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Karin Shankar and
Kirsten Larson

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Acknowledgments

An Introduction to P[art]icipatory Urbanisms

Karin Shankar and Kirsten Larson

P[art]icipatory Urbanisms is a peer-reviewed publication interrogating the "participatory turn" in contemporary urban studies, performance studies, and art practice. The current revival in participatory, collaborative, relational, and democratic practices in the realms of urban art and planning is, in some ways, a harkening back to participatory ideas of the 1960s.[1] However, given the diverse arenas in which participatory urban activity has been proliferating in the past two decades—including within a range of public, private, civil society, and hybrid formations—participation itself as mode of engagement must be examined as a critical terrain of negotiation between state, society and market forces. The articles in this anthology track the form such negotiations take across divergent sites and from interdisciplinary perspectives, to assess the radical promise and potential pitfalls of 'participation' in the realms of urban art and politics today.

Participatory art projects are generally considered to be those in which the conventional relationship between art object, artist, and audience is subverted. As Claire Bishop defines it, "the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long- term project with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or 'beholder', is now repositioned as a co-producer or participant."[2] In *urban* participatory art projects the 'object' being produced is also an altered relationship to urban space. Critics of participatory art, though, see this as a compromised form, for it is ruled by the "external" or heteronomous interests of communities, organizations, local governments, etc. rather than being created within an "autonomous" field of the arts.[3] In the realm of urban politics and decision-making (city budgeting, for instance) participatory projects have been shown to deepen democracy, expand civic consciousness and increase transparency and efficiency.[4] However 'taking part' has, in many instances, been co-opted by the neoliberal state and international organizations, which could potentially lead to a depoliticization of community struggles. Therefore, even with the radical potential that 'participation' as mode has historically promised, in contemporary discourses of both aesthetics and politics, the term continues to occupy a complicated place. *P[art]icipatory Urbanisms* is positioned in the midst of these debates.

The bracketed [art] in the title of this anthology refers to participatory urban aesthetic practices which could include community, social, or relational art initiatives, but also more general claims by city residents on the visible and *sensible* aspects of public space. Bracketing the [art] in 'participation' also suggests a blurring of the conventional separation between the aesthetic and the political dimensions of urban participation. As articles in this collection illustrate, urban praxes, from spontaneous urban protests, to everyday acts of subversion of the dominant urban spatial order, to organized minoritarian claims on urban space, are as

aesthetic as they are political, in that they entail a re-ordering of the field of urban experience and perception (here, we consider an older meaning of the word 'aesthetic,' as simply 'perceptible to the senses.'). Contemporary movements from Occupy to #BlackLivesMatter attest to this.

Articles in this anthology offer critical tools from across the humanities and social sciences, and research diverse geographic and temporal sites, to expand methodological and theoretical debates around themes of urban participation and its entanglement with state power, aesthetic praxis, racialized and queer spaces, citizenship, temporality, publics, and infrastructure. The anthology is divided into four sections: ***Memory and the City-Body; Austerity Politics, Occupation, and Performance; Curating Publics; and Ruptures in Neoliberal Space.*** Critical connections also surface across thematic groups and keywords for urban theory are repeated and variously defined or recast as they meet different disciplinary frames. Such keywords include: publics, counter-hegemony, agonism, memory,occupation, participation, infrastructure, cooptation, amongst others.

Memory and the City-Body

The four articles grouped under the theme of ***Memory and City-Body*** theorize the labor of memorializing or remembering, differently. In her article "Ghetto Biennale and Jalousie en Couleur: The Politics of Post-Earthquake Aesthetics in Port-Au-Prince" Carolyn Duffey describes a "Ghetto Biennale" and a community mural—both of which draw from the spiritual and aesthetic practices of vodou—in two Port-au-Prince *bidonvilles* or shantytowns. She argues that vodou offers residents of these two *bidonvilles* a counterhegemonic mode of response to politicized post-earthquake reconstruction models supported by Western nations and Haitian elites.

In Rebecca Caines' article, improvisatory performance is similarly engaged to subvert dominant urban codes. "Fugitive Moments and Public Memory: An Improvised Memorial for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X (SIEVX) in Canberra" describes a performance-based memorial from 2006, in which 600 volunteers held up wooden poles in the shape of a boat, marking the deaths of over 300 Iraqi and Afghani refugees on international waters, five years prior. The organizers of this ceremony improvised this memorial when the National Capital Authority rejected a permanent memorial for those on board SIEVX, on the grounds that memorials could only be erected ten years after a tragedy. With tragic echoes in the refugee crisis in Europe today, Caines engages this incident to pose a question about the promises of improvisatory urban planning—one in which "risk, real-time processes, and the foregrounding of the unexpected become deliberate tools in planning and managing urban spaces."

Ying Zhu theorizes the embodied aspects of memorialization in "Reinventing Fluidity: Colliding Bodies and Architecture at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial." Zhu writes, "...architecture, structures, and memorials are positioned in the built environment for its users, who are comprised of flesh, muscle, sinew, tendon, and bone and engaged in processes of motion and action (...)" She adopts a dance studies lens to illuminate how the "bodily writings" of visitors to the Vietnam War Memorial "jostle" the monument itself, thereby challenging the critique that enduring architectural memorials (and the implied 'solidification' of historical memory) is in opposition to the more fluid construct of human memory.

Finally, in "The 'Good Death' of Buildings," Heidi Käkelä analyzes an alternate form of post-disaster memorialization articulated by Gap Filler's participatory and performative responses to Christchurch's devastated cityscape in the wake of the 2011 earthquake that struck this city. Käkelä describes Gap Filler's necessary work in establishing the "good death" of buildings, or a passing marked by dignity, mourning and a reconciliation with loss.

Austerity Politics, Performance, and Occupation

We prepare this publication at a time when participatory social movements have emerged as the ongoing mode of radical political engagement in urban spaces across the globe, from Occupy (2011) to Tahrir (2011) to São Paulo (2013) to Taksim (2013) to austerity protests in Southern Europe and Greece (2014-) to #BlackLivesMatter (2014-). Aside from the participatory internal decision-making mechanisms that many of these movements engage with, all these movements may also be considered participatory in a larger sense, for they consist of multitudes reclaiming a part of the urban in plazas, parks, houses and streets. In doing so, they redefine the field of urban experience collectively; urban space is separated or un-sutured from its conventional references and opened to new orderings.[5]

The first two articles in the ***Austerity Politics, Performance, and Occupation*** section present urgent and vivid ethnographic accounts of the urban manifestations of radical democratic responses to Europe's contemporary austerity regimes. Andreea Micu's reading of the affective forms of protest around ongoing housing struggles in Rome and Madrid identifies 'indignation' as the prevailing affect in times of austerity. Indignation, she offers, grows in the "gap produced by the unfulfilled promises of the welfare state" and the "increasing experience of precarity" by large sections of the population in Southern Europe. "Making of the Indignant Citizen: Politics, Aesthetics, and Housing Rights in Madrid and Rome" explores how this affect is mobilized to powerful effect in street protests. In "Critical Performance Spaces: Participation and Anti-Austerity Protests in Athens" Gigi Argyropoulou examines the occupation of the Embros theatre in Athens at the outset of the Greek debt crisis, to explore the ways in which alternate forms of sociality and citizen participation were enacted. She describes how emergent and collective participatory practices in the occupied theater may have faced repeated failures, but successfully marked a paradigm shift, opening up the space of possibles for alternate "instituent" practices of politics and culture in times of austerity.

In the third article, "Participatory Aesthetics and Makeshift Urbanism: Guimarães, Cova do Vapor, and Terras da Costa" Joana Braga evaluates the efficacy of, and challenges faced by three tactical and makeshift urban experiments in the larger Lisbon metropolitan area, and discusses the paradoxical place these practices hold within Lisbon's current landscape of austerity. While on the one hand, these practices create alternative modes of social relationality, on the other, they are complicit with current neoliberal frameworks that have coopted principles of insurgent creativity.

Curating Publics

Under the rubric of ***Curating Publics,*** Rattanamol Johal, Lydia Matthews, and Cecilie Sachs Olsen present four examples of urban social practice—a participatory art form that treads the lines between object-making, installation, performance, and activism, usually taking place outside the 'white cube' of the art gallery or museum. In doing so, these four authors compel readers to revisit older questions around audiences for, value in, and efficacy of social art practice while also defining anew the terms under which agonistic, counter-hegemonic, and relational art practice may or may not "work," in the context of specific urban spatial politics.

In "Seeing in the Dark: Unearthing Batumi's Hidden Backyard Treasures" Lydia Matthews describes the impact of art installations co-created by artists and local residents, in residents' backyards, highlighting the "infra-ordinary" of their daily lives and quotidian acts in the rapidly transforming Black Sea port-town of Batumi in Georgia. In "Windows on an Urban Village: Participation and Antagonism in Shaina Anand's 'KhirkeeYaan'" Rattanamol Singh Johal describes artist Shaina Anand's project to establish channels of communication using CCTV cameras, television screens and microphones across spatial and social boundaries in Khirkee, an urban village of Delhi, becomes the site for communication lapses, miscommunication and disjuncture. Johal therefore offers important insights into the "conflictual production of urban space." Finally, in the curatorial project *invisible Zürichs,* researcher and curator Cecilie Sachs Olsen's public workshops aim at exploring how socially engaged artistic practice might produce spatial imaginaries and alternate archives of the city, even in environments of "endless maintenance and careful design."

Ruptures Neoliberal Space

In the articles under the thematic grouping of ***Ruptures in Neoliberal Space***, authors articulate aesthetic ruptures or new 'partitions of the sensible' in neoliberal space, while contextualizing how 'neoliberalism' has specifically played out in New York City, Shanghai, Guangzhou and San Francisco.[6] Such ruptures, as Todd May has described, not only question particular social arrangements but indeed, "reveal the contingency of the entire perceptual and conceptual order in which such arrangements are embedded."[7] Kavita Kulkarni looks at Soul Summit, an open air house music dance party that has been held since 2001 in the historically black, rapidly gentrified neighborhood of Fort Greene in Brooklyn. She explores the political potential of the various assemblages (both 'live'

and in social media) of open-air house music culture—composed by largely black and brown dancers, music and musicians, documentarians, and a sizeable online community—and how, through various forms of participatory co-production, Soul Summit works to counteract "the spatiality of peripheralization" and the "temporality of extinction" imposed on black social life in the US.

In her lyrical exploration of a unique public art happening in the city of Shanghai, Chiayi Seetoo ruminates on the spatial and temporal alternatives presented by the site and art actions of *O collective Happening* (Shanghai 2014). Seetoo describes the venue for O collective happening as "loose space" and theorizes the competing temporalities encompassed by art actions undertaken there—those of instantaneity, loss, memory, nostalgia, sustainability, amongst others—in an urban milieu marked by breakneck speed development, a building boom, vast demolition, and huge influxes of global capital.

In "Squatting in Non-Spaces: Queering Art and Identity in Global China's Guangzhou," Jenny Lin focuses on another iconic urban space in China, Guangzhou, examining queer identity and spatial politics in one featured work, Squatting Project/Guangzhou by Hong-Kong born United States-based artist Simon Leung. She argues that the piece works performatively on multiple levels, "queering language and bodily gestures to expose the fluidity of identity," and to articulate a "non-space" mimicking Guangzhou, and "cosmopolitan mythologies" of both the city and global art biennales. Finally, in "Negotiating Informality: Social and Economic Strategies of Food Vendors in San Francisco's Mission District," Ginette Wessel and Sofia Airaghi offer an ethnographic case study of San Francisco's Latino food truck vendors, describing how these workers destabilize categories of formal and informal economic activity, exposing the visual, social, and legal variances that occur between these general terms, to create a spectrum of flexible possibilities rather than binary positions for control, in fast gentrifying San Francisco.

Apart from articles in traditional scholarly formats, *P[art]icipatory Urbanisms* features alternate formats that perform urban scholarship in experimental modes.

> In **[Annotations]** Ron Morrison's notes on The Negro Motorists Green Book (1936), are the beginnings of a manifesto of sorts, for a liberatory black spatial politics today.

> In **[Conversations]** Nathan John presents three interviews with practitioners (in Berlin, Madrid and Paris) of what he terms "spacehacking," a mode of urban practice that entails an "intimate and highly local understanding of urban, material, and social systems to enable their dynamic reconfiguration."

> In **[Forms in Images]** Alex White-Mazzarella, Namrata Mehta and Soaib Grewal's photo essay documents how an Akhada or wrestling rink, came to be constructed by a community in the city of Gurgaon, near New Delhi.

Layla Forrest-White's **[Urban Prose]** is a long form essay reflecting on democracy as performed on a basketball court in Mosswood Park in Oakland, California. Forrest-White writes about the ways in which the sport is made possible by democratic conditions, and embodies democracy itself, in its "fleshy, messy, overcrowded, bodies-touching-each-other reality."

Finally, in **[Planning Cases]** Antje Steinmuller details three San Francisco-based case studies of public-private partnerships transforming and activating public urban space, evaluating them for their potential as new forms of pro-active urban citizenship.

This publication has been the result of our collaboration and friendship over the past year-and-a-half, across three cities, and also across disciplines, Performance Studies (Karin Shankar) and Architecture and City Planning (Kirsten Larson). In weekly meetings in cafés in Berkeley, or virtually, in countless skype conversations between São Paulo and New Delhi, we took part in, discussed, read, mapped, wrote or imagined each aspect of this publication together. As we launch the publication, we hope this platform continues to spark conversation and collaboration on participation as critical urban spatial praxis.

Notes

[1] Krivý M. and Kaminer T. (2013) Eds. "The Participatory Turn in Urbanism" Footprints Delft Architecture Theory Journal, Autumn 7:2, pp 1-6.

[2] Bishop, C. (2012) Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, Verso. Print.

[3] Jackson, S. (2011) Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics. Routledge. Print.

◧ Annotations

Research Notes from a Black Urbanist
Ronald Morrison

As a black urbanist, I follow in a long tradition of intellectual and experiential practices by black people to place ourselves in the city. In continuing this work, I am drawn to uncover the experiences of black and brown bodies in urban space that reveal the multitude of our contributions to meaning-making in cities. In the research annotations that follow, I turn to the *Negro Motorist Green Book* as an artifact and resource for contemporary urbanists and designers that, in its method and form, gestures toward a more liberatory urban spatial politics.

Started in 1936 by a mailman named Victor H. Green in Harlem, *The Green Book* began as a modest effort to list establishments that African-Americans could patronize in New York City. It soon grew to include numerous other cities in the U.S. and became an essential companion for black people traveling across the country during the violently segregated Jim Crow era. Green hacked the U.S. Postal Service network to gain detailed information about safe places where black people could commune, including hotels, restaurants, and individual homes, thereby appropriating an already existing system for a new function or use. Postal employees became intermediaries, collecting information from residents of the neighborhoods on their delivery routes. Because the information was provided by sources embedded in communities, the ability to review and evaluate spaces for their safety (and alter the guide accordingly) could be done relatively quickly.

In the 1949 edition of the *Negro Motorist Green Book* there were 3,706 total facilities listed. Of these, 1,643 of the facilities were travel accommodations including hotels, motels, and tourist homes. The remaining listings consisted of beauty parlors, nightclubs, and various other social sites. The 1959 edition listed 1,749 travel accommodations.[1] A possible reason for this increase was that in the post-war era, more and more African-Americans owned automobiles and were traveling long distances for leisure and tourism. Eventually, the Green Book covered all 50 states and parts of Bermuda, Mexico, and Canada. At its height, the Book's circulation reached two million copies in 1962.[2] Since 1945, the publication had been supported by Standard Oil. The Book hosted printed advertisements for the oil company and was distributed at Esso gas stations across the country, until its final edition in 1964, following the passage of the Civil Rights Act. This partnership with Standard Oil indicates the complicated intersections of capitalism and race at the time.

Today, as tools for understanding and visualizing space become more complex and descriptive, blackness is still so often emphasized as a quantifiable variable, and flattened as demographic information. When GIS mapping is used as a tool to visualize racial injustice, it is still premised on the understanding that race and space are fixed variables that may simply be superimposed, one onto the other, to identify and address the effects of racism. In the words of geographers Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, this portrayal "naturalizes racial difference in place." While this method is important in revealing inequity and the effects of dispossession—including access to housing, employment, and health and other services in urban space—an analysis of how race and space are co-produced is lost.

Following McKittrick and Clyde, and other scholars working at the intersection of urban studies and critical race studies, urban scholarship must contend with the limits of treating blackness as a measurable unit of difference; it must also acknowledge the richness of geographic meaning that black people make in their daily lives. This would demand a shift in urban research practice to include both qualitative socio-historical narratives and technical data, not only commenting on 'what is' but how things came into being. Speaking to this point, McKittrick writes:

> Identifying the "where" of blackness in positivist terms can reduce black lives to essential measurable "facts" rather than presenting communities that have struggled, resisted, and significantly contributed to the production of space.
> McKittrick and Wood, *No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean* (2007, P.6)

The Negro Motorist Green Book presents a methodological rupture that describes both blackness and space not as fixed categories but as socially and historically produced and shifting. Engaging a participatory, community network of knowledge-makers, it mapped a safe black territory within an extremely dangerous geography, undergirded by the values of white supremacy.

Today, as black urbanists confront the unfinished project of building a liberatory urban spatial politics, *The Green Book* comes alive as a reminder that:

Like Green did with the U.S. Postal Service we must learn to retune everyday systems into moments of extraordinary function;

Expertise must be returned to the experiences of black people, not vested solely in technocratic approaches to urban policy and planning;

Participatory and flexible networks must be capitalized upon to subvert the hegemonic value system of white supremacy.

Here, I perform the initial stages of my engagement with this powerful historical archive in the form of raw annotations. My notes, underlines, and keywords perform a link between Green's original project—the 'matter' or lived experiences of black lives; personal research; and the larger liberatory social politics of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. I choose this working form in order to suggest openings for the development of a new urban knowledge equal to the predicaments of our present conjuncture, in which black lives are lost too often and too soon.

Notes

[1] Sorin, Gretchen Sullivan. "Keep Going: African Americans on the Road in the Era of Jim Crow". University of Ann Arbor. 2009

[2] Gross, Andrew Steven. "The Changing Shape of the American Landscape: Travel, Corporate Expansion, and Consumer Culture, 1845-1945". University of Ann Arbor. 2001
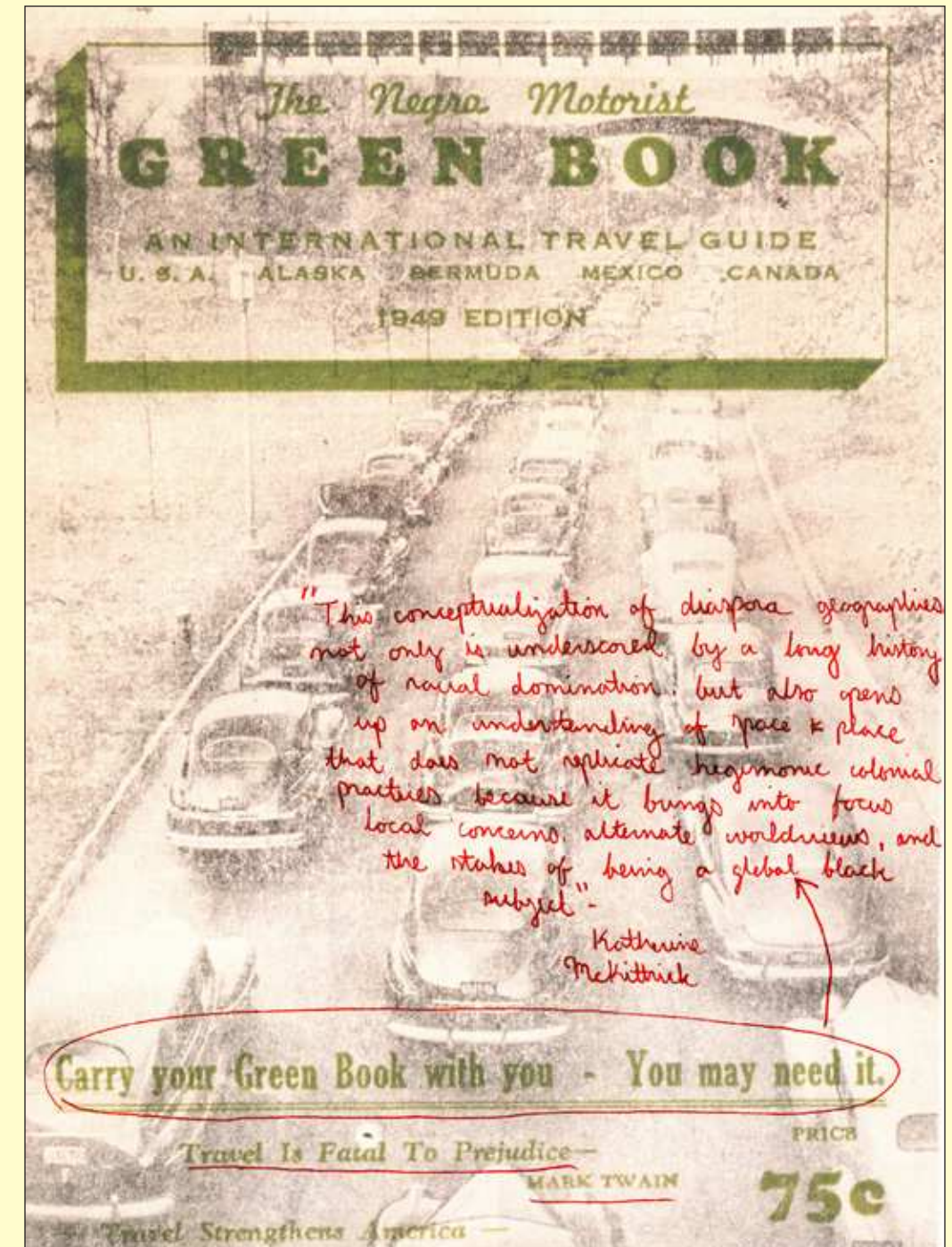
Figure 1. *The Negro Motorist Green Book.* From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

ESTABLISHED 1936

THE Negro Motorist GREEN BOOK

INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of this travel guide in 1936, it has been our idea to give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments and to make his trips more enjoyable.

The Jewish press has long published information about places that are restricted and there are numerous publications that give the gentile whites all kinds of information. But during these long years of discrimination, before 1936 other guides have been published for the Negro, some are still published, but the majority have gone out of business for various reasons.

In 1936 the Green Book was only a local publication for Metropolitan New York, the response for copies was so great it was turned into a national issue in 1937 to cover the United States. This guide while lacking in many respects was accepted by thousands of travelers. Through the courtesy of the United States Travel Bureau of which Mr. Chas. A. R. McDowell was the collaborator on Negro Affairs, more valuable information was secured. With the two working together, this guide contained the best ideas for the Negro traveler. Year after year it grew until 1941 "PM" one of New York's great white newspapers found out about it. Wrote an article about the guide and praised it highly. At the present time the guide contains 80 pages and lists numerous business places, including whites which cater to the Negro trade.

There are thousands of first class business places that we don't know about and can't list, which would be glad to serve the traveler, but it is hard to secure listings of these places since we can't secure enough agents to send us the information. Each year before we go to press the new information is included in the new edition.

When you are traveling please mention the Green Book, in order that they might know how you found their place of business, as they can see that you are strangers. If they haven't heard about this guide, ask them to get in touch with us so that we might list their place.

If this guide has proved useful to you on your trips, let us know. If not, tell us also as we appreciate your criticisms and ideas in the improvement of this guide from which you benefit.

There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment. But until that time comes we shall continue to publish this information for your convenience each year.

1

Figure 2. *The Negro Motorist Green Book.* From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

Arthur Ralph—Advertising Manager

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2

The Green Book helps solve your travel problems'

By Wendell P. Alston, Special Representative, Esso Standard Oil Co.

Through the ages, men of all races have moved from place to place. Some to seek new lands, others to avoid persecution or intolerance and still others for the sake of adventure.

Today, men of all races continue to move and for much the same reasons, though since the days of the foot-traveler and the ox-cart, they travel with much more convenience and comfort and at far greater speed.

For most travelers, whether they travel in modern high-speed motor cars, streamlined Diesel-powered trains, luxurious ocean liners or globe encircling planes, there are hotels of all sizes and classes, waiting and competing for their patronage. Pleasure resorts in the mountains and at the sea shore beckon him. Roadside inns and cabins spot the highways and all are available if he has the price.

For some travelers however, the facilities of many of these places are not available, even though they may have the price, and any traveler to whom they are not available, is thereby faced with many and sometimes difficult problems.

The Negro traveler's inconveniences are many and they are increasing because today so many more are traveling, individually and in groups.

This year for the annual convention of the largest Negro organization in the world, nine special trains in addition to the regularly scheduled trains of a number of railroads were required to transport more than fifty thousand of its members to a mid-western city. Several more thousands made the trip by car and some by plane.

Top ranking orchestras and numerous minor ones, concert singers and various musical organizations are moving over the country in increasing numbers. Touring clubs, like the one in the nation's capital which chartered three of the most modern buses of one of the country's largest bus lines for a trip to California and Mexico this year, are growing in number. More students and teachers and many others in the field of education seeking further training in the country's major centers of learning are traveling. More business men, representing increasing Negro enterprises, are traveling from city to city, and more white corporations cognizant of the mounting purchasing power of the Negro consumer, have Negro representatives in the field, a number of whom, like ourselves, spend half the year traveling.

3

Figure 3. *The Negro Motorist Green Book.* From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

JAMES A. JACKSON (SEATED) AND **WENDELL P. ALSTON**, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ESSO MARKETERS IN THEIR NEW YORK OFFICE

Numerous religious, sorority and fraternity groups travel constantly through the year to quarterly or annual conferences—all faced with the problem of finding suitable places to stay, places to eat and the convenience and comforts which all travelers need and desire.

The GREEN BOOK with its list of hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, beauty shops, barber shops and various other services can most certainly help solve your travel problems. It was the idea of Victor H. Green, the publisher, in introducing the Green Book, to save the travelers of his race as many difficulties and embarrassments as possible.

The many requests we receive for information about it convince us that he has done much to ease the anxieties of the average Negro traveler.

As representatives of the Esso Standard Oil Co., we are pleased to recommend the GREEN BOOK for your travel convenience. Keep one on hand each year and when you are planning your trips, let Esso Touring Service supply you with maps and complete routings, and for real "Happy Motoring"—use Esso Products and Esso Service wherever you find the Esso sign.

reappropriating Capital's interest in black

To critically view and imagine black geographies as interdisciplinary sites ... brings to focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeograp[hic] — Katherine McKittrick

A precedent has been established in the low-priced automotive field by combining handsomeness and beauty with durability and comfort in the interiors of the 1949 Ford cars.

Ford has broken away from the neutral tones which have been traditional for mass production automobiles as designers have turned to textured fabrics popular in fashions and interior decorating.

Of the three new fabrics, the most unusual is a soft gray tweed mixture with a blue stripe which gives the 1949 Ford interiors a freshly tailored look. It has been combined with a bolster of blue-gray broadcloth to protect the upper section of both front and rear seats.

The clock dial has been centered on the panel and placed higher. Night glare is eliminated on all instruments by "black lighting."

Chrome trim throughout the car has been reduced. On the panel it is expressed in a neat arrangement of uniform knobs which control choke, windshield wiper, lights, heater and defroster.

On each door, the chrome strip makes a decorative arc over the heavy artificial leather kick pad at the bottom. Flame-shaped center pillar lights provide plenty of illumination for the interior and for stepping into and out of the car.

The same tailored good result is obtained with the other fabrics — a smooth green striped broadcloth, and two new adaptations of mohair in a green and maroon stripe and green and gray stripe combination. In proper combination, they complement the new Ford exterior colors such as Sea Mist Green, Birch Gray, Arabian Green and Bayview Blue.

The instrument panel of the new Ford has been simplified. All instruments are combined in a single cluster directly in line with the driver's view. Projecting slightly for better visibility, the large figures on a telescoped dial indicate speed, fuel level, rate of battery charge and oil pressure.

Interior door handles pull up instead of down to open the door. This eliminates the possibility of the car doors swinging open if the handle should be pressed down accidentally.

The new Ford's functionalism has been extended to the roomy seats—57 inches wide in front and 60 inches in the rear, plenty of room for six persons.

New windows demonstrate the new trend. The rear window alone is 83 per cent larger—as large as the ordinary windshield. The windshield is deeper and wider. They give a picture window effect to the entire car and greatly improve all around visibility.

middleclass consumers

Figure 4. *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).
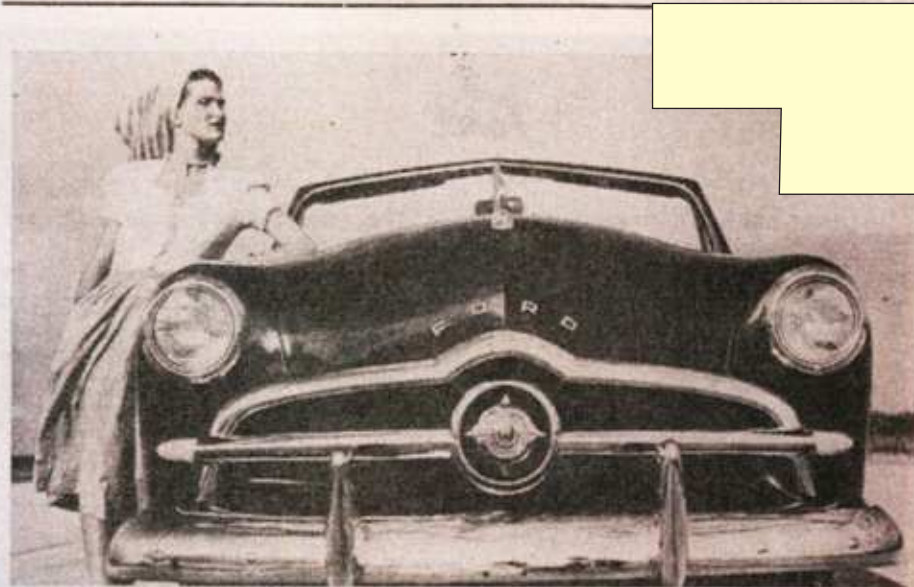
The smooth, flowing lines of the 1949 Ford passenger cars are accented by the simplicity of the air-scoop grille. Fresh air for the pressurized ventilation system also enters through the grille.

The distinctive styling of the 1949 Ford convertible features smooth, flowing contours, full fender-width body and luxurious interior appointments. Completely new, the convertible chassis is doubly reinforced.

IMPORTANT CONVENTION DATES

Organization — National Medical Association
Date of next Convention — August 8-12, 1949
Where to be held — Detroit, Michigan

Organization — Imperial Council Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine
Date of next Convention — August 14-18th, 1949
Where to be held — Detroit, Michigan

Organization — National Technical Association
Date of next Convention — September 1-4th, 1949
Where to be held — Chicago, Ill. (Probably)

6

RESERVATION BUREAU

Going to take a trip, attend some convention — make sure of your accommodations before you leave.

alludes to the material violence of white supremacy

HOUSING CONDITIONS MAKE THIS NECESSARY

Reservations for all Hotels, Tourist Homes and Vacation Resorts throughout the United States, Alaska, Mexico and Bermuda can be made for you through our Reservation Bureau.

We have contacts with all Hotels, Tourist Homes and Vacation Resorts. Send us a list of the cities that you expect to pass through, the dates wanted, how many in your party and have us make your reservations. Fees are moderate.

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VICTOR H. GREEN & CO.

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EXPLANATION

No travel guide is ever perfect with the changing conditions, not only in the world, but also in the United States. The listings contained in this guide are given to you just as it is given to us from its source. There is a possibility that the address might be a few numbers out of the way—or the business has moved, so that by the time you receive your guide, start to use it you will find some discrepancies. This is due to the fact, from the time that the guide goes to press until you get it a few months have passed and many changes have taken place in the business world. This we can not help and we don't want you to get the idea that this guide is of no value; we try to have it as correct as possible. Each year these listings are checked before we go to press.

Our guides are published for every one, hence we have supplied you with any number of places in cities and towns so that one can select what they want within their price range. We do not recommend any of these places, although hundreds of them could be. But due to the thousands of listings, it is impossible to inspect all, so we leave it to your decision. We would welcome letters from you giving the name and address of any place that you feel that isn't up to our standards of a first class business place. They will be removed, which would give not only you, but other travelers the benefit of only first class places.

In order that you won't find any difficulty in finding the kind of business that you are looking for, we have placed the listings under their proper classification in cities and towns.

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Figure 5. *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

EASTMAN

TOURIST HOMES
J. P. Cooper—211 College St.

MACON

HOTELS
Douglas—361 Broadway
Richmond—319 Broadway
TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. E. C. Moore—122 Spring St.
Brs. F. W. Henndon—159 1st Ave.
RESTAURANTS
Mables—Main Street
Red Front—417 Wall St.
Jean's—429 Cotton Avenue
West Side—961 Dempsey Ave.
BEAUTY PARLORS
Marquiata—554 New Street
La Bonita—455 Cotton Avenue
Carrie's—133 Forest Avenue
Lula Life—425 E. 2nd Street
TAILORS
Huschel—264 Broadway
Community—550 - 3rd Avenue
SERVICE STATIONS
Anderson's—Pursley at Pond Street

SAVANNAH

RESTAURANTS
Dreamland—43rd & Hopkins St.
BEAUTY PARLORS
Rose—348 Price St.
SCHOOL OF BEAUTY CULTURE
456 Montgomery St.
SERVICE STATIONS
Gibson's—442 West Broad St.
DRUG STORES
Moores'—57th & Florence
TAILORS
Halls—1014 W. Broad St.
TRAILER PARK
Cocoanut Grove—Mrs. J. Cox

WAY CROSS

HOTELS
Cooper—Oak St.
TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. K. G. Scarlett—843 Reynolds
Smith's—State St.
RESTAURANTS
Paradise—Oak St.
BARBER SHOPS
Johnson's—Oak St.
SERVICE STATIONS
Union Cab—State St.
GARAGES
State Street—State Street

IDAHO

BOISE

HOTELS
California—1110½ Main St.
TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. S. Love—1164 River St.
Open Door Mission—1159 River St.
RESTAURANTS
Union Pacific Greyhound Depot—9th and Bannock Sts.

POCATELLO

TOURIST HOMES
A. M. E. Parsnage—625 E. Fremont St.
Tourist Park—E. Fremont St.

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO

HOTELS
MANOR HOUSE HOTEL
4635 SOUTH PARKWAY
Tel. Li. 8-9312 — Li. 8-9840
Ritz Hotel—409 East Oakwood Blvd.
Hotel Como—5204-6 South Parkway
Green Gables—2920 S. Lake Park Ave.
Du Sable—764 Oakwood Blvd.
Evans Hotel—733 East 61st St.
Pershing Hotel—6400 Cottage Grove Ave.
Southway Hotel—6014 South Parkway
Spencer Hotel—300 E. Garfield Blvd.
Grand Hotel—5044 South Parkway
Y. M. C. A.—3763 Wabash Ave.
S & S HOTEL
4142-48 SOUTH PARKWAY
Y. W. C. A.—4559 South Parkway
Monarch Hotel—4530 Prairie Ave.
Albion Hotel—4009 Lake Park Ave.
Prairie Hotel—2836 Prairie Ave.
Eberhart Hotel—6050 Eberhart Ave.
Hotel Elliot—2645-47 Washington Blvd.
The Don Hotel—3337 Michigan Ave.
Harlem Hotel—5020 S. Michigan Ave.
RESTAURANTS
Morris'—410 E. 47th St.
Wrights—3753 S. Wabash Ave.
A & J—105 E. 51st St.
Pitts—812 E. 39th St.
Palm Gardens—720 E. Oakwood Blvd.
400 Club—715 E. 63rd St.
Pioneer—553 E. 43rd St.
Pershing—755 East 64th Street
TOURIST HOMES
DAY'S VISITORS HOME
3616 SO. PARKWAY
Mrs. Ethel M. Day, Mgr.
Mabel Bank—712 E. 44th St.
Poro College—4415 S. Parkway
BEAUTY PARLORS
Matties'—4212 Cottage Grove Ave.
BARBER SHOPS
Bank's—209 E. 39th St.

[handwritten annotation in margin: individuals turning their homes to rest]

What to See in Chicago

Every section of Chicago is served by the Chicago surface lines. Car stops are indicated by White Bands on the poles at street intersections. 98% of the population live within three blocks of one or more surface lines.

Below are listed many of the principal points of interest in Chicago.

AIRPORTS — Chicago Municipal Airport — 63rd St. and Cicero Ave. One of the nations finest airports and the greatest scene of aeronautical activity in the United States. Board southbound State St. cars on State St. or Clark-Wentworth or through Route No. 22 cars in Clark St. and transfer West on 63rd St. to Cicero Ave.

AMUSEMENTS

Riverside Park—Belmont and Western Aves. A large summer amusement park. Take Riverview-Larrabee cars at Dearborn and Randolph Sts. or Clybourn Ave. cars at Wells St. direct to park. By transfer north on Western Ave. or west on Belmont Ave. direct to park.

BASEBALL PARKS

Cubs Park (Wrigley Field) Clark and Addison Sts. (1100 W.—3600 N.) Home grounds of the Chicago National League baseball team. Take Clark-Wentworth or through Route No. 22 cars on Clark St. north to main entrance.

White Sox Park (Comiskey Park) West 35th St. and Shields Ave. Home grounds of the Chicago American League baseball team. Take Clark-Wentworth or through Route No. 22 cars on Clark St., south to 35th St.

and Wentworth Ave. Baseball park, one block west.

MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRIES

Central Manufacturing District — Between Ashland Ave., Morgan St., 35th St. and Pershing Road (1600 W. to 1000 W. and 3500 S. to 3900 S.) Also along Pershing Road between Ashland and Western Aves. This district contains about 250 nationally known manufacturing concerns. Take south bound Ashland Ave. cars on State St. and transfer on 35th St.

Union Stock Yards — Between Pershing Road, 47th St., Halstead St. and S. Ashland Ave. (3900 S. to 4700 S.) (800 W. to 1600 W.) The world's famous center of the packing industry. Take south bound Halstead St. cars on Clark St., or Wallace-Racine cars on State St. direct to main entrance at Halstead and Root Sts.

MUSEUMS

Chicago Historical Museum — The best collection of American historical mementos are displayed here. Relics of Columbus, Lincoln, Spanish explorers, the French voyageurs and the Indian Northwest are shown. A real education. Admission Free Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Address, in Lincoln Park at Clark St. and North Ave.

Adler Planetarium and Astronomical Museum—Located on Lake Michigan at Roosevelt Road (1200 S.) and open to the public. Demonstrations with lectures at 11 A.M. and 3 P.M. on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. At 11 A.M., 3 and 8 P.M. on Tuesday and Friday; at 3 and 4 P.M. on Sunday. Admission Free on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

Figure 6. *The Negro Motorist Green Book.* From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

Robbins, Illinois Steps Out In Front

By GEORGE W. SHEPPARD

The fastest growing town in the state of Illinois is one that is OWNED AND OPERATED BY NEGROES.* It is Robbins, Illinois, located seventeen miles from Chicago. Ninety-five per cent of the more than six thousand inhabitants OWN THEIR OWN HOMES.

But Robbins is no "Boom Town." It was founded in 1917 by Thomas J. Kellar and has since experienced a slow but sure growth.

It owes the rapid strides it is making at present to a number of factors. First, perhaps, is the fact that the city of Chicago, like most cities, has an acute housing shortage and its inhabitants, looking for places to live, have been attracted by the many advantages that Robbins offers.

Secondly, the town is a "natural" as a resort. It affords many picnic grounds and is an ideal place for summer outings. Many lakes are close by and inhabitants claim that fishing is good too.

Thirdly, the courage, the foresight and ability of the present mayor, Hollis L. Reeves, is bringing good, sound, practical business into the local government. In that way the village is in a good position to cope with the many problems that a fast growing community must face. He is ably assisted by Misses Bertha L. Hendricks, deputy clerk, and Bessie M. Stephens, secretary to the administration. William March is chief of police with thirteen patrolmen working under his direction. Milton A. Robinson is chief of detectives.

The village is run by six trustees in addition to the mayor. They are Fletcher Tillman, DeWitt Williams, Joseh Moore, Lee Riston and Victor Anderson. Together they have guided the destinies of the community for the last eight years.

National Leaders Started in Robbins

Edward A. Starks, a business man in Robbins for 41 years, recalls that Herman E. Moore, now Federal judge of the Virgin Islands, served as Village attorney.

William L. Dawson, congressman from the First Illinois District, also served the Village as attorney. Mr. Stark states that they helped to set up the legal machinery for the town and that the village owes them a debt of gratitude. Legal business and the courts are conducted by one elected judge, Ernest Lemon; Village attorney. Today there is little crime in Robbins.

No Prejudice and Restrictions

The change that the visitor sees in Robbins now is only of population but of industry. Where there were shelters covered with tar paper, there are homes built of stone, concrete and marble. Water is supplied from the city of Chicago and efforts are being made to increase the supply. Because of the absence of prejudice and restrictions, opportunities for the Negro are unlimited.

There are ten churches of various denominations, one centrally located school of which William E. Jackson is principal and a community high school in the adjoining city of Blue Island. There are sixty places of business and two physicians who serve Robbins; Dr. Waurice Winston, county physician ad Dr. Williams. The Rev.

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Matthew Anthony is pastor of Greater Hope Baptist Church, the largest from the standpoint of membership of the ten churches. The court, the city jail and the fire department, headed by Edward Willett, are housed in the administration building.

