time passes. The day goes quick.*

JH: *What's it like if we come back into the garden a month later?*

Yamini: *Nice grass.*

JH: *How are the flowers?*

Yamini: *The flowers are blooming as well.*

JH: *And what are you making with the crochet?*

Yamini: *Dressing table set. Round.*[72]

The imaginative potential of abstract object play was also evident with individuals with the lowest discursive capitals. For example, the fact that Mrs Jadeja could not speak English meant that her conversational affordances (when working with me) were quite limited, but in the object play, she was able to participate more fully. She began by selecting an adaptor plug, followed by a ball of string and seeding pot and proceeded to describe (via Indu's translation) a relatively elaborate scenario of returning home from shopping and beginning her household tasks, using the adaptor plug as a story-telling fulcrum for a range of household appliances:

Indu: *She say – this one we plug it in and use the iron.*

(Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *Iron, television, kettle and she can plug the fridge to keep the things cold.*

JH: *What will you plug in first?*

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[72] Yamini', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community, London (24 July 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub13'.

(Indu translates, Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *Iron first to iron her clothes.*

JH: *What next?*

(Indu translates, Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *TV*

JH: *Turn the TV on? What's on?*

(Indu translates, Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *She watch the programmes, whatever comes.*

(Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *The water gets boiled. For tea. Fridge to put vegetables and milk, yoghurt.*

JH: *And what about the pot and the string?*

(Indu translates, Mrs Jadeja speaks)

Indu: *You put mud and then seeds to grow in the pot. Flowers. And to the string, she can hang it for the clothes.*[73]

It could be argued that this story does not represent a huge imaginative departure, since it focuses on the enactment of household chores, correlating closely with Mrs Jadeja's working role as a housewife. In light of her elderly frailty, however, this episode was, for me, a striking moment of imaginative play and encouraged my idea that the use of familiar objects in an abstracted context could serve as a useful springboard for imaginative reconfiguration of cultural memes. Moreover, in the same way that Ukeles' work with typically invisible household labour is highlighted and defamiliarized by its transposition to an art gallery, the fact that Mrs Jadeja presented her story in a creative setting, beyond the quotidian normalcy of housework, arguably made her performance '*an* experience', to borrow Dewey's phrase, marking it out as being special and meaningful.

My interest in pursuing the defamiliarization of spatial abstraction (as opposed to sensory immersion in space) resonates with Bogost's critical appraisal of immersive aesthetics in video games. He claims that the video games industry has a 'continuing obsession with verisimilitude' and links this to his wider agenda of avoiding totalizing systematization, arguing that

[73] 'Mrs Jadeja', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (24 July 2017). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub13'.

the verisimilitude that virtual reality pursues is another example of an attempt to impose organisational order and control on the systems of play.[74] By contrast, in his discussion of *The Sims*, in which characters speak in a form of gibberish, abstraction is described as beneficial. For Bogost, this '"weakness" is also a strength because it increases the game's possibility space' since the partiality of the simulation enables players to focus on the things that interest them rather than being subsumed by full immersion.[75] Bogost subsequently links non-immersive aesthetics with his wider theory of unit operations by discussing montage in the work of film-maker Sergei Eisenstein[76] arguing that its dislocated assemblage of cultural memes has much in common with the scattered assemblage process of bricolage.[77] Consequently, in the same way that the bricoleur makes connections between units of bric-a-brac, in the case of montage, the viewer or reader is required to construct an assemblage from the discrete units provided, rather than consuming images that provide fully coherent renderings of space that require no effort of imagination to grasp.

In my workshops in the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes, I followed up on my initial experiments with the abstracted use of objects and developed this aesthetic strategy to create montage play structures, framed by a sequence of object selections, that might provoke imaginative bricolage. In one session, I worked with Daniel, a Congolese man, inviting him to create a story that could make a journey from an imagined past to an imagined future, using objects as stimuli.[78] Firstly, I asked him to pick an object that connected with his past and he selected a spanner, saying:

> *It reminds me when I was younger to repair or fix the bike. And then when I went to the city capital – I was helping a friend – fixing his car.*

Next, he was invited to pick an object related to the future and he selected a small orange:

> *This one is not only for the future – but also from my infancy to the future. Because my father was not only a tailor – he was also in*

[74] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 150.
[75] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 85.
[76] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 69.
[77] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 113.
[78] See Appendix B.9 for the structure of the *Object Montage* exercise.

> *agriculture. And we had a plantation with all kind of fruits, and this was one of them. And for me it represents when the earth will produce enough food for everyone. It's a bright future.*

Having discussed the past and the future, I asked him to pick an object that represented a place, and he picked up a flashlight, saying:

> *I'm now preparing to go somewhere in the bush where there are no lights and it's dark. I will need it to see my way where I am going and identify objects around me.*

Next, I asked him to choose an object that represented a character in this place, and he picked a balloon:

> *Yes – because a balloon can be flexible, and you can put the air inside and it becomes big – this young man or woman – very young, he will grow up and become an adult.*

At this point, I asked him to describe the hopes of his character and he said '*he's trying to find something very precious for them. A treasure that they can discover.*' Next, I asked him to pick another object that represented a new place, or a new opportunity and he picked up a toy aeroplane:

> *He found his treasure in that bush. He comes back and boards a plane. Now he wants to go to trade it in New York. And there he will land in the JFK and then find somewhere he can trade his treasure.*

Finally, I asked him to pick an object that represented a challenge and he selected a padlock, saying:

> *This can represent somewhere where the doors are locked. And he needs to unlock so that he can either hide his treasure or the price that he received – he doesn't know where to put it and protect it. But it is a challenge. I see on the padlock – there are numbers – codes. He needs to know what code to unlock, hide his treasure and lock it. Keep and not forget the code. Because then there is no way to come back.*[79]

In reflecting on this play experience, I found it noteworthy that a very simple montage of object selections could serve as the springboard for an imaginary construction of a relatively complex story which made a significant departure from Daniel's lived experience growing up in Africa, towards a broader horizon of possibility in America (a place that he had never visited). It should be acknowledged that Daniel had, in my estimation, relatively high educational capital, so the imaginative and discursive range of his responses

[79] 'Daniel', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Clements House Sheltered Housing Scheme, London (29 January 2018). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyClementsHouse4'.

is perhaps not surprising, but when facilitating a similar exercise with images, I found that the montage approach also provided fertile imaginative ground for participants whose affordances were arguably weaker.

Following up on the immersive sound and image combinations that I had used at Haringey Community Hub, I decided to experiment with a spatial collision between images of familiar and unfamiliar places to explore what the interruption of immersion in the familiar might offer in terms of stimulating an imaginative departure.[80] In making this experiment, I worked with Brenda, an elderly lady who had previously told me a story about suffering an epileptic fit as a young girl during an excursion to a pond in Epping Forest, just outside London, which had almost caused her to drown. To begin, I laid out a range of photographic images relating to stories that members of the group had told me and asked each of them to pick the image that interested them the most. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they all chose the image that represented the story that they had previously told. I invited Brenda to look at her image, which depicted a young girl splashing (and possibly struggling) in a small lake whilst also playing a soundscape of splashing water. During this experience Brenda commented:

> *Going in the water – I was unconscious – didn't know anything in that respect. Sounds very much like me bath when I pull the plug out. I'm just thanking God someone was there and I survived. Grateful. This is what that must have sounded like to my friend.*

Subsequently, I asked Brenda to imagine another character in her scenario, either a real person or a fictitious one, to which she replied:

> *Yes, my friend's older sister who was supposed to be looking after us. I can imagine she wishes she was away in the forest or at the sea and go away – because it frightened her very much – because of what happened. Mavis was her name.*

Next, I asked Brenda to pick a second image, choosing one of the pictures relating to the stories that other people had told, and she chose a photograph of a small aeroplane flying over water, which related to Daniel's story of seeing a plane for the first time when he was a child. I then invited

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80 See Appendix B.3 for the structure of the *Image Collision* exercise.

her to listen to the soundscape of the aeroplane whilst imagining a destination that her character wanted to go to, to which she replied:

> *Possibly France – run away from Tottenham – if she thought we was gonna say something to mine or possibly her own parents. She's frightened – so she runs away…She'd want to go somewhere nice – Paris. Have a good time – knowing Mavis. Drink – and all the things that young women and girls would do – especially where there's no father to put her in her place. Possibly a weekend – maybe just a day and then she would come back.*

In reflecting on the exercise, Brenda commented on the divergence between the true aspects of the story and the fiction she had invented:

> *There was a lot of memories because it was a true story. That's only imagination that she would want to get away, but I can imagine her doing it – she was that kind of person.*

I then asked her to comment on how familiar the two images (the girl in the lake and the plane over water) seemed to her and she replied that the first was familiar but the second was unfamiliar:

> *I've never flown – I don't even have a passport. I've never been abroad. I've been to France, but on the ferry. That was on a one-day pass.*[81]

In my reflections on this exercise, I formed the idea that the spatial collision between the familiar image and the unfamiliar image, alongside the deterritorialization of taking up a new subjective vantage point in the character of Mavis, opened the possibility for Brenda to make an imaginative leap from the known quantities of a familiar situation to the unknown quantities of experiences outside of her experiential horizon. Essentially, I suggest that the defamiliarization produced through a montage of recognisable and alien spaces provided an imaginative gap for bricolage, in which she could assemble original cultural memes, moving beyond the limitations of her habitus.

My emphasis on the juxtaposition of the familiar and the strange resonates with the defamiliarization strategies of Bertolt Brecht who argues that estrangement shifts perception from passive acceptance of the apparently natural state of the world and prompts a recognition that the

[81] 'Brenda', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Clements House Sheltered Housing Scheme (12 February 2018). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyClementsHouse5'.

existing order of things is changeable.[82] My contention is that the defamiliarization of a montage of the familiar and the unfamiliar provokes a reflexively productive oscillation between closeness and distance, here and there, now and then, in contrast with the pursuit of immersive immediacy of space and time. I contend that such reflexivity, activated through aesthetic reconfigurations of space and time might enable a movement beyond the existing habitus towards a diversified memeplex, offering potential for cultural transformation.

4.5 Heteronomous Field Networks and Permeable Systems

In the previous section, I argued that heteronomous artistic practices can enable culturally transformative potential by promoting an interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar, in contrast to the valorisation of autonomy which, in my view, promotes cultural ossification in isolation from external influences. Similarly, in this section, I discuss a heteronomous conception of fields as networks that are open to change, as field agents seek out external influences from other spheres of activity to diversify their capital affordances. I subsequently link this discussion of field heteronomy to game design by returning to the work of Ian Bogost, who argues that although systems can be conceived as static and closed, they remain permeable to outside influences through the unpredictable subjectivities of players.

Recent considerations of Bourdieu's work have been critical of his belief that fields tend to pursue increased autonomization, presenting alternative example of heteronomous fields that are boundary spanning. In discussing the work of 'think-tanks', for instance, Thomas Medvetz argues that these organisations gain resilience by acquiring diverse capitals from a range of fields:

> In an institutionalized context already marked by advanced specialization, think-tanks excel by gathering and assembling multiple forms of capital as a way of claiming for themselves a kind of mediating role in the social structure. In this way, it is their function

[82] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 192-193.

> with respect to the relationships among fields – and thus their positioning and reach – that becomes the basis of their power.[83]

Field heteronomy is also celebrated in a less institutionalised setting by David Landy, who discusses the influence on the Jewish political field in the United Kingdom of contacts with political activists in Palestine. Landy argues that by 'bringing the outside in' through encounters with Palestinian groups, anti-Zionist Jewish organisations have cultivated methods of 'accumulating external forms of cultural capital which they translate to local fields' and thereby alter the dominant ideology within them.[84]

Just as fields can be reconceived as heteronomous networks, as opposed to autonomous spheres of activity, Bogost, having critiqued the totalising thrust of systems theory, argues that systems are permeable to external influences through the insertion of contingent player subjectivities. Bogost uses the term 'simulation fever' to describe the moment when the player can apply their subjectivity in the gaps between system operations.[85] As a result, Bogost enacts a kind of rehabilitation on systems, suggesting that if there is scope for subjective reflection to permeate users' engagement with a system, it ceases to be closed and static. Bogost reifies his concept of simulation fever through discussion of *Grand Theft Auto III*. This game is, arguably, extremely rhetorical, in the sense that players are only able to progress if they enact acts of violent crime. Jesper Juul argues that although it appears to offer almost limitless freedom and emergent potential, as players explore a vast urban landscape, it is, in fact, a game of progression in which players can only proceed along a linear narrative pathway as they unlock a series of 'levels' through successful criminal enterprise that open up new spaces in the game.[86] This structural determinism does not curtail the possibility for player subjectivity to permeate the system, though, and Bogost argues that, as the player avatar traverses the city, much like the

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[83] Thomas Medvetz, 'Field theory and organizational power: four modes of influence among public policy 'think tanks', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 221-237 (p.229).
[84] David Landy, 'Bringing the outside in: Field interaction and transformation from below in political struggles', *Social Movement Studies*, 14:3 (2015), 255-269 (p. 267).
[85] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, pp. 108-109.
[86] Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 82-87.

flâneur, the gaps between the unit operational points of decision offer space for the subjective reflexivity of simulation fever:

> *GTA* crafts the game experience in terms of a set of relations between possible actions and their consequences; in the gap between these decisions, simulation fever reigns. This is where the player must frame his next action in relation to a web of motivations, fears and preconceptions, both within and without the game.[87]

This argument for simulation fever (in the context of *Grand Theft Auto III*) is not entirely convincing, because although Bogost cites examples of players resisting the game's rhetoric by stealing ambulances to bring the injured to hospital or donning a priest's habit and praying for the victims of crime,[88] the design of the game clearly necessitates the performance of violent crime as the means of progression. Nonetheless, simulation fever is a useful concept in reflecting on my system-based game design work because it emphasises the heteronomous interplay between the functions of the supposedly closed system and the subjective reflections of players that appear to exist outside it.

With regard to *Islands*, the piece that I designed for participants at Haringey Community Hub, Bogost's concept of simulation fever provides a new way to view the game and the players' responses to it. In debriefing their play experience, participants commented on the synergies and tensions between the play action and their own subjectivities. Ravi's character, Antoine, had progressed from being the poorest child in the village to finish the game on the 'big island' with a high level of educational capital, a small amount of money and a very low level of popularity. In reflecting on this outcome, Ravi claimed that he had won the game (even though there were no specific victory conditions) saying, '*I been in the big island and I got some money and I got education – so I'm happy*', but as he further elaborated on his feelings it became unclear whether he was talking about the life of his character or his own life:

> *It was a good game. We played success. We played also for education, money and happiness – I'm pleased. I got lot of education. Making money. My life – I got my money. I got education and I got happiness –*

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[87] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 157.
[88] Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 156.

little happiness. I got money and education. I done all the transactions to reach that point.

I then asked him what it was like to leave his friends behind and see that Mr Ganguly's character, who had devoted more of his time to the cultural capital of friendship, had met someone special, to which he responded:

> *I'm not interested in friends – the past is past. And then I go to this position – what I see – regalement – fulfilled. I don't need the others – friends or what has passed. What is past is past. What I have here is happiness – I'm happier here.*[89]

In analysing the playing of this game, it seemed that Ravi's comments represented a retrospective form of simulation fever in which he had the opportunity to express his subjectivity and cultural particularity by drawing a relation between the structure of the game and his own life experiences. Despite his initial claim that the '*past is past*', at the end of the play session he changed his position, saying that if he was to play the game again, he would work to acquire even more wealth so that he could return to the small island (implicitly based on his home country of Mauritius) to buy the big farm that his family had lacked when he was a child. Subsequently, it occurred to me that if I had offered more space and time for players to articulate similar reflections on the connections or contrasts between play action and their own subjective viewpoints throughout the game (in the gaps between its unit operational functions), the meaning making impact of play and its culturally transformative potential might have been enhanced.

Although my analysis has responded favourably to Bogost's unit operational approach, which argues for the assemblage of networks from the ground-up, it is important, I suggest, for players to combine the experience of the localised affects of play with a more distanciated, critically reflexive perspective. As I have previously argued in my Literature Review, through my discussion of Falk Heinrich's tripartite theory of performative beauty which combines the sensory, the agential and the reflexive in his formulation: to do / to act / to perform,[90] reflexive consideration of the

[89] 'Ravi', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Haringey Community Hub, London (19 March 2018). Appendix A: 'HaringeyCommunityHub42'.
[90] Falk Heinrich, *Performing Beauty in Participatory Art and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 6.

structures of participation is fundamental in transforming the immediate satisfactions of play into something with greater culturally transformative potential. Essentially, my pursuit of reflexivity is geared towards creating aesthetic experiences that unconceal a clearing,[91] to borrow the terminology of Heidegger, in order to escape ossified enframement. Consequently, the final section of this chapter considers how thinking systemically can facilitate an oscillating movement between the immediacy of sensory experience towards reflexive meaning making, combining the satisfactions of immediate action alongside greater scope for culturally transformative reconfigurations of the habitus.

4.6 Reflexive Communication in System Formation

In contrast with Bogost's critical appraisal of totalizing systems, in this section I offer a more positive account of systems theory by drawing on the work of Niklas Luhmann. At first glance, Luhmann's view that systems are characterised by 'operative closure'[92] seems to correspond with Bogost's position, but I argue that despite the apparent autonomy of systems in Luhmann's thinking, he remains open to the possibility that they are permeable to what lies outside their form. Alongside the highly abstract theory that Luhmann presents, I offer more concrete applications of his ideas in the context of participatory art by referencing the writing of Tim Stott, who highlights the possibility that participants can reshape the form of the systems they play within by making decisions that bring things that are external to the system into its form. I will subsequently link these ideas to my practical work to argue that instead of creating play structures in a top-down fashion, the majority of the play activities that I facilitated at Haringey Community Hub and the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes invited participants to create the systems of their play from the ground-up, through sequences of decisions that brought the play form into resolution. The final part of this section considers the work of Gregory Bateson who

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[91] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), cited in Heinrich, *Performing Beauty*, pp. 52-53.
[92] Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, trans. by Eva M. Knodt (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 10.

compellingly argues that the act of play is integral to higher level communication as players define the form of their play and 'meta-communicate' to each other that this form is distinct from ordinary reality.[93] Subsequently, I argue that this 'meta-communication', through which players reflexively recognise the distinction between what is inside the play system and what lies outside it, is a vital tool for abstract thinking that enables the limitations of immediate surroundings to be transcended. I suggest that this allows players to imagine possibilities that lie beyond immediate experience and thereby visualise potential transformations of existing cultural practices and the values associated with them.

In setting out his understanding of systems, Luhmann argues that they are fundamentally characterised by distinctions, whereby a boundary is drawn between a form and that which lies outside it.[94] In other words, a form can only be defined by a distinction that creates a boundary between the intended object that is 'marked' and the 'unmarked' external environment,[95] in much the same way that phenomenologists see visual perception as being essentially based on a distinction between figure and ground.[96] Stott's application of Luhmann's ideas suggests, however, that the insistence on a strict boundary between form and its outside does not mean that systems are impermeable to change. He argues that although the form is closed 'it also remains open on its unmarked side'.[97] This fundamental linkage between form and its unmarked exterior is redolent of Shannon Jackson's juxtaposition of the heteronomy of everyday life with the autonomous art object which she describes as 'the exteriority that interiority can't do without, the co-operator'.[98] In other words, the openness of the 'unmarked side' of the form implies the possibility that further distinctions

[93] Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', in *The Game Studies Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, ed. by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 314-328 (p. 315).
[94] Luhmann, pp. 27-36.
[95] Luhmann, p. 29.
[96] Katherine J. Morris, *Starting with Merleau-Ponty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 23-24.
[97] Tim Stott, *Play and Participation in Contemporary Arts Practices* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 43.
[98] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 247, cited in Jackson, p. 15.

can redefine the form and bring new objects from the exterior within its boundary.

The notion that forms and systems are created through distinctions that establish a boundary with the 'unmarked' outside is relevant to my play design approach because it suggests a model through which systems of play establish their form through sequences of distinctions made by players. For example, in the object play of Mrs Jadeja, her selection of the adaptor plug defined the initial form of her activity, establishing a system based on the operational functions of the plug. She subsequently made further distinctions that drew upon the 'unmarked exterior' of external objects by selecting a ball of string and a seeding-pot which enabled her to expand the system of her play to create an imaginary domestic environment with a broader plurality of system operations, including watching TV, ironing clothes, putting food in the fridge, planting flowers and hanging washing on the line. None of these systemic features were given by the authored play design, they emerged in a bottom-up bricolage process that brought the play form into resolution through an initial distinction made by the player and a sequence of formal redefinitions that were made through further distinctions.

Central to Luhmann's concept of distinctions as the basis of formal definition is the idea that they are made through observations. An observation should not be seen as the sole preserve of a living agent who perceives and selects an object of intention (an observation can also be made by a system itself, such as a thermostat system, in its observations of hot and cold).[99] For my purposes, however, a human-oriented view of observations is most useful. In discussing observations, Luhmann makes a key distinction between first-order observation, which is the primary action of distinction that separates form from that which lies outside its boundary, and second-order observations which are, effectively, observations of the initial observation.[100] Stott usefully reifies the concept of second-order observations by discussing the activity of a child in play who not only makes

[99] Stott, p. 9.
[100] Luhmann, pp. 55-57.

distinctions as part of her play activity but is also consciously aware of having made these distinctions:

> She now observes how she takes part, and, once she is aware of the distinction and how she relates to it, she can begin to consider what she and other players might do next. She can begin to reflect upon and evaluate the play of which she is part.[101]

As this quotation suggests, second-order observations are fundamentally reflexive, and this reflexivity is significant because it enables the observer to recognise that they have made a distinction and that they have the possibility of making further distinctions that open a wider realm of possibility. As Luhmann notes, 'the world of possibility is an invention of the second-order observer which, for the first order observer, remains necessarily latent'[102] and he goes on to suggest that 'second-order observation affects the modality of whatever appears to be given and endows it with the form of contingency, the possibility for being different'.[103] In other words, the act of second-level observation is, in effect, the reflexive consideration of possibilities for further distinctions that can redefine the form of the system at play, opening potential for contingent changeability that is unavailable through first-order observations in which 'the world is observed directly on the basis of the belief that it is as it appears'.[104]

An awareness of contingent changeability was evident in the previously discussed play exercise at one of the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes which involved transposing my hiking story to the year 1794. In this activity, the players not only made distinctions that expanded the form of the story beyond its factual origins, they also made second-order observations of their distinctions. In reflecting on her play experience, Beryl commented that:

> *What's interesting is that when we started, the first parts of the story were absolutely true…but then you asked Tony to take up your story – and it made me realise that when somebody else comes into it they've got a completely different outlook on the story and it puts a bombshell into it…it's that Tony – not rudely – he put his spokes in and the whole*

[101] Stott, p. 46.
[102] Luhmann, p. 62.
[103] Luhmann, p. 67.
[104] Luhmann, p. 57.

story's gone totally out of proportion, but it just shows you – life is like that. This is what happens.[105]

What this example illustrates is that the players in the exercise recognised the contingency of meaning that could emerge from their story-making as a result of reflexively acknowledging their capacity to radically change the form of the play activity, rather than being bound by the givenness of the factual details upon which the exercise was based.

Luhmann's arguments regarding second-order observations share commonalities with the ideas of Gregory Bateson who argues that the evolution of communication is marked by a progressive abstraction so that:

> The organism gradually ceases to respond quite 'automatically' to the mood-signs of another and becomes able to recognise the sign as a signal, that is, to recognise that the other individual's and its own signals are only signals, which can be trusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected and so forth.[106]

Essentially, what Bateson is describing is a movement from a first-order observation to a second-order observation, whereby an organism not only makes signals as 'automatic' reactions to external stimuli, but also consciously recognises that signals are signals of contingent meaning. Bateson's arguments are concretised by his classic example (in the field of game studies) of play-fighting monkeys at San Francisco zoo. He argues that in order for the monkeys to engage in play that does not threaten injury, they must enact a form of meta-communication that alerts them to the fact that 'this is play' rather than actual violence.[107] In other words, in entering their play-fight, the monkeys draw a distinction between what is real and the 'not real' space of play, enacting a second-order observation which meta-communicates that a boundary, or frame, between the real and play has been drawn.

Bateson extrapolates his reflections on the monkeys' play to suggest that play may be an important feature in the development of complex communication (a theme which I will return to in the next chapter) by

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[105] 'Beryl', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Cranley Dene Sheltered Housing Scheme, London (17 January 2018). See Appendix A: 'HaringeyCranleyDene2'.
[106] Bateson, p. 315.
[107] Bateson, pp. 316-317.

creating frames, much like the formal boundaries of play systems, which enable second-order observations that facilitate reflexive meaning making. He claims that 'a frame is meta-communicative. Any message, which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, *ipso facto* gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the messages within the frame'.[108] In a similar vein to my arguments regarding Luhmann's notion of second-order observations, Bateson's concept of meta-communicative frames suggests that systemic thinking that consciously recognises both what is inside and outside the frame (or system) enables thinking at a level of abstraction that permits a movement beyond automatic responses to stimuli and promotes an awareness of contingent possibility. Consequently, despite the problematisations of systems theory that I have offered through discussion of Bogost's work, ultimately, thinking systemically about play (and in play) is an important feature of play's culturally transformative potential. Rather than simply responding to 'mood signs', players meta-communicate second-level observations of their activity, offering scope for abstract thinking beyond the concrete limitations of the present, which opens possibilities for emergent expansion of play systems and emergent transformation of the environments that exist outside them.

4.7 Summary

To conclude, in this chapter on designing play in response to the cultural particularity of players, I have argued that a ground-up approach to the social construction of human culture is fundamental to designing play structures that offer scope for the expression and potential alteration of cultural particulars. My practical work has illustrated that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful in conceiving cultural particularity and that given circumstances analysis is an effective tool for exploring how the capital affordances of participants have been shaped over their life trajectory. Habitus is a fundamental component of Bourdieu's broader field theory, but I have problematised a field analytical approach to play design, due to the

[108] Bateson, p. 323.

tendency of Bourdieu's theory to emphasise a field autonomy that reaffirms the doxa of dominant ideologies. As an alternative to the totalizing tendencies of field theory, Bogost's concept of unit operations suggests a model of analysis that privileges discrete relational connections that assemble more flexible networks. His argument for the reconfigurability of unit assemblages has proved valuable for my focus on the culturally transformative potential of play, stimulating ideas on the possibilities of bricolage play as a method of deterritorialization and overcoding that offers scope for habitus alteration.

In a similar vein to Bogost's arguments for bricolage as the formation of flexible assemblages, the performance and fine art scholars that I have cited emphasise the value of heteronomy in opposition to the inviolable autonomy of the art object. The arguments for artistic heteronomy that I have presented are both political and aesthetic, promoting an overlap of art and life as a means of promoting participatory agency but also as a way of creating aesthetic defamiliarization that merges what is known with wider array of unfamiliar influences that might enable cultural change. Consequently, my aesthetic investigations of defamiliarization techniques, set in opposition to the aesthetics of immersion, have suggested that such strategies can offer potential for players to escape un-reflexive perception and action and make new imaginative leaps that might be culturally transformative. Despite my problematisation of Bourdieu's field theory, I have drawn on recent critiques of his work which offer what I see as more productive visions of fields as heteronomous networks that are open to mutual influence. Similarly, despite Bogost's criticism of totalizing systems, his concept of simulation fever suggests that apparently closed systems can be permeable to contingent player subjectivity. This permeation of heteronomous influences suggests that systems, like fields, can be reconceived as emergent structures that offer scope for expressing and reshaping the cultural particulars of those who play within them. The potential for systems to support contingent changeability is affirmed by the work of Niklas Luhmann and Gregory Bateson. Both theorists argue, albeit with variations in language and approach, that systemic thinking is consonant with the reflexivity of second-order observations and meta-

communication, both of which enable abstract thinking to transcend the limitations of immediate perception and open a wider realm of the possible.

Crucial to my arguments in this chapter is the notion that systems, whether they be social structures or structures of play, can be understood and designed in a manner that proceeds from the ground-up. This means that play systems need not be seen as top-down impositions of a designer that corral the actions of participants, but rather as assemblages that players can form for themselves. Consequently, the emergent formation of flexible play systems, led by the distinctions of players, can engage their cultural particularities and enable the reconfiguration of the habitus as intersubjective exchanges evolve the form that the play activity takes, inviting reflexive reconsideration, and possible transformation, of cultural values and practices.

Chapter 5. Pedagogy & Documentation:

Curatorial Learning in Play

In the previous chapter, I investigated how the design of participatory performance might engage with the cultural particularity of players and enable transformative experiences, but in considering the impact of play in the broadest possible sense, a focus on the act of play alone cannot be sufficient. The experiences of players are recorded in myriad ways and, since memory and documentation are central to our knowledge of the world, a study of the culturally transformative potential of play must include an exploration of how play is remembered and documented. The importance of memories and documents is heightened further by their use in the transmission and creation of knowledge in processes of learning which are fundamental to the foundation, reaffirmation and potential transformation of cultural values. This essential linkage between the experience of play, the remembering and documentation of play and learning about play (or through play), yields the second of my subsidiary research questions:

> *How can play documentation and play design pedagogy further the culture building potential of play in the context of participatory performance?*

In responding to this question, I discuss the works of Paulo Freire, Jacques Rancière and Lev Vygotsky, all of whom seek to construct pedagogical theories through which learners might move beyond apparently fixed identities or ossified cultural values. Freire sets out an oppositional approach towards 'banking education' in which the knowledge of the masterful pedagogue is simply transmitted to the mind of the passive student and calls for an emancipatory pedagogy that creates equality.[1] By contrast, Rancière's *a priori* assumption of equality between students holds

[1] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 72-86.

that learners, like emancipated spectators of art, are always already emancipated and free to break out of the conventional distribution of the sensible. This view of learning is described by Tyson Lewis as being highly theatrical because it invites students to enact disruptive performances as if they were someone other than the person whom power brokers, or the 'police order', as Rancière describes it, have assigned them to be.[2] This chapter problematises Rancière's ideas, however, through reference to the work of Lev Vygotsky, whose pedagogical studies suggest that learning depends on imitation of others with stronger, or more diverse, capacities. Similarly, whereas Rancière asserts the necessity of autonomy for the emancipated student, human development through play is a highly social activity in which groups construct the sites, substances and narratives of their learning through intersubjective exchange. In making these arguments, I draw upon the concept of 'the curatorial' which has become increasingly influential in fine art contexts as a way of conceiving artistic projects as frameworks for co-creation. Artistic curation can be understood as the presentation of knowledge, with the curator acting as a mediator between the masterful artist and the nominally passive spectator. By contrast, the curatorial in participatory art focuses on creating contexts for a form of meaning making that is relationally constructed by participants.[3]

In the same way that pedagogy often appears to be policed by a masterful pedagogue who stands as a transcendent figure of power, the issue of documentation is laden with concerns over the canonical hegemony of the archive. In considering alternatives to conventional archival approaches, I discuss Diana Taylor's proposal that cultural practices which might be excluded from the archive continue to exist in the 'repertoire' of embodied memory that is passed down through the generations,[4] alongside Rebecca Schneider's arguments that performative acts can, in fact, be

[2] Tyson E. Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education: Theatre, Curiosity and Politics in the work of Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 40-41.
[3] Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[4] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

understood as documents of the past.[5] This notion that embodied memory contains the remains of a performative repertoire is also useful in considering how players might promulgate the culturally transformative impact of their play experiences through ongoing play performances that function pedagogically.

In practical terms, my creative work has interrogated links between play pedagogy and play documentation through a creative learning project in which I worked with a group of arts practitioners to explore methods of game design, interactive performance and live action role-play. Over the course of twelve weekly sessions between March and May 2018 at Theatre Delicatessen in London, this project, entitled Playground, invited participants to construct a group learning environment, test out methods of play design and work towards the creation of several original participatory works which were play-tested by invited guests. Throughout this project, participants were invited to document their experiences through writing, drawing or discursive reflection. These documentations were subsequently applied by four members of the group who took on the role of facilitators in a second Playground project in September and October 2018 (which will be discussed in Chapter 6). As a whole, this process has offered scope for an active consideration of how knowledge of play design can be created in a group learning environment, how pedagogical experiences can be documented or remembered and how these records might stimulate ongoing pedagogical work. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that participatory documentations might be understood to function, not as commodities of use for an artist or archival curator, but as gifts that issue a call to other (potential) participants to recognise the play that has taken place and respond to it in some fashion. Drawing on recent anthropological and museological works by Roger Sansi and Roger Simon, respectively, I propose that such gifts are not free offers that confirm a utopian egalitarianism, but a form of debt through which play documentation calls

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[5] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and war in times of theatrical reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

for a response from those who receive it, inviting ongoing creative learning that perpetuates the culturally transformative potential of play.

5.1 Theatrical Imitation & Inequality in Learning

In this section, I consider Tyson Lewis' comparative analysis of the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière which both assess the issue of educational emancipation. Lewis describes Rancière's vision of emancipated learning as the performance of the 'theatrical will' through which individuals can dismantle hierarchies and free themselves of assigned roles by performing alternative identities.[6] Although this theatrical liberation from fixed subject positions may seem compelling, I question Rancière's assumption of equality amongst learners and offer a different pedagogical perspective, through reference to the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose theories of childhood play suggest that human development implicitly relies on inequality, as learners attempt to appropriate the abilities of other individuals with stronger, or more diversified, capacities.

In his discussion of Friere's pedagogy, Lewis suggests that an apparently emancipatory approach may actually be the opposite in cases where intellectual emancipation depends on a 'master explicator'. He makes the compelling argument that although Freire's approach is geared towards the liberation of oppressed students, the necessity of pedagogical expertise in 'unveiling' the forces of oppression that have subjugated them reinforces the very inequality that it aims to overcome:

> To empower students to see themselves as agents of cultural change they must first identify themselves as unequal partners in the pedagogical act of pointing and looking – an act that holds them in the very position of dependency which the pedagogy of the oppressed is attempting to counteract.[7]

In contrast with Freire's notion that emancipation and equality are to be achieved by the student with the support of the pedagogue's expertise, Rancière advocates an approach to pedagogy that 'breaks with intellectual

[6] Lewis, p. 48.
[7] Lewis, pp. 140-141.

dependency by asserting the abilities of all to think, speak and act differently on their own accord'.[8] Building on Rancière's theories, Lewis' concept of theatrical will suggests that students can break out of the hierarchy of roles assigned by the police order, by performing 'as if' they were someone other than who they are supposed to be:

> The aesthetics of politics are situated in terms of the theatrical 'as if…' of sensual disruption and disjunction, where the subject is a subject in excess of prescribed names, and thus an actor that wears the mask, performs the gestures, suffers from pains and pleasures which are the exclusive property of others…Behind the mask is not a fixed individual but rather a singular will to become other than. It is this theatricality of the will that enables political actors to take up words that they are not meant to speak, or sights they were not supposed to see, or pleasures they were not supposed to feel. The theatrical will is a *creator of material fictions* – fictions of the senses that challenge the order of things.[9]

In other words, the theatricality that Lewis proposes, invites students to dismantle hierarchy and assert equality by relinquishing pre-ordained subject positions and enacting a redistribution of the sensible by adopting roles that do not belong to them. In the context of a study about the culturally transformative potential of play (with a specific focus on role-playing with alternative identities), this theatrical 'as if' is a highly attractive proposition, but I will now suggest that the concept of theatrical will, and the Rancièrean theories on which it is based, are problematic, since they disregard the implicit inequality of theatrical imitation.

Lev Vygotsky's theories of learning through childhood play are strongly, if indirectly, theatrical because they are focused on processes of imitative mimicry which are central to notions of theatrical performance. This playful imitation is not merely a mimetic reproduction of observed behaviour, it is a transformative act, 'allowing the child to perform as if a head taller'[10] so that they incrementally become other than what they are. Lois Holzman highlights the idea that imitation is a selective and generative activity stating that:

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[8] Lewis, p. 12.
[9] Lewis, pp. 47-48.
[10] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'Play and its role in the mental development of the child', trans. by Catherine Mulholland, *Soviet Psychology*, 5:3 (1967), 6-18. (p.16).

> Children do not imitate anything and everything as a parrot does, but rather what is 'beyond them' developmentally speaking and yet present in their environment and relationships. In other words, imitating is fundamentally creative.[11]

The idea that creative imitation is an endeavour to perform beyond the developmental level of the playful learner foregrounds the importance of unequalness in childhood learning, suggesting that children extend their capacities by enacting versions of actions that they are not (yet) capable of performing. Implicit inequality is central to Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, which conceives the learning process as an inherently social endeavour in which development occurs 'under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers',[12] and Holzman elaborates on the necessary inequality within the ZPD by arguing that:

> Vygotsky showed that children learn collectively and through their active relationships with others at varying levels of skill, knowledge, expertise, ability and personality…They learn by doing with others what they do not know how to do because the group (usually the family) supports such active, creative risk taking and performs with them.[13]

The emphasis in this excerpt on 'varying levels of skill, knowledge, expertise, ability and personality' is salient, highlighting that learners develop by imitating that which is beyond, or other than, their capacity, which clearly implies the necessity of differentiation and unequalness, in contrast to Rancière's emphasis on equality.

The importance of inequality in learning is affirmed by Elena Bodrova and Deborah Leong's study of early childhood play. They assert that 'in today's early-childhood settings, children are almost always segregated by age and have to interact with play partners who are as inexperienced as they are'.[14] The result, according to Bodrova and Leong, is that the developmental

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[11] Lois Holzman, 'Without Creating ZPDs There Is No Creativity', in *Vygotsky and Creativity: A Cultural-historical Approach to Play, Meaning Making and the Arts*, ed. by M. Cathrene Connery, Vera John-Steiner and Ana Marjanovic-Shane (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 27-40 (p. 32).
[12] Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, ed. by Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner & Ellen Souberman, trans. by Alexander R. Luria, Martin López-Morillas, Michael Cole & James V. Wertsch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 86.
[13] Lois Holzman, *Vygotsky At Work and Play* (Hove: Routledge, 2009), p. 37.
[14] Elena Bodrova and Deborah J. Leong, 'Vygotskian and Post-Vygotskian Views on Children's Play, *American Journal of Play*, 7:3 (2015), 371-388. (p. 386).

complexity of contemporary children's play is markedly lower than children of the 1950s who would, typically, benefit from playing with children of a more a diverse range of capacities in their home or neighbourhood.[15] This strongly suggests that effective learning requires 'intellectual asymmetry' so that children can 'appropriate knowledge and skills from more expert members of their society'.[16] Consequently, the zone of proximal development can be seen as a relational social space in which encounters with, and imitations of, the differentiated and unequal behaviours of other members of the group are central to learning.