One Can Play Here, Too!

But all is not work in this throbbing community. There are night spots that would do justic to Chicago or New York's brightest. The oldest and most popular is Walter (Pop) Flowers place. A complete floor show is found at the Apex Club. The Community Club and Grill, operated by Williams Rhodes and Orr is another to which pleasure seekers throng.

The future of Robbins, the full realization of Thomas J. Kellar's dream, is in the hands of the straight thinking citizens who will refuse to get lost in a maze of politics and internal strife and who will continue in office those who are working night and day for its betterment. IT IS WORTH THE TROUBLE TO GO OUT AND TAKE A LOOK AT AN EXPERIMENT OF AN EXHIBITION OF WHAT NEGROES WORKING TOGETHER CAN DO. Indeed, it would not be a bad idea to pitch in and help.

* During the last eight years Robbins built 582 units. Per cent of increase 139.2, according to Real Estate Research Corp. Covering 30 cities and villages.

Take west bound Madison St. cars on Monroe St., direct to stadium.

Coliseum — 1513 S. Wabash Ave. (50 E) Auditorium seats 14,000 persons. Take south bound Cottage Grove, Indiana, Stony Island - Wabash or Thru Route No. 1 or No. 3 cars on Wabash Ave. direct to Coliseum.

Soldiers Field — 14th St. and Lake Shore (1400 S) Take south bound Clark St. cars, except those marked Clark-Downtown or south bound cars on Wabash Ave., except cars marked Wabash-Harrison and transfer to east bound Roosevelt Road cars to terminal. Walk one block south to entrance. Address on Lake Front at 14th St.

Race Track—Six months racing and six real tracks. Between May 1st and October 31st. Reached by railroads, also good automobile highways. Parking spaces are available for the motorist at all tracks.

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Figure 7. *The Negro Motorist Green Book.* From the Collections of The Henry Ford (autolife.umd.umich.edu).

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Memory and the City-Body

Ghetto Biennale and "Jalousie en Couleur":
The Politics of Post-Earthquake Aesthetics in Port-Au-Prince

Carolyn Duffey

Port-au-Prince, capital of the island nation of Haiti, which is often dismissed as "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere," made international headlines when a catastrophic earthquake struck it on 12 January 2010, killing over 300,000 people. Barring intense media coverage of the earthquake, both Port-au-Prince and Haiti itself are actually very little known or understood in the U.S., despite the country's close proximity to the coastline of Florida and the many Haitian immigrants (606,000, according to the 2012 census)[1] living in the U.S., from Miami to Brooklyn. Right-wing American tele-evangelist Pat Robertson claimed that the nation experienced the terrible tragedy of the earthquake because Haitians have sworn a pact with the devil through their vodou religion,[2] (a spiritual tradition that Haitians consider to be at the heart of their revolutionary history).[3] *NY Times* columnist David Brooks wrote that Haiti had "'progress-resistant cultural influences' including 'the influence of the voodoo [sic] religion,'" which would doubtless impede post-earthquake reconstruction or development.[4] On the other hand, Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat spoke post-earthquake of the dangers of the much-repeated claim by the international media of Haitians' admirable, yet somewhat tragic "resilience" in the aftermath of seemingly unending Job-like difficulties.[5] In these mainstream Western narratives, it is easy to see the reproduction of racialized colonial tropes of the demonized native or conversely, the noble savage-like Haitian, that continue to inform Western knowledge about this island nation.

Such false and misleading information about Haiti circulates, in fact, for reasons that are highly motivated, dating back to the time of the Haitian Revolution, a remarkable 13-year slave rebellion resulting in the first free black republic in the world in 1804, a time when the trans-Atlantic slave trade had not yet been abolished, nor obviously slavery itself. As Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot says, "The Haitian Revolution thus entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened,"[6] even by the most radical Jacobins of the French Revolution. France, despite its own concurrent revolution, was also a colonial power facing the loss of an extraordinarily lucrative colony and had many reasons to silence this first successful slave rebellion. It did so with extensive postwar indemnities and diplomatic threats. The United States, with its own large slave population worked politically and militarily from 1804 on to destabilize Haiti, including the 1915-34 occupation by US Marines; Cold War-influenced support for the 30-year Duvalier dictatorships; and the more recent involvement in the two coups (1991 and 2004) against Haiti's first democratically-elected, populist president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.[7]

I re-frame this deeply distorted Haitian narrative—the construction of which has been ongoing since Thomas Jefferson's horror at the news of a free black republic so close to the US border[8]—by examining and contrasting two Port-au-Prince neighborhoods, both referred to as *bidonvilles* or slums: Jalousie, located in the hills above the city center; and the

neighborhood of Grand Rue, an older crumbling area bordering the southern end of Port-au-Prince's main street, Boulevard Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Both communities are involved in forms of post-earthquake urban renewal (although Grand Rue's project began before the earthquake and has increased in visibility and viability in its aftermath), and both engage Haiti's rich aesthetic history and spiritual traditions. The ever-present iconography of vodou, the influence of early French painting schools, and a later "primitive" style promoted and critiqued by the Port-au-Prince Centre d'Art [9] have produced conflicting connotations for Haitian art, a situation which is at stake in various ways in these two communities. That is to say, Haitian aesthetic work has been perceived, particularly by the external art world, as intriguingly but equivocally "traditional." For example, minor American artist DeWitt Peter's initiation of the Port-au-Prince Centre D'Art in 1944 to teach the already well-known and respected Haitian artists, like Hector Hyppolite, Western pictoral technique remains a significant point of contention.[10]

I argue, using Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre's concepts of conceived space, perceived space, and lived space, or representational space,[11] that the politics of art—here I refer to both the political uses of aesthetics and aesthetic practices with political resonance—currently are highly significant in the production of daily life in the two neighborhoods.[12] Furthermore, the kind of everyday life that is produced in Jalousie and Grand Rue both complicates and defies the narrative of Haiti's "tragic" or "progress-resistant" history.

Jalousie and Grand Rue: An Introduction

The following series of images depict pre-and post-earthquake Jalousie, and the art and living spaces of Grand Rue.

Figure 1. Jalousie pre-earthquake *Haiti Sociètè* (fair use)

Figure 2. "Jalousie en couleurs," post-earthquake 2010, Haiti Internet.com (fair use)

Figure 3. Big Chair by Joe Winter at the 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013. Photo by Multiversal Services

Figure 5. Sculpture by Andre Eugene in opening parade for 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013. Photo by Multiversal Services

"Jalousie en couleurs" is current Haitian President Michel Martelly's (elected 2011) project to beautify this *bidonville* by painting the facades of structures in rainbow colors. This choice of aesthetic is a nod to well-known Haitian artist Préfète Duffaut, who was famous for his fantastical canvases detailing multi-hued cities on Haitian hills.[13] *"Jalousie en couleurs"* simply beautified this shantytown—which lacked a sewage system, running water or electricity—because the community is clearly visible to the nearby wealthy hill neighborhood of Pétionville, developing several post-earthquake luxury tourist hotels. For example, even a "Junior Suite" at the recently built Royal Oasis costs $350 per night.[14] Notably, these hotels look directly upon the newly colorful Jalousie.

Grand Rue, on the other hand, is internally very active in its grassroots aesthetic production by a community of artists who call themselves *"Atis Rezistans."* This is a densely populated neighborhood in downtown Port-au-Prince, characterized by narrow streets and alleyways, surrounded by auto repair shops and scrapyards. Here, homes double as ateliers and large sculptures appear at their doorways, in their small interiors, or in the yards outside. *Atis Rezistans* was founded by Jean Hérard Celeur and André Eugène in 2000. The collective consists of talented, self-trained sculptors, some previously employed as wood workers in the neighborhood, who inventively combine discarded materials from Grand Rue's streets in their works. Along with plastic and metal detritus, the leftovers of modernity, they also include bones from the huge nearby cemetery, La Cimetière, in their art.[15] Haitian cemeteries frequently feature above-ground tombs or vaults, which can hold numerous bodies. Because the cost of internment can be high, families can rent a tomb. If the tomb is neglected for a significant period of time, and the bodies decompose, owners discard the bones to make way for other bodies in the tombs.[16] Bones and especially skulls, feature significantly in *Atis Rezistans'* sculptures. These human remains performatively cycle death in life, in a vodou-influenced art practice. Some of the artists, who are also practicing vodou *oungans* (priests), incorporate their altars, replete with bones, in sculptural assemblages. In the last five years, *Atis Rezistans* have expanded their work to produce what they call the 'Ghetto Biennale,' to resist the bourgeois gallery world of both Haiti and global art exhibitions and specifically to "expose social, racial, class and geographical immobility" in the art world.[17] Not incidentally, improvements in the economic health of this neighborhood, including that of numerous Grand Rue children in artist apprenticeship training, have long been a part of this arts community. The 2010 earthquake seriously injured many here, and interrupted, but by no means ended this art practice. The Ghetto Biennale continued in 2011 and 2013 after its 2009 inception.

Figure 5. ISWA II - Chabon by Joe Winter at the 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013. Photo by Multiversal Services

The neighborhoods of Jalousie and Grand Rue are, thus, compelling sites to investigate the relations between aesthetics and politics and their role in the production of Port-au-Prince's patterns of urbanization. That both *bidonvilles* are a product of Haiti's particular history of colonization and rebellion is undeniable. I rehearse these histories in brief below, in order to shed light on the ways in which so much of the past of this remarkable nation has been omitted or consciously suppressed in Western contexts. Erroneous narratives continue to circulate in particularly destructive ways since the earthquake of 2010, and inform Western and Haitian elite attitudes to reconstruction.

I begin by exploring the legacy of French colonial policies on economic and class divisions in both rural and urban areas, paying particular attention to how they affected urban spatial divisions that underlie the creation of Jalousie and Grand Rue to this day. Thereafter, I discuss the longstanding and enduring post-revolution interference by Western countries and international organizations in Haitian internal affairs, specifically that of the US, France and to some degree, Canada and the UN more recently. Finally, I expand on the connections between aesthetics and urban space- making in the communities of Jalousie and Grand Rue. Specifically, I comment on the entangled relations between the political economy of art and the globalized art world; the ways in which the cultural and spiritual practice of vodou figure s prominently in the lived experience of Port-au-Prince residents; and post-earthquake reconstruction strategies in these two *bidonvilles*. I conclude by reiterating that very different aesthetic approaches have served to reconfigure Jalousie and Grand Rue since 2010, affecting the ways in which these urban spaces are perceived and *practiced* in Haiti's capital.

French Colonial Legacy in Haiti

Haiti was France's richest colony in the 18th century. The making of spatial divisions in Haiti, which resonate and manifest today in the creation of the urban *bidonvilles* and wealthy Pétionville, began with French colonial policies. In *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History,* Laurent Dubois states that 1,000,000 slaves were brought from Africa to Saint Domingue with huge numbers dying young; about 500,000 slaves were present in Haiti at the time of the beginning of the revolution in 1791. At that point, the composition of the colony was approximately 32,000 whites (many of whom lived in great opulence in the then northern capital of Cap Français, now Cap Haïtian); 24,000 *gens de couleur,* free mixed race descendants of planters and their slaves, who often owned slaves themselves; and 500,000 black slaves.[18] In his 1797 work describing the colony, (*Description Topographique, Physique, Civile, Politique et Historique de la Partie Français de l'Ile de Saint-Domingue*), French visitor to Saint Domingue, Moreau de Saint-Méry, included 32 pages recounting the recognized color combinations of non-whites, which the white planters used for control.[19]

These color divisions were quite significant in the many phases of the Haitian uprising. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a freed black slave who ultimately declared Haitian independence in 1804, initially fought with revolutionary hero Toussaint L'Ouverture in the French army against the Spanish and English attempts to take Saint Domingue from a weakened French state during its own revolution. But he then turned against the French and the mulatto generals like Alexandre Pétion and André Rigaud, the sons of wealthy white planters, both educated in Paris, who were

still fighting on the side of the French, in order to win independence from France. Pétion and Rigaud did ultimately unite with the black generals fighting to rid Haiti of the French when Napoleon demanded the return of slavery, which had been rescinded under Jacobin rule.[20] The finally victorious Dessalines proclaimed that henceforth all Haitians would be known as "blacks."[21] Nevertheless, the colorism/racism of the colonial era defined class stratification, subsequent land use and urban divisions in modern Haiti (as seen obviously in the name of wealthy Pétionville in the hills above downtown Port-au-Prince). Dubois further notes that post-revolution, most ex-slaves refused to return to the plantation system, which leaders felt was the only option given the colonial infrastructure for monoculture exports. The former took the rural areas for small farming plots; the elites consequently acquiesced and decided to control the ports, export trade, and the state (thus the urban areas), setting up a hierarchy that remains largely in place today[22], though the rural farmers have not maintained their land. The story now turns to the range of other kinds of post-revolution foreign intervention.

Continuing Colonialist Interventions in Post-Revolutionary Haiti

No state would recognize post-revolutionary Haiti, for fear of the effects on their own slave populations. In 1838 France finally agreed to recognize Haiti's independence but only after Haiti paid them (for taking France's colony) 150 million gold francs ($3 billion in today's currency)[23], effectively impoverishing the country for most of the 19th century.

The U.S. did not acknowledge Haiti as a nation until after the Civil War and invaded and occupied the country from 1917 to 1934, while U.S. bankers obtained shares in Haiti's National Bank, to exert control over the government's fiscal policies, making Haiti a political and financial protectorate of the United States. At the same time, the U.S. created an army for the country designed to protect the interests of US investors and Haitian elites. Duvalier dictators, Papa and Baby Doc, later used these forces to terrorize the population.[24],[25] The more recent intervention by the U.S. consisted in provided aid to the Haitian elites through School of the Americas-trained military from the Dominican Republic, who worked with French and Canadian support to oppose the presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide via the 1991 and 2004 coups against his government. Aristide had been attempting to finally include the Haitian poor—those descendants of the half million slaves—by instigating literacy programs, a minimum wage law, and medical care for the great majority of Haitians who had none. His democratic populist program was enormously popular in Haiti but seen as a threat to U.S. interests. The U.S. therefore effectively worked to undermine him.[26] This colonial and postcolonial political history in Haiti has contributed greatly to the class divisions that are so visually apparent in contemporary Port-au-Prince.

Additionally, foreign debt has contributed even more severely to the recent destruction and reconstruction of Port-au-Prince neighborhoods. Since the dramatic end of the reign of the Duvaliers in 1987, the huge debt incurred by Papa Doc's and Baby Doc's lavish personal spending and Swiss bank accounts has had to be continually repaid, mainly to the World Bank and the IMF. And when President Aristide was returned to Haiti by the US in 1994, after being in exile for 3 years following the 1991 coup deposing him, he was forced to agree to neoliberal structural adjustment policies as the prerequisite for international loan aid to the country.[27] This meant, among other things, ending

protectionist tariffs on imported food. Haitian rice farmers (rice is a staple of the Haitian diet) were devastated as cheap American rice flooded the country. Consequently, many rural farmers left their land and moved south to Port-au-Prince into informal, unsafe housing, doubtless increasing the loss of life during the earthquake. Bill Clinton apologized in 2010 for forcing such a policy on Haiti during his presidency, but this was too late as rice production in Haiti had come to a halt and Port-au-Prince had become more unlivable for the urban poor and rural migrants.[28]

Some aspects of recent foreign intervention that have worsened since the earthquake are the presence of various international aid groups including, a fragmented network of the military mission of the U.N. (MINUSTAH), which began during the coup periods; the presence of U.S. aid groups; and a very large number of other international NGOs, flooding the country since 2010. In late 2010, a year after the earthquake, Ricardo Seitenfus, the Brazilian head of the O.A.S. mission, said that the U.N. troops were only in Haiti to prop up a "bankrupt vision" for the country, making "Haiti a capitalist country, a platform for export for the U.S. market," with no concern for the needed help for agrarian self-sufficiency.[29] Additionally, the U.N. infuriated Haitians after a number of Nepali troops in Haiti came down with a form of cholera known previously only in Nepal, which then spread rapidly in Haiti. Lack of concern by the U.N. for infectious care was disastrous. This form of cholera eventually took the lives of 8,500 Haitians. The U.N. refused to admit culpability.[30] Furthermore, with regard to the ubiquitous NGOs, Seitenfus claimed that Haiti has been reduced to a handy place for "professional training" for an increasingly youthful group of workers; as he puts it, "Haiti, I can tell you, is not the place for amateurs."[31] As for results from the outpouring of Western money for Haitian aid post-earthquake, virtually all has been controlled by U.S. and European NGOs. In terms of U.S. aid, Georgiana Nienaber in *The Huffington Post* reported in the summer of 2013 of the "$1.5 billion in contracts and grants awarded, more than half went to the top 10 recipients of global USAID awards," mostly for companies "Inside the Beltway" and only 0.7 percent went to Haitian businesses.[32] In February 2014, journalist Jason O'Brien wrote that only 1.4 percent of all the aid raised has gone for probably the most pressing need after the earthquake: safe, permanent housing.[33]

Vodou's Production of a Counterhegemonic Space

While the omitted political and economic history of Haiti is crucial to understanding the conflicted contemporary urbanism of Port-au-Prince, a central factor in Haiti's philosophical and cultural life, the spiritual practice of vodou, presents another way of framing urban space in Port-au-Prince. Henri Lefebvre's notions of a social space which resists the hegemony of the dominant class is helpful to consider the ways in which the two *bidonvilles* of Jalousie and Grand Rue incorporate the spiritual system and philosophical framing of the religious practice of vodou in response to the particular colonial and postcolonial histories that have produced urban Haiti. I argue that, given the centrality of this system of performative spiritual practice and culture to everyday life in Jalousie and Grand Rue, both *bidonvilles* present aesthetic, political and philosophical alternatives to the so-called globalized modernity of post-earthquake re-construction in Port-au-Prince. Specifically, vodou performativity creatively addresses the forces of multi-national development producing Jalousie today, and those of the global art market impressing themselves upon the Ghetto Biennale of Grand Rue.

Lefebvre speaks of a conceived urban space, ordained by the controlling class which, in Port-au-Prince, has constructed the rigid color/class coded *communes* where the poor and black live without water or sewage systems, or livable housing, many close to the center of the city and the port. From the end of the revolution on, elites controlled the cities and certainly the capital. Thus, the descendents of the free lighter-skinned *gens de couleur* divided the city space between *centre ville* for the poor, and hill neighborhoods for themselves—with bougainvillea-laced houses, French-influenced night clubs, and water trucked in from ships and delivered to tanks situated on the roofs of these houses.[34]

Lefebvre's formulations of both perceived urban space (socially produced despite constraints) and representational urban space, (that is, space seen as otherwise in daily life or imagined differently, for example in art), on the other hand, are useful to uncover how, despite the so-called administrative terrain of urban divisions, the lived collective experience as well as the imaginative aesthetic *détournement* (diversion) of the neighborhood space escapes expected hegemonic control. [35] In such a formulation of space, the meaning and experience of vodou is highly significant. To understand how the practice of this religion relates to urban processes, it is necessary to approach and re-examine representations of this cultural and spiritual system that the West, particularly France and the U.S., have constructed (to their advantage), as the ultimate indicator of the "barbaric" amongst the darker peoples of the world. [36] Haitian elites have frequently acquiesced to this conception of Haitian "backwardness" for their own purposes. President Martelly himself has rescinded the Aristide-era declaration of vodou as a national religion alongside Catholicism.

Vodou traces its origins to the West African religion of the Yoruba people of Dahomey, now Benin, which sees the natural world as a readable space of spirits (*lwa*) who are linked specifically to families and communities. Within Haiti it is a wholly collective religion, where the group, directed by the *oungan or mambo,* (priest or priestess) helps a suppliant cross over, to be between this world and another or between life and death, to meet the *lwa* and/or ancestors. Significantly, there is no particular end to the vodou experience. This experience is to enter and re-consider a disordered state of being, very different from the Christian's individual journey directed toward redemption. For Haitians under slavery and colonialism, the practice of this religion was necessarily covert, and it consequently became a syncretic system of Yoruba *lwa* who borrowed and added the powers of Catholic saints to their own. Vodou was also recast as a space for new and angrier *lwa* who resisted the horrors of slavery. These figure s were hidden under Catholic iconography. Saint Peter, for example, became the image of Legba, the crucial *lwa* of the crossroads, who limps as a reminder of the chains of slavery.[37] From an ontological perspective, vodou refuses the dualistic (good and evil) and teleological Christian philosophical system of an end in heaven or hell and offers a world in which the twinning of life and death is ever present. In practice it presents a performative and cyclical worldview.[38]

In Leah Gordon's photographic study of *Kanaval* in Jacmel--a small city to the south of the capital hosting the most dramatic version of Haitian carnival--she documents how this space of in-betweenness is precisely the space of vodou in the streets of that small city.[39] *Lwa*-masked performers who visually suggest current figure s or issues of power relations evoke the ongoing transformation of the dead and the living. Political figure s can die out and return in various

forms. The murdered Dessalines himself is said to have transformed into a *lwa*. The *lansetkòd*, hooded *kanaval* men with bare chests smeared with sugar cane juice and ashes, figuring the death of slaves, dramatically force their bodies and the narrative of slavery and colorism on the *kanaval* participants.[40] In effect, the dispossessed carve out a creative space in plain sight of the ruling class in Haitian *kanaval*, performing the practice of vodou publicly. The spiritual system has been at the heart of Haitian resistance from the time of the first major uprising in the Haitian Revolution prompted by a vodou ceremony at Bois Caïman[41] and is manifest in various responses to post-earthquake Port-au Prince in Jalousie and Grand Rue.

Jalousie: "Urban Botox"

According to its inhabitants, after the earthquake Jalousie saw itself as a "sacred place" because it was the only neighborhood in Port-au-Prince in which no houses were destroyed by the 7.0 quake.[42] President Martelly, on the other hand, saw these still standing, if dilapidated, gray or beige, mostly cement buildings as an opportunity for himself.

Critics in Haiti and elsewhere considered this problematic. Amy Wilenz of *The Nation* calls Martelly's plan for Jalousie "Urban Botox."[43] The painting of these houses, some only on the visible sides which face Pétionville, in a multitude of Caribbean colors, using $1.4 million of earthquake aid money, was presented by the government as a way to honor the well-known Haitian artist Préfète Duffaut magical realist "cities on the hill" paintings. [44] Duffaut is certainly popular in Haiti. However, considering the way in which an artist with a type of picturesque style is perceived in the West, certainly the Western art world, the use of his work here poses questions about advertising Jalousie's "transformation" as a positive portrayal of a re-constructed, modernizing post-earthquake Haiti. The repetitive use of photographs of the newly red, yellow and blue Jalousie are intended for Western audiences who have a view of the neighborhood from the recently constructed, private sector wealthy tourist area of Port-au-Prince. Creating a facade for a community, painted in cheerful, traditionally bright Caribbean colors, for those who are in fact densely and poorly housed, evades addressing the material needs of this community, is condescending, and plays heavily on colonialist stereotypes.

Furthermore, President Martelly publicized the project in Jalousie by emphasizing the designation of this *bidonville* as a relocation area for those in earthquake camps, since it had housing that was still standing. This would then allow a very visible Port-au-Prince re-construction project to be paid for with earthquake aid money, enhancing his own reputation as an effective and concerned politician. However, no additional housing, sewage, water or electricity systems were being planned for the arrival of the camp dwellers. And this was already a community of at least 50,000 people where women carried five gallon water jugs to hill top homes everyday, and residents used candles or dangerous freelance wiring pulled from the weak municipal grid, for light. This was and continues to be a community serving Pétionville and two other wealthy neighborhoods nearby, Montagne Noire and Bourdon, as nannies, cooks, gardeners or maids (if they have jobs at all).[45]

Michel Martelly is known as a "stealth Duvalierist" in Haiti.[46] His notorious *compas* musical performances in the latter years of Baby Doc's rule, specifically for that dictator, and his support for the coups deposing President Aristide, which forced Aristide's populist Lavalas party into hiding, were not seen as a problem by the Western aid industry. He has welcomed the neoliberal, private sector development model into a society, which, outside of the tiny elite class, finds this mode antithetical to its needs. The vertical, market-driven movement toward "modernity" includes low-wage, sweatshop urban labor for the poor, along with environmentally devastating economic undertakings like the joint US - South Korea Caracal garment factory project,[47] and has no connection to Haitian desires for community-run urban reconstruction and agrarian aid for rural regions of the country. It is highly significant that on 10 January, 2015, 5 years, to the day, after the earthquake, demonstrations against Martelly's rule and his several years' attempt to stop parliamentary elections occurred throughout Port-au-Prince.[48]

BBC's "World Have Your Say" radio news program went to Jalousie, on June 18, 2013,[49] shortly after the transformation of *"Jalousie en couleurs,"* to interview inhabitants. Those interviewed said briefly that they liked the newly painted houses, however partial the paint job, but were much more interested in discussing the water and electricity needs of their *commune*. Several of the interviewees talked about a 20-30 meter mosaic wall mural initiated by Patrick Villaire in 2007,[50] called "Water is Life," and revered by the community who view it regularly as it is situated near the only water spigots of the *bidonville*, which still exist post-earthquake. Images, including that of a woman rising from the water, fill the large tile mural, emphasizing Jalousie's need for water along with the ambiguous powers of La Sirène, a vodou figure linked to Agwe, the *lwa* of the sea. She can be evoked for help, while her figure suggests the simultaneous birth and death link to water.[51] Jalousie's space, marked as "sacred" for its still standing houses after the destruction and many deaths of the earthquake, can be re-imagined as a place of re-birth as inhabitants each day walk down to fill their buckets at the site of La Sirène's mural and discuss the power of community action for running water. The political and the philosophical aspects of water issues have already coincided as 1,000 Jalousie residents protested the planned government demolition of many homes in their community for flood danger reasons, potentially affecting the wealthy suburbs nearby, without government construction of any other houses for the displaced of Jalousie.[52] The post-earthquake "modernization" of this Port-au-Prince neighborhood, via the cynical use of one kind of Haitian aesthetic practice to further enrich Haitian elites and western corporations with NGO money has been actively rejected by the residents of Jalousie, who claim their urban space both socially and aesthetically. Using Lefebvre's terms, these movements constitute the social production of space by those who live within it.

Grand Rue's "Ghetto Biennale": *Détournement?*

Grand Rue, the downtown Port-Au-Prince community of sculptors, more particularly and directly exhibits a conscious resistance to the external perception of this *bidonville* as an impoverished urban junkyard. The neighborhood was known previously only as a small market area for handicrafts for ever-decreasing groups of tourists. In this neighborhood, survivalist re-cycling has been a way of life. The practice became essential to the artistic creativity of the self-taught *Atis Rezistans*, who live and work here in an area no larger than a

city block. The sculptures and collages of the *Atis Rezistans* incorporate what co-curator of the Ghetto Biennale, Leah Gordon, describes as "computer entrails, TV sets, medical debris, skulls." As she puts it, the "detritus of a failing economy... [transforms into] deranged, post-apocalyptical totems with a Cyberpunk aesthetic."[53] The aesthetic of self-trained artists André Eugène and Celeur, initiators of this artistic community, is rooted in the materiality of this *bidonville*. Grand Rue is filled not only with scrapyard materials but also with the literal remnants of life, in the form of the bones and skulls from La Cimetière. In the large and dramatic sculptures of skulls with light bulbs in eye sockets or atop broken hub-caps—often with the presence of the big phallus of the *lwa* Legba, the crossroads spirit—the performative space of vodou 'in-betweenness' is apparent. The simultaneity of life and death is also always evoked in the works of the artists in their training program, as it is in the vodou altars in the homes/ateliers of the *Atis Rezistans,* who define themselves as *oungans* (priests).

This urban space occupies the realm of what Lefebvre envisioned as a *détournement*, a diversion from the new neoliberal framing of the city, (and also from the old elite framing of the city) by an artistic intervention determined by the inhabitants of the space in which they live. This "slum" is being re-formulated otherwise by *Atis Rezistans,* as a re-invigorated neighborhood. Children of the neighborhood, the group *"Ti Moun Rezistans"* (Children of Resistance), who have a studio at the *Atis Rezistans* art school, where they learn from the adult sculptors, are (and this has continued since the earthquake) exhibiting their own works and selling them through their own email addresses and websites.[54]

The "bourgeois" Haitian artist establishment actively disapproves of the work of *Atis Rezistans* while the global art world denies them entry, mimicking the political- economic system that is coming to build a "new Haiti" after the earthquake.[55] While globalization seems to be promoting non-Western venues for biennales[56] or grand art exhibitions (a European invention), expressing what art critic and curator David Frohnapfel calls the "anthropological turn" in curators' attention, Leah Gordon argues that the largely elite art world, nevertheless, reproduces a global class structure and excludes artists like those of *Atis Rezistans* for purely economic reasons. For instance, André Eugène, whose work was to be exhibited in the show *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou* at the Nottingham Contemporary, was refused a visa to enter the U.K. because he didn't have enough money in a bank in Haiti.[57]

To counter these currents in the art market, the Ghetto Biennale has been inaugurated by a collaboration between the artists of *Atis Rezistans,* particularly Eugène and Celeur, and European curators, crucially, Leah Gordon, who has worked as a photographer in Haiti for 15 years and maintains helpful connections with the British art world. The postcolonial asymmetries of class and race in this collaboration are clearly significant. Gordon herself has commented on her awareness of her complicated status as a white woman involved in the politics of representation both in her photography and as a co-curator of the Ghetto Biennale, recognizing that this is an ongoing conversation as the Biennale continues. [58]

The Ghetto Biennale called for artists to come to Haiti to both produce their art in the conditions the Grand Rue community experiences, and show it in a collaborative fashion with Haitian artists who were involved in "autonomous curating." This was challenging for young Western

artists who expected to bring work from their own Western studios in the standard biennale manner, and were discomfited by the conditions in Port-au-Prince.[59] In the first Ghetto Biennale after the earthquake (2011), there was an uncomfortable "Westerners saving the poor Haitians," atmosphere,[60] so the 2013 Biennale responded directly in the following formulation. Calling itself "Decentering the Market and Other Tales of Progress," the "strapline" of this Ghetto Biennale was "What happens when First World art rubs up against Third World art? Does it bleed?" All participants in this event had to create their work in Haiti in collaboration with Haitian artists and show the works to local neighborhood audiences. This was a 'lensfree' event,' to avoid the "ethnographic gaze and the accompanying commodity fetishism".[61]

The results of the 2013 Biennale were complicated and interesting. Frohnapfel, one of the curators with Gordon, Eugène and Celeur, commented on the young Western neo-Marxists participating who wanted to be utterly removed from the commercial world and were shocked when some of the *Atis Rezistans* wanted this Ghetto Biennale to allow them entry into that larger art world from which they had been excluded, albeit on their own terms. This would include paying them fairly for their art works, thereby improving material conditions in Grand Rue. Class negotiations around aesthetic definitions and re-evaluations of clichés about the "urban poor" that ensued at the event were fruitful, even though there was some danger of what Frohnapfel referred to as a potential "slum vacation into the tristes tropiques," because Westerners stayed for a relatively brief period of time in Port-au-Prince. The *Atis Rezistans* demanded that for the next Ghetto Biennale all foreign artists must stay at least a month in Haiti. While the impact of this event is still unfolding, the whole experience may nevertheless be called what Frohnapfel termed "globalisation from below."[62] The extent of that kind of achievement, which will be ongoing, from a space conceived as a slum junkyard of the poor in a "progress-resistant" country, is most difficult to underestimate.

Conclusion

Jalousie and Grand Rue are producing participatory urban spaces in ways that are markedly different from each other in relation to aesthetic expectations (local and global), and to socio-political responses to the post-earthquake re-construction models supported by Western nations and Haitian elites. The community of Jalousie has little interest in the manipulative use of nationally acclaimed and internationally acknowledged artist Préfète Duffaut's idealized vision of a "colorful city on a hill," to further the neoliberal development in their community for the benefit of wealthy neighbors, or to (partially) fix their *bidonville* in the mode of the picturesque for outsiders' viewing. Instead, they are consciously claiming an everyday space with running water, among other amenities, in an imagistic mode consistent with the performative spirituality of vodou.

Grand Rue, on the other hand, is carving out a space, specifically with original art forms, that juxtaposes the broken remnants of urban modernization and Haitian vodou life-in-death fragments. Outside of any economic model of outsourced low wage labor or development benefiting Haitian elites, the *Atis Rezistans* provide programs for local young people in this neighborhood of high unemployment, to make an income from their creative work. Concurrently, they are devising what Frohnapfel terms "globalisation from below" via their

Ghetto Biennales, countering a global art market from which they have been excluded. Instead of being curated "anthropologically," as in some global mega-exhibitions, which as Nigerian curator Okwui Enwesor notes, still refuse any notion of aesthetic modernism outside of a Western model,[63] they are bringing Westerners to Port-au-Prince to experience art making under the conditions of their own street, that is, within a space of Haitian equivocal modernity.

Both of these *bidonvilles* are, in their own way, producing an ongoing correction of the so-called inevitably tragic Haitian story. While Jalousie residents resist the trajectory of Martelly's paint-infused project of destructive neoliberal re-development, self-taught sculptors in Grand Rue turn their battered urban world of the dead and dispossessed into a space of dramatically commanding figures made of old car parts and bones, echoing *Ezili* and the *Gédé*, those powerful *lwa* specifically figuring life and death.[64] In either case, Port-au-Prince, in the aftermath of the terrible 2010 earthquake, can certainly still manifest what Michel-Rolph Trouillot, speaking of the Haitian Revolution, termed the peculiar characteristic of being "unthinkable" even as it happens.

Notes

[1] Chiamaku Nwosu and Jeanne Batalova. "Haitian Immigrants in the United States," MPI Migration Policy Institute, May 29, 2014. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-immigrants-united-states

[2] George Packer, "Suffering," *The New Yorker,* January 25, 2010: 2 http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/01/25/suffering

[3] Laënnec Hurbon, *Voodoo: Search for the Spirit,* trans. Lory Frankel (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 42-43.

[4] Laurent Dubois, *The Aftershocks of History* (NY, Picador, 2012), 3, citing David Brooks, "The Underlying Tragedy," *New York Times,* Jan. 14, 2010.

[5]. "Novelist Edwidge Danticat: 'Haitians Are Very Resilient But That Doesn't Mean They Can Suffer More Than Other People,'" *Democracy Now!,* Jan. 12, 2011. http://www.democracynow.org/2011/1/12/novelist_edwidge_danticat_haitians_are_
[6] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 73.

[7] See Dubois for an excellent historical treatment of these issues in Haitian history. The documentary, *Aristide and the Endless Revolution,* dir. Nicolas Rossiter, 2005, provides a clear presentation of the two coups against Aristide.

[8] Dubois, 137.

[9] Jean Elie Paul, "Haïti-Culture: Le Cente d'Art renait au printemps de ses 70 ans," *Alter Presse* (14 mai, 2014), 1. Both gallery and school since 1944, the Centre d'Art has promoted the varied schools of Haitian art and is in the process of being re-constructed since the earthquake destroyed the building and its holdings. http://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article17382#.VQYmJxygmYk

[10] See notes from the 1997 Corbett Haiti Discussion Forum re: "Haitian Art Before and After 1944 and DeWitt Peters", including a post from Michel Rolph Trouillot. http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/art/pre-1944.htm

[11] W.T.J.,Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 2002), Preface, ix-xi. Mitchell's description of Lefebvre's triadic conceptual organization of space in Henri's Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*.

[12] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson- Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publications 1991), 4-11.

[13] Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had a painting of Duffaut's in her collection, sold for $6,900 by Sotheby's on April 25, 1996. See Galerie Macondo, "The Artists of the Grand Rue: *Musée d'Art,*" March 2005 http://www.artshaitian.com/Pages/haitianart3duffaut.html

[14] Royal Oasis, Haiti, here a "Junior Suite" costs USD350.00 per night. http://www.occidentalhotels.com/city-hotel/occidental-royal-oasis-rooms-and-suites.

[15] For excellent photos of the tombs and routes through La Cimetière, see Justin Ames, "Visiting the Grand Cemetery of Port-au-Prince," *Velvet Rocket* (April 1, 2011). http://thevelvetrocket.com/2011/04/01/visiting-the-grand-cemetery-of-port-au-prince/

[16] Myron Beasley, "Vodou, Penises and Bones: Ritual performances of death and eroticism in the cemetery and the junk yard of Port-au-Prince," Pweformance Research (London: Routledge, 2010) 15:1,I 41-47

[17] Ghetto Biennale. http://ghettobiennale.org/

[18] Dubois, 19-21, and Ramsey Clark,"Haiti's Agonies and Exhaltations," in *Haiti: A Slave Revolution,* edited by Pat Chin, Greg Dunkel, Sam Flounders and Kim Ives, (N.Y.: International Action Center, 2004), 2.

[19] Charles Arthur and Michael Dash, eds. *A Haiti Anthology: libèté* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 35.

[20] Dubois, 54-65.

[21] Dubois, 43.

[22] Dubois, 104-115.

[23] Dubois, 7. Though later reduced 60 million francs, the cycle of debt simply got worse.

[24] Clark, 7-8.

[25] Dubois, 276.

[26] See the 2005 film *Aristide and the Endless Revolution,* dir. Nicolas Rossier

[27] Dubois, 263.

[28] "We Made a Devil's Bargain: Fmr. Pres. Clinton Apologizes for Trade Policies that Destroyed Haiti's Rice Framing," *Democracy Now!,* April 1, 2010. http://www.democracynow.org/2010/4/1/clinton_rice

[29] Dubois, 367.

[30] James O'Brien, "International Community Failed Haiti Reconstruction, Brought Cholera." *Institute for Justice and Democracy for Haiti* (Feb. 17, 2014) http://www.ijdh.org/2014/02/topics/law-justice/haiti-special-report-just-where-did-the-money-go/(6/26/2013): 2

[31] Dubois, 368.

[32] Georgiana Nienaber, "Who Owns Haiti's Future?" *The Huffington Post* (6/26/2013): 2. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/georgianne-nienaber/progress-in-haiti_b_3138597.html

[33] O'Brien, 3.

[34] Personal communication with Sacha Christianson, daughter of a close friend, who worked in an orphanage outside Hinche, Haiti in the rural Artibonite region in 2014. Visiting an American acquaintance working for an American NGO in Port-au-Prince, she was shocked at the fortress-like housing for NGO workers and the elegant night club scene in Pétionville where such workers spent a good deal of time.

[35] Because Lefebvre had disagreements with the Situationists as to the aesthetic vs. everyday life role in *détournement,*" see Guy-Ernest Debord and Gil J Wolman. "Mode d'emploi du détournement," *Biblioteque-Virtuelle.* Appeared initially in *Les Lèvres Nue N.B.,* May 1956. http://sami.is.free.fr/Oeuvres/debord_wolman_mode_emploi_detournement.html

Another useful article re: this concept is "Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space,*" Not Bored http://www.notbored.org/space.html

[36] Hurbon, 51-63. See his discussion of U.S. Marine's 1931 *La White King of La Gonaive* and the 1941 American film *I Walked With a Zombie*.

[37]Hurbon, Chaps. 1, 2, 4.

[38] Hurbon, 82-83. The twin *lwa (marassa lwa)* repeat the androgynous double gods Mawu-Lisa and symbolize primeval harmony or dangerous jealousy.

[39] Leah Gordon, Don Constantino, Richard Fleming, *Kanaval, Vodou, Politics and Revolution on the Streets of Haiti* (Soul Jazz Publications, 2010)

[40] Nicole Willson, "A New Kanavalesque: Re-Imagining Haiti's Revolution(s) Through the Work of Leah Gordon," HARTS & Minds: *The Journal of Humanities and Arts,* Vol. 1, No.1, (Spring 2013) www.harts-minds.co.uk/against-thegrain

And see Edwidge Danticat, *After the Dance* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 143.

[41] Hurbon, 43-46.

[42] Inhabitants of Jalousie commented repeatedly about this "sacredness" when interviewed for "Life in Haiti After the 2010 Earthquake," BBC *World Have Your Say,* June 18, 2013 http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p019mz2d

[43] Amy Wilenz, "Urban Botox in Haiti" (April 9, 2013). http://amywilentz.tumblr.com/post/47557157414/urban-botox-in-haiti-redux/

[44] Duffaut's "Jacmel School," a form of "primitive" or "naive" art from Haiti, was embraced by American and European collectors in the era of the 1970's, and is a part of permanent galleries in the New York Museum of Modern Art, among others. http://www.martellyartgallery.com/artists/prefete_duffaut.html

[45] Wilenz, "Botox."

[46] Jeb Sprague, "Michel Martelly, Stealth Duvalierist" *Haïti Liberté* Nov. 27- Dec. 03, 2013.

[47] Amy Wilenz, "Letter from Haiti: Life in the Ruins," *The Nation,* Jan. 28, 2013.

[48] David McFadden, "Haiti protesters again rally to demand president's departure," charlotte observer.com, Jan. 16, 2015. http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2015/01/10/5438225_haiti-protesters-again-rally-to.html#.VLnx-BygmYk

[49] http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p019mz2d

[50] Patrick Villaire, born 1941 in Haiti, is known for his work in ceramics and sculpture which re-consider vodou for the contemporary world. http://presse.fondation.cartier.com/nowadays/the-collection-of-coloring-books/pantheon-vaudou-coloriages-avec-patrick-vilaire/?lang=en

[51]:"Lav tête - literally "wash the head," in springs and rivers is part of a vodou experience to cross over to the ancestors or greet the *lwa.* See Hurbon, 118-119.

[52] "Haitians protest home demolition plan," *Al Jazeera* June 26, 2012. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/06/20126266564392626283html

[53] Harold Szeemann, "The Biennial Questionnaire: Leah Gordon," Art Review, 2. http://artreview.com/previews/the_biennial_questionnaire_leah_gordon/

[54] "Arts of Resistance in Haiti," *Waves of Change,* January 12, 2011. http://deepdishwavesofchange.blogspot.com/2011/01/art-of-resistance-in-haiti.html

See also "Maxim's News Network: Haiti's Atis Rezistans," an excellent short video in *Kreyòl,* which gives a good view of both the look and activities of Grand Rue, with specific attention to the children artists of the community. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ya9z5gQhgO4

[55] Szeemann, 2-4.

[56] Okwui Enwezor, " Mega Expositions: The Antinomies of a Transnational Global Form," *Other Cities, Other World: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age,* ed. Andreas Huyssen (Durham: Duke UP) 2008), 147-180.

[57] Szeemann, 2-3.

[58] Willson, p. 2 and personal communication with Leah Gordon, Spring, 2013.

[59] Carine Fabius, "Creating and Bleeding at Haiti's Grand Rue at the Ghetto Biennale," *Repeating Islands* (Dec, 20, 2011). http://repeatingislands.com/2011/12/30/creating-and-bleeding-in-haitis-grand-rue-at-the-ghetto-biennale/

[60] Personal communication with Leah Gordon, Spring, 2013.

[61] Ghetto Biennale http://ghettobiennale.org/

[62] David Frohnapfel, "The 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013: Decentering the Market and Other Tales of Progress," *Artlink* Issue 34:1 (March 2014). 1-2. https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4089/the-3rd-ghetto-biennale-2013-decentering-the-marke/

[63] Enwezor,, 147-180.

[64] Hurbon, 74-79.

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Fugitive Moments and Public Memory:
An Improvised Memorial for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X in Canberra
Rebecca Caines

Sometime in the night of the 20th of October 2001, an overcrowded fishing boat carrying over four hundred refugees, mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan, sank in international waters en route to Australia. Three hundred and fifty-three people drowned, including one hundred and forty-two children. The ship has become known as X, SIEV being the Australian Navy acronym for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel, X standing for unknown. The facts of the sinking are hotly disputed and no official lists of passengers' names have ever been released. It was the "biggest maritime disaster in Australia since the Second World War" (Zable: 2013). On the 2nd of September 2007 a memorial to the disaster was installed in a public park on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Australia's capital, Canberra. It was constructed out of three hundred and fifty-three decorated wooden poles. The poles include the names and ages of the dead (when known), written in English and Arabic, although many are unnamed. It also includes the names of the groups, or individuals who decorated each pole. The memorial marks the exact dimensions of the original boat. It stretches down to the water's edge, and then snakes off into the park, with large poles representing the adults and smaller poles for the children. The exhibition has been granted "temporary" leave to remain and is currently still in place (See Figure 1). In 2015, the conservative Coalition government in Australia teeters on the brink of collapse, and is attempting to shore up support by engaging in a stern rhetoric on refugees who arrive unannounced by sea, with current Prime Minister Tony Abbott famously insisting, "I'll turn back every boat" (Johnston 2012).

Between the SIEV X tragedy, and the raising of this piece of community-engaged public art and memorial lies a complex performance of contesting and contested sites, spaces, and places that continues to reverberate in 2015. In particular, I focus in this paper on a moment of performance in 2006, when, upon being denied permission to erect the memorial, around six hundred people held the poles up in the shape of the SIEV X memorial, whilst another fourteen hundred people observed. This paper traces how different types of space were performed that day, and how the park was physically affected and continues to be affected by this event. It argues that the embodied sense of place created that day through performance brought communities together to create new social "fugitive" actions, expose hidden histories, memorialize death, create new vehicles for political activism and information gathering, and build new networks of personal support. I argue that this event also disrupted established conceptual spatial control through exposing planning permission processes for public space in Canberra. Utilizing theory in the field of Critical Studies in Improvisation I explore the potential for improvised performances, like the SIEV X pole raising, to challenge the way civic "planning" is understood.

History(s)

The SIEV X memorial was planned by Australian psychologist Steve Biddulph, working with his friends Rev. Rod Horsfield and Beth Gibbings, along with a group of individuals connected to the Uniting Church of Australia and the advocacy agency Rural Australians for Refugees.[1] Landscape architect Sue Anne Ware consulted on envisioning the project design (Ware and Raxworthy 2011). It had three aims. The first was pedagogical: to let as many people as possible know about the tragedy. The second was psychological: to create a location for memorial healing and grieving for the families and survivors, and for the Australian public (Gibbings 2009). Biddulph has also explained that part of his aim was to get the nation to take responsibility and to "change the appalling status of refugees in Australia through reaching out to young people" (Gibbings 2009). In this third aim, this work stands alongside a large body of activist Australian visual art, theatre and performance–based works that emerged at the beginning of the new millennium in response to the refugee policies of the conservative Liberal government, under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard (Wake 2014).

This organizing group set up a high school art "collaboration", where the most powerful designs sent in by teenagers would then be incorporated into a final design for a memorial (See Figure 2). Information packs were sent to three thousand high schools across Australia and distributed through church, community activist networks and refugee groups. Three exhibitions were held showing the nationally sourced submissions. Fourteen-year old schoolboy Mitchell Donaldson created the design of poles in the shape of the boat. This idea was adapted as the final design because it "elicited the strongest audience response from both families of the dead, and from the public" (Gibbings 2009).

Figure 1.
Poles in Place, SIEV X Memorial, Canberra. Credit: SIEV X National Memorial Committee Inc.

Plans then began for the construction of the memorial. Many of the organisations that had been involved in contributing to, promoting, or exhibiting the designs in the first phase were then invited to become involved in completing the final memorial. The poles were decorated by primary and high school students, community organisations including nationwide rural women's associations and Rotary service clubs, survivors and families, all participating with different political, personal, and religious motivations (Stewart 2006, Martin 2006, "Touching Tribute to Lost Refugees" 2006). Many poles feature paintings by children, teenagers or amateur artists, some incorporate text, comics, found objects or sculptural forms, and some include Arabic calligraphy. Others are professional art works, some incorporating strong colours and stylized imagery (See Figure 1).

The Political Context

The sinking of the SIEV X occurred at the height of the very closely contested Australian federal election campaign in 2001. The incumbent Prime Minister, John Howard, had focussed his re-election campaign on what he called "border protection", keeping "queue jumping" unannounced asylum seekers out of Australia, initiating large scale operations to track all boats and disrupt their progress, especially from Indonesia, where many refugees passed through (*John Howard's 2001 Election Policy Speech* 2001). The government strategy focussed on deterrents such as imprisoning asylum seekers in isolated, high security detention centres for periods of up to three years (Australian Government). In the weeks before the SIEV X sank, the government had been using the Navy in high media profile operations to disrupt and turn away boats of asylum seekers (Barkham 2001). Refugees were described by government officials as manipulative, and accused of "throwing their children overboard" for media attention (*Navy Chief Enters Asylum Seekers Debate* 2001). This was later proven to be a false claim by a Senate inquiry (The Parliament of Australia 2002). Government and media sources described the activities of the refugees as a concerted campaign of "moral blackmail" involving the cynical exploitation of Australians' instinctive "generosity" (Akerman 2002, *John Howard's 2001 Election Policy Speech* 2001). The government's hard line stance on refugees seemed to have a significant effect on the election campaign, as Howard surged ahead in opinion polls following high profile incidents in the final weeks of the campaign ("Australian Election: The Issues" 2001).

Figure 2.
Memorial plaque and poles in place, SIEV X Memorial, Canberra. Credit: Rebecca Caines

SIEV X also became fodder for conspiracy theorists on both sides of the political spectrum. The SIEV X sank just two weeks before the election and the disaster received very little national attention.[2] Did Australia have an implicit, or perhaps explicit, involvement in the tragedy (Hutton 2013)? How much did the government's policy of placing refugees with successful applications onto "Temporary Protection Visas," which denied family reunion rights or travel, actually add to the likelihood that separated families would use illegal people smugglers? How much responsibility should governments take for the victims of conflicts such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan that produce the social conditions that contribute to refugee displacement? How did a leaky fishing boat avoid detection in a period of intense surveillance, and why was it not located before the survivors died in the water? What is to be made of passenger accounts that large military boats had arrived in the night, shone searchlights over the area and left without saving the survivors in the water, many of whom died from exposure (Kevin 2004, Meade 2004)? Jim Lloyd, Federal Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, amongst others, believed the narratives being distributed about the sinking, and the subsequent memorial project, were a plan by the left wing to hijack the grief of survivors for political gain (Stephens 2008, Hart 2006, Editorial 2006). With very little facts, there is much room for speculation.

A Performance Moment

In 2005, three weeks before the project was to be installed, the planning permission application to install the memorial was rejected by the government-run National Capital Authority on the grounds that all permanent memorial projects had to wait ten years after a tragedy before being erected. Media jumped on the story hinting at a government cover-up of the real SIEV X story (Harrison 2006). The organizers had planned for the memorial to open on the day of the fifth anniversary of the tragedy on October 15, 2006 and had invited all the participants to travel to Canberra for the public dedication. Despite the rejection of their application, they decided to hold a remembrance event at the site, and the poles were laid out on the ground. Over two thousand people arrived to pay respects.

The organizers refer to this event as a "ceremony." There were speeches, including an address by Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory, Jon Stanhope, and live music from groups including the Kippax Uniting Church Tongan Choir, and the audience walked around examining the poles. Significantly, the wooden poles did not stay laid out on the ground; six hundred volunteers held them up in the shape of the monument. One to two people held up each pole. The poles were heavy and difficult to lift, yet the volunteers managed to lift them simultaneously, cued by a drum beat from one of the musicians. The participants were from a range of backgrounds and geographical locations, including children and seniors. The pole-raising portion of the ceremony was documented in photographs and online videos, and the event received considerable media attention. The pedagogical/activist aims of the event organizers were clear and under this rubric, the event was a success, as Biddulph notes: "More people heard about SIEV X that day than in all the years since the sinking" ("Siev X National Memorial Project Website").

There are a number of ways we can understand this spatial activity. The SIEV X pole-raising in 2006 could certainly be examined as an enactment or perhaps, following Rebecca Schneider, a strange sort of spatial "re-enactment". The event re-enacted the actual dimensions of the boat that sank in the past; and it stood in for, perhaps even deputised, each of the absent bodies of the dead; even as it enacted a future, potential, also absent monument, a future (and a not yet possible) political climate where the memorial would be permanently installed. Perhaps this is what Schneider might call a "fugitive political performance" that cuts back and forth, between the past and the future. Schneider asks, "What are fugitive moments? And when is fugitive time? Could such moments be, perhaps, past moments on the run in the present? Moments when the past flashes up now to present us with its own alternative futures—futures we might choose to realize differently" (Schneider 2010, 7)? Although she was speaking specifically about re-enactments of political speeches, the SIEV X memorial pole-raising similarly confused linear temporality. What could the political potential of this temporal flux be? I question, as Schneider does: "Might the past's 'fugitive moments' be leaky, syncopated, and errant moments—moments stitched through with repetition and manipulated to recur in works of performance, works of ritual, works of art, works of re-enactment that play with time as malleable material? As malleable political material" (Schneider 2010, 7)? A kind of fugitive temporal shift encourages me to write this paper ten years on from the performance, as Australia is considering the political future of a government that has made its main policy an aggressive engagement with refugee boats on their way to Australia, despite more accidents and controversies. Tony Abbott's "I'll Stop Every Boat" announcements are constructed just across the lake from where the SIEV X memorial now stands. This performance event continues to enact a potentially different temporality and space, as it is remembered, archived, discussed in national media, and described in popular sources, films, plays, stories and academic analysis, such as this paper (Ware and Raxworthy 2011, Ware and Monacella 2007, Thomas 2008, Burke 2006).

This project is also a work of public memory, a memorialisation with all of the psychological affect, ritual and ceremony, mediatisation and uncertainty that 21st century memorials perform, a slippage that post-memory scholar Bryoni Tresize calls "The incommensurability that exists between the traumatic event and its reinscription [where] the ends of memory appear as deeply vexed, deeply mediatised cultural operatives" (Trezise 2009). This particular performance is caught between media sensationalism, mourning, art and activism. The poles are substitutes for missing heavy, lifeless foreign bodies (old and young) that never made it to Australia, but they are also blank canvases upon which Australians can project their fears, imaginings, opinions and memories, as well as being gravestone markers.[3] Could it be possible that in its transience, this moment in 2005 may have been more significant to its audience than its fixed future as an installed work? As I have discussed in my earlier research, some memorials can enable the repeated performance and questioning of the process of memorialization, and can deliberately evoke the temporary as a spatial strategy of resistance to forgetting (Caines 2004). French artist Christian Boltanski, for example, suggests all memorials should be made out of paper rather than bronze in order to ensure that we actively care for, protect, remake, and tend to them with our hands, even as we understand that they cannot survive the passage of time (Caines 2004, 5).

Site/Space/Place

Henri Lefebvre's well-known re-contextualisation of spatiality sees space as made up of interconnected perceived (material sites), conceived (conceptual spaces) and lived realms (places), which all contribute to the production of human experience (Lefebvre 1991). Recognizing and reuniting these three strands of spatiality could also reunite everyday citizens with the means of understanding and challenging how the spaces around them are created, produced and controlled (Lefebvre 1991, 222). Site/space/place for many contemporary artists is both a source of local body-based knowledge, memory and connection; and a producing, constraining political influence to be exposed and challenged.

Much of the study of capital cities has focussed on their part in global networks of information, commerce and communication (Castells 1996). Scholar, Allan Cochrane, has shown with his case studies of European capitals, that "capital cities still have a significant role in shaping national urban and regional relations (and hierarchies)" (Cochraine 2006). Canberra is a carefully designed capital city, planned with the two supposedly complementary ideas held by the government at the time. The first, according to Taylor, is "a vigorous national identity existed, and this was related to the ideal of the Australian landscape itself" and the second is the idea that this identity "could be symbolised in the landscape itself, and that city planning would create a better and healthier society" (Taylor 2005). Twin notions of a green uniquely Australian "bush capital" and a healthy community-based "garden city" informed the Chicago architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Griffons in their plan in 1912 for a city, which included a man-made lake, and a large number of parks and landscaped terraces set in a pattern of rings and triangles, with parliamentary, civic and mercantile institutions deliberately exposed in the heart of the inner city. Russell Smith succinctly points out the contradictions within these utopian ideal city agendas, where "the rigidity and uniformity of the utopian plan suggests a conceptual authoritarianism at odds with the diverse particularities of human flourishing that it is supposedly designed to engender" (Smith 2009, 81). Controlling how Canberra's city space is constructed and used is a deliberate reflection of current policy vision (the new parliament house construction is one excellent example), even though at times the espoused spatial narrative can actually hide other less explicit political activities (Filmer 2013). Engaging with public space in this captial city is thus completely different from engaging with public space elsewhere in Australia. Andrew Filmer argues that performance in Canberra and other national spaces can further expose spatial poltics. "Engaging by means of performance with these sites enables their 'silent complicity' in established patterns of power relations to be rendered visible and audible and opens up the potential for alternative forms of participative political performance to be developed" (Filmer 2013, 26).

Locating the memorial in Canberra links it to other Canberra national memorials such as The National War Memorial, The ANZAC Memorial The Army Memorial, and The Vietnam War National Memorial. In fact this conceptual link was so strong that some ministers thought that a so-called "protest" memorial would take away from memorials to police and army dead, and that the people it remembered had not earned the right to be remembered

nationally in Australia (*Siev X Memorial 'Damaging' to Other Monuments* 2007). In my interviews with organisers and participants, I repeatedly heard versions of the following statements: "This happened on my watch", and, with greater frequency, "this is not the Australia I thought I lived in". For these participants, many of whom travelled to Canberra from remote geographical locations, the memorial performed a different Australia directly contrasting the one portrayed in official government narratives and the other memorials. This sentiment is reflected in the designs of the poles themselves which featured text such as "Welcome"; "You are welcome here"; " Home"; "We wish we could have known you" and with representations of Australian symbols such as flags, distinctive Australian flora and fauna and Australian landmarks.

The site (perceived space) for the 2007 SIEV X memorial pole raising performance is a portion of Westin Park, a green public park planted with native flora overlooking the parliament building across the lake. It is a peaceful spot, with mown green grass and a large mob of relatively tame kangaroos often seen grazing near the memorial site. There is a well-maintained children's play area nearby. The beaches are popular spaces for water sports. This "public" space is of course closely monitored and controlled by both the Parks Authority, and the Federal planning body, the National Capital Authority (NCA), and by police, to prevent its being misused. The park is the embodiment of the contrast between Canberra as a controlled Australian bush capital, and Canberra as a lived public space for communities to utilise. It is this contrast that was exposed when the memorial was blocked by the NCA at this "public" park. The memorial was creating a new vision for the public use of this physical space, and when permission was denied, community bodies made the memorial despite and alongside the authorised usage of the parkland site. The physical space was permanently changed by improvisation that day, as the opposition Labour party promised that the memorial planning application would be accepted if they gained power, which they did, and it now stands.

Lucy Lippard reminds us that to become a "place", rather than an abstract "space", a location must make room for memories, bodies, and experiences (Lippard 1997). The temporary physical adaptation of the space that day included the recreation of the exact dimensions of the SIEV X, 19.5 meters long and 4 metres wide (so small for its 400 passengers). This collapsed the physical spaces of the ocean and the park on top of each other. It also collided the origins of the boat and its passengers, Indonesia, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the material conditions of Canberra, and of the participating communities. The found materials and sculptural elements used reflected the huge range of environmental and ethnic environments where the poles originated. The raising of poles clearly had an affect on the bodies of the audience at the 2005 event, many of whom cried, loudly sighed or gasped when the poles were lifted and lowered. The ceremony created this embodied sense of place, as people imagined the bodies of the victims in that space, and made memories together on this site as they assisted each other to hold up the wooden poles in the shape of the ship. That day, Australian citizens spoke with refugee survivors and families, directly denying the policies designed to keep this from happening; survivors and families formed their own support network for the first time, and many people grieved together.

Improvising Participation

Critical Studies in Improvisation (CSI) is an emerging interdisciplinary field that examines the ubiquitous global phenomenon of improvisatory art (Bailey 1980). A key element of this type of art-making is the tension between structure and freedom, and advanced improvisers often discuss the simultaneous need for deep skill and knowledge, and the requirement that artists let work develop in real-time in brand new directions and reconfigure "failure" into material (Monson 2014, Caines 2014). Key CSI scholars argue that improvisation "must be considered not simply as a musical [or artistic] form, but as a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body" (Heble 2009). CSI has traced how African American expressive culture, for example, is marked by numerous examples of improvised music, dance and visual art at the centre of the reclamation of erased histories and disenfranchised cultural forms, and how it incorporates improvisatory adaptation and survival techniques that are needed for daily life in uncertain social conditions (Lewis 2008, Rose 1994, Neal 2004).

In discussing urban spaces, CSI scholar Dean C. Rowan draws a direct link between critical understandings of improvisation and ideas of planning for urban spaces. Rowan examines how a number of improvisational practices like blues music, free improvisation and creative music are embedded in communities, and engage with space creatively. He argues these can act as models for successful planning, or as counterpoints to set plans, exposing when urban space is not responsively utilized. Rowan defines improvisation as a form that employs a means of feedback and assessment – not merely aurally, but socially, politically, and spatially – as it searches "not for an elusive musical consensus", but for a "new starting point." He suggests the possibility of "a place for responsive improvisation at the nexus of form and content, fact and value, techniques and politics." He goes on to argue that improvisation as a tool for spatial engagement provides a "way of referring to contingent, provisional, spontaneous, or insurgent modes of engagement in the city. It can characterize figuratively the way 'rules' ought to be resisted or violated if a variation on the status quo is to be performed" (Rowan 2004).

Rowan's case studies "urge planners and policy makers to pay attention to the marginalized and unofficial knowledge residing in communities and regions" and the art practices found there, thereby "striving to avoid "strategies of social reform that allow only normative or mainstream use of the spaces." He concludes, "Improvisation and the spirit of improvisation in planning... can provoke or facilitate an ethos more conducive to the polyrhythm and discord of heterogeneous society, and therefore ought to be pursued more deliberately, even recklessly. Improvisation, if carefully accommodated and planned for, poses the possibility of creative transformation and responsive bureaucracy, worthy ends achieved through rational yet risky means" (Rowan 2004).

It is clear from interviews and the work itself that the whole SIEV X memorial project relied on improvisatory active listening and real-time decision-making between the groups involved. The coordination was complex and involved thousands of participants and faced continually shifting challenges. New people with skills such as event management, landscape design, industrial design, insurance, law etc. continually stepped in throughout the process to volunteer time to the project as new needs arose, and each contributed to the performance being able to take place that day. The organizers deliberately engaged the improvisatory, they responded and changed plans rapidly in response to conditions.

The performance of raising the poles also incorporated a number of elements of improvisation in the event itself. In interviews, Beth Gibbings has noted that she saw many of the poles for the first time during the pole raising, as they were driven directly to the site on the day by the community groups using their own private cars and coming directly from their homes scattered across Australia (Gibbings 2009). Gibbings was surprised by the unexpected size and diversity of the crowd and the ways in which multiple members of a single family stepped up to hold the poles together when they asked for single volunteers, all factors which shaped the theme of the event as one of support. She also noted how some families of the victims met for the first time during the event, and she witnessed numerous occasions where survivors and family members of the deceased were spontaneously approached by other Australian citizens during the event who wanted to connect, sometimes with gestures, sometimes with words of condolence, or welcome. The pole raising was itself never part of the original plans for the memorial; indeed organizers admit that they are not sure whose idea it was to raise the poles, or at what time the decision was made. Interviews with participants from this period reflect a rapidly changing sense of hope from connecting with others, and a corresponding despair that the memorial would never be approved. The memorial was "installed" that day, despite a lack of planning permission, but was certainly not in the form that the organizers had planned and hoped for; it was a reconfiguration of a "failure."

Figure 3.
Poles in place, Canberra, SIEV X Memorial, Canberra. Credit: Rebecca Caines

Futures

If art practices can become both models for social practice, and vehicles for new types of spatial engagement, what might happen when these alternative spatial narratives continue to rub up against authorised narratives? The pole raising was just the first in a number of events that brought the SIEV X to national prominence, including the national Senate inquiry mentioned above, so I am wary to overstate its singular effect on government policy. Instead, I think the performance held, just for a moment, a number of contradictory positions in productive tension. For just a moment, shapes made from bodies and bodily prosthetics disrupted place, overlapped and blurred spatial boundaries, and collectively improvised partial and transient alternatives to civic participation in urban spaces. It invites us to consider the question: if risk, real-time processes and the foregrounding of the unexpected become deliberate tools in planning and managing urban spaces, what could our future urban participation in the capital city become?

Notes

[1] For a history that focuses on the witness accounts and the memorialization aspects of the project, see project organizer Beth Gibbings' own "public history" (Gibbings 2010)

[2] For a notable exception: see (Zable 2001).

[3] See Gibbings (2010); Stephens (2008) for an in depth analysis of the cultural memory elements of the SIEV-X memorial.

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Reimagining Fluidity:
Colliding Bodies and Architecture at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Ying Zhu

I.

In 1986, four years after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) in Washington D.C was publicly dedicated, Charles Griswold contributed an early voice to the mounting public and academic discourses making sense of the aesthetics and meaning of a visually potent structure and site, whose designer, Maya Lin, unsettled conventional tactics towards memorial design. In concerning himself with the memorial's symbolic register in conjunction with how the architecture impacts "...those who participate in it," Griswold reveals a facet of architecture as signifier of collective memory yet to be fully accounted for and theorized.[1] His passing reference to the centrality of "participation" suggests the necessity for visitors to wield energy and force as they enact individual pathways through a memorial site—implicating the body in acts of commemoration. While his is not a project targeting the stakes of embodiment, this early research tacitly begins to carve out space for the reciprocal choreography of architecture with body. Scholars have already deeply mined the VVM, which features a wall and site designed by Maya Lin, a figurative sculpture of three servicemen designed by Frederick Hart, a women's memorial designed by Glenna Goodacre, and an American flag. However, I return to this site, with particular focus on the memorial wall conceived by Lin, by way of the body—that is, to make explicit the faint invocations of corporeality embedded in, but not fully attended to, in VVM scholarship and memory studies discourse.

This re-centering of the moving, inscribing the body as an active force within the seemingly stable environment of a memorial is a response to Participatory Urbanisms, which aims to provoke multiple imaginings of the idea of "participation." I approach this challenge from a bodily perspective, grounded in the physical labor of memory and the production of space and site. Architecture, inclusive of national, regional, and private memorials, is positioned in the built environment for its users, who are comprised of flesh, muscle, sinew, tendon, and bone and engaged in processes of motion and action.[2] These bodily writings, by inhabiting and engaging with built sites of memory, jostle the static nature of memorials and monuments. Architect-theorist Bernard Tschumi establishes a framing of space and architecture inclusive of the user.[3] He relies on an abstracted idea of "violence" to illuminate the relationship between body and architecture; "any relationship between a building and its users is one of violence, for any use means the intrusion of a human body into a given space, and the intrusion of one order into another."[4] While this assertion of violence as mediator indeed signals an inextricable link between body and architecture, I suggest rather than a dynamic enforced through interruption and "violence," the embodied, participatory actions of users in certain memorials generate a quality of fluidity undercutting the critique that architectural representations of memory, as permanent, enduring structures, are misaligned with memory as a less stable construct.

Locating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) in Washington D.C. as a case study, I take on an analysis of the architecture and site of this memorial through a dance studies lens, situating the body—moving *and* still—as a crucial, yet under-theorized component of architectural memorialization. I argue the VVM, as a site of tension, invoking both formal codes for commemorative performance and inviting a certain measure of freedom of exploration, functions as a choreographic force directing visitors to weave contradictory dances of formality and fluidity. In this essay, I consider how structural restrictions in the site choreograph performances of physical caution and spatial limitation. Yet, the body finds space to maneuver as I contend the interaction of body with memorial wall guides visitors into collectively embodying choreographies of stillness and motion, which pervade the corporeal vernaculars of all visitors to the memorial site.[5] Such corporeal activity imbues fluidity to the VVM as choreographies captured against the reflective surface of the memorial wall evolve the wall into a dance film, projecting a constantly changing series of movement-images. I also examine how these pedestrian dances mediate and prompt the affective responses to the memorial. This moving collaboration between body and architecture subverts the critique of the memorial as a stable entity, suitably identified along Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of "becoming."[6] The VVM is engaged in an architectural *becoming*, whereby the built structure is complicit in engendering, via the body, a quality of fluidity.

When examining the role and place of the body in processes of collective, public remembering, a dance studies orientation for theorizing the body can illuminate how the seeming intractability of architectural commemoration is actually made fluid—that the idea of a structure must account for the bodily elements that temporarily use it. An early and still-commanding force in dance studies, Susan Leigh Foster grappled early on with the question of how to discursively document the choreo-inscriptions of the body.[7] Underlying her 1995 investigation in "Choreographing History," is her stance that the moving body writes; "a body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing."[8] Foster argues for a construction of the body-in-action, comprising dances choreographed from both motion and stillness, as legible entities, to be encountered, examined, and theorized. In other words, the moving body is a meaning making entity. As such, the "moves," produced from a body's relational experience in space, harbor meaning.[9]

The past decade has witnessed a widening in the canon of dance scholarship in content and form, whereby the idea of dance has been conceptually loosened to encompass bodies moving in, through and inhabiting sites and spaces of the everyday.[10] Galvanized by this innovation in the ontology of dance, I expand the delimiters of this term to include the moves, kinetics and actions embodied by visitors at the VVM as a form pedestrian "dance." This configuration of "dance" signals a turn towards the corporeal in matters of architecture, space, and memory—a strategic assertion that the presence and utility of the body is crucial to our understanding

of architecture, especially in light of memorial structures. This overlay of a dance (and performance) studies optic onto the study of the VVM can illuminate new ways to perceive the condition and politics of architecture as a problematic signifier for commemoration.

Our current framing of memory hinges on qualities of instability, erosion, and ephemerality.[11] The body figures similarly, its materiality subject to decay over time and its moves disappearing as soon as they are enacted. In this way, memory is not conceptually incoherent with theorizations of the body as grounded in questions of appearance and disappearance. In their critique of Western memorial practices, in which material objects serve as referents to memory, Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler look towards non-Western, ephemeral memorials, vulnerable to and intended for decay, as alternative practices for addressing social, collective memory.[12] Peggy Phelan's claim that the performative presence of the body cannot be reproduced echoes this privileging of instability, "performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations."[13] While traditional Western, architectural artifacts of memory, like the VVM, certainly counter Forty and Küchler's proposal against permanence, these structures, however, harbor an ephemeral element in the form of bodies temporarily inhabiting this site, which is produced in part by the choreographies generated by visitors. Here, the body, as mediated through dance and performance studies discourses, can be a useful way for accounting for the nature and condition of ephemerality—for asserting a locomotive way of thinking through memory. Both of these disciplines have theoretically tackled the status of immateriality, possibilities from which the politics of memory can advance.

The idea of choreography proves particularly useful for shedding new light on understanding the dynamic between body and space in the context of memorial architecture and site.[14] Choreography refers to the material produced within the dance-making process as well as the labor of devising a dance through designing a sequence of moves/actions, as complicated by a determination of movement quality, with equal attention to the body's placement in space and adherence to a time structure oriented around tempo and rhythm. Recent dance scholarship has not only exploded the idea of dance, but has also broadened the contexts in which choreography is invoked. In *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*, Sansan Kwan exposes the expanding circuits of choreography as inclusive of the built environment:

> Another way to think about choreography, however, centers on the ways that space can be an agent that determines movement. For example, in cities, bodies and other moveable objects, such as cars, can have choreography imposed on them—they can *be* choreographed—by both the predetermined and the unpredetermined shapings of space made by streets, buildings, and even other moving objects.[15]

In privileging the actions and moves generated by visitors at the memorial site, I not only account for the intersection between architecture and the body, which results in the performance of a diverse set of pedestrian choreographies, but I also extrapolate from Kwan's theorizations to argue individual structures within the built environment inform a body's relation to timing, space, movement vocabulary. That is, architecture choreographs.

The VVM is one site in a wide collection of national memorials/monuments spread across the National Mall and Constitution Gardens, mapping a narrative of national identity saturated with symbolic registers. This space, fraught with historical and cultural references, simultaneously hosts domestic and international tourists. As such, visitors to the VVM occupy a diverse demographic ranging from children to adults, the bodies of whom collectively claim a spectrum of national, cultural, ethnic, gender affiliations, all of which inform their bodily habits and motions. In deploying her own body as an agent of spatial inquiry, Sansan Kwan expresses reticence towards scrutinizing the performances of other bodies in determining the condition of a place, "While I am convinced of the value of studying movement as a way of studying place, I am wary of the usefulness of watching other bodies move through a place and theorizing on general characteristics of that place..."[16]

Given the heterogeneous demographic of visitors at the memorial site, an interrogation of bodily texts inscribed in/with the architecture and space does not permit the defining of a distinctly American choreography of memory—how Americans perform the memory of the Vietnam War. However, there is theoretical possibility in reading the dances performed by visitors at the VVM site. While it may indeed be impossible to extract a clear understanding of ethnic, cultural identity of particular populations by studying their choreographies at the VVM—and this is not my intention—these bodies and their dancing serve as source material through which to understand the figuring of space and architecture as a mechanism of socialization.[17] Every visitor to the VVM confronts the same black chevron partly carved into the earth. Their physical readings and reactions, which are constructed and informed by their positionalities in the world, are equally informed by the composition of the memorial itself. What concerns me is thinking through the dialectic between body and architecture as a choreographic force, an intersection made (temporarily) legible in the form of "dances" performed at the memorial site.

Architecture often serves, in politically and culturally charged environments, as signifiers of larger ideas or statements. The study of bodies in space and architecture signals how we are invited to engage with the public, cultural memory. Architecture scholar Dolores Hayden argues the significance of historic places lies in how memory is always connected with it, that memory is "place-oriented," possessing the power to "trigger memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present."[18] And the power of the built environment to elicit or trigger public memory implicitly includes a bodily component, as it is people who not only inhabit the built environment, but according to Paul Connerton, memory is also enacted through embodied performances as situated in cultural landscapes.[19] This attention to the body at the VVM applies ambiguity into a discourse about (collective) memory, which commends the power of the transitory and more importantly, this investigation reveals how a nationally sanctioned and publicly funded formation about the memory of the Vietnam War engenders a set of bodily texts—the patterns and inconsistencies of which—making fluid a seemingly permanent structure and suggest that work of "remembering" is synonymous with the embodied act of encountering.

II.

The VVM is sited in Constitution Gardens, which is a section of parkland in the heart of Washington D.C. Moreover, the memorial is territorially circumscribed as a part of the National Mall, which is also administered by the NPS.[20] This politicized space is subject to overt mechanisms of oversight and control. In his article, "Culture of, by, and for the People: The Smithsonian Folklife Festival," Richard Kurin reveals the unrelenting control the NPS maintains over disturbances to the integrity of this politicized arena, "the Mall is among the most heavily regulated spaces in the world. To do anything, you have to get approval of the National Park Service, for they regulate and police the mall."[21] His claim about institutional control and surveillance on the Mall registers implications for the body. In the case of the VVM, the site is overlaid with additional architectural directives, which limits how users engage with and access the site. These administrative impositions affect both the topography of the site as well as the quality of bodily movements that could potentially permeate the space and contribute to variability in the rhetorical content of the memorial.

While the VVM was originally designed to be an open-access, park, which invited visitors to freely roam within the bi-level site, the spatial corridors of the memorial have been significantly narrowed.[22] A set of chain and stanchions are positioned around key elements of the memorial, with visitors spatially confined to more narrow corridors of access immediately adjacent to the memorial wall, the two figurative sculptures, and the flag. The green areas atop and alongside the memorial wall are unavailable for exploration. Visitors are guided to enter the main element—the memorial wall—from two (narrow) points of entry, which simultaneously serve as exit points. This path discursively funnels incoming bodies along a specific course within the site, shrinking the possibilities and freedom in determining spatial circuits.

Early concern for the integrity of the ground upon which the VVM sits compelled the initial, logistical reasoning for partitioning the site into usable and unusable spaces. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) archive houses documents detailing the resolution of structural problems with the VVM in post-production between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the Cooper Lecky Partnership, the Washington D.C.-based architectural firm hired to deploy and oversee the construction of Maya Lin's design, and the National Park Service (NPS), the State agency stewarding the site. A document dated November 24, 1982, compiled by Carla Corbin, an employee of Cooper Lecky Partnership, details a set of decisions made during a project meeting convening representatives from the NPS, members of the VVMF, and architects from Cooper Lecky. The meeting convened to address a concern over drainage issues linked to heavy pedestrian traffic on areas of the site covered in sod. Being a former garbage dump, the soil composition of the memorial site is uneven and unstable. Heavy pedestrian occupation of the grass sections of the memorial contributed to sod instability. And a set decisions determining repair work stipulated both sod replacement and installation of "...ropes and stakes, and signs to direct pedestrian traffic."[23]

This letter evidences the insertion of chains and stanchions into the site environment, used to demarcate permissible space from areas guarded from visitor encroachment. Subsequent correspondence from the VVMF archive, dated a year later, suggest the NPS anticipated the lawn area to be cordoned off from public use only whilst contractors resolved the sod drainage problem.[24] The continued presence of structural blockades around the green space in the present-day may remain out of permanent concern for the stability of the sod, however, the long-term presence of the chains and stanchions have shifted their meaning into an explicit formalization of usage of the site as aligned with suitable commemorative practices for the body.

This institutional determination of usable and restricted space signals a choreographic consequence for the visitors. Spatial design—the conscious determination of where and how bodies inhabit space—figure s centrally in the choreographic process. These structural signifiers delimiting usable and unusable space overwrite early tactics towards an expansive use of space that has been visually scripted through the Associated Press Image and Artstor databases. These image-banks house photographs capturing the public, November 15, 1982 dedication of the memorial. Photographs taken by Bob Daugherty, Maya Lin, and Charles Pereira chronicle early practices in space consumption at the VVM as bodies fully occupy the entirety of the site; attendees even crowd atop the grassed section above the memorial wall. Subsequent photographs documenting the memorial in 1983 reveal a similar determination of spatiality. An AP image taken by Charles Tasnadl on January 28, 1983 exposes visitors inhabiting all areas of the site, with bodies positioning themselves in the green spaces immediately surrounding the memorial wall. These images also evidence the absence of spatial deterrents presently bifurcating the site into accessible and non-accessible sections.

As contemporary visitors are guided into permissible portions of the memorial, the site, as institutionally mediated through the NPS, possesses choreographic valences, designing the spatial orientation of user experiences. This structural determination of spatiality is reinforced by a set of signs outlining the perimeter of the memorial. Official mandates for the body, in the form of signs delineating the actions/activities prohibited within the circumference of the VVM, stand guard in the vicinity of the entrance/exits. An additional layer of signs are positioned along the perimeter of the memorial, reinforcing the change in the memorial's topographic composition: "Honor Those Who Served: Please Stay on the Sidewalk."

This alert for the body not only fortifies the spatial directives already established by the chains and stanchions, but it also suggests physical practices of commemoration as wrapped up in notions of "honor" and "respect," and more specifically that a choreography for a performance of remembering-as-honor is visible on the body by way of visitors' occupation of and behavior in the site. Because this framing of memorialization is perceptible through the body, this sign also suggests visitors deviating from the permissible pathways may be subject to ambiguous, but publicly consequential repercussions as this act of "honor" is defined along corporeal terms. Along with signs organizing visitors' usage of space, official mandates delineating the forbidden stand guard in the vicinity of these entrance/exits; visitors are asked to refrain from a set of actions: smoking, eating/drinking, bicycling, running. These activities are located in the environment of the everyday, but explicitly marked as disruptive in this environment.

According to linguist Florian Coulmas, public signs constitute a linguistic landscape, imbued with a status of authority "…writing by dissociating the word from its speaker creates abstract authorship, that is, authority officialdom to constitute itself and solidify its power."[25] These logo-centric directives, however, are edicts for corporeal behavior, regulating of the type, quality, and timing of bodily moves also provisions the body with a movement landscape—an act of choreography. As much as the work of choreography involves devising spatial patterns for the body to travel, the labor of making dances also entails the work of formalizing "moves," which is further complicated by specifications for the quality and timing of those movements.

This dual system of text and architectural directives—demands on behavior and spatiality—are choreographic in nature, formalizing the dance/action vocabulary within an environment of commemoration. While not a policy in the traditional, legislative sense, these directives for the body comprise an embodied "policy," (of respect and commemoration) dictating appropriate and improper uses of the space. This "respect" is defined by one's choreographic choices in terms of how one interacts with the space in both comportment and kinetics (by refraining from running), as well as how one inhabits the space (by staying on the walking path).

This relationship between architectural directives and visitors conjures up Michel Foucault's understanding of the "body as object and target of power."[26] In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he contends the object of bodily control, in the classical age, expanded to incorporate "processes of the activity rather than its result," whereby the operations of the body—physical actions—were appropriated by external forces of supervision.[27] Power thus becomes intimately linked to the body. The mechanisms alerting visitors to refrain from certain bodily moves and to avoid certain areas of the memorial space impose a Foucauldian disciplinary corporeality onto visitors. These directives suggest a formalization of the practice of commemoration as a "process." And this process of discipline is enacted through the work of limiting and restricting the ways in which visitors navigate and experience the memorial in terms of space and movement.

III.

There exists a tension between the VVM as a national institution, subjecting visitors to disciplinary forces that formalize acts of commemoration, and the VVM as a site conceived by Maya Lin to be a "moving composition," an assertion achieved by the presence of mobile bodies. [28] This tension is complicated by the status of the memorial as a site that remains individually accessed, in which visitors retain some physical determination for their experience. However, the limitations of space and action do not fully prevent the reciprocal mobilization of body and architecture, especially within the vicinity of Lin's memorial wall. The presence of bodies in the memorial site literally "moves" the memorial. Many scholars have commented upon the reflective quality of the memorial wall, as the black granite surface archiving the names of Vietnam War dead also casts the images of visitors who cross its path. These temporary and ephemeral projections of moving bodies literally "enliven" or make active the memorial structure.

As visitors pass across the wall, their bodies are temporarily projected onto the surface of the black granite. Visual and cultural studies scholar Marita Sturken positions the VVM as a site mediating multiple and often-contentious narratives of the Vietnam War, "the walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial act as a screen for many projects about the history of the Vietnam War and its aftermath."[29] Bodies passing through the memorial site are rendered visible on the architecture's surface, corporealizing Sturken's argument that a multiplicity of perspectives inscribe the Vietnam War and are projected across the memorial. Building on this "screen" metaphor, I see this "screen" as also projecting the movement-images of visitors, revealing an unstable, constantly shifting rotation of commemorative choreographies traversing through the memorial site. It is here, at the convergence of physical bodies with the screen, where dance studies, especially the theorization of the dancing body as captured in film, presents a new orientation for the memorial wall.