Although the examples cited above relate to childhood learning through play, Holzman argues that that playful zones of proximal development can be created by people at all stages of life, suggesting that 'this performing kind of play and these spaces for performance are essential to development and learning – not only in early childhood but for all of us at all ages'.[17] In line with Holzman's positive assessment of the potential of adult play, the Playground project illustrated the developmental benefits of playful imitation for a group of (adult) artists before we had even engaged in any role-play games. The first exercise at the start of the opening session was a very simple play activity called *Totem Build*,[18] in which participants were invited to collectively build a monument, or totem, out of a pile of assorted junk, without speaking or negotiating how they might do it. In reflecting on this exercise, one participant, Zara, admitted being inhibited by the apparent weirdness of the task, even though, as an actor, she was used to unusual workshop activities. Her nervousness in this case was overcome by simply imitating other people, enabling her to become something (a confident workshop participant) that she was not, initially:

> *It's like 'okay, we're gonna just pick up some things from around the room and make a structure' – and I'm like 'what do you mean?!' – but that was great because – because I had no idea what was going on, but*

[15] Bodrova and Leong, pp. 385-386.
[16] Juan Manuel Fernández-Cárdenas, Rupert Wegerif, Neil Mercer and Sylvia Rojas-Drummond, 'Re-conceptualising "scaffolding" and the zone of proximal development in the context of symmetrical collaborative learning', *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 36:2 (2002), 40-54 (pp. 40-41).
[17] Lois Holzman, *Vygotsky*, p. 19.
[18] See Appendix B.21 for the structure of the *Totem Build* exercise.

> *some people did – there was this thing of sort of – 'Well, they seem to know what they're doing – so okay – I'll pick up this ball!'*[19]

Another participant, Josh, who described himself as an introvert, also reflected positively on the opportunity to imitatively follow others in unilaterally sculpting the totem, which enabled him to move beyond his usual shyness and deference towards others:

> *I really liked the statue thing – it's nice to go along with everyone doing their own thing and just say 'I feel like doing this. I wanna put that dog – there…because it's not something I do very often in my life. I spend a lot of time questioning my decisions and doing things that other people want…This might be really personal, but I really like being selfish in these games, just going 'I think that should go there'.*[20]

The theatrical imitation practiced by Josh and Zara in this instance was, in contrast to Rancière's insistence on equality, borne of an inequality in the sense that both felt uncertain or less well equipped to engage in the activity than their apparently more confident peers. Their solution was to learn by imitating, following the actions of differentiated and unequal others, in keeping with Vygotsky's notions of how learners develop by performing 'a head taller' than themselves.

5.2 Relational Sociality in Learning

The ability of participants to perform beyond their initial capacities that is illustrated by the examples noted above is fundamentally dependent on the social relationality that makes theatrical imitation possible, as individuals perceive and copy the behaviour of those around them. The highly intersubjective and relational nature of group learning through play, as articulated by Vygotsky, stands in sharp contrast with Rancière's valorisation of the autonomy of emancipated students. In this section, I question his emphasis on autonomy, arguing that relational sociality is fundamental to playful learning through theatrical imitation.

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[19] 'Zara', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground18'.
[20] 'Josh', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (19 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground13'.

For Rancière, preserving the autonomy of emancipated students is essential in disrupting the hierarchical distribution of social roles of the police order. For example, the *Ignorant Schoolmaster* of Rancière's philosophy is not a pedagogical guide, but simply someone who invites the always already emancipated and equal students to 'follow [their] path'[21] and autonomously pursue the will that is served by their intelligence.[22] Undermining singular autonomy, in his view, risks a perpetuation of stratification, as the viewpoint of one individual is compared and ranked in relation to others, thus reaffirming hierarchies that determine whose voice is worth listening to and whose is merely noise.[23] The hierarchy of the police order is described by Rancière as the orthodox 'count' of assigned identities and, in reaction to this, he calls for a 'rupture' or 'breach' in the stratified distribution of the sensible through actions that cast aside preassigned roles.[24] This relinquishment of prior identities is described by Lewis as a 'dis-identification' that moves autonomous individuals beyond hierarchically ordered social space into the 'atopic space of the stranger'. Lewis suggests that this atopia is characterised by the 'inoperative communication necessary for an uncertain community to remain open to the possibility of politics'.[25] Essentially, what is envisioned here is a form of political action in which an individual divests pre-existing identity through the performance of the theatrical will, claiming an unassigned role which cannot be recognised because it has no pre-ordained name. This process also appears to eschew intersubjective exchange because it occurs in a space of 'inoperative communication' in which all are strangers. Although these theoretical propositions are geared towards preserving intellectual emancipation, I argue that isolated autonomy could actually threaten the end of learning. In contrast to Vygotsky's highly intersubjective model of the zone of proximal development, which relies on relational connectivity for creative imitation to stimulate development, according to Rancière's theory, the autonomous student makes their discoveries independently. I contend, however, that if

[21] Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. by Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 57.
[22] Rancière, *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, p. 54.
[23] Lewis, p. 61.
[24] Lewis, p. 70.
[25] Lewis, pp. 71-72.

students lack a differentiated social group to creatively imitate as a means of discovering capitals that are (initially) beyond them and also lack peers with whom they can communicate to compare their discoveries, it is unclear how learning can occur.

In considering the Playground project as a possible manifestation of the zone of proximal development, the composition of the group as a diverse social entity with varying skills and levels of knowledge was of central importance. One participant, Jack, who runs a theatre company for young audiences, commented on the value of relational exchange within a creatively diverse group, arguing that this made it possible for participants to produce things that exceeded their capacities as individuals:

> *What's nice for me is that – although I do work very collaboratively in the company I have, I'm always the writer and the director of everything…But the range of approaches and the range of backgrounds that we had – and experiences – really made the process of creating things feel very new. It was very rich for producing stuff – and producing stuff that no-one individually could have made – but somehow between them they could.*[26]

Beyond the relational connectivity of group function, a centrally important aspect of the project was the creation of relational connections within the play experiences themselves. One participant, Navdeep, commented on several occasions about an exercise in which groups of participants built a landscape, characters, and relations by '*tapping in and tapping out*' so that each person, in turn, would add a layer to the emerging story world then step back to observe the next layer added by the next person.[27] For Navdeep, the important feature of this process was that all knowledge was publicly shared as the exercise unfolded, enabling participants to make their contributions in relation to the offerings that others had made:

> *The tapping in, tapping out thing – and kind of rotating of the characters – that for me was like a brilliant gift…because you have to plug into the shared thing – how you relate it to the whole…and one of the things I realised afterwards – cos I reflect on it a lot – but one of the things about that is that everybody's seeing what's happening, everybody's observing…so the tapping in tapping out made a landscape, someone said it's a base on the moon then there were the characters – like Zara*

[26] 'Jack', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (28 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground16'.
[27] See Appendix B.2 for the structure of the *Gestalt World Building* exercise.

> *said 'you treat me differently cos I'm a woman', so then I'm like 'I'm not like that' – and everything was feeding into like a collective thing.*

Navdeep went on to describe a piece that he designed later (about secrecy and paranoia in a squatters' commune) in which social sharing was relatively absent, using this experience to reflect on the value of relational connectivity in play:

> *When I did my piece – I'm not flagellating myself – but I did much less, I just went 'you're there, you're there' and what I realised I did was that I split people into silos. I didn't want them to – cos one of the themes was mystery and I was thinking 'don't tell them' – and what I realised was that I put a barrier between a shared experience…and the tapping in tapping out – why I mention it is – everyone's watching, so everyone's writing – there's that sense of a whole.*[28]

As these examples suggest, social relationality is extremely important in offering learners a differentiated range of behavioural material that they can creatively imitate to expand their capitals. Conversely, Navdeep's observations about splitting people '*into silos*' illustrates the pedagogical risks of autonomy that precludes the formation of zones of proximal development by limiting relational connectivity.

5.3 Language and Reflexivity

In the same way that relational connections are essential for generating learning through play, Vygotsky argues that the discovery and use of language as a means of 'completing' instances of knowledge creation in social interactions is of central concern. He claims that 'speech does not merely serve as the expression of a developed thought…thought is restructured as it is translated into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word'.[29] Holzman builds on these ideas to suggest that 'the human ability to create with language – to complete and be completed by others – is, for adults as well as very young children, a continuous process of creating who we are becoming'.[30] In addition to using language in social

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[28] 'Navdeep', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (12 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground17'.
[29] Lev S. Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky, Volume 1* (New York: Plenum, 1987), p. 251, cited in Holzman, *Vygotsky*, p. 39.
[30] Holzman, *Vygotsky*, p. 40.

communication, Vygotsky's theories also emphasise the importance of inner speech in developing imaginative thinking and this section considers the value of both external and internal speech in supporting reflexivity in play.

In the Playground project, the continuous process of attempting to create meaning through discursive reflection was extremely important. It is traditional in Nordic Larp communities to conclude the play activity with the ritual of the *runda*, or storytelling circle, in which each player is invited to verbally reflect on what they have encountered, and it became a regular practice to conclude sessions in this way. A notable example of discursive reflection came when one participant, Meg, was thinking about a play experience she had had when role-playing with me, which had affected her, but without her being able to immediately understand why. The discussions that followed illustrate the value of shared verbal reflection as a means of intersubjectively forging new understandings of what has taken place. The experience being discussed was a role-play, designed by members of the group, which involved a small band of revolutionaries (two of whom were secretly in love with each other) being hunted by the police. In the first stage of the role-play, the group made plans to flee from a shopping centre in Cardiff, rejecting the option of escaping by car and embarking on a journey to Bristol by stealing a small boat. In the final scenario, the revolutionaries found themselves floating on the Severn estuary, following the failure of the boat's motor, which prompted the characters to engage in some philosophical meditations about the possibility of death and what they would like to do with their lives if they survived. The design of the play activity invited players to deliver these meditations through the device of character inner monologues which allowed them to verbalise things that their characters were thinking, but could not say.[31] In reflecting on this scenario, Meg focused on a moment when the tone of play changed and became, for her, more emotionally charged, and she attempted to work out why this change had occurred:

> *The moment when our play shifted was when you as a player gave like a monologue and there was something about there being introspective character roles* (the ability for players to articulate the inner feelings of

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[31] See Appendix B.17 for the structure of the Retreating Army play design exercise.

> their character as a meta-theatrical gesture) *that shifted the way I was playing – like I could think about how I was feeling and I got to be like – 'I'm feeling really frightened right now' – and then I could pretend like I wasn't really frightened and I could deal with everything – but it allowed me to bring two layers to the way I was playing and I found that really useful.*[32]

Meg's comment that there were '*two layers*' to her play as a result of the types of communication that she was able to use is strongly redolent of Gregory Bateson's notion of 'meta-communication' which was discussed in the previous chapter. In this instance, communication self-consciously referred to itself as Meg and I used language *within* the role-play and also as meta-communication *about* the role-play through the device of character inner monologues.

The notion that communication can function on '*two layers*' connects to a key component of Vygotsky's theory: the link between using language for external and internal speech. Norris Minick offers a neat articulation of Vygotsky's idea that although speech emerges first as social communication about tangible objects in a child's immediate vicinity, secondarily, as the child begins to develop complex play, it becomes a tool for internalised thought that enables a higher level of imagination that transcends the limitations of immediate surroundings:

> Vygotsky argued that word meanings are…bound to their objects for the very young child, with word and thing fused in the child's consciousness…it is through the development of the child's play activity that thought and meanings are liberated from their origins in the perceptual field, providing the foundation for the further development of speech and its role in advanced forms of thinking and imagination.[33]

Several months after playing the scenario in the Severn, when we were debriefing the project as a whole, Meg again remembered the episode and continued to develop her understandings of it through dialogue with me and through a consideration of her own internal dialogue:

[32] 'Meg', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (17 April 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground8'.
[33] Norris Minick, 'The Development of Vygotsky's thought: an introduction to *Thinking and Speech*', in *Introduction to Vygotsky*, ed. by Harry Daniels (Hove: Routledge, 2017), pp. 32-56. (p. 46).

> *I really remember our conversation in the boat from Wales. I remember being really affected and I think, of my playing experiences, it was the most significant…And I remember that I had a whole narrative in my head about our relationship that I didn't say – and then I was playing, and I was like – 'why didn't I verbally share that at the start of this? Because I'm clearly playing it'. Thinking about it now as we're speaking, a big part of it was that when we were on that boat, I felt like there was nothing – I had no idea what was going to happen, and we were just on a boat – and that was important. That as a circumstance really facilitated a particular type of conversation.*[34]

In setting out this reflection on Meg's play experience, several salient points about communication emerge. Firstly, her verbal speech was clearly not an articulation of pre-existing thoughts. The fact that she was '*thinking about it now as we're speaking*' illustrates that her thoughts were shaped by the act of speaking itself. Secondly, she identified that her inner speech about the (potentially romantic) nature of the relationship between her character and my character was an important aspect of what had made the experience valuable, aside from what was actually said within the role-play, which shows the reflexive value of the internal conversation in play. Thirdly, she emphasised the unknown quantity of what was going to happen to the drifting boat on the Severn and suggested that this facilitated a '*certain type of conversation'*. I suggest this '*certain type*' was an open-ended dialogue about abstract imaginings of the future (relating to possible sinking or survival) rather than a conversation about immediate realities. This highlights the vital relation between internal language use (which was clearly a major feature of this role-play) and abstract, imaginative thinking that is oriented towards the future and, in the following section, I offer further consideration of the relationship between imagination and time in play.

5.4 Temporal Immediacy & Imaginative Time

A comparison of the theories of Vygotsky and Rancière shows a marked contrast in notions of pedagogical space, with Rancière's emancipated student arriving through the breach of the theatrical will in an atopia in which their autonomy is preserved at the expense of relational

[34] 'Meg', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (27 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground15'.

communication, set against Vygotsky's vision of learning in a strongly relational space that thrives on communicative connection. In a similar vein, the two theorists have differing approaches to pedagogical time and I will now discuss Rancière's interest in the temporal immediacy of curiosity, as articulated by Lewis, to throw into relief Vygotsky's alternative view of imagination which relies on both recursion and projection in time.

In his analysis of Paulo Freire's pedagogy, Lewis argues that Freire sees a temporal progression between scientific learning about the world and aesthetic imagination. According to Lewis' articulation of Freire's ideas, 'the aesthetic event of vision is the *imaginative* supplement to scientific unveiling'.[35] In other words, the pedagogue must first help the oppressed student to unmask the material conditions of their oppression as a necessary precursor to any imaginative projection by the student of how the world could be changed in future. The problem, according to Lewis, with a temporal separation between scientific unveiling and imagination is that it reaffirms a hierarchical subordination of ignorant students who must have the objective scientific reality of the world unveiled to them by the expertise of the pedagogue before they can exercise creative imagination. By contrast, Rancière focuses on the immediacy of curiosity rather than imagination. In Lewis' description, Rancière sees curiosity as 'a failing in our understanding' that occurs in 'a location where the eye "does not know in advance what it sees, and thought does not know what to make of it"'.[36] The benefit of curiosity, for Lewis, is that it forgoes any temporal division between scientific understanding (mediated by the masterful pedagogue) and imagination, and he claims that 'overcoming this division reorients education from a utopian horizon to the active aesthetic performance of the theatrical will in the here and now'.[37]

The assumption of equality lies at the heart of Rancière's emphasis on the immediacy of curiosity. In his pedagogical theory, prior identities assigned by the police order can be cast aside in the moment of equal

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[35] Lewis, p. 95.
[36] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2009), p. 105, cited in Lewis, p. 99.
[37] Lewis, p. 98.

perceptual capacity, but without a projection into the future that might become tied into a hierarchically ordered prescription of what a utopian future should look like.[38] I contend, however, that Rancière's ideas on temporal immediacy appear to undermine the possibility of accomplishing the type of radical political reordering of the world that he envisages. For example, Çiğdem Çidam argues, in an article assessing Rancière's political philosophy, that his focus on temporal immediacy 'overlooks the question of how to hang onto gains attained by a political movement' creating a vision of democratic action that is limited to the 'here and now'.[39] Aside from the political limitations of temporal immediacy, I argue that Rancière's emphasis on the instantaneity of curiosity in the here and now might actually preclude any performance of the theatrical will. Central to Vygotsky's theories of learning through play is the idea that it is fundamentally imitative, functioning as a creative mimicry of behaviours and events that the child has previously experienced. In Rancière's philosophy, however, the temporal immediacy of curiosity elides recursion of past experiences, while the assertion of equality strips away the particularities that individuals have developed over their life trajectory. I suggest that the consequence of this equalisation and expungement of particularities that have emerged over time is the removal of the experiential material that must necessarily be the substance of any theatrical performance. In other words, if all students are equal and perform the theatrical will in the immediacy of now, they can have no recursion of past experiences or deploy the particularities of their repertoire in their theatrical performances.

In the context of a study of the culturally transformative potential of play, the valorisation of temporal immediacy is problematic because it reduces the scope for reflexivity whereby an individual can recursively draw on their experiences of the past to prompt action in the present. For Vygotsky, however, the reconfiguration of past experiences is fundamental in

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[38] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 84, cited in Lewis, p. 106.
[39] Çiğdem Çidam, 'Disagreeing About Democracy: Rancière, Negri, and the Challenges of Rethinking Politics in the Wake of 1968', *Theory & Event*, 19:1 (2016) <https://muse-jhu-edu.libproxy.ncl.ac.uk/article/607269> [accessed 8 May 2019].

fuelling imagination. In describing his imaginings of the Saharan desert, for example, he argues that:

> These productions of the imagination…consist of transformed and reworked elements of reality and a large store of experience is required to create these images out of these elements. If I did not have a concept of a lack of water, sand, enormous spaces, animals that live in deserts, and so forth, I, of course, could not generate the concept of this desert.[40]

The imagination that reconfigures aspects of past experience (either things that have been directly encountered or indirectly discovered through verbal communication or written literature, for example) is not limited to basic mimetic reiteration of these experiences. Rather, Vygotsky suggests that the function of imagination is to selectively gather elements of past knowledge and creatively reconfigure them in anticipation of the future:

> When, in my imagination, I draw myself a mental picture of, let us say, the future life of humanity under socialism or a picture of life in the prehistoric past and the struggle of prehistoric man, in both cases I am doing more than reproducing the impressions I once happened to experience…The brain is not only the organ that stores and retrieves our previous experience, it is also the organ that combines and creatively networks elements of this past experience and uses them to generate new propositions and new behaviour…It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present.[41]

As Vygotsky's arguments suggest, imagination is predicated upon the repurposing of prior experience, a point that is elaborated by Anna Stetsenko's reading of his work which highlights the fundamentally time-bound nature of emergent experience as a composite of prior knowledge and future-oriented imagination:

> Reality has to be understood in its unfolding and open-ended, dynamic historicity where the present is a continuously emergent process tied not only to previous conditions but also, most critically, to future conditions as these are envisioned.[42]

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[40] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity in Childhood', *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology,* 42:1 (2004), 7-97 (p. 16).
[41] Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity', p. 9.
[42] Anna Stetsenko, 'Moving beyond the relational worldview: Exploring the next steps premised on agency and a commitment to social change', *Human Development*, 59:5 (2016), 283-289 (p. 286).

Consequently, the performance of the theatrical will, as described in Lewis' articulation of Rancière's theory, must necessarily be limited in its transformative scope by the temporal immediacy of curiosity, since the curious subject must remain in relative ignorance and therefore possess a relatively limited range of material to supply their performative repertoire. By contrast, the depth perspective of imaginative time that combines experience of the past with visions of potential futures offers a more fertile ground for performing the theatrical will, for the simple reason that there is a greater store of prior knowledge to fuel this performance. Furthermore, as Vygotsky carefully points out, imagination is not simply a reproduction of the old, or a reaffirmation of existing norms, it is a creative repurposing of the past, projected into an uncertain future, that simultaneously reshapes the present moment.

In the Playground project, instances of imagination connecting past present and future are innumerable, but one workshop was particularly focused on using memory as the basis for imaginative play. The session started off with an introductory exercise in which I asked participants to respond to the question: '*Where have you come from today?*' The replies that they gave detailed the ordinary activities of everyday life and might, therefore, be seen as relatively inconsequential, but I suggest that this simple invitation encouraged participants to put themselves in the mindset of remembering, in preparation for engaging in creative activities with their memories. Subsequently, I conducted another memory exercise which asked participants to draw a place that really mattered to them from their past experience. Working in small groups, they then passed the image on to another player who was invited to draw characters into the picture, leading to small role-plays in which group members acted out a scenario featuring the characters in the pictures.[43] In reflecting on this exercise, several participants commented on the imaginative potential of reconfiguring personal memories in play:

> Zara: *I really enjoyed the mixture of building from people's memory versus them taking it into an imaginative place and it was kind of – very satisfying from when you described something – the next player kind of*

[43] See Appendix B.11 for the structure of the *Palimpsest Drawing* exercise.

listening to that and adding to your picture – influenced by what you'd said.

Meg: *Similarly, I found it starting in a place that was quite like – it was a memory…and then the development out of that – there were characters that were discussed that then formulated and that was really lovely to see – to see someone who had existed in a kind of off-hand comment then taking full form – and actually like a massive back story as the game went on.*

Xanthe: *I guess something similar – with the auxiliary character that has a relationship with someone from the like – first world. I liked that as a spark to an entirely different environment, or time. I guess you would think of it as going into the past – but then there was a different temporality…in my case it was quite resonant because it's a place – the story is of a woman who starts to lure tourists into the sea to kill them – and this is from a place that was very dear to me that has been absolutely ruined by tourism and that's actually like a fantastic fantasy! So, I'm like – 'Wow! Good idea! Lure them into the ocean!'*[44]

As Xanthe's comments suggest, the reconfiguration of memory in the play activity provided a fertile ground for future-oriented fantasy. Although her idea of killing tourists was clearly not a serious proposition, it does share similarities, I suggest, with Vygotsky's understanding of imagination, which draws on past experiences as a means of constructing future projections. Just as Vygotsky draws on his experience of the past to construct the utopian vision of the future life of humanity under socialism, Xanthe's play imaginatively reconfigured memories of her home in Greece to create a vision, fantastical though it might seem, of productive change (from her perspective) in a place that was extremely important for her.

5.5 Not-Knowing & the Search for Method

A fundamental aspect of imagination is the notion that the future is uncertain and, in the same way that uncertainty in play is a large part of what makes it compelling, in this section, I argue for the pedagogical value of not-knowing. In discussing Vygotsky's ideas on childhood language acquisition, Lois Holzman states that 'developmental activity does not require knowing how'.[45] She argues that 'when babies begin to babble, they

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[44] 'Zara', 'Meg' and 'Xanthe', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (27 March 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground3'.
[45] Holzman, 'Without Creating ZPDs', p. 31

are speaking before they know how to speak or that they speak, by virtue of the speakers around them accepting them into the community of speakers and creating conversation with them'.[46] Vygotsky's positive assessment of not-knowing can also be linked with the pedagogical ideas of his American contemporary John Dewey who argues that 'suggestion…runs beyond what is actually…present. It relates, therefore, to what is possible rather than to what is actual. It proceeds by anticipation, supposition, conjecture, imagination'.[47] In other words, development comes from imaginative leaps as speculative instances of hypothetical suggestion that do not need to be rooted in scientific knowledge and analysis of actuality.

In Playground, the speculative, suppositional nature of not-knowing was a marked feature of the project. In the same way that babbling babies begin to speak before they know how to speak, the participants were challenged to design and facilitate live action role-plays before they really knew how. Rather than seeing this as a negative, however, participants reflected positively on not-knowing, as is illustrated by Xanthe's comments following a play-test session of her group's final piece:

> *My reflection – holy shit – you just do it. And something comes out of it and you learn something. I didn't want to play-test, I was like 'We're not ready. I don't have my concepts!'* (everyone laughs) *'I don't know if this needs to be here or here, so like – we'll do it next time' And then – you think it's gonna be rubbish but then – it was helpful. I mean, we're not gonna show it – quite now – but yeah. It was really helpful for us – you just do it even if you haven't got all the laces and flourishes and its really basic. But it's great – cos I'm really an overthinker.*

Xanthe's comments were subsequently echoed by Josh, who also identified the value of moving away from a highly thought out creative process:

> *I'm astonished by how quickly you can build something. Like – when did we start doing this – last week? That is wild that we've got functioning things in such a short space of time. I'm used to spending a year building an hour-long show…this is the literal opposite – where you can just come up with a concept – build it – and you just let it run – and it is wild to me that I feel pretty comfortable with what we've got in two weeks.*[48]

[46] Holzman, 'Without Creating ZPDs', p. 34

[47] John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 104.

[48] 'Xanthe' and 'Josh', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (8 May 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground10'.

As these examples indicate, know-how was not a requirement for designing role-play games. Rather, the willing embrace of speculative not-knowing was key in enabling participants to seek out new ways of working based on quick iterations of their designs, in contrast to more ordered forms of creativity framed by careful planning.

The relationship between knowing and not-knowing was further elaborated by Meg in her reflections on our scenario of the boat in the Severn estuary. Her enjoyment of having '*no idea what was gonna happen*' in this role-play subsequently led into a consideration of facilitating the unknown in her own projects. She described being strongly attracted by complexity, but said that she often undermined the experience of her audience-participants by over-explaining things to them and creating a deficit of not-knowing:

> JH: *With this thing of complexity – feels like there's maybe something similar to what you described about being in the boat – where you don't know…*
>
> Meg: *Yeah.*
>
> JH: *There's a kind of layer of unknown.*
>
> Meg: *Yeah. Yeah! And I think – often what I'm trying to facilitate is getting people to that point of unknown – but what I think I often do is – I explain the complexities and then they're not at a point of unknown.*

At this point, Meg picked up a menu card (which was shaped like a triangular cylinder) from the table to illustrate her facilitation of complexity:

> Meg: *It's like – this is the complexity* (the menu) *and I want them here* (outside the structure) – *but instead I put them here* (inside the structure). *So, I put them in the midst of the complexity rather than like – sitting on top of it or sitting outside of it so that they're able to kind of lean on it and consider it.*
>
> JH: *So – if you've put me into it – you've already told me what the properties of this thing are – too much perhaps?*
>
> Meg: *Yeah, cos then you can't get down. You're just in it. You're in it so much that you can't remove yourself from it.*[49]

This notion of wanting to be able to remove oneself from the close, proximal immediacy of knowledge in order to stand outside it and discern it is strongly suggestive of the role of reflexivity in learning. The reflexivity

[49] 'Meg', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (27 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground15'.

involved in standing outside complexity does not imply a valorisation of perpetual not-knowing, however. Instead, my proposal is that not-knowing is a productive foundation for the search for new knowledge.

In Vygotsky's theories, the search for method is a key aspect of learning whereby members of a group do not simply acquire tools to find solutions, the search for method is itself the source of development. This can be exemplified most clearly by childhood language development in which the discovery of words and speech provides tools for communication but also results in development through the process of searching for these tools. Holzman describes this as a 'tool and result' approach to learning as opposed to the 'tool for result' approach of banking education in which teachers instruct students on how to use a tool in order to achieve a desired result. For Holzman, 'the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study' and the method itself is 'not a tool to be applied, but an activity (a search) that generates both tool and result at the same time and as continuous process'.[50]

The search for method in the Playground project was indeed a continuous process for both participants and me as the facilitator. I was mindful to avoid the temptation of simply supplying the group with a range of tools with which they could produce the 'result' of new works, favouring a more experimental (and risky) approach of trying to do things that I did not know how to do as part of my own search for method. A consequence of this emphasis on not-knowing and searching for new tools was that there was a considerable amount of what might be seen as failure, particularly in the early part of the project. Nonetheless, I would argue that a culture of not-knowing placed participants in a position that enabled them not just to acquire tools but to discover that they could create their own tools as well. For example, Navdeep commented on the widely used Nordic larp practice of applying workshop activities, like using post-it notes to propose ideas for the fictional settings in which a role-play might be played, as a preparatory first stage of the play experience:

[50] Holzman, *Vygotsky*, p. 9.

> *Because I'm such a workshop whore* (referring to his frequent attendance of arts workshops) *I realised early on that part of larp must be the workshop…If we're doing a preliminary thing, we're larping…If we're doing this thing with the post-it notes – as a process of idea generation – this isn't just – this is actually part of the larp.*[51]

The salient point that can be drawn from this reflection is that Navdeep became aware that the workshop was not a separate precursor to the larp itself, or a tool that would produce the result of role-play drama. Rather, the workshop process of sticking post-it notes on the wall to generate ideas was both tool and result: not just a preparatory warm-up, but a fundamental part of the larp itself. Moreover, this realisation meant that that he had not only acquired a tool (using post-it notes for world building), he had also gained a self-reflexive, second-order awareness of his acquisition and his ability to make such an acquisition, which can be understood as a form of learning development that is independent of the tool's utilitarian function.

5.6 Pedagogical Scaffolding & the Curatorial

As I have suggested in my previous discussion of the balance between knowing and not-knowing in my facilitation of Playground, a substantial part of the pedagogue's work lies in deciding the extent to which they will present pre-existing methods or concepts or invite students to experimentally originate their own. Educational psychologist Jerome Bruner, who is, arguably, a leading proponent of Vygotsky's theories, gained notoriety for developing the concept of 'scaffolding' as the means by which the pedagogue creates frameworks for learning, with a balance of independence for the student alongside teaching guidance.[52] In the latter part of his career, as Vygotsky's influence on him grew, Bruner recognised that his scaffolding concept placed too much emphasis on the expertise of the pedagogue and moved towards a position of valuing the intersubjective nature of learning, seeing the individual learner 'not as the pure and enduring nucleus but…the

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[51] 'Navdeep', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (12 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground17'.

[52] David Wood, Jerome S. Bruner and Gail Ross, 'The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving', *Journal of Child Psychology*, 17 (1976), 89-100.

sum and swarm of all participations'.[53] Nonetheless, for my purposes, scaffolding remains a useful term for considering how a facilitator can frame a learning process. In the same way that Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster* frames learning by 'pointing' towards objects that might be unfamiliar or 'placing' before the student another such object,[54] scaffolding can be seen as a process of curatorial pointing through which the facilitator points out things that may be of interest for the students to explore further. To develop the idea of pedagogical scaffolding as curatorial pointing, I will now discuss the concept of the 'curatorial' as it has emerged in recent fine art discourse.

In considering the distinction between curation and the curatorial, Jean-Paul Martinon defines the former as the practice of presenting existing knowledge contained in art objects, in opposition to the latter which seeks to be more disruptive of received knowledge. He states that curating:

> Is an attempt a) to take the measure of a world (art, artists, generation, geography etc.), b) to figure the measure (translate it in a common language: art history, ethnography, history, sociology etc.), c) to give it an ideological character (to slant the translation with a set of common principles or political beliefs), and finally, d) to hide from the viewer the method that led to this measurement, figuration, translation and ideology.[55]

Martinon clearly suggests that traditional curating is highly instrumental, with a clear intent to sculpt the perceptions of audiences. This approach has a strongly biopolitical character, setting out a vision of the curator as a caretaker who selects objects of attention that are desirable and excludes undesirable elements from a specific body of work.[56] Stefan Nowotny goes further to suggest that the actions of the curator as caretaker can be seen as narcissistic, referencing the myth of the goddess Cura (the etymological root of the word 'curator') who sculpts the first human from clay as an image of

[53] Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 107, cited in Keiichi Takaya, *Jerome Bruner: Developing a Sense of the Possible* (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2013), p. 39.
[54] Lewis, p. 86.
[55] Martinon, pp. 27-28.
[56] Joasia Krysa, 'The Politics of Contemporary Curating: A Network Perspective', in *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, ed. by Randy Martin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 114-121.

herself in the same way that curators might been seen to sculpt the perceptions of audience in line with their own visions.[57]

In contrast with an approach to curation that seeks to gather an understanding of the world and present it to the viewer, which might be seen as analogous to the principles of 'banking' education, the curatorial, according to Martinon is 'simply an effort to let go of knowledge…an effort to sustain the disruption of knowledge'[58] that is 'paradoxically, but necessarily, the birth of knowledge'.[59] This call for curatorial disruption of knowledge seems to connect directly to Rancière's pedagogical theory of curiosity, but other contributors in Martinon's book suggest a model of curatorial practice that is less disruptive and more constructive. Irit Rogoff argues that the curatorial creates contexts for 'the event of knowledge',[60] by setting a plurality of viewpoints in relation, in the same way that a plurality of diverse learners construct the zone of proximal development, a point which is affirmed by curator Ine Gevers:

> Curating is a practice that permits the creation of different interpretive contexts, embracing different political, social and psychological positions, theories and ideologies, at the same time as making cultural connections between them. To put it more simply, it is about opening up 'spaces' within which different discourses can be brought into relationship with one another, 'spaces of transformation' in which both critical and self-critical engagement are put into work as the chief transforming agents. Such 'spaces' would bring personal strategies into the public domain in a way that encourages an arena of inter-subjectivity.[61]

Building on the ideas presented by Gevers, I argue that the Playground project functioned as an 'arena of inter-subjectivity' in which practitioners from a range of disciplines were brought into creative relation with each other. In reflecting on his experience of the project, one participant, Andy,

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[57] Stefan Nowotny, 'The Curator Crosses the River: A Fabulation', in *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by Jean-Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 59-64.
[58] Martinon, p. 30.
[59] Martinon, p. 26.
[60] Irit Rogoff, 'The Expanding Field', in *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by John-Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 41-48 (p. 46).
[61] Ine Gevers, 'Curating: The Art of Creating Contexts', in *Conversation Pieces* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 1995), pp. 41-42, cited in Aneta Szylak, 'Curating Context', in *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by John-Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 215-223 (p. 219).

who came from a fine art background, commented on the interdisciplinarity in the group, saying:

> *I felt like the course was kind of a broad spectrum of different variants of larp and interactive theatre and games but lots of people came from an interactive theatre background and that kind of – kind of pushed a lot of decisions in our piece into that setting. Which was fine…I mean – I think we made some decisions that were more – more trusting the players – but some decisions pushed more into the kind of interactive performance area.*[62]

Andy's comments highlight the fact that intersubjective exchange is not necessarily a harmonious process of adapting to alternative viewpoints and, as he suggests, the prior inclinations of some participants led them to hold onto favoured artistic forms in which an audience would interact with a performance rather than creating the performance themselves. On one hand, this could be seen in a negative light, with the implication that the project did not enable interactive performance makers to adapt their methods and encounter the culturally transformative experience of using alternative creative forms. I suggest, however, that within the methodology of scaffolding as curatorial pointing, cultural transformation should not be seen as something that is necessarily desirable or required. Rather, as Andy's comment shows, the Playground participants were able to choose or disregard the various things that were 'pointed to' at their own discretion, rather than being required by the pedagogue to receive prescribed forms of knowledge or practical methods. In other words, they were invited to pursue cultural transformation in their repertoire of creative methods to the extent that it was desirable for them to do so.

5.7 Curatorial Aesthetics

Aside from the question of the content offered by the pedagogue, the formal aspects of curatorial pedagogy relating to the framing of events in space and time were important areas of interest in my facilitation of Playground. In the same way that I have challenged valorisations of temporal

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[62] 'Andy', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (23 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground14'.

immediacy for reducing the scope for critical reflexivity, this section considers the spatial composition of pedagogical contexts. Drawing on Roger Simon's analysis of museological practice, I argue that, in contrast to the aesthetics of sensory immersion, spatial compositions in playful learning environments that employ defamiliarization and a minimalistic economy of means can be conducive to critical reflexivity and imaginative thinking that fosters culturally transformative potential.

Simon's discussions of curatorial practice offer detailed descriptions of exhibitions of lynching photographs from the United States, focusing closely on the aesthetics of their curation. He proposes that despite their horrific content, the lynching photographs might be seen as a gift (an idea that I return to later in this chapter) that calls for a response from the viewer.[63] To achieve this response, however, Simon argues that the curation of the photographic exhibit must seek to generate a movement from affect to thought that might stimulate action:

> At the heart of the matter regarding questions of difficult knowledge is the provocation of affect, and most importantly, affect's relation to the instigation and possibilities of thought…this notion of affect is not dichotomously opposed to or forestalling thought, but felt as a force that incites and compels thought as to the range of emotions one is feeling…and, consequently, in what ways this encounter might become significant to one's framework of acting in the world.[64]

In considering how the link between affect and thought might be brought about, Simon applies the concept of the *dispositif*, which he describes as 'a specific complex of discourses, material practices…that orient, enable, but also constrain and limit particular ways of rendering a sensate world comprehensible'.[65] Simon develops his conception of the dispositif by analysing the ways in which sensory stimuli are used in curatorial strategies to generate affective impacts. In a particularly striking example, he discusses an 1893 street exhibit of lynching photographs in Seattle, which used soundscapes of baying crowds to supplement the affective force of the

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[63] Roger I. Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2014), pp. 2-3.
[64] Simon, p. 11.
[65] Simon, p. 178.

images, which can be seen as an immersive strategy that strives for complete sensory envelopment of the viewer in the events depicted:

> The sounds integral to this event attempted to draw the viewer nearer to what the photographs alone would not show. This attempt approaches Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of 'super-representation', a regime of rendition in which what is aspired towards is the exposure of a world without fissure, without withdrawn invisibility, that can be placed right before one's eye.[66]

In Simon's analysis, this immersive 'super-representation' creates an affective intensity that precludes critical reflexivity whereby 'the image actively gives out an affective force that exhausts itself either in spectacle of the image and/or of the trauma of its blur, with the consequence that there is little provocation to thought'.[67] Simon contrasts this example with a more contemporary exhibition of lynching photographs, entitled *Without Sanctuary*, at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, which intentionally created an incompleteness by placing the images on their own without explanatory text or additional sensory supplements. According to Simon, this dispositif created a 'hollowness' in the images that 'resulted in an occlusion of what happened that was at the same time an acknowledgement of an unimaginable horror and an opening to thought'.[68] In other words, in contrast with the immersive completeness of the 'world without fissure' presented in the Seattle exhibit, the partial occlusion of 'hollowed' images created an incompleteness that required viewers to actively think about what was represented.