The moving/still images of bodies traveling along the expanse of the memorial are captured across the surfaces of the wall panels. As such, visitors not only witness their own figure s cast upon the wall-as-screen, but also perceive the images of other bodies, activated by the memorial and congregating in shared time and space. These projected actions cultivate a constantly shifting screen *dance*, made possible through the temporary participation and presence of bodies occupying the memorial site, rendering the memorial in flux.[30]

Lin's memorial wall thus figure s doubly as a screen: a screen, as interpreted by Marita Sturken, as well as a literal screen, upon which is projected a shifting and moving series of pedestrian choreographies. The action and inaction of the bodies, navigating in tension between limitation and freedom, stimulates a quality of flux within the memorial site. In deliberating on the reciprocal influences of dance and film, Erin Brannigan cites advances in photography and cinema as interfacing with the emergence of modern dance in the early twentieth century.[31] The development of this new dance form, which modifies the understanding of movement, respectively implicates and inserts motion in the definition of film.

In his treatise on cinema, Gilles Deleuze asserts this twentieth century advance in the conceptualization of movement—through dance—as a referent to the emergence of cinema:

> To an even greater degree, dance, ballet, and mime were abandoning figure s and poses to release values which were not posed, not measured which related movement to any-instant-whatever. In this way, art, ballet and mime became actions capable of responding to accidents of the environment; that is, to the distribution of the points in a space, or of the moments of an event. All this serves the same end as cinema.[32]

Working to destabilize the perception of film as a static entity, Deleuze suggests that flux and continuity contained within the (modern) moving body as also defining the filmic medium. In other words, films themselves engender movement and evolve their own shifting temporalities. As a screen that is also a choreographic collaborator, the memorial wall becomes a site that not only "moves" the visitors through its space by playing a role in their

choreographic process, but this corporeal activity is also made visible or "screened" on the wall itself. That is, the memorial "moves," in the form of a dance-film, as the very real motions of visitors' bodies become projected onto the memorial wall/screen as movement-images.

Brannigan suggests, "Deleuze not only provides a way into Bergson's ideas and their relevance for cinema, but he draws dance into the discussion using it as a historical example and analogy."[33] This conceptual collision between dance-movement and film exposes the fluidity generated by the wall-as-screen. In other words, these bodies, and the reflections of their commemorative actions, projected on the face of the memorial wall in the form of an ephemeral film, generates movement in a manner defined by Deleuze as he disrupts the perception of film as static.

Moreover, bodies, according to Henri Lefebvre, are active agents in the production of space, "can the body, with its capacity for action, and it various energies, be said to create space... each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces space."[34] As moving bodies converge at the VVM, their very physical presence and their motility participate in transforming the memorial and its reflective surface into a dance film, jostling the stability of the architecture with a constant changing set of movement-images. This screen dance comprising the "movement-images" of visitors to the memorial is unstable, given the constant ebb and flow of visitors at the memorial site. The qualitatively volatile nature of patronage at the memorial is also a kind of "motion," in its instability and unpredictability, further eroding the VVM's appearance of immovability.

IV.

Discursively, scholars have categorized the VVM as a "moving" entity in reference to its affective, rather than kinetic, thrust. Nearly twenty years ago, Daphne Berdahl opens her analysis of the memorial by centering on the emotional reactions elicited by the memorial's visitors, "visitors... respond to its stark, haunting beauty in a multitude of ways. Some come to weep, pray, mourn, and to remember; others come to witness the emotion of the place."[35] Her listing of affective response to the VVM supports its orientation as a "moving" entity. However, there is duality in its (e)motive force. As much as the memorial provokes emotional responses to the trauma of the Vietnam War, it also engenders bodily action and motion. Beyond its motility as a dance screen, the architecture also compels a literal moving of the body in the process of eliciting affective responses.

Since the VVM is bound up with ordinances for the body, with visitors prohibited from traveling through space with physical force (no running allowed), walking takes over as the primary modality for propelling the body through space. Lin's architectural marking of the Vietnam War accentuates the temporality of the conflict and the chronological scale of embodied destruction represented in the sea of names etched across the facing of the memorial wall. Jeffrey Ochsner, in positioning the VVM as a "linking object," evokes the centrality of the body in assessing the impact of war, "As we walk along the memorial, we pass through year after year of losses until we are faced with the enormity of the war's time frame..."[36] His

narrative of moving through the memorial space reveals interconnectivity between the moving body and affect production. In other words, the scale of physical trauma is accounted for when bodies are physically activated, walking from one end of the memorial wall to the other.

In his interrogation of the nature and formation of affective spaces, Derek McCormack argues for the body's complicity in the production of these environments, "bodies participate in the generation of affective spaces: spaces whose qualities and consistencies are vague but sensed, albeit barely, as a distinctive affective tonality, mood, or atmosphere."[37] As a site inviting and participating in choreographies of memorialization, the presence of bodies stepping, pacing, shuffling, trudging, marching through the site not only coproduces, as McCormack suggests, the affective space of a memorial, but I suggest the kinetics of the body also reinforce and generate the affective sensations themselves. Through "dancing," the affective register of the memorial—both discrete feelings of mourning, sorrow, peace, and resolution and less conclusive expressions—emerge.[38] That is, one's feelings towards the Vietnam War, as mediated by the body via the VVM, are embodied ones.

While walking figure s as a central locomotive device in dances generated at the VVM, there emerges another unifying movement phrase: at some point in their routes, all visitors shift from motion to stillness, replacing their forward momentum to address the surface of the wall.[39] When and how long these shifts take place is connected to the performative placing-making that is asserted by each visitor. While the ways in which bodies perform and compose this oscillation between motion and stillness encompass a spectrum of timing and qualities, inevitably, this "move" is performed by almost every visitor. At varying junctures, visitors reposition their orientation to address the surface of the wall—making a transition between motion and stillness, as they travel from one end of the wall to the other. The walking action, which is partly enabled by memorial design via the central walkway, is seldom constant. All visitors inhabiting the vicinity of the memorial wall will take a few steps. Some tread further, walking steadily towards the apex, but inevitably, the body is compelled to locate stillness, which in turn, is a call for motion.

The architecture compels this motion and stasis. On one hand, the sloping nature of the walkway structurally invites bodies to activate forward momentum, and on the other hand, the composition of the wall surface, performing a visual act of naming as overlaid with the movement-images of visitors, beckons for bodies to take pause and view the contents of this "screen." The endless rows of names etched upon the face of highly reflective granite panels are best made out when visitors arrive at stasis. While scholars have already commented upon the reflective quality of the wall material, what goes un-assessed is this very design element also contributes opportunities for the a physical transition from motion into stillness.[40] As visitors catch sight of their reflections temporarily superimposed onto the granite surface, an instance in which flesh and structure momentarily intersect in the liminal space of the reflection, their locomotion forward transforms into stasis.[41]

This movement motif, woven from the tension between walking and stopping, articulates the fluid nature of the memorial wall, as the architecture moves—and stops—bodies that are

materialized in a series of unpredictable dances, that are then projected onto the screen of the memorial. As such, the memorial is doubly enlivened, made unstable by the inconsistent, yet persistent, flow of bodies. They are provoked by the architecture to exist in a liminal space between motion and stillness, made fluid through the reflection of these dances across the face of the memorial wall. Maurice Halbwachs argues human memory exists primarily within a collective context, constitutive not only of official signifiers of memory like war memorials or public anniversaries marking historical achievement, but also framed by narratives transmitted by family and religious institutions.[42] As such, an ineluctable bond is forged between individual memory and collective memory as formulated in the social sphere:

> ...individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over—to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from social milieu.[43]

T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper reinforce this dynamic between individual and collective memory.[44] In identifying a shortage of intersectionality in memory scholarship, they advocate for conceiving of memory as a collective entity, operating in dialectic with individual subjectivity, in which the complexities of personal memories are constructed through cultural practices of representation in civil society. The singular and collective choreographies of visitors at the VVM embody and address this confluence between personal experiences of public, shared history; it is made visible through a dynamic whereby the individuality of choreographic content subtlety overlaps with shared movement phrases in which the body shifts from motion to stillness, and out again. The diversity in how the VVM is used by visitors, as informed by the architecture, is strung together by a shared moment in which every body, in his/her individual way, lurches, gently settles, eases into, hesitantly, abruptly finds a place of stillness and then retrieves momentum for continuing through the memorial space.

This phrase, connecting every commemorative dance with all the others, makes tangible the linkage between individual experiences of the VVM and the collective—with the memorial wall itself as signifying this shared representation of the Vietnam War collaborating in the choreography of this movement motif of bodies shifting between motion and stillness. Seldom do visitors navigate across the terrain of the site in an unbroken continuum. Rather moments of pause, injected between bouts of motion, produces inconsistency in the traveling momentum of bodies. These irregularities in action and temporality in choreographic dynamics expose the residual tension embedded in the Vietnam War as a historical moment and as signified in architectural form. The labor of engaging with and commemorating this war is not effortless, nor even physically and affectively smooth, but rather hinges on a jerky fluidity. The VVM is engaged in moving and stopping the body, embodying the complexities of national, collective memory, woven from what Marita Sturken would suggest as divergent and inconsistent narratives. The jerky-fluid quality of visitors' choreographies inscribes the labor of wrestling with a node of public memory that not only carries historical magnitude, but also resists complete resolution. Thus body's oscillation between motion and stasis corporeally translates the affective condition of the space.

V.

I conclude by posing a not-yet-resolved question into the potential theoretical alliance between the body and memory. Earlier in this essay, I suggest dance and performance scholars' interrogations of ephemerality via live performance might also inform the inconstant nature of memory. Here, I invoke Rebecca Schneider's seminal complication to the multivalent condition of performance. By tracing the political and discursive stakes of divorcing performances from the archive and possibility of permanent documentation—that live bodily performances do not remain and cannot be recorded—she exposes the complex discursive nexus concerning liveness, disappearance, materiality and ephemerality, within which the body is embroiled.

Schneider however recuperates the body's archival possibilities as a political act, troubling impermanence and asserting an understanding of performance—and for purposes of this essay, dancing-as performance—that remains, "when we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the act of remaining and a means of re-appearance...we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh."[45] Hers is a project wielding the body as a destabilizing weapon against the Western-privileged archive. For Schneider, remains exist out of live (dance) performances.

Certainly the "remains" of collective memory, as signified in architectural form, have been critiqued by memory studies scholars as countering the circumstance of memory as decidedly mutable and ephemeral. So, can active bodies and their choreographies complicate this perception of memorials, with the VVM serving as theoretical case study? I suggest turning towards Schneider's grounding of performances as not simply disappearing, but operating as a repository for collective memory. This epistemological disruption in which the immaterial figure s as site of mnemonic preservation offers up an alternate understanding of memory and Western commemorative practices, which also hosts a body of accumulated choreographies transpiring, disappearing, and according to Schneider, reappearing "differently" in confluence with the memorial site, "to the degree that it remains, but remains differently or in difference, the past performed and made explicit as (live) performance can function as a kind of bodily transmission conventional archivist dread, a counter-memory..."[46] Can then, the "dancing" of visitors—their performances—we encounter as we navigate the VVM conjure up past choreographies and actions that have already disappeared as well as invoke or "perform" the physicality of war itself, which is archived in the memorial in an implicitly bodily manner, in the form of names inscribed against the face of the memorial wall. Furthermore, the dances generated by visitors are also re-animated and briefly "remain" across the reflective screen that is the memorial wall, which also figure s as an archive to the war dead. Can Schneider's enunciation of performance as 'remaining," further trouble the staticity of the memorial structure and the collective memories architecture embodies?

Notes

[1] Charles L. Griswold. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 4 (1986): 690.

[2] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). Lefebvre suggests that in order to comprehend social space (and practices), the body must be reinserted into the discourse and theorization of space. Not only do social practices imply the use of the body, but the body also produces and exists within space. Lefebvre goes further by enunciating the body *is* space; it is situated in a sensory-sensual space: "before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before producing itself by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing* itself by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space" (170).

[3] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 42.

[4] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 123.

[5] This kinesthetic pattern materializes the dynamic between personal and collective remembering, emergent amidst a daily collection of dances, which are diverse in terms choreographic structures such as duration, timing, movement vocabulary and movement quality.

[6] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari propose a process of *becoming*, which refers to a process of change, movement within an *assemblage*, or a collection of things, affects, parts gathered into a single context. The becoming of an assemblage achieves its own ontological status. I use this idea of "becoming" to suggest the union of memorial architecture (seemingly stable) with body (ephemeral and unstable), as resulting in a *becoming*, or a reconceptualization of memorials as fluid entity.

[7] Susan Foster, "Choreographing History," in *Choreographing History* (Unnatural Acts: Theorizing Performance), ed. Susan Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[8] Susan Foster, "Choreographing History," 3.

[9] In 1997, Jane Desmond uttered a call by way of her essay, "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies," for the privileging of the moving body to trouble discourses surrounding issues of social identity, culture, history, politics. Her invocation of the body as a site of inquiry also reveals scholarly reticence towards engaging with the materiality of the corpus, "even the now popular subfield of critical work on "the body" is focused more on representations of the body and/or its discursive policing than with its actions/movements as "text" themselves," with dance scholars and dance studies as primary advocates in unraveling these neglected embodied scripts. It is only recently that performative practices have alighted more concretely onto the methodological realm of cultural studies, of which the formation and representations of shared, collective memory figure .

[10] A physical traverse in the built environment demarcating the divide between East and West Berlin (Jens Richard Giersdorf, 2003), a public funerary procession in the streets of San Francisco and the unfurling of the NAMES Project AIDS quilt (David Gere, 2004), New York City club culture (Fiona Buckland 2002), a kinesthetic performance of woman flâneur in Chinese-inflected cityscapes (Sansan Kwan, 2013) have all become sites in which the body becomes the apparatus through which culture, sexuality, social identity, ethnicity, is evaluated and critiqued. And implicitly, these investigations also involve spatial parameters within which the body operates. Architecture scholars are also heeding earlier call to account for bodies in the process of design and planning. Vikas Metha's recently published *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space* (2014) accounts for behaviors, patterns, rhythms of people using and occupying the streetscape to interject into the discourse of street design and planning, while scholars are beginning to address the artistic jostling of the memory discourse by intervening in the discourse of performance, examining the transformation of oral, narrative-based memory into performative and artistic expressions.

[11] Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, "Introduction: Mapping Memory," in Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates, edited by Susannah Radston and Bill Schwarz, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010). Radstone and Schwarz, grounding memory in a postmodern context, argue for a definition that is coupled with disappearance, "the current fascination—or even obsession—with memory is ineluctably associated with the idea of its absence, atrophy, collapse, or demise" (1).

[12] Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, *The Art of Forgetting* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001).

[13] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

[14] The idea of choreograph(y) has also become deterritorialized from its previously rigid designation, conceptually reimagined by scholars operating inside and outside the bounds of dance. Traditionally, the term refers to the labor of crafting dance, the conscious effort of designing a sequence of moves/actions, as complicated by a determination of movement quality, with equal attention to the body's placement in space and adherence to a time structure oriented around tempo and rhythm. It is the work of design—a triadic nexus between body, space, time—which lends itself to repurposing into other discursive environments. In the case of architecture, "choreography" has been most readily applied to illustrate the calculated placement of structures onto space or the texturizing of space with elements of hard and soft design. However, the intimacy between the built environment and its users saw advancement as early as 1977 by those involved in production of space. In "Body Movement," architect Robert J. Yudell makes an early case for an approach to (architectural) design that accounts for the physicality and motions of the bodies for which buildings and structures are intended. Furthermore, his commentary about the body's relationship to space is suggestive of architecture as participating in shaping the maneuverings of the body: "...our movements are ever subject to the same physical forces as are built forms and may be physically contained, limited, and directed by these forms...This critical interaction of body form and movement with architecture deserves careful attention" (57).

[15] Sansan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

[16] Kwan, *Kinesthetic City*, 6.

[17] I am not interested in attaching demographic claim onto the patterns of bodily activities apparent at the site.

[18] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 46.

[19] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[20] Edith L.B. Turner, "The People's Home Ground," in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 69-78. Edith L.B. Turner registers The National Mall as overlaid with symbolic value, accrued through its use as a public stage "symbolizing the pageant of American history," performed not only via the canon of performances, protests, rallies, inaugural events marking discord in socio-political trajectory of the country, but also signified through the collection of monuments and memorials commemorating significant moments in American history.

Federick Turner, "Washington as Pilgrimage Site," in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 97-92. Frederick Turner in turn characterizes this site as a public gathering place, both a site of pilgrimage and tourism. As such, the site is imbued with definitive historical and political meaning, as a portion of the built environment representing a nation's political ideology. As a site stewarded and regulated by a State agency, the National Park Service, the composition of the Mall, in terms of how and what events transpire and how and what visitors engage with the structures located within this space is carefully orchestrated to reinforce the face of American democracy. The VVM, as situated in this arena, is subject to the same institutional forces.

[21] Richard Kurin, "Culture Of, By, and For the People: The Smithsonian Folklife Festival" in The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 108.

[22] Maya Lin, *Boundaries*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05. VVM designer Maya Lin frames her design proposal for the VVM as an alliance between structure and motion. Her 1981 visual submission to the national design contest sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund includes a written description: "The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to be understood as we move into and out of it; the passage itself is gradual, the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the meaning of this memorial is understood." Her early reference to the memorial as a "moving composition" enacting "change" suggests her understanding of this memorial as active, fluid, and in motion.

[23] National Park Service 1982-1983/ Memorial Design/Development and Construction/Site Restoration (Phase II)/ Files from the Project Director, Container 71, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[24] National Park Service 1982-1983/ Memorial Design/Development and Construction/Site Restoration (Phase II)/ Files from the Project Director, Container 71, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[25] Florian Coulmas, "Linguistic Landscaping and the Seed of the Public Sphere," in *Linguisti Landscape: Expanding the Scenery*, eds. Elana Shohamy and Durk Gorter (New York: Routledge, 2008), 14.

[26] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 136.

[27] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 137.

[28] Lin, *Boundaries*, 4:05.

[29] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 82.

[30] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara. Habberjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). The term "movement-image" is used by Deleuze as he embarks on a project of defining and classifying the concept of image, which Deleuze carries out as an expansion on Henri Bergson's work in *Matter and Memory*. Deleuze uses the cinematic medium to build a theory on being, positioning objects, things in the universe, even those which are still or unmoving, in perpetual motion, shifting only when environment and context are altered, "...cinema does not gives us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us movement-image. It does give us a section, but a section which is mobile, not an immobile section + abstract movement" (2). These (moving) images, framed and captured on screen provide insight into one—out of many perspectives, or ways, of deciphering the cosmos.

[31] Erin Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*, 19-20.

[32] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 6-7.

[33] Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 21.

[34] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 170.

[35] Daphne Berdahl, "Voices at the Wall: Discourses of Self, History, and National Identity at the Vietnam Veteran Memorial," *History and Memory* Vol. 6, Fall-Winter (1994): 88.

[36] Jeffrey Ochsner, "A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 50 no. 3, (1997): 156-171.

[37] Derek McCormack, *Refrains for Moving Bodies: Experience and Experiments in Affective Spaces* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 3.

[38] Nigel Thrift, "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B Human Geography* 86 no.1 (2004). In his excavation of the affectivity of the city space, Nigel Thrift accounts for the body's role in the production of feelings, "the first translation of affect which I want to address conceives of affect as a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as outer lining." Furthermore, dance scholars would suggest the evocation of affect as prompted by the body as a form of kinesthetic empathy for the war itself.

[39] The term "phrase" or "movement phrase" is deployed in choreographic vernacular to reference a sequence of dance moves and steps, possessing its own internal logic and fitting into a larger choreographic structure. Often, movement phrases are repeated, manipulated, expanded upon, in an effort to craft a single dance. As such, movement phrases are not the dance itself, but rather the material from which dances are formed.

[40] Scholars have collectively and often commented upon the reflective quality of the memorial wall designed by Maya Lin. Writing in 1997, Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, frames the VVM as a "linking object" that connects the structure to its viewer. He perceives the reflectivity of the wall as a way in which "we first find others and then ourselves in the wall" (164). In her essay, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall,"" Kim Servart Theriault analyzes the mirror-like effect of Lin's wall design, "As the viewer looks at the Wall, he or she is reflected on its surface. Lin used polished black granite...making the viewer actually becoming part of the work as he or she is reflected in it" (425).

[41] In particular, the memorial's apex, whereby the east and west sections of the wall merge to a sharp tip, is explicitly conducive to a performance into which bodies transition from motion into stillness. This literally heightened area of the wall functions as an obvious and common location for user-dancers to take pause, as the magnitude of the war is visibly rendered in the daunting scale of the wall—the panels of which are at their tallest, and the convergence of dates (1955 and 1975) marking the beginning and end of this war, which brings into reality extensive duration of American involvement in Vietnam and the human—bodily—scale of the war.

[42] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[43] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 53.

[44] T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, Michael Roper, eds., *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, (New York: Routledge, 2000). In citing a surge in public and scholarly interest in war commemoration in the last two decades, which they contend as following two primary, yet distinct paradigms: war memorials as practices of national identification, whereby these "symbolic repertoires" participate in corralling citizens into a collective national identity or war commemorations as produced for psychological reasons, operating as an expression of mourning, these editor/authors maintain these dual investigative models exist as mutually exclusive paradigms, lacking interface.

[45] Rebecca Schneider, *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 101.

[46] Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 105.

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The "Good Death" of Buildings:
Filling Gaps in Post-Earthquake Christchurch

Heidi Kakela

The city of Christchurch was irrevocably changed on September 4th, 2010, when a magnitude 7.1 Richter earthquake rattled its sleeping residents awake in the early hours of the morning. The disaster that ensued was wholly unexpected for a city that had always imagined itself far from New Zealand's most likely site of seismic activity, the Alpine Fault. Equally unexpected was its largest aftershock of magnitude 6.3, on February 22nd 2011, a little over six months after the first earthquake. The February aftershock killed 185 people and total damages were equal to 20 percent of New Zealand's GDP (McCrone 2014, 102). In material terms, this included the demolition of 80 percent of Christchurch's damaged central business district. As once familiar buildings began to disappear, leaving behind vast empty sections, the city quickly became a patchwork of dusty streets and looming absences.

This article discusses these absences in the cityscape and their "reactivation" by an organization called Gap Filler. True to its name, Gap Filler addresses the disaster by temporarily filling lots left vacant after the demolitions through performative actions and installations. Its multitude of projects—from poetry readings to non-commercial retail outlets—are built, choreographed, and realized on borrowed land through volunteer work, with recycled materials, and small financial contributions. They are opportunities for citizens to experiment with alternative visions for Christchurch's urban space, whose future is largely determined by the New Zealand government's plans. Gap Filler offers residents a venue to critique and challenge the top-down character of the reconstruction. Its work consists of identifying locations for installations, approaching their owners for permission to temporarily reactivate these for various purposes, and marshaling both the human and monetary resources necessary. The organization also concerns itself with these sites' former purposes, which guides the shape their projects will take.

In their own words, Gap Filler generates and facilitates "desires" to use vacant land as a vehicle for reimagining the identity of a city (Reynolds 2014). It works with anyone who comes up with an idea for a project and, through these, aims to stoke residents' imaginations to consider gaps not as places stripped of their former identities, but as a places of infinite potential. The organization believes the desire to address these spaces and not to consign them to official reconstruction is instrumental for both civic renewal and the restoration of a sense of belonging. The space it reimagines is replete with a past whose physical referents may have been lost to the earthquake, but whose presence is still felt by residents. The sudden changes in the cityscape shocked many residents, who felt the city they had known had become unrecognizable. Where any kind of reconstruction provided a respite of sorts from the absences, it was clear those that addressed former landmarks evoked stronger reactions. In this article, I argue that the reactivation of vacant lots is not only a grassroots critique of the rebuild, but indirectly amounts to a socially acknowledged and therapeutic 'good' death for familiar vistas.

Integral to these deaths were the absences that spurred the gap-filling projects, the projects' preoccupation with the sites' past, and their intention and ability to envision the city's future. To facilitate the description of the absences Gap Filler seeks to address, I turn to Tim Ingold's work on familiar surroundings and particularly to his notion of "taskscapes" (2000, 195). At their most simple, taskscapes are landscapes in motion. If the landscape refers to a space of interrelated features seen from a particular perspective, the taskscape is the networks of different kinds of labor, or tasks, that these features generate. These networks are not ahistorical, but have come into being through years and decades of life in particular surroundings. Basing his argument on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2000) and Gilles Deleuze (2011), Ingold argues that they constitute our sense of being placed somewhere, where we are constantly in a process of shaping and being shaped by our surroundings. This suffuses our familiar vistas with meaning and, unavoidably, attaches a sense of temporality to them. To attend to a taskscape is to effect a momentary artificial abstraction of one's sense of duration. As such, taskscapes are a moment where the past and present meet, affording us a vague sense of the likely shape of the future. Here it is the inherent sense of historicity in Ingold's concept that makes it apt to reason with around placed memories and meanings.

Pre-disaster Christchurch taskscapes faced an unmooring when their physical referents were demolished, leaving residents experiencing a sense of grief. It is this bereavement that Gap Filler's work indirectly addressed. By engaging with the past meanings and purposes of demolished sites, through everything from thematic inspiration to archaeological digs, its activities emphasized their lived histories and memorialized them before they are built over. This memorialization, in concert with the temporariness of Gap Filler's installations, establishes a "good death" for the mental image of Christchurch by commemorating the loss of the familiar.[1] In his study of modern Western funerary practices, James Green terms this kind of commemoration the poiesis of memory (2008, 186). He borrows the term from Michael Lambek's work, where it refers to Aristotle's notion of "poetic" creation that forms the emotional, affective part of a triad with theoretical contemplation and practical making (1998). Poietic creation offers a third way between abstraction and materiality, which Green believes is necessary to understand how memories are formed, interpreted, and used. He suggests that through poiesis, memories of the deceased are refined, linked to a cultural imaginary, and utilized to envision a future without them. Applied to Christchurch, this means that Gap Filler's poietic (re)creation of past sites incorporates them into a shared civic memory. In Ingold's terms it helps the residents patch up an unravelling taskscape and to resist the more alienating effects of reconstruction.

This article draws from a variety of sources. Alongside extensive interviews with Gap Filler's creative director Coralie Winn, conducted in 2012 and 2014, my research is based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Christchurch, where I carried out 23 interviews in ten neighborhoods. Working with a community support organization called the Neighbourhood Trust, I conducted participant observation to learn how people linked perceptions of disaster-induced uncertainty and loss with their surroundings. During this time Gap Filler was already active in Christchurch and their projects were received enthusiastically by my participants, who were both struggling to come to terms with their loss and pummeled with weekly aftershocks. For them, Gap Filler provided a much-needed respite from disaster-exhaustion and one way to tackle the rebuild.

Gaps in the Scenery

It all began with the demolitions. The February aftershock killed 185 people, most of whom were crushed by falling debris or collapsed buildings in the city center. In response, the central business district of Christchurch was closed off from the public by a military-enforced cordon. The vast majority of its buildings were declared structurally unsound, irreparable, and bound for demolition. It was perhaps no surprise that when the cordon was lifted six months later, the abrupt absence of formerly familiar buildings loomed large. People I met eagerly pointed out empty lots in order to recount former buildings and past purposes. The rapid demolition of Christchurch effected a presence of absences, where the lack of what had once defined a place made it both present in memory and absent in reality. The successive disappearances of its defining structures, such as heritage buildings, were emotionally disturbing.

To illustrate the tone that views of the demolitions took and contextualize the problem Gap Filler's work came to address, I will briefly quote two people I came to know during my fieldwork. Freda had worked as a city councillor before her retirement. She emphatically argued for the importance of Christchurch's heritage buildings for her former job.

It was a heritage city and many people worked to save that heritage. Fought battles with the Council on why you should save that building — and it ain't there anymore. That's like a death. To me, it's like a death.

By virtue of their broad scope, the demolitions were interpreted as abrupt departures and extractions. They were questioned, accepted, and mourned by residents who reacted to them as a form of passing. The other quote comes from Sue, with whom I visited Cashel Street's re:Start mall, which was one of the first public-private attempts to lift parts of the central city cordon. As we surveyed the area, she looked around at the jumble of damaged buildings and construction sites and mused aloud:

It's just so many empty lots and all these stones and bricks and it just — it makes you feel a little bit speechless. What will the city look like after this is all cleared away? What will they put there and will it do justice to what was there?

Where creative destruction and the clean slate evoke the potential for renewal, I found that Sue, Freda, and others rebuilding their lives were more preoccupied by what they could no longer see than what they could envisage in its place. It was as if the city had suffered an identity crisis over the loss of its physical landmarks.

Juxtaposed against these salient absences were meaningful presences. If Ingold's (2000) taskscapes are historical networks of comings, goings, and "hanging-abouts," they exist in connection with landscapes that are the accumulated traces of these tasks. In this archaeological notion of spatiality, the physical signs of human duration and situated life together are what make a place familiar. While Sue admittedly held no particular love for the city center's "concrete blocks" over its heritage buildings, they both had served as spatial referents for memory that anchored her sense of familiarity with her city. Consequently, she now noted with some dread that their absence had changed Christchurch's identity completely. Within Ingold's conceptual framework, Sue had considered the buildings a part of the "lived" landscape or the taskscape of Christchurch by situating them in her experience of the city and conversely placing her experiences within the city with their help. As an integral part of our worldview, then, the taskscape goes largely unnoticed until its existence becomes threatened.

Feelings towards the demolitions were mixed, both expressing grief over the loss of the old Christchurch and invoking a list of urban problems that could now be addressed through the rebuild. Gap Filler's impetus came in response to this discrepancy between the memories of a city pre-earthquake and visions of it after the rebuild. After the September earthquake the government and private investors rushed to rebuild the city, sparking public concern over the potential alienation of its residents. On its website Gap Filler states it was founded as a movement seeking to prove reconstruction did not have to stem solely from the government or private sector.[2] From its modest beginnings after the first earthquake, Gap Filler has now grown into a full-scale civil society organization employing seven people and to a trust fund. Most of its financial support comes from Christchurch City Council and the Arts Council of New Zealand. The organization collaborates with people from both Māori and non-Māori communities and other initiatives, like the Life in Vacant Spaces trust, which facilitates legal issues with transitional projects' access to vacant lots, and the Greening the Rubble trust, which creates and maintains temporary green spaces. In 2014, its creative director Winn received the Queen's Service Medal for her outstanding service to arts (Cairns 2014).

Gap Filler has occupied over 20 spaces around Christchurch for a number of purposes, some of them brief and transient and others popular enough to remain for over a year. For example, the Pallet Pavilion, an outdoor events venue and community space, was continued out of popular

demand and lasted for two years. The success of some projects, including a public jukebox called the "Dance-o-mat," has endeared them to the city strongly enough to merit discussions of permanent installations. Others have come to stand for the organization's commitment to community, artistry, and the banality of the extraordinary in times of disaster, such as the decommissioned industrial refrigerator installed on a vacant lot as a book exchange library. Despite their prominence, the built, physical manifestation of the projects matters less to Gap Filler than their ability to appeal to disaster-weary residents. They manifest the desire not only to envision something in the place of absence, but to act upon it as well.

The organization considers its work a form of "adaptive urbanism," maintaining that it addresses urban life beyond more customary forms of creating and developing cities. Winn considers the term a processual one, but agrees with the definition put forth at the International Congress for Adaptive Urbanism held in Christchurch, which Gap Filler helped organize. The concept is defined as:

> ...the growing practice of residents, artists, community groups, and more getting actively involved in conceiving, designing, implementing, activating and maintaining flexible city spaces. This empowered mode differs from conventional public and private city-building where most residents are solely consumers of 'permanent' developments created for them – rather than active producers of, and participants in, evolving public space.[3]

Gap Filler's emphasis, thereby, is not on asserting concrete changes on the physical rebuild, but the public desire to envision alternatives. The organization believes it essential for these installations to be temporary to avoid prescribing a shape for what they believe ought to remain fluid and responsive.

Although cities are resistant to erasure, they can be reconstructed without fully recovering (Campanella & Vale 2005). It is not enough to provide a physical framework for urban life, rebuilding as a process must also restore cities' social and cultural networks. This proved to be the common tune among those doubtful of Christchurch's official plans. After the September earthquake, the Christchurch City Council launched their lauded "Share an Idea" campaign (Future Christchurch 2013), which openly solicited the public's views on the rebuild. Some of the keywords assembled were eco-friendliness, seismic resilience, cultural heritage, as well as easier access to public space. The draft proposal produced, however, was deemed financially unfeasible at the governmental level and largely abandoned in favor of a more centralized plan, the "Blueprint". It was conceived in a breakneck hundred days on the basis of the earlier draft but without public consultation, involving mostly experts, private investors, and bureaucrats, but also the local Māori iwi, or 'tribe', the Ngāi Tahu. It viewed the city as a blank canvas (McCrone 2014) and strongly re-zoned its central business district.

Gap Filler and other civil society actors found decisions problematic. "It assumes there was nothing there before," Winn explains, "It is a canvas, but it's not blank." She felt that what was being evoked was an iconoclastic urban utopia, drawing parallels to the city's founding. In 1850, the visionaries of Christchurch, the Canterbury Association set out to create an antipodean, utilitarian version of English society. Their plans for the city laid it out in unnatural, perpendicular lines and emphasized its European character through gothic architecture (Rice and Sharfe 2008). Existing signs of Māori settlement were razed to produce what would later be the "Garden City" of New Zealand. To Gap Filler, the government's Blueprint implied the same kind of abstract and proscriptive idealism that sought to pave over both material and psychological wounds caused by the disaster.

In the central city, the plan specified 16 large precincts called "anchor projects", shaped around a rectangular green space called The Frame. This was meant to help owners by raising the value of properties in the core, but proved problematic when parts of the Blueprint bogged down in local government and led to its halting implementation. This coupled with the ambitious proportions of the precinct projects themselves has caused capital to flee into the suburbs (McCrone 2014). The development of Christchurch's city center has slowed down and its absences have prevailed. Whether good or bad, the Blueprint's vision to redesign Christchurch from the ground up lags behind the private sector, which has proved better at flexing with the demands of a city in transition.

In elaborating on Gap Filler's "desire for the gap," founding member and trust chairperson Ryan Reynolds presents gaps as empty spaces with just enough form to hint at their imaginable purposes, turning a jarring presence of absences into a wealth of potential. Evoking Georg Simmel, he observes; "life must either produce forms or proceed through forms" but that these "contradict the essence of life itself" (2014, 175). From this perspective, all form of urban development in Christchurch is subject to change and this is what allows healing. In this, Reynolds' and Ingold's work converge. A taskscape is equally fluid, as its form is tied not to the presence of social life but to its process. It can only ever be congealed momentarily by taking in one's position in the world through the artificial distancing effected by introspection. Where Ingold moves further than Reynolds is when he argues that it in this moment of artificial abstractness that the present and past come together (2000, 189) like Sue's simultaneous perception of her former familiar places and the absence that accentuated them.

The "Good Death" of Buildings

Gap Filler's temporary and transitional ethos attaches it firmly to the rebuild. This both aids it in securing space for its projects and hinders it by constraining projects to an interim temporal period between the disaster and the rebuild. While Winn saw this as a potential drawback of the organization's ability to contribute to Christchurch beyond reconstruction, I would argue otherwise. I venture that Gap Filler's work indirectly establishes the "good death" — a passing marked by dignity, mourning, and acknowledgment — of familiar vistas

though their response to the transitional temporality of post-earthquake Christchurch. While maybe an indirect consequence of the organization's work, it is no less significant to the reimagining of the city.

Gap Filler's activities fulfilled two goals in Christchurch's rebuild. On the surface, they simply patched up a streetscape of disruptive absences. However, they also formed a focused desire to reconsider the gap itself as a past site of activities. Perhaps the best example of this is the archaeological dig set up on the former site of the Pallet Pavilion. The Pavilion was built on the lot of the Crowne Plaza hotel, damaged beyond repair the February earthquake. During its deconstruction people wondered about the various objects that had slipped between the pallets, a curiosity that turned into full-fledged scientific inquiry. The project unearthed material remains all the way from the pre-European settlement of Christchurch, or *Ōtautahi*, creating new kinds of popular awareness of the city's history. Most of the projects, however, deal with its more recent past.

If, as Freda argued, the city had indeed died, participating in envisaging its future was a way of bringing about a certain sense of closure through a "good death" of acknowledgement and commemoration. Green (2008) posits that while we may have once sought to emphasize the hallowing effects of death, today funerary practices aim more at celebrating life. Collective, and often selective, memories of a life lived well are what constitutes a "good" death, anchoring it in a shared cultural ethos. Evoking Michael Lambek's (1998) use of the concept of poiesis and linking it with modern styles of commemoration, Green observes that these memories are strongly subjective cultural re-interpretations of past events brought forth in the present (2008, 184-185). This process of memorialization purifies them, making the mundane and the profane into the necessary, virtuous, and foundational.

One of Gap Filler's projects was a cycle-powered cinema set up to fulfill the demand for destroyed arthouse cinemas. The project was built on the lot of a former bicycle shop, where Gap Filler installed bicycle-powered generators. These provided clean energy for the cinema but also a much-needed space for socializing and exercising in the inner city. Using Green's concepts of memory (2008) the installation addressed the site's past in two ways. Firstly, it refined it by condensing it to cycling, the task most essential for it. Secondly, it drew not only on Christchurch's past cultural imagery, where it was a repair shop and a cyclists' hub, but also as the eco-friendly and open public space people had called for in the first plan. This reliance on familiar values of participation and sustainability also evokes Green's third condition of the poiesis of memorialization; by reaffirming the past and the present, it envisions a future.

By arguing that Gap Filler's projects memorialize a pre-earthquake Christchurch, I risk representing them as shrines or even potential permanent memorials to the disaster.[4] This is not the organization's objective and their work differs from other such markers in at least two important aspects. Firstly, the majority of their projects do not directly engage with the most common impetus for memorialization: the casualties. For example, while the collapse of the Twin Towers strongly symbolizes 9/11, its spontaneous street shrines and commemorative expressions, both performative and monumental, evoke the loss of lives (Fraenkel 2011; Gunn 2004). The 185 victims of the February earthquake will be immortalized in the planned Christchurch earthquake memorial and their demise has arguably had a strong impact on the future shape of the city. Gap Filler, however, gears its projects towards the surviving residents, not unlike the funerary practices considered by Green.

Secondly, where reconstruction has symbolized healing and trauma attached to the built environment, it has usually claimed indestructibility. The felling and subsequent restoration of Dresden's Frauenkirche as a partial return to the city's pre-war identity as "Germany's Florence" is rather a permanent act of defiance against the city's firebombing than an attempt to move on (James 2006). Gap Filler, in contrast, does not aim to restore what was lost, but to engage with it in order to both mourn and celebrate it before letting it go, probably to be built over. The sense of temporality in its projects is therefore the artificially seized temporality of taskscapes, of cyclists' hang-outs, and not the physical reinstitution of past cityscapes and landmarks.

A secular sense of death in Western societies is often vague about the thereafter.[5] It does not easily conform to a facile interpretation of funerals as a transmissive rite between the immanent and the transcendent. Green posits this is why, at our death, those around us celebrate our life and through it offer us the only certain form of immortality: remembrance (2012, 161). This makes funerals less about cadavers and more about survivors. In commemorating the dead or the absent we engage in a creative process that links the past to the present, and projects it forward in an idealized form. Through remembrance, the past and the absent becomes integrated in our worldview. This grants both it and us permanence, as it also reassures us of our own survival.

I argue, however, that Green's focus on remembrance has a further effect on those surviving the deceased: by incorporating the past, we are able to move on from it. To draw on a last example from Gap Filler, I consider their contribution to Christchurch's "ghost signs". As demolitions progressed, advertisement signs once painted on old buildings re-emerged from behind the modern cityscape. One of Gap Filler's projects, an art installation by the urban poetry project, Poetica, used these signs as inspiration for their own "Ghost Poems," which took the form of four commemorative murals painted on walls that would eventually be built over.

The organization's physical legacy is meager. Although permanence is not its goal, Winn admits "they [the projects] are what people will remember." Beyond the projects themselves, many now just photographs and memories, Gap Filler aspires to contribute to the city's future by changing the way residents view empty spaces. Rather than merely seeking to facilitate the transition of a city from one form to another, it thereby also mediates the transition of

its people. The murals of "Ghost Poems" are both ephemeral and concrete additions to the cityscape. They retain a link with the transitional period, perhaps to be unearthed someday. They allow the residents to acknowledge their losses, to engage with the potentiality of empty spaces, and finally to let these both go. Seen this way, filling gaps constitutes memorialization and the poiesis of an immaterial Christchurch civic imaginary able to persist through ownership. It opens up a future beyond the disaster in a way material reconstruction does not.

In closing our last interview, Winn pointed out that the organization's ethos of impermanence is not meant to counteract the rebuild, but rather to bring the city's residents closer to it. She maintained that rebuilding something equally alien as the absences had been would not do justice to the former Christchurch. With this in mind, I have argued that instead of seeing the gaps and Gap Filler's projects as strictly material features in a damaged cityscape, they might be better viewed as parts of an unraveling taskscape. Freda was not alone in asserting that in the absence of its heritage buildings, its most obvious historical ties, Christchurch itself faced death. When Bruce Ansley heard Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee dismiss its historical buildings to the scrap heap, he decried the minister's disregard for the "city's soul" (2011, 9). Such poetic language was mostly evoked by activists, but large parts of it resonated with all residents, who felt that the earthquakes had drastically disturbed the city's warp and weft.

Gap Filler was formed to address Christchurch's transitional period. The temporariness of ghostly murals, bicycle cinemas, and refrigerator libraries makes them relatively unassuming experiments at adapting to the changed premises of life in Christchurch, but their capacity for teasing out placed memories by far surpassed the cathartic abilities of the official reconstruction. Not all Gap Filler's projects succeed, Reynolds (2014) and Winn both emphasize, and neither are they meant to. It is more important that both unsuccessful and successful projects shape instead a sense of belonging in a city of irrevocable losses and drastic change.

Notes

[1] This paper peripherally raises questions of Māori funeral traditions and mourning, *tangihanga*, that are too broad for its scope. For those interested, Benton, Frame and Meredith (2013, 379-394) offer a more comprehensive discussion.

[2] "About" Last accessed: March 26, 2015 http://www.gapfiller.org.nz/about/

[3] "About." Last accessed: March 26, 2015. International Congress on Adaptive Urbanism. www.adaptiveurbanism.org.nz/about/

[4] It does not bear mentioning that practices of commemoration are varied, from spontaneous shrines (Santino 2006) and roadside memorials (Clark and Franzmann 2006; Kennerly 2008) to national monuments (Herborn and Hutchinson 2014; Patraka 1996) and park benches (Kellaher and Worpole 2010). Natural disasters, however, tend to occupy a more ambiguous position vis-à-vis human-made ones due to their unclear sense of culpability, which affects their memorialization (Hastrup 2010).

[5] See for instance Tercier's (2011, 17-23) discussion of modern and post-modern death or Ariés' (1981) classic work, *The Hour*

of Our Death.

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◼ Conversations

Spacehacking as Praxis
3 Projects, 3 Perspectives: aumlaborberlin, Recetas Urbanas, Collectif Etc
Nathan John

The word "hacking," as it is commonly used, evokes images of mass thefts of information and malicious intrusions into private networks. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a hacker as "a person who uses computers to gain unauthorized access to data."[1] Yet the original hackers were anything but criminal.[2] They were, rather, jubilant tinkerers, who in the face of dizzying technological advancements took "delight in having an intimate understanding of the internal workings of a system."[3] Although the exact origins of the word "hacker" are unclear, the most widely accepted source is the MIT Tech Model Railroad Club, which began to experiment with computers in the early 1960's and went on to form a core part of MIT's Artificial Intelligence Lab. This lab, in turn, was a key contributor to ARPANET, the Department of Defense-funded precursor to the modern Internet.

A hacker, in this original sense, is someone who confronts a complex system with a will to understand and experiment, to innovate and improve, and to have fun doing it. Cities, and the structural and infrastructural fabric of which they are made, are systems of the most complex sort. I coined the term 'spacehacking' as a conceptual framework for architectural and urban projects that seek to mediate city fabric in a range of inventive and unconventional ways. Translated to the field of architecture, it is a mode of working that entails an intimate and highly local understanding of urban, material, and social systems to enable their dynamic reconfiguration.

Over the past five years, I have worked to understand these new dynamics, studying spacehacking as a mode of production that interweaves the disciplines and practices of art, architecture, activism, and craft, first as a graduate student in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, and now as a design professional in the San Francisco Bay Area. As part of this effort, I have conducted over thirty interviews[4] with architects, artists and designers working around the world who, I argue, have fashioned themselves as spacehackers in their method of urban spatial practice. What follows are excerpts from three of those conversations, with Jan Liesegang of raumlaborberlin, Santiago Cirugeda of Recetas Urbanas in Seville, and a member of Collectif Etc, in Paris.[5]

The interviews articulate a range of relationships: of the temporary artifact to the more permanent built environment; of the ephemerality of a single event to the desire for lasting change; of the urban actor to their local and national context. Most of all, these three practitioners, and the larger collectives they represent, offer ways to invite new actors and transfer tools in the work of reshaping the built environment. Together, they offer a sense of the trajectory that spacehacking has traced over the past twenty years, beginning as a largely ignored and invisible outsider pursuit in Berlin of the 1990's, re-emerging as a highly visible tool for civic activism and agitation in Seville in the early 2000's, and transforming into an uncontroversial and even comfortable methodology in Paris today.

In the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, much of the population of the city fled for the wealthier urban centers of former West Germany, such as Cologne, Hamburg or Munich. Within and around the surplus property that resulted from this mass exodus, a culture of spatial reuse and appropriation came into being, sparking the imaginations of young counter-cultural artists and architects across Germany.[6]

A native of Cologne, Jan Liesegang moved to Berlin to study architecture in the early 1990's, lured in part by this insurgent spatial culture. In 1999, Jan, along with three collaborators, co-founded the design collective raumlaborberlin; in the past sixteen years, the group has grown to seven partners, and realized numerous projects around the world, without ever losing sight of their initial impulses. "How," he asked in a recent publication, "can you put people, who would normally never have the opportunity to shape space, into a position to do so?"[7] This regard for the dynamics of participation is central to their work, whether by simply challenging the assumptions of visitors, at a temporary hotel that they constructed and occupied in front of the now vanished Palast der Republik in former East Berlin, or by directly engaging local youth in the design and production of street furniture.

Shortly before we spoke, raumlabor realized one of their more ambitious works to date: Die Grosse Weltausstellung, or The Great World Fair: The World's Not Fair, a counter-cultural response to the trope of the architectural expo, in which a number of local designers and artists were given the opportunity to conceive and construct fifteen pavilions within Tempelhof, a former airfield situated in the middle of Berlin. The vast space is presently used as a park, though it has undergone almost no renovation since its prior life. The Weltausstellung aspired to address the immensity of its site, not through a corresponding largeness of scale, but instead through the aggregation of small moments or nodes. The work of contributors to this intervention varied widely: installation art within a previously existing bunker; a large multi-story scaffolding structure for immersive theater; a festival center with a working bar; and a highly programmed symposium space. Despite this range of interventions, the works were united in their attempts to activate the spaces of Tempelhof as they found them. They created hybridities: new interventions enabling and encouraging activity within an aging superstructure.

Figure 1.
The central gathering area and bar within the Weltausstellung hosted formal talks and symposia (pictured here), as well as informal conversations. Credit: Nathan John

Figure 2.
One of the installations included within the Weltausstellung invited members of the Romani community to inhabit it for the duration of the festival as a provocation related to the treatment of this ethnic group within Germany.
Credit: Nathan John.

NJ: How did raumlabor get started? Your practice is unconventional and there are a lot of partners doing very different things.

JL: The way raumlabor developed has a lot to do with Berlin and the fall of the wall. We started as very good friends—we all came to Berlin shortly before the wall came down, and then suddenly we found ourselves in this city which was a little bit out of control, you know? While we were studying we did some, what we now call urban interventions, but this term didn't exist when we were doing them in '95. But there were a lot of open spaces and possibilities and uncertainties.

And then after we all graduated, we just saw that what we were doing in our spare time in our little studio was so much more fun and interesting than what we were asked to do in those boom years [of the mid 1990's] when we were working as architects. So we kept our studio, which was in Mitte, in a very central space, first to do some competitions, but also as a kind of a gallery and a space for discourse. It slowly developed from a group that was interested in public space, in occupying houses, in this whole idea of squatting.

Also, we always had happy hour, where we would invite some people to give a lecture and at the same time have this very informal bar and conversation, which led, over the years, to us getting more and more into this field, and getting recognized. And then we started to make a bit of a living out of it, and it became more and more like a real profession for us, doing what we were interested in. And this is still what keeps us together.

We're not really a company, though; we never actually manage to make enough money to really build a company. It's always kind of a struggle. We still try to keep everything on a level that we can do these kinds of low budget projects, so that we don't build up this big structure. It's good and bad.

Good and bad, how?

I mean the good part is that we have a lot of freedom, and very often we get commissions from people who just have a problem. Like maybe there's a space in the city which is terribly neglected, and people want to do something about the space, but they're not town planners or architects or builders, so somehow they find us, and they ask if we can do something.

And so we start developing ideas together, but it's often very open, and we have a lot of freedom in what we propose. We have very supportive clients, which is hard to find in the normal architectural field, where everything has to pay back on a very straight economical level.

In terms of relevance for the city, it's a bit frustrating. We have worked in the field of public space, trying to make the city more livable, more of a special place, more interesting. We have done a lot of strategic proposals, [looking at how cities can change the way they think about building, and growth, and their interactions with their citizens], and we're still working on this small scale, and I think that's maybe the part where we still need to develop.

Now there is all this interest in public space and there are biennales for urban interventions. I think it's a zeitgeist that is out there, which has maybe been supporting us, and we're part of this kind of movement, and it would make me very happy if this were more translated into new kinds of town planning tools, new tools for participation.

Some of our work, like the work we did for Tempelhof airport, already has this link between the off and the on, between the formal and the informal. So I think this is quite interesting for us right now, to find this link, to become more responsible. On a political level, I think we feel it's time to get out of this cultural comfort zone, and it's time to get into the real political discourse, time to take responsibility for our city and our desires, for how we run the city, or our living conditions. To really talk about: how can you view the street differently, how can you organize property differently, how can you organize space differently, so that it's more flexible, less driven just by commercial interests, less by value, less about payback.

I mean, it sounds very abstract, but all this is just convention: what you do in public space, how you make it, what is legal, what is illegal, it is all just conventions, which I think have to be negotiated.

I was fascinated with Tempelhof when I went to visit the World's Fair. When you guys made your first proposal, to simply open it up as a park without renovating it, what did you think would happen?

It's such a weird place. Nobody expected it to work like [it does]! This is something where [several years ago] we were proposing just to open it, but we weren't sure, when we said, "Yeah, let's just open it! We have no money? No problem, just open it! It's there, people can come and look at it."

But we didn't really expect it to have 20,000 visitors a weekend! We didn't know that people from the neighborhood would just accept it as a park, would say, "Ah, it's a beautiful park, let's just go there." You know? Let's go BBQ, let's windsurf, let's do sports…It's like…each of these windsurf boards is like a folly in a park, you know? They're beautiful, they move…

You said earlier when you were talking about the good and the bad parts of your work that you would like to see new tools for participation develop. What are these tools?

Maybe I can give you an example—almost a year ago we developed an idea for what we call micro factories. A few years ago, we started to make self-built furniture for public space for a

few projects, which came out of a very pragmatic situation: we were doing a lot of projects in public space, where people would come together and build kind of temporary communities, so this always involved some kind of event where you would sit down and have dinners or talk in public space.

So you would always rent these normal beer garden benches, and we started to think about: how can we do something else, how can we find a tool that people can build this furniture themselves? And then [the furniture] would stay, and create a possibility or a problem: you have all these chairs, suddenly on the square.

And because they were all participative projects, we found the educational part of it more and more interesting. In many of the difficult neighborhoods that we work in, doing something together, building something together, has such a strong impact on the community; it's so self-promoting. If you start building something very fast, people suddenly get the idea that change is possible.

So you do some kind of fabrication, which normally only happens in factories, in public space, in very different conditions. We sort of said, "How can we put this together?" This is where this idea of learning and teaching comes in - there are [architecture] students participating, and then there are people from the neighborhood. So there are creative people who have potential, but rarely have the chance to do something in the real world, and then there are the people who have a lot of time. So these groups, they could produce these micro-factories in public space.

And we'd always try to connect local potentials—maybe someone who is really good in repairing washing machines could be in that workshop in public space, and then there would be some creative people, like our students, also trying to maybe do something more with these washing machines, and then people from the neighborhood who find out [and say], "Ah, there's a possible business!" Because if people are in a very tight, difficult situation, there has to be some profit. So we're trying to put this all together, but this is quite a big project, so it is hard to realize under pure cultural [funding] conditions. This is an idea that we're already carrying around for more than a year, and we haven't found a single slot of time or any extra money to invest in developing it. We're kind of carrying these ideas around the world, hoping [we'll find] one project big enough to make a prototype.

So this is the kind of thing where I think, "Ok, maybe we have to either settle down in some kind of institutional framework, maybe in a school, where you can support or develop this kind of thing, or we have to maybe find a more permanent kind of laboratory structure, which has not only project support but some kind of general support to invent and develop prototypes." There's a lot of these lines of inquiry that we've developed in our work, where we always think, "It would be so great to be able to do this perfectly, even just once."

02 | Santiago Cirugeda (Recetas Urbanas, Sevilla, ES)

Santiago Cirugeda began creating temporary urban interventions in 1996, only a handful of years after raumlabor. However, unlike the case with raumlabor, rather than building on an opportunistic interaction between vacant spaces and governmental vacuum, Cirugeda's point of departure was to create such spaces within the byzantine bylaws that held sway in his native Seville.

Beginning his practice amidst a series of protest movements taking place across Europe in the early 2000's, Cirugeda created Recetas Urbanas, or Urban Recipes, a collective for activist design, construction and civic disobedience.[8] In doing so, he pivoted towards an explicitly participatory model, and developed a more aggressive stance with respect to municipalities. At the same time, he also began to question the value of temporary interventions and 'event urbanism' that were driven and directed almost exclusively by architects, artists, and designers.

By late 2012, when we spoke, public sentiment in Spain had reached a crescendo of discontent that amplified and made prescient Cirugeda's positions. As one of the European countries hardest hit by the economic crisis, Spain was unusual in that it suffered not only at the hands of over-confident borrowers and negligent lenders, but malfeasant public officials, who commissioned civic extravagances contributing to the bankruptcy of many municipalities. [9] Educators began to speak of a "lost generation" of Spanish architects, as work in the architecture, engineering and construction fields ground to a halt.[10]

At the same time, adults across the country were moving back in with their elderly parents, unable to support themselves or their families. The Spanish equivalent of Social Security became a primary source of income for these citizens. An estimate published by the Guardian in late 2014 noted that up to 500,000 partially constructed properties had been abandoned since the onset of the crisis while hundreds of thousands of people were forced from their homes, in both cases leaving behind fallow land and empty structures.[11] In this charged atmosphere, Cirugeda's actions took on new urgency.

Like raumlabor, Cirugeda began to apply the tactics he developed through his work with small urban interventions to larger civic questions. I interviewed him in La Carpa, the physical instantiation of one such effort. La Carpa is a community arts compound on illegally occupied (but previously vacant and neglected) public land. La Carpa brought together an array of Recetas Urbanas' previous interventions: "El Chimpum," "La Oficina Araña," and "Aula Abierta," among others.

Figure 3.
La Araña, one of the structures that compose the La Carpa artistic space, serves as an office, dormitory, and the cover for a communal dining area. Credit: Nathan John.

Figure 4.
Two recently-arrived repurposed structures from prior Recetas Urbanas projects in the process of being folded into the La Carpa compound. Credit: Nathan John.

Excerpts from the interview:

NJ: Tell me about how you started working in this way—because you started in a very unusual way, I think—and also what is important to you about your particular way of working?

SC: At the beginning, in 1996, I remember my first project...I was a simple citizen. I didn't have the title of architect: I was an artist, a citizen, a neighbor, who decided to use public space. And at the beginning I was afraid, really, because my family is all in the military: my father, my brother, my grandfather. So my culture is very rigid, no? Really!

So when I began to propose a project in a public space, I thought, "Ok, it could be illegal, so I have to check what's happening with the law, with the regulations." I began to study, alone, how to use public space within the law, and I began to pay for simple permits to use scaffolding or dumpsters, in a legal way, because the use never appeared in the law.

"You can't sleep inside scaffolding! You can't live there! You can't put a playground on top of a dumpster!"

"Why not?"

It was amazing, because each week for six months, I brought my money from working in bars and said, "Ok, I want to fight with my politician." It was a political question, really. But totally alone. I was studying architecture, but I had no team, no group, no collective. It was very important to discover that, as a citizen, you can offer, you can propose.

For me, it's very important to think about public space in terms of regulations: administrations and politicians try to control it, but you can make different things. Like here: we haven't any license to build! All this is built ourselves. All of this! With wood from Madrid, a building we brought from Granada—it was built seven years ago with many people in Granada, but six years later we said "We need this, here!"—so we brought it from Granada!

This building we've had for only two weeks! We made, not business, but an agreement with a very poor firm, a container service in Seville. They have no work, no money, so we said, "Give us two of these, free, ok, without any money, and we will build a work center for your guys."

It shows that in crisis, people can invent space.

And so this space, the ground, who owns it?

The owner? The owner is the City of Seville! So it's happening! Our fight is with the city or the planning office or the politician, because it was not like this (gesturing)—it was empty! An empty place, dirty, so we said, "If you don't want to be responsible for this public space, we will propose a different way, a different system!" To use the public space and offer it openly, because it never appears in the urban plan of Seville what to do here! It doesn't appear!

"You can't!!"

"Let us invent here!"

It's a weird position, because many times I've used streets or [vacant] lots in a very fast way, dumpsters and scaffolding and illegal action, and I don't know why, but now I prefer to show that we can make it for longer. Not always four months, six months. No! Eight years! It's another type of fight. It's longer. For me, it's heavier.

For me, the short things are [great] because you can be very fast, so the police, if they come to you, you can react in no time. [They aren't going] to change the world, [they come from a] feeling of "Fuck you! We will stay here!"

So the short things, the small actions, they make a point…

Yes! When we went to a political meeting with the mayors of Madrid and Seville, at the end, we said, "Pffff, totally boring." So, the next week [I made] a short action that appeared in the newspaper, and said, "Ok, you remember our meeting? If you want, I can return to making short things. If not, we can try to make another type of covenant, that's not a disaster." So it's a question of saying, "We can!" Of saying, "Remember, I put a tree in your house. I put scaffolding in your face. So, take it easy."[12] It's a question of power. If you say fight, I will fight you! I don't like to fight, ever! I hate it! But it's the only way…It's the only way…

And is there space for form, or aesthetic? As an architect, how do you think about these questions, how do you make decisions about them?

I never decide the design! I prefer to have problems with the politicians, not with my people, with friends. I say, "What do you want?"

"This."

"Ok!"

Then they say, "Help me, no?" and I say, "No, I have my problem with the politicians, fuck you and your problem!" It's the joke, always…

"But we make everything together!"

"No, but not now! That is your project, and your problem, ok! It's beautiful. But fuck you, it's your project."

It's a joke, ok, but it's the same. And we change… at the beginning, when I was alone, I would go, very proper, "I have a meeting at 11 with the Mayor, with the architect…" So then they would fuck me, because you arrive alone, one person, and they are five: a lawyer, an architect, the politicians, the secretary, their mothers. You say, "I am thinking about…" and they say, "No, the law has changed."

"Are you sure it changed? The plan says it's possible to make a covenant…"

"No, we have a covenant like this."

So now, the important meetings, we come with ten people. Lawyers, hackers, and all. It's a question of methodology. I've changed from a citizen to an architect to Recetas Urbanas, and now, to a network. This is the question.

03 | Le Collectif Etc (Paris, FR)

Le Collectif Etc formed in 2009, when a group of students and recent graduates from the Institut National des Sciences Appliquées in Strasbourg were given the opportunity to repurpose an underutilized parking lot in front of the University's main building. In that initial project, titled Á nous le parking, or We have parking, Collectif Etc developed a project where students at the school designed mobile, temporary public furniture and amenities based on standard shipping pallets. It was so successful that the school administration decided to make it permanent. This is the essential model for Collectif Etc's practice—open participation, self-building, and working under the umbrella of an existing authority.

Building upon this collaborative approach, in 2012 several members of Collectif Etc embarked upon a twelve-month tour of France by bicycle, entitled Détour de France. Their objective was to literally place the work of Collectif Etc into context with a larger movement towards temporary urbanism that was gathering momentum amongst young activist designers in France[13], an effort made possible by France's generous unemployment policies and the pooling of the group's financial resources.

Figure 5.
Local residents and Collectif Etc members work together to construct seating from common materials in one corner of the Place au Changement in Saint-Étienne, France. Courtesy of the architect.

Figure 6. Place au Changement seen from above. What was once a vacant lot in a residential area is now a self-built public space for communal use and enjoyment. Courtesy of the architect.

Excerpts from the interview:

NJ: How did Collectif Etc start? Was it when you were still in school?

CE: Yeah, we were just a group of friends from two classes. When we started, we were doing street art. We would say, "Ok, let's meet this Sunday and do something," without much idea of what it would be.

One day we decided to work on a wall that had these fake windows, and do stuff on them. And many people came to help us—people from the buildings around, who said, "Oh, maybe you need this tool," or, "Could we help with that?" or, "What are you guys doing?" And it was great. It was really nice for everyone, and by the end of the day we said, "Ok, what matters is that people get involved. That's how it's interesting for us, and interesting for them."

As architecture students we got to study many things, but we missed one thing, which was to build real-scale stuff that we had designed. So we offered to organize a workshop for students [at our school] to build furniture for a parking lot that's right in front of the school. There was no public space where students could stop a little bit and smoke cigarettes, or eat something. So we said, "Ok, let's remove all the cars from this parking lot and put them in a parking lot that is behind the school and always empty." And the school said, "Ok, you've got a couple of thousand euros, you can buy some materials and organize this, go ahead."

So we did these pieces of furniture that people can move, and the students designed them, and built them, and we were all around and all working together, and it was great.

I love that project! The pallets are such a basic form, and the furniture itself is super rough, but the activity that you managed to create was really remarkable.

Oh, you know it! The school really loved it also, and decided to make it permanent! So we thought, "That was a good start, and we got some good publicity from it." And we applied to a competition to design a public space in Saint Etienne. When the jury was happening, we said, "If you pick us, you have to know that you have to let us manage all the money, and you have to realize that we will do a collaborative, participative work with all the inhabitants. That's what we stand for—if you don't accept that, we don't want to win the competition." And they picked us.

When some of us went to St. Etienne to prepare, we already had in mind this idea of the Détour, taking one year off to go around France, meet all the people who work in the field we work in, create a network between these people, and see if we could actually exist and survive. We had two goals: one was meeting all these people, and the other was to work with them, create projects, and build stuff.

So you made a lot of projects as you went…

Yeah, we did around 15 projects, or something like that. It was great: we met and worked with so many [people] from different fields, with different interests. We worked with municipalities and associations, with schools, with social centers, with random people. We worked in the center of cities, and we worked in neighborhoods outside of cities, in rich places, poor places. We worked in villages…

It was really amazing, and the response from everyone was great. Because politically, no municipality can say no to somebody who comes and says, "Ok, I'm trying to legitimate [taking] an action in the public space [with your citizens]: do you accept that or not?" They can't say no, or they will lose votes for the next election.

It seems to me that right now it is in France, more than in almost any other place, that there is this type of thought or engagement. There are so many collectives active here.[14] Do you have some insight as to why this is happening here, now?

I would say that by the late 90's, there were a couple of groups who appeared out of the blue, Bruit du frigo, and Coloco and Atelier d' Architecture Autogeneré, and they fought for things, and they are still alive now. I mean, many of them [have since] stopped, but they were the first group of people who said: it is possible. This is what we believe in and it is possible.

It was not fashion then, it was not really what it is now: now it is trendy to work in this field, I would say. So there was a moment then, and nobody heard much about it, but now the trend is social - it's easy to communicate with people, it's easy to get collaborative tools. So these tools, and the fact that the background was already there [in France], I think explains the fact that we just appeared and that so many groups such as us are…

…appearing all at once.

Right now, yes. We've been meeting all these people, we interviewed like thirty groups [on our trip], and we are creating a platform where the experiments we've been doing will appear. The aim is to show and to explain processes, to make them legible to the people who can make decisions. We want this not to be our product, but the product of the whole community of people, a tool that everyone can be involved in and everyone can use.

Are you thinking about what happens next, how it evolves?

Well, we think it's not enough to talk to people – we think it's better to do things together. In Bordeaux, we worked on a public square; we did these workshops every day where people could come and saw wood and we had nails, screws, whatever.

But then, this is not for everyone. This is for people who are interested in [building things]. So we believe there should be food lessons, there should be music, a concert, there should be round tables – that's really important, actually – and there should be petanque competitions or whatever, to make sure that everyone can come and talk about what matters. And what matters is living together in a place. We believe that the city should evolve as people evolve, and that means all the time. Temporary interventions are a way to show that with little money, much ambition and many people, you can do great things.

Reflections on the practice of spacehacking

Hacking is both a conceptual apparatus and a set of skills and tools that facilitate engagement and reengagement with a shifting urban landscape. Foremost amongst these tools is the ability to construct experiments that test new ideas and techniques. Spacehacking consists of real-time testing of physical structures and material systems, as well as social structures and modes of engagement.

Practices of spacehacking—temporary interventions, urban prototyping, tactical urban actions—which were launched to prominence with the worldwide financial crisis of 2008[15] and embraced by a battered civic-industrial complex, now face scrutiny, as cities, markets and practitioners once again embark upon large-scale, long-term projects. A wider array of actors is beginning to ask many of the same questions as Jan Liesegang and his contemporaries: what is the efficacy of the intervention as a tool? What is its ability to effect lasting change in a city? How can tools being pioneered at a micro level—technological, material, and social—scale up?[16]

It is clear that urban interventions must either continue to evolve in order to move towards answers to these questions, or risk irrelevance. Having made the journey from architectural and political non-entity, to adversary, to useful ally for the market and civic forces that shape our urban spaces, they face a new struggle: avoiding cooptation by the very things they were protesting. Already, pioneering urban interventions like Platoon Kunsthalle in Seoul and Berlin and PROXY in San Francisco face corporate imitation in the form of projects like the BoxPark in London, which at the time of my visit in 2012 featured storefronts for The North Face, Oakley, Beats by Dre, and Lacoste, or the The Yard at Mission Rock in San Francisco, a near-replica of the PROXY project undertaken a few miles away at the behest of the San Francisco Giants baseball team.

This burgeoning use of temporary spaces and events as outreach tools by development corporations points towards a widening awareness of the real value of spacehacking in exploring the latent potential of urban spaces, and in helping to reshape their narratives within the social fabric of a city. The challenge for spacehackers, going forward, is to stay at least one step ahead.

Notes

[1] Hacker, Oxford Dictionaries, Oxford University Press, accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/hacker.

[2] For the definitive history of the original hackers, see Steven Levy's *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution* (New York: Anchor Press, 1984).

[3] As defined by G. Malkin, in an early glossary of Internet slang, "Network Working Group: Request for Comments 1392", *IETF.org*, accessed March 19, 2015, https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1392.

[4] Many of these interviews were conducted with the generous support of the John K. Branner Traveling Fellowship from the CED at UC Berkeley, which provides for one year of global travel and independent study.

[5] All interviews included here were conducted in English, with the exception of the conversation with Santiago Cirugeda, which was conducted in a mix of Spanish and English and translated by the author for this publication.

[6] An early and brief examination of these pioneering interventionists is Peter Arlt's, "Urban Planning and Interim Use", *Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of City Spaces*, eds. Florian Haydn and Robert Temel (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006).

[7] Raumlaborberlin, *Acting in Public* (Berlin: Jovis, 2008), 54.

[8] Large-scale protests were a recurrent phenomenon in Spain at this time, a response to a neoliberal shift in economic policy. On March 16, 2002, protests in Barcelona, saw nearly 500,000 people take to the streets during an E.U. Summit moving towards freer markets within the Eurozone. Another notable protest during this period was the global Anti-War Protest on February 15, 2003, which was attended by up to two million protestors in Madrid, and one to one and a half million in Barcelona. https://www.globalpolicy.org/protests/30952-anti-globalization-protest-barcelona-march-15-16-2002.html

[9] Daniel Fernández Pascual & Alon Schwabe of Cooking Sections (cooking-sections.com) offer the most "edible" explanation of the particularities of the Spanish economic crisis through their performance/lecture "Geopolitical Paella", featured in the 2014 US Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture as part of the OfficeUS collaborative project.

[10] The effects of the economic crisis on the architectural profession in Spain are hard to overstate: by one account, the number of housing projects built dwindled from 920,000 in 2006 to 60,000 in 2011, forcing up to 45% of architecture firms to close their doors. David Cohn, "The Pain in Spain," *Architectural Record*, August 2012.

[11] Ana Naomi de Sousa, "How Spain's 'guerrilla architect' is building new hope out of financial crisis," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2014, accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/aug/18/santiago-cirugeda-guerrilla-architect-spain-seville-financial-crisis. One of the most remarkable reactions to these abandoned development projects is the Campo de Cebada in Madrid (http://elcampodecebada.org/), which has been a probing ground for several design collectives, as well as a self-governing and much-loved resource within its community.

[12] Both are references to two punitive urban interventions undertaken by Recetas Urbanas as part of disagreements with city officials.

[13] A profusion of such design groups organized as egalitarian and participatory collectives came into being during the European financial crisis; in Paris alone, that list encompasses Bellastock, Atelier/TRANS305, YA + K, and EXYZT

[14] While conducting interviews in Paris, I was hosted by members of the participatory design collective YA+K (http://www.yaplusk.org/); I was also introduced to or interviewed individuals associated with several similar groups, including Atelier / Trans305 (http://www.trans305.org/), Bellastock (http://www.bellastock.com/), aaa (Atelier d'architecture autogérée, http://www.urbantactics.org/), and Coloco (http://www.coloco.org/).

[15] Within the last several years, a number of new curatorial efforts have been directed at work in this vein, including publications such as Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams' *The Temporary City* (New York: Routledge, 2012), Philip Jodidio's *Temporary Architecture Now!* (Cologne: Taschen, 2011), and *a+t 38: Strategy and Tactics in Public Space* (Vitoria: a+t architecture publishers, 2011) and marquee exhibitions around the world, including Spontaneous Interventions, the U.S. representation at the 2012 Venice Biennale of Architecture and *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities*, currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

[16] Skepticism about the long-term usefulness of temporary interventions was a theme that recurred in my discussions with a number of early advocates of the medium.

Austerity Politics,
Participation, and Occupation

Making of the Indignant Citizen:
Politics, Aesthetics, and Housing Rights in Madrid and Rome

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The first time I participated in the obstruction of an eviction, I entered the crowd with unsteady steps. Alongside activists of Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH),[1] I was standing on the street in the peak of summer of 2013 in Madrid to support Marisa, a woman in her 60s who was unable work due to a medical condition and had not been able to pay her rent for months. Unsure of what exactly I was supposed to do at such an "obstruction", I candidly asked a woman standing next to me. She explained that we were waiting for the court's order of eviction, usually brought by a court-ordered committee, escorted by the police. Upon delivery of this document, Marisa would have to leave the apartment immediately. However, because the PAH's lawyers had previously appealed this order, the court-ordered committee could just as well be on their way to communicate that the eviction had been indefinitely postponed.

> - What if it hasn't been postponed? –I asked, already expecting the answer to make me uneasy.

> - Well–she said–then the police come and things get tense, because they are armed, and they try to provoke us. We need to stand together in front of the door and not move until they drag us, one by one. They usually start pushing us. Sometimes they push an elderly person or a child, and then people get angry and the fight starts. They're always looking for excuses to beat us or arrest us, but it doesn't matter, because we are right.

My interlocutor's stance, and that of many participants in the housing activist movements currently taking place in Spain and Italy in the context of the European economic crisis, is a stance of outrage and moral righteousness in the face of precarious economic conditions and unresponsive political administrations.

This article examines the work of Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca in Madrid and Lotta per la Casa movements.[2] in Rome through a performance studies and affect theory lens. I use the term "indignant performances" to define the actions of these groups, as they intervene politically in the public sphere. When shifting political economic conditions saturate the everyday, they impose a sense of estrangement, forcing citizens to reconsider their individual and collective political alignments. Indignant performances are expressed in at least two ways: first, as the affect produced when individual bodies come into contact with processes of capital accumulation that have a negative impact on their everyday life; and second, as the collective enterprise in which political subjects reject the capitalist promise of upward mobility and economic stability, and take this rejection to the public sphere, transforming affect into action with political purpose. Indignant performances are

manifestations of shifting political economic landscapes specific to late capitalist processes of retreat of the state from economic affairs and advancement of market economies that have left large sectors of population in a state of precarity in Spain and Italy. In the work of activists organizing around housing issues, this process opens up new political possibilities as citizens come together to resist and reconfigure the urban space against the grid of the neoliberal city.

While responding to different social, political, and legal contexts, these two housing rights movements present similarities that allow us to speculate about how the current European economic crisis has fueled the emergence of activist projects animated by a sense of moral outrage or indignation against existing regimes of capital accumulation. Spanish and Italian housing activists currently engage in the obstruction of home evictions and mortgage foreclosures, provide free legal counseling to people affected by housing issues, raise awareness and popular support to change existing legislation about housing, and organize occupations of empty buildings. Drawing from the voices of housing activists and my own ethnographic experiences at their public gatherings and in the obstruction of home evictions in Madrid and Rome, I discuss examples of indignant performances that not only mobilize debates about housing rights, economic justice, and democratic participation, but also rehearse forms of behavior that are potentially revolutionary in their struggle for economic justice. In doing so, these organizations also provide an embodied political pedagogy that helps their participants make sense of current political-economic processes happening at the local, national, and European level, and position themselves in relation to these processes. In this way, indignant performances mediate notions of belonging, citizenship and political participation.

Performance studies as methodology circumvents the need to equate efficacy with effects when studying political interventions. Such a methodology places the political efficacy of performance in the possibilities that performance opens *affectively*, whether that implies examining our subject positioning within the existing neoliberal economic order or just finding new ways of being together collectively. In performance studies scholar Dwight Conquergood's terms, all performances "remain at mirror distance from ongoing social processes and are important monitoring mechanisms, scanning devices whereby a people can interpret themselves to themselves as well as to others".[3] Performance, therefore, becomes the lens to understand broader social and historical processes. In the work of housing activists in Rome and Madrid, I define performance as all human symbolic behavior and communicative action employed to express collective ownership and to obtain social justice; performance cuts across everyday behavior and heightened aesthetic forms.

The political economy of indignation

This essay is the result of nine months of fieldwork in Madrid and Rome between 2013 and 2014, during which time I engaged in deep-immersion ethnography of activist networks working on housing rights.[4] My interlocutors in the field hailed from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, although the majority of them were part of the working class or lower middle class;[5] from public employees affected by drastic wage cuts, retirees, and long-term unemployed people to college students. They had a wide range of previous political or activist experience but most shared the experience of downward class mobility in the previous few years. The aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis and the subsequent enforcement of austerity policies shaped their personal engagement with political organizing. The majority of people affected by evictions and foreclosures were low-income families with children, and single mothers, many of them first and second-generation immigrants.[6]

Housing activist movements are but one example of the many grassroots initiatives that have either emerged or gained renewed vitality and support as a result of the austerity measures following the 2008 economic crisis in Southern European countries.[7] The word most commonly used to describe the affective predisposition not only of participants in these movements but also of these societies in general is "indignation".[8] From social media to daily conversations, Southern Europeans everywhere express their individual and collective grievances as a result of the perceived degradation of democracy, the existing symbiosis between European governments and finance capital, and the power imbalances amongst EU member states. Indignation is the current epoch's cultural affect, one that collects popular reactions to shifting political economic landscapes based on the retreat of the state from economic affairs and the consolidation of neoliberal economies in Southern Europe. In this regard, it is a negative affective reorientation towards circumstances, objects, economic elites, and politicians. Never fully defined or explained and yet culturally specific, the nature of indignation is both understood by all those who share it and experienced differently alongside class, gender, ethnic, and geographical markers. As a particular historical affect, this socially shared predisposition begs us to interrogate how indignant bodies mobilize and how they create political projects that oppose neoliberalism.[9] I propose the term indignant performances as an umbrella term that can account for the multiple and diverse forms in which housing activists in Spain and Italy act against current political economic circumstances, whether through direct political action, aesthetic means, or the voicing of dissent in everyday life.

Affect is that which "saturates the corporeal, intimate, and political performances of adjustment that make a shared atmosphere something palpable."[10] The historical circulation of indignation as a collective affect, an individual and social claim, and a political impulse can only be understood in the political and economic context of the current disassembling of the welfare state in European countries. After all, one does not become indignant unless she feels that something to which she was entitled has been taken away from her. Indignation is not begging, is not asking, and is not irrational rage. In the context of the European economic crisis, this affective reorientation is experienced by individuals who understood themselves as subjects of rights and who find themselves suddenly deprived of those rights. If austerity policies entail a promise of return, through sacrifice, to the state of the economy existing prior to the crisis, indignant performances manifest the failure of this promise and the radical potential of forms of economic justice that are yet to come.

What might an examination of affects as collective political manifestations offer for the study of social movements? How do we take into account how macroeconomic processes are *felt* in everyday life and eventually transformed into specific activist projects? How are socially circulated forms of feeling related to political projects and to the perceived (im)possibilities of a revolutionary change? And, finally, what methodologies could cultural critics could offer to explore these questions? If widespread social indignation and the proliferation of grassroots activism are connected, the study of affect as performative intervention in the political sphere is crucial. Such a project rejects a teleological perspective of affect as essentially radical, but it does acknowledge its capacity to be such. Indignant performative interventions contain both the possibility of radical social change and that of regressive nostalgia for a capitalist political formation that is now increasingly unsustainable, such as the welfare state.[11] What a focus on affect allows is the study of social events as ongoing processes rather than fixed objects. Because affects contain a virtual dimension, they can be both actualized in particular behaviors and exceed its actualization. It is within these parameters of both virtual and actual that the political possibilities of collective affects reside.

The interdisciplinary body of literature in affect theory understands affect as a matter of circulation between bodies, whether human or non-human; affect is the capacity to affect bodies and be affected by them.[12] By privileging circulation and movement, affect theory destabilizes a definition of the subject as a clearly delimited entity;[13] a body in movement is a body that transcends being by experiencing a constant process of *becoming*. It is this process of *becoming* that places bodies within the political dimension.[14]

In the last decade, scholars have addressed the relationship between the political economic formation that we call "late capitalism" and the place of affect within it. While heightened forms of affect circulation are essential to existing forms of capital accumulation,[15] there are also affective contingencies that might become forms of politics that escape capitalist co-optation. Sara Ahmed has examined how notions of happiness are tied to hegemonic ideologies and desires for capital accumulation that reify themselves precisely through a continuous deferral in the future.[16] This deferral is sustained through "cruel optimism," in Lauren Berlant's words, in which the cruelty lies in the fact that it is precisely fantasizing with a desired object that makes actual material conditions of lacking bearable.[17] That is, while the current economic order is predicated on a retraction of the social democratic promise of the post-Second World War period in Western countries, it is also based on the maintenance of "fantasies" of the good life to which we are affectively attached to the point that giving up those fantasies can feel like a form of loss.[18] The question worth exploring here is whether sudden political economic shifts that feel like widespread social shocks might bring about a collective re-examination of hegemonic promises of happiness and upward class mobility. Current indignant performances in Southern European societies emerge out of a social breach between deregulation of the economic sphere according

to neoliberal precepts, and an understanding of social rights inherited from the waning social democratic regime characterized by the existence of a widespread social safety net. Understanding how this affect circulates socially and in performance, and how it shapes peoples' perceptions is, therefore, "a problem of understanding the emergences, changes, and shifts in modes of power".[19] Indignation, then, is a collective popular reaction to the demise of the European welfare state.

Landscapes of eviction: Madrid and Rome

Notwithstanding similar manifestations of macroeconomic processes, the emergence and evolution of housing movements in Madrid and Rome respond to different historical contexts profoundly shaped by local politics. Spain's building boom emerged in the 1990s, when the right-wing liberal government of José María Aznar put land that had been formerly protected from building on the market. Spanish banks began to offer inexpensive credit borrowed from other European banks, which in turn were tied to Wall Street. The economy experienced an unprecedented boost, lifting Spain out of the economic hardship that processes of deindustrialization–required by the European Union in exchange for membership–had caused in the 1980s. During the building boom, 87 percent of the Spanish population became homeowners, the highest percentage among EU countries.[20] The eventual rupture of the housing bubble and the global economic crisis that followed in 2008 (together with Spain's particular legal framework surrounding mortgage loans) resulted in millions of Spanish residents losing their homes.[21]

The Roman housing movement is older, and arguably more complex, traversing different historical periods. Initially tied to occupation rather than anti-eviction activities, the movement emerged in the 1970s with the occupation of public property houses belonging to the state or local administrations as a response to the chronic scarcity of affordable houses for ever-growing working classes and the accumulation of real estate property in the hands of a reduced elite class and the Catholic Church. Long and cumbersome bureaucratic requirements often entail years of struggle before the occupiers can achieve any form of legal recognition from public administrators. Local administrations in Rome, of both left and right political leanings, have generally approached these occupation movements with either hostility or, at best, a tolerant attitude that did not adequately address the city's housing problems. Moreover, the eruption of the actual economic crisis has all but worsened this situation. Sinking under the weight of spiraling debt, local administrations are increasingly selling public resources to the private sector. Development and financial companies are buying these properties with the hope of turning a profit in an economic environment in which investment opportunities are scarce. Meanwhile, indebted and unemployed working classes, many of whom are immigrants, are being evicted on a daily basis.

In both Madrid and Rome, the landscapes against which evictions and mortgage foreclosures occur are strikingly similar. Foreclosed homes are generally located in the city's periphery, in working-class and immigrant neighborhoods that spread beyond the end of train, subway, and bus routes. In Madrid, foreclosures and evictions are more frequent in the south, southwest and southeast areas of the city, in neighborhoods such as Carabanchel, Usera, San Fermín, Vallecas,

Parla, and Villaverde. In Rome, Tor Sapienza, Magliana, Tor Bella Monaca, Alessandrino, Centocelle are some of the most affected areas. In these places, foreclosed apartments are part of multi-storied buildings that spread out by the hundreds next to noisy polluted highways, industrial areas, gas stations, empty fields, and former villages now engulfed by the city. Unfinished buildings, left behind by bankrupt construction companies, show their slow decay of nude bricks and glassless windows. They are the architectural corpses that remain from a time when bank credit seemed endless, and home ownership seemed universally reachable. Ubiquitous "for sale" signs display telephone numbers that nobody will call to make an offer. Left out of tourist guides and cosmopolitan cultural imaginaries, these areas barely count in the administrative efforts that Madrid and Rome make as European capitals to brand themselves as historic, cultural, economic, and political world centers. Here, the immigrant population rate is high and the employment rate is low.