Linking the curatorial ideas from the museum exhibitions cited by Simon to my curatorial pedagogy in Playground might seem surprising given that the project did not work with photographs and did not handle any subject matter that approached the complexity and severity of lynching. I suggest, however, that the aesthetic implications of sensory occlusion (as opposed to sensory completeness) in exhibition practices connect closely with my concerns about strategies of immersion that valorise sensory immediacy in both space and time, to the detriment, in my view, of reflexive

[66] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Forbidden Representation', in *The Ground of the Image* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 38-39, cited in Simon, p. 181.
[67] Simon, pp. 181-182.
[68] Simon, p. 182.

thought. In the Playground project, the spatial framing of the work, in terms of its physical context and the materials used, has been revealing regarding the aesthetics of pedagogy. In discussing the space where the workshops took place, which was an extremely nondescript former office building, Andy commented that:

> *Because it was so bland and benign – it does sort of stimulate your imagination in a way that like – cos it was so plain it sort of pushed your imagination even further. You had to imagine you weren't there – which is the basis of most larps* (he laughs). *So yeah – it did its job.*[69]

Although the workshop space was extremely bland, in my facilitation I sought variety in the spatial composition by avoiding the temptation to arrange the space before the start of each session. In other words, when I arrived in the room, I responded to whatever configuration I found it in, a strategy which was noted by Jack who commented on the possibility of finding dynamism in the use of the space, despite its dullness:

> *When I make stuff, I'm always responding to the space so much. Whereas like – when we first started, I was like – 'it's gonna be so boring if it's in an office every time!'* (he laughs)*…but it felt like it worked. I think the fact that we never – there was never like a set way that we used the space. It was never like we were always in a circle and it felt like we used different bits of the space – like – 'let's have this conversation here' or the room would get pulled apart – and it meant that the room was dynamic. Sometimes working on the floor – sometimes on the table. The fact we it was dynamic in the way we used it meant that it worked.*[70]

Beyond the composition of the room itself, Zara commented on the use of random objects within the neutrality of the space and the impact this had on her theatrical imagination:

> Zara: *I guess the flexibility of using them* (the objects*) in lots of different ways – you start to see –* (she puts on a mysterious voice) *'see beyond the object'. That sounds very wanky, but because – you begin either thinking about things in a very literal way – or you start to do that thing of – 'or it could be this!' – but then you just start going with it, without trying to be clever.*
>
> JH: *What does it mean to 'see beyond the object'? Cos I don't think that's wanky at all.*

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[69] 'Andy', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (23 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground14'.
[70] 'Jack', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (28 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground16'.

> Zara*: It's just like – the thing – isn't it? It just becomes like a tool – and that's quite different to my experience of theatre. And later working with Josh – he was like 'oh, do we need like costumes and set?' – and almost – like the idea of that just seemed absolutely insane to me…cos it was just like – 'this is just the room isn't it? So, let's just pretend'* (she laughs) *– and that's absolutely fine – so that was something that I let go of as a result of the space, over time.*[71]

In the same way that seeing '*beyond the object*' allowed Zara to let go of the immersive conventions of theatrical naturalism and embrace the imaginative attitude of '*let's just pretend*', Meg also made some intriguing comments about how distance in space could help in finding a flexible perspective on her ideas. When I asked her about the space, her first comment was that one side of our workshop room was a floor to ceiling plate glass window which allowed us to see out into a long foyer area, and she mentioned that she had seen someone doing taekwondo at the other end of the space. I asked her what impact this had, and she replied:

> Meg: *The thing about taekwondo is that it has specific roles and it's very – it's got like a uniform and a very set space and a very clear perception that it adheres to and we were doing quite a lot of throwing away of those things….And it* (the large window) *made us feel like we had more space cos it kind of let some things go…it gave you the space to throw things out to. For some reason – it made it easier in retrospect to let go of stuff and feel a little bit looser…I've been thinking quite a lot about creating distance in my life more broadly – being able to take a step back. Its where the sense of time comes from – being at ease. And it creates an ease in playing when you're able to create distance. Big bodies of water do it sometimes. You look at the sea – and I think it can allow you to create some distance from what you're doing right then. And perhaps even in that larp that we played* (the boat on the Severn), *even though the water wasn't there – again it was the mass of this thing that we're floating on – in my brain.*[72]

This example suggests that the ability to create distance in space promotes reflexivity by taking '*a step back*' from spatial immediacy in the same way that thinking beyond temporal immediacy offers reflexivity through recursive/projective imagination.

The aesthetic considerations drawn from the examples noted above have moved my conception of curatorial pedagogy beyond the question of

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[71] 'Zara', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delictassen, London (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground18'.
[72] 'Meg', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (27 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground15'.

content towards a more formal consideration of how the dispositifs of curatorial scaffolding can offer an expansiveness in space and time that supports the potential for cultural transformation through play. In contrast to Rancière's views of space and time that prioritise autonomy in space and immediacy in time, Vygotsky's sense of space is fundamentally relational, with social connections at the heart of the zone of proximal development, while his emphasis on imagination relies on reflexive recursion and projection in time. My emphasis on reflexivity is not a call for perpetual distance as remoteness and strangeness. Rather it is a call to step into a relational play space and then have the capacity to step back in order to '*see beyond the object*' and consider its possible reconfiguration. Similarly, reflexivity in time is not divorced from immediate action in the now, it is a call for learners to repurpose the experiential material accumulated through their past existence and imaginatively project a reconfiguration of this material into an uncertain future through action in the present.

5.8 Documentation & Memory

Central to the culturally transformative potential of play is the question of how knowledge of the world that is created through play can be remembered or documented. Essentially, if the knowledge gained through play is to be disseminated and shared with others to promote further learning and the ongoing social construction of culture, this knowledge must be narrativized or recorded in some way. The archive stands as the conventional institution for housing valued knowledge but, as I have previously noted, the canonical hegemony exerted by the archive and its curators appears to assert the police order that Rancière describes as the hierarchical distribution of the sensible. In opposition to the authority of the archive, many performance studies scholars have valorised the ephemerality of performance, arguing that attempts to capture it through documents like photographs or film are a betrayal of the inherent liveness of the performative act.[73] In this section, however, I draw on the work of Rebecca

[73] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Schneider and Diana Taylor to suggest that the play of participatory performance can be effectively documented by the embodied memory of players and the retrospective narratives that they discursively construct.

In contrast to arguments for the innate ephemerality of performance, Schneider argues that performance always remains, for the simple reason that all present performances are necessarily composed of elements of previous performances, meaning that traces of the past remain through their reiteration in the now:

> Performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive re-appearance. It challenges, via the performative trace, any neat antinomy between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence, through the basic repetitions that mark performance as indivisible, non-original, relentlessly citational and remaining.[74]

What is striking, from my perspective, about Schneider's argument that past performances remain through their citation in subsequent performances is the strong commonality that it shares with Vygotsky's understandings of play. In the same way that play is an imitative reconfiguration of past experience, performance remains because it is repeated or theatrically imitated in future iterations. This idea is compounded by Richard Schechner's theories of performance which have been strongly influenced by repetition in ritual play. Schechner claims that players in rituals 'get in touch with, recover, remember…strips of behaviour and then rebehave according to these strips' and he goes on to argue that due to the recycled nature of these behaviours, 'performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to nth time. Performance is "twice-behaved behaviour"'.[75]

In a similar vein to the ideas of Schneider, Diana Taylor's concept of the repertoire, which refers to 'a treasury, an inventory' of embodied knowledge, suggests that times of the past are recorded in the body and transmitted through social interactions. Rather than viewing the repertoire simply as an embodied archive that passes knowledge on to others through mimetic repetition, however, Taylor argues that 'the actions that are the

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[74] Schneider, p. 102.
[75] Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 36.

repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning'[76] and she goes on to discuss the concept of the meme, suggesting that the reproduction of cultural topes is a selective process whereby certain memes 'catch on'.[77] By way of example, Taylor discusses the '*madres*' of Argentina, mothers of people who disappeared under the dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s, who developed the practice of carrying identification photographs of their loved ones during protest marches, a cultural trope that has subsequently been adopted by other protest groups elsewhere.[78]

The concept of the meme that is reproduced and becomes more influential as it is reperformed is, as I have indicated through discussion of Ian Bogost's consideration of memes in the previous chapter, very useful in my overall project of considering how individuals and groups develop cultural tropes that can be adapted and reconfigured. In the Playground project there were certain memes that appeared to 'catch on' such as the co-creative world building process that Navdeep described as '*tapping in, tapping out*', in which players shared all the roles so that everyone could contribute to the development of all aspects of the story world. This model of gestalt co-creation became something of a meme within the repertoire of the group, with several variations of this method emerging. In reflecting on aspects of the project that were memorable, Jack commented that:

> *The investigation of like – sharing characters or swapping characters was really – you can almost create more empathy and I found it really engaging…like – in terms of collaboratively telling a story it was really interesting. I can make a decision about this character that in five minutes you're gonna have to deal with – but it did – there was a less selfish perspective maybe on the things we were playing because the self changed so many times – it was more about creating the whole thing.*[79]

Similarly, several other members of the group adopted the meme of gestalt characterisation in developing their final piece, a scenario set in a hospital

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[76] Taylor, p. 20
[77] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), cited in Taylor, p. 173.
[78] Taylor, p. 174
[79] 'Jack', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (28 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground16'.

with three characters who were to be shared by three players. Following the final playtest with invited guests, one player wrote a blog post about this larp which gives an insight into the gestalt character experience:

> This was a three player larp, with roles of the patient, the doctor and the visitor. During three scenes, the players rotated around these roles, so you played all three. Reality was kind of vague. So it was never stated what was wrong with the patient, except that they were blindfolded and had to be led around by the doctor. The doctor asked the patient a bunch of questions, while elsewhere the visitor filled in a questionnaire. Then the visitor was admitted and there was a touching sick bed scene. But then we rotated characters and played out the same sequence again – except this time the visitor's answers from the first situation formed the basis of the doctor's examination. And it became somewhat blurred as to whether the sickness was in the patient's and visitor's relationship rather than in the patient themselves. And then we rotated again, and reality now was pretty thoroughly abstracted, we were all caught up together in a network of sickness, possible recovery, grudges, possible forgiveness and a sense of the *Hospital* as Purgatory. All in all, a powerful and expressive experience, built from small and simple ingredients.[80]

Aside from the subjective experience of the participant who played this larp, I argue that this manifestation of the meme of gestalt characterisation serves as an example (even though you are reading about it through a written account) of a live performance act that stands as a document of previous live acts. The participant played the three gestalt characters in the *Hospital* larp and thereby (unknowingly) documented the previous embodied experiences of the designers who had also performed gestalt characters in preceding workshop sessions.

Live performance documentation of live performance from the past is described by Schneider as a kind of 'syncopated time' and she reifies this term through discussion of *Hamlet*, arguing that the protagonist constructs a live performance (through the dumb show of the players) as a documentation of the past events surrounding his father's death, as narrated by Old Hamlet's ghost:

> The character Hamlet is making a 'live' performance to function as record – troubled as that record may be – for a prior event (his father's murder) otherwise recorded only by the testimony of a phantom…The

[80] Mo Holkar, 'Playground playtest', *Games! All sorts of different ones* (2018) <http://blog.ukg.co.uk/playground-playtest/> [accessed 9 May 2019].

problem of the real in relation to the live here slips away from tidy distinction.[81]

In other words, according to Schneider, the play within the play serves as a live record of a past event, syncopating time by creating a simultaneity of past and present. The idea that theatrical performance can serve to document the past in a syncopated time that is both past and present combined stands in sharp contrast with the long-standing distrust of theatricality that thinkers from Plato to Rousseau have expressed.[82] Schneider summarises this anxiety by arguing that 'the threat of theatricality is still the threat of the imposter status of the copy, the double, the mimetic, the second, the surrogate, the femme or the queer'.[83] In other words, theatricality is seen as a fake version of an authentic original that should be eschewed because of its artificiality. Notions or originality are regularly problematised by performance scholarship, however, a point that is illustrated by Gabriella Giannachi's discussion of performative re-enactments. She cites the example of the performance art persona Roberta Breitmore, a fictional character created and performed in a variety of real-world settings over a four-year period by artist Lynn Hershmann. Breitmore's life was documented through fragmentary accounts from the 'original' performer and then reperformed by a number of successors who assembled further collections of documentary fragments. In discussing this sequence of reiterative performances, Giannachi troubles the notion of the original by refencing Rosalind Krauss who suggests that 'originality should be considered as "a working assumption that itself emerges from a ground of repetition and recurrence"'.[84]

Beyond performance in artistic contexts, when considering the performance of play, as it has been analysed by Vygotsky, theatrical imitation is fundamental, and Gregory Bateson's seminal studies of play

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[81] Schneider, p. 89.
[82] Lewis, pp. 53-55.
[83] Schneider, p. 30.
[84] Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 7, cited in Gabriella Giannachi, 'At the edge of the "living present": Re-enactment and re-interpretations as strategies for the preservation of performance and new media art', in *Histories of Performance Documentation: Museum, Artistic and Scholarly Practices*, ed. by Gabriella Giannachi and Jonah Westerman (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 115-131 (p. 117).

activities amongst animals further demonstrate the intrinsic theatricality of play. In describing the play fighting of the monkeys in San Francisco zoo, Bateson identifies that the animals signal to each other that the contest is not real. Nonetheless, his famous phrase 'it's not a bite, but it is a nip' makes the point that although the play fight is not real it is also not not real.[85] This doubleness of play that is concurrently not real and not not real seems to resonate with the twice-behavedness of performance as described by Schechner, problematising the assumption that there is an authentic original that is simply copied. Instead, all performance play is composed in theatrical imitation of previous performances that were themselves imitations. The temporal register of this not real / not not real performance play can consequently be understood, not as a linear progression from knowledge of the world that is then mimetically repeated, but rather as a 'not-in-between' time in which knowing is an event that occurs in theatrical imitation, syncopating past performance concurrently with its present reconfiguration.[86]

Schneider's understanding of the hybridity of not real / not not real is clearly illustrated in her descriptions of American Civil War re-enactments. She argues that when the bugler plays *Taps* he is not merely copying *Taps* as a representation of it, he is really playing *Taps*, while the soldier eating salt pork is not simply representing Civil War era food culture, he is really eating salt pork:

> Both are true – real *and* faux – action *and* representation – and this both/and is the beloved and often discussed conundrum of theatricality in which the represented bumps uncomfortably (and ultimately undecidedly) against the affective, bodily instrument of the real.[87]

In other words, performance play can be seen as a live document of the past that is not just a secondary copy of a previous event (with an 'in-between' time that separates the two) but an event of knowledge that simultaneously

[85] Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', in *The Game Studies Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, ed. by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 314-328 (p. 319).
[86] Schneider, p. 128.
[87] Schneider, p. 41.

combines the not real and the not not real through theatrical imitation in a syncopated, 'not-in-between' time that is concurrently now and also then.

5.9 Documentary Gifts as Social Debt

Although performance play can serve as a document, this does not necessarily devalue more conventional forms of documentation. For my purposes, in the context of a study focused on the culturally transformative potential of play and the subjective aesthetic experience of play, the question of documentary agency is, ultimately, a more pressing concern than documentary form. Consequently, I have investigated how participants can produce their own self-documentations, either through ongoing performance play, embodied repertoire memory or other more traditional archival documents like written notes. This section describes participant-led documentation in the Playground project and sets out the argument that exchanging documentary records of play can be understood as a form of gifting that calls for a reciprocal response from those who receive these gifts.

Tied into the question of agency in the creation and curation of archives is the notion of documents as commodities. In discussing the commodification of artistic documentation, for example, anthropologist Roger Sansi describes contemporary artist Francis Alÿs' work *When Faith Moves Mountains* which is presented as a video work, depicting a group of 500 volunteer students moving a sand dune in front of a shantytown on the outskirts of Lima in Peru, over a distance of 100 metres:

> The work…is clearly separated in two phases: first, the subsumption in everyday life through 'events'; and second, the 'redemption' of these events for the world in the form of documents that toured through different art venues…in fact, this documentation has become the very work of art, the commodity that is sold in the art market, an objectification of the ephemeral event…At the turn of the twenty-first century, the 'document'…has become…the new form of commodity fetishism in art.[88]

Sansi's description of this kind of documentation as commodity fetishism is salient because the video document in this instance is an objectified

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[88] Roger Sansi, *Art, Anthropology and the Gift* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 41.

distillation of the labour of the students moving the sand dune and stands as a clear example of 'the reduction of action to object that constitutes the basis of commodity fetishism for Marx'.[89]

In practices of larp, examples of commodity fetishism that reduce performative labour to commodity objects are common. For example, in the highly popular larp *Fairweather Manor*, (a regular production, since its first run in 2015, of the Danish/Polish company Dziobak Studios) which is based on the well-known television programme *Downton Abbey*, the production of glossy photographs and video documentations of play elides the very real labour that players contribute to making the larp function. As a fully immersive experience, *Fairweather Manor* requires staff to work below stairs as cooks and cleaners and the players who take on these roles within the fiction pay substantially lower participation fees than the aristocrats in recognition of the labour that they provide. Nonetheless, this labour is integral to the provision of lavish banquets which are subsequently photographed and filmed, rendering the performative labour of all involved (both masters and servants) as commodity objects that are used to market subsequent runs of the larp.[90] In all the practical projects undertaken in this study, I have avoided such forms of documentation, using only audio devices to record verbal reflections from participants on their subjective experiences of play. In the Playground project, however, I also invited participants to consider how they might choose to self-document their experiences to record or remember aspects of the project that might be of value to them, rather than foregrounding the creation of my own documents as artistic commodities of use-value for myself. In responding to this invitation, several participants commented that they would remember the project simply by applying their experience in the creation of subsequent works, in keeping with Schneider's notion that performance remains through subsequent reiterative performances. Others suggested that they would (or already had)

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[89] Sansi, p. 117.
[90] Katherine Castiello Jones, Sanna Koulu and Evan Torner, 'Playing at Work: Labor, Identity and Emotion in Larp', in *Larp Politics: Systems, Theory and Gender in Action*, ed. by Kaisa Kangas, Mika Loponen and Jukka Sarkijarvi (Helsinki: Ropecon, 2016), pp. 125-134 (p. 128).

written notes about the work undertaken while others spoke about drawing diagrams or images to illustrate various ideas for themselves.

In contrast to the idea that artistic documents become commodity objects, I propose that the forms of self-documentation outlined above can be understood as gifts whenever they come into relation with others. Whereas Sansi leans in the direction of viewing gifting as free-flowing munificence, however, I find greater value in understanding the gift as a form of social debt that calls for what Simon terms 'response-ability'[91] (or empathetic responsiveness), from others. Sansi's analysis responds to the work of sociologist Marcel Mauss whose studies of gift-giving practices were intended to 'question the notion of the "natural" economy, based on the market and commodity exchange between individuals guided by the principle of utility'.[92] The primary example used by Mauss is the *potlatch*, a ritual of excessive gift-giving practiced by indigenous communities on the Pacific coast of North America in which individuals seek notoriety and social stature by giving away their possessions. The example of the *potlatch* illustrates that 'not all forms of exchange in world history are market exchange: in many societies, the first and foremost form of exchange is the gift'. Sansi is at pains to point out, however, that the objective of gaining notoriety that is inherent in the *potlatch* shows that gifting practices are not necessarily symptomatic of 'utopias where everyone gives and takes freely'. Rather, the social relations entailed by giving, receiving and returning gifts are often 'hierarchical and bound to strict social obligations'.[93]

Central to Sansi's analysis of gift giving is the notion that the gift embodies the 'distributed person',[94] a term borrowed from anthropologist Alfred Gell. Gell suggests that the objects that people possess function as prosthetics that serve as extensions of their agency. Using the example of a soldier, he suggests that 'the soldier's weapons are parts of him which make him what he is…agents thus, "are" and do not merely "use" the artefacts that

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[91] Simon, p. 19.
[92] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990 [1925]), cited in Sansi, p. 97.
[93] Sansi, p. 97.
[94] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (London: Clarendon Press, 1998), cited in Sansi, pp. 11-12.

connect them to social others'.[95] In other words, agency is not solely bound up in the intentions of the soldier, it is also expressed in the objects that are 'parts of him'. Subsequently, when an individual offers objects as gifts, their agency is made manifest in the effects that the objects generate as they connect with the people to whom they are given. Essentially, 'through gifts, people give themselves to other people',[96] and this idea can be exemplified by another gifting ritual, the *kula* of Melanesia, in which individuals from one island offer gifts, not to be kept by those who receive them, but to be passed on along the chain of islands. Sansi sees the *kula* in similar terms to the *potlatch* as an expansion of a person's notoriety, describing 'the transmission of kula valuables as an expansion of the person in space and time, an expansion of her name, her fame'.[97]

The apparently egotistical and hierarchical nature of gift-giving may seem unappealing, but I find value in the idea that a gift implies a spatio-temporal expansion of the gift giver that calls for recognition and response from others. Regarding the Playground project, I argue that certain forms of documentation functioned as gifts that issued such a call, inviting other participants to make a creative response. Towards the end of the project, Josh, who was well known for being organised and diligent, wrote up detailed notes on the piece that he was developing with his partners. This gift documented the creative process that he and his group were engaged in (making a larp about a cult group recovering from the death of their charismatic leader) and called on his colleagues to respond. Clearly, the other participants in Josh's group could have chosen to ignore the gift that they had received but, in this case, they accepted and responded to it, as is illustrated by Zara's comments:

> *Towards the end – Josh is like the master of note taking – and he sent so many notes over to us and then we like – watched things and sent things to each other and stuff. Like the phenomenon of Bhagwan – Wild Wild Country? It's a nine-parter on Netflix – and it's about cults – so I*

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[95] Alfred Gell, '"Things" as social agents', in *Museum Objects: Exploring the Properties of Things*, ed. by Sandra H. Dudley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 336-343 (p. 339).
[96] Mauss, p. 59, cited in Sansi, p. 99.
[97] Nancy Munn, *The Fame of Gawa, A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in Massim Exchange* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), cited in Sansi, p. 98.

> *watched all of that and made notes that I sent. Josh watched something else and Meg sent something else and we sort of engaged as a three.*[98]

In this example, I argue that the giving of gifts functioned as a form of social debt through which individuals felt the need, or desire, to reciprocally respond to each other, and although the word 'debt' has many negative connotations in contemporary economics, it can also be seen, more positively, as being constitutive of social relationality. For example, anthropologist David Graeber articulates the fact that social debt substantially predates the formation of modern market economies based on commodity exchange and money and he argues that debt plays an important role in developing bonds of trust within communities.[99] Similarly, Gustav Peebles makes compelling arguments that credit/debt relations build connections between people over time, claiming that 'credit/debt refers backward to specific actions in the past when an obligation was established. In so doing, contracting parties conjoin their respective futures and pasts, materialising their temporal bond, as it were'.[100] Peebles goes on to argue that in addition to creating temporal bonds between people, credit/debt consolidates sites of social relationality, arguing that it plays a central role in 'place-making' by building 'consistent transactional pathways and networks' of exchange.[101] Consequently, I contend that, in the context of participatory art, the notion of gift as debt is conducive to intersubjective response-ability.

Earlier in this chapter, I referenced Simon's suggestion that the exhibition of lynching photographs could function as a gift that calls on the viewer to respond and he goes on to argue that the reception of documentary gifts functions as a form of 'inheritance' which is not merely passive reception of information but an invitation to link affect to thought and subsequent action:

> This is a temporal bond rooted in a felt sense of obligation to inherit what one has seen and heard so that it becomes a locus of difference in the way one lives one's life. To inherit is never a passive condition, never simply a transfer of skills or some material goods of symbolic

[98] 'Zara', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground18'.
[99] David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2013).
[100] Gustav Peebles, 'The anthropology of credit and debt', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39 (2010), 225-240 (p. 227).
[101] Peebles, p. 233.

> knowledge, never just a felt sense that the violence of the past weighs on one's psyche. Rather 'to inherit' is to engage in a particular form of work that intertwines thought and affect. Following Derrida, one's inheritance is never simply that which is given, 'it is always a task'. When considering what it is that exhibitions might actually do, one response is to view exhibitions as initiating the task of inheritance. In this sense, exhibitions may be understood as a form or gift, one that interpolates its intended receivers in a manner that demands a thoughtful response (even if that response is ultimately to ignore the bequest).[102]

Simon's referencing of Jacques Derrida's work is pertinent here, linking with his argument that 'the question of the archive is not…a question of the past, it is a question of the future, the question of a response, or a promise of and a responsibility for tomorrow'.[103] Schneider shares Simon's future-oriented view of the archive, suggesting that 'documents that had seemed to indicate *only* the past, are now pitched toward the possibility of a future reenactment as much as toward the event they apparently recorded'.[104] This idea is affirmed by Paul Clarke's discussion of the temporal extension of performance through the distribution, or gifting, of its archival traces:

> A performance takes place through the dissemination of its performative documents, our time-based encounters with them in archives or beholding them in displays; the work continues through oral accounts, rumours, hearsay, reviews and reinterpretations in print. Practical modes and motives are passed on experientially, in-and-through performance practice and spectating, reappearing transformed in new generations of works.[105]

This vision of performance continuation through the distribution of its archival traces can be readily exemplified by documentation outputs from the Playground project. For example, having played my larp Neighbourhood[106] (in which players construct a neighbourhood, invent characters and play out a year of good news or bad news in the life of the community), Jack went on to run another version of it at the National Student Drama Festival with a group of teenagers. This reiterative

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[102] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 54, cited in Simon, p. 215.
[103] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics*, 25:2 (1995), 9-63 (p. 27).
[104] Schneider, p. 28.
[105] Paul Clarke, 'Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past', in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. by Gunhild Borggreen and Runa Gade (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), pp. 363-385 (p. 378).
[106] See Appendix B.8 for the play script of *Neighbourhood*.

performance combined the documentary gift of my larp script, which serves as a 'score' or instruction sequence as a framework for play, alongside his own embodied memory of having played the larp previously, which enabled him to offer the documentary gift of facilitating it for the students:

> *It was really interesting because, on your notes you gave kind of step by step instructions on how to run it… and I think the main observation was how much fucking crazier they were. They were real musical theatre kids – full of energy and things like – houses would burn down. One person was addicted to smack and wanted to murder someone for their money – and then there were people having sex – loudly…I was worried during it that they were just pissing about and not really thinking about it and then – actually – the second half – they came back from the break and had a good chat about it for about 45 minutes and they were really, really engaged with like – how that can be – like is it theatrical? Who are the performers and who are the audience? And we talked about it as a piece of theatre and then talked about larp – and they found that really interesting and they were engaged – sort of – intellectually with it.*[107]

As an instance of distributed personhood, this example includes the distribution of my person as the larp designer and Jack's person as the facilitator through the documentary gifts of my larp script and Jack's embodied memory. The inheritance of these gifts enacts a substantial temporal extension, whereby larp, as a gift in itself, is projected forward in time to a group of young people who had evidently never heard of this creative form. Subsequently, the teenage participants might further the distribution of the gift through future play performances, embodied memory, telling the story of their experience or perhaps even seeking out further opportunities to larp again.

5.10 Gifting as Bricolage

In addition to the projection of knowledge into future time that results from the inheritance of documentary gifts, I argue that gifting also effects an expansion of knowledge in space, in line with the notion of gifts as embodiments of the 'distributed person'. Roger Sansi links his discussion of gifts as manifestations of the distributed person with the concept of bricolage

[107] 'Jack', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (28 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground16'.

through which subjectivities are formed and re-formed as individuals pass through space and time, forging relational connections with other objects and other subject agents. He argues that 'the gift is not just an act of participation and collaboration of pre-existing subjects that remain separated, but an event, a situation through which the people and things assembled become something else in relation to each other'.[108] Similarly, I argue in this section that the Playground project as a whole, including its offshoots into other creative contexts, represents an assemblage of gift exchange that offered the potential for adaptation of subjectivities and, by extension, cultural transformation, by creating new forms of relational connection.

In the same way that documentary gifts project the distributed person forward in time, Zara described how she held the memory of playing the *Totem Build* exercise from the first session and subsequently applied this embodied documentation by using the exercise with her own theatre group, projecting the gift she had inherited into new creative spaces:

> *A lot of the stuff we did – like the methods or systems that we used – I then relayed quite a lot of that stuff to my company – so I was like 'oh, let's try this' – cos we were getting stuck in the process and it was good to try different methods. I would set up an exercise and they'd be like 'what do you mean?!' – and I'm like 'well, I was thinking that, but just do it'…And also – like those experiences made more sense when you then become the teacher as well – or the facilitator or whatever – so I would do something – you would relay it to me and I'd do it and then in the act of actually trying to facilitate it you also then learn something more. Because you remember things that you'd done – physically in the body or something that's helped you hook into what you're doing – so I guess that's an extra layer when that role changes.*[109]

As this example illustrates, my person is distributed as the gift of the *Totem Build* exercise is passed on. Likewise, Zara's person is distributed as she passes her version of the *Totem Build* on to others. The spatial expansion that results from this gift-giving need not be seen merely as an expansion of the 'fame' of the person who has given the gift. Instead, I see it as building potential for a greater array of relational connections that can support zones

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[108] Sansi, p. 143.
[109] 'Zara', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground18'.

of proximal development for further creative learning. In addition to providing learning opportunities for others, I suggest that the most salient point that can be drawn from this example is that Zara's subjectivity was altered through the process of giving the gift. Rather than simply passing on existing knowledge, the act of gift-giving enabled her to '*learn something more*' and, effectively, alter her subjectivity as a practitioner, even if only slightly, in the process. Similarly, Jack's gifting of the Neighbourhood larp prompted new reflections on whether he wished to produce fully immersive performances. In contrast with his usual approach, in which all facilitation of the audience experience would be delivered within the fictional diegesis, the facilitation of the *Neighbourhood* larp, which requires the facilitator to break immersion and give instructions from outside the fiction, led him to reconsider how he might approach future works:

> Jack: *What I needed to get over throughout the course was the fact that not every bit of the setup – it doesn't have to be dramatic in itself, or theatrical. And none of it has to be theatrical is the other thing that I struggled with as well. Generally, when I was making the things we played I was always trying to find ways…like menus that would tell you things and plates that would say something or a cup with something inside it that would give you information – and no one else seemed to care about integrating it into the fiction* (he laughs)…*but in your larp…it was just like 'Now you're doing this' and I was like 'Okay!' So, I definitely let go of having to have like – an in-world way of explaining things – actually just saying it.*
>
> JH: *So, being able to step outside the fiction and say: 'Now we're gonna play a scene with x, y, z?'*
>
> Jack: *Yeah. Learning that was a challenge. But I did learn it.*[110]

Another example of subjectivity being altered through the bricolage of gift exchange can be found in Meg's comments about the new forms of collaborative relation she had developed over the course of the Playground project. She suggested that her collaborations enabled her to become less protective of cherished ideas, embracing 'darling killing' (which can be understood as a method of dispensing with fixed concepts) and relinquishing a fixed sense of her own subjectivity as an artist:

[110] 'Jack', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (28 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground16'.

The whole thing has made me more conscious of how I collaborate. I was able to sit back – and be on the outside of myself a little bit and think 'okay – that's how I manage things'. And then – being able to have a multitude of examples of ways you can work…I remember learning about killing your darlings – I feel like – particularly working with Josh, I remember coming up with this idea and I was super interested in it and then we threw it out and that is something that I never do…and I had a real moment of like – 'oh my goodness – okay.' So that was a really practical experience of going through a process in a way that I don't normally go through a process and that was really important.[111]

Meg's reflection on finding new forms of collaboration that enabled her to embrace 'darling killing' exemplifies the process of bricolage whereby she was able to reformulate her subjectivity by entering into new relational connections and assembling new ways of working for herself.

Within the overall Playground project, the play experiences of participants were stored as both embodied memories and more conventional documents and gifted to each other as a call for response and reciprocal response-ability in the unfolding creative process. The documents that emerged from Playground should not, therefore, be seen as commodities that conceal the translation of labour into object as is the case with Marx's model of commodity fetishism. Instead, treating play documentation as a gift (whether it is through ongoing performance play as a reiteration of previous performances, embodied memory, or written notes) enables gifted knowledge to travel through space and time as a manifestation of the distributed person. In exploring the potential of play to generate cultural transformation, the documentary gift as a form of social debt necessitates a concurrent consideration of the spatial and temporal composition of pedagogical projects. An expanded sense of relational space offers the prospect of fertile bricolage as evolving subjects reform themselves by establishing new connections with the world around them, receiving gifts and responding in turn. Likewise, the reflexivity of syncopated time enables gift givers to recursively draw upon past play experiences and reassemble them in new performances that not only document the play that has gone before but also

[111] 'Meg', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (27 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground15'.

offer templates for playful learning in an imagined future, reiterating the call for response-ability from players who are yet to come.

5.11 Summary

To conclude, I have argued in this chapter that the culturally transformative potential of play depends on how it is remembered and documented by players to enable further learning to take place in pedagogical contexts. Conventional approaches to archiving hold that valued knowledge of the world should be recorded in the form of artefacts in order for pedagogues to transmit learning to students, but I have suggested, through reference to the work of Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor, that it is also possible for knowledge to be held in embodied memory and ongoing cultural performances that pass the past on to successive generations of learners. The commonalities between Schneider's ideas of performance as being fundamentally reiterative and Lev Vygotsky's conviction that play is always composed of imitation creates a strong sense that theatrical play performances are fundamental to learning as players reconfigure the substance of the world as they have encountered it to sculpt the ongoing social construction of culture.

Regarding the role of the pedagogue, I have argued that Jerome Bruner's concept of scaffolding, combined with contemporary art theories of the curatorial, provide a strong basis for reconceiving the facilitator of play pedagogy as a context provider, offering space and time for groups of individuals to create zones of proximal development in which they can learn through intersubjective exchange. The Playground project has provided a platform for the participants, and me, to experiment with how knowledge can be co-created. As the facilitator, I have curatorially pointed to various creative forms and participants have then reappropriated these methods in a tool and result process of discovering tools and concurrently discovering their potential to create new ones. In my investigation of the aesthetics of curatorial pedagogy, I have argued that considerations of spatial and temporal framing are extremely important. By offering a space that is social and relational, but also with scope for spatial distanciation and

defamiliarization, I contend that players are able to receive stimuli from other performers and critically reflect on these stimuli through the external and internal use of meta-communicative language. Similarly, the concept of syncopated time, that combines recursion and projection, allows players to compare their experience in the now with historical precedents as the basis for future imaginings.

Within the Playground space, players did not simply play, they also documented their play through ongoing reiterative performances, embodied memory and written documents and I have argued that these documents function as gifts that are exchanged to create social debt. The notion of debt need not be viewed as coercive obligation. Instead, I propose that the call for response-ability that is issued by the gift acts in service of relational sociality that enables the imitative performance that is central to learning. As participants give and receive their documentary gifts, they engage in bricolage, reforming their emergent subjectivity by receiving the offer of new relational connections and reaching out for more such connections as the network of the distributed person expands. As Rancière suggests, this is a theatrical process of performing new roles 'as if' each player could become someone else.[112] Rather seeing this as an autonomous breach in temporal immediacy, however, my vision of theatrical play calls for an expanding field of relational space, with a proliferation of players who repurpose the past through their play and collaboratively create the culture of the future as they do so.

[112] Rancière, *Emancipated*, p. 70.

Chapter 6. Aesthetics & Agency:

Reflexive Space & Time in Play

The act of play can be understood in the most elemental sense as the endeavour to impart some impact on the material fabric of the world. When players play, they reconfigure the substance of their lived experience and take action, either consciously or unconsciously, to move the world in ways that are satisfying to them.[1] In this chapter, I argue that the fundamental materials of play are space and time, both of which are composed and recomposed by the bodies of players as they enter into relation with other objects on their various trajectories. This embodied activity of relationally composing space and time in play can be seen as an aesthetic process, following Terry Eagleton's claim that 'aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body' comprising 'nothing less than the whole of our sensate life - the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces'.[2] The aesthetic reconfiguration of space and time is concurrently political, however, since distributions of sensible forms also shape the capital affordances of agents that enable and limit their powers of action. In considering both the aesthetics and politics of play, this chapter investigates how the capacity to play with space and time in variable ways can promote the reflexive agency of players, and thereby the potential of participatory performance to enable cultural transformations, in response to my third subsidiary research question:

> *How can the aesthetic compositions of space and time in the play of participatory performance promote reflexive agency?*

My analysis of compositions of space and time in play is informed by the philosophy of Jacques Rancière, whose theory of the redistribution of the

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[1] Thomas S. Henricks, *Play and the Human Condition.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 24.
[2] Terry Eagleton, 'The Ideology of the Aesthetic', in *The Rhetoric of Interpretation and the Interpretation of Rhetoric*, ed. by Paul Hernadi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 75-86 (pp. 75-76).

sensible proposes a radical politics based on aesthetic reordering of sensible forms. As I have discussed in previous chapters, Rancière's vision of a redistribution of the sensible in artistic contexts calls for perceptual autonomy of the spectator as a means of preserving their interpretive independence. This autonomy also requires an *a priori* assumption of equality between spectators, since an erosion of autonomy will result in a return to a hierarchisation of interpretations. Despite the emancipatory intent that lies behind Rancière's theory, I have suggested that his emphasis on autonomy undermines the relational space that makes learning possible. I have also argued that theoretical equality necessitates the expungement of the variable capital affordances of the habitus that are composed of the past experiences of individuals. In temporal terms, therefore, equality elides history and places the performer of the 'theatrical will' in a decontextualized now,[3] while in spatial terms, the isolation of autonomy sets the emancipated spectator in the 'atopic space of the stranger'.[4] Consequently, Rancière's theory offers, I contend, an aesthetics of immediacy that emphasises instantaneous time and an isolated space that is limited to what is immediately proximal.