For many of my interlocutors within housing movements in Madrid and Rome, what urged them to act, putting their own body on the line and facing the very real possibility of physical harm, was both a forceful and hard to describe impulse. This impulse was often justified as response to the failure of the existing administrative and state structures–a failure that was perceived as intolerable. The profound mistrust of all existing mechanisms of political representation seem to be a common condition of movements emerging in the global north in the last few years [22] and it is something that many of my interlocutors shared. In both Madrid and Rome, rage against the failure of local, national, and European political structures is pervasive and ubiquitous. Despite the obvious differences in the names of the characters that are to be blamed, all conversations have a similar pattern and an overarching complaint about how politicians "only care about money". Existing mechanisms of political representation are perceived as insufficient, and the democratic nature of the state is questioned. The failure of existing administrations is often linked to the palpable degradation of urban environments, which according to them has all but worsened in the last few years. Amongst my Roman interlocutors, in particular, the topic of urban degradation emerged frequently. Although I had not planned to ask about this in my interviews, after the first few weeks in the city, I realized it was a major concern. "This has always been a hard city, but now it's becoming harder, more hostile, unnecessarily aggressive," said one of the activists I interviewed. Words like *sporca* (dirty) and *pesante* (heavy, burdensome) were often used, followed by the explanation that these adjectives were not exactly right to describe it. This degradation was rarely described in specific terms and, upon inquiring, I was almost never offered a concrete example or anecdote that could illustrate what my interlocutors meant. Rather, they talked about it as an unpleasant atmosphere, a sensation, a reality that was palpable yet elusive to words, perhaps because it was registered at the level of daily micro-encounters that could accumulate almost unconsciously to a point of overflow without ever reaching the status of an event. During public assemblies of the housing movement in popular neighborhoods such as Magliana and Tor Sapienza, people took the microphone to denounce the city's "war on the poor," and the fact that political administrations only showed concern for certain neighborhoods during electoral seasons. Some of my interlocutors stated that this urban degradation was in fact part of a larger agreement that the city had made with developers, letting some areas decay so they could be later gentrified and revalorized for economic purposes.

Indignant Performances

Housing movements in Madrid and Rome create precarious yet stubborn solidarity networks that address urgent housing problems, articulate a grassroots critique of their political economic causes, and perform social justice. In anti-eviction and anti-foreclosure picket lines, crowds gather in front of the affected peoples' houses or apartment buildings and wait for the police, sometimes under implacable weather conditions. These crowds range from a few dozen to a couple of hundreds, and their diversity is remarkable. Elderly men and women, middle-aged couples with children, college students, teenagers, or pregnant women stand alongside experienced activists and community organizers. First and second-generation immigrants and people of color form a significant part of these groups. People in the crowd greet each other, form smaller circles, and engage in casual chats. For these crowds, the outcome is always uncertain, and most of the waiting time is spent in mobilizing collective strength and taming individual fears. These gatherings of housing movement members and supporters are indignant street performances in the making. These performances respond to a repertoire of activist behavior forged through repetition, always already performed, and yet new every time. Songs, slogans, and gestures are both familiar and at the edge of emergence. Activists make use of the embodied elements of this repertoire and actualize it depending on what each new gathering might demand.

Performance cuts across these events and manifests in multiple forms, from the smaller everyday gestures of resistance to the all-encompassing epic of the social drama that is the fight with the police. In these performances, everyone has a part, albeit a highly improvisational and precarious one. It is precisely the uncertainty of these performances' result that opens a space for popular participation, persuading those involved that their role is decisive. In both Madrid and Rome, much of the performance happening in the crowd was meant to build up collective courage to face the police. Particularly in Madrid, certain slogans, such as *Que no, que no, que no tenemos miedo* (No, no, we're not afraid) were chanted in a call and response pattern every time police cars showed up and the collective voice of the crowd became stronger and lauder as bodies gathered in front of the building door forming a mass. In fact, police repression, surveillance, the possibility of being arrested [23] and the infiltration of the movement by police were all essential concerns for activists. The extent to which these undercover activities were being carried out by law enforcement is difficult to establish, although the knowledge that this was happening clearly made some activists hyperaware and suspicious of newcomers. Some of my interlocutors in Madrid shared stories about undercover police officers that infiltrated the crowd during the obstruction of evictions and pretended to attack police officers in uniform, giving them an excuse to charge against the crowd and make random arrests. At large gatherings, I saw people pointing to newcomers and unfamiliar faces and having conversations about whether they "looked like" an undercover agent. In the beginning, my own role as an ethnographer and supporter of the movement was questioned on different occasions, whether overtly or through teasing remarks about how I could be one of the *maderos*.[24]

During gatherings in both Madrid and Rome, people often shared stories about bodies being exposed to police violence, or bodies standing against police repression. In each site, these stories formed a local lore of heroes and villains, with recurrent figure s such as the elderly woman who reprimands a police officer, or the young man who is arrested as a scapegoat. These stories reminded participants that they were part of a collective entity, and while the possibility of experiencing physical harm or being arrested was real, their individual effort and exposure was supported and shared by others.

During an anti-eviction picket in the Roman neighborhood of Magliana, activists placed about a dozen black motorcycle helmets on top of a car parked in front of the building where the eviction was going to take place. Their number and positioning suggested that in the case of an actual fight people would wear them to face the police. As the morning went by and no patrol cars showed up, people started to collect their helmets and leave, which made me realize that they actually belonged to the activists who had come riding their motorcycles. Using the available means in a creative aesthetic purpose, the activists performed a particular image of physical strength that was perhaps meant to be as encouraging for participants as discouraging for adversaries.

For those involved, indignant performances are performances of legitimacy and righteous reactions to unjust conditions. The confrontation of police and activists enacts a full-fledged a social drama that reveals the social breach that emerges between the current political economic order and notions of essential democratic rights. Each new repetition of this social drama, each new eviction, only reminds everyone involved that the deployment of police force "marks the point at which the state, whether from impotence or because of the immanent connections within any legal system, can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends that it desires to attain".[25] The activists' physical vulnerability underlines the repressive character of the legal system, widening the social breach between people affected by evictions and their supporters, on one hand, and the banks and state apparatus, on the other. These gatherings are performative, in that they create patterns of social collective behavior that empower participants.

At one gathering in Madrid, a middle-aged single mother of two explained why she had come that day:

> I could be in this situation myself very soon. I'm divorced and I have two children that I support by myself. My rent is 700 euros and my monthly income is about 1000. And I'm still in a better situation than many people because if I lose the house I can go to my parents. They don't have much but they would feed us... At some point I realized that you have to fight. When you have nothing left, you don't care that much about what you have to lose, and then you realize that fighting is the only thing you have. So you go on the streets, and you fight.

Later, she mentioned she had worked the night before and had slept only two hours, and explained her decision to come by saying that her "body asked for it.[26]". As she said those words, her hand drew a circular motion in front of her stomach, as if describing an energy located inside her body, emerging from her gut, that instigated her to act. In her description, coming to obstruct a home eviction by physically resisting the police was the result of a bodily impulse difficult to describe in rational or emotional terms. Performances of indignation are thus *folded into* smaller gestures of the everyday. In further explanations, she related this impulse to the inability to stay put while "people were losing their homes because of the banks". This example illustrates the embodied, pre-cognitive, and relational dimensions of affect, which are both physically felt and related to macroeconomic processes that are rationalized as unjust. Her bodily reaction existed both in reference to a material economic reality and to a political futurity in process. In this case, affect was both embodied and ideological, individual and collective, grounded and contingent.

In all the indignant performances outlined above, the radical political potential lies precisely in the possibility to transform affect into specific gesture and action. These gatherings have the very concrete goal of stopping evictions and more broadly, specific housing rights agendas that depend on the local context. However, insofar as performance is mobilized to do so, the energy released in these gatherings may unleash affective potentialities that then might transform participants and carry into the everyday. These outcomes are notable in their pedagogical potential to signal possibilities of collective action; in the fact that they modify participants and observers; and in the fact that they leave traces of the utopian that remain long after the performance is over.[27]

Housing activism and citizenship

Housing activists in Madrid and Rome make visible the impossibility of reconciling the liberal-democratic ideal of political subject as a bearer of rights with the neoliberal economic organization of urban space, which entails the dispossession and disenfranchisement of the urban working class. These activist movements embody Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre's notions of "rights to the city" in their radical potential to resist urban neoliberalism by producing space according to notions of collective ownership and equal distribution of resources.[28] In doing so, they open up possibilities for critically redefining existing notions of citizenship. This is evident in the collaboration of national citizens and immigrants in the claim to housing rights in both Madrid and Rome. However, any formation of citizenship is always a dual project, a contingent relationship between state and society that offers both possibilities of "insurgence" for the historically disenfranchised and consolidation of existing regimes of citizenship.[29] Current housing activism in Madrid and Rome operates in contingent ways, making possible forms of communal living and insurgent grassroots organization of urban space while often appealing to traditional liberal ideals of private property and home ownership. This type of activism is simultaneously a longing for an ever-shrinking welfare state and an embodiment of ways of inhabiting the city space that transcend neoliberal impositions, a contradiction that defines the very essence of indignant citizenship.

Conclusion

As a political possibility, indignation is an opportunity for a collective reexamination of the capitalist promise of happiness. In the context of an economic crisis, with its consequent cut of credit flows and the inability of large numbers of people to face mortgage payments due to unemployment, the promise of happiness attached to middle-class status through the circulation of financial capital is indefinitely postponed. In this instance, feelings of indignation can transform into collective performances of indignation, which open up possibilities for building social alternatives from the perspective of the "unhappy", those that, according to Sara Ahmed "enter history only as troublemakers, dissenters, killers of joy".[30] In her view, "to kill joy [...] is to make room for possibility, for chance".[31] Insofar as indignant performances reveal the breach in the promise of happiness, they might provide opportunities for a collective re-examination of the very project of happiness, the fantasy of the good life.

When the woman standing next to me at my first eviction gathering implied that "it doesn't matter" to be beaten up or arrested "because we are right," she revealed, first, the friction currently existing between the established political economic apparatus and what increasing sectors of Spanish, and more broadly European, society consider to be fair economic conditions. And second, that this friction fuels new grass-roots political commitments and activist networks that actively challenge neoliberal economy. When indignant bodies come together, they construct an entity full of political impulses. Indignant performances affectively construct the collective body of the crowd as an entity that is powerful enough to perpetually regenerate itself despite individual bodies being dragged, grabbed, pushed, arrested and beaten.

In this article, I have discussed indignation as a political affect that emerges within a specific historical period and geographical location. As affect, indignation is a political re-orientation that emerges and becomes visible in collective performances that potentially disrupt the neoliberal urban space, rehearsing and bringing into being forms of collective ownership, resource redistribution, and space making. As they reclaim space from and against the intertwined interests of financial capital and state urban planning, indignant housing activists in Rome and Madrid offer models to think about forms of urban planning that emerge from below. If we are to explain why oppositional mass movements have practically disappeared, being replaced by a constellation of smaller, highly adaptive groups that work as a constant disturbance of the existing political-economic apparatus, then affect–as a collective political catalyst, bodies–as sites of affective circulation, and space–as a field of contention, must be included as objects of analysis.

Notes

[1] Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca translates literally as "platform of people affected by mortgages".

[2] While Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca forms a unified network of local groups that share strategies and guidelines, the Roman movement is much more disaggregated. It is formed of multiple smaller groups that might converge for specific purposes, but that usually organize separately for specific purposes.

[3] Dwight Conquergood. *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 35.

[4] My methods included participant-observation and participation in the everyday activities of these activist groups, such as the obstruction of home evictions and mortgage foreclosures, and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Spanish in Madrid, and English and Italian in Rome.

[5] Class is a relational identity marker that is highly contingent on local specificities and individuals' self-description. In this essay, and my work more generally, I define my interlocutors class positions taking into account how they situate themselves in the local class structure.

[6] Based on my ethnographic experience and my interlocutors' answers, the specific composition of these groups varies. These variations respond to some extent to recent immigration patterns in these countries. For instance, Latinos are a bigger group in Madrid than Rome, and therefore, there are significantly more Latinos participating in the movement in Madrid. Rome has a significant presence o Ethiopians and Eritreans, two groups that are almost inexistent in the Spanish migratory landscape. Moroccans are the biggest North African group in both sites, and Romanians are the biggest Eastern European group.

[7] In Italy, Spain, and Greece, a plethora of activist groups work on a wide range of initiatives, such as opposing the privatization of water resources and public hospitals, occupying former factories, protesting the cuts of the public education system and the raise of university tuition, undertaking legal proceedings against bankers, establishing consumer groups that exchange services and create local fair trade markets, creating eco-gardens in city spaces, organizing free educational activities for unemployed and low income people, organizing workshops and lectures about "fair" economy, etc.

[8] The term "indignation" has been used by Spanish protesters since 2011. Specifically the square occupation movement that emerged in May 2011 is referred to as "Movimiento 15M" or "Movimiento de los Indignados." While acknowledging this genealogy, I extend the use of this term as a trope through which I examine a wide range of phenomena that has not been necessarily understood by their protagonists under the label of indignation, and which refers to the public circulation of negative affects against shifting political economic landscapes.

[9] These contemporary forms of mobilization in Southern European countries have resonances with other recent waves of protests such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and more recently, the mobilizations in Ferguson. Although a complete examination of these links is beyond the scope of this essay, many of my interlocutors were very aware of these protests and the strategies they use in their claims against the state and regarded themselves as part of broader transnational and global social movements opposing neoliberalism.

[10] Lauren Berlant. *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 16.

[11] Christian Marazzi. *Capital and Affects: The Politics of the Language Economy* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011), 45. Marazzi argues that the welfare state has currently become unsustainable because it is a historical model of income redistribution that emerged within the Fordist model of production of the 20th century to create consumers that could absorb the production of capitalist industry. In new models of production that privilege flexibility and adaptability, and where consumers become debtors, the welfare state serves no purpose, from a capitalist point of view.

[12] Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke UP, 2002)

[13] Jean-Luc Nancy. *Being Singular Plural* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000)

[14] *Becoming* never happens in a vacuum, but within and against specific historical formations that are traversed by power relations. Thus, becoming happens within a political sphere, which is itself undergoing a process of constant transformation. See John Protervi. *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 50.

[15] Paolo Virno. "The Ambivalence of Disenchatment" in *Radical Thought in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

[16] Sara Ahmed. *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010)

[17] Lauren Berlant. *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

[18] Ibid., 5.

[19] Ben Anderson. "Modulating the Excess of Affect: Morale in a State of 'Total War,'" in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2010), 183.

[20] Ada Colau and Adriá Alemany. *Vidas Hipotecadas: De la Burbuja Inmobiliaria al Derecho a la Vivienda* (Barcelona: Angle Editorial, 2012)

[21] Spanish legislation regards mortgage loans as personal loans, for which the actual property is only a warranty. This means that, in case of foreclosure, houses cannot necessarily be returned to the bank to cancel the debt. Rather, they are put up for auction, often being sold for much less than the loan's total value, especially when the market collapsed. The result is that the debtor loses the house but remains indebted to the bank for the rest of the loan.

[22] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2011. "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street: The Encampment in Lower Manhattan Speaks to a Failure of Representation." *Foreign Affairs* Oct, 11. http://www.foreignaffairs.com. Hardt and Negri have described this mistrust of mechanisms of political representation in the Occupy movement.

[23] In May 2014 two very active members of the Roman movement, Paolo di Vetta and Lucca Fagiano, had been put under house arrest for more than five months for their participation in an anti-eviction picket line.

[24] Slang word to refer to police officers.

[25] Walter Benjamin. "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections* (NY: Schocken, 1978), 287.

[26] "He venido porque me lo pedía el cuerpo."

[27] José Esteban Muñoz. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

[28] Henri Lefebvre. *Writings on Cities* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996)

[29] James Holston. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 13.

[30] Sara Ahmed. *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 17.

[31] Ibid., 20.

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Critical Performance Spaces:
Participation and Anti-Austerity Protests in Athens
Gigi Argyropoulou

The social and political conditions in Greece during recent years have given rise to an engagement with questions of participatory democracy, and challenged notions of what such participation might entail. These questions have arisen both in the wider social and political spheres as well as within the field of contemporary performance. In 2010, the Greek debt-crisis led to drastic neoliberal reforms that produced a social crisis without precedent in Europe. The International Monetary Fund, The European Central Bank and the European Commission offered Greece loans towards restoring its economy, but these were tied to harsh austerity measures that included radical cuts in public spending, salary and pension reductions, tax increases and a general dismantling of the welfare state. This crisis also gave rise to a series of collective struggles, which, in some moments, took an almost insurrectionary form. While public social support systems collapsed during these years, citizens, cultural workers and activists created self-instituted, bottom-up structures to absorb shocks and express their collective indignation. These structures included community assemblies, medical clinics, social kitchens, medicine exchange networks, solidarity food centers, legal aid hubs, and reactivated cultural venues. Political theorist Alexandros Kioupkiolis argues that these collective actions articulated the demand for another mode of democracy and yet, he qualifies, these emergent radical alternatives remained "unstable, fugitive, fragile" and "have yet to succeed in creating effective expanded democratic counter powers."[1] Indeed, despite the recent election of a new government in Greece, which has publicly committed to restoring elements of the social welfare system, many of the self-organized initiatives remain active and the questions they provoke, unanswered.

This article seeks to examine theories of participation in relation to the production of cultural space in neoliberal Athens, following Chantal's Mouffe proposition that critical artistic practices can play a central role in challenging domination by creating a multiplicity of sites where hegemony is contested.[2] I specifically examine a theatre occupation in Athens at the outset of the crisis in November 2011, to explore both the ways in which citizen participation and alternate forms of sociality were instituted and the subsequent shape that the struggle for radical democracy has taken there.

Figure 1. Photo Credit: Georgios Makkas, Embros Reactivation, 2011

The Limits of Participation

In *Environmental Theatre*, Richard Schechner discusses the notion of participation as that which transforms understandings of performance as bounded or self-contained work, to performance as social event:

> What happens to a performance when the usual agreements between performers and spectators are broken? What happens when performer and spectators actually make contact? When they talk to each other and touch? Crossing the boundaries between theatre and politics, art and life, performance event and social event, stage and auditorium? Audience participation expands the field of what performance is because audience participation takes place precisely at the point when the performance breaks down and becomes a social event. In other words, participation is incompatible with the idea of self-contained, autonomous, beginning, middle and end artwork.

> Schechner, *Environmental Theatre* [3]

For Schechner, audience participation can produce unexpected structures and social encounters—modes of (performative) praxis that operate between politics and art, life and performance—by crossing boundaries of established roles (actors and spectators), and of spatial divisions (auditorium and stage). In Schechner's proposition, relationality and participation appear intertwined. However, both of those terms have been problematized in recent years—participation, in itself, is not a radical practice anymore with the boundary-breaking connotations it had in the 1960's and 70s.[4]

While the lack of participation in societal and political processes in late capitalism gave rise to diverse localized bottom-up experiments of social praxis, subsequently, neoliberal institutions and governmental policies often recuperated such practices in order to contain demands of truly democratic participation by proposing structures that sought to nominally 'include' the public. Within corporate and institutional domains, participation appears as a series of practices seeking to explore modes of praxis that would increase citizen involvement in decision-making processes within a democratic order. However, these practices have been criticized as simply producing "greater productivity at lower cost," often supporting precarious working conditions by masking unpaid labor for participatory forms; or as mechanisms to "conceal and reinforce oppression and injustices in their various manifestations."[5] In some cases such participatory practices are utilized to reinforce the implementation of top-down hegemonic plans, by manipulating public opinion and defusing civic disagreement. For

instance, structures of controlled participation such as questionnaires or online participatory interactions are often used to justify pre-given urban regeneration and gentrifications plans. While this is a global paradigm, similar practices were utilized in Athens during the crisis. Municipality participatory projects such as 'Post it 4 Athens' asks citizens 'what they want in their city?' as if this were a singular question independent from other conditions.[6] Similarly, such practices have been utilized by *Rethink Athens* a privately funded urban plan for the transformation of the city center. In sum, participation today is not unrelated to a series of pressing questions around the potentially muddy politics of producing a 'social event' in public space. Who initiates this encounter and why? What is the actual role of each participant? What differentiates this mode of encounter from neoliberal models of participation?

In the field of the arts, since the late 1990s, there has been an expansion of practice and critical engagement with social and site-specific forms of art. 'Real' people and/or communities are often invited to be part of such work either as participants or collaborators. Often there is an attempt to create a localized temporary community or an 'in situ' assemblage of people. The traditional roles of the artist, the curator and critic are contested, as what comprises contemporary art practice itself is brought into question. As Hal Foster observes, artists began to describe their projects as "platforms" and "stations", as "places that gather and then disperse," emphasizing the casual communities they are bringing into being.[7] Exploring the "techniques and tools at their disposal" these artists or artists-as-curators attempt to create new imaginaries of public space, civic action and places of connectedness and intersubjective encounter.[8]

Nicolas Bourriaud in his book *Relational Aesthetics* drew on examples of artistic practice in the 1990s that focused on the realm of social interactions to propose that art no longer sought "to represent utopias but rather (attempted) to construct concrete spaces."[9] Claire Bishop criticized Bourriaud's conception of "relational aesthetics" and raised questions around the quality of the encounter, exclusion, and also the meaning of "democracy" in this context.[10]

Engaging with dramaturgies of the social domain and spatiotemporal dialectics of the urban landscape, such practices devise forms that produce concrete spaces. Recently, these concrete spaces take unexpected and distinct form, from a self-built structure on the seashore of Portugal, [11] to a queer site-specific performance in a flat in Exarheia in Athens,[12] to a re-enactment of a historical political event, in Yorkshire,[13] to a hybrid space that engages with the diverse city needs in Galata,[14] and various other modes of practice, including performative urban journeys, experiential installations and community work with marginalized social groups. Such spatial interventions are involved in the complex politics of their locales and are often intertwined with its specific conditions and restraints, cultural and social imaginaries, political landscapes, urban environment, and local art traditions. The micro-politics of the artwork are inseparable from the macro-politics of the urban, and the policies of the institutions that often support these works. Needless to say, such art manifestations appear both inside and outside, within and against neoliberal structures. The

questions to ask of participatory practices today is: do these forms of cultural practice simply replicate the conditions of the social in which they already exist—the commodification of social space in the neoliberal city—or can they offer an alternative to those conditions? How might contemporary participatory practices manifest in order to resist the practices of recuperation and incorporation by other agendas?

Jacques Rancière in his book *On the Shore of Politics* notes that participation as understood by contemporary democracy derives from two conceptions of differing origin: "the reformist idea of necessary mediations between the center and the periphery, and the revolutionary idea of the permanent involvement of citizen-subjects in every domain."[15] The admixture of the two positions produces a "mongrel" idea of democratic participation, Rancière continues, that is usually reduced to a question of filling up the spaces left empty by power. Genuine participation, he argues, is something different: the invention of an "unpredictable subject" who momentarily occupies the street, the factory, the theatre or the museum – rather than simply "filling up empty spaces," through forms of participation dependent on the dominant order.[16] Following Rancière's proposition, emerging artistic practices might practically perform how this momentary participation can be produced, delineate the spaces that make it possible and, reveal how forms of genuine participation might give rise to wider forms of participation in societal and political structures.

In the following pages I discuss the performance group Mavili Collective's occupation of the Embros Theater in Athens, a laboratory for such questions of participation. I was a researcher-participant in this collective experiment: both a participant and co-organizer of the initial occupation, a member of Mavili Collective, and a participant-observer in the ongoing open assembly. This momentary collective form of participation challenged the established boundaries between "theatre and politics, art and life, performance event and social event, stage and auditorium"[17] and through curatorial and performative structures, transformed a performance event into 'a socio-political event' and vice versa. This temporary critical counter-hegemonic site gave rise to other emergent forms of democratic participation that questioned the limits of popular decision-making, ideals of democratic inclusion and modes of relation to the dominant order. In its evolution, this occupation instituted different structures of artistic and political participation to respond to the socio-political conditions in Greece. The trajectory of the occupation of Embros, as the discussion in the following pages will demonstrate, complicates the potentialities of counter-hegemonic structures within neoliberal regimes.

Figure 2.
Photo Credit: Georgios Makkas, Embros Reactivation, 2011

Mobilizing the Theatre

On the 11th of November 2011, the Mavili Collective, a group of theatre makers and scholars, occupied the disused theatre building of Embros, in the gentrified neighborhood of Psyrri in Athens' city center. The Mavili Collective was formed in 2010 to respond to Greece's precarious socio-cultural conditions and initially sought to address the government's lack of stable institutional framework and infrastructure for the arts. Embros, a public theatre, had remained closed and disused since early 2007 for unidentified reasons. Following a public letter to the Minister of Culture demanding a coherent public policy for the arts, and a conference that called for public participation of cultural workers, the Mavili Collective instituted the Embros occupation.

The occupation positioned itself as a 're-activation,' seeking to differentiate its practices and intentions from the dominant form of anarchic squatting popular in the Athenian activist landscape since the 1980s. The Embros reactivation sought to not solely occupy space but to revive and repurpose the (disused) theatre, bringing together diverse forms of practice, and questioning what theatre and performance could do in the context of Athens' socio-economic crisis and cultural impoverishment. As Mavili stated in its manifesto:

> We aim to re-activate and re-occupy this space temporarily through our own means, and propose an alternative model of collective management, and forms of performance work. For the next eleven days Mavili Collective will reconstitute Embros as a public space for exchange, research, debate, meeting and re-thinking [...] We act in response to the general stagnation of thinking and action in our society, through collective meeting, thinking and direct action by reactivating a disused historical building in the center of Athens.
>
> Mavili Collective, 'Reactivate Manifesto' [18]

Over the course of twelve-days, 291 artists, scholars and practitioners, ranging from emerging artists to established practitioners, students and university professors, activists, and members from immigrant community groups working across multiple disciplines, presented work at Embros. Breaking conventional agreements between spectators and performers as well as the hierarchical forms of categorization of the art market, the occupation of Embros brought together a generation of makers across the fields of theatre, performance, dance and visual arts. The twelve-day program sought to offer an 'incomplete' proposal for cultural praxis in response to the precarious cultural conditions in Greece pre- and during the crisis. The collective outlined a series of new strands of activity that sought to playfully subvert normative forms of artistic and theoretical practice:

Open classes: For academics from across disciplines to give lectures in a different kind of classroom;

Live archive: An attempt to document and archive 'live' the currently undocumented Greek 'new work'[19] across the fields of theatre, dance and performance of the last decade;

Debate: Discussions on urgent issues in art, performance and the community.

Starting principles: Playing with the double meaning of the Greek word αρχές (arhes) – meaning both beginning and working principles – artists, dance and theatre-makers share methodologies and strategies for beginning a project.

One-day residency: One-day residencies by visual artists in response to the occurrences that particular day involving leaving a trace in the space.

Chaos days: Multiple actions, performances, gatherings, installations, social works, live art events through the day in the neighborhood surrounding Embros.

Own goal: An invitation to artists to experiment with hybrid forms and unexpected collaborations – an invitation to reverse certainties, challenge personal limits, artistic clichés and conventions.

Adapted from the Mavili Collective 'Reactivation Program Categories'[20]

The program was formed in secret by Mavili's collaborators, prior to the announcement of the occupation, but it was updated and reprinted daily during the twelve-days of re-activation, as more people expressed interest in being a part of the occupation. These strands proposed hybrid open modes of praxis that makers could inhabit, and at the same time provided some coherence for the audience. Through this open curatorial framework, Embros destabilized categorizations of doing and hosting 'performance' and instead created an unexpected space of cultural production in Athens.

A wide range of works, performances, installations, one-on-one encounters, workshops, lectures, discussions and concerts occupied the stage of Embros. Audiences actively took part in the production of space, creating, through their participation, new forms of exchange. As collaborators in immersive, participatory pieces of work, or spectators in conventional forms of theatre, they actively opened up space for dialogue after the show. All the activities in Embros were free of charge and the bar served drinks for a voluntary contribution. Audience members responded by offering food, drinks and other resources to be shared with others. Embros's community of spectators and makers co-existed thus producing forms of 'inappropriate sociality'[21]; to be "in critical, deconstructive relationality as cultural workers, which was incommensurable with the existent regime of labor regulation"[22] Conventional spatial and social 'agreements' were reversed through art practices, giving rise to unexpected forms of experimental work and diverse modes of social encounters.

The activities that took place inside the theatre repeatedly transformed its various spaces through diverse and unexpected uses. After the first week of reactivation, as the occupation received more exposure through the media and word-of-mouth, the Mavili Collective initiated a call for public works in the surrounding neighbourhood. As the Embros theater opened itself to the city, site-specific performances, re-enactments of political speeches, communal cooking and dinners, performative journeys in the city and durational actions occupied the blocks around the occupation.

For Mouffe, critical artistic practices can construct new practices and subjectivities that aim to subvert dominant hegemony[23] and, as such, Embros produced its own space and critical practices in the city in relation to existent cultural industries and the socio-political landscape. Lefebvre argues that '(social) space is a (social) product'[24] and as such is produced or constituted by a series of agents. Embros, as a product, was constituted by the cultural program; the materiality of the building; the works presented and discussed; unexpected and 'inappropriate' encounters; and the surrounding urban movements. Rather than serving a function in a pre-existing space, for these twelve days in Athens' time of crisis, cultural workers sought to intervene in the dominant production of space and create the conditions for an alternate modality of spatial production, which challenged existent societal imaginaries of cultural praxis.[25]

Embros was a cultural space that had been abandoned by the State for over five years. However, rather than instituting a reimbrication in the dominant urban cultural fabric, the Mavilli Collective appropriated the space as a zone of political and cultural togetherness that affected the surrounding neighborhood and also the city's art scene—that is, its position shifted with regards to the modes and relations of production of the time.[26] This reactivated, disused cultural building produced, temporarily, a collective undefined and unpredictable subject that took over the occupied theatre. The collective participatory model of the reactivation program sought to produce a wider structure of participation amongst the cultural workers and to renegotiate the relation between the artistic work and its audiences. This model gave rise to an open-ended participatory happening that was in constant process. The ethos of participation extended from cultural workers to audiences to produce an evolving public sphere where the cultural and the political co-existed, giving rise to critical forms of practice.

Mavili had stated in the announcement of the program that on the last day of the reactivation the public would collectively decide on the future of this occupation through an open, public assembly. Its probable continuity therefore destabilized the expected trajectories of an artistic project and opened decision-making to the public that had supported this event.

As Mavili Collective noted in a text on this last day:

> Today, on the last day of the 'reactivation' of Embros Theatre in Athens, we collectively write this text [...] Thinking of the political today, we find ourselves trapped by previous conceptions, models and practices. However, this occupation has resisted the idea of serving up something that feels familiar and responds to pre-given expectations. We think of the political today through practical structures that respond to the conditions of the Greek landscape and we seek to reevaluate models before they become immobile structures [...] Today we wonder about the consequences of our decisions and actions and how they might contribute to the future cultural landscape [...] What are the modes and practices that might allow us to rethink relations and roles in society? [...] Without the necessary solutions we think of the political today through 'places' of exchange, of re-evaluation [...] that will perhaps produce future alternatives.

> Mavili Collective, 'Να ξαναφτιάξουμε το πολιτικό'/'Rethinking the political' [27]

Although the Embros Theater reactivation initially had an ephemeral horizon, that of twelve days, wide public participation from the artistic community and audiences forced its continuation. After a few 'full house' public assemblies in the theatre, the Mavili Collective announced that they would continue activities at the Embros Theater. In the following year, 2012, the Embros occupation explored the potentialities of continuity, further experimented with models of cultural praxis and its relation to the city, including modes of organization and collective management. An assembly of local residents took place weekly in Embros and participants of the area organized a series of community events, public discussions, and planned other social activities such as a community vegetable garden. The Mavili Collective instituted residences, festivals and curated programs as well as gave space to other collectives and groups of the city to organize events and use the Embros Theater as a base for action and a meeting place.[28] At the same time visitors from Europe, other occupations, and collectives visited the Theater and took part in its programs and activities.

Constantly experimenting with alternative modes of production and exploring possible ways of continuation in the precarious landscape of crisis, during these months, the Embros experiment also faced the challenge of sustainability outside of current regimes of monetary exchange. Unfunded, Embros continued through alternative networks of solidarity and exchange between participants. In an ongoing process of production by neighborhood residents, collectives and groups it also produced new relations, friendships, collaborations and forms of inappropriate sociality.

Figure 3.
Embros Reactivation, 2011

Performing the Assembly

Through 2012, the Embros occupancy produced a diverse public program of activities, free of charge, that drew large audiences while resisting the dominant imaginary of a squatted space within the Athenian landscape. The State seemed to silently accept or at least not publicly oppose this occupation as there were no attacks by the police or the State. In these years of crisis while the State was unable to fund cultural activities and support social networks, Embros seemed to have a positive impact on the artistic and local community. However a year later, the crisis in Greece deepened as further austerity measures were implemented. The new government in June 2012 initiated violent and repressive mechanisms and narratives that paradoxically promoted both the privatization of public goods and a return to nationalistic values. A growing neo-nazi faction violently patrolled the streets of Athens and as urban impoverishment deepened the government attempted to close all self-organized spaces as 'centers of illegality'. Almost a year after the initial reactivation, in September 2012, the State acting through ETAD/PPCo SA,[29] a new public-private company responsible for privatizing public properly and selling national assets, demanded that the Mavili Collective evacuate Embros in order to proceed with plans for the privatization of the Embros building. Despite letters of support from unions of artists, architects, technicians, art spaces, universities, independent artists from Greece and abroad, a petition with over 2000 signatures, and attempts to initiate a dialogue with the Mavili Collective and local residents, ETAD/PPCo S.A. replied: 'We are particularly sensitive to the requests from groups, collectives and citizens of the city. However, our company has to privatize buildings according to the common interest of the citizens'[30] and set a date for the evacuation of the space by the police. Even with internal conflicts regarding the identity and future organizational structure of the space, Mavili Collective refused to hand over the keys of the space and made a call to other artistic and social collectives, political groups, and citizens to support Embros and oppose the police. Public support for Embros succeeded in keeping the space open and also led to a change in its mode of operation and decision-making. Embros began to be operated and managed by a weekly open assembly. This form again broke from usual agreements of participation in this occupancy and from the structures of curatorial and performative participation in artistic and cultural fields and yet was a familiar mode of decision-making and organizing in the

political field, and the dominant mode of organization in most occupied spaces in Athens managed mainly by anarchist groups. Participation in the assembly was open to all citizens, 'except neo-Nazi's' as stated by the assembly – and anyone could use the space, present works or organize events without a selection process. The participants in the assembly were also encouraged to take part in the management of the space.

Embros gradually transformed from an experimental performance space to an emergent 'unpredictable subject,' giving rise to new public forms of self-management, participation and co-existence. The open, unstructured participatory format of the assembly appeared fruitful at first, as the decision-making and organization of the space became a public matter of debate and contestation amongst participants. However, even though participants in the assemblies rejected time constraints and organizational rules as hegemonic, the free, open and unstructured form of the Embros assembly eventually created a field of potential manipulation. The assembly was occasionally controlled by 'experts,' and the labor of political participation became difficult for many.

Many artists and cultural workers including the collective that initiated the occupation, withdrew from Embros after instances of violent assemblies.[31] Repeatedly confronted with the impossibility of finding common ground, they left space for those more experienced and organized in alternative political groups to gain precedence. Following their time at Embros, the Mavili Collective initiated a series of counter-hegemonic interventions in the landscape of crisis, which included a performative intervention in the opening speech of the Minister of Culture in the EU conference 'Financing Creativity' as well as actions in the urban domain that questioned the politics of the cultural landscape. [32]

The Embros occupation continued despite internal conflicts, divergences and disagreements, as a difficult exercise of "social pedagogy"[33] confronting participants with the challenges of the 'commons' and participation in the open field of the political. Embros continues to operate by a weekly open assembly however, the police has shut down the assembly on three occasions and two people have been arrested while rehearsing in the space. Although Embros continues to host diverse activities, discussions, performances, festival and events almost on a daily basis, the people that take part in the weekly assembly often do not exceed twenty-five participants.

Figure 4.
Photo Credit: Georgios Makkas, Embros Reactivation, 2011

Conclusion

Radical experiments in socio-spatial production as the Embros occupation bear the potential to become useful starting points for collective praxis, unexpected urban exchanges and the production of new modes of organization and participation. In neoliberal landscapes such unexpected spaces and practices that challenge the usual agreements can produce new precarious public spheres yet cannot promise sustainable or smooth convivial encounters and happy endings.

Yet collective bottom-up interventions like Embros question the limits of participation by creating emergent, open, critical, diverse public spheres that confront us with the actual challenges of democracy.

The question remains, how might participatory practices resist cooptation by vested interests—whether these interests emanate from neoliberal institutions that instrumentalize participation to reinforce their policies, or from struggles for power in alternative counter-institutions and bottom-up cultural experiments like Embros? Kioukiolis argues that horizontality cannot exist as a permanent condition but 'as a horizon of a constant struggle against the residues of unfair, hegemonic and centralized power'.[34] Similarly, participatory practices that challenge the usual agreements, roles and spatial allocation of power can only exist in a precarious process of constant redefinition. They must be seen as an ongoing laboratory of negotiating the conditions of co-existence and collectively setting contexts of being together while rethinking the exclusions of democratic structures and our current inability to create new forms of political life.

The collective participatory practices like Embros that emerged during the years of crisis faced repeated failures. However they also marked a paradigm shift in the modes of practicing politics and culture, and of taking part in the political and social. The failings of these practices might be a fruitful place to begin thinking of new 'instituent'[35] practices through emergent fugitive participation formats. These formats would challenge both political pre-conceptions and neoliberal recuperation, to produce radical democratic forms of life and culture that exist in constant struggle between the personal and the public, the institutional and the bottom-up, continuity and stasis.

Figure 5.
Embros, *Where Are We Now* Festival organised by Kolektiva Omonia 2013. KangarooCourt group during their action "Brigitte's Vardo or almost 15 minutes" where the artists created installations-sets inspired by theatrical roles "around and on the bodies of volunteers-viewers-protagonists with materials and objects, so that the final result would be a new visual installation-theatrical scene" (Saxini, N., 2013).

Notes

[1] Kioupkiolis. 'Για μια άλλη δημοκρατία των κοινών' (For a democracy of commons). 2013

[2] Mouffe. Hegemony, Radical Democracy and the Political, 207-215.

[3] Schechner. *Environmental Theatre*, 40.

[4] Claire Bishop argues that 'at each historical moment participatory art takes a different form, because it seeks to negate different artistic and socio- political objects. In our own times, its resurgence accompanies the consequences of the collapse of reallyexisting communism, the apparent absence of a viable left alternative, theemergence of the contemporary 'post- political' consensus, and the near total marketisation of art and education.But the paradox of this situation is that participation in the West now has more to do with the populist agendas of neoliberal governments. Even though participatory artists invariably stand against neoliberal capitalism, the values they impute to their work are understood formally (in terms of opposing individualism and the commodity object), without recognising that so many other aspects of this art practice dovetail even more perfectly with neoliberalism's recent forms (networks, mobility, project work, affective labour) (2012:276) See further Bishop (2012)

[5] Cooke and Kothari. *Participation: the New Tyranny*, 13.

[6] See further: http://postit4athens.gr/

[7] Foster. 'Chat Rooms', 190-200.

[8] See further: Jackson, *Social Works* and Kester, Conversation Pieces

[9] Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*, 46

[10] In 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' Bishop explored "the antagonism and conflict" inside "relational" democratic spaces drawing on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (1985).

[11] Exyzt. *Casa Do Vapor*. Cova do Vapor, Portugal. 2013. Self-built Structure.

[12] Nova Melancholia. *Ectoplasms*. Athens. 2012. Performance.

[13] Jeremy Dellar, *Battle of Orgreave*, 2001. Artwork.

[14] Oda Projesi. *Oda Projesi*. 2000. Room Project

[15] Ranciere. *On Shores of Politics*, 60.

[16] Ranciere, *On Shores of Politics*, 61.

[17] Schechner. *Environmental Theatre*, 40.

[18] Mavili Collective, 'Reactivate Manifesto', 2011. See further: https://mavilicollective.wordpress.com/re-activate/

[19] During the years 2000-2010 a series of emerging experimental companies across the fields of theatre, dance and performance appeared in the peripheries of the dominant Greek cultural landscape. These works questioned conventional theatre and dance formats and made works that could be characterized as post-dramatic, experimental, devised, site-specific and so on. These practices were marginalized for years from the dominant institutions that at the time supported mainly conventional art forms. Most of these companies presented work in difficult working conditions and therefore often the work was undocumented. Without access to established distribution mechanisms often these works although drew large audiences were made, presented and forgotten.

[20] Mavili Collective 'Reactivation Programme Categories', 2011. See further: https://mavilicollective.wordpress.com/re-activate/programme-categories/

[21] Haraway, 'The Promises of Monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d Others.' 299.

[22] Haraway, 'The Promises of Monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d Others.' 299.

[23] Mouffe. *Hegemony, Radical Democracy and the Political*, 213.

[24] Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*, 26

[25] Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*.

[26] Benjamin. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 225.

[27] Mavili Collective. 'Να ξαναφτιάξουμε το πολιτικό', 120-121.