In contrast to the aesthetics of immediacy presented by Rancière, I argue in this chapter for spatio-temporal reflexivity in play through reference to the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza states that human beings are rendered increasingly 'passive' when they are 'assailed' solely by the 'passions' of external causes in the immediate present and he proposes that the reason of the mind must be applied to generate active, self-determined behaviour.[5] In spatial terms, I apply Spinoza's ideas to argue that rational self-determination requires perception that looks beyond the immediate, proximal and familiar to encounter a wider diversity of affects. Similarly, I propose that his work suggests the value of depth perspective on time whereby individuals can link past, present and future, promoting the enabling multiplicity of affects that temporally varied imagination can

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[3] Tyson E. Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education: Theatre, Curiosity and Politics in the work of Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 98.
[4] Lewis, p. 71.
[5] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometric Order*, ed. by G.H.R Parkinson, trans. by Andrew Boyle and G.H.R Parkinson (London: Everyman Classics, 1992).

provide. These ideas are reified in this chapter through discussions of forms of theatrical performance and digital works that valorise temporal and spatial immediacy which will subsequently link to considerations of how I have pursued spatio-temporal reflexivity in my practical work.

Analyses of my practical activities focus primarily on the spatio-temporal experiences of players in projects at Trumpington Community Orchard and the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes. The Trumpington project was hosted by the members of a small committee of volunteers who had created the orchard in 2006, following a long campaign to raise funds and obtain the necessary permissions from the local council to renovate the site and plant a selection of Cambridgeshire heritage apple trees. The housing estate bordering the orchard was constructed in the 1950s, but during my residency the neighbourhood was in the process of rapid expansion with thousands of new houses being built. Judging from my interactions with members of the small committee managing the orchard space, there appeared to be a veiled hostility towards this new community. Consequently, the collision of natives and strangers was something that I endeavoured to explore in my practical work, fuelling the design of a simple two-player larp which involved the intersecting journeys through space and time of two strangers. I will describe how this work invited playful manipulation of the aesthetic materials of space and time and supported the development of my ideas around pursuing a greater multiplicity of affects.

The Peartree Bridge residency was a commission from Arts for Health, Milton Keynes, an organisation focused on providing participatory art opportunities in Milton Keynes Hospital and its surrounding areas. The brief for the project suggested that Peartree Bridge is a very isolated community and, in my explorations of the neighbourhood, I found this description to be accurate, which stimulated my interest in making play activities that might enable participants to expand their view of the local space and forge new relational connections in the process. The level of uptake for my workshops was extremely low, however, limited to a handful of (mostly older) residents. At the conclusion of the project, I contacted a participant called Laura, who was chair of the Residents Association, to explore the possibility of arranging

some form of follow up activity, but her reply crystallised the difficulty of engaging with local people:

> *The events were well advertised so I'm not sure offering another one will receive better attendance, especially now the weather is colder. I don't think this is a reflection of you, rather it reflects the spirit of Peartree Bridge – the activity was not for them…a deep sense of apathy resides in PTB and it's difficult to break people out of their routine.*[6]

In reading these comments, it would be reasonable to conclude that the Peartree Bridge project was a failure, but the fact that the project was generally characterised by a failure to generate play throws into relief the value of occasions when play did enable participants to transcend '*apathy*' and the familiarity of habitual '*routine*'. Consequently, these instances offered useful insights on how the spatio-temporal aesthetics of play might help or hinder participation and reflexive agency.

In addition to discussing the Trumington and Peartree Bridge projects, I offer examples from the second iteration of the Playground project and *Migrations of Cool*, a street game that I designed as part of a residency at the Arebyte Gallery in Hackney Wick. Both of these projects investigated the impact of spatio-temporal reflexivity in play, but it is important to state that my conception of reflexivity does not reject the immediate pleasures of play in the here and now, or the habits that are necessarily forged in immediate action. Rather, I propose that a spatially expansive movement between 'here' and 'there', alongside a temporal movement between 'now' and 'then' can enable habitual practices to be productively re-forged. In spatial terms, an oscillation between 'here' and 'there' offers potential to move beyond the proximal to engage with a wider relationality in space. Aesthetically, this spatial expansion is based on distancing, diversification and defamiliarization, with the aim of enabling individuals to encounter more than what is close and familiar. In temporal terms, shifts between 'now' and 'then' promote a combined consideration of past, present and future that stimulates the reflexive reconfiguration of memory in future projections that can inform creative action in the present.

[6] 'Laura', 'Re: Walking Project in Peartree Bridge', email to Jamie Harper (3 October 2018).

Notions of reflexivity can appear to affirm a cognitive distancing that separates the minds of individuals from the material actualities of their world. I argue, however, through reference to neurobiologist Antonio Damasio's writings on Spinoza, that reflexive rationality does not require remote detachment of the mind from the body. Rather, it is a matter of linking the emotional body states that affects produce to conscious awareness of feelings,[7] as a form of second-order observation that functions as the basis for self-determined action. Lev Vygotsky's work on language also suggests that the use of words in inner speech plays a key role in enabling humans to combine primary emotions with more critically self-conscious feelings. For Vygotsky, whose later work was strongly influenced by Spinoza's philosophy, language is vital for generating abstract thinking that enables human beings to transcend the concrete limitations of the present and visualise new pathways of agential action.[8] Consequently, I suggest that the use of language in inner speech is an essential aspect of the human ability to move beyond un-reflexive, automatic responses to the affects of immediate circumstances.

My arguments for spatio-temporal reflexivity, facilitated by internal language use, support my broader exploration of how play can enable transformations of habitual action, but in the latter sections of this chapter I suggest that habit is not antithetical to reflexive changeability. Instead, I argue that habit can serve as a foundation for change, as existing knowledge and capitals are reconfigured. Subsequently, in the final section of the chapter, I set out a model for play, combining habit and reflexivity, that I term *anchorage-leverage*. Anchorage can be understood as analogous with the habitus, composed of the accumulated affects that an individual has encountered over the course of their life trajectory. The choice of this term might seem to imply a deadening weight that enforces stasis, but I see anchorage as a platform for leverage as agents reposition themselves through reorganisations of the sensible forms at their disposal. The

[7] Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: Vintage Books, 2004).
[8] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'Imagination and creativity of the adolescent', in *The Vygotsky Reader*, ed. by René van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner, trans. by Theresa Prout and René van der Veer (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), pp. 266-288 (p. 269).

oscillation between anchorage and leverage requires spatial reflexivity, however, so that players can exercise greater intentionality in seeking out a broader plurality of affects in a wider relational space. Similarly, I argue that temporal reflexivity is needed to afford leverage, whereby conscious memory and projection into imagined futures can inform agential action in the present. As a whole, the concept of anchorage-leverage offers a theory of play in participatory performance that combines the joy of playing in here and now with a critical awareness of how this activity can go beyond immediate satisfactions to enable more substantial transformative impact.

6.1 Constraints of Immediacy in Space and Time

In this section, I argue that immediacy in space and time can constrain the agency of individuals by hindering their capacities for reflexivity and self-determined action. In setting out this argument I refer to Pierre Bourdieu's logic of practice, which downplays reflexivity and emphasises practical action in response to the urgent necessity of immediate circumstances.[9] Spinoza's philosophy arguably has similarities with Bourdieu's theories in its description of humans being held in 'servitude'[10] by the affects of external forces in the present that render the body passive.[11] In contrast to Bourdieu's scepticism towards reflexivity, however, Spinoza asserts that it is possible for affects to be controlled by reason and I draw upon his discussions of space and time to argue that a movement away from spatio-temporal immediacy can aid rational criticality.

The primary importance of what is immediately proximal in space is strongly apparent in Bourdieu's discussions of the habitus and the acquisition of taste. He asserts that the habitus 'is constituted in practice and is always orientated towards practical functions'[12] and argues that these

[9] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 86-91.
[10] Spinoza, p. 141, part IV, pref.
[11] Spinoza, p. 146, part IV, prop. II, proof.
[12] Bourdieu, *Logic*, p. 52.

practical functions are focused on immediate needs so that the 'ultimate values' of social groups:

> …are never anything other than the primary primitive dispositions of the body, 'visceral' tastes and distastes, in which the group's most vital interests are embedded, the things for which one is prepared to stake one's own and other people's bodies.[13]

In other words, the habitus is a set of dispositions that emerge in practice in response to immediate conditions and the 'vital interests' of bodily needs within the close proximity of social groupings. This focus on the necessity of responding to the material conditions that define an individual's immediate requirements grounds Bourdieu's logic of practice in the 'time of action'[14] which can be clearly seen in his references to game play, in which he suggests that 'a player who is involved and caught up the game' makes his ludic choices '"on the spot", "in the twinkling of an eye", "in the heat of the moment", that is, in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflexion'.[15]

In a similar vein to Bourdieu's logic of practice, Spinoza's philosophy asserts the primacy of events in the spatio-temporal present in determining the actions of human beings. Before offering my analysis of Spinoza's ideas on space and time, however, it is necessary to give a brief summary of his theory of affects. At the heart of Spinoza's philosophy is the contention that the primary endeavour of human beings is to persevere in being, which leads them to seek out affects that give pleasure and avoid those that give pain.[16] By receiving joyful affects, Spinoza asserts that the *potentia*,[17] or power of action, of the individual is increased. In order to maximise *potentia*, Spinoza's argues that it is necessary to mark a distinction between self-determined activity, which he describes as *active*, and actions that are primarily driven by external causes, which he describes as *passive*. Spinoza states that we are passive 'when something takes place in us…of which we

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2010), p. 476.
[14] Bourdieu, *Logic*, p. 81.
[15] Bourdieu, *Logic*, p. 82.
[16] Spinoza, p. 103, part III, prop. XXVIII.
[17] Spinoza, p. 145, part IV, def. VIII.

are only the partial cause'[18] and claims that being driven by external causes alone is symptomatic of 'inadequate ideas', or confused knowledge.[19] Affects that are primarily driven by external causes are termed 'passions' and Spinoza contrasts the passions that induce passivity with rational thought that enables human beings to actively seek out beneficial affects.[20] Essentially, the freedom that Spinoza argues for is the rational pursuit of joyful affects that support the endeavour to persevere in being and I will now suggest that the rational control of passions can be supported by shifting perception beyond the immediate affects of the spatio-temporal present.

Spinoza is explicit that events in the temporally immediate present have the strongest affects on the body, stating that 'the image of a thing future or past…is…weaker than the image of a thing present, and consequently the emotion towards a thing future or past is…less intense than the emotion towards a thing present'.[21] He goes on to assert, however, that a limited temporal horizon is disabling to the powers of self-determined action, stating that 'when we follow our emotions, we count as primary that which is pleasant in the present, nor can we estimate a future thing with an equal emotion of mind'.[22] Consequently, 'the desires by which we are most bound have regard only to present, not to future time'.[23] The suggestion that we are 'bound' by the emotion of the present implies a negative view of perception that is held in the immediacy of now, and Spinoza makes this point clear by arguing that 'it is not wonderful that desire which arises from the knowledge of good or bad, in so far as this has reference to the future, can be more easily restrained by the desire of things which are pleasant in the present'.[24] In other words, the affects of pleasant passions in the present can undermine knowledge that enables self-determined action orientated towards future time.

[18] Spinoza, p. 146, part IV, prop. II, proof.
[19] Spinoza, pp. 157-158, part IV, prop. XIII, proof.
[20] Spinoza, pp. 202-203, part IV, prop. IV, note.
[21] Spinoza, p. 150, part IV, prop. IX, coroll.
[22] Spinoza, p. 196, part IV, app. XXX.
[23] Spinoza, p. 182, part IV, prop. LX, note.
[24] Spinoza, p. 184, part IV, prop. LXII, note.

In contrast to the aesthetics of temporal immediacy, Spinoza's ideas on reason suggest that if the mind is to have adequate ideas that are the basis for self-determined action, it must be equally affected by imaginings of the future or past, rather than being solely 'bound' by affects in the present. He states that 'in so far as the mind conceives a thing according to the dictate of reason, it will be equally affected whether the idea be of a thing present, past or future'.[25] This notion of controlling the assailment of passions by thinking in syncopated time is echoed by Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd's discussions of Spinoza's views on temporality. Gatens and Lloyd argue that 'the intensity of the present can eclipse all thought of the future' but they also suggest that by 'rendering the object of emotion distant from us in time – in excluding it from present existence – our understanding of causes reduces the intensity of the image'.[26] Consequently, I suggest that temporal distancing is one means by which passions might be overcome.

In the same way that temporal immediacy can be seen to undermine rational thinking and the power of action, Spinoza's theories suggest that spatial immediacy can serve as a harmful constraint. He asserts that 'the more the body is apt to be affected in many ways or to affect external bodies in many ways, the more apt is the mind for thinking'.[27] This suggests that the powers of reasoned thought and self-determined action are supported by moving beyond a narrow spatial immediacy to perceive a broader multiplicity of affects in a wider relational space. Nigel Thrift affirms this argument, building on Spinoza's ideas to call for an expansive spatiality of manifold relations. He argues that a 'complex body' can only emerge from a wide plurality of relationships in social space, suggesting that:

> The simple political imperative is to widen the potential number of interactions a living thing can enter into, to widen the margin of 'play'…increasing the number of transformations of the effects of one sensory mode into another.[28]

[25] Spinoza, p. 183, part IV, prop. LXII.
[26] Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 52-53.
[27] Spinoza, p. 195, part IV, app. XXVII.
[28] Nigel Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Analer: Human Geography*, 86:1 (2004), 57-78 (p. 70).

In other words, by pursuing an expansion of relational space, manifold affective exchanges are enabled. Subsequently, as beings increase their ability to be affected and to affect others in a great many ways, their *potentia* is increased.

To summarise this section, Spinoza's philosophy suggests that although the affects of immediate space and time have the strongest impact on the body, rational self-determination is aided by perception that shifts beyond the spatio-temporal present. By seeking a multiplicity of affects in a wider relational space and thinking with a depth perspective on time that combines past, present and future, the *potentia* of beings to persevere in being is enhanced. Having set out these theoretical propositions, the following section concretises my ideas by offering a critique of spatial immediacy in theatre and games which will subsequently serve as a foundation for presenting ideas drawn from my practical explorations of spatial reflexivity in play.

6.2 Problematising Spatial Immediacy in Theatre & Games

Recent analyses of immersive theatre practices have strongly emphasised the potency of spatial immediacy, foregrounding the value of close-up, haptic engagement between performers and audience-participants. Josephine Machon, for example, draws on Wagner's concept of *gesamtkunstwerk* alongside the 'total theatre' aesthetics of Antonin Artaud[29] to affirm her arguments against reflexive criticality in favour of full sensory envelopment:

> The immersive experience arises when medium and message are fused, resulting in the totalisation of the artwork. This ludically subverts aesthetic and critical distance, placing the perceiver of the art *within* the art.[30]

Although Machon's sees the subversion of critical distance as a positive, Rainer Mühlhoff and Theresa Schütz argue that immersive practices can

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[29] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 29-30

[30] Machon, p. 34.

disable the critical faculties of individuals by creating situations in which 'any possibility of distancing on the part of the subject is temporarily blocked' leaving them '"at the mercy of" the inter-affective context'.[31] They discuss the immersive works of the Danish theatre collective Signa and claim that the company's performance installations are so 'hyper-realistic' that the 'frame' that distinguishes the fictive world from reality dissolves as a result of 'the bare immediacy of acting and reacting in an intense affective dynamic'.[32] Mühlhoff and Schütz go on to suggest that such immersive blurring of frames can be problematic when applied in work environments. They argue that immersive strategies are employed in human resource management to create socially convivial working spaces that blur boundaries between work and leisure and claim that 'this facilitates a form of micro-governance that modulates people's behaviour for the company's benefit by stimulating dynamics that strategically prevent moments of distancing and critique'.[33] In other words, by creating a seamless overlap between work and leisure, workers find themselves continuously (and apparently voluntarily) working for the company's profit.

As Mühlhoff and Schütz suggest, immersive strategies of spatial immediacy can be applied in a wide variety of contexts. This diversity of immersive practices is also apparent by Oliver Grau's work which illustrates that techniques of immersion are as old as illusionist art itself, from Roman revel rooms to nineteenth century naturalism in theatre,[34] raising the important point that insights on immersive immediacy can be applied across a variety of cultural forms. Nonetheless, I suggest that the most thorough analyses of immersion can be found in recent game studies and media scholarship. Gordon Calleja's work on the experience of 'presence' in videogames foregrounds the issue of mediation, noting that the pursuit of immersion involves the attempt to elide awareness of an interface and create transparent spatial immediacy so that users feel like they are really 'present'

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[31] Rainer Mühlhoff and Theresa Schütz, 'Immersion, immersive power', in *Affective Societies: Key Concepts*, ed. by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 231-240 (p. 231).
[32] Mühlhoff and Schütz, p. 235.
[33] Mühlhoff and Schütz, p. 232.
[34] Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: from illusion to immersion*, trans. by Gloria Custance (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

in the game. Calleja states that 'transparency erases the interface and offers the viewer or user as direct an experience of the represented space as possible'[35] drawing players 'so deeply into the game that they feel as if they are part of it'.[36] Jason Farman makes similar arguments about the transparency of digital game interfaces. Referencing the design of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, which offers a digital simulation of the actual street layout of Los Angeles, he argues that:

> With the mapping of virtual space onto material space…the cultural metaphor of the interface is altered so that 'digital' and 'natural' space are no longer distinct, but instead inform and influence one another to the extent that the border between them appears to dissolve.[37]

Another example of such dissolution of interface mediation can be found in Jakob Linaa Jensen's discussions of Google Earth. Jensen claims that in their engagement with this digital simulation of space 'users do not distinguish between Google Earth and "real earth". Instead, physical, mediated and imaginary experiences seamlessly merge' which results in 'a certain feeling of embodiment, of actually being there'.[38]

What is striking about the descriptions of *GTA: San Andreas* and Google Earth offered by Farman and Jensen, respectively, is that the pursuit of immersive immediacy in the experience of space excludes awareness of a distinction between real terrain and its mapped representation and this has substantial implications for the reflexive potential of play. Gregory Bateson, in his previously cited work on meta-communication in animal play, discusses the relationship between map and territory, arguing that:

> Play marks a step forward in the evolution of communication – the crucial step in the discovery of map territory relations. In primary process, map and territory are equated; in secondary process they can be discriminated.[39]

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[35] Gordon Calleja, *In Game: From immersion to incorporation* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2011), p. 23.
[36] Calleja, p. 25.
[37] Jason Farman, 'Hypermediating the game interface: The alienation effect in violent videogames and the problem of serious play', *Communication Quarterly*, 58:1 (2010), 96-109 (p. 98).
[38] Jakob Linaa Jensen, 'Augmentation of Space: Four Dimensions of Spatial Experiences of Google Earth', *Space and Culture*, 13:1 (2010), 121-133 (p. 131).
[39] Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', in *The Game Studies Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, ed. by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 314-328 (p. 321).

In other words, play enables players to mark a distinction between actuality and its ludic representation. Consequently, the endeavour to create spatial immediacy by dissolving any mediating distinction between map and territory would seem to undercut the reflexive ability to make a second-order observation that delineates actual terrain and its mapped representation. Given that this capacity is, according to Bateson, a major step in the development of complex communications, the pursuit of spatial immediacy seems to prompt a regression in human perceptual capabilities. Effectively, it leaves users 'at the mercy' of spatially immediate affects, or the assailment by passions, with a reduced capacity to apply rational criticality and an equally reduced power to undertake self-determined action.

In considering the notion that spatial immediacy might promote the assailment by passions, analyses of the methods that digital interface designers use to focus the spatial perceptions of their users are instructive. In his discussion of digital interfaces, James Ash uses the term 'resolution' to describe how game designers shape perception of objects within the horizon of play. He offers the example of the first-person shooter game *Battefield 3*, describing the combination of high and low resolution objects, noting that 'the grass on the ground appears in low resolution as more or less homogenised clumps that cannot be affected by the player', in contrast to the high resolution of enemy combatants who are the intended objects of attention within the game.[40] The emphasis here is on directing the focus of players towards highly singularised points of space, which directly opposes the more expansive spatiality advocated by Spinoza, who states that:

> An emotion is bad or harmful only in so far as the mind is prevented by it from thinking. And therefore that emotion by which the mind is determined for regarding many objects at the same time is less harmful than another equally great which detains the mind in the contemplations of one alone or fewer objects in such a manner that it cannot think of others.[41]

Arguably, therefore, an interface design that intentionally 'detains the mind in the contemplation of one alone or fewer objects' through the pursuit of

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[40] James Ash, *The Interface Envelope: Gaming, Technology, Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 43-44.
[41] Spinoza, p. 205, part V, prop. IX, proof.

high resolution spatial focus can be seen to hinder the capacity for thinking. By extension, the limitation to thinking caused by the external force of perceiving digital objects at high resolution arguably promotes assailment by passions and limits capacities for self-determined action.

Ash comments on the political implications of high resolution spatiality by referencing Warren Neidich's concept of neuropower.[42] Neuropower can be understood as the process by which interfaces shape 'habits and practices on a fairly implicit, unconscious level'.[43] Essentially, Neidich's argument is that the composition of objects in an interface establishes expectations in the mind of the user, generating patterns of habitual behaviour that subsequently deliver rewards to the user and power to the interface designer. This can be readily exemplified by the red bell of the Facebook notifications icon which stands out in high resolution against the blue background. When the notifications icon turns red, it is habitually clicked, yielding economic value for the company and experiential rewards for the user. For Neidich, this kind of tightly corralled spatial focus is 'essentially dulling, leading to less creatively able bodies'[44] and I contend that high resolution spatiality combined with the collapse of spatial distance through the elision of mediation is conducive to passivity as it is described by Spinoza.

Despite my problematisations of spatial immediacy, it is useful to consider examples of digital and non-digital play that interrupt immediacy in space. In his analysis of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, Farman notes that it is possible for players to disrupt immersive immediacy by playfully altering the costume of their avatar. He argues that the donning of ridiculous costumes that do not fit with the crime world aesthetic of GTA, like Ian Bogost's example from Chapter 4 of players wearing a priest's habit and

[42] Warren Niedich, 'Neuropower: Art in the Age of Cognitive Capitalism', in *The Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism: Part One*, ed by. Arne De Boever and Warren Niedich (Berlin: Archive Books), cited in Ash, p. 6.
[43] Ash, p. 40.
[44] Warren Niedich, 'The Mind's Eye in the Age of Cognitive Capitalism', in *Brain Theory: Essays in Critical Neurophilosophy*, ed. by Charles T. Wolfe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), cited in Ash, p. 53.

praying for crime victims,[45] enacts a form of defamiliarization, following the ideas Bertolt Brecht,[46] that disrupts the seamless spatiality of the 'interfaceless interface'.[47] By doing so, Farman claims that the immediate enjoyment of play can combine with hypermediacy, whereby the game 'constantly calls attention to its own status and process as a mediated interface'.[48] This argument for hypermediacy in games reaffirms my argument from Chapter 4 that conscious awareness of the distinction between play and non-play enables reflexivity through second-order observations.

Arguments in favour of a hypermediacy that consciously distinguishes between play and non-play can be found in Bruce McConachie's suggestion that play and performance both involve a 'conceptual blending'[49] whereby the player is able to oscillate between engagement in the immediacy of action and critical distanciation:

> Games, like other kinds of performances, depend on social conventions that locate players and spectators both in and out of the action – immersing themselves in competition one moment and pulling back to keep score or plan strategy in the next.[50]

In other words, in the same way that Bateson's monkeys throw themselves into play fighting whilst also establishing a meta-communicative frame that distinguishes playful activity from genuine violence,[51] a fundamental aspect of human play in theatre and games is the capacity to oscillate between spatial immediacy and a reflexive criticality that recognises the frame that delineates play from non-play.

The summarise this section, my analysis of spatial immediacy in theatre and games suggests that immersive designs that pursue close

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[45] Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), p. 156.
[46] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), cited in Farman, pp. 103-105.
[47] Farman, pp. 99-100.
[48] Farman, p. 98.
[49] Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 179, cited in Bruce McConachie, 'An Evolutionary Perspective on Play, Performance and Ritual', *The Drama Review*, 55:4 (2011), 33-50 (p. 39).
[50] McConachie, p. 41.
[51] Bateson, pp. 316-317.

proximity and high resolution focus in space often promote the formation of habitual patterns of action that undercut the potential for reflexive agency. In response to the problematic aspects of spatial immediacy that I have described, my practical work has pursued distance, diversification and defamiliarization of space. In doing so, my aim has been to promote active reflexivity in play that overcomes the passive affects of spatial immediacy, enabling players to generate self-determined action, and the next section describes the outcomes of these explorations of spatial aesthetics.

6.3 Spatial Reflexivity in Practical Work

As I have outlined in the introduction to this chapter, my interactions with participants during the Trumpington Community Orchard project suggested that the existing community felt a strong a resistance to change in the local area and a veiled hostility towards the new communities created by rapid housing development. In responding to this context, my practical work played with spatial diversification and encounters with unfamiliar others, exploring the potential of participants to reflexively adapt their outlook towards changing circumstances. At the start of the residency, Samantha, one of the members of the small committee who managed the orchard, led me on a walk around the village, which enabled me to view the scale of development activity. She also took me to an event at a local community centre, organised by the local council, which focused on integrating the new residents with the established community of Trumpington. The theme of this event was 'resilience' which the facilitators defined as the ability to bounce back from disruptions. The explicit aim of the session was to encourage neighbours to help each other in times of difficulty, but it also became apparent from my conversation with one of the organisers that the implicit aim of the event was to build resilience so that the state could incrementally withdraw its services from the neighbourhood.

In contrast to the apparently conservative view of resilience that the Trumpington event sought to promote, I conceive resilience, not as the ability of a system to 'bounce back' from shocks and resume its original

form, but to radically reconfigure itself.[52] This reconfiguration can only occur, however, if the system in question is sufficiently diverse to be able to apply varied capacities to meet a variety of challenges.[53] My considerations of resilient changeability were further informed by the biological composition of the orchard, which was populated by Cambridgeshire heritage apple trees. In discussing the emphasis on local varieties of apple, one of the committee members, Cerys, made strong arguments for maintaining biodiversity (a key feature of ecological resilience) but this localisation, focusing on apples native to Cambridgeshire, also connoted a somewhat exclusionary attitude. This was further highlighted by discussions of Brexit (which Cerys had voted in favour of as a way of championing '*localism*') and the expansion of the village, which, in her view, threatened to undermine it as a '*cohesive community*'.[54] This defensive attitude towards change in the local space was something that I sought to explore by creating a two-player role-play about the meeting of strangers, called *Passage*.[55] Essentially, this piece was about an encounter with difference, inviting two players to go on separate journeys during which they would meet, decide (for whatever reason) to spend a winter together and then either proceed on their journey together or go their separate ways. My aim in designing this piece was to investigate how spatial diversification through encounters with the unfamiliar might promote resilient changeability and a reflexive awareness of culturally transformative potential.

The preparation for the role-play invited players to share stories from their own past to provide stimuli for the creation of fictional characters. The process began with three questions: *Where have you come from today? Where have you come from as an adult? Where have you come from since childhood?* Following the sharing of responses to these questions, players made a drawing of a character about to go on a journey, based on what they had

[52] Jonathan Joseph, 'Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: a governmentality approach', *International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, 1:1 (2013), 38-52.
[53] Nancy J. Turner, Iain J. Davidson-Hunt and Michael O'Flaherty, 'Living on the Edge: Ecological and Cultural Edges as Sources of Diversity for Social-Ecological Resilience, *Human Ecology*, 31:3 (2003), 439-461.
[54] 'Cerys', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Trumpington Community Orchard, Cambridge (23 September 2017). See Appendix A: 'TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard1'.
[55] See Appendix B.13 for the play script of *Passage*.

heard from their play partner. Participants were then asked to imagine possible landscapes that characters might pass through and possible feelings that they might have in these new landscapes. The possible landscapes and feelings were written on cards that players drew randomly at certain points during play. In other words, they would not know in advance what type of landscape they would arrive in next and the feelings they would encounter in these places. When Cerys played this piece with me, she invented a character called Celia who had left her husband and come to a new town with her two young children. Along the way, she met my character, a brooding young man called Jan, who had fled the war-torn context of his childhood. Celia subsequently helped Jan to find a place of safety over the winter by working for a farmer living next to her home, before he proceeded on his way the following spring. In reflecting on the meeting of trajectories between Celia and Jan, Cerys commented on how this new relation changed Celia which, in turn, invited her to reflect on her own changeability:

> *I didn't know what to do with you at first…I thought 'he's quite difficult to deal with' and then suddenly I became much more – I became like – quite a together person and I realised I was quite together and had quite a lot to offer this rather – sort of troubled young man – which is kind of – not like how I feel in life so maybe that's something I need to take seriously… But with this troubled young man – although I wasn't 100% about you and I wasn't sure it was what I wanted it felt good to help – you know – getting you a job and a place to stay with the farmer – Mr McGinnis – and then it was really nice that you – as you became less troubled when you stayed with Mr McGinnis you started to make your journey and then you looked as if – I started to feel quite warm towards you by the end and I really wanted to know what happened to you in the future. I wanted you to come back – and to include you in my family.*[56]

As this example indicates, the *Passage* role-play invited Cerys to respond to an encounter with an unfamiliar place (the imaginary landscape of the new town) and an unfamiliar person. As a result of this diversification in her relational connections in space, she seemed to develop new capacities, becoming '*quite a together person*' in order to help Jan. It cannot be claimed that this exercise transformed Cerys' attitudes towards encounters with unfamiliar others in the 'real world' spaces of Trumpington, but I suggest

[56] 'Cerys', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Trumpington Community Orchard, Cambridge (23 September 2017). See Appendix A: 'TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard2'.

that it does illustrate the potential of spatial diversification in play to prompt reflexive awareness of resilient changeability, enabling players to recognise how they can develop new capital affordances by forming new connections with others.

In a similar vein to the Trumpington project, the work at Peartree Bridge created defamiliarized compositions of space to take the perceptions of players beyond the confines of habitual familiarity. The challenge of looking beyond the familiar to compose a more affectively diverse space was highlighted by one of the early workshop sessions, which featured a play activity which I called *Platform*.[57] This exercise involved laying a blanket on the ground and inviting participants, one by one, to place objects (the same assortment of things used in previous projects) onto the platform to build an imaginary landscape. Players added further objects to represent characters in the landscape, then narrated a sequence of actions and reactions between the characters, using the environmental context of the platform as an imaginative stimulus. One participant, James, began his contribution to the platform by selecting an object which was not part of my assortment of things. His selection was a brick which was lying around in the park space in which we were playing, and when placing the object on the platform he described it as a power station because the colour tone of the brick was similar to the visual texture of the iconic Battersea Power Station. In reflecting on the exercise, James expressed frustration at the choices he had made, stating that his power of imagination was limited by his inability to look beyond the familiarity of objects and their literal function:

> *I wasn't very creative…I think I'm just feeling a bit dull today, I suppose. Couldn't see much further than the next moment or two. So, ah – suffering from a lack of imagination, I think…Maybe – being stuck in the house all day looking at the screen – maybe that's what's – sort of dulled me.*

I went on to ask James some further questions about what aspects of the imaginary landscape he had found to be valuable and his answers prompted me to think about the imaginative limitations of looking at familiar objects:

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[57] See Appendix B.15 for the structure of the *Platform* play exercise.

> *It's nice to see some water there* (referring to a river that had been constructed on the platform). *I guess that's the most attractive thing to me, personally…I used to be an oceanographer…and I was born near the sea. So, with the river, being literal, having identified the brick as Battersea, then obviously that's the Thames and the sea is down there somewhere – but that's been my problem today – I've been very literal – not very inventive.*[58]

These comments suggest that James' choice to deploy a familiar object (the brick), rather than choosing something more unfamiliar from my assorted junk, limited the diversity of his powers of thought. By identifying the object as something very similar to the brick itself (a power station composed of red bricks) and then creating more landscapes that were familiar to him (in the form of the river Thames and the sea), he seemed to limit his power to create a diversified imaginative space. This was made manifest within the fictional story when James converted the power station into an art gallery, mapping onto the transition of another former power station on the banks of the real-world river Thames: the Tate Modern Gallery. In another session, however, he experienced something different by taking on a highly unfamiliar role. The exercise in question involved collaborative drawing between pairs which again invited players to create an imaginary landscape and also a character for their partner.[59] In this instance, James' partner made the somewhat surprising choice of giving him the character of a sheep and he reflected positively on the experience of playing this unfamiliar role:

> *I think I concentrated too much on the actual drawing…but then in the conversation it was easier being a sheep than a human being* (everyone laughs). *There was greater freedom in where my imagination could go – instead of sort of being – bound to – bound too much to reality.*[60]

As this example shows, being bound to the realities of familiar roles in familiar social spaces was a limitation that could, to a certain extent, be overcome by composing unfamiliar spaces of encounter and establishing relations between a broader multiplicity of beings.

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[58] 'James', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (20 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge3'.
[59] See Appendix B.11 for the structure of the *Palimpsest Drawing* exercise.
[60] 'James', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (13 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge1'.

As the workshops progressed, engagement with unfamiliar relations in space, in the form of animals, become something of a running theme. At the end of one session, I asked one of the participants, Lysbeth, what topics the next workshop might focus on and she replied that she would like to play with the theme of pets. When I asked her why, she replied:

> Lysbeth: *I'll tell you one thing – my friend got a Yorkshire terrier. I've got two Border terriers. They're supposed to be the same – they're not the same. They're terriers – that's it.*
>
> JH: *So, you're interested in the differences between different types of animals?*
>
> Lysbeth: *Yeah.*
>
> JH: *Why's that interesting to you?*
>
> Lysbeth: *Well – my little Frodo* (one of her dogs) *likes hedgehogs – now how crazy can you get? Full of fleas and – horrible. But he curls up and goes to sleep with them – confusing or what?*
>
> JH: *Interesting.*[61]

Lysbeth's description of the surprising relational connections that her dog could establish with other animals chimed with a comment that another local resident, Susan, had made when she took me for a walk around the neighbourhood. She spoke about her perception that although people in the area were relatively isolated from each other, their pets helped them to expand into new spaces and form new relations with people:

> Susan: *We've recently got a dog – so we're walking more, and I thought I knew Peartree Bridge really well – but we've found all these new spaces.*
>
> JH: *That's interesting – so the walking of the dog took you somewhere – to find something that you hadn't experienced before?*
>
> Susan: *Yeah, cos with a dog you've got an excuse, haven't you? To go and see what's happening somewhere…and I would say I know quite a lot of people in Peartree Bridge, but I've got to know more people since having a dog.*
>
> JH: *Why do you think that is?*
>
> Susan: *Cos people come and talk to you, don't they? When dogs stop and want to meet each other – the people do the same thing.*[62]

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[61] 'Lysbeth', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (4 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge4'.
[62] 'Susan', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge6'.

Working with the idea that pets could bring people into contact with the unfamiliar in wider relational spaces, I created a workshop activity called *Superpets* which invited participants to draw a landscape, create human and animal characters and then collaboratively narrate a story about the superpets taking their humans into new territories.[63] In playing this activity, Lysbeth created a cat character called Eyes. Thanks to her night vision, Eyes was able to lead their human through the night to the local pub, which was the centre of social life within the fiction, even though the human character was afraid of the dark. When I asked her to reflect on her play experience, this was her reply:

> Lysbeth: *Interesting. Really interesting. Cos I never knew I could creep in my cat's skin so much that I'm so like a cat. Friendly one minute and the next* (she makes a scratching action, and everyone laughs).
>
> JH: *What was it like to creep in the cat's skin?*
>
> Lysbeth: *Well, you know what they say – an owner takes after their pet – and the beautiful eyes. Looking into the dark – to be like that – it's nice. Never need any lights – just look in the dark with the beautiful eyes.*[64]

These examples suggest that remaining bound by a focus on the familiar objects, beings and social spaces can limit the scope of imagination, but by seeking out a wider multiplicity of unfamiliar affects, the power of imaginative thought can be strengthened, as new territories are explored, and new relational connections are made with both the human and non-human.

In addition to spatial diversification and defamiliarization, the value of a distanced perspective on space was illustrated by the activities of Playground 2. For scheduling reasons, the first session of the project took place, not in the usual venue of Theatre Delicatessen, but at The Nursery Training Centre, a set of rehearsal studios located on the sixth floor of a former office building overlooking the roof of London Bridge railway station. In reflecting on their experiences of space over the course of the project, participants commented on the affective impact of the view from the Nursery,

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[63] See Appendix B.20 for the structure of the *Superpets* play exercise.
[64] 'Lysbeth', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (18 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge5'.

echoing Meg's comments from the previous chapter on the potential benefits of distance in supporting reflexive thought. One participant, Luke, commented that:

> *I actually really liked that space – it felt really exciting to me. Maybe it was the elevation of it – being high up…I've always found that like – sitting on top of a hill and looking over a landscape – or being in a tall building – somewhere high where you can look across and see over a far distance – I've always found that you can kind of see the scale of things in comparison to – to yourself, I guess. And I find myself doing that in my own mind as well – almost like a tool – a bit of coping tool sometimes. Seeing everything and trying to see things in perspective and zoom out to see all the parts of a whole – or see the whole that makes up all them parts.*[65]

In a similar vein to Luke's comments on the expansion of perspective he found in the Nursery space, another participant, Catryn, reflected on how this distanced space was incorporated into the imaginative landscape of the *Neighbourhood* larp and how this expanded perspective actually changed her perception of the immediately proximal space of the Nursery studio:

> Catryn: *The Nursery space was quite cold…it was absolutely awful weather outside – the rain and everything and it was grey and miserable – and it didn't encourage playfulness…However – what was really interesting is how that Neighbourhood game – because I remember coming into that space and thinking this is a fairly bleak view with that weird roof –*
>
> JH: *London Bridge station.*
>
> Catryn: *Exactly – but part of that Neighbourhood game asked us to look beyond the town and imagine and translate that real landscape into imaginary markers – geographical markers – and that kind of turned it round – so all of a sudden, the weird curved roof became the sea – and then I was okay…it kind of poetised the space.*[66]

The salient point that emerges from this example is that Catryn's imaginative engagement with the distanced space of the view over London Bridge station, which '*poetised*' the space, enabled her to alter her perception of her surroundings. Effectively, she stopped focusing on the immediate actuality of coldness by supplanting this powerful negative affect with the pleasurable

[65] 'Luke', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (24 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.2'.
[66] 'Catryn', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (26 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.1'.

affect of imagining an expansive seascape within the fiction which, quite literally, increased her power of action as a participant in the larp.

In sum, I argue that the examples cited from Playground 2 and the Peartree Bridge and Trumpington projects suggest that whereas high resolution focus on the familiar objects of an immediately proximal space can limit imagination and the power of action, a distanced and diversified view of space that embraces unfamiliar connections can promote imagination. This enables players to be affected in an increased variety of ways which, in turn, strengthens their power to take self-determined action to redistribute the sensible forms in their horizon of perception.

6.4 Problematising Temporal Immediacy in Theatre & Games

In this section, I argue that immediacy in time can limit reflexive agency and culturally transformative potential. In the same way that spatial immediacy often holds subject agents in a proximal, familiar and over-focused 'here', I contend that temporal immediacy in theatre and games creates an imminent 'now' that limits the ability to reflexively compare present and past and imaginatively project into the future. My alternative argument is that reflexivity in time deepens the imaginative scope of players, enabling them to seek out a greater multiplicity of temporal affects. By accessing affective diversity in time, *potentia* is increased, enabling players to reconfigure their past into future imaginings that inform self-determined action in the present.

As I have noted in my Literature Review, the quest for temporal immediacy is strongly apparent in contemporary theatre practices. David Wiles affirms this view, arguing that 'today's culture is preoccupied…by the pursuit of an indivisible now, detached from past and future time'.[67] Similarly, Josephine Machon argues that immersive theatre disrupts chronological time in favour of immanent 'becoming' in an 'ongoing present' that enables 'dwelling in the moment; moment by moment'.[68] This attempt to

[67] David Wiles, *Theatre & Time* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 15.
[68] Machon, p. 130.

dechronologise time is also clearly apparent in digital games. James Ash highlights the trend in digital game design 'towards attempting to encourage players to concentrate on a modulating present moment, in an increasingly narrow spatio-temporal envelope of perception'.[69] In setting out his ideas on the temporal immediacy of digital games, he references the work of literary theorist Katherine Hayles who suggests that 'rather than developing "deep" modes of attention, based around temporally elongated activities such as reading, these industries create a "hyper" attention, where increasing levels of stimulation are required to keep viewers interested'.[70] Ash subsequently links the 'hyper' attention of the 'perceptual now' to the recent proliferation of gamification strategies that use digital technologies in work and leisure activities to increase productive participation and economic value. Ash suggests that 'the problem with these systems is how they attempt to…focus users' perception on a continuously modulating present tense at the expense of creative thinking in relation to future or present possibilities'.[71] The analysis offered by Ash is similar to that of Emily Keightley who argues that in a contemporary context dominated by high-speed communications technology 'the very real temporal conditions of past, present and future disintegrate, producing 'passive spectators deprived of any sense of time'.[72]

The potentially damaging effects of temporal immediacy are further exemplified by philosopher Bernard Stiegler's concept of psychopower, as described by Ash, which highlights the implications of temporal immediacy for memory and future projection. Stiegler's argument is that consciousness is composed of 'primary retentions', which refer to the immediate perceptions of experience, alongside 'secondary retentions', which refer to memories of past experiences. Subsequently, primary and secondary retentions are combined to produce 'protentions' as anticipations of the future.[73] This process is short-circuited, in Stiegler's view, as digital technologies replace

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[69] Ash, p. 4.
[70] N. Katherine Hayles, 'Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes', *Profession* (2007), 187-199, cited in Ash, p. 4.
[71] Ash, p. 13.
[72] Emily Keightley, 'From immediacy to intermediacy: the mediation of lived time', *Time & Society*, 22:1 (2013), pp. 56-57.
[73] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 18, cited in Ash, p. 64.

primary and secondary retentions with 'tertiary retentions' that are provided by the interface. Tertiary retentions essentially refer to the virtual memory that is created so that, for example, a person does not have to draw on their own secondary retentions of an urban landscape to find their anticipated destination because GPS devices remember the landscape for them.[74] According to Stiegler, in Ash's articulation, 'the result of this dechronologisation for the human beings implicated in these technical systems is that "there tends to be less consciousness of the past and there also tends to be less of a feeling for the future"'.[75] Subsequently, because users are held in temporal immediacy, with future protentions being managed by the interface itself, Stiegler claims that users' perceptions become 'standardised and particularizable, meaning they are formalizable, calculable and finally controllable'.[76] Stiegler's account of psychopower creates a vision of temporal immediacy in which reflexive agency is eroded as players' access to memory and future projection is limited. This enables digital interface designers to exercise considerable control on the distribution of sensible forms and the way that users perceive them. In considering the concept of psychopower in relation to Spinoza's work, it seems clear that the orchestration of temporal immediacy in digital interfaces functions as assailment by passions. Spinoza states that 'it is not wonderful that desire which…has reference to the future, can be more easily restrained by the desire of things which are pleasant in the present'[77] and, since the techniques of psychopower actively pursue temporal immediacy to diminish thinking in relation to the future, I suggest that the use of such techniques 'is not wonderful'.

Although the technologies of contemporary culture clearly place strong emphasis on temporal immediacy, Keightley and Ash both offer compelling arguments that entrapment in a 'perpetual now' can be resisted. Keightley suggests that instances of temporal disjuncture, when digital devices are

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[74] Bernard Stiegler, 'Anamnesis and Hypomnesis', *Ars Industrialis* (No Date) <http://arsindustrialis.org/anamnesis-and-hypomnesis> [accessed 12 June 2014], cited in Ash, p. 123.
[75] Bernard Stiegler, *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 42, cited in Ash, pp. 64-65.
[76] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care*, p. 99, cited in Ash, p. 65.
[77] Spinoza, p. 184, part IV, prop. LXII, note.

disrupted, can interrupt the 'time of the instant' and stimulate reflexive thinking:

> It is through…an awareness of temporal difference or distance that we come to experience time. The historical drama interrupted by contemporary advertisements; the overloaded broadband network that distorts a conversation over Skype…it is a liminal condition which opens up at the juncture of different temporal modes, rhythms or representations.[78]

Whereas Keightley focuses on disruption, however, Ash argues that digital interfaces can be designed with the express intention of opening up an expanded perception of both space and time by modulating between spatio-temporal immediacy and a more expansive spatial focus with less intent attention on the now moment. Ash also proposes that interface users might create this spatio-temporal expansion for themselves which 'could open a space in which potential futures' are 'not anticipated from within the logics of the interface design'.[79] As an example of an interface design that enables players to modulate space and time on their own terms, he references *Minecraft*, a game that celebrates its low resolution spatiality and slow, open-ended temporality. He describes the 'graphically simplistic cubes' that players use to sculpt their environment, noting that:

> Unlike the glossy environments of AAA games that carefully try to hide their artifice from the player, *Minecraft* revels in its artificiality. Indeed, the clear exposure of the game's artificial, constructed nature is key to its capacity to generate new horizons of protention.[80]

In other words, the low resolution spatiality and temporal expansiveness of the game radically departs from the immersive aesthetics of big-budget games that seek to cultivate habits to generate ongoing user engagement. Instead, *Minecraft* invites an open-ended range of play activities that enable players, quite literally, to redistribute the sensible forms of the digital world in myriad ways.

To summarise this section, in the same way that spatial immediacy seeks to hold individuals in the close proximity of 'here', temporal immediacy pursues a 'perpetual now' in the perception of time with the result, I suggest,

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[78] Keightley, p. 67.
[79] Ash, p. 131.
[80] Ash, p. 136.

that human bodies are more likely to be assailed by passions and less able to exercise reflexivity. Nonetheless, just as spatial immediacy can be disrupted by spatial diversification, distance and defamiliarization, interruptions of seamless instantaneity that create a more expansive temporality can invite thinking in a syncopated time that combines the immediacy of the present with past retentions and future protentions. In my practical work, I have applied strategies that pursue syncopated temporality as a depth perspective on time and the following section describes the outcomes of my explorations of temporal reflexivity in play.

6.5 Temporal Reflexivity in Practical Work

In Playground 2, the attractiveness of temporal immediacy in play was apparent in Catryn's reflections on the overall project. When I asked her which aspects of our activities she remembered most strongly she immediately replied that the process of using post-it notes (in which participants write down as many ideas as possible in response to a given prompt within a limited time period) was the most memorable play activity she had encountered. When I asked her why this activity was memorable for her, she invoked Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, describing a satisfying experience of instinctive, immediate action:

> Carrie: *Because you have the time pressure you have to go with your instinct – you have to go with a certain flow. And I have to say to you – I'm so sorry – I've nicked it quite often already* (she laughs).
>
> JH: *Oh, nick away. Nick everything.*
>
> Carrie: *Because it is really – it is – I've used it because there is something about working under a certain time pressure and having to find that flow. Cos when you look at the concept of flow, the whole point is that actually you forget about – you forget to check yourself – you just follow that instinct. And in a way – when you do the post-it noting – because you have the time pressure you enter that state of flow – of not checking – in order to be productive – in order to give numerous suggestions – cos as soon as you begin to explain them too much or understand them too much you end up not writing anything.*

As this example shows, in contrast with my positive valuation of reflexivity, Catryn clearly valued the immediacy of flow and held a critical view of '*self-checking*'. In describing her experience of designing her final piece at the end

of the project, however, she acknowledged that the '*stop-start*' nature of the collaborative design process stimulated reflexivity, which enabled her to let go of some of her ideas and adapt to those of others:

> *The self-checking when you start to collaboratively create something for someone else…there was an interruption of flow. I think I would have found a very big flow if I had to do this game by myself – because then you really have to work it out step by step, almost like a mathematical puzzle – but because you're working collaboratively – it's a constant negotiation between letting go and suggesting – yielding and resisting to a certain extent…and that is something that stops and starts the flow.*[81]

The salient point that can be drawn from this example is that the interruption of temporally immediate flow prompted Catryn to respond to the ideas of others rather than autonomously pursuing her own instincts. Consequently, in spite of her desire to find a flow state in play (and also in the design of play activities), I suggest that shifting beyond temporal immediacy was conducive to a relational reflexivity that supported the adaptation of her ideas in a collaborative process.

In the Peartree Bridge project, I had a similar interest in inviting participants to strengthen their reflexive agency by taking time out from the flow of everyday life to explore the possibility of shifting their habitual perceptions of the area. For the final piece that concluded the project, I developed a two-player role-play entitled *Ridge Walk*.[82] This piece invited players to walk through the neighbourhood together and reimagine it as an alternative society called Ridge, which was divided into two culturally isolated regions: East and West Ridge. The play involved the use of a map of Ridge that was overlaid onto the actual layout of Peartree Bridge and, over the course of the walk, players were invited to navigate a set route that criss-crossed between East and West. As they walked, they followed written instructions that prompted them to respond to their surroundings and imagine the fictional history of their region and also make future projections of how the two communities would evolve. One playing of the *Ridge Walk* was enacted by two residents who had lived in the area for over twenty-five years: James (who I have mentioned earlier in this chapter) and a woman

[81] 'Catryn', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (26 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.1'.
[82] See Appendix B.18 for the play script of *Ridge Walk*.

called Lottie. In reflecting on their play experience, they commented that although they had both lived in the same small neighbourhood for a considerable period, they were strangers. Despite their initial hesitancy in playing together, they managed to create a quite complex story of two societies recovering from a war that had created the separation between east and west. James created a female character who had been a victim of violence and Lottie described his story contributions as '*quite mythical – almost fantastical*'.[83] Despite the dark subject matter that they chose to play with, however, in reflecting on his experience of the *Ridge Walk*, James commented that the slow pace of the activity had enabled him to recognise some of the positive features of the landscape that he would normally overlook:

> James: *I noticed aspects of the area that I hadn't grasped before – because I don't walk around with my eyes open, I suppose…looking in the evening when its quiet like this – it has made me think that parts of this – territory – are quite attractive.*
>
> JH: *What did you find yourself being drawn to?*
>
> James: *Mainly the trees. During the daytime, if you work and commute as most people do here – you don't pay much attention to the actual surroundings. It's a very still evening, very quiet – and looking around I've appreciated the actual shapes of the trees more than I normally would – dashing around during the day…you can see the sort of – sculptural forms of things rather than everything being in motion like it is in the day when you're rushing around.*[84]

The key point that emerges here is that the slowness and stillness of the activity invited James to expand his perceptual horizon beyond everyday objects of attention and notice things that would ordinarily be disregarded. Consequently, I suggest that because the temporality of the play interrupted the fast-paced flow of day-to-day experience, James was able to access the pleasurable affects of the '*sculptural forms*' of trees which seemed to override his generally negative view of the neighbourhood.

As I have noted in an earlier section of this chapter, the *Passage* role-play at Trumpington Community Orchard was founded on a consideration of

[83] 'Lottie', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (30 August 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge8'.
[84] 'James', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (30 August 2018). See Appendix A: PeartreeBridge8'.

time, beginning with three questions: *Where have you come from today? Where have you come from as an adult? Where have you come from since childhood?* The responses to these questions formed the basis of the fiction, providing stimuli for players to invent their characters, but I suggest that they also established a mindset of depth perspective on time that combined considerations of the past alongside an imagined future towards which the characters were travelling. In Cerys' play experience, her character, Celia, established a busy life, driven by the need to work as a teacher to provide for her young family. Towards the end of the play, however, she reached a new (randomly selected) location, a plateau, which offered Celia (and Cerys) time to think about what they wanted in their future lives:

> *All these things in the role-play are about our inner landscape. Like – in the summer, I got the plateau* (she holds up the randomly selected landscape card) *and the desire to learn* (she holds up the randomly selected feeling card) *so then I thought – where is it –* (she reads from Celia's journal) *'I'm settled and happy, but now it's time to make my mark on the world' – this is really – my life at the moment – I feel like I'm on a bit of a plateau and I want more variety and inspiration. Most of my life has been about learning – like the pressure to learn more new things – more and more…but you know – I'm not gonna be here in twenty-five years – that's very – you get to my age – life speeds up at such a rate and every year goes – I mean god its nearly winter again – already. I've always had this big need to feel like I've done something…and when I was on the plateau – on the plateau is actually being stuck and taking the time to recognise my stuck-ness. So, it's like – recognising that I'm ready to act – but these are the things – the qualities I need when I act to be able to – to make a good end to life. And to enjoy it on the way.*[85]

What is notable about this example, other than the highly personal nature of what Cerys had to say, was her emphasis on taking time, as a departure from the increasing speed of life, to reflect on past and future. Her thoughts on the past mention '*pressure*' to learn '*more and more*' but her imaginative projection of the future was about acquiring '*qualities*' that would enable her to act meaningfully. Referring to Spinoza's ideas, Cerys' reflections seem redolent of his distinction between the inadequate ideas that can result from being driven by temporally immediate affects and the adequate ideas that can be attained by giving equal consideration to the imaginings of past and

[85] 'Cerys', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Trumpington Community Orchard, Cambridge (23 September 2017). See Appendix A: 'TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard2'.

future. It was clear that Cerys' play experience made her think quite deeply about her future and it seemed that this was conducive to seeking out beneficial affects that would strengthen her power of action '*to make a good end to life*'.

These examples from Playground 2 and the Trumpington and Peartree Bridge projects suggest that a depth perspective on time, in contrast to the aesthetics of temporal immediacy, increases the power of imagination and reflexive agency. Despite her valorisation of flow, the interrupted temporality of the design process in Playground 2 enabled Catryn to exercise a reflexive capacity to critically appraise her ideas in relation to those of others. Similarly, *Passage* and *Ridge Walk* both invited players to take time in order to reflect in depth about time, constructing play activities built on past experiences but which also stimulated future-oriented imagination. I suggest that this depth of temporality enabled players to be affected in an increased variety of ways which appeared to strengthen their power to reconfigure the substance of sensory experience and generate consciously self-determined action.

The notion that sensory affects can be reflexively reconfigured in play resonates with the theories of Brian Sutton-Smith whose discussion of animal play makes a simple, but compelling, argument that the evolutionary invention of play enables beings to move beyond automatic reflex responses to sensory stimuli and think before they act.[86] In other words, play acts as a mechanism that combines the primary emotions of immediate instinct with second-order observations that serve to regulate and, potentially, adapt these instincts in service of more beneficial strategies of action. Following Sutton-Smith's ideas, I contend that the conscious regulation of emotion can be seen in the examples of temporal reflexivity in this section. Cerys' reflections on her play experience enabled her to step out of the quick tempo of daily activities to consider the future time of her life and visualise the '*qualities*' that might enable her to live it well. Likewise, the slow tempo of James' play during the *Ridge Walk* departed from habitual '*rushing around*'

[86] Brian Sutton-Smith, 'Play Theory: A Personal Journey and New Thoughts', *American Journal of Play*, 1:1 (2008), 80-123 (p. 113-114).

and enabled him to partially overcome his negative outlook on the neighbourhood by observing the trees and recognising the pleasure that they gave him.

6.6 Unifying Emotional Immediacy & Rational Reflexivity

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have argued that reflexivity in spatial and temporal perception supports imaginative agency in the play of participatory performance. For many scholars, however, the type of reflexivity I have argued for is suggestive of a problematic mind/body dualism whereby the mind seeks to control the body as an object. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, is critical of reflexivity, because it smacks of a Kantian 'pure gaze',[87] that sees the mind and its disinterested contemplation as standing in distanced separation from the world. These arguments can be countered, however, through reference to scholars such as Antonio Damasio who compellingly links Spinoza's philosophy with twenty-first century neuroscience to argue that the affects of the body and the reason of the mind are not separate, but rather operate in a continuum that connects primary affects of immediate sensation to self-aware feelings in the conscious mind.[88] Drawing on the work of Damasio and other recent Spinozist scholars, I argue in this section that rational reflexivity in play involves the integration of primary affects and second-order observations that recognise how the sensible forms of the world are composed and how they might be redistributed.

Spinoza's conception of reason involves the ability of the mind to consciously seek beneficial affects that strengthen the power to take self-determined action. Damasio brings these ideas vividly to life, suggesting that through human evolution, primary *emotions* have led to *feelings* as a more complex mental awareness of bodily affects:

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[87] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), cited in Richard Shusterman, 'Pierre Boudieu and pragmatist aesthetics: Between practice and experience', *New Literary History*, 46:3 (2005), 435-457 (p. 447).
[88] Damasio, pp. 206-215.

> The first device, emotion, enabled organisms to respond efficiently but not creatively to a number of circumstances conducive or threatening to life…The second device, feeling, introduced a mental alert for the good or bad circumstances and prolonged the impact of emotions by affecting attention and memory lastingly. Eventually, in a fruitful combination with past memories, imagination, and reasoning, feeling led to the emergence of foresight and the possibility of creating novel, non-stereotyped responses.[89]

Damasio suggests that his conception of feelings can be seen as analogous to Spinoza's conception of reason, whereby conscious self-awareness of feelings generates mental power over the emotional process. He makes it clear, however, that Spinozist reason remains connected to the immediate emotional affects of the body, arguing that 'central to his thinking was the notion that the subduing of passions should be accompanied by reason-induced emotion and not by pure reason alone'.[90] These arguments are affirmed by Mark Johnson who combines a discussion of Damasio's work with the philosophy of John Dewey whose 'principle of continuity' between body and mind 'denies any ontological gaps between various levels of functional complexity'.[91] Consequently:

> If the ways of the body are actually constitutive of what and how we think, the logics (plural) have only as much validity as the shared patterns of bodily experience on which they rest. Logic doesn't drop down from the heavens of pure reason; rather, it rises up from recurring patterns of embodied enquiry.[92]

Essentially, in the same way that the immediacy of primary emotion is the source material for rational, conscious feelings (according to Damasio), for Johnson, mental logic is inseparably bound up in the body.

A crucial aspect of Johnson's argument linking the primary affective processes of the body and rational thinking is the development of communication through language. Building on Dewey's ideas, he claims that '"mind" is an added property assumed by a feeling creature, when it reaches that organized interaction with other living creatures which is language,

[89] Damasio p. 80.
[90] Damasio, p. 12.
[91] John Dewey, 'Logic: The Theory of Enquiry', in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 26, cited in Mark Johnson, 'Mind incarnate: from Dewey to Damasio', *Daedalus*, 135:3 (2006), 46-54 (p. 49).
[92] Johnson, p. 52.

communication'.[93] This idea resonates closely with the late work of Lev Vygotsky whose studies of language use were strongly influenced by Spinoza's philosophy. Vygotsky's Spinozist turn was based on the recognition that the capacity to use language in internal thought processes enables individuals to reconfigure the stimuli that the body receives from its immediate surroundings. In discussing Spinoza's influence on Vygotsky, Jan Derry suggests that 'in the end, Vygotsky flirts with the idea that the use of language creates consciousness and even free will'.[94] Her argument is that whereas the actions of animals appear to be determined by external forces in their immediate environment, for humans, 'the basis of freedom is man's ability to separate himself from his passions, from the contingencies of nature, and to make for himself a space within which he can determine his actions'.[95] Derry contends that this is made possible, according to Vygotsky's theory, by the human construction of tools and signs[96] and this point is reaffirmed by several other scholars of Vygotsky and Spinoza. Andrey Maidansky argues that the use of language enables humans to convert affects into concepts in a 'contradictory unity…of reason and passion' that frees human beings from determination by external forces.[97] Similarly, Ekaterina Zavershneva argues that, for Vygotsky, 'thought and word, by shedding light on the affect, interfere with it and change it'[98] and she goes on to claim that 'it is the meaningful word, added to the primary affect, that connects it with other conditions and the world; which elucidates it, makes it transparent and visible and, therefore, manageable and conscious'.[99] In other words, by applying language in internal thinking, humans are able to

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[93] John Dewey, 'Experience and Nature', in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), p. 200, cited in Johnson, p. 50.
[94] Jerome Bruner, 'Prologue to the English edition', in *Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky, Volume 1: Problems of General Psychology*, ed. by Robert W. Reiber and Aaron. S. Carton, trans. by Norris Minick (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), p. 2, cited in Jan Derry, 'The Unity of intellect and will: Vygotsky and Spinoza', *Educational Review*, 56:2 (2004), 113-120. (p. 113).
[95] Derry, p. 118.
[96] Derry, p. 118.
[97] Andrey Maidansky, 'Spinoza in cultural-historical psychology', *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 25:4 (2018), 355-364. (p. 357).
[98] Ekaterina Zavershneva, '"The Way to Freedom": Vygotsky in 1932', in *Revisionist Revolution in Vygotsky Studies: The State of the Art*, ed. by Anton Yasnitsky and René Van der Veer (Hove: Routledge, 2016), pp. 127-140 (p. 131).
[99] Zavershneva, p. 138.

gain conscious awareness of embodied emotional states through second-order observations which serve as the basis for voluntary action.

In considering the theoretical ideas noted above in relation to my practical work, I argue that many of the activities undertaken invited internal language use as a means of transforming the emotions of spatio-temporal immediacy into conscious feelings. In the *Passage* role-play, the majority of Cerys' play took place in an internalised thought process and it seems clear that her internal conversations generated reflexive awareness of emotions. On the plateau, for example, her sense of '*being stuck - and taking time to recognise my stuckness*' is indicative of having an emotion and making a second-order observation of it that might subsequently lead to conscious action to overcome the external forces that had caused her to become stuck. Similarly, the slow play of James' *Ridge Walk* not only gave him a pleasurable emotion in observing the trees but also the critically self-conscious recognition that he did not ordinarily give himself time to observe and appreciate his surroundings.

Although Vygotsky's ideas on the role of language in consciousness focus strongly on its internalised use, it is important to stress that this does not imply another form of dualism separating the subjective mind from the objects that it regards. Wolff-Michael Roth and Alfredo Jornet argue that Vygotsky's understanding of language involves a movement between the intersubjective and the intrasubjective, whereby the individual learns language socially then develops the capacity to apply it in internal thinking.[100] They are explicit, however, that internal thinking is never separate from the material world; rather it is always geared towards external action.[101] Roth and Jornet go further in asserting Vygotsky's opposition to mind/body dualism by suggesting that whereas his early work saw language as a form of mediation between objects and psychological understanding, under the later influence of Spinoza, he rejected this idea. For Vygotsky, in Roth and Jornet's articulation, the notion that the universe is composed of one substance, as Spinoza's monism asserts, necessarily precludes the idea

[100] Wolff-Michael Roth and Alfredo Jornet, *Understanding educational psychology: A late Vygotskian, Spinozist approach*, (Basel: Springer Press, 2017), pp. 96-98.
[101] Roth and Jornet, p. 22.

that language mediates between the mind and the physical world.[102] They argue that 'in real relations, signs generally and language specifically do not mediate and stand between the individual and her world, between the individual and others. Instead, language is an integral part of this world'.[103]

Roth and Jornet's rejection of mediation in favour of 'real relations' is strongly redolent of the work of media theorist Richard Grusin. Grusin's argument for 'radical mediation' proposes that mediation is fundamentally about relations.[104] He takes a critical stance towards proponents of immediacy who pursue the transparent dissolution of digital interfaces and argues for a hypermediacy[105] which foregrounds conscious recognition of how relational connections bring objects and the subjects who perceive them into existence:

> Mediation should not be understood as standing between already actualised subjects, objects, actants or entities…but rather…as the process, action, or event that generates or provides the conditions for the emergence of subjects and objects, for the individuation of entities within the world.[106]

Grusin's ideas on radical mediation as relational connectivity resonate with scholars who argue that Vygotsky's psychology is geared towards understanding how the human mind operates in relation with a wider environmental context. Zavershneva notes the influence of one of Vygotsky's collaborators, the gestalt theorist Kurt Lewin, and argues that he wanted to investigate how the human mind might strive to 'reach the highest level of analysis, the level of the whole that determines its parts'.[107] Similarly, Andy Blunden argues that Vygotsky's psychology is not simply focused on the thoughts and actions of individuals but rather on a broader relational system in which 'social practice, individual consciousness, and material culture…mutually constitute one another, as part of a Gestalt'.[108]

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[102] Roth and Jornet, p. 28.
[103] Roth and Jornet, p. 84.
[104] Richard Grusin, 'Radical Mediation', *Critical Inquiry*, 42:1 (2015), 124-148 (p. 138).
[105] Grusin, p. 131.
[106] Grusin, p. 129.
[107] Zavershneva, p. 138.
[108] Andy Blunden, 'Vygotsky's idea of Gestalt and its origins', *Theory & Psychology*, 21:4 (2011), 457-471. (p. 463).

The notion of an approach to psychology based on gestalt perception shares commonalities with arguments from scholars of Spinoza that his concept of reason is based on gaining adequate ideas by understanding the causes, or mechanisms, of affects.[109] Stuart Pethick argues that 'the question of knowledge is…the question of the composition of our affective relations'[110] and he offers a striking example of relational understanding through Spinoza's discussion of an imaginary circle. Spinoza offers two descriptions of a circle: one that already exists, and can be confirmed as a circle if it is measured to be 'a plane curve everywhere equidistant from a central fixed point', and one that might come into existence which can be 'described by any one line of which one end is fixed and the other moveable'.[111] What this rather cryptic example illustrates is the distinction between a 'general notion' which offers the concrete image of a circle as a pre-existing object and a more abstract 'common notion' that contains 'its conditions of coming into being'.[112] In other words, the second example refers to the mechanism of 'how' a circle might be actualised, not merely a description of 'what' it is, and this is significant in relation to Spinoza's wider advocacy of reasoned thinking. In the same way that Vygotsky argues that internal language enables thinking in abstract concepts that allows human imagination to escape the limitations of concrete circumstances, Spinoza, in Pethick's account, argues that 'we need to find "common notions" that can understand the geneses of bodies and how these can be composed'.[113] Essentially, this is an argument for reflexive thinking that shifts beyond the spatio-temporal immediacy of experience to seek an understanding of the affective mechanisms at play in the relational composition of objects in our field of perception, as the foundation for volitional action that might enable human beings to transform these objects.

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[109] Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 221.
[110] Stuart Pethick, *Affectivity and philosophy after Spinoza and Nietzsche: Making Knowledge the Most Powerful Affect* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 4.
[111] Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. by Michael L. Morgan, trans. by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2002), p. 26, cited in Pethick, p. 60.
[112] Pethick, p. 60.
[113] Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), props. XXXVII-XL, cited in Pethick, p. 67.

In Playground 2, conscious awareness of the mechanisms of affects was apparent in participants' replies in response to the question of whether any aspects of the process had felt particularly pleasurable or painful. As part of her discussion of '*self-checking*', Catryn spoke about the pain of seeing her final piece fail to achieve what she had intended, but also the pleasure of recognising why it had failed:

> *I'm still amazed by how wrong it went and how I enjoyed it! It was really insightful for me. It was so interesting to be so convinced that it was a really good idea and then seeing how it didn't work and why it didn't work.*[114]

Similarly, Luke commented on the pleasure that he experienced when watching his piece being played and reflected on the creative process that had created that pleasurable emotion:

> *That last afternoon, watching players play the larp that we created – that was pleasurable. It felt like – we'd worked hard on this thing and its actually unfolding in front of us…the only way I can think about it is like – kind of – dressing up like a superhero when you're young – especially a superhero with a cape* (he laughs) *– and like – you stand up, bolt upright – stick your arms out and stand your ground – just feeling strong. That's the only way I can – sort of like feeling as thought…a proud feeling – creating something and then – in a social sense – seeing the ramifications of how it unfolded.*[115]

Drawing on Luke's notion of '*feeling as thought*', these examples suggest the value of making second-order observations of emotion, which, for Luke and Catryn, involved reflexive considerations of the processes that had caused feelings of pleasure or pain. I suggest that such reflections build participants' awareness of their *potentia*, prompting them to consider how their pleasurable or painful affects had been created and how they might approach their work in future to maximise their experience of creative joy.

To summarise this section, rational reflexivity can be understood to operate in a continuum with emotional affects in the spatio-temporal immediacy of embodied action. Rather than seeing reason as being analytically separate from the life of the body, Damasio's work asserts that

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[114] 'Catryn', interviewed by Jamie Harper, London (26 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.1'.
[115] 'Luke', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (24 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.2'.

rational feelings are inseparably related to emotional affects and Vygotsky's theories suggest that language is the vital link that enables humans to reconfigure primary emotions through the second-order thinking of the conscious mind. This emphasis on language need not imply a mediation that imposes a dualistic separation of mind and body. Rather, language is a means of establishing awareness of relations in a gestalt perception, or hypermediacy, whereby humans can understand the affective mechanisms that bring objects into existence or produce the emotions that they experience. This hypermediacy of perception is a rational reflexivity that converts primary affects into second-order observations, enabling human beings to escape automatic responses to stimuli, overcome the assailment by passions and develop schemes of self-determined action that enhance *potentia*.

6.7 Habit & Change

The arguments that I have made in the preceding sections of this chapter have focused on the potential for rational reflexivity to enable individuals to move beyond habitual patterns of action as part of my wider concern with investigating the culturally transformative potential of play. In the same way that primary emotional affects serve as the foundation for rational feelings, however, it is important to recognise that habit is not antithetical to cultural transformation. In this section, I argue that habit can be seen as the base from which any changes in cultural practices must necessarily come. In making this argument, I return to Bourdieu's concept of habitus and draw on examples from my practical work to suggest that habitual practices produced by the dispositions of the habitus serve as the ground from which cultural transformations might emerge.

As I have noted previously, Bourdieu's logic of practice downplays the possibilities of reflexivity, suggesting that the ability to apply reflexive criticality is an affordance that is typically limited to people with high levels

of cultural and educational capital.[116] Critics of Bourdieu's work such as Margaret Archer take issue with this sceptical attitude and suggest that reflexivity is the essence of all human agency and that automatic habit can only be broken through reflexive thought.[117] The binary between habit and reflexivity that Archer's draws is problematic, however, because it disregards the necessity of habit for performing basic daily activities. Sadiya Akram and Anthony Hogan argue, for example, that:

> Routine habitual action is necessary for everyday living and the functioning of the taken-for-granted, in that adherence to habits developed over the life course guide behaviour, providing daily reinforcement of routine and often useful habits.[118]

Similarly, Ian Burkitt argues that even highly reflexive individuals need the foundation of habit to function successfully, claiming that if habit is absent from daily life 'even predominantly meta-reflexives will struggle…to establish purposeful projects and sustainable practices'.[119] Burkitt also challenges Archer's sharp separation between the reflexive mind of the individual and the practices of the body in the social world, claiming that reflexivity cannot function as an individual cognitive process. Rather, he suggests that it occurs intersubjectively 'as a dialogical process' that 'should be understood as an aspect of the relational fabric in which bodily selves are embedded'.[120] Subsequently, in the same way that the habits of language are learned through social relations, reflexivity also functions as a social activity, whereby individuals adapt their habits based on what they imagine other people think of them.[121] In other words, in the same way that Vygotsky maintains that the use of internal language in thinking is always directed towards the social world, the habits that develop through social relations are

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[116] Matthew Adams, 'Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity?', *Sociology*, 40:3 (2006), 511-528 (pp. 521-522).
[117] Margaret Archer, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), cited in Ian Burkitt, 'Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues', *Sociology*, 46:3 (2012), 458-472 (pp. 462-464).
[118] Sadiya Akram and Anthony Hogan, 'On Reflexivity and the conduct of self in everyday life: reflections on Bourdieu and Archer', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 66:4 (2015), 605-625 (p. 610).
[119] Ian Burkitt, 'Relational Agency: Relational Sociology, agency and interaction', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19:3 (2016), 322-339 (p. 328).
[120] Burkitt, 'Relational Agency', p. 325.
[121] Burkitt, 'Emotional Reflexivity', pp. 463-464.

rarely adapted by individual reflection alone, they are most commonly adapted by social reflexivity based on relational connectivity with others.

In my practical work at Peartree Bridge, the value of social reflexivity was apparent in conversations about the *Ridge Walk* between James and his play partner, Lottie. In reflecting on their experience, Lottie mentioned that because her meeting with James occurred in the context of a dialogic role-play, this enabled them to reflect on their feelings about the area in ways that they would not normally feel able to, given that they were strangers:

> *Playing a game as an adult is really quite difficult – it takes a real leap of faith – especially when you're talking to a stranger. But actually – it – you know – gave us a bit of insight and made us use words about the area that we wouldn't have said if we hadn't done it through a story…I think both of us have sort of – negative views on things – that we kind of played out through the story. They weren't sort of like – constantly berating the area – but they were kind of – like very dark and the story kind of evolved that way. It enabled both of us to use these words that we wouldn't normally with a stranger…in my story the landscape started off quite barren and then grew and matured as the character did – but then was broken, but not beyond repair – it was then evolving again, kind of like a continuous cycle which is how I think the community is…and just the opportunity to walk through it, talking about it to somebody rather than walking alone in it or talking to somebody about something different – I was talking about the actual place. So, the actual fact that it was driven to talk about that – it made me then reflect on my experience in the area.*[122]

What this example suggests is that the dialogical play between Lottie and James enabled them to engage with habitually embedded attitudes (a generally negative view of the area) and habitual practices (retaining a certain reserve in relation to strangers) and explore the possibility of changing them. The change that occurred in Lottie's case was the discovery of an ability to talk about the area in a way that she would not normally feel able to because the frame of play implicitly gave her permission to express a '*dark*' perspective, but also enabled her to recognise that the war torn landscape within the fiction, like the landscape of Peartree Bridge itself, was '*not beyond repair*'.

[122] 'Lottie', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (30 August 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge8'.

Further discussion of the value of habit can be found in James Ash's writing on digital interfaces. He suggests, in contrast to Warren Neidich's pessimistic account of the habits that are imposed by neuropower, that habit can be a source of creativity:

> Habit can be understood as a dynamic force that is 'both the site of change and movement, as well as incorporating the potential for bodily forms of fixity, continuity and stability.' As such, habit is a productive process through which new skills are enabled and created.[123]

In considering habit, Ash's offers a useful discussion of Martin Heidegger's concept of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand objects. In Ash's articulation of Heidegger's theory, ready-to-hand objects are utilised in habitual action that does not require conscious thought. By contrast, 'humans can encounter objects in a *present-at-hand* way. This is experienced when individuals step back from their involvement in a situation and consider objects as distant things rather than part of a broader task'.[124] With regard to my practical work as a whole, my consistent use of an inchoate assortment of junk has invited players to encounter objects in a present-at-hand way and I suggest that, in contrast to the high resolution focus that Ash describes when discussing digital objects, my utilisation of present-at-hand objects can be seen as an intentionally low resolution form of play design. This does not imply an outright rejection of high resolution spatiality, however. Rather, I propose that it is the players who bring space into resolution through the appropriation and redeployment of objects and I contend that this redeployment enables players to move the objects of play beyond their habitual function.

In Playground 2, Luke spoke about his interest, as a practicing artist, in a low resolution aesthetic of reappropriating scrap objects to take them beyond the ready-to-hand functionality of habitual use:

> Luke: *There's something about – a kind of 'make do' approach. These materials – I describe them as scraps – they're things that have function, but maybe not hugely significant…and I've found it fascinating how something that's seen as everyday junk – or not seen – overlooked*

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[123] Lisa Blackman, 'Habit and Affect: Revitalizing a Forgotten History', *Body and Society*, 19:2-3 (2013), 186-216 (p. 208), cited in Ash, p. 53.
[124] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), cited in Ash, pp. 60-61.

– something can be overlooked but then with attention given to it – it can kind of highlight it – and shift the focus of that.