[28] Further information for activities during these months are available here: https://mavilicollective.wordpress.com/embros/

[29] As stated in the company website: 'The Public Properties Co. (PPCo S.A.) is a corporation with the mission of developing and managing the private state-owned properties. The Company is 100% owned by the Greek State and is supervised by the Ministry of Finance' See further http://www.etasa.gr/versions/eng/page.aspx

[30] ETAD, Letter to Mavili Collective. October 28, 2012.

[31] The assemblies were often verbally violent and aggressive as different social behaviors manifested in the space. In the subsequent years violent physical collision took place between participants of the assembly.

[32] Mavili Collective more information: www.mavilicollective.wordpress.com

[33] Lefebvre in the *Survival of Capitalism* argues that only self-management makes participation possible otherwise it 'becomes ideology and makes manipulation possible'. According to Lefebvre, self-management is defined as knowledge of and control [by a group] over the conditions governing its existence. Lefebvre argues further that self-management also requires a social pedagogy.

[34] Kioupkiolis. 'Ριζοσπαστική δημοκρατία και συλλογικά κινήματα σήμερα.' 2014.

[34] Following Gerald Raunig I use the term "instituent practices" here to point towards emergent practices that resist structuralization and yet engage with (institutional) formations and structures.

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Participatory Aesthetics and Makeshift Urbanism:
Cases of Guimarães, Cova do Vapor, and Terras da Costa

Joana Braga

> Driven by desire, participatory design is a "collective bricolage" in which individuals are able to interrogate the heterogeneity of the situation, to acknowledge their own position and then go beyond it, to open it up to new meanings, new possibilities, to "collage their own collage onto other collages", in order to discover a common project. The process is somehow more important than the result, the assemblage more important than the object, the deterritorialization more important than the construction of territories (Petrescu 2005, 45).

Doina Petrescu refers to participatory design as a process of collective construction that emphasizes intersubjective relations among a multiplicity of individuals who, acknowledge the contingency of their particular position; recognize the relational constitution of the situation; and are willing to negotiate their positions (and therefore open them up to new possibilities) in order to discover a common project. As an assemblage of "desires," in Petrescu's words, processes of transversal participation create a place of encounter, conviviality and debate for the diverse subjectivities involved, with their different daily gestures, activities and social positions, (e.g. neighbourhood associations, informal teams, experimental institutions, other self-managed organizations, planning and cultural institutions), and encourage the development of relational networks, aimed at the experimental and inescapably polemical construction of a democratic common ground.

In this article I discuss three connected socio-spatial experiments that took place in Portugal between 2012-2014: "Building Together" a public workshop and residency at the *Curators' Lab* in Guimarães; *Casa do Vapor*, a makeshift wooden house that encouraged experimental artistic and social practice in the informal settlement of Cova do Vapor; and the *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen*. My position is that of a scholar and practitioner of participatory design processes. I posit that these projects led to the construction of temporary communities built around the projects themselves; they embodied the collective construction, necessarily negotiated, of common spaces and their subsequent cohabitation. Proposing alternative modes of social engagement they expanded spaces of possibilities and created new "configurations of the sensible"[1] for all those involved. Moreover, I consider *Casa do Vapor* and *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen* as processes of 'urban commoning', through which the created spaces emerged as 'urban commons' (Stavidres 2014, 83). My conclusion addresses the limitations of these projects and discusses the paradoxical place these practices hold within the current political-economic situation in Portugal.

Three Projects: An Introduction

I. "Building Together"

In 2012, the city of Guimarães in northern Portugal was designated a European Capital of Culture (ECC).[2] That year, one of the most significant interventions in art and architecture programming was the *Curators' Lab*. The Lab, set up in Guimarães' disused ASA Factory, was a year-long exploration consisting of several spatial interventions, exhibitions, workshops, residencies, performances, conferences, talks and debates, with the aim of reflecting on the practice of curating. "Building Together," one of the Lab's spatial interventions, was a three-week long public workshop directed towards the participatory construction of a makeshift wooden auditorium. The construction of this wooden structure entailed relational processes and was a means of connecting the expectations of local residents concerning the ASA factory's new role as a cultural space with its reintegration into the social fabric of the city. Exyzt, a transdisciplinary collective that develops research through relational experimental urban practices, coordinated the workshop (figure 1).[3]

Figure 1.
[*Curator's Lab*] makeshift wooden auditorium constructed within *Building Together*, http://constructlab.net/projects/construir-juntos-for-curatorslab-ecc2012/

Figure 2.
Casa do Vapor, http://constructlabnet/projects/casa-dovapor/

Figure 3.
*Terras da Costa
Community Kitchen*
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II. *Casa do Vapor* (Steam House)

After the participatory experience of "Building Together," a decision was made to embark on a second collective venture. A large quantity of wood had been acquired in the construction of the auditorium in Guimarães, which could be used again. The project that transpired—facilitated by Exyzt, the participants of "Building Together," and the Ensaios e Diálogos Association[4]—entailed the construction of a makeshift wooden house, Casa do Vapor [5], which, from April to October 2013, aimed to stimulate experimental artistic practice and research in Cova do Vapor, an informal neighborhood in a disputed territory south of Lisbon (figure 2). The project incorporated a participatory process that built on collective dynamics already in place at Cova do Vapor, which in turn, reverberated in surrounding neighborhoods such as Terras da Costa.

III. *Community Kitchen* in Terras da Costa

After the makeshift house was taken down in Cova do Vapor the wood was re-used a third time. This iteration involved the construction of a community kitchen at Terras da Costa, a precarious informal neighborhood near Cova do Vapor, as well as the provision of running water to the site. The project was developed by ateliermob, an architectural office concerned with urban interventions that connect different agents within urban and political spheres[6], and Projecto Warehouse, an experimental architecture collective engaged in processes of participatory construction[7] (figure 3).

Figure 4.
Cartography
showing Cova
do Vapor and
Terras da Costa

It wasn't only raw material that travelled between the three projects; the Ensaios e Diálogos Association, the Exyzt collective, and other participants in *Casa do Vapor* such as Projecto Warehouse, became active stakeholders in the Community Kitchen at Terras da Costa. The processes set into motion by the projects led to the strengthening of a network of cultural and design practitioners—strongly interlaced with local communities—that was concerned with the urban and social dimensions of this territory south of Lisbon. This network also had established connections with the local administrative authority, the Almada Municipal Council (figure 4).

Nevertheless, the movement of wood between the three projects was also significant, not only because it provided a valuable resource which enabled the construction, at minimal cost, of both the makeshift structure of Casa do Vapor and the Community Kitchen at Terras da Costa, but also because it served a symbolic function. It connected practices of 'being in common' performed at three sites, and gave material form to the negotiations that such explorations entail.

These projects, developed through open-ended processes, aimed to create relational spaces and foster exchange between the project initiators, specific sites and their inhabitants. Following Massey (2008), I consider space as always being a product of interrelations necessarily embedded in material practices. Relational space refers to the material and discursive spaces opened up by these projects, which enhanced the intersubjective relations between those involved—local community members, artists, architects, researchers, students, and other participants with different affiliations, as well as the institutions that supported them.

My approach to the notion of 'common ground' is informed by radical democracy theoreticians Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and Lefort (1988), who posit that the social field, the realm of our 'being in common', is relationally constituted and that within this negotiation of relations between a multiplicity of entities, themselves relationally constructed, the social dimension is uncertain and open to debate. Rancière suggests that a 'common world' is never simply an ethos, a shared abode that results from the sedimentation of a certain number of intertwined acts, but rather that "it is always a polemical distribution of modes of being and 'occupations' in a space of possibilities" (2004, 42). A 'common world' may thus be perceived as the outcome—always provisional—of the negotiation of heterogeneous, sometimes agonistic processes rooted in social differences (see also Laclau and Mouffe). The limits of this 'space of possibilities' referred to by Rancière are reconfigured and actualized by practices that question dominant classifications of modes of social existence—'modes of being and occupations'.

A Landscape of Austerity

As a result of years of economic hardship, which ultimately turned into a sovereign debt crisis, Portugal officially requested a bailout in April 2011 and received a €78 billion rescue package funded by the International Monetary Fund and European Union for three years, until May 2014. The rescue package entailed a set of structural austerity measures that deepened the manifestations of 'embedded neoliberalism' in this peripheral European country (Van

Apeldoorn's 2002). These included the intensification of privatization of public goods and services; the deregulation and flexibilization of the labor market; the elimination of protections for tenants (resulting in the displacement of poorer residents and small local commerce from city centers); considerable tax hikes; and welfare retrenchments, namely substantial cuts in social support and decreases in pension funds. Record levels of unemployment were also seen in this time. Austerity cuts in Portugal have affected not only the already disadvantaged, but increasingly, also the youth and more segments of the middle class.

Within this bleak landscape, public funding for the arts dropped substantially. Designated as one of the European Capitals of Culture (ECC) of 2012 by the EU's Council of Ministers of Culture in May 2009, the 2012 Guimarães ECC was an exception to this rule. The event was seen as an opportunity for creativity-led economic and urban development of Guimarães, in compliance with the current neoliberal urban technique of city marketization. Nonetheless, the initiative opened a space of experimentation and encounter for young national and local artists, and adopted a diversified cultural approach intended to value and stimulate the local population's engagement. Programming around this initiative included procedural, open-ended and situated artistic and architectonic forays, such as the Curators' Lab (described in more detail below).

Private foundations, municipalities and cultural entities also showed an interest in socio-cultural urban projects in various sites across the country. These parties considered that such "art of action, interfacing with reality" (Bishop 2013, 11-14) might serve to stimulate social inclusion, compensate for the decrease in public social services, and assuage potentially disruptive groups and sites of conflict. Local authorities and real estate capital, especially in Lisbon and Oporto, have also been mobilizing dynamic local 'culture scenes' as locational assets in creative city branding efforts within entrepreneurial interurban competition. [8] According to urban scholar Margit Meyer, such unconventional creativity does not encompass the radical dimension it used to, as when deployed within the Keynesian welfare state. Today's neoliberal urbanism has appropriated unconventional creativity's features as vital pieces of local regeneration programs, which are designed to spur activation of urban space and "self-responsabilization rather than political empowerment" (2013, 12).

My focus here, on the *interlaced working* of a set of supporting institutions and these collective projects—two of which were realized without official commission—relates to recognizing that any practice is always sustained by interdependencies, sometimes paradoxically, within social systems. I use the term 'paradoxically' to emphasize ambiguous interdependencies. For instance, the *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen* project would not have been possible without support from the Municipal Council. Nevertheless, the Council (due to financial shortcomings) was reliant upon architects, anthropologists, artists and researchers to perform its social role. Further, several socio-urban practices oppositional to financial speculation on urban space, are only possible with funding from private corporations related to real estate, who expect that these initiatives will raise land value. Following Jackson's (2011) *Social Works*, in my approach to relationality, I understand the term to be a visible dimension of this situated nexus of forces.

"Building Together" at Curators' Lab: materializing a relational space

Guimarães is located in Vale do Ave in northern Portugal, a region where the process of deindustrialization left its mark on the social fabric. Vale do Ave had an industrial tradition whose productive specialization was in the low-value-added sectors of the textile and clothing industry. Here, most entities were micro and small enterprises—92 per cent of which had less than 10 employees (Castro 2012, 19). These industries have been on the decline since the early 1990s, as a result of the strong appreciation of currency in that decade, heightened by Portugal's adhesion to the Euro, and also strong competition from the opening up of European markets to products from Asia.

The disused ASA Factory, located in Covas, two kilometers from the Guimarães city center, became one of the main spaces for hosting different ECC projects. Formerly one of the most successful textile firms in Vale do Ave, with over 1,000 employees, the factory gradually ceased manufacturing during the early 2000s until it closed down for good in 2006.

Curators' Lab, an initiative of the art and architecture program of Guimarães ECC, was installed in the ASA Factory's central hall. Artist and curator Gabriela Vaz Pinheiro conceptualized the Lab with Lígia Afonso as co-curator and program coordinator. *Curators' Lab* was a year-long exploration, consisting of various residencies, workshops, spatial interventions, performances, exhibitions, conferences and debates, aiming to reflect on the practice of curating. The Lab involved a continuous process of research on cultural production and its relation to context— in this case, with particular attention to the process of deindustrialization to which the municipality of Guimarães had been subjected, including the positioning of the ASA Factory within that process. The Lab assumed the status of a meeting platform, a space for continuous creation and an experimental workshop. In the words of Lígia Afonso (2013, 13) the Curators' Lab re-opened the factory with a proposal for "another kind of habitability, testing relations between the interlacing of memories and expectations between those who had worked there, the instant curiosity of a public as yet unknown, and the subjectivity of its coming occupants."[9] Curators' Lab had a tripartite structure both conceptually and temporally. Each temporal phase or moment presupposed a dialogic intertwining of three dimensions: spatial design, a collective residency and an editorial project.[10]

The transdisciplinary collective Exyzt was invited to design and implement the spatial situation of the first 'moment' of the Curators' Lab. Exyzt's work is characterized by the design and construction of temporary structures which are used to experiment with new modes of collectively inhabiting and enhancing common spaces and functions. The work commissioned was "the construction of a [wooden] auditorium which would facilitate the process of encounter" (Afonso 2013, 15). Exyzt's proposal, "Building Together," was a collective residency that took place over three weeks and included a public workshop attended by about thirty architecture and art students, as well as other participants. Coordinated by Alex Roemer, members of the Exyzt collective moved into the factory and, together with the workshop participants, began constructing the first component of the residency: a shelter, with a kitchen and sleeping alcoves, which served as a meeting, working, living and social space, and which provided the basic infrastructure for completing the commissioned work (figure 5).

The work that emerged—the auditorium—was an 'interim' structure that expressed the relational and constructive processes taking place within the factory. It consisted of a makeshift body of architecture, changing fluidly in response to the practices and processes associated with its habitation. While some participants built the auditorium, others mapped out the surrounding neighborhood; interviewing residents (some of them former factory workers), tracing their life stories and inviting them to visit and take part in the dynamics of the factory's new life (figure 6). Participants and residents, together with the Lab editorial project, edited and published a fanzine, Construir Junto, documenting those weeks. In constructing and inhabiting the auditorium space together, a dynamic synergy was generated between the members of Exyzt and the group of participants. The outcome was the desire to work on a future collaborative project reusing the wood from the makeshift auditorium of "Building Together."

II. Casa do Vapor: unfolding an alternate model of social engagement

Cova do Vapor is an informal settlement on the southern shore of the river Tejo, where it meets the ocean. Located within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, its local authority is the Almada Municipal Council. Bound to the north by the river, the west by the ocean, the south-east by an expanse of forest and the north-east by various military installations, Cova do Vapor's urban density is the product of an informal urban development within a confined territory (figure 7). Strongly influenced by its proximity to Lisbon, its mostly working-class residents, the lack of land to build on and the systematic reuse of all kinds of available materials, Cova do Vapor became a unique social and urban environment, shaped by various desires and processes of self-organization. The neighborhood is inhabited by around 200 permanent residents, a number that increases five-fold in the summer due to the popularity of the local beaches. The main livelihood of the local community is fishing.[11]

Cova do Vapor is not legally recognized. The land is privately owned by Urprasol, a real-estate enterprise that proposed an urban project in the early 2000s promising to "to 're-naturalize' Cova do Vapor, put an end to the illegal constructions, give the area back to tourism" (Queiroz 2012, 238). This project, which overlooked the community's actual social fabric, was blocked towards the end of the 2000s, as public entities declared the site a high-risk area due to its proximity to zones affected by encroaching tides.

The diversity of entities responsible for the territory has made the situation of the local community more complex. Although privately owned, Cova do Vapor is under public protection; integrated in the National Ecological Reserve and under the legal jurisdiction of the Portuguese Environment Agency, its northern area is also under the jurisdiction of the Institute for Ports and Maritime Transport and the Lisbon Port Authority. This complex legal framework prevented the settlement's conversion into a formal urban area by the municipality, therefore the construction of new houses is not permitted and residents may be subject to eviction at any time. Nevertheless, many own a construction license and pay municipal and public service taxes (figure 8).

The Informal School of Architecture (TISA) is a pedagogical architecture project based on the idea of schooling as a practice of exchange. TISA creates participatory 'plug-in' courses in which students work in specific socio-urban situations. TISA's pilot project, which took place in Cova do Vapor between May and July 2011, documented, with the participation of residents, the informal and organic architecture that is found there. The presence of the school in Cova, the debates they generated and the knowledge they produced, as well as the space created by them to facilitate communication between local residents and committed outsiders, all played an important role in deciding to locate Casa do Vapor at this site.

Casa do Vapor was produced and sustained under conditions of uncertainty and scarcity, with minimum financial support. The initial project proposal, with a necessarily rough outline due to its open and contextualized character, was presented to the Almada Municipal Council in December 2012. The Municipal Council guaranteed its endorsement after the Portuguese Environment Agency authorized a permit (justified by the interim character of the occupation) but refrained from supporting it financially. Exyzt and the Ensaios e Diálogos Association made efforts to acquire funding from private foundations and cultural events. In view of the collective cultural and social dynamics generated by the presence of *Casa do Vapor* in the neighborhood, the Municipal Council became more committed and eventually provided a small grant.

Casa do Vapor—collectively built within the framework of a public construction workshop with a flexible, multidisciplinary and international team—opened its doors between April and October 2013. A wide range of cultural events related to the social and urban environment were held there (figure 9) and the space embodied an alternative curatorial practice that was extended to all of the participating artists, researchers and residents. During those months, the house became a meeting point where those involved could exchange experiences and affect one another.

The building workshop, beyond just constructing a house, was also a collaborative practice aimed at enhancing a space of encounter for participants of the workshop and the residents that joined; "permanent inhabitants, temporary inhabitants, permanent visitors, temporary visitors", performing an alternative model of social engagement. Sofia Costa Pinto, an artist involved in the project, used these terms to describe possible modes of inhabiting the neighborhood. I consider them very appropriate for a critical reading of the notion of 'local community', which in my view consists always of a provisional, evolving and open entity, including different forms of relating to and inhabiting a place.

The Casa do Vapor kitchen functioned as an aggregating node within the process, allowing a great number of meetings around a plentiful table. A library project, created within the wooden structure, became a meeting point for local children. The library acquired a considerable collection during the six months of the project. More than 800 books, journals and audiovisual materials were collected through generous donations from individuals and institutions. A bicycle workshop, skateboard half-pipe, and daily artistic and pedagogical activities exploring the spatial and cultural dimensions of the site ensured continuous usage of the house.

Figure 9.
An evening at *Casa do Vapor*, http://constructlab.net/projects/casa-do-vapor/

This socio-cultural space unfolded continually, opened both to unexpected external contingencies and to discovered possibilities. The design of the house itself, constituting the spatial dimension of the project, materially reflected the permeability, openness, informality and negotiation that embodied the conditions of 'emergence' of the entire process (figure 10).

The house was taken down in October 2013, but resonances of the project persisted in the area. The *Vapor* Library relocated to the Neighborhood Association and a local community board was formed. The collection was also inscribed in the Municipal Libraries Network. For an informal neighborhood such as Cova do Vapor, the inscription of the library within the municipal network was a political gesture with considerable symbolic meaning. The Ensaios e Diálogos Association was invited to set up another library in Trafaria, a village near Cova do Vapor, which was inaugurated in October 2014.

The wood from Guimarães used to build *Casa do Vapor* was further recycled for use in various social projects in the municipality of Almada. Part of it was used to create furniture for the two new libraries. A significant quantity of the wood was used in the construction of the community kitchen at Terras da Costa (see below).

Casa do Vapor was a temporary project that was able to endure, creating dynamics now embedded in Cova do Vapor and intensifying the interlacing of diverse urban and social practices in this region. It was well received by local communities and established connections with regional authorities, setting up trans-local spatial networks.

III. *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen*: an Urban Commons

Terras da Costa is an informal neighborhood located about 3.5 kilometers south of Cova do Vapor, between the densely built-up seafront area of Costa da Caparica and the Fossil Cliff Protected Landscape (figure 11). Over the years, residents have constructed their own makeshift homes here, in the middle of agricultural fields, using metal sheets, pieces of wood, bricks, cement and whatever else was available. The neighborhood is a so-called 'shantytown.'[12]

Figure 10.
Casa do Vapor, http://constructlab.net/projects/casa-do-vapor/

With the independence of African countries formerly colonized by Portugal, in 1974 and 1975 a great number of Portuguese colonial settlers returned to Portugal alongside people indigenous to those former 'Portuguese overseas provinces'[13]. In the late 1970s Portugal saw its population grow by as much as half a million. The process led to huge population increases in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, and simultaneously gave rise to a large number of informal settlements. The Almada district was not an exception, informal neighborhoods were settled throughout the district, including in the area around the current neighborhood of Terras da Costa. Later on, in the 1990s, the Almada Municipal Council conducted operations to evict the residents there[14]. However, in the 2000s new waves of immigration from former Portuguese African colonies such as Cabo Verde and Angola led to the settling of a new population in Terras da Costa. Members of the Roma community[15] also settled in the neighborhood, which eventually became home to a multicultural community of about 500 people. The male population has generally been employed in construction, but at the time of writing was largely unemployed. The main occupation for women is domestic work. A considerable section of the community is undocumented, with no guaranteed right of legal residence in Portugal.[16] Limited access to citizenship and the consequent restrictions on entering the labor market constitute invisible expressions of post-colonial structural violence towards low-income immigrants that also prevents them from developing their potential capabilities within the current Portuguese political, institutional and economic framework.

There is no running water in the neighborhood and therefore also no sewage system. Surrounding farms do nevertheless have irrigation systems. Residents obtain water from a public fountain in Costa da Caparica, about one kilometer away from the neighborhood, carrying it in containers above their heads. As the streets are not paved, this path becomes treacherous during rainy periods. There is no legal access to electricity, only improvised illicit schemes. Interestingly, cable TV, a private service, can be legally subscribed to and paid for. This community is mostly invisible to the middle-class residents of Costa da Caparica, or, when visible, is largely faced with dissatisfaction and mistrust, stemming from racial prejudice, and perceived dangers of the proximity of such a "precarious" neighborhood to the more middle-class areas. This biased image of the neighborhood is an expression of the invisible cultural violence rooted in the endurance of colonial forms of organizing social relations and modes of representing cultural, racial, and ethnic difference[18].

The informal settlement is therefore a controversial space and the public entities involved have divergent attitudes towards it. The Ward Council of Costa da Caparica does not recognize the legitimacy of communities in unauthorized neighborhoods and has fiercely criticized the actions of the Almada Municipal Council.[19] In the words of the former Ward Councilor "take two or three machines there and demolish it! End of story." (Costa, Moreira 2013). The Almada Municipal Council agrees that the neighborhood should be demolished (and that the local community rehabilitated elsewhere) based on the legal framework that prohibits any construction on a site included in the National Agricultural and Ecological Reserves. However, acknowledging the impossibility of implementing this process swiftly, due to financial shortcomings and the legal impasse in which the local development plan finds itself, the Municipal Council recognizes the

legitimacy of the community living there for the time being. Without legal residence rights in Portugal the community at Terras da Costa have no way of being formally heard. A priority for the community is to have their rights recognized and to improve their living conditions.

Another entity involved in the debates around this site is the Urban Boundaries Research Project—a critical ethnographic movement concerned with emancipatory education politics—that worked with the community from 2010 to 2013 aiming to present alternatives for its social and urban consolidation and improve adult literacy. One of the outcomes of their presence was the constitution of the Neighborhood Association in May 2013. Within the framework of the Autonomous University of Lisbon's participation in the Urban Boundaries Project, a situated architectural laboratory took place in the neighborhood in June 2012. This laboratory, in which professional architects advised groups of students, allowed for the formulation of proposals concerning future alternatives for Terras da Costa. One of the groups, mentored by ateliermob, proposed a mediation process for engaging with all stakeholders by building a table around which everyone could sit. At the end of the laboratory the inhabitants asked ateliermob to continue the collaboration in order to solve their primary problem: lack of running water. In the words of a local resident: "The main issue here is water! We don't have water in our homes, we have to go there (pointing to Costa da Caparica). And this has to be told to the public so everyone sees how our neighbourhood is. We are immigrants but we need to have conditions in our neighbourhood" (ateliermob 2013).

Architects began work immediately, participating in local community assemblies in order to draw up a plan of action. The idea for a community kitchen was put forward by residents, accustomed to cooking and eating together. Cooking inside makeshift dwellings is dangerous—a fire can easily break out when cooking on an open flame indoors. The construction of a community kitchen represented not only a justification for installing running water in the neighborhood; it was also a way of ensuring safety from fires and built on a community custom of eating communally. The idea developed into a program comprising other common facilities proposed by residents: a laundry area, a barbecue, and a space to host Neighborhood Association meetings.

Figure 11.
Terras da Costa
© Warehouse

Figure 12.
Terras da Costa
© Inês Veiga

Ateliermob continued the mediation process of engaging key stakeholders, including local political power. The Almada Municipal Council, concerned with the improvement of community living conditions in the short term while acknowledging the impossibility of swiftly enacting a rehousing process, became committed to the community kitchen project. Its political will and support were substantial to developing a paralegal mode for enabling the project as well as to ensure the construction of the infrastructure necessary to get running water into the neighborhood. Nevertheless, it was necessary to acquire funding. Ateliermob's strategy was two-directional; gaining media visibility for the project while applying for competitions as well as grants from private foundations and cultural events. The Gulbenkian Foundation[20] established contact with ateliermob in the spring of 2013. In May 2014, after a long period of negotiation, the Foundation finally committed to financial support, which it provided two months later.

Meanwhile, Casa do Vapor had been set up nearby, and had invigorated participatory social and cultural dynamics beyond Cova do Vapor. Part of the wood from the disassembly of the house travelled to Terras da Costa along with a group of practitioners, including Projecto Warehouse, who then became co-producer of the *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen*. The new common space would be a self-made makeshift wooden construction designed with a modular structure enabling phased construction in pace with the securing of funds. The construction of the first unit, the kitchen, took place in March 2014.

A meeting between key stakeholders took place in the makeshift kitchen in May 2014, involving the municipality's Vice-Mayor, two councilors, and representatives of the Neighborhood Association and proved to be a decisive moment (figure 13). The Vice-Mayor guaranteed the construction of the infrastructure to bring running water into the neighborhood, an act supported by the Council's collective political decision–making. Raul Marques, a member of the Roma community and a representative of the Neighborhood Association, appreciated this guarantee: "Imagine this site in the winter, it's all mud. [Imagine] going [to fetch water] with two cans of 20 liters, that's 40 liters on your head. What you are giving to this community is life, it is a win" (Moutinho 2014).

With this guarantee, and Gulbenkian funding in hand, ateliermob and Projecto Warehouse began to plan the next construction phase, which occurred in August 2014 when water infrastructure was already in place. It was an intensive month-long process made possible with the generous and effective collaboration of an international group of hundreds of volunteers[21] and the active participation of residents. The presence of this heterogeneous team within the neighborhood altered its relational dynamics, not only by opening up a space of communication between residents and the multiplicity of committed European outsiders, but also by shifting the middle-class residents of Costa da Caparica's biased perceptions of the place. This transformation might be explained by enduring modes of identity representation specific to the contingent history of Portuguese colonialism. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1993), "Portuguese colonialism, featuring a semi-peripheral country, was also semi-peripheral itself. It was, in other words, a subaltern colonialism." Whereas Anglophone

colonial discourse was based on the polarity between the colonizer (Prospero) and the colonized (Caliban), Portuguese colonialism involved a more complex identity relationship—the Portuguese Prospero was not only a Calibanized Prospero; he was simply Caliban from the viewpoint of the North and Central European super-Prosperos. "The identity of the Portuguese colonizer is thus doubly double. It is constituted by the conjunction of two others: the colonized other, and the colonizer as himself a colonized other"[22] (Santos 1993). Thus, the alteration of Costa da Caparica inhabitants' tendentious representation of Terras da Costa community in face of the presence of these European outsiders in the neighbourhood might be explained by the subliminal persistence of these complex and uneven colonial games of identity representation that posit the Portuguese both as 'colonizer' and 'colonized other'.

Terras da Costa Community Kitchen was a tactical makeshift urban project designed to meet the local community's primary demand—running water for the precariously situated, informal neighborhood. In a context in which the Almada Municipal Council—because of the local development plan legal impasse and financial shortcomings—was incapable of addressing the socio-urban issues faced by the community, this makeshift urban project managed to concretely improve its living conditions in the immediate future, even if imperfectly. Although, its realization was not possible without the political will and support of the Municipal Council (figure 14). Durval Carvalho, from Cabo Verde and a member of the Neighborhood Association, hopefully said: "To see if we can get there [having access to urban infrastructure], through the communal kitchen, with the support of those who are around us now, because now we are no longer invisible" (Moutinho 2014).

The project reinforced community self-organization and action. Through ateliermob's mediation strategy a space for communication between the neighborhood community and regional authorities was opened. By way of collective construction processes the neighborhood's relational dynamics were enhanced and transformed, blurring boundaries and decreasing social stigma. The visibility that the neighborhood gained is instrumental to its survival—any action that might prejudice the community will now be scrutinized in the public sphere.[23]

Figure 13.
Meeting at *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen* © ateliermob

Figure 14.
Terras da Costa Community Kitchen © Inês Veiga

Conclusion

The "Building Together" participatory experience opened a relational space connecting artistic processes within the ASA Factory—stimulated by the Guimarães ECC—to memories and expectations of city dwellers concerning the factory's new life. *Casa do Vapor* created a space of exchange between practitioners, participants and local residents grounded in shared vocabularies of self-organization and self-construction, enabling new encounters and conviviality. *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen* was a tactical makeshift urban project in which the construction of a community kitchen led to fulfilling the main demand of a community—bringing running water into the informal neighborhood. Wood and committed practitioners travelled between all three sites, remaking socio-urban space.

These collaborative practices were effective in interlacing the possibilities and contingencies presented by specific places and temporalities, assembling different singularities and desires, generating relationships and discovering provisional common grounds. Nevertheless, each project encountered limitations. "Building Together" did not reach the point of critically assessing the reintegration of the ASA Factory as a cultural and business space within the city of Guimarães. Even though the social and cultural dynamics that emerged with the project at Cova do Vapor contributed to altering the public image of the neighborhood and to invigorating intersubjective exchange in the community, it didn't address the ambiguous legal situation of the site. Finally, after the construction of the Community Kitchen at Terras da Costa, internal conflicts among the local residents became visible, often concerning the common management of the space. A common space entails the negotiation of differences, and such a process was hampered by the range of problems faced by this particular community, problems that would need to be tackled over a longer period of time and with a clear focus on addressing planning, social and labor issues, compounded by the racial prejudice this community faces.[24] This prejudice develops into structural and symbolic violence as a concrete expression of the persistence of colonial modes of thinking; forms of violence that are almost unnoticed in the public sphere (they became naturalized) due to the perpetuation of the myth of racial tolerance among the Portuguese.[25]

Moreover, the position of these practices within the current Portuguese political economy is ambiguous. On the one hand, they perform critical engagement with socio-spatial issues, inventing alternative modes of social relationality around the collective construction of common spaces and their subsequent co-habitation. On the other, they are complicit with the current neoliberal framework that has integrated principles of insurgent creativity (for example, 'self-management' and 'DIY'), as well as aspirational goals such as sociability and liveability, into market-based creative concepts, stripping them of their political ethos.

"Building Together" at Curator's Lab was part of 2012 Guimarães ECC, a mega-event used as a strategy to enhance the city's brand and improve its global image. Casa do Vapor was managed under conditions of scarcity, only made possible through voluntary work. *Terras da Costa Community Kitchen* compensated for the limited social role of public institutions, namely the Municipal Council confronted with budget constraints, an effect of austerity measures associated with the current political economic crisis.

The aim of the present discussion, however, has been to look at socio-spatial practices that worked both under and counter to the neoliberal framework, to explore the modalities of 'being in common' produced within conditions of scarcity and tight budgets. These practices triggered both a perceptual and social alteration of each place's social and political potency, when opened up to collective use—even if imperfectly—as well as fueling collective imagination and agency over space.

Notes

[1] The 'sensible', according to Rancière, refers to what is capable of being apprehended by the senses. As the author argues in Dissensus: *On Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), the 'distribution of the sensible' consists of a "generally implicit law that defines the forms of partaking by first defining the modes of perception in which they are inscribed; it is always a certain sense of the sensible; the dividing-up of the world (du monde) and of people (du peuple)" that reveals "who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed" (36). To Rancière, 'dissensus' designates a political process that creates a fissure in the sensible order by confronting the established framework of perception, thought and action with the 'inadmissible', working thus to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception.

[2] Over the past three decades, the European Capitals of Culture initiative has grown into one of the most ambitious cultural projects in Europe. The initiative aims to internationally promote and brand selected cities, improve cultural institutions, mobilize local artistic communities and open up the cultural field to more diverse audiences. In recent years, the ECC initiative has encouraged participating cities to promote activities that resonate not only in the cultural field, but also in the social, educational, urban-planning and economic spheres. This direction — concerning a tighter integration of culture and long-term development — allowed the cities to articulate their participation in the project with the development of urban planning processes, e.g. the regeneration of derelict urban spaces, the creation of new infrastructure (ECC European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture 2015 and Castro 2012, 21-24). Nevertheless, this economic concern established in the logics that determined the programs of ECC's has threatened to overlap the cultural objectives that gave birth to it. The ECC designation has been seen as a powerful tool for promoting the tourism industry and the development of creative industries in the host cities, integrating neoliberal policies centered on the marketization of cities.

[3] In 2003, five architects based in Paris with a shared desire for building and living together founded Exyzt, an architecture collective that has slowly grown into an international transdisciplinary network. Exyzt not only design their projects but also build them, erecting temporary structures and mobile units that have a DIY aesthetic and are cheap and easy to construct. The collective usually works on empty urban sites or buildings, acquiring them temporarily with the permission of the owner. Their objective is to create social spaces programed in consultation with local inhabitants and specific user groups. Their working method and production of temporary reversible architecture is informed by theater and performance. The temporary nature of their projects ensures that no space is completely appropriated by one dominant user group. See http://www.exyzt.org/; http://constructlab.net/projects/construir-juntos-for-curatorslab-ecc2012/

[4] The Ensaios e Diálogos Association (Essays and Dialogues Association) was formed as part of the Casa do Vapor project. It consisted of a group of persons living at Cova do Vapor for the duration of six months and assuming responsibility to provide everyday support to the project. This cultural association is now engaged in a new situated artistic project in this territory south of Lisbon.

[5] See http://constructlab.net/projects/casa-do-vapor/

[6] ateliermob's partners, Andreia Salavessa and Tiago Mota Saraiva, argue that the current economic situation induced by the financial crisis does not necessarily mean the decrease of architectural needs. The problem is not the lack of work but the means by which to pay for the work of a qualified professional. A big part of ateliermob's work is now based on an approach that redefines the architect's role. They believe that architecture professionals should become organizers and managers of financial and funding processes, creating an essential link between public administrators, the financial systems and communities. According to Mota Saraiva, if construction processes had formerly been seen as a relationship between three parties—owner, designer(s), and builder—today, there emerges a fourth party, the funder. See http://www.ateliermob.com/

[7] http://cargocollective.com/projectowarehouse

[8] The expression 'entrepreneurial interurban competition' refers to the audacious ways in which cities brand and market themselves, competing for global investors, affluent residents and flows of tourists. For instance, Lisbon's central areas are currently being subjected to a significant process of gentrification connected to the tourism industry and foreign capital investment.

[9] The factory's 'coming occupants' are the artists, curators, researchers and other participants in the Curators' Lab. The transformation of the ASA Factory was an investment initiative promoted by private capital, with the aim of transforming the site into a key cultural space during the Guimarães ECC as well as beyond, when it would become a hybrid space for both cultural and business activities. However, at the end of the event the space wasn't able to maintain its cultural component and became a platform for small-businesses.

[10] The spatial design that configure d the Lab in each of the moments was generated from, and in conjunction with, the ideas of the artists engaged in the main collective residency; the editorial project was designed in each of the moments to test visual and textual essays derived from the experience of the Lab; and all of them were interconnected to the larger critical issues being discussed (Pinheiro 2013, 2-3).

[11] Cova do Vapor emerged in the 1920s as a fishing neighborhood composed of small wooden houses built on stilts. Vacation homes were constructed here in the 1930s. The area was severely affected by the encroaching tide during the 1940s, forcing the small settlement to retreat into the expanse of forest that bounds it in the South-east. In the second half of the 1970s, the

first stones were placed for the piers that helped tame the waves and allowed for the community to grow. In those years, the neighborhood experienced a period of expansion; new houses were built while former wooden houses were strengthened with masonry. The inhabitants also formed a Neighborhood Association and took to the task of creating infrastructure, such as sewage and rainwater drainage, an electrical grid, pavements, etc.; only water distribution had already been provided by the municipality at the beginning of the 1970s. The current problematic situation of traditional modes of fishing due to National and European regulations, together with the difficult access to labor market at Cova do Vapor, led new generations to leave this settlement. According to the 2011 census, Cova do Vapor, consisted of 225 buildings, most of them single-family houses with one or two floors. Nowadays this space is inhabited by only around 200 permanent residents.

[12] The alternative designation would be "slum", but, like Cachado (2008), I consider the term inaccurate here as it typically refers to deprived areas in cities (overcrowded and with a lack of infrastructure) and not to self-building in unauthorized areas, in the manner of shantytowns. The correspondent French term bidonville, is perhaps closer to the Portuguese situation and name—bairro de barracas.

[13] After 1945, Estado Novo (the right wing Portuguese dictatorship), confronted with international pressure that favored self-determination in colonial territories, attempted to legitimate the maintenance of the status quo in the Portuguese colonies. This legitimization demanded a doctrinal reformulation, initiated with the constitutional reform of 1951 that embedded, as sub-text, a simplified and nationalistic version of the thesis of lusotropicalism from the Brazilian Gilberto Freyre. Lusotropicalism, in the words of Castelo (2015), "proposes that the Portuguese have a special ability to adapt to the tropics, not by political or economic interests but due to an innate and creative empathy. The aptitude of the Portuguese to form relationships with tropical lands and peoples, and their intrinsic plasticity were supposedly the result of their own hybrid ethnic origin, their 'bi-continentality' and their extensive contact with the moors and the Jews in the Iberian Peninsula during the first centuries of nationhood, which was manifested primarily through miscegenation and cultural interpenetration". This doctrinal reformulation, which became the official discourse of Estado Novo to be used in propaganda and foreign politics, performatively converted a history of five centuries of colonization into five centuries of relationships between people from different ethnic origins and cultures; a colonial society into a multi-racial one; an imperial nation into a multi-continental one; the colonies into overseas provinces. Nevertheless, colonial practices persisted despite the doctrinal reformulation. With the beginning of the wars for liberation of Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, the colonial governments needed to develop a set of socio-political initiatives to gain the support of the colonized populations and reduce the impetus for independence movements. Among these measures was the assignation of Portuguese citizenship to all inhabitants in Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. With the end of the dictatorship and the independence of the former colonies, these men and women lost Portuguese nationality. The ones that had already come to Portugal were now undocumented immigrants. See Cláudia Castelo (2015 and 1999).

[14] In 1993 the Special Relocation Programme (PER) was set up to rehouse people living in precarious conditions; it focused on the municipalities of the metropolitan areas of Oporto and Lisbon. Guided by words such as eradication and full extinction PER followed a national programme to fight poverty started in 1991. Its aim was to act socially in order to integrate excluded communities 'devoted to criminality, prostitution and drug addiction'. This programme was based on a prejudgment of shantytown dwellers as a 'social scourge'. At the same time, it was intended as a manifesto for progress (after the Portuguese entry to the European Union in 1986 enormous areas of shantytowns at the city entrance could no longer be tolerated). See Cachado, 2008.

[15] See Maria Manuela Mendes and Olga Magano (eds.), Sociologia, Thematic Volume 2014 Ciganos na Península Ibérica e Brasil: estudos e políticas sociais, Oporto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2014

[16] See Pedro Campos Costa and Paulo Moreira. "On Another Coast", translated by Natalia Laczko. In Jornal dos Arquitectos 247, 88–99. 2013. Lisbon: Ordem dos Arquitectos; and Filipa Ramalhete and Sérgio Silva. "Intervenções Arquitetónicas em Espaços Informais: Três Exemplos no Concelho de Almada". In Estudo Prévio 5. 2014. http://www.estudoprevio.net/artigos/43/filipa-ramalhete-sergio-silva-.-intervencoes-arquitectonicas-em-espacos-informais

[17] This Plan—framed by the Polis Costa da Caparica Project and joint-funded by the Portuguese Government (60%) and the AMC (40%)—ceased to be in effect in 2014. Nevertheless the Almada Municipal Council maintains the negotiations around the aforementioned PP4 aimed at its future implementation.

[18] After the Estado Novo attempt to instill in the Portuguese the idea of the benignity of Portuguese colonization (in the 1950s and specially with the beginning of the war in Angola in 1961) a simplified version of lusotropicalism took over the national imagination contributing to consolidate the self-image in which the Portuguese see themselves as a tolerant, brotherly, pliable people with an ecumenical vocation (see footnote 13). This self-imagination of a lusotropical community survived its author as well as the demise of the Portuguese empire, often being employed as a rhetorical device from an acritical and fixed perspective; in the past to legitimate Portuguese colonialism; today to perpetuate the myth of racial tolerance among the Portuguese. This might explain the small number of debates and discussions concerning racial inequality taking place in the public sphere; the issue is discursively silenced.

[19] These two public entities maintain a tense relationship due to the divergent political positions they take in their approaches towards informal settlements such as Terras da Costa.