JH: *Shift into what?*

Luke: *Anything.*

Luke subsequently went on to connect his enthusiasm (in his own practice) for present-at-hand redeployment of familiar objects with the use of scrap materials in the spatial composition of play activities during the Playground workshops. In describing a role-play in which he and his partners created a well as the secret base for a group of children's party entertainers plotting a revolution, he commented that:

> *I was really interested in how the use of objects or props can curate the space…like when we used the big tarpaulin to create the well* (he laughs)…*I just really enjoy being given the potential to create a space – actually try and replicate a space we kind of know – with limited resources. I find that quite captivating. There's something about the limitation of having only a certain amount of things to make a new place with – and the endless possibilities of how you can do that with these limited resources.*[125]

The key points that can be drawn from Luke's reflections on making spaces with scrap objects are his engagement with the familiar or habitual (in imagining places that are known) alongside their construction in a relatively abstract, defamiliarized form. As Luke suggests, the low resolution poverty of '*limited resources*' does not restrict the imaginative agency of the player in assembling and reassembling the space, it decisively enables it. Consequently, I contend that the utilisation of present-at-hand objects has facilitated an open-ended play culture in which players have been invited to reappropriate objects, take them beyond their habitual function and transform their uses to bring new spaces into resolution.

In arguing that habits, forged in the immediacy of everyday action, can be the foundation for change, Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of 'striated' and 'smooth' space are instructive.[126] In Doreen Massey's discussion of these terms, she describes 'smooth' spaces as being relatively open to change in

[125] 'Luke', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (24 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.2'.

[126] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 523-551.

contrast to 'striated' spaces that are relatively resistant to it.[127] Although her ideas seek to mobilise a 'more variegated politics'[128] Massey recognises that 'the impetus to motion and mobility, for a space of flows, can only be achieved through the construction of (temporary, provisional) stabilisations'.[129] In other words, stabilisation, like habit, need not been seen as ossification. Instead, it can serve as the foundation for mobility, offering the texture, or grip, that is required to produce momentum. Massey's arguments for the reciprocal relationship between striated and smooth space resonate with the work of Martin Jones who argues that although space is in a continuous process of relational composition, the construction of provisional striations is necessary for people to be able to visualise political activism. He claims that 'when performing their practical politics, agents imagine and identify a discrete, bounded space characterized by a shared understanding of the opportunities or problems that are motivating the very nature of political action'.[130] In other words, conceiving a territory as a discrete region, or neighbourhood, imposes a necessary stabilisation that creates the foundation for effective political action. Jones subsequently proposes the concept of 'phase space' as a 'conceptual middle road between space as territorial anchorage and fixity and conceptions of space as topological, fluid and relationally mobile'.[131] Essentially, his proposition is that space can be productively considered in terms of a 'co-existence of structure and flow',[132] or a combination of striated and smooth, in recognition of the need to base transformative activities in already existing habitual practices of a given context.

The combination of smoothness and striation is significant for a study of play because, arguably, all ludic activities require a degree of striation to establish, however provisionally, a defined play space. Tauel Harper suggests that although play should not be seen as fully separate from the outside world, the conceptual boundary of the magic circle is a necessary

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[127] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005) p. 174.
[128] Massey, p. 101.
[129] Massey, p. 95.
[130] Martin Jones, 'Phase space: geography, relational thinking, and beyond', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33:4 (2009), 487-506 (p. 494).
[131] Jones, p. 496.
[132] Jones, p. 497.

stabilisation that nonetheless enables 'transgressive transformations to take place', arguing that 'the magic circle depends upon a striation from the real world to exist and enforces a number of striations in the form of "rules" and yet, it encourages the continual renegotiation and smoothing out of these striations'.[133] This notion of a combination of striation and smoothness can be exemplified by my previously cited *Platform* play exercise. Each object selection that is added to the platform marks a formal distinction that establishes a striation of the play space. These striations do not imply fixity or stasis, they serve as the foundation (or platform) for continual smoothing, as new distinctions are made that open the form of play to unpredictable new developments. In other words, although the establishment of a magic circle, or the formal distinctions that define the play space, impose striations, these stabilisations create the foundations for transformative actions to occur.

To summarise this section, I have argued for an oscillation between habit and change alongside a movement between immediacy and reflexivity in play. My essential proposition is that although habits (like the habitus) develop through the spatio-temporal immediacy of ready-to-hand activity, it is possible to shift into a more reflexive, present-at-hand perspective on space and time that enables alteration of habits. My ideas on the movement between habit and change, are subsequently reified in the final section of this chapter, which sets out a model of reflexive play as an oscillation between *anchorage* in the established practices of the habitus and *leverage* as rational criticality than opens potential for cultural transformation.

6.8 Anchorage & Leverage

My argument in this section is that reflexive agency in the play of participatory performance is supported by oscillation between *anchorage* in space and time and reflexive *leverage* that shifts agents into new temporal and spatial perspectives. In making this argument, I define anchorage as

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[133] Tauel Harper, 'The Smooth Spaces of Play: Deleuze and the Emancipative Potential of Games', *symplokē*, 17:1-2 (2009), 129-142 (p. 135).

essentially analogous with the habitus and leverage as the reflexive capacity for rational thought that supports self-determined action. Bourdieu's vision of habitus formation can be seen as a form of anchorage whereby individuals tend to remain constrained by a limited range of possibilities that they mimetically reproduce. He argues that the practices produced by the habitus are 'relatively unpredictable' but 'also limited in their diversity'.[134] Consequently, within the limited horizon of experience that he envisages, 'the evocative power of bodily mimesis' produces a 'universe of ready-made feelings and experiences' which, despite appearing to be 'choices' actually 'imply no acts of choosing'.[135] In contrast to this apparently deterministic position, Damasio's response to Spinoza's philosophy offers convincing ideas on how, in the broad span of evolutionary history, the development of self-conscious feelings has enabled human beings to break with habits that have become deeply embedded in the body. Taking racism as an example, he argues that racial prejudice may be based on the important evolutionary development of the ability 'to detect difference in others because difference may signal risk or danger and promote withdrawal or aggression'. He goes on to argue, however, that although this ability might once have been vital to survival, in contemporary society 'we can learn to disregard such emotions and persuade others to do the same'.[136] Damasio's argument is that although habits that are anchored in the body are highly durable, they can be altered through rational feeling. My contention is that such alteration requires leverage out of habit, but that this leverage still depends on the anchorage of habit as a foundation. As I have suggested previously, adaptive variability in play involves repurposing the substance of the habitus, so the anchorage that habitus imposes is also the material with which leverage out of anchorage must be performed.

In temporal terms, leverage requires a reflexive perspective on time that moves beyond the present tense to delve into the anchorage of past experience and imaginatively reorder it as a projection of desired futures. Damasio makes precisely this point when he argues that:

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[134] Bourdieu, *Logic*, p. 55
[135] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 476
[136] Damasio, p. 40.

> One of the main tenets of civilised human behaviour is thinking in terms of the future. Our baggage of accumulated knowledge and our ability to compare past and present have opened the possibility of 'minding' the future…We trade instantaneous gratification and defer immediate pleasure for a brighter future, and we make immediate sacrifices on the same basis.[137]

As this quotation illustrates, 'minding' the future requires shifting beyond a temporally immediate perspective in an oscillation between considering the 'now' of the moment and the twin 'thens' of past and future. This process is clearly based on an interrogation of the anchorage of 'accumulated knowledge' but the reflexivity of combined considerations of 'now' and 'then' enables leverage beyond the limitations of past and present to generate visions of future potential.

Linking the ideas noted above with my practical work, I will now describe a project that attempted to create anchorage-leverage in play. The piece in question, *Migrations of Cool*, was a street game, designed for a small festival at the Arebyte Gallery in Hackney Wick, which focused on the role of artists in processes of gentrification.[138] Hackney Wick is an area that has seen rapid transformation in recent years, from a dilapidated industrial zone, to a haven for artists, and, most recently, to an area of large-scale residential property development. The core premise of the game was that artists play a role in stimulating gentrification by creating an 'aura of cool' in the areas they populate, which attracts the attention of developers who wish to create high-value properties in 'cool' areas. Consequently, the design of the game, which was structured around a grid map overlaid on the landscape of Hackney Wick, invited property developers to pursue the aura of cool, while the artists tried to evade their moves by seeking increasingly remote areas where they could make their work at low cost. Beyond the system logic of the game, the key formal device of the play experience was that all players were required to play artists and also property developers. In effect, this meant switching roles at specific points in play and pursuing two radically different sets of objectives.

[137] Damasio, p. 146.
[138] See Appendix B.7 for the rule set of *Migrations of Cool*.

All the participants who played *Migrations of Cool* came from artistic backgrounds and, as such, they carried with them, to great or lesser extents, the habitus (or anchorage) of artists. In preparation for play, participants were asked to create fictional artistic collectives which allowed them to express their stereotypical ideas of what Hackney Wick artists are like. Similarly, they created fictional property development companies which also displayed their artistic habitus through the creation of stereotypically greedy, corporate entities. In the process of play, however, the formal device of role-swapping invited players to defamiliarize their perspective and reflexively shift beyond their anchorage to take a different view of artists and property developers. One participant, Nadia, recalled, in written correspondence, that in the post-game debrief several people had '*sympathised with the developers as it was very competitive and fast*'. She also noted that players were '*surprised by themselves being cynical and ruthless towards artists during the game*' noting that '*employees of development companies also need to make a living*'.[139] As this example indicates, the design of the game invited oscillation between anchorage and leverage as the artistic habitus of the players was challenged by playing with an alternative perspective.

In spatial terms, anchorage-leverage oscillation manifested itself in shifts between different physical relationships to the urban environment. Artists were asked to make playful sculptural interventions in space, photograph them and send pictures to the game facilitator, while property developers were required to make video presentations of their development plans in particular zones of the play space. In simple terms, this created an oscillation of perspective between space as a playground and space as a territory of economic value, as is made apparent from the written feedback of another participant, Meg, (who later joined the Playground project):

> *As an artist I definitely moved around space with an eye to what I could create in the environments I was moving into. I wanted the spaces to be cheap, but I also needed there to be something creatively stimulating in them. As a property developer my focus was more direct: money and*

[139] 'Nadia', 'Re: Toxicool art', email to Jamie Harper (24 July 2017).

> *potential mark up. I was more focused on the map and the overlaid value as opposed to the quality of the spaces themselves.*[140]

What is interesting about this reflection from Meg, is that the immediacy of property development action led to a conflation of map and territory (to borrow Gregory Bateson's terms). By contrast, the more reflexive perspective of artists recognised the distinction between the aesthetic detail of the actual terrain in contrast to its abstract representation on the map.

Reflexivity was further promoted by the creation of different time registers, with property developers having less time to make their moves in comparison with artists. In considering her experience of time Meg commented that:

> *I made my artist decisions much slower than as a property developer as I felt I had more to weigh up in space and environment as opposed to value on a map. I felt time was valuable as an artist to create, whereas as a developer I didn't want to waste any time, I had to move as quickly as I could.*

Meg went on to comment on how she used the extended time of artistic play to think relationally about the composition of the urban space and how her artistic activity (within the fiction) might impact upon it and people within it:

> *I remember when I made an artist purchase* (renting a zone on the grid map of the game) *outside a local primary school and thought quite a lot about how students at the school would engage with the artwork and how I could make it something that spoke to them and involved them as opposed to just happening near them.*[141]

This example is illustrative, I suggest, of the kind of rational thinking that Spinoza advocates. Rather than passively receiving the affects of the immediate environment and recognising a school for what it is (like recognising the form of an already existing circle), Meg's reflections with regard to the primary school included a deeper consideration of how the neighbourhood might be relationally reconfigured by her creative presence to create beneficial affects for both artist and local children. In other words, the slow time of her artistic play enabled her to convert immediate primary

[140] 'Meg', 'Lima Collective', email to Jamie Harper (27 July 2017).
[141] 'Meg', 'Re: Lima Collective', email to Jamie Harper (28 July 2017).

affects into second-order observations of her actions and the longer-term ramifications they might have in a wider relational space.

As a case study, *Migrations of Cool* offers an example of how spatio-temporal reflexivity can enable players to leverage themselves beyond familiar, habitual perspectives. In the same way that Damasio argues for conscious awareness of feelings, my concept of anchorage-leverage suggests that reflexive consciousness of habitual modes of activity can stimulate considerations of how these practices might be altered. Such reflexivity is not, as Bourdieu argues, detached from the material actuality of practice, it remains embodied and emotional, but it does require an oscillation between habitual, ready-to-hand activity and more distanced, diversified and defamiliarized perspectives on space and time. My argument is that a reflexive consciousness of one's position in social space and temporal trajectory offers the possibility for a diversification of the affects that can be received and an equal diversification of capacities for affective action. This diversification is the essence of adaptive variability in play, enabling the reflexive agency of conscious position-taking that can redistribute the sensible forms of the world and reconstruct the cultures that these sensible forms embody.

6.9 Summary

To conclude, in this chapter I have argued that reflexive agency in the play of participatory performance is supported by compositions of space that are distanced, diversified and defamiliarized, and compositions of time that encourage syncopated combination of past, present and future imagination. This contrasts with the aesthetics of spatio-temporal immediacy which foreground close proximity, high resolution focus, habitual engagement with the familiar and the instantaneousness of the now-moment. My contention is that temporal immediacy limits reflexive comparison of past and present and the capacity to reconfigure experience in future imaginings. I have also argued that reflexive agency is hindered by an immediacy in space that limits the establishment of new relational connections, which subsequently constrains the development of new capital affordances.

My discussion of space has recognised the importance of proximally immediate affects in the horizon of perception and noted Bourdieu's convincing arguments that immediate material conditions play the primary role in shaping the habitus. I have suggested, however, that greater distance, defamiliarization and diversification of spatial perception can enable individuals to move beyond the constraints of their limited horizon. My conception of time, similarly, recognises the urgency of necessity that is emphasised in Bourdieu's logic of practice, alongside Spinoza's assertion that we are most strongly affected by external forces in the present moment. Again, however, I have suggested that a reflexive consideration of deep time allows memory to prompt imagination and helps individuals supersede the limitations of the present.

With regard to creative practice, I have acknowledged the attractiveness of spatio-temporal immediacy in immersive theatre and digital games, but I have argued that these immediate gratifications represent what Spinoza terms the assailment of passions. It is important to emphasise that the play activities I have created are not wholly based on the pursuit of reflexive criticality. Rather, they combine the immediacy of play action with reflexive thinking in an oscillation that continuously shifts between the here and now and the 'thens' of past and future, alongside the 'theres' of a wider relational space. The reflexive rationality I have argued for is viewed sceptically by theorists like Bourdieu because it appears to create a separation between analytical thought and the immediacy of practice. As I have argued, however, the reflexive rationality which Damasio describes as 'feeling' is inextricably linked to the emotional affects of the body. In making this argument, Vygotsky's ideas on the use of language provide an essential link between primary affective experience and the second-order observations of rational thinking. His focus on internal speech does not imply that language mediates between the body and the mind, it establishes a relational continuum between the continually evolving objects of perception and the mental images of them that humans construct. Furthermore, the relational nature of Vygotsky's gestalt approach to mind as a unity of person and environment links powerfully with Spinoza's view of rational thinking as the understanding of causes and mechanisms, whereby the mind forms

‘common notions’, or adequate ideas, not only of what things are, but also of how they come into existence and how they might subsequently change.

Although my overall study is focused on the potential of play to generate cultural transformation, I have proposed that transformative action driven by reflexive thinking is not antithetical to habit. Instead, I have suggested that play might enable an oscillation between habitual, ready-to-hand activity and present-at-hand engagement with sensible forms that is more critically self-aware. I have termed this oscillation anchorage-leverage, recognising that the anchorage of the habitus is the essential material with which individuals act in the world, but also proposing that this material can be reconfigured through spatio-temporal reflexivity. In other words, anchorage, like the habitus, need not be seen as an ossified block of habitual practices that are predetermined to reproduce themselves. Rather, the insertion of rationality into Bourdieu’s theory through the ideas of Spinoza and Vygotsky offers scope for habitus alteration as reflexivity widens spatial perception and deepens temporal thinking, diversifying the affects we receive and the affective action we can perform, to enable self-determined agency in redistributing sensible forms and opening potential for the reconstitution of human cultures.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that the culturally transformative potential of play in participatory performance can be promoted by designing in response to the cultural particularities of players, pursuing spatio-temporal reflexivity in play that enables them to diversify their affective *potentia*, and inviting participants to produce self-documentations of their experiences that can feed into ongoing creative learning. I have proposed that basing the design process on an investigation of their habitus invites players of participatory performances to actively consider issues of concern in their own lives. Within the play experience, I have suggested that an aesthetics of reflexivity prompts participants to look beyond the familiar within their horizon of perception and draw upon a more diverse range of affects to expand their capacities. Subsequently, my arguments for participatory self-documentation are based on the notion that the transformative potential of play goes beyond the act of play itself, as documentations, memories and performative reiterations are applied in pedagogical processes that extend the possibilities for learning, inviting playful experimentation with possible reconfigurations of cultural values and practices.

7.1 Primary Research Question

This research enquiry is founded on the premise that play reflects human cultures and also shapes their ongoing social construction. As such, play can be both a conservative activity that solidifies cultural values and a transformative activity that progressively alters them. Brian Sutton-Smith's theory of adaptive variability makes a compelling case for the progressive potential of play, as individuals reconfigure the substance of their lived experience in preparation for uncertain futures.[1] Applications of play in artistic contexts have displayed a similar progressive intent, with movements

[1] Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 221-224.

such as Situationism and relational aesthetics using playful, participatory approaches to seek liberation from consumerist spectacle[2] and technological alienation,[3] respectively. Several theorists, though, have questioned the liberating potential of active participation in artistic contexts. Jacques Rancière has argued that theatrical works which seek to activate audiences have tended to reinforce the artist's agenda rather than emancipating spectators.[4] Rancière's ideas have subsequently influenced the work of Claire Bishop, who suggests that participatory art works, far from serving an emancipatory function, often enforce either communitarian consensus[5] or the values of neoliberal self-sufficiency onto participants.[6] In light of the conflicting visions of play in participatory art, my core concern in this project has been to investigate how play can promote the 'ascending meaning' of cultural changeability[7] in line with Sutton-Smith's theory of play as adaptive variability. This core focus frames the primary research question of this study:

> *How can the design, enactment and documentation of play in the context of participatory performance create the potential for transformations of cultural values?*

7.2 Subsidiary Questions & Research Findings

Within the primary research question noted above, I have focused on three subsidiary questions that inform the overall theme of this study. In this section, I reiterate these questions and set out the findings that have emerged in response to them, prior to drawing together the insights that my enquiries have produced to address the primary research question.

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[2] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay Press, 2009).
[3] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), pp. 16-17.
[4] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2009), pp. 4-5.
[5] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), p. 25.
[6] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 14.
[7] Thomas S. Henricks, *Play and the Human Condition*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 50.

7.2.1 ***Play Design in Response to Cultural Particularity***

My first subsidiary research question starts from the premise that if cultural transformation through play is of central concern, there must be a consideration of whose cultural values are at stake and what kind of transformation players might wish to enact. It is important to state that this research has not proceeded from an assumption that cultural transformation is necessarily desirable or required. Rather, my focus has been to create play activities in which the essential content is determined by the interests of participants rather than the interests of the designer. This endeavour to enable players to actively reflect upon their own cultural values and express their agency in (potentially) transforming them, frames the first of my subsidiary research questions:

> *How may the cultural particularity of participants inform the design of play in participatory performance works?*

In responding to this question, Jacques Rancière's theory emancipated spectatorship has provided a productive provocation in its assumption of perceptual equality amongst spectators. In considering the play of participatory performance, Rancière's emphasis on equality is problematic since it elides the differential capacities of each individual which will necessarily define their relative powers as players. By contrast, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful in considering the variable capital affordances that individuals have acquired over their life trajectory. Furthermore, whereas Rancière emphasises perceptual and interpretive autonomy, Bourdieu's field theory is fundamentally relational, promoting the notion that the capital affordances of the habitus are formed and continually reformed through relational connections in the fields that individuals occupy.[8] Consequently, Bourdieu's ideas on habitus formation have informed my design of play activities that engage the cultural particularity of participants and invite them to play with possible cultural transformations.

[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2010), p. 87.

In my practical work, Bourdieu's habitus concept has served as the basis for play design through a process that I have termed 'habitus mining'. Habitus mining is, effectively, a reappropriation of Constantin Stanislavski's process of 'given circumstances' analysis which seeks to excavate texts for contextual details of place, time and character biography.[9] I have chosen to use given circumstances analysis because I see strong connections between this process and system analysis in game design as well as Bourdieu's field theory. These analytical approaches seek to assess a system or social field by identifying the active objects (or agents) in the system and the attributes that they have acquired through relational connections with other agents and their inhabited environment. Rather than simply representing social scenarios, however, these approaches also consider the possibility for emergent changeability within them, as agents acquire new capacities by forming new relational connections with other objects in the system. Consequently, given my primary priority of investigating possible cultural transformations through play, hybridisation of given circumstances analysis, system design and field theory seemed to offer scope for creating play structures that might enable players to apply their agency in exploring emergent potential.

In the Haringey Community Hub project, habitus mining proved to be effective in assessing the cultural particularity of participants, as simple questions about places of meaning yielded substantial insights into their life trajectories and the capital affordances that had shaped them. For example, Yamini's description of her choice to emigrate from Tanzania to England to pursue further education illuminated her relatively high cultural capital, while Mrs Jadeja's forced migration, prompted by Idi Amin's persecution of the Asian population of Uganda suggested much lower capital affordances. Following the habitus mining process, my intention was to use the material gathered to create system-based games, with the aim of creating play structures offering agency and the potential for emergent narratives. It proved problematic, however, to assimilate a broad plurality of life trajectories within one unified system and this prompted a reconsideration of

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[9] Constantin Stanislavksi, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 43-44.

the value, for my purposes, of system-based game design and Bourdieu's field theory. This reconsideration suggested that the concept of the field can impose a reductive simplification on complex social phenomena. Furthermore, in Bourdieu's theory, as fields become more autonomous from external influences, the doxa, or dominant ideology of field activity, becomes strengthened and increasingly resistant to change.[10] Consequently, in the context of a study about cultural transformation, I recognised that field theory was much less useful for my practical work than the concept of habitus, since relative field autonomy implies relative cultural ossification. I was also prompted to reflect on the limitations of system design in developing games for diverse participant groups and this led me to draw on the work of Ian Bogost, whose theory of unit operations offers an alternative to systems thinking in the study of games.

Bogost's theory applies the concept of the meme as the elemental cultural unit,[11] which interacts with other units to assemble structures in a bottom-up process of *bricolage*, in opposition to top-down visions of systems governed by universal laws that strive to provide totalizing determinations.[12] This theory has been influential for my design approach because, in contrast to methods of system design that can impose reductive simplification on complex issues, bricolage play creation invites players to assemble their own structures as the memes of one habitus interact with others to co-create a broader memeplex. Bogost's unit operational theory is expanded through the concept of rhizomatic nomadism in which bodies are deterritorialized into new contexts, enabling an 'overcoding', or reconstitution, of the body in question.[13] Subsequently, the bricolage play activities that I have designed have offered scope, I suggest, for players to deterritorialize themselves and

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[10] Louis Pinto, 'The Field: a Leibnizian perspective in sociology', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, ed. by Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 102-118 (p.112).
[11] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 192, cited in Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), p. 45.
[12] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 22, cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 49.
[13] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), cited in Bogost, *Unit Operations*, p. 141.

reconstitute their subjectivity, even if only slightly, through intersubjective overcoding.

In my work with Ravi and Mr Ganguly, the invitation for both players to reappropriate each other's stories enabled them to insert their subjectivity into a new context, with the possibility that they might alter their cultural particularity and that of their play partner. Ravi's renovation of Mr Ganguly's story of working as a guard on the platform of King's Cross station created a dramatic narrative of trying to rescue a woman from the train tracks, which challenged Mr Ganguly to consider with a more impulsive and less rule-bound version of himself. Similarly, in the work at the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes, the collision of familiar stories with unfamiliar images from other people's narratives challenged players to deterritorialize themselves. This was particularly evident in Brenda's story of near-drowning at the pond in Epping Forest, which made a substantial imaginative departure through the overcoding of Daniel's image of an aeroplane flying over water. This image prompted Brenda to take her story to Paris, as Mavis, the young woman who was the caretaker of her childhood self, fled her responsibilities for a weekend of fun in a place that Brenda (who did not even have a passport) had never visited. The key point that emerges from these examples is that bricolage play design frameworks enabled players to express their cultural particularity in relation to cultural memes provided by others. This created intersubjective palimpsests that offered scope for imaginative adaptation of the habitus and the potential, however slight, for cultural transformation.

7.2.2 *Participatory Self-Documentation and Curatorial Pedagogy*

Beyond the act of play itself, play performances are remembered and documented and these recordings can subsequently be used in pedagogical processes through which individuals gain knowledge that informs their power of acting in the world. It follows that if play is to be culturally transformative, there must be a consideration of how it is documented and how the records of play are applied in ongoing learning about play and through play. This focus on extending the culturally transformative potential

of play through documentation and pedagogy frames the second of my subsidiary research questions:

> *How can play documentation and play design pedagogy further the culture building potential of play in the context of participatory performance?*

In approaching this question, my research has responded to critiques of conventional performance archives and conventional models of pedagogy. For performance theorists like Diana Taylor, the archive often consolidates the control of historical narratives by figures of power, which prevents ordinary people from expressing their agency in recording their own experience.[14] In the context of participatory performance, I have argued that conventional documentation forms such as photography and video are particularly problematic since they create archives that distil the experience of participants into art objects. These art objects are often then utilised to present the artist's version of the work, which implicitly undercuts the ability of participants to give their own account of it. In the same way that the archive can consolidate artistic agency, conventional models of education foreground the agency of the pedagogue as the 'master explicator' who imparts knowledge to students with the putative objective of reducing their ignorance. This arguably undermines the agency of learners in shaping their own educational experience. In response to these conservative perspectives on performance documentation and pedagogy, I have created pedagogically focused play projects in which participants could self-document their experience and subsequently apply these documentations in ongoing learning.

Rancière's theory of emancipated studentship has been influential in stimulating my pedagogical research, but in contrast to his emphasis on autonomous learning undertaken by students who are assumed to be equal, I have found greater value in the pedagogical theories of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development views learning as a fundamentally social process in which groups of individuals with differing

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[14] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 74.

capacities develop new knowledge by creatively imitating each other, performing what they cannot (yet) do in order to acquire new capacities.[15] In the Playground project, the prevalence of performative imitation in a group learning context was clearly apparent. In reflecting on the early workshop exercises, Josh and Zara both commented on the value of copying others who seemed to know what they were doing, as a way of overcoming their initial inhibitions. In addition to foregrounding the relational space of learning, Vygotsky's approach to imaginative time has presented a fertile contrast to Rancière's preference for temporal immediacy. Whereas Rancière favours the immediacy of curiosity which requires no prior unveiling from the master explicator,[16] Vygotsky makes it clear that learning in the present requires imaginative recollection of past experiences in order to construct future projections.[17] This notion of imaginative time that combines past, present and future has been significant in the Playground project as participants recalled various exercises and projected these memories into the future by applying them in new creative contexts, such as Zara's recycling of my *Totem Build* exercise with her own theatre company.

My design of the Playground projects has been informed by Jerome Bruner's 'scaffolding' concept, which can be seen as an extension of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.[18] In the Playground projects, my scaffolding involved setting out a range of play design methods that participants could test and reappropriate as they saw fit and I have argued that this pedagogical approach can also be understood as a form of 'curatorial' practice. In fine art discourses, the curatorial describes the endeavour to create contexts for the 'event of knowledge'[19] in which participants co-create the content of their experience, just as learners co-create new ideas and methods. This notion of curatorial scaffolding in pedagogy creates a context for the bricolage of knowledge in much the same

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[15] Lois Holzman, *Vygotsky At Work and Play* (Hove: Routledge, 2009), p. 30.
[16] Tyson E. Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education: Theatre, Curiosity and Politics in the work of Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 95.
[17] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity in Childhood', *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology,* 42:1 (2004), 7-97 (p. 16).
[18] Holzman, *Vygotsky*, p. 28.
[19] Irit Rogoff, 'The Expanding Field', in *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by John Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 41-48 (p. 46).

way that bricolage as a design process invites co-creation of play structures, and I contend that this concept is valuable in framing both the design of play and the teaching of play design.

With regard to documentation, this research has considered debates between performance studies scholars who view performance as ephemeral and unrecordable and those who argue for the necessity of archival documentation to preserve and pass on knowledge. Alternatives to these polarised positions are offered by the works of Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider who argue that performance can serve as a form of embodied recording in itself. Similarly, Richard Schechner's notion of performance as 'twice-behaved behaviour' suggests that performative activity in the now necessarily holds traces of the past.[20] These ideas have enabled me to forego photographic or video documentation of my practical work and invite participants in the Playground projects to self-document their experience through written notes, verbal reflection, embodied memory or reiterative performances. I have subsequently argued, drawing on the work of anthropologist Roger Sansi, that such documentations can function as gifts of the 'distributed person'[21] that extend knowledge into the future in a wider relational space, creating a social debt and issuing a call for 'response-ability'[22] from those who receive these gifts. The notion that documentary gifts can function as social debt has been evident in the Playground projects as participants represented their experience to each other and called for a response. For example, Josh's written documentation of the development of his group project issued a call for response-ability to his colleagues, prompting them to undertake their own research and then document their findings. Similarly, the various offshoots of *Playground* exercises into new creative contexts exemplified the concept of the distributed person, as embodied memories of play were gifted to others, inviting them to playfully

[20] Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 36.
[21] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (London: Clarendon Press), cited in Roger Sansi, *Art, Anthropology and the Gift* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 11-12.
[22] Roger I. Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2014), p. 19.

respond and thereby extending the agency of players into new spaces and times.

7.2.3 *Aesthetics of Reflexivity in Play*

The third of my subsidiary research questions is premised on the notion that play is, essentially, an endeavour to make some impact on the material fabric of the world.[23] This marks play as an aesthetic, yet concurrently political, process, whereby players reconfigure the material of their experience in pursuit of desired futures. In considering the capacity of players to reconfigure the world, I have explored how the aesthetic materials of space and time can be composed and recomposed in play. This exploration has investigated how an aesthetics of reflexivity might enhance players' agential capacities to consciously reorder the sensory forms within their horizon of perception, alongside the cultural constructions that are bound up in them, in response to my third subsidiary research question:

> *How can the aesthetic compositions of space and time in the play of participatory performance promote reflexive agency?*

My response to this question has been informed by Rancière's concept of the redistribution of the sensible which sets out a radical vision for how individuals can reconfigure the hierarchical organisation of the sensible forms of the world.[24] Rancière's theory rests on the assumption of equality between individuals and the preservation of their autonomy, but I have argued that presumed equality elides the history of the habitus and autonomy undercuts the relationality of social space. This contraction of space and expungement of past time presents an aesthetics of immediacy, and I contend that immediacy in space and time undermines the ability of individuals to reflexively think beyond the spatio-temporal present and thereby impedes their power of action. In response to the aesthetics of immediacy, I have explored spatio-temporal reflexivity in play, inviting participants to look beyond the immediate here and now to access a wider

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[23] Henricks, *Human Condition*, p. 24.
[24] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 139.

diversity of affects that can expand their agential capacities to effect cultural transformations. In developing my ideas on spatio-temporal reflexivity, the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza has been of primary importance. Spinoza argues that human beings are most strongly affected by that which is present in space and time.[25] He also asserts, however, that if beings are solely affected by what is immediately present, they are, effectively, caught in a passive enslavement to external forces.[26] By contrast, directing the mind to things that are beyond the spatio-temporal present enables beings to receive a broader diversity of affects.[27] Subsequently, as the body increases its capacity to be affected in a many ways, its *potentia* is similarly increased.[28] It follows from this that reflexive agency is promoted by an expansive spatial perspective and a depth perspective on time, both of which enable affective diversification and strengthened power of action.

In the Trumpington and Peartree Bridge projects I have sought to reify my ideas on facilitating reflexive agency in play by extending the spatio-temporal perspective of players. In the *Passage* role-play at Trumpington, the source material for play was 'mined' by asking three time-based questions about the immediate and more distant past: '*Where have you come from today?*' *'Where have you come from as an adult?'* and *'Where have you come from since childhood?'* Subsequently, the play itself reconfigured the material gathered in response to these questions in an imagining of desired futures of the characters that were created. In Cerys' reflections on playing this piece, it was evident that she appreciated being able to take time, in contrast to the typically quick tempo of everyday action, to think deeply about her own temporal trajectory and what she wished to do to '*make a good end to life*'. Consequently, I argue that the temporal framing of this play activity serves as an example of how temporal reflexivity in play can promote agency, producing affective diversification that increases the potential to take self-determined action. In Peartree Bridge, spatial diversification took a

[25] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometric Order*, ed. by G.H.R. Parkinson, trans. by Andrew Boyle and G.H.R. Parkinson (London: Everyman Classics, 1992), p. 196, part IV, app. XXX.
[26] Spinoza, p. 182, part IV, prop. LX, note.
[27] Spinoza, p. 183, part IV, prop. LXII, note.
[28] Spinoza, pp. 168-169, part IV, prop. XXXVIII.

somewhat unusual form in discussions of how animals can enable people to move beyond the immediate familiarity of the spatial present. During our walk around the neighbourhood, Susan suggested that, for her, having a dog not only opened new spaces that had previously been unexplored, it also helped her make connections with new people in the area. Similarly, the *Superpets* role-play invited participants to create animal characters as guides who could bring their humans into a wider relational space. Lysbeth's reflections on having the night vision of a cat, for example, are suggestive of the possibilities of imaginatively playing with a wider plurality of relational connections (both human and non-human) and the new affordances that these imagined connections might confer.

The diversification of relational play space to include a broader plurality of affective influences, beyond those that are immediately familiar, implies the value of pursuing the defamiliarization of space. In *Playground 2*, Luke reflected on his appreciation of using relatively abstract objects, suggesting that this offered scope to redeploy objects beyond their familiar function. This chimes closely with Martin Heidegger's delineation of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand objects, with the present-at-hand inviting reflexive thought about how to deploy the object, as opposed to immediate and automatic ready-to-hand use of it.[29] I suggest that a present-at-hand approach to space is valuable because it offers scope for transcending spatial familiarity and invites reflexive consideration of potential reappropriations of sensible forms. In addition to defamiliarization of space, the work of Playground 2 illustrated the potential of spatial distancing for promoting reflexivity. In discussing the view over London Bridge station from the Nursery Training Centre, Luke noted the value of looking over a wide distance to gain a broader sense of perspective. Similarly, Catryn highlighted that an expanded spatial horizon can alter perception of what is proximal, as was evident from the fact that her imaginative reconfiguration of the roof of London Bridge into the sea (within the fiction of the *Neighbourhood* larp)

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[29] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), cited in James Ash, *The Interface Envelope: Gaming, Technology, Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 60-61.

produced pleasurable affects that '*poetised*' the space, displacing her painful awareness of the coldness of the studio in which the larp was being played.

All the aesthetic strategies noted above, which have pursued depth perspective on time and diversified, distanced or defamiliarized spatial perception are in line with Spinoza's call for the rational intentionality of the mind to seek a broader array of affects beyond the spatio-temporal present. This does not require an outright rejection of immediacy, however. Rather, my argument has been for oscillation between immediacy and reflexivity in play. As Bourdieu's logic of practice suggests, habitual action is developed in the immediacy of action in the here and now. Whereas Bourdieu downplays the possibility for reflexivity to alter habit,[30] however, I have argued that the application of Spinozist rationality via the internalised use of language described by Vygotsky, offers potential for habit to oscillate with alteration as primary affects are reshaped by second-order observations. I have described this oscillation as anchorage-leverage, with the idea that the anchorage of habitual action can be altered through the leverage of spatio-temporal reflexivity that produces affective diversification and the emergence of a diversified habitus.

7.2.4 *Synergising Research Findings*

The ideas that I have developed regarding the aesthetics of space and time in play provide a thematic link between the several stages of this research enquiry, enabling me to draw together my findings in response to the primary research question. In the same way that the projects featured in Chapter 6 have focused on spatio-temporal reflexivity with a view to enhancing the *potentia* of players, the activities undertaken in response to the first and second questions (detailed in Chapters 4 and 5) have also employed aesthetic strategies that pursued redistributions of the sensible and potential habitus alteration. At Haringey Community Hub, my work with Mr Ganguly gave an early indication of the limitations of an aesthetics of

[30] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 86-91.

immediacy. When I invited him to look at a picture of a train travelling through snowy mountains whilst listening to the sound of a train clanking over the tracks, I recognised that I had unwittingly immersed him in the here and now of his memory of travelling home from boarding school when he was a young man. Although this appeared to be highly satisfying for him, it was clear that the spatio-temporal immediacy I had created was not conducive to reflexive thinking. By contrast, the *Islands* game invited players to find depth perspective on time by comparing the 'now' of living in England with the 'then' of their childhoods in other countries. In Ravi's reflections on playing the game, it seemed that the experience had prompted him to think quite deeply about whether he was happier in London or whether he would like to return to Mauritius and buy the big farm that his family had lacked when he was a child. This subsequently led me to reflect that, even at his advanced age, playing with depth perspective on the past could prompt Ravi to make imaginative projections of alternative futures. With regard to space, a key focus in my work in the Haringey Sheltered Housing schemes was to create play contexts that invited spatial expansion into unfamiliar territory through intersubjective exchanges with new relational connections. Brenda's play with Daniel provided an example of this spatial expansion as his story of seeing an aeroplane for the first time fed into her story of Mavis' flight from Epping Forest to Paris, which imaginatively transported her well beyond her own horizon of experience.

In the Playground projects, although the setting of the workshops was a relatively familiar artistic context, spatial expansion occurred through the composition of a group learning environment that contained a wide variety of expertise, enabling participants to creatively imitate others with different capacities and thereby diversify their own capitals. Beyond the social relationality of the group itself, the use of distanced perspectives, such as Meg's gaze out of the window to the foyer space outside the studio, which was similar to the gazes of Luke and Catryn over London Bridge, promoted reflexivity and 'letting go' of creative habits. Similarly, the use of abstract objects created a defamiliarization of space that enabled participants, in Zara's words, to '*see beyond the object*' and transform space beyond immediate familiarity. Regarding time, although the Playground workshops

tended to focus on the immediate practical action of play design tasks, the gifting of play documentation created depth perspective, as participants remembered their play and projected it into the future, either in their own practical work, or in the reiterative activity of facilitating the Playground 2 workshops. The significance of using aesthetic strategies of spatio-temporal reflexivity across this body of work is that they have all been applied with the aim of enabling participants to look beyond the familiarity of their immediate horizon of experience. By enacting this looking beyond, players have opened new possibilities for being affected in a great many ways, strengthening their power of action and creating potential for cultural transformation.