[20] Established in 1956, the Gulbenkian aims to mobilize critical reflection in the fields of: the arts, science, education, health and human development, and global affairs.

[21] In recent years there has emerged around Europe a movement among students and young architects towards direct engagement in collective construction processes related to makeshift architecture within the framework of relational and socio-spatial practices. Given the visibility that the project gained in networks connected to these practices, an international group of volunteers subsequently came to the site and joined the building process.

[22] Nevertheless, the fact that the colonizer was colonized in turn does not mean that he was better or more closely identified with those he colonized. See Boaventura de Sousa Santos. "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity". In Luso-Brazilian Review 39:2, 9-43. 2002. doi: 10.3368/lbr.39.2.9

[23] An excellent photo essay on the project by Portuguese architectural photographers Fernando Guerra and Sérgio Guerra is available at http://fernandoguerra.com/terrasdacosta/#2

[24] At the time of writing this article, ateliermob's collaboration with the Terras da Costa Community continues and is focused on improved housing.

[25] See footnote 18.

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Forms in Images

'Space to Wrestle With:' Social Practice in Gurgaon

By Alex White-Mazzarella, Namrata Mehta and Soaib Grewal

As part of a grant from the Khoj International Artist's Association, in the summer of 2013, we, Alex, Namrata and Soaib*, three artist-practitioners, facilitated a community art project in Tigra, an 'urban village' of the city of Gurgaon, in India. Over a month and a half, we worked with village residents to collectively reimagine the nature and use of public space here. This photo essay presents the participatory tools and processes that led to creating an akhada, a traditional wrestling ground, in Tigra.

*Alex White Mazzarella, Namrata Mehta and Soaib Grewal work as an interdisciplinary team with a range of experience in urban design, research and social art practices. Namrata and Soaib have consistently engaged with everyday Gurgaon life in their practice, while Alex brings to this collaboration his experience in community-based art practices in India and other parts of the world. Their work in Tigra was supported by the Khoj International Artists' Association's, "Negotiating Routes: Ecologies of the Byways" project. A publication based on this work was released earlier this year and is available at https://gurgaonecology.wordpress.com/.

Image 1: A tourist bus parked against a compound wall featuring fake foliage. The wall encloses one of Gurgaon's many golf courses. In the distance is the familiar sight of a highrise apartment complex. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Located 32 kilometers west of New Delhi, Gurgaon is the biggest hub of outsourcing companies in the world. In just 25 years, Gurgaon has grown from a cluster of villages to a 'Millennium City' of over 1.5 million people. This period of accelerated growth was driven by the private real estate sector, with landowners selling vast tracts of their agricultural land to builders of commercial and residential complexes. Today, the landscape of Gurgaon is a complex mix of state-of-the-art business parks, shopping malls, golf courses and gated residential complexes, with several old village settlements in the midst of these new constructions.

Image 2: A group of young boys play cricket on a road that functions as common urban space. Credit: White-Mazzarella/ Mehta/Grewal 2013

The Gurgaon model of development is being replicated in new urban spaces across the country. However, the Millennium City's viability, beyond its short-term boom, is already being questioned--specifically its environmental, social and cultural sustainability. While Gurgaon attracts white-collar workers from across the country to the many Fortune 500 companies based here, the city also has a large share of rural migrant labor, employed in lower-level, service sector jobs. Friction between these increasingly disparate socio-economic classes is becoming more evident, and is perpetuated in the exclusivity of urban space and privatisation of land. Common space is needed to help create and establish a collective social life and include diverse Gurgaon residents as active citizens.

Image 3: New developments inch closer and closer to the outer limits of Gurgaon's urban villages. Credit: White-Mazzarella/ Mehta/Grewal 2013

In Tigra, agricultural land belonging to its residents was acquired by the government or sold to private developers nearly twenty years ago. Even though Tigra is today an 'urban village,' many families continue to maintain rural livelihoods, farming on land, now several miles away, or herding cattle for their milk. Tigra's population also consist of rural migrants from across North India, who work in Gurgaon's high rises, and rent tenement rooms from Tigra's landowning residents.

Image 4: A community meeting space is demarcated on the lake bed. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 5: Tigra residents gather together on the lake-bed to discuss its possible futures. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Our activities focused on Tigra's Baba Ram Mohan Johar (lake). Believed to be sacred for its water, the seasonal lake is located at the center of the village. The lake has dried up as a result of the deterioration of monsoon rainwater channels, and the subsequent drop in groundwater levels in the surrounding areas. Some areas of the lake-bed have been reclaimed as land for the construction of a community center, (which as of the year 2013, had been under construction for three years, and had yet to be used.) The incumbent Ward Councillor, of the newly formed local governmental body, Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG), proposes to build a boundary wall along the circumference of the lake to secure it from further encroachment. Having just barely defeated Tigra's candidate by three votes, her proposal has a bleak future. It is especially opposed by a group of three village elders, self-appointed as the Village Development Committee.

Our discussions with residents revealed various opinions for future uses of the lake bed: some believed what was left of the lake should be used as grazing land for cattle; others held that it should be converted into a park for children; some imagined an old-age home on it; others believed it should be restored as a seasonal water source; and still others wanted to see it as a parking lot for the community center. Villagers also offered stories about the lake's history going back seven generations. They discussed its sacredness to believers and its use as a playground by children. One woman mentioned how the lake was perhaps punishing the village for its degradation: *"The lake, the house of God, was beautiful, but now it is doomed. Not because of the water but because of this wayward world and its bad deeds. The village cannot find happiness."*

Image 6: Residents from Tigra village watch a film in which other residents narrate their recollections of the Baba Ram Mohan Johar. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 7: The words *zameendari* and *zimmedari*, translate roughly to 'land ownership' and 'responsibility' in Hindi, and invite an open-ended exploration of civic values in Gurgaon. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

On Sunday, May 5th, 2013, we invited village residents to the community center for a dialogue about public space. The da- long activities included a video screening (a film of Tigra residents' recollections of the Baba Ram Mohan *Johar*), an installation, a viewing of public art, and a dialogue on imagining the future of the lake. Invitations were printed out and hand-delivered, door-to-door, the day before.

A provocative question about land ownership—framed as a play on words—was painted on large pieces of paper and placed in the lake bed for Tigra residents' interpretation. The words *'zameendari'* and *'zimmedari,'* translate roughly to 'land ownership' and 'responsibility' in Hindi, and present an open-ended exploration of civic values in Gurgaon--a city that is increasingly facing water, land management and ecological challenges. A series of land artworks also occupied the lake bed: the figure of a cow, to indicate the lake's role as a grazing ground and bathing area for dairy cows and buffalos (owned by 60 per cent of the village); the ancient and auspicious Hindu symbol of the *swastika*–representing the lake as a holy place for pilgrimage; and a rain cloud– representative of the reservoir's role in collecting monsoon rainwater.

Image 8: A village elder pours water into a pipe that channels water from the rooftop into the lake. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 9: Deepak, a young wrestler and resident of Tigra, interacts with us through the day. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

The roof of the community center served as a viewing gallery for the land art and also as a space for continuing dialogue on the revitalization of the lake. A groundwater collection installation was created to explore how water from rooftops across the village could be channeled into the lake. While the objective of these dialogues was to envision how best to secure the lake's future and prevent encroachment, the actual conversation revolved around politics, power structures, and class divisions that govern the village. Despite having designated a time slot during the day exclusively for women to join in the dialogue, none participated. Also conspicuously absent from the day's events were the three village elders from the Village Development Committee.

Image 10: A forum for discussion followed the screening of the film. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 11: A photograph of Lord Hanuman at the Tigra Akhada, the patron deity of wrestlers and athletes, is propped up against a mound of earth. The deity's blessings are sought just before training. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

In the evening, a second projection of the film featuring resident recollections of the Baba Ram Mohan *Johar* (lake) took place at a centrally-located street corner, to which the Village Development Committee were especially invited (they attended the event). An open forum to discuss and critique the various views that were presented in the film followed the screening. During this conversation, Deepak and a group of young adults presented an idea they had been discussing for the community space: to build an *akhada*, or a traditional wrestling arena. Haryana, the state in which Tigra village is located, is known for its tradition of *pehlwani* (wrestling). The young men decided to self-organize to bring an *akhada* to the community.

An *akhada* is a gymnasium or wrestling arena, central to the social fabric of martial communities in northern India. While the form is physical, it also embodies a deeper spiritual aspect. Each day, a mound of earth is dampened with water and dug up to displace the tough topsoil. This work is performed religiously with fixed rites, one elder passing the shovel to the next. The space embodies collectivism in usage and custodianship, and both the space and activity are inclusive; within the wrestling circle all are equal and the practitioners don't observe caste distinctions. The camaraderie here is palpable and helps in promoting the neutrality of the space in an otherwise politically divided environment. According to Deepak, *"A truckload of dirt, a bag of almonds and an image of Lord Hanuman is all you need to build an akhada."*

Image 12: A Tigra resident and wrestler works to loosen the topsoil in the akhada. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 13: A crowd of participants keenly watches wrestlers of different age groups practicing. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Tigra's *akhada* was opened with only the basic infrastructure required to begin a wrestling practice. It will be formalized over time, with the community contributing to its development. The *akhada* is a structure that requires very little initial financial investment, and allows for the easy testing of new design ideas. In this incremental approach, each new design element is added out of necessity. Here, users of the space are its designers, and must negotiate their different visions. Since the *akhada* is made by the people who use it, community investment is central to its sustenance. The sense of collective ownership and work in the *akhada* builds intimacy between people and the space.

At it's core, the *akhada* is a form of community-driven urban design and planning, Although *pehlwani* (wrestling), and other similar sports, such as boxing, have been traditionally male dominated sports, there is a strong and growing space for women to participate and excel in them. The village of Bhiwani, also in Haryana, is for example a popular training ground for Haryanvi women boxers, and many families from villages across the state send their daughters to Bhiwani to train competitively.

Image 14: A young girl, traditionally excluded from entry into the akhada, stands on a rooftop for a view of a wrestling match. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

Image 15: Young boys run laps while training in the akhada. Credit: White-Mazzarella/Mehta/Grewal 2013

 We came in to Tigra, intent on questioning existing power structures that limit imagination and activation of public space here--age, caste, landownership and gender. The result of our work was that a group of Tigra's young men organized to build the temporary *akhada*. The *akhada* is a space that is familiarly associated with inclusivity, though perhaps limited, in this case, to caste identities and land ownership, not gender. Given that the *akhada* was built in the public space of the community center, a sphere of Tigra village life that observably excludes women, and also that our dialogues were largely with men, both young and old, this outcome isn't surprising. What emerged was an understanding that any instance of community art or social practice, in this case, the *akhada*, is also a wrestling space for the articulation of existent and potential or emergent community relations.

Curating Publics

Windows on an Urban Village:
Participation and Antagonism in Shaina Anand's 'KhirkeeYaan'

Rattanamol Singh Johal

Social space is produced and structured by conflicts. With this recognition, a democratic spatial politics begins.[1]

In January 2014, nearly a month after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won a significant number of seats in the Delhi Assembly Elections and was invited to form a minority government, its Law Minister Somnath Bharti attempted an unauthorized raid of a private house in Khirkee Extension.[2] The densely packed neighborhood, itself a spillover from Khirkee village, one of Delhi's numerous "urban villages," has offered affordable housing and an easily accessible location to lower middle class and migrant labor populations arriving in Delhi from various parts of the country (and recently, from around the third world), struggling to make ends meet in an increasingly expensive and inflation ridden, space-deprived capital.[3] The target of this particular (attempted) raid were immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Uganda, who were believed by the Minister and his accomplices to be running a drug and prostitution racket from their premises. Bharti claimed to be acting upon a series of complaints made by neighbors and residents, though he neglected to obtain an official search warrant, relying instead on the presumption of authority accrued to him from the newly won political position and bolstered by the coercive agency of the television cameras that accompanied him. Unfortunately for Bharti, himself a lawyer and activist, the local policemen whom he had hoped to co-opt in carrying out the raid, refused to participate in the absence of a warrant. Unable to enter the premises, the mob sought out four African women – two Ugandan and two Nigerian – in the street and forced them to provide urine samples for drug testing. All the samples collected illegally tested negative for the presence of illicit substances, while the targeted women alleged molestation and a blatant abuse of their rights.

This incident, an exemplar of the persistent tensions among diverse communities squeezed together in densely-packed neighborhoods across Delhi, provides one lens through which to view the contemporary mega-city, with all its urgencies and unevenness of population growth, infrastructure development, migration and assimilation. The events of January 2014, the manifestation of a bigoted politician's personal prejudices, were certainly not an isolated occurrence. Rather, they emerge from an underlying web of complex relationships between and among subjects claiming various religious affiliations, caste positions, geo-political provenance, socio-economic class, and longevities of local residence – all situated in extreme physical proximity. Set within this milieu, Shaina Anand's 2006 participatory art project *KhirkeeYaan* offers important insights into the conflictual "production" of urban space, foregrounding the problematics of community formation, affect, exchange, and antagonism. The project's multi-faceted, episodic nature aimed at the possibility of forging linkages and conversation between strangers across diverse groups living and working in such close quarters.[4] All this unfolds under the specter of the State, which in Delhi makes its presence felt through the physical and immaterial apparatuses of the bureaucracy and law enforcement.

Alongside its traditional associations with centralized state power, institutional clout, and monumental architecture, Delhi has in the past two decades emerged as a site for vibrant research-driven, community-based art practices emerging from places like Khoj International Artists' Association, which began as an artist residency space, and Sarai, a think-tank and urban laboratory of sorts initiated by the Raqs Media Collective with key collaborators at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). The members of Raqs – Shuddhabrata Sengupta, Jeebesh Bagchi and Monica Narula – wax poetic on Delhi's urbanscape and the role of the artist-thinker-researcher-instigator-catalyst figure within this ecology.

> Delhi is overwhelmingly a city of migrants. In this giant mixer-grinder of dreams, hallucinations and nightmares, the artist finds herself a natural ingredient, bringing to the city's obsession with speculation in real and unreal estates, the spice of sightings of tangential territories in the imagination. The artist is the migrant to Delhi who never stops migrating. She remains afloat and adrift, like the suspended particulate matter in Delhi's air, thickening it, infecting it, infusing it with the buoyancy of many kinds of desire. Meanwhile, the city continues to make room for drifters, shape-shifters and other adventurers.[5]

In the same feature on Delhi's art scene, published in a summer 2012 issue of Frieze Magazine, the Raqs Media Artist Collective recognizes the anomalous space of the urban village, falling outside the formal codes of municipal planning, as a vital incubator for various kinds of art and cultural initiatives. From non-profit spaces like Khoj to independent design studios and an entire commercial gallery district in Lado Sarai, spaces are produced, appropriated, repurposed, reinvented, and dismantled to accommodate what the city's established institutions and infrastructures do not provide. In this gambit, the diverse communities that inhabit these neighborhoods must confront their new and changing neighbors, a process that is ever susceptible to reproducing hierarchies and power relations far more seamlessly than achieving the abstract ideal of cross-community mingling and respectful interaction. Although Raqs' gloss evades any mention of these inevitable tensions, a project like *KhirkeeYaan* repeatedly reinforces the inherent complexity of these relationships, irreducible to binaries of any kind.[6]

Set within a dense urban village and its surroundings, the contiguous neighborhoods of Khirkee, Khirkee Extension, and Hauz Rani in South Delhi (collectively referred to as Khirkee), *KhirkeeYaan* made use of technologies commonly deployed for surveillance (CCTV cameras, television screens, cables, microphones etc.) to connect different sites within the urban conglomeration. To produce each of the seven episodes that constitute the work, four separate locations were networked, with live images and audio transmitted between them.

The interfaces were activated by local residents present or placed at each site, prompting interactions between the diverse, disconnected and often alienated co-habitants of Khirkee, itself an anomaly within the urban landscape. The project's title, *KhirkeeYaan*, both a composite of *khirkee* (window) and *yaan* (vehicle), as well as the plural for window, evokes the possibility of contact, communication and exchange across barriers. By creating a platform for dialogue, often prompted by a prescribed theme (singing competition, grievances about the neighborhood/city, doctor's advice etc.) and occasionally intervened in by planted "actors" and the artist herself, the project allowed for a sharing of migrant experiences and often laid bare the conditions of unevenness and inequality that permeate the urban core. The "spontaneous" interactions varied widely in tenor and outcome, at times engendering bonds of empathy and trust while also creating situations of confrontation and conflict. This essay offers an account of three episodes from the series, discussing them in light of recent critiques of socially engaged, community participation-based art practices as well as in a lineage of critical theory that engages with urban experiences of potential and hope, exploitation and empowerment.

As a filmmaking project, *KhirkeeYaan* dispensed of conventional and consistent directorial and technical mediation, relying instead on a willful tweaking of the surveillance apparatus to serve an altogether different purpose. Anand's project seems to deploy the well-known Situationst strategy of *détournement* – an appropriation or redirection of existing apparatuses towards subversive ends. Using an open-circuit television system, a cheaper and more disperse alternative to the CCTV surveillance that pervades most cities, Anand explores its potential for "local area network communication, micro-media generation and feedback..."[7] The deployment of an apparatus used for surveillance towards two-way communication and community use was enabled by a range of low-cost equipment – television screens (either already existing in the chosen locations or put there by the artist), microphones, low resolution surveillance cameras, cables of various kinds, a quad processor, audio mixer, radio frequency (RF) modulator and splitter, among other odds and ends. All interactions were recorded, now existing as seven episodes that have since been exhibited at galleries and festivals around the world. The artist and her team engaged in conversations with communities and individuals across the village to source consent, obtain assistance in setting up equipment (including running cables across village streets, from one site to another), and ultimately recruiting participants for the interactions to be realized. The entire project was hosted and supported by the aforementioned Khoj International Artists' Association, a non-profit contemporary art centre that has been located in Khirkee Extension since 2002 and has a history of engagements with local communities, both through resident artists' projects as well as their own community art initiatives.[8] The Khoj team played a crucial role in facilitating the artist in securing consent and installing the communication devices in both public (shops, streets) and private, otherwise inaccessible, spaces (homes, workshop interiors).

Art historian and critic Claire Bishop grapples with the notion of (participatory) art held up to the task of social amelioration in her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*.[9] Especially acute in the United Kingdom under New Labour, where the rhetoric of participation was called upon to draw into the sphere of consumer society those who had been excluded, Bishop echoes leftist critiques of New Labour cultural policy that

sought to render inequality "cosmetic rather than structural."[10] Other significant problems worked through in Bishop's book are the criteria under which such work can be discussed and evaluated as art. Debunking binaries with clearly privileged terms (in the context of participatory art) such as collaborative vs. single authorship, process vs. finished product, deskilled production vs. artistic mastery, Bishop begins the important work of building critical discourse around this genre of work without resorting to tropes and platitudes about its aspirations and achievements. Critiquing another significant theorist of participatory and dialogical practices, Grant Kester, Bishop writes, "Kester's emphasis on compassionate identification with the other is typical of the discourse around participatory art, in which an ethics of interpersonal interaction comes to prevail over a politics of social justice."[11] Although, for the purposes of this study, I largely sidestep specific discussions of the work's aesthetic qualities and artistic merit, they nevertheless undergird some of my provisional conclusions regarding the project's unsettling effects within the social space it mines.

It is within this framework of an actively lived, socially produced notion of space that Shaina Anand's project *KhirkeeYaan* intervenes, interfacing disparate spaces within a small geographical area. The social actors who produce this space (which itself functions analogous to other economic goods) – residents occupying the spectrum of caste and class positions, business owners, workers, guests, neighbors, strangers and interlopers – are acted upon by the possibilities and limitations it imposes on them as much as their actions, values, desire and demands shape the space. Henri Lefebvre, the philosopher par excellence of the quotidian, writes in the final chapter of his landmark volume *The Production of Space*,

> In analyzing the social relationship, it is impossible simply to dub it a *form*, for the form as such is empty, and must have a content in order to exist. Nor can it be treated as a *function*, which needs objects if it is to operate. Even a *structure*, whose task it is to organize elementary units within a whole, necessarily calls for both the whole and the component units in question.[12]

Informed by his experience of May 1968 in and around Paris, Lefebvre recognized the complexity of grasping and describing the changing configuration of the social as undergirding the production of space within an increasingly urbanizing world. Space could, thus, no longer be studied or abstracted as a kind of geometrical/mathematical absolute, warranting instead an examination of the specific conditions and relations (of production) between actors that contribute to its articulation. Under such conditions, Lefebvre writes, "space 'is' whole and broken, global and fractured, at one and the same time. Just as it is at once conceived, perceived, and directly lived."[13]

One could attempt, within the specific context of Khirkee, to untangle the Lefebvrian concepts of "abstract" and "absolute" space, where the former connotes a kind of top-down domination and implementation (echoing modernist principles) while the latter is associated with organicism and appropriation (by resistance movements and activists). Inhabited since the twelfth century, the medieval village of Khirkee and its surroundings underwent significant changes between

the 1960s and 1980s as the largely middle and upper middle class neighborhoods of South Delhi, guided by the planning policies and initiatives of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), began to expand to the land immediately surrounding the village core.[14] This core, colloquially referred to as the *lal dora* or "red thread" for the manner in which it is marked on the Delhi Master Plan, is the village area designated for habitation and falls under the administration of the village Panchayat or local governing body (following the predominant model for rural administration around the country). The land surrounding the *lal dora*, originally a combination of farmland and cattle grazing commons, was not authorized for any form of construction or development. However, as traditional agricultural and cattle rearing activities were largely abandoned within an increasingly urban context, this land became a grey zone for speculation and unauthorized building by developers and property brokers who made unofficial deals with its owners and occupiers. There has been an ongoing struggle between these groups and the city government, marked by a spate of demolitions and sealings in some areas while others have remained unchecked, often owing to the nexus between bureaucrats, local politicians and the land mafia.[15] In light of the operation of such forces, it is perhaps less effective to set up simple binaries between those who dictate the striation and organization of space and those who use it in a subversive or self-serving manner. However, it is undeniable that social space, in Lefebvre's own words,

> [C]ontains potentialities – of works and of reappropriation – existing to begin with in the artistic sphere but responding above all to the demands of a body 'transported' outside itself in space, a body which by putting up resistance inaugurates the project of a different space (either the space of a counter-culture, or a counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing real space).[16]

Drawing on a similar idea of potentiality and operating within the "artistic sphere," Anand engages in an act of reconfiguration towards creating a counter-space in which those formerly disconnected, distanced or alienated by the dominant forces of spatial production are enabled to resist their alienation and establish channels of communication across spatial boundaries. However, it becomes evident fairly soon that this "initially utopian alternative" is in fact equally the site for disjuncture, communication lapses, slippages, misunderstandings, and guarded sharing. As demonstrated later in the essay, the artist's role as catalyst and mediator compels her to intervene in such situations, specifically when interactions turn vitriolic and minority communities (often characterized by geographical origin or religious affiliation rather than numbers) are vilified by local hegemonic formations.

Within the ethos of collaboration based participatory art practices, the artist often acts as the supplier of a counter-apparatus, working closely with actors in the community to enable the production of an alternative or counter cultural space. Anand's first point of contact in Khirkee was a local electronics shop, where her conversation with its owner is telling:

> We spoke to Imran, the young owner of City Electricals, telling him about the project. "It's called Khirkeeyaan" (window vehicle). "Through this device we hope to allow people to talk to each other and generate media that belongs to this street."

"Oh, an *aina*", said Imran, a mirror. "Exactly," I said excited. "But what's the point of it?" "The same point as going for a movie, watching TV or reading a book", I said. "You mean, entertainment, information, time pass… then it's *samaaj kaam* (society work) you are doing after all! It's for the people! Sure, you can use our shop."[17]

The shopkeeper's initial response to the idea of the project as being a form of social work is significant, especially considering the discourse within which much participatory art has been framed in recent years. Grant Kester, in his introduction to the 2011 publication The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context, writes:

> …[W]e might view the recent proliferation of collaborative practices as part of a cyclical paradigm shift *within* the field of art, even as the nature of this shift involves an increasing permeability *between* "art" and other zones of symbolic production (urbanism, environmental activism, social work, etc.)…[T]here are really two decisive shifts at work. First, there is growing interest in collaborative or collective approaches in contemporary art. And second…there is a movement toward participatory, process-based experience and away from a "textual" mode of production in which the artist fashions an object or event that is subsequently presented to the viewer.[18]

Further elaborating the category of "dialogical" art practices, which he first developed nearly a decade ago in the book *Conversation Pieces*, Kester observes how this form has grown to encompass new media and now runs the gamut of art world contexts, from international biennials and institutional commissions to small, community and neighborhood based initiatives.[19] *KhirkeeYaan* can certainly be regarded within this framework, unsettling as it does all three philosophical categories identified by Kester as inflected by this "paradigm shift" – ontological (what is art?), epistemological (what kind of knowledge does it generate?) and hermeneutic (what methodologies are required to understand/interpret the work?).[20]

In order to consider *KhireeYaan* critically, both as an artwork and an intervention into a specific kind of Delhi neighborhood (the urban village) that sought to record its attendant complexities, potentialities, tensions and contradictions, a selection of three (of seven) episodes are discussed here. These three episodes, *KhirkeeYaan #3: Mahasangram, KhirkeeYaan #7: Mahasangram Reloaded* and *KhirkeeYaan #4: Char Karkhana*, offer a sampling of Khirkee's populations (shopkeepers/small business owners, daily wage laborers, cultural producers etc) and spaces – both public (the lane and shops in episodes 3 and 7) and private (inside small manufacturing units in episode 4). The television screen at each location appeared divided into four quadrants, which displayed live feeds from each of the four recording sites. As such, participants (and onlookers) at every location were witness to their counterparts at the other three sites as well as to themselves. In addition to the artist's extensive annotations on the project website, all seven episodes – recorded in the same format as that in which they appeared on the screens – are openly accessible online through *Pad.ma*.[21] These sources provide valuable documentation of the interactions that transpired, both in the process of negotiating the project's realization with local actors as well as during the episodes' filming. [22]

KhirkeeYaan #3: Mahasangram was staged at four different shops in the lane where Khoj is located. The lane is in many ways a microcosm of the larger neighborhood, with most village constituencies represented in some form. It begins with a Sai Baba Temple, transitions into property owned by upper caste Hindu landlords and rented by daily-wage laborers, continues through small businesses offering services (teashop, barbershop etc.) and then Khoj (itself a significant architectural presence), following which the gradual transition into Hauz Rani, with its majority Muslim residents and a different address scheme (the S- building numbers turn to E-), commences. Anand's writing about the episode reveals the first traces of tension between her vision for the project and her dealings with a local, upper caste Hindu boy and occasional Khoj collaborator who was enlisted to assist her. Much like the episode itself, Anand's report about her somewhat contentious interaction with the intern reveals the centrality of caste that feeds the politics of space and territorial control within the village.

> He had come to pick me up from the airport, a week ago and was to work with us on this project, "about the Khirkee community". He lived in the lane and is the only local youth who hangs out in the evenings at Khoj and even attends events. His family owns a lot of the land around Khirkee Extension. and even flats in other places in Delhi. I was told that he was a 'techie' and was to intern with me. Our working relationship was cut short very soon, as it appeared that he hated work of any kind, having never done any in his life, as he said he lived off the rent they made. To kill time he'd asked his father to open a little general store for him, but tells us that he soon realized manning a storefront was a lot of work. His shop, now a [public phone] booth, in the Khoj lane, was never open. Moreover, his refusal to come with me on my first walk in Khirkee, (because I was heading right, in the direction of Hauzrani and not left in the direction of Khirkee Village.), revealed too many problems and biases, none of which belonged to the project.[23]

The episode was filmed at a late hour, kicking off with a fair share of tomfoolery and inappropriate jokes between the all-male group of shop owners and their customers (some in a visibly inebriated state). Any attempt at a serious conversation about the problems of the village, the precarity of its population (the plight of migrants from Bihar came up), Hindu-Muslim relations, the sealing of shops by the Municipal Corporation (for being unauthorized operations), was obstructed by an extreme rigidity of positions, which quickly turned into an exercise in transferring blame and an exchange involving a string of polarizing statements around caste, class, religion and places of origin. About thirty-seven minutes in, a slightly slurring man appeared, demanding to know what Khoj is and does. Someone offered, "Advertising studio!" Aastha Chauhan, an artist and then coordinator of community programs at Khoj, appeared in one of the windows to offer a quick explanation. The hostilities continued and almost an hour in, an exasperated Anand intervened.

> Listen! Listen! When I am looking at these four screens, I am an outsider, I am from Bombay. I am in these lanes, in Khoj since the past 8 days. I have sharp eyes, I observe a lot. Looking at these four screens I am able to see the mentality of people very much.

One of the things is that we don't listen to each other. This one is saying something, that one is saying something and you all are shouting amongst each other. That means that for each one his opinion is important, what someone else is saying, you don't bother to listen. Is it true or not?[24]

Some attempt was made to bring order and civility to the conversation, repeatedly disrupted by Raju Bhai aka Baby Uncle, the owner of Baby's Corner Store where one of the media stations was installed. Constantly undermining efforts to engage in a sustained exchange on any issue, he mocked and dismissed other voices with a cheeky confidence that emerged from a position of privilege (being a high caste Hindu and property owner in the village). The conflicts and disjointed fragments of conversation that span the length of this episode offer some of the most pertinent insights into Khirkee's ground realities and related challenges (for the artist and other actors) in creating a platform for cross-community exchange. This episode's fallout, underscored by the artist's unplanned intervention with its distinctly disciplinary tone, altered the larger project plan by creating a need to restage the interaction on different terms for all involved.

In the book, *The Present in Delhi's Pasts*, historian Sunil Kumar outlines the tensions that were created between the poor, predominantly Muslim residents of Hauz Rani and those of the neighboring upper middle class neighborhood, Saket, owing to the DDA's construction, in the early 1990s, of a Sports Complex that catered almost exclusively to the latter constituency. The construction project was accompanied by a conscious disruption to pedestrian flows between the village and the modern housing enclave, with the result that each community became increasingly territorial and suspicious of the other's actual or perceived encroachment.[25] Here, difference needs to be understood outside the predominant (Western) model of liberal nationalism, wherein local antagonisms are elided and transcended by national coherence – "a neutral shared space."[26] The situation in Hauz Rani/Khirkee seems to demand an alternate paradigm – that of "the neighbor, and neighborliness" – sketched out by Ajay Skaria as a culturally specific and nuanced translation of Gandhian *ahimsa* (literally understood as "non-violence").[27] Skaria argues that Gandhi critiques liberal modernity through the notion of "neighborly nationalism" where,

> [n]eighbors shared nothing less (or more) than the kinship of all life; beyond this, the neighbor was marked by an absolute difference that could not be overcome by shared history or culture. In the face of such absolute difference, relations were created through *tapasya*, or "suffering." The *tapasya* of neighborliness differed depending on the kind of absolute difference being addressed: the equal was met with *mitrata* ("friendship"), the subordinate with *seva* ("service"), and the superior with *satyagraha* ("civil disobedience").

The complex social hierarchies and intertwinedness of neighborly relations in Khirkee exemplify the polyvalence of *tapasya* (forms and degrees of tolerance, in my understanding) as mediating between the migrant laborer and the original inhabitant, the petty bourgeois and the lumpen proletariat, the Dalit, the Muslim and the high-caste Hindu, the white, whiter, brown, browner and black.

As indicated earlier, the idea for the final episode – KhirkeeYaan #7: Mahasangram Reloaded – was sparked by the experience of filming #3, specifically the caste and regional tensions that emerged. Anand was particularly disturbed by the manner in which the former episode replicated existing social hierarchies, allowing the privileged participant(s) to dominate the conversation, hurl insults, needle and provoke, all while silencing, frustrating or exhausting the other(s). For this redux, the artist returned to the format of picking four establishments in the Khoj lane (though different locations were chosen except Baby's Corner Store where the most egregious offender had appeared) but planted a foil. A National School of Drama actor, Tanmoy Sarkar, was hired to show up at one of the tea shops, posing as a migrant laborer from Bengal looking for work. In addition, the interaction was staged at an early evening hour in order to avoid the drunken aggressions that transpired in #3. The episode began with Baby Uncle dominating the exchange once again, in his loud, boisterous, irreverent manner. About fifteen minutes in, Sarkar who had been listening on the side, entered the frame at DADA teashop. Identifying himself as Bengali, he made an instant connection with other Bengali laborers in the adjacent window. The conversation turned to the problems of migrant labor in Delhi, touching upon the issue of police apathy and the dismissal of legitimate complaints. A few minutes later, a Muslim preacher (maulvi) appeared at the tea shop and Baby Uncle proceeded to provoke him by asserting that all terrorists are Muslims, to which the maulvi responded with exasperation and accused the media of being irresponsible and biased (he assumed a news program was being filmed). Aastha, from Khoj, appeared at KT's Salon to remind everyone that one of the most heinous acts of terror committed in the recent past were the 2002 riots in Gujarat under the leadership of a Hindu right wing politician, Narendra Modi (then the Gujarat Chief Minister, now India's Prime Minister). The interaction continued, taking twists and turns, with a good measure of spontaneous poetry, couplet recitals and jokes being shared, closing with a teenager rebutting Baby Uncle's cockiness!

KhirkeeYaan #4: Char Karkhana explored the village as a site of production and labor with small manufacturing units that bring in workers from across the country. These units are largely engaged in tailoring, embroidery, carpentry and leather work, their products being supplied to stores and designers in India and internationally. The conditions in these workplaces, as the artist discusses in her annotation to the episode, were far better than those in sweatshops elsewhere.[28] She also notes that the factory owners were very open to the idea of their workers communicating with those in other units. Much longer than the other episodes, which lasted about an hour each, #4 spanned an eight-hour duration, documenting the units' functioning and workers' tasks through a significant chunk of their workday. The presence of the cameras in this case was perhaps closest to the operations of traditional surveillance, though the devices were in no way concealed, hidden or obscured from those being "watched." Rather the media apparatus became a window through which workers across the units beckoned each other, tracked the tea vendor doing his rounds, sang songs, recited poetry, struck bargains and deals, and generally remained animated while working with their machines and tools.

The Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams was prescient in writing, "A displaced and formerly rural population is moving and drifting towards the centers of a money economy which is directed by interests very far from their own."[29] Perhaps today, more than a half-century later, these roving populations are not exclusively linked by an immediate rural past but by a chain of both intra and transnational displacements of the proletariat, akin to what Friedrich Engels so adeptly analyzed a century and a half ago in his text *The Housing Question*. [30] Where Williams looks to literature as an embodiment of such experiences, and Engels to the changing urban landscape of industrializing late nineteenth century Europe, I direct attention to a contemporary genre of art practice that engages with "community," most active on the margins of our capitalist societies – in the sweatshops, ghettos, housing projects, shanty towns, slums and indeed the urban village.

In light of the two episodes discussed above (#7 & #4), which introduce and incorporate the characters of the migrant laborer, the deliberately planted provocateur and the incidental interloper, one could also read Khirkee as an inner-city quarter that constantly offers shelter to the figure of "the stranger." First described by the early twentieth century German sociologist Georg Simmel in opposition to the wanderer "who comes today and goes tomorrow," the stranger is one "who comes today and stays tomorrow."[31] The stranger inhabits a space while being set apart from it as someone who is not from there, and could not be. Though Simmel's example, drawn from a modern European context, is that of the trader (a category within which the figure of the Jew is accommodated), the question arises whether the precarious, unstable, impermanent, mobile body of labor that finds a temporary abode in Khirkee and lies outside "established ties of kinship, locality, and occupation" also adheres to the same classification?[32] Simmel's stranger certainly enjoys a degree of agency, involvement, and participation in the host society that doesn't seem quite available to the migrant populations of Khirkee. The constitution and texture of these migrant populations is itself worth questioning. This is not a homogeneous body, and recent decades have witnessed various waves of "strangers" making their way through. On the one hand, there's a significant population of unskilled (male) labor from India's rural hinterland. On the other, and more so in recent years, there are educated youth moving from smaller towns and villages to the capital in search of opportunities in administration, customer service and lower-level management at corporate offices, shopping malls, banks and the like. The presence of immigrant populations from sub-Saharan Africa, most prominently Uganda and Nigeria, has only been prominent and visible over the past half-decade. Workers in small manufacturing units within the village and elsewhere in the city continue to make this neighborhood their home and workplace. Alongside grows a burgeoning creative class of freelancers – artists, designers, dancers and choreographers – in search of spaces to develop and promote their professional practice.

The relationship between the communities described above defies any simple collective classification or theorization, constantly shifting in response to social, political and economic pressures. However, the "host community" in the village, mostly higher caste Hindu landowners who have outsourced their property to ruthless developers and tenement

builders, maintains a visible distance from these groups of "strangers," remaining comfortably cocooned inside their mansions with high walls and opaque gates. From here they orchestrate the rents and establish the conditions with which the "strangers" must comply in order to establish a temporary home in the village, often adjusted (on an increasing scale) for the degree of "strangeness." The complexity of these relationships, marked by distance but also by proximity and everyday coexistence, give currency to Simmel's concluding comments.

> In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group. Its uniform life includes the specific conditions of this element. Only we do not know how to designate the particular unity of this position other than by saying that it is composed of certain measures of nearness and distance. Although some quantities of them characterize all relationships, a *special* proportion and reciprocal tension produce the particular, formal relationship to the "stranger."

Unsurprisingly the most recent (in this case, foreign and dark-skinned) arrivals into the neighborhood often end up having to negotiate the most inhospitable terms and conditions, including the greatest likelihood of eviction and criminal suspicion, as demonstrated by episodes such as the one this essay opens with. Specifically with regard to the encounters engendered by the relatively recent presence of black bodies in Khirkee, feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's notion of "embodying strangers" is telling. Avoiding an ontological categorization of "the stranger," which has in the past led to a fetishization of the concept and its problematic treatment in postmodern discourse around multiculturalism, she instead describes how processes of bodily identification (of strange-ness) create claims of irreconcilable otherness.

> Through strange encounters, the figure of the 'stranger' is produced, not as that which we fail to recognise, but as that which we have already recognised as 'a stranger'. In the gesture of recognising the one that we do not know, the one that is different from 'us', we flesh out the beyond, and give it a face and form. The alien stranger is hence, not beyond human, but a mechanism for allowing us to face that which we have already designated as the beyond. So we imagine, here, now, that we are facing an alien stranger: it allows us to share a fantasy that, in the co-presence of strange and alien bodies, we will prevail.[33]

Such imaginaries are enacted by gestures that create increasingly rigid definitions of the "body-at-home...which enable a withdrawal from the stranger's co-presence in a given social space."[34] Anand's project captures both the manner in which Khirkee's diverse inhabitants are increasingly insulated in their own enclaves, while illustrating the potential of the street as a space for the production of non-utopian communities.

Dealing with the contentious and constantly transforming notions of social space in India, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty makes pertinent observations regarding the potentiality of interactions in the street and the *bazaar*, spaces that are for him paradigmatic of the outside (vs. categories of family and kinship that define the inside), where social life is produced.[35]

> Speech and face-to-face interaction have to do, as we have seen, with overcoming the mistrust of the outsider in a space where transactions are contingent on trust.... The duality of this space is inescapable. It harbors qualities that threaten one's well-being (strangers embody these qualities). Yet it provides a venue for linkage across communities (linkages with strangers). Speech and direct interaction produce such solidarity.[36]

KhirkeeYaan's episodes reveal both the potential for conversation and reconciliation (albeit temporary and highly mediated), but also the continuing presence of substantial frictions and a deep sense of disconnect between the village's constituent communities, which include the figure of the interventionist artist and the collaborative art institution.

I contend that conflict, far from the ruin of democratic public space, is the condition of its existence.[37]

Notes

[1] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Introduction," *Evictions* (Chicago/Canbridge, MA: Graham Foundation/The MIT Press, 1996), xxiv.

[2] The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is a recently formed political outfit that grew out of a large, urban anti-corruption movement (2011-12), which came to be called India Against Corruption (IAC). Led by ex-bureaucrat and activist, Arvind Kejriwal, the AAP set itself apart from the IAC movement, calling on those who believed in direct political participation (through electoral politics) as the most effective strategy for targeting corruption, among other issues.

[3] The term "urban village," an oxymoron, is used to describe formerly rural settlements (often with surrounding farmland) that now fall within the urban expanse of a city. The zoning and administration of these villages remains distinct from the urban districts surrounding them, creating a sort of in-between space with a great deal of unplanned construction and property speculation. Urban villages vary drastically in size, density and degrees of development and access to facilities. For more on the status of urban villages as a policy and planning anomaly, specifically within the urban fabric of Delhi, see Ajay K. Mehra, "Urban Villages of Delhi," in *Urbanization and Governance in India*, eds. Evelin Hust and Michael Mann (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 279-310.

[4] This is gathered from the words of the artist and her institutional collaborators at Khoj, reiterated across different episodes.

[5] Raqs Media Collective, "Delhi – City Report," Frieze Magazine, June-August 2012, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/delhi/.

[6] In the same piece cited above, specifically regarding Khirkee, and? Raqs write(s),

> In Khirkee village, for instance, it is possible to hear West-African French, Pushto, Persian and a host of Indian languages being spoken by many kinds of migrants who would not find themselves as welcome elsewhere in the city. These migrants bring with them forms of tolerance, artisanal skills and vernacular entrepreneurship that are crucial to the everyday life of artistic practice. More importantly, they hold in abeyance the binary categories of elite and subaltern, provincial and cosmopolitan, outsider and insider, queer and straight, recent immigrant and established settler – leading to the continuous articulation of the more fluid forms of self-hood and community that makes for a vibrant art scene.

> I