In sum, my response to the question of how the design, enactment and documentation of play in participatory performance can create the potential for the transformation of cultural values is based on the application of aesthetic strategies of spatio-temporal reflexivity in all stages of the process: design, play, documentation and play pedagogy. A curatorial scaffolding that encourages a wider and deeper spatio-temporal horizon enables designers, players and learners to apply their cultural particularity as a precursor to potential habitus alterations in the anchorage-leverage process that engages with existing subjectivities but also offers scope for transforming them. The habitus, forged in the immediacy of practical action, is the foundation for this process, but rational reflexivity allows players to oscillate between action and thought, habit and alteration. As a result, they can engage with a wider plurality of affects, strengthen their power of action and play their way towards a diversified habitus that enhances their agential capacity to redistribute the sensible forms of the world.

7.3 Research Limitations

The main limitation to my arguments in this study is that the practical work undertaken involved quite small numbers of participants, particularly in the Trumpington and Peartree Bridge projects. The difficulty of inviting people to play has led me to consider that, in planning certain parts of this research, I could have endeavoured to engage people on more familiar terrain through more familiar activities, prior to undertaking more ambitious

activity that might be conducive to culturally transformative possibilities. My consideration of alternative approaches has been informed by email correspondence with Laura, the chair of the Peartree Bridge Residents Association. In discussing a possible follow-up activity to the workshops that were undertaken in the summer of 2018, Laura suggested that a Halloween themed workshop about ghost stories in the local pub might be popular since '*the local pub where residents have a beer in hand is the most obvious comfort zone for most in PTB!'*[31] In considering this suggestion, it was tempting to look askance at the idea of a workshop about ghost stories, but I thought further about the idea of engaging participants within their 'comfort zone' and, if scheduling had permitted, I would have undertaken this proposed activity.

The tension between participant interests and those of the practitioner-researcher was also evident in the Playground project. It was clear that, in most cases, the participants had joined the activity with the desire to learn new skills, but this conflicted, at times, with my experimental 'search for method', which risked failure and participant frustration. Consequently, it was tempting to pragmatically give the participants the tools they wished to acquire rather than pursuing my more unstable and unpredictable research interests. Similarly, in Playground 2, some of the original participants who came back as facilitators commented that limitations on their time prompted them to pragmatically repeat activities that they had done in the first iteration rather than trying out something new in pursuit of their own interests. Subsequently, in speculating on a possible Playground 3, Josh suggested that it might be beneficial to run the project within an entirely new set of parameters in order to move beyond being '*a cover band for Jamie's greatest hits*'.[32] In considering the balance between meeting participants on familiar ground and pursuing an experimental research agenda, perhaps the most instructive example is the project at Haringey Community Hub. Given that this context was so unfamiliar to me, I had to let go of all artistic pretensions and simply

[31] 'Laura', 'Re: Walking Project in Peartree Bridge', email to Jamie Harper (3 October 2018).
[32] 'Josh', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Theatre Delicatessen, London (6 October 2018). See Appendix A: 'Playground2.4'.

attempt to establish relationships with participants. Despite the difficulties that were presented by working in this unfamiliar context, my work at Haringey Community Hub has informed the development of my anchorage-leverage concept by highlighting the value of seeking to engage participants in the anchorage of familiar places and activities, as a precursor to pursuing a leverage that invites them to play beyond their comfort zones.

7.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This section sets out the contributions of this research to scholarship and creative practice in participatory performance. The primary contribution to knowledge that this study makes is an exploration of spatio-temporal reflexivity in play, which serves to challenge the prevalence of immersive aesthetics in contemporary participatory performance. Although immersive immediacy is widely prized, immediacy of time and space in participatory performance works can undermine the agency of participants by limiting their perception to the here and now. My alternative propositions advocate a more expansive spatial perspective that looks beyond what is immediately proximal, alongside a depth perspective on time that combines imaginings of past and future to inform creative action in the present. My contention is that spatio-temporal reflexivity can enable players to transcend the anchorage of the habitus and diversify their capacities, enhancing their potential to affect others in a great many ways and thereby leverage transformations in the cultural values and practices of social groups.

My arguments for an aesthetics of reflexivity inform all of the contributions to knowledge that are presented by this study. Regarding narrative design, I propose that the methods I have used provide useful alternatives to linear models of narrative in interactive performance. My explorations of bricolage play suggest that, in contrast to the totalising determinations of singular authorship or top-down systems design, intersubjective story-making, in which participants reflexively adapt their stories in relation to the contributions of others, can offer potential for emergent narrative development that may be more conducive to cultural transformation. With regard to the enactment of participatory performance,

my focus on creating play in response to the cultural particularity of participants foregrounds the notion that participant experience can be seen as the locus of aesthetic value in participatory art. In contrast to the normative primacy of the art object, this study proposes that the reflexive meaning-making that participants engage in, both as individuals and as groups, should take priority over external valuations of the relative quality of the work. Given that participant experience is of central importance in my practice, I have invited participants to take the lead in documenting their activity. The use of such documents in ongoing learning processes also contributes to understandings of creative pedagogy, offering a self-reflexive and cyclical model of participatory arts culture in which players can expand the culturally transformative impact of play by applying their self-documentations in teaching others about play and through play.

7.4.1 *An Alternative to the Aesthetics of Immersion*

This research enquiry challenges the aesthetics of immersion in participatory performance and presents an alternative aesthetics of spatio-temporal reflexivity. Theatre studies scholars like Josephine Machon have praised the exciting instantaneity of 'the moment' in immersive theatre works[33] and valorised the spatial immediacy of immersive *communitas*, arguing that this kind of theatrical communitarianism offers radical political potential.[34] Digital media scholarship provides compelling counter-arguments, however, that spatio-temporal immediacy is not necessarily conducive to political agency since it is often used by digital interface designers to steer users into habitual patterns that serve economic profit.[35] Although the experiences of participating in immersive theatre and playing video games are not the same, I argue that it is useful to transpose insights gleaned from digital media to live performance contexts in order to question the assumptions held by proponents of aesthetic immediacy that ever-increasing immersion equates to enhanced experiences. My research has

[33] Jospehine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 130.
[34] Machon, p. 144.
[35] Ash, p. 78.

suggested that the aesthetics of immediacy in participatory performance can constrain participants in a limited spatio-temporal horizon that hinders reflexive criticality. By contrast, spatio-temporal reflexivity in play can create wider and deeper horizons of space and time, enabling players to be affected in a great many ways and strengthen their powers of action. Building on this research, I suggest that the challenge for practitioners and researchers in participatory performance is to question assumptions about the value of immersion and create works that experiment further with the aesthetics of spatio-temporal reflexivity in the endeavour to offer greater creative agency to participants.

7.4.2 *Non-Linear Play Design of Bricolage*

This research poses a challenge to the linearity of structure that permeates much participatory performance, offering the alternative concept of bricolage play design, in which players reflexively co-create the content of their play within a curatorial framework provided by the designer. In my Literature Review, I have suggested that theatre studies scholars have quite partial understandings of how participatory narrative structures can be designed to promote the agency of participants. Consequently, I have argued that performance practitioners who wish to include playful participation in their work might usefully pursue greater knowledge of how games are designed as systems that afford emergent narrative potential and player agency. Despite my advocacy of using system-thinking in participatory performance design, this research has recognised that systems can be as totalising as linear narratives. Ian Bogost's work has highlighted that many games function as closed systems with immutable rules that limit transformative potential and his theory of unit operations has prompted me to pursue looser play design processes, informed by the concept of bricolage, in which participants assemble their own play contexts within a curatorial framework. My development of bricolage play design has been strongly informed by the co-creative workshop practices of Nordic larp and, in making arguments against the deployment of pre-prepared content and linear narrative structures in participatory performance, my encouragement

to scholars and practitioners in this field is to seek out the practical knowledge that Nordic larp has pioneered and apply it, as I have attempted to do, to further their understandings of how participatory narrative design can support participant agency.

7.4.3 *Cultural Particularity and Aesthetic Experience*

This research contributes to knowledge in the field of participatory performance by proposing that the cultural particularity of participants can be the source and substance of the work and that their subjective play experience should be seen as the locus of aesthetic value. This proposition challenges the tendency of fine art critics like Claire Bishop to treat participants as material for artists to complete their participatory works.[36] Instead, this enquiry has suggested habitus mining as a process for gaining insight into the cultural particularity of participants, which can then serve as the foundation for the design of the performance work in question. It must be acknowledged that many applied theatre practices are based on long term engagement with the cultural particularity of their participants,[37] but I argue that, in theatrical contexts, the dominant tendency is to focus this participatory engagement on the final output of an art object that is presented as **P**erformance for an audience. Clearly, there are exceptions to this, but I propose that participatory performance makers can benefit from the insights of writers like Grant Kester whose discussion of dialogical aesthetics in participatory art focuses on the aesthetic value of participant experience.[38] In arguing for the primacy of aesthetic experience in participatory performance, I encourage practitioners and scholars to question the hierarchies of artistic judgement in which critics, academics and persons in positions of artistic leadership are assigned the role of defining artistic worth. My contrary proposition is that the subjective reflections of participants should determine the aesthetic value of a given

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[36] Bishop, *Artificial*, p. 237.
[37] Gareth White, *Applied Theatre: Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 76.
[38] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

work and it is the voices of participants that should come to the fore in describing its success or failure.

7.4.4 *Cyclical Processes of Play Documentation & Pedagogy*

In developing my approach to play documentation, I have referenced work on performance documentation by Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider whose ideas on performance as embodied memory have been extremely valuable to this study. I propose that my research adds to this work by explicitly linking play documentation to play pedagogy, with the argument that participatory self-documentation through reiterative performance is a key stimulus to ongoing learning about play and through play. I have suggested that self-documentation can function as a gift that creates social debt and calls for reciprocal response-ability, which implies an ongoing learning process, as gifts are received and passed on. The Playground projects have exemplified a self-reflexive and cyclical process of learning by inviting players to become designers, then teachers, and, finally, to become players again as a new group of makers comes to the fore. This is a model of participatory culture that seeks to collapse the divide between artists and audiences so that everyone can be an agent, if they so choose, in an evolving community of practice. This model of participatory culture is already practiced in Nordic larp communities, where there is little perceived distinction, I suggest, between individuals defined as players and those defined as designers. My proposition is to bring this approach into new performance settings with an explicitly pedagogical intent to create a broadened zone of proximal development in which everyone can be a player and also a maker.

7.5 Impact of Research on Personal Creative Practice

Having worked for over ten years as a theatre director, this research has led me to transition from viewing myself as an artist towards viewing myself as a curator of co-created play experiences. This transition has been a highly reflexive process that is both professional and personal. In addition

to letting go of many of my prior convictions about performance and the role of the theatre director, I have been prompted to look back into my family history and my parents' work in education. Having previously held the dismissive view that they were 'just teachers' my pedagogical research has created a newfound admiration for the creativity and passion of their pedagogical practice, which I have sought to emulate. Necessarily, a child emulates their parents to some extent, but my endeavour to carry forward some of the pedagogical insights of my parents has led me to think in terms of a genealogy of learning which has strongly influenced my ideas on the pedagogical cycle of play, as players pass on their experience to others through documentary gifts and reiterative performances. Reiterative performance can be found at the very start of this thesis in the quotation, included in my acknowledgements, from Ruth Ludemann about the balance between answers and questions in research.[39] My father found this quote on a door at the University of Ulster in Coleraine in the early 1990s when he worked there as an educational researcher. A few years later, when my older sister was completing her PhD, he passed this quote on to her and she made it the epigram for her thesis. She has subsequently passed this gift on to me and I now accept the response-ability of using it to frame my research as a combination of answers and questions for further research.

7.6 Questions & Answers

In concluding my response to the question of how play might create potential for the transformation of cultural values, my answers begin with an argument for developing curatorial frameworks for all stages of the play process, whether it is the design, enactment, documentation or teaching of it. Curatorial frameworks provide a structure for the co-creative design process of bricolage, whereby participants are able to make their cultural particularity the source and substance of play. This bricolage approach brings the habitus of participants into contact with new relational connections on alternative trajectories, offering scope for deterritorialization

[39] Ruth Ludemann, 'The Paradoxical Nature of Nursing Research', *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 11:1 (1979), 2-8.

of cultural particularities as the habitus is altered by intersubjective exchange. Beyond the process of co-creative design, in the play itself, I have argued for an aesthetics of spatio-temporal reflexivity so that players can look beyond their limited horizon, and the anchorage of their habitus, to leverage new possibilities from the imagination of deep time and the affective diversification of expanded space. Once play is concluded, the invitation for participants to document their experience foregrounds the importance of player agency, not only in play, but in the retrospective narrativization of play experience. This documentation can take any form that the players choose, but I have suggested that the embodied memory of play and its reiterative performance can fulfil an important role in the pedagogical promulgation of playful transformative potential.

As the documentary gifts of the distributed person are extended in space and time, the cyclical process of playing, remembering, making and playing again is perpetuated, offering further possibilities for players and their successors to play on, interrogating new questions and continuing to ludically redistribute the sensible forms of the world. Fundamentally, this redistribution is an aesthetic, yet concurrently political, process that rests on a spatio-temporal reflexivity that enables players to look beyond the familiar and incorporate the strange into their horizon of experience. By widening our perspective on space, we open the possibility of making new connections that diversify our capitals as a plurality of affects strengthen our power of acting, while a depth perspective on time enables us to reconfigure past and present in imaginative projections of desired futures. The future-oriented focus of play illustrates that play activities do not simply offer reflections of cultures, they also fulfil a vital role in their ongoing social construction, and the ongoing task for players, designers and scholars alike is to continue questioning how playful performance can widen our horizons and strengthen our power to create a culture of joy for all who play, and all the players who are yet to come.

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Harper, Jamie, *Migrations of Cool* (London, Arebyte Gallery, 2017)

Harper, Jamie, *Pathways* (London, Haringey Community Hub, 2017)

Harper, Jamie, *Passage* (Cambridge, Trumpington Community Orchard, 2017)

Harper, Jamie, *Random Objects* (London, Haringey Community Hub, 2017)

Harper, Jamie, *Gestalt World Building* (London, Theatre Delicatessen, 2018)

Harper, Jamie, *Image Collision* (London, Clements House Sheltered Housing Scheme, 2018)

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Appendix A: Audio Recordings of Participant Interviews

Please see the enclosed DVDs for access to the audio files listed below.

Note: these DVDs will not be made publicly accessible alongside the published version of this thesis, in order to maintain participant confidentiality.

A.1: Audio Files for projects in Chapter 1

A.1.1 *Haringey Community Hub*

HaringeyCommunityHub1	3 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub2	3 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub3	3 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub4	3 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub5	10 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub6	10 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub7	10 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub8	10 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub9	17 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub10	17 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub11	24 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub12	24 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub13	24 July 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub14	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub15	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub16	7 August 2017

HaringeyCommunityHub17	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub18	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub19	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub20	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub21	7 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub22	14 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub23	14 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub24	21 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub25	21 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub26	21 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub27	21 August 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub28	4 September 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub29	4 September 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub30	27 November 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub31	4 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub32	4 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub33	4 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub34	4 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub35	4 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub36	11 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub37	11 December 2017
HaringeyCommunityHub38	12 March 2018
HaringeyCommunityHub39	12 March 2018
HaringeyCommunityHub40	12 March 2018
HaringeyCommunityHub41	12 March 2018

HaringeyCommunityHub42	19 March 2018
HaringeyCommunityHub43	26 March 2018
HaringeyCommunityHub44	23 April 2018

A.1.2 *Haringey Sheltered Housing Schemes*

HaringeyCranleyDene1	22 November 2017
HaringeyClementsHouse1	11 December 2017
HaringeyClementsHouse2	15 January 2018
HaringeyCranleyDene2	17 January 2018
HaringeyClementsHouse3	22 January 2018
HaringeyClementsHouse4	29 January 2018
HaringeyClementsHouse5	12 February 2018
HaringeyClementsHouse6	26 February 2018

A.2: Audio Files for projects in Chapter 2

A.2.1 *Playground*

Playground1	13 March 2018
Playground2	13 March 2018
Playground3	27 March 2018
Playground4	27 March 2018
Playground5	27 March 2018
Playground6	3 April 2018
Playground7	3 April 2018
Playground8	17 April 2018

Playground9	24 April 2018
Playground10	8 May 2018
Playground11	15 May 2018
Playground12	22 May 2018
Playground13	19 June 2018
Playground14	23 June 2018
Playground 15	27 June 2018
Playground 16	28 June 2018
Playground17	12 July 2018
Playground18	23 July 2018

A.3: Audio Files for projects in Chapter 3

A.3.1 *Migrations of Cool*

MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment1	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment2	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment3	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment4	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment5	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment6	8 July 2017
MigrationsOfCoolDevelopment7	8 July 2017

A.3.2 *Trumpington Community Orchard*

TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard1	23 September 2017
TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard2	23 September 2017

A.3.3 *Peartree Bridge*

PeartreeBridge1	13 June 2018
PeartreeBridge2	13 June 2018
PeartreeBridge3	20 June 2018
PeartreeBridge4	4 July 2018
PeartreeBridge5	18 July 2018
PeartreeBridge6	23 July 2018
PeartreeBridge7	23 July 2018
PeartreeBridge8	30 August 2018

A.3.4 *Playground 2*

Playground2.1	26 October 2018
Playground2.2	24 October 2018
Playground2.3	24 October 2018
Playground2.4	6 October 2018
Playground2.5	23 September 2018
Playground2.6	30 September 2018

Appendix B: Game Rule Sets & Play Scripts

B.1 *Deterritorialization*

The *Deterritorialization* exercise was played at Haringey Community Hub in London in November 2017.

This exercise was played in pairs. To begin, I laid out four images relating to stories that each player had told me. I then asked the other player to pick the image that they were most interested in.

Once the image was selected, I asked the player to whom the image related (the original storyteller) to describe the place and their relationship to the place.

The new player was then invited to imagine a fictional character in the location. As a stimulus, they were invited to pick two characteristics (one positive, one negative) which were written on small slips of paper.

Using these characteristics, the new player was asked to give the character a name and describe them.

At this point, the original character was asked to imagine and describe two more people in the location who have some important relationship with the fictional character.

The new player was then invited to discuss the hopes and fears of the fictional character.

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The new player decides which of the two new people they would like the fictional character to go and speak to (for whatever reason).

The new player then describes this meeting and the original player says what the outcome of the meeting will be.

The new player describes what happens when the fictional character goes to speak to the other person with whom they have an important relationship and the original player, again, describes the outcome of this meeting.

The new player gives a final description of the hopes and fears of the fictional character.

Debrief: Players were invited to reflect on their experience of the play exercise. What was it like to work with someone else's story? What was it like to have someone else work with your story?

B.2 *Gestalt World Building*

The *Gestalt World Building* exercise was played at Theatre Delicatessen in London in April 2018.

To begin, players were separated into groups of 4. I placed a randomly selected stimulus image in the centre of a space for each group. Players were invited to pick a random object that somehow responded to the image.

Players were given a number: 1, 2, 3 or 4.

1. Player 1 was invited to place their object in the space and describe it as a feature of an imaginary landscape.

2. Players 2, 3 and 4 were invited to add their object (one at a time) and give an additional description of the landscape.

3. Having built a landscape with the arrangement of the objects, players were invited to move the objects further apart to expand the range of the space.

4. Player 1 was invited to make a movement into the space and find a place to stop within it that they liked, or where they felt safe or strong.

5. Player 1 was then invited to give a description of a character (Character A) that they imagined in this space – giving them a name.

6. Player 2 was invited to make a movement into the space and find a place to stop within it that they liked, or where they felt safe or strong.

7. Player 2 was then invited to give a description of a character (Character B) that they imagined in this space – giving them a name.

8. The next person (Player 3) was invited to go and replace the person playing Character A, then make a journey through space and find their way towards a frozen image in which they make a gesture towards the other character that expressed a relationship.

9. The other player was invited to give a description of the relationship.

10. The next person (Player 4) was invited to go and replace the person playing Character B, then make a journey through space and find their way towards a frozen image in which they make a gesture towards the other character that expressed a relationship.

11. The other player was invited to give a further description of the relationship

12. The next person was invited to go and replace the person playing Character A. They then made another journey in space, finding their way towards a frozen image in which they made physical contact with the other in a way that expressed the needs or weaknesses of Character A.

13. The other player was invited to describe the needs and weaknesses of Character A.

14. The next person was invited to go and replace the person playing Character B, then make another journey in space, finding their way towards a frozen image in which they made physical contact with the other in a way that expressed the needs or weaknesses of Character B.

15. The other player was invited to describe the needs and weaknesses of Character B.

16. At this point, I told players that we would shortly begin a role-play that would include verbal communication, with the invitation that players could replace each other at any point in time by tapping the existing player on the shoulder.

17. The next person was invited to go and replace the person playing Character A, then begin moving through the space in a way that expressed their character's behaviour.

18. The other player was invited to describe the behaviour of Character A.

19. The next person was invited to go and replace the person playing Character B, then begin moving through space in a way that expressed their characters' behaviour.

20. The other player (whilst still moving) was invited to describe the behaviour of Character B.

21. Play Begins. The players tap in and out whenever they feel the impulse to do so.

22. Play Ends.

Debrief: Players were invited to reflect on what it was like to take part in the *Gestalt World Building* and start to role-play within the fictional play space.

B.3 *Image Collision*

The *Image Collision* exercise was played at Clements House Sheltered Housing scheme in Tottenham in February 2018.

Participants played this exercise individually, but within a group workshop context. To begin, they were asked to look at a range of images relating to stories that members of the group had told and select the one that they responded to most strongly.

Once they had selected the image, they were invited to listen to a soundscape relating to the image.

They were invited to tell the story that the picture and sounds suggested to them whilst looking at the image and listening to the soundscape.

Having gone through the looking and listening process, participants were invited to describe a character in the landscape.

Next, participants were asked to pick another image from the selection of pictures and imagine it to be a new location that their character would travel to.

Having selected this image, participants were invited to look at it whilst listening to the accompanying soundscape and describe what they imagined would happen when their character travelled to the new location.

Debrief: Players were invited to reflect on what it was like to invent a story that combined two disconnected locations.

B.4 *Islands*

Islands was played at Haringey Community Hub in London in March 2018.

Part One – The Village

Islands is a board game about 3 children growing up in a village on a small island. One child is quite poor, one is quite rich, the other is somewhere in the middle.

Sometimes the children need to work on the farm to help their family make money, but they also want to go to school so that they can get a good job in future. Aside from work and school, they like to play at the seaside to make friends and be happy.

The game starts when the children are 11 years old. Each round of the game represents 1 year of their life. Each round costs 1 coin. In each round, the children can either work to make money, go to school or go to play at the seaside.

Each child has a certain amount of money, education tokens and happiness points:

Kid A has 2 coins, 1 education token and 3 happiness points.

Kid B has 4 coins, 2 education tokens and 2 happiness points.

Kid C has 6 coins, 3 education tokens and 1 happiness point.

You can increase your education tokens by going to school. Each time you go to school, you get 1, 2 or 3 education tokens, depending on a dice roll. If you get to 6 education tokens, you qualify to work at the factory in town. If you get to 9 education tokens, you qualify to work at the port. Both of these jobs pay more money than farm work.

The family of Kid C has a big farm. If Kid C chooses to work, they will earn either 2, 3 or 4 coins, depending on a dice roll.

The family of Kid B has a small farm. If Kid B chooses to work, they will earn either 1, 2 or 3 coins, depending on a dice roll.

The family of Kid C does not have a farm. If Kid C chooses to work, they can work at Farm B or Farm C. They earn the normal amount of money when they work, but Kid B or Kid C will also receive the same amount. In other words, when Kid A works at Farm B or C, they also work for Kid B or Kid C.

Playing at the seaside is important for making friends and being happy. Whoever has the most happiness points can ask for a favour from another player at certain times. The favour can be about getting help with education or asking for money.

If a child asks for help with education, they get to take 1, 2 or 3 education tokens from their friend; if a child asks for help with money, they get to take 1, 2 or 3 coins from their friend, both of which depend on a dice roll.

The Kid who is asked for help can refuse, but if they do so, they lose 1, 2 or 3 happiness points, depending on a dice roll.

Every time the children go to play, their happiness (and popularity) increases by 1, 2 or 3 points, depending on a dice roll.

Play Structure

Assign roles to the players and ask them to create a character name, starting with the letter A, B or C, depending on which of the Kids they are playing. Ask the players to imagine what the kids are like, what they like and what they dislike.

Players draw their picture and then give a short introduction to their character avatar.

The first phase of play proceeds over 6 rounds, punctuated by short interludes for the most popular player to call in favours.

Age 11 Work / School / Play

Age 12 Work / School / Play

Age 13 Work / School / Play

Favour — The child with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boost their levels of education and money.

Age 14 — Work / School / Play

Age 15 — Work / School / Play

Age 16 — Work / School / Play

Favour — The child with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boost their levels of education and money.

Part Two – The Town

Now that the children have become young adults, some of them can move into town to work at a new job. Living in the town is more expensive. It costs 2 coins per round, but the jobs are more highly paid.

If you have 6+ education tokens, you can work in the factory and earn 3, 4 or 5 coins, depending on a dice roll.

The factory belongs to the family of Kid C, so they get the same amount that you earn for working there.

If you have 9+ education tokens, you can work in the port, where you earn 4, 5 or 6 coins, depending on a dice roll.

You can also choose to stay in the village and work on the farm as before. It is also possible to buy your own farm. A small farm (which can earn between 1 and 3 coins each round) costs 8 coins. A big farm (which can earn between 2, 3 and 4 coins) costs 12.

Aside from work, you can continue your education at the college in town. If you get to 12 education tokens you qualify for a visa to move to the city on the big island. The trip to the big island costs 5 coins. Life on the big island is expensive, costing 3 coins per round, but the jobs there are very highly paid.

Playing is also still important. You can go to the dance hall to make friends or maybe even meet someone special!

If you go dancing and roll a 6, it means that you have met that special someone. If this happens, you can choose to start a family, if you wish. This adds to your living costs by 1 coin per round but gives you a one-off happiness boost of between 4 and 6 points.

Play Structure

Aged 20	Work / College / Dance Hall
Aged 22	Work / College / Dance Hall
Aged 24	Work / College / Dance Hall
Favour	The player with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boost their levels of education and money.
Aged 26	Work / College / Dance Hall
Aged 28	Work / College / Dance Hall
Aged 30	Work / College / Dance Hall
Favour	The player with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boos their levels of education and money.

Part Three – The Big Island

Now that the children are fully grown up, some of them can move to the big island. Living on the big island costs 3 coins per round, but the jobs are highly paid.

Working at the warehouse earns 5, 6 or 7 coins per round. If you get to 15 education tokens you can work at the Power Plant, which earns 6, 7 or 8 coins per round. If you get all the way to 18 education tokens you can work at the Laboratory, which earns 8, 9 or 10 coins per round!

You can also choose to stay in the village or the town and continue life as before.

Aside from work, you can continue your education at the college in town or at the University if you live on the big island.

Playing is also still important for living a happy life. You can go to the social club on the big island or continue going to the dance hall in the town.

Play Structure

Aged 30	Work / Education / Social Life
Aged 32	Work / Education / Social Life
Aged 34	Work / Education / Social Life
Favour	The player with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boost their levels of education and money.
Aged 36	Work / Education / Social Life
Aged 38	Work / Education / Social Life
Aged 40	Work / Education / Social Life
Favour	The player with the most happiness points can call in a favour to help them boos their levels of education and money.

Debrief

Players are invited to summarise of how the life of their character has progressed. They are also invited to reflect on how the content of the game might relate to their own life experiences.

B.5 *Journey Dialogue*

The *Journey Dialogue* exercise was played at Haringey Community Hub in London in June 2017.

Participants played this exercise in pairs. To begin, each player was asked to choose a picture that they found interesting from a selection of images based on stories they had told me previously.

Players are asked to look at their chosen image and try to imagine someone in the picture who is about to go on a journey of some kind.

Who are they? Each player describes the character they are imagining.

Next, players are asked to think further about their character: what is their job or role? What do they do on an ordinary day?

What kind of personality do they have? Each player describes the character they are imagining.

*

At this point, the participants switch pictures and start to work with the image and character that the other player has described.

Players are asked to imagine where the character is leaving from. Are they in a city, town or village? Who are they leaving behind? Are they happy or sad to go?

Each player describes what they are imagining.

Players are asked to imagine where the character is going to. Is it far away or close? Have they been to this place before?

Each player describes what they are imagining.

*

At this point, the participants switch pictures again and the images are returned to the person who originally chose it.

Players are asked to think about why the character is going on this journey. Is it for work, for family, or just for fun? Are they excited or fearful to be going on this journey?

Each player describes what they are imagining.

*

Debrief: Players are invited to reflect on what it was like to play the *Journey Dialogue* exercise.

B.6 *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*

Journey to the Centre of the Earth was played at Haringey Community Hub in September 2017.

This piece was a storytelling board game, which challenged players to make a journey to the centre of the earth (Haringey Community Hub) by moving their avatar around the game board (according to a dice roll) to collect objects (represented by mini-images) that related to locations (represented by larger images) that they had told me about.

The game board was an arrangement of large images showing locations. The board comprised an outer ring of pictures relating to stories from the more distant past, an inner ring of pictures relating to stories from the more recent past and, lastly, an image of Haringey Community Hub in the centre.

A mini-image of an object was placed on each of the large images. The task of the players was to work out which of the large location images related to their stories and which object images related to those locations, then move their avatar around the board to collect the relevant objects. Once they had collected a relevant object, they could tell one of their stories to the group of players. When they had told two of their stories on the outer ring, they could move into the inner ring and tell their final story.

At this point, the last task was to proceed to the centre of the earth. The player who arrived there first was to be awarded the prize or a cup of tea, made by myself.

As well as collecting their own object-images, players were told that they could collect other people's objects and exchange them, if they wished to do so. They could also withhold other people's objects, though, to make things harder for other players.

Debrief: At the end of the game, players were asked what it was like to tell their stories to the group and hear the stories of other players.

B.7 *Migrations of Cool*

Migrations of Cool was played at the Arebyte Gallery and the surrounding areas of Hackney Wick, East London in July 2017

Introduction

Migrations of Cool is a street game about the migrations of artists around London and the waves of property development that seem to follow in their wake.

In this game, you will play two different roles: You will play artists, AND property developers, at various times.

The game will be played in Hackney Wick on the area shown on this map. The map is broken into 16 zones. Each zone represents a unit of territory in the game.

The aim of the artists is to find space to make their work and max out their artistic cred, without losing their financial sustainability by paying exorbitant rents.

The aim of the property developers is to max out on financial capital, building new apartments in cool areas that will be attractive to buyers.

The aim of the resident groups is to generate community projects that will help their area, working with artists and property developers to see what benefits they can offer.

General Guidelines for Play

Artists

There will be 4 groups, groups A, B, C, and D, representing 4 artist collectives.

Each artist collective needs to find a zone in which to make their work. At the start of the game, 12 semi-derelict industrial zones are available for rent. There are 4 residential zones which are unavailable to rent.

Each of the available zones has a rental cost of between 1 and 4 Cred per round. Each artist collective has a starting Cred of between 1 and 6 Cred.

Cred is the universal system of value in the game, encompassing artistic Cred, economic Cred, political Cred etc. All these values are rolled into one number which represents the group SCORE.

There will be 6 rounds in the game, but I will say more on the time structure, a little later.

You can find the rental cost of a zone, by locating a white balloon at the spot marked on the map, and reading the Cred cost, between 1 and 4, that is written on it.

If you wish to rent the zone, you need to call the Local Authority (me) to complete the transaction. Before the game begins, I will take a phone number for each group so that I can stay in contact with you. Once you have rented a zone for the round, you can make art.

Making an artistic work is done by making some type of sculptural piece, photographing it and sending the picture via Twitter to @hobotheatre using the hashtag #migrationsofcool. If you would prefer not to publicly tweet, you can email me at jamie@hobotheatre.co.uk

This work will then be critically evaluated and given a Cred score, which will hopefully be higher than the rental cost you have paid. At the end of the round, I will tweet the overall CRED scores for each artist collective on @hobotheatre

It is worth noting that if you have an artistic collective in the zone next to you, it will increase the artistic Cred that you are likely to accrue.

Equally, if property developments pop up in the zones next to you, the rental cost of your zone is likely to increase considerably.

<u>Property Developers</u>

There will be two property developer companies, formed by groups A & C working together, and groups B & D working together.

Each company needs to find zones in which to create property developments. For the property developers, the game starts in round 2, when there will be 8 semi-derelict industrial zones available for purchase.

There will also be 4 residential zones and 4 artistic zones which are not available for purchase at this stage of the game.

Each of the available zones has a purchase cost of between 18 and 36 Cred. Each developer starts off with between 18 and 36 Cred.

You can find the purchase cost of a zone, by locating a white balloon at the spot marked on the map, and reading the Cred cost, between 18 and 36, that is written on it in small numbers.

If you wish to purchase the zone, call the Local Authority (me) to complete the transaction. Once you have purchased a zone, you can make a property development.

The public announcement of a property development is done by making a short film, that somehow expresses your redevelopment proposal. This film should be sent via Twitter to @hobotheatre with the hashtag #migrationsofcool. If you would prefer not to publicly tweet, you can email me at jamie@hobotheatre.co.uk

The proposal will be critically evaluated and given a Cred score, which will probably be between 1 and 10. At the end of the round, I will tweet the overall CRED scores for each property company on @hobotheatre

It is worth noting that if you have an artistic collective in the zone next to your development, your Cred is likely to be higher, as buyers flock to snap up units in a cool area.

Equally, if your developments are built next to the residential zones, you Cred is likely to be lower as buyers are less keen to live next to problematic estates.

Zones that have been occupied by artists are not available for purchase in the first three rounds of the game, but they can be purchased in rounds 4, 5 and 6.

If an artist zone is purchased, the artist collective will be displaced and must find another zone to rent.

Residents

There will be four communities of residents. Each resident community has a pre-assigned zone which is their home.

The game starts for residents in rounds 3 and 4. During these rounds, residents – who will be represented by me, can seek to work with developers or artists to hatch community projects that are beneficial to residents.

If a resident group requests a partnership with an artist collective or property developer, the artist or property developer can either choose to engage with the residents or ignore them.

Community engagement projects are enacted by going to the residential zone and conducting some productive artistic or recreational activity, photographing this action and sending the photo to @hobotheatre with the hashtag #migrationsofcool.

If artists engage with resident groups, they will benefit from a substantial reduction in their rent, but they will receive lower artistic cred because community art projects aren't seen as being particularly cool.

If property developers engage with resident groups, their next purchase will be half price.

If resident groups are ignored, they become alienated. An alienated resident community substantially reduces the profitability of a property development located in the next zone.

Alienated residents do not have any negative impact on artists located in the next zone.

Residential zones are not available for purchase in rounds 1, 2 and 3, but they can be purchased in rounds 4, 5 and 6.

The purchase price of a residential zone starts at between 24 and 42 Cred. Although - if a residential zone becomes alienated, its purchase price falls by half as the Local Authority is increasingly keen to regenerate a bad area.

Game Structure

The game is played over 6 rounds. Each round will last for either 15 or 30 minutes, which means that you have a limited amount of time to make your choices and do what you need to do. The game will finish at 5.30pm. At that time, everyone should return here to hear the final scores and have a short debrief (which is optional) on what the experience was like.

Round 1: 3.30-4.00pm

Group A: Artists

Group B: Artists

Group C: Artists

Group D: Artists

Round 2: 4.00-4.15pm

Groups A & C: Property Development Company 1

Groups B & D: Property Development Company 2

Round 3: 4.15-4.30pm

Group A: Artists

Group B: Artists

Group C: Property Development Company 1

Group D: Property Development Company 2

Round 4: 4.30-4.45pm

Group A: Property Development Company 1

Group B: Property Development Company 2

Group C: Artists

Group D: Artists

Round 5: 4.45-5.15pm

Group A: Artists

Group B: Artists

Group C: Artists

Group D: Artists

Round 6: 5.15-5.30pm

Groups A & C: Property Development Company 1

Groups B & D: Property Development Company 2

Debrief: A short reflection on what the game was like (snacks provided!)

B.8 *Neighbourhood*

Neighbourhood was first played at Theatre Delicatessen in London in March 2018. Another version was facilitated by a Playground participant at the National Student Drama Festival in Leicester in April 2018.

Facilitator Preparation

The larp can be played by between 6 and 16 participants.

To play this larp, you will need an open classroom sized space with some tables and chairs and a large pile of random junk (enough to fill a big suitcase).

You will need to compile a list of job occupations, including unemployed, retired and student (written on slips of paper).

You'll also need to compile a list of positive and negative characteristics (written on slips of paper).

Set out the play materials around the periphery of the room.

Gather a stack of post-it notes, some paper for writing and some pens.

Introduction

The basic introduction is that the group will build a neighbourhood, invent characters who live there and play out a year in the life of the community.

Explain that players can opt out at any time with no questions asked. An opt-out can be temporary (to go to the bathroom or have a quick break) or if they want to leave entirely that's also fine.

Let participants know that if anything happens in the play activity that they aren't comfortable with, they can just walk away and come to talk to you.

Neighbourhood Workshop

1 There is a pile of notes with various jobs or occupations on them. Ask players to pick one of these pieces of paper. This determines the occupation of the character they will play.

2 Players are invited to build an abstract 'home' for their character based on their occupation, using the random junk in the room.

3 When this is done, tell the players that half of them live in the south side of the neighbourhood and the other half live in the north side. IE half of the players are designated as southerners and half are northerners.

4 Invite players to imagine features of the landscape that might exist around their neighbourhood. They each propose 2 features by writing them on post-it notes and sticking them on the wall.

5 Players then vote for 3 features of the landscape that they like, which have been proposed by other players. Votes are indicated by putting a 'tick' on the relevant post-it note.

6 The facilitator chooses the 4 most popular features of the landscape and announces the place in the room where each feature is located, IE – for each of the four walls, we imagine a 'feature of the landscape' that lies beyond the edge of the neighbourhood.

7 There are 2 piles of notes with positive and negative characteristics. The players pick one good characteristic and one bad one.

8 The players are invited to write for 2 minutes about who they imagine their character to be. The facilitator encourages players to approach this as 'free writing', jotting down anything that comes into their heads.

9 Players give a short presentation of their character, giving their name and other key biographical details like their job, age, family status.

(The Facilitator should note down the names of characters so that they can refer to a player with their character name during play).

10 Players propose ideas of major local issues. They are invited to write proposals on two post-it notes for the best thing about the area (2 ideas) and the worst thing (2 ideas).

11 Players are then invited to vote on proposals made by other players, with 3 votes each for the best thing and 3 votes for the worst thing. The facilitator then determines what the most popular options are, articulating the best thing about the area and the worst thing about the area.

(The facilitator keeps a note of what the best and worst thing are – it will become relevant for development of the role-play).

12 Players are invited to think about a hobby that their character might like to do, then find an abstract way to physically enact this hobby. Whilst enacting their hobby they are invited to imagine the hopes and fears of their character.

13 Players are invited to build relations between residents of the neighbourhood. The player who starts gestures to another player who then describes the nature of the relationship between the two characters. Everything that is articulated becomes true within the world of the story. Once the player has finished their description, they pass the baton to another player who describes another relational connection. This continues until all players have described a connection between their character and another character.

14 The facilitator gathers the group together to tell them that they will have a short break before running the role-play. Before breaking, explain the structure of play.

Play will take place over one year in the life of the neighbourhood, marked by four phases of play over the four seasons.

Tell the players that during play you will clap your hands to signal to them that they should go back to their home and listen for details of the next phase of play.

15 Break: 10 minutes.

Neighbourhood Play

1 Spring: Play will start in springtime, with characters on the south side of the neighbourhood paying a visit to one of their neighbours on the north side. Any character who doesn't receive a visit can spend time doing their hobby. (5 minutes)

At the end of this first passage – clap your hands and ask players to return home. As they go home, tell them that time is passing from spring to summer.

2 Interlude: During this interlude, the facilitator randomly selects 3 players on the south side who receive BAD news of some kind. 3 players from the north side are also randomly selected to receive GOOD news. The facilitator then invites the players concerned to describe their imagining of what this good or bad news entails.

3 Summer: At the end of the interlude, the facilitator asks one character to volunteer to be the host of a summer party by raising their hand. The first player to do so becomes the host for the next phase of play. When play resumes, players can choose to attend the summer party or stay home and do their hobby. (10 minutes)

4 At the end of this period clap your hands again and invite the players to return home. Tell them that time is passing again from summer into autumn.

5 Interlude: Following the summer party there is another interlude, during which the facilitator announces GOOD news for the neighbourhood. This news is drawn from the worst thing about the area. Essentially, the good news is that the worst thing about the area gets rectified, somehow. This is for YOU to invent!

6 Autumn: At the end of the interlude, characters on the north side of the neighbourhood are invited to pay a visit to one of their neighbours on the south side. Any character who doesn't receive a visit can spend time doing their hobby. (5 minutes)

7 Interlude: Following the period of play in the autumn, there is an interlude during which the facilitator randomly selects 3 players on the north side who receive BAD news of some kind and 3 players on the south side who receive GOOD news of some kind. The facilitator then invites the players concerned to describe their imagining of what this good or bad news entails.

The facilitator then announces some bad news for the neighbourhood. This is based on the best thing about the area. Essentially, the bad news is that the best thing about the area turns into a problem, somehow. Again, this if for you to INVENT!

8 Winter: At the end of the interlude, the facilitator asks two characters to volunteer to host festive parties by raising their hands. The first two players to do so become the hosts for the next phase of play. When play resumes, players can choose to attend either party or stay home and do their hobby. (10 minutes)

9 At the end of this period clap your hands again and invite the players to return home. Tell them that time is passing again into a new year.

10 Epilogue: Following the festive parties, all players are invited to articulate their hopes and fears for the future.

Debrief

The play finishes and all players are invited to offer a short reflection on their experience. They can also choose to say nothing if they wish.

B.9 *Object Montage*

The *Object Montage* exercise was played at Clements House in Tottenham in February 2018.

Participants played this exercise individually. To begin, a selection of random objects was spread out across a large table.

Players were asked to start by selecting an object that made them think about their past. Once they had made a selection, they were invited to describe the place and time they were imagining.

Players were then asked to select an object that represents the future and describe what they were imagining.

Players were asked to pick an object that made them think of a place that was important to them and describe what they were imagining.

Players were then asked to pick an object that could represent a young person in this place and give a description of the young person's hopes and fears.

Players were asked to pick another object representing a new place that the young person could go to where they might find some kind of opportunity and give a description of the new place.

Players were then asked to pick a final object that would represent some kind of challenge that the character would face in this new place and describe how the character coped with the challenge.

Debrief: Players were invited to talk about what it was like to play the *Object Montage* and reflect on the journey that they had created for their character.

B.10 *Overcoding*

The *Overcoding* exercise was played at Peartree Bridge in Milton Keynes in July 2018.

The *Overcoding* exercise was designed for 4 players. To begin, players were asked to think of the most important locations in the neighbourhood and write down 3 options on post-it notes.

Next, players were asked to select one idea that had been contributed by another participant.

Having selected a location, players were asked to build it by laying a blanket on the ground and constructing an abstract representation of the place using a selection of random objects. Each player was then invited to give a description of their location.

Players were invited to move into a location that another participant had built and imagine a fictional character in this place by drawing a sketch of them in that landscape.

Players then passed their sketch on and received someone else's sketch. At this point, they were asked to write for one minute about the character in the sketch.

The sketches were passed on again and the next player wrote for another minute about the hopes of the character in the sketch.

Sketches were passed on one more time and the last of the four players wrote for another minute about the fears of the character.

At this point, the sketches were returned to the original drawer and they were invited to read the descriptions of the character that had been offered by the other players.

Next, they were asked to choose an object to represent the character, place it in the location and give a description of the character.

Players were invited to go and pick up one of the other character objects and imagine that the character they were holding had a positive attitude towards

one of the other characters and a negative attitude towards a second character. Players were then asked to articulate these positive and negative attitudes.

Players were then given a letter: A, B, C or D.

Player A was invited to pick one of the 4 characters and take them on a visit to another one of the characters in the location that they occupied. Player B took on the role of this other character and A/B played out a short role-play in that location.

At the end of the short role-play, Player B summarised the action and Player A described how their character had been affected by the exchange.

At this point, Player C selected a character and took them on a visit to another one of the characters in the location that they occupied. Player D took on the role of this other character and C/D played out a short role-play in that location.

At the end of the short role-play, Player D summarised the action and Player C described how their character had been affected by the exchange.

This process was repeated with players B and C, then players D and A, then players A and C, then players B and D.

At the end of this sequence of role-plays, each player was invited to pick one character and deliver a monologue about the sights and sounds of the landscape they occupied and describe whether the place had changed for the better or the worse.

Debrief: Players were invited to reflect on how the content of the role-play related to their perceptions of the area and describe what it was like to take part in a role-play in which they played multiple characters.

B.11 *Palimpsest Drawing*

The *Palimpsest Drawing* exercise was played at Theatre Delicatessen in London in March 2018 and also at Peartree Bridge in Milton Keynes in June 2018.

To begin, participants were invited to make a small sculpture using three objects from their bag. Each participant was invited to comment on one other sculpture that caught their eye.

Each participant was invited to pick one of the objects from their personal sculpture. They were then invited to form groups of 2 or 3 with other people whose objects seemed to connect somehow with their object.

We then created some role-plays from drawing, using the following process:

1. Players were invited to spend a few minutes drawing a place that really mattered to them. They described these pictures, then passed them on to the player on their left whilst also receiving a new picture from the player on their right.

2. Players were invited to draw two characters into the picture they had received. They named these characters and gave a description of them, then passed the picture on to the person on their left.

3. Working with their new picture, players were invited to imagine another character who really matters to one of the two original characters in the picture. They described this new character and their relation to one of the original characters.

4. The pictures were passed back to the original drawer. They were then invited to pick which character they would like to play in a role-play (either the new character or the original character with whom the new character has a relationship). The original drawer would also ask another player to take on the other character.

5. The two players then played a role-play with the two characters until the original drawer felt that the scene should finish. Following the first role play, the second and third role-plays were played out.

Debrief: Players were invited to reflect on what it was like to construct and play these role-plays, with a specific focus on what it was like to draw upon personal memories as the source material for fictional invention.

B.12 *Palimpsest Storymaking*

The *Palimpsest Storymaking* exercise was played at the Cranley Dene Sheltered Housing scheme in Highgate in January 2018.

Participants were told that the exercise would involve telling a story about an adventure from their own experience, then use these stories as a stimulus to invent new fictional stories.

Participants were asked to think of an adventure that they had experienced at some point in their life. They were invited to draw a sketch of this adventure showing one of the locations in which it took place, then describe it to members of the group.

Once everyone had described their adventure, the sketches were passed on to the next person in the group. This participant was asked to draw a fictional character in the location depicted by the sketch. This new character could be similar to the person described in the original adventure story or very different from them.

Participants were asked to describe the fictional character, articulating their hopes and fears within the adventure scenario.

At this point, the sketches were passed on again and the next player was invited to draw a new character into the scenario. This new character could be a stranger or someone with a pre-existing relationship with the original (fictional) character.

Participants were asked to describe this new character, giving an indication of whether they were a stranger or someone familiar to the other character.

At this point, the sketches were passed on again and the next player was invited to draw some action that took place between the two characters and describe what took place.

Next, the sketches were passed on again and the next player was invited to take the original fictional character to a new location where they would meet another character.

At this point, the person who had told the original adventure story was invited to take part in a two-player role-play between the two characters in the new location. They could choose which of the two characters they would play and another participant could volunteer to play the other.

The two players started the role-play and could bring it to an end whenever they felt like it.

Debrief: Participants were asked what it was like to take part in the *Palimpsest Storymaking*, with a specific focus on what it was like to reconfigure other people's stories and have their own stories reconfigured.

B.13 *Passage*

Passage was played at Trumpington Community Orchard in Cambridge in September 2017.

<u>Instructions for Play</u>

Passage is a role-play about journeys and unexpected encounters, designed for two players.

The play will involve fictional characters who both undertake journeys through imagined landscapes. During these journeys, the two characters will meet each other and spend a winter together before travelling on together, or alone.

Either player should feel free to opt-out of the activity at any time, and for whatever reason, with no questions asked.

The instructions below are intended to be carried out, one at a time. It isn't necessary to read the full document in order to start playing.

***

To begin, each player should speak to the other for approximately one minute in response to the question: 'Where have you come from today?' In other words, players should tell each other briefly about their journey through the current day.

Next, each player should speak to the other for approximately two minutes in response to the question: 'Where have you come from as an adult?' This question can be addressed in whatever way the players wish.

Then, each player should speak to the other for approximately three minutes in response to the question: 'Where have you come from since childhood?' Again, players should feel free to say as much, or as little, about their personal lives as they wish.

At this point, both players are invited to making a drawing based on the stories they have heard from the other person. This drawing should feature a fictional character in a specific place, from a long time ago who is about to

set off on a journey. Players do not need to know where this journey is leading them, they just need to draw the place that the character is departing from. The sketching process should last for around five minutes.

Next, the players are invited to imagine some NEEDS and FEARS that their characters might have. Each player should write down five NEEDS and five FEARS on ten post-it notes.

Then, these post-it notes should be crumpled up and placed in two combined piles, one pile for NEEDS and one pile for FEARS. Each player should pick two NEEDS and two FEARS.

At this point, having discovered the NEEDS and FEARS of their emerging characters, players are invited to write for two minutes on the subject of what their character is leaving behind as they set off on their journey. Also, if they have not already done so, players should select a name for their character.

Players are invited to read what they have written to each other, so that they have some knowledge of the two characters that have been created.

At this point, players are invited to choose a physical location in the play space as the starting point for their journey. Imagine this location to be the 'well spring' from which the journey starts.

Next, the players are invited to imagine some LANDSCAPES that their characters might pass through on their journey. Each player should write down five LANDSCAPES on five post-it notes.

Then, these post-it notes should be crumpled up and placed in a combined pile. Each player should pick three LANDSCAPES, but they should not look at them yet. The crumpled up post-it notes should be stowed away in their pocket.

At this point, players are invited to imagine the place that their character hopes to reach at the end of their journey. This place should not be somewhere that the character has been to before, it should be a place that is hoped for, a place that will meet their needs and allay their fears.

To aid the imagining of this place, players are invited to make another drawing, spending about five minutes on their sketch.

Next, players are invited to imagine some FEELINGS that they might encounter as they pass through various landscapes on their journey. Each player should write down five FEELINGS on five post-it notes.

Then, these post-it notes should be crumpled up and placed in a combined pile. Each player should pick three FEELINGS, but they should not look at them yet. Rather, the crumpled up post-it notes should be stowed away in another pocket. This pocket should be separate to the one used for LANDSCAPES to avoid getting the two sets of post-its mixed up.

***

At this point, it is time for the characters to go on their journey. The progression of the journey will take the form of seasons. The play will begin in springtime, with the characters setting off on their journey. Summer will arrive and they will reach a new landscape. In the autumn, they will meet each other and spend the winter together. Spring will come and they will set off on their journey again, either alone or together. Summer will bring a new landscape. Finally, in autumn, the characters will arrive at their final destination.

In making these journeys, players are invited to move through the space in whatever way they wish. The only rule is that their paths must converge in the autumn, when the characters will meet and (for whatever reason) decide to spend a winter together.

***

In order to progress through play, one player should read the following instructions:

<u>Spring</u>

It is spring and you are about to begin your journey. As you prepare to depart, spend five minutes writing in your journal about your feelings, your hopes and fears for what lies ahead.

(Allow 5 minutes of writing).

Now its time to set off, begin your journey slowly and start to move into a new space.

(Allow 2 minutes of journeying).

Summer

At this point, it is summertime and you have arrived in a new landscape. Draw one of your LANDSCAPE post-it notes to tell you where you are.

Then draw one of your FEELINGS notes to suggest how you might feel in this place. Now, spend five minutes making a drawing of this landscape.

(Allow 5 minutes of drawing)

Now its time to set off again. Begin moving on into a new space.

Autumn

Now it is autumn and you have arrived in a new landscape. But at this point you have both arrived in the same place. The character whose name comes first alphabetically should pick a LANDSCAPE note and announce the location where both characters have arrived. Both players should also draw a FEELINGS note to suggest how they might feel in this place.

Now, it is time to meet each other. Find away to approach each other and spend 10 minutes getting to know this new person.

(Allow 10 minutes of talking)

At this point, you are invited to voice your thoughts on what it feels like to have arrived in this place and to have met this new person. Describe the reasons why you would want to stay with them over the winter.

Winter

It is winter and you have decided to pass the colder months together. The place where you are is the place that you have found or constructed as a temporary home.

Now spend ten minutes together and find out more about each other. Try to understand the other person's history and their hopes for the future. During this conversation, you should determine whether you wish to travel together on your onward journey or go your separate ways when the spring comes.

(Allow ten minutes of talking)

Spring

It is spring and you are about to travel onwards, either alone or together. Spend five minutes writing in your journal about your feelings as you prepare to depart.

(Allow five minutes of writing)

Now its time to move on – either alone or together. Slowly start to move off in a new direction.

(Allow two minutes of journeying)

Summer

It is summer and you have arrived in a new landscape. If you are travelling alone, both of you should pick another LANDSCAPE note from your pocket. If you are together, the character whose name is closest to the end of the alphabet should draw the LANSCAPE note. Both characters should draw a FEELING note to suggest how you might feel in this landscape. Now, spend five minutes making another drawing of this landscape.

(Allow five minutes for drawing)

Now its time to set off again. Begin moving on into a new space.

Autumn

It is autumn and you are arriving in your final destination. Is it how you imagined it would be? Or is it very different?

Either way, for whatever reason, this is the place where you are going to stay. Now, spend five minutes describing, in the voice of your character, your feelings on arriving in this place.

Have your hopes been realised? Have your fears been allayed? Or are you still unsatisfied? When these descriptions have finished, it will be the end of the play.

***

Debrief

At the end of the play, you are invited to speak for around two minutes, without interruption, about your experience of *Passage*. You can say as much, or as little, as you like. Both players should have the opportunity to reflect on their experience before the activity concludes. This is simply a space to express whatever may be on your mind, having gone through the play activity.

B.14 *Pathways*

The *Pathways* exercise was played at Haringey Community Hub in London in December 2017.

Participants played this exercise individually. To begin, players were shown a selection of images related to stories they had told me and asked to pick the one they were most drawn to.

Participants were then asked to describe the place and their relationship to the place, then invent a fictional character in that place.

Having created a character, participants were invited to imagine a new place that the character would go to. This new place could be the mountains, the forest, the sea, the city or a village.

Participants were asked to describe the journey to the new place, then imagine a new character that the original character would meet there. This new character could be a family member, a friend, a work colleague or something else – provided that they had some pre-existing relationship with the original character.

Participants were asked to describe what happened in the meeting of the two characters. Perhaps the original character might make a request, tell a secret, give a gift or make some decision.

<u>Debrief</u>: Participants were invited to reflect on what it was like to tell a story that started from a familiar place. Did the journey go somewhere unfamiliar, or stay in familiar territory?

B.15 *Platform*

The *Platform* exercise was played at the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes in July 2018.

Play Instructions

Platform is a play activity about imagining a landscape and characters through the use of objects.

It should be played by 3 or 4 players.

By way of preparation, lay a plain blanket on the ground and scatter an assortment of random objects in the space around it.

Number the players. Tell them that the blanket is a 'platform' on which they will build an imaginary landscape.

Ask the first player to select an object and place it on the platform – imagining it to be a feature of the imaginary landscape. Invite them to describe the landscape feature they have created.

Ask the next player to select another object, add it to the landscape and describe what they imagine it to be. Continue until all players have added a detail to the landscape and described it.

Next, ask the first player to select an object that they can imagine as a character within the landscape. Invite the player to place the character within the landscape and describe who they are. Invite the other players, in turn, to do the same.

Ask the first player to take an imaginary action on behalf of one of the characters towards another character on the platform. Invite them to move the object representing the character in a way that shows this action and describe what the action is.

Ask the second player to describe the reaction of the character who has been acted upon and move the relevant object in a way that shows this reaction.

Ask the next player to take another action on behalf of one of the characters towards another character on the platform. Invite them to move the object representing the character in a way that shows this action and describe what the action is.

Ask the next player to describe the reaction of the character who has been acted upon and move the relevant object in a way that shows this reaction.

Ask the next player to take another action on behalf of one of the characters towards another character on the platform. Invite them to move the object representing the character in a way that shows this action and describe what the action is.

Ask the next player to describe the reaction of the character who has been acted upon and move the relevant object in a way that shows this reaction.

Ask each player, in sequence, to reflect on how the landscape on the platform has changed as a result of the actions that have occurred.

Debrief

Invite each player to respond to the question: what was it like to play *Platform*?

B.16 *Random Objects*

The *Random Objects* exercise was played at Haringey Community Hub in July 2017.

Participants played this exercise individually. To begin, a scattered assemblage of random objects was placed on the table.

Participants were invited to look at the objects and examine them.

Participants were then invited to pick up to three objects that seemed meaningful to them.

Participants were invited to construct an arrangement of the three objects on the table in front of them. This arrangement could refer to which of three objects was most important or just look nice.

Participants were asked to describe why each of the objects was important to them – starting with the object they liked the most and moving through the other objects.

Lastly, participants were invited to imagine and describe a place where all the objects might come together.

B.17 'Retreating Army'

The 'Retreating Army' design exercise was run at Theatre Delicatessen in London in April 2018.

In this exercise, groups devised a role-play, with a narrative design based on three different approaches: rules based narrative progression, an episode based narrative progression and an imagination based narrative progression.

I stated that the overall goal of the retreating army troop would be to get to a safe destination without being caught. I also said that the troop could not go back to resume fighting and said that the troop must stay together.

Part 1: Rules Based Narrative Progression

To begin, I invited groups to generate ideas on where the army was retreating from and the identity of the troop. Participants wrote ideas on post-it notes and decided upon a preferred option.

Next, I invited groups to generate an idea of where the army was fleeing to. Participants wrote ideas on post-it notes and decided upon a preferred option.

I then invited groups to generate an idea of where the troop is now (what's the location of the scenario). Participants wrote ideas on post-it notes and decided on a preferred option.

Next, I invited groups to generate ideas of landscapes that the army might pass through over the course of their retreat. Participants wrote multiple options on post-it notes and selected three landscapes.

I also invited groups to develop a generic sense of who the individuals in the troop might be, by creating character archetypes. Participants wrote multiple options on post-it notes and whittled them down to three options.

***

At this point, the task was to create rules that would shape the decision-making of the troop as they plan their escape. I told the groups that we would not play the scenario like a game, but rather as a scene in which the characters would consider their next move as if they were playing a game of retreat.

I encouraged the groups to think about these rules in terms of spatial / temporal and mechanical considerations. IE – retreating through the mountains is safer because it is a deserted space, but it will slow down the retreat OR escaping by car (a valuable mechanic) along the highway is fast, but there is a risk of being stopped by roadblocks.

Having designed their rules, I invited groups to present their scenario and the rules that might shape character decisions of how to begin the retreat (where to go next) and thus inform the next stage of the narrative.

Part 2: Episode Based Narrative Progression

At this point, I invited the groups to swap and work on the other group's scenario.

The task was to create three new scenarios based on the three options for where players could go as they began their retreat.

The focus here was to design three new CONTEXTS for action. I encouraged the design groups to think less about the next destination - the next destination of the retreating army should already be determined. In other words, the focus of play should not be on the quantitative question of 'where do we go next?' but rather on the qualitative question of 'what do we do while we're here?'

Essentially, the creation of the three new episodes was based on the local circumstances in each of the three locations, so that the players (having made a strategic choice about where to go in Part 1) would arrive in their chosen place, discover whether or not they had made a good decision, and respond to the new context.

***

After the players had designed their three CONTEXTS, I invited them to do some thinking about how they could help the players to develop characters in the preparatory process before the playing of Part 1.

I asked participants to begin by picking three of the previously created character archetypes as the basis for the creation of three characters within the scenario.

Then, I asked participants to design a stimulus that would enable players to generate a sense of character back story.

Next, I asked participants to design a stimulus that would enable players to develop interpersonal relations within the group.

Part 3: Imagination Based Narrative Progression

Groups continued to work on the same scenarios that they had worked on in Part 2.

The design task for Part 3 was to develop stimuli that could invite the players to imagine the circumstances of a third scenario.

The premise of this third scenario was that something had gone wrong as the group progressed towards their intended destination. The players would then be invited to imagine:

a) what had gone wrong

b) where they had gone instead.

I also asked the participants to design a stimulus to help the players generate a sense of their interpersonal goals for Part 3.

***

Having developed ideas for stimulating the imaginations of players in moving the narrative forward to Part 3, I asked the participants to do some further thinking about how they could help players develop their character before the beginning of play in Part 1.

Specifically, I asked them to consider a stimulus that would help players develop a sense of their character's:

a) Hopes and Fear for the future

b) Strengths and weaknesses

***

Having gone through the design process, two scenarios were play-tested. In debriefing the workshop, participants were invited to reflect on what they had experienced as players of the other group's role-play and what they had experienced in developing their design and seeing it play-tested.

B.18 *Ridge Walk*

Ridge Walk was played at the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes in August 2018.

Requirements

Two walkers, two A4 pages, two pencils.

Instructions:

To begin, sit on the swings at the START point on the map. During the walk, one of you will need to read the instructions aloud to the other. Please choose who the reader will be. Whenever you see the * symbol, it means that it is time to do whatever the most recent instruction has asked you to do.

Welcome to Ridge.

Imagine that Ridge is an alternative version of Peartree Bridge. Perhaps it exists in the future, or maybe in a parallel universe.

Whatever it is, things appear to be a bit different in Ridge. As you undertake the Ridge Walk, everything you see and hear will be as it is now, but you can IMAGINE that things look and sound like something else.

A tall tree could be a communications tower and a telegraph pole could be a skyscraper. In other words, you get to INVENT the fictional world you're walking through. Take a moment to practice this. Look around for something that catches your eye.

Once you've seen something interesting, try to imagine something else that it could be. Spend a minute telling your partner what you are imagining and vice versa.

*

The land of Ridge has two regions, East Ridge and West Ridge. The map will show you where the border lies between East Ridge and West Ridge.

The border between the two regions isn't a strictly guarded frontier, but the two regions are different and the people on either side tend to keep to themselves.

On this walk, however, two citizens from East and West will walk through Ridge together. If you are sitting in the more Easterly swing you are the Easterner. If you're in the Westerly one, you're the Westerner.

When you begin the Ridge Walk, you won't know much about your regions or about who you are as a citizen of East or West Ridge.

As you walk, though, the instructions will give you prompts to imagine new things about the imaginary place you're in – and the imaginary character whose shoes you're walking in.

When you read BEGIN, you will start the Ridge Walk by walking north towards the first stopping point marked on the map.

As you walk, look for objects that seem to represent your landscape of East or West Ridge. Try to find objects on your side of the border that you can pick up.

Think of these objects as symbols of your region and imagine what your region is like. When you reach the first stopping point, stop and follow the next instructions.

BEGIN

*

1.

It's time to stop. Use the objects that you have picked up to make a small sculptural arrangement that shows what your region is like.

*

Now take your piece of A4 paper and fold it three times so that you end up with eight small rectangles on each side of the page.

*

Now write for about one minute about your home region in the first small rectangle of your paper. What is it like as a landscape? What is it like as a community? When you have both finished, show your sculptures and share your thoughts about your region with your partner.

*

It's time to move on. As you walk, look at the landscape far away and find something pleasant that catches your eye.

Imagine that the thing you see somehow represents the past of your region. What is the history of your home place? At next stopping point, pause for further instructions.

*

2.

Stop. Spend a minute drawing a sketch of your region's history in the next mini-rectangle on your A4 page.

What kind of history has your region had? Is it happy or sad? When you've both finished, share your histories.

*

It's time to move on. As you walk, look for objects on your side of the border than you really like. Find a nice object that you can pick up and imagine that it is a symbol of a fictional character. A fictional citizen of East Ridge or West Ridge.

Try to imagine what this fictional character is like. Who are they? What's their name? At the next stopping point, pause for instructions.

*

3.

Stop. Draw a sketch of your character. When you have both finished, introduce your characters.

*

It’s time to move on. Now look for far away sights that are beautiful to you. Imagine that these sights somehow represent the history of your character. What is their past? At the next stopping point, pause for instructions.

*

4.

Stop. Sit on the swings and face south. Spend a minute writing the history of your character. Write this history as if it is YOUR history. As the fictional character, what are the important details from that past that have made YOU who YOU are?

When you’ve both finished, read your writings to each other.

*

Now it’s time for the citizen of West Ridge to visit the East. As you enter East Ridge, the HOST can point out to the VISITOR things that show the strength of the region.

This pointing can be done by literally pointing at things that seem to represent the best aspects of the region. In looking at the things that are pointed out, you are reminded that your imagination can turn them into something different than what they really are.

Now begin the visit.

*

5.

Stop. Take a minute to draw a sketch of the region’s strengths. The VISITOR is invited to describe the strengths of the HOST’S region.

*

It’s time to continue. As you walk, the HOST can offer a series of small objects to the VISITOR as GIFTS. Imagine how these gifts represent the relationship between the two of you.

*

6.

Stop. Take a minute to write about the relationship between you and your neighbour. Are you friends? The VISITOR is invited to describe the relationship as they see it.

*

At this point, the visitor will lead the host across the border into West Ridge. As you walk, the new HOST can offer a series of GIFTS to the new VISITOR.

Imagine how these gifts represent the ongoing relationship between the two of you. What kind of relationship are you building?

*

7.

Stop. Take a minute to write about the relationship between you and your neighbour. Are you friends? Allies? Something else?

Now the new VISITOR can describe the relationship as they see it.

*

At this point, the new visitor will lead the host back across the border into East Ridge. As you walk, the visitor can point out things in the region that show its weakness.

As you walk, imagine what makes this region weak.

*

8.

Stop. Take a minute to draw a sketch of the weaknesses that you see in this region. The HOST can describe these weaknesses.

*

It’s time cross over into West Ridge again. As you walk, the host can point out things in the region that show its strength and imagine what makes this region strong.

*

9.

Stop. Draw a sketch of the strengths that you see in this region. The HOST can describe these strengths.

*

To continue, the walkers will cross the border again into East Ridge.

As you walk, think about the things that you admire about the other region and think about your region's needs. Talk to your walking partner and tell them what you are thinking.

*

10.

Stop. Take a minute to write about something you would like to take from the other region but DO NOT share what you have written.

*

Continue. For the final time, cross the border into West Ridge. As you walk, the VISITOR can point out the weaknesses that they see in their neighbour's region.

*

11.

Stop. Write about the weaknesses of this region. The VISITOR can describe these weaknesses as they see them.

*

Continue. As you walk, try to look beyond the things that are right in front of you to find some sight that strongly catches your eye. Use this image to imagine some ACTION that your region will take in relation to the other region.

*

12.

Stop. You are invited to imagine that the ACTION you have thought about has, in fact, happened.

Draw a sketch of what this action was. What did your region do? Share your sketches with each other.

*

At this point, the Ridge Walk will go back onto the border pathway, walking south towards the starting point.

As you walk, talk about how your regions REACT to the action that your neighbours have taken. Is it a positive or negative reaction?

*

13.

Stop. Write about your personal feelings about the other region's action. Share your writings.

*

Continue. This time, the citizen of East Ridge will walk in front and the citizen of West Ridge will follow in their footsteps.

The Easterner can imagine that this pathway somehow represents their actions towards the citizen of West Ridge.

If they want to treat them kindly, the pathway will be pleasant and playful. If they want to treat them harshly, the pathway will be rough and difficult.

During this journey, Westerner is invited to imagine what actions the Easterner has taken towards them.

*

14.

Stop. The Easterner is invited to draw patterns of shapes that symbolise the action they have taken towards the Westerner.

The Westerner is invited to draw a sketch of the action that the Easterner has taken towards them. The Westerner is invited to describe this action.

*

To continue, the citizen from West Ridge is invited to walk a pathway that is directly followed by the citizen of East Ridge.

Again, if they want to treat them kindly, the pathway will be pleasant. If they want to treat them harshly, the pathway will be rough.

The citizen of East Ridge is invited to imagine what actions the Westerner has taken towards them.

*

15.

Stop. The Westerner is invited to draw patterns of shapes that symbolise the action they have taken towards the Easterner.

The Easterner is invited to draw a sketch of the action that the Westerner has taken towards them. The Easterner is invited to describe this action.

*

It's the last stage of the Ridge Walk. As you move, listen to the sounds around you. Imagine that these sounds represent the future of the other region. Does it sound good, bad, or simply neutral?

What events will unfold in the future of your neighbours?

*

16.

Stop and sit on the swings. Write about the future of the other region. How will your neighbours fare in the future? Share your writings.

*

The Ridge Walk is now over. You are invited to introduce yourself to your partner using your real name. If you would like to, spend five minutes talking about your experience of the Ridge Walk.

B.19 *Sound and Image*

The *Sound and Image* exercise was played at Haringey Community Hub in August 2017.

Participants played this exercise individually. To begin, they were shown a selection of images based on stories that they had told me previously.

Once they had selected the image, they were invited to listen to a soundscape relating to the image.

They were invited to tell the story that the picture and sounds suggested to them whilst looking at the image and listening to the soundscape.

B.20 *Superpets*

Superpets was played at the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes in July 2018.

Superpets is story-making play activity for 4 players. It is played around a table. To play the game, paper, pens and post-it notes are needed.

The facilitator will also need to create a selection of positive and negative characteristics (each written on a small slip of paper)

Start by inviting players to imagine the worst places in the Peartree Bridge area. Ask them to write down 2 ideas on 2 post-it notes and stick them to the table.

Then, ask them to vote for 3 ideas proposed by other players that they strongly agree with.

The facilitator selects the 4 most disliked places in the area and asks the players to pick one of them then draw a picture of it.

Players describe their sketch then pass it on to the person on their left.

Working with this new drawing, ask players to draw a house of some kind within the existing landscape picture – then describe the house and pass the picture on.

Next, invite each player to draw a positive and negative characteristic. Working with their new sketch, imagine a character with these characteristics who lives in the house in the picture. Ask players to draw this character into the picture, then describe them – articulating their problems in life.

The pictures are passed on again. At this point, players are invited to imagine a pet who lives with (or near to) the character – who has some kind of special power. This special power should give the pet the capacity to help the character solve their problems somehow. Ask players to draw the pet into the sketch – then describe them.

The pictures are passed on again so that each player receives their original sketch.

The facilitator states that all of the locations in the drawings are located fairly close to each other in the same village or town. Players are invited to give a brief reiteration of the terrible places that the characters live in.

Each player is invited to imagine the pet in their picture taking the human to one of the other places with the aim of somehow helping their human to do something that will be beneficial for them or make them feel better about their area.

Once each player has selected a destination for this journey, they take the picture of that destination and draw what happens when the pet takes the human there. Once this is done, they describe what happened.

Next, the pets choose to pay a visit to one of the other pets, to compare notes on their human friends. Players enact a five-minute role-play with one of the other pet characters to talk about what's going on.

At this point, players are invited to imagine (based on what their pet knows about the people in the area) how their human character feels about their neighbours. They're asked to describe one person they like and one person they dislike.

Next, the pets take the humans on another journey to a new place to meet one of the other human characters – with the aim of helping their human feel better, somehow.

Each player receives the picture of the location that their human is taken to, draws a sketch of what happens when the human goes there and describes what happens.

Next, the pets get together with another of their peers to compare notes on what's going down in the neighbourhood.

At this point, one of the humans (whoever wants to go first) decides (based on what they learn from their pet) to pay a visit to another of their neighbours to try to take some action that will make the neighbourhood better.

They play out a five-minute role-play to try to make this good thing happen.

The other two players play out another five-minute role play at the same time – which also seeks to make things better somehow.

At this point, each player is invited to narrate the outcomes of these interactions.

Next the pets describe how their humans feel. Lastly, the humans and pets describe what will happen in their respective personal futures.

Debrief: Players are invited to reflect on what it was like to play *Superpets*.

B.21 ***Totem Build***

The *Totem Build* exercise was played at Theatre Delicatessen in London in March 2018.

The *Totem Build* is played as a group exercise. To begin, a large number of random objects are scattered around the outside of the play space.

Participants are told that the exercise will involve building a monument, or totem, somewhere in the room, using the random objects and anything else that players can find (other than people's personal belongings).

All objects used to construct the totem must connect with each other so that a unified structure is created. The building process must be done without verbal negotiation about how the totem should be constructed.

Once play begins, players are invited to seek out objects that they find interesting, but also notice the objects that other players find interesting.

Players are invited to be selfish in sculpting the totem in ways that they find pleasing. They are given permission to change the contributions that others have made.

Players are told that when they are happy with the totem, they can stand back and look at.

Next, players are invited to come into contact with the totem in some way – either by touching it or sitting within it.

Players are then invited to notice the presence of other members of the group, possibly with eye contact. Lastly, players are invited to step back from the totem.

Debrief: Players are invited to reflect on what it was like to go through the *Totem Build* process.

B.22 'Visitors'

The 'Visitors' play design exercise was run at Theatre Delicatessen in London in April 2018.

Scenario Task:

We worked on creating an interactive performance scenario in which a GROUP with a dilemma, invite VISITORS to come and help them in some way, leading to a narrative progression based on a bifurcating narrative tree (like a Choose Your Own Adventure story or Twine structure).

***

We broke into small groups and each person was asked to write 2 proposals of generic GROUPS which might become the focus on the design task.

Each person picked 1 GROUP proposal offered by another member of their team. Then, they imagined a dilemma that the group is facing, focusing on an EITHER/OR choice that the group might make in responding to their dilemma.

Each person presented their group dilemma and passed it on to the person on their left. Next, each person (working with a new group/dilemma) imagined VISITORS who might be invited to come and help the group in some way.

Each person presented their group/dilemma/visitors and the team chose their preferred option.

Dilemma and Narrative Structure

First, the group clarified the initial dilemma that the group faced and the EITHER/OR choice that they could make. Then, they imagined two secondary scenarios based on the initial EITHER/OR choice.

At this point, I invited the groups to split in half, with one half working on a SCENARIO A (resulting from choosing the EITHER branch) and the other half working on a SCENARIO B (resulting from the OR branch).

In both new scenarios, I asked participants to imagine another EITHER/OR choice. Ultimately, this would lead to a branching narrative structure in which an initial scenario would lead (via the initial EITHER/OR choice) to Scenario A or Scenario B and then another EITHER/OR choice would lead to a third scenario (with a total of 4 possible options for this third scene).

Who Are the Visitors?

I then asked participants to write for a minute about the Visitors, responding to the following questions:

What is the reason why they were invited by the Group?

What are their reasons / motivations for coming to help?

What is their role in the interactive performance?

Participants compared their responses to these questions and worked out their preferred options.

Who Are the Characters and What are their Internal Relations?

I invited participants to design their own characters, using any method that seemed most suitable to them. Similarly, I invited participants to design the internal relations between their characters in whatever way they saw fit.

How is the Interactive Performance Facilitated?

I asked participants to consider how they would facilitate the performance, both in terms of briefing the audience at the start and steering the progression of the performance.

How are Decisions Made?

I asked participants to consider how narrative progression decisions would be made, either by the characters (under the influence of the audience) or by the audience (in which case they would need to consider what authority the audience have, in terms of their ROLE, to make the decisions).

Watching / Performing

I asked the participants to consider the extent to which the audience could sit back and watch the performance (as opposed to more direct participation) and the extent to which the characters would 'perform' / tell the story.

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Following the design process, three interactive performances were play-tested. Participants were then invited to reflect on their experience as players and also their experience of designing their piece and seeing it being play-tested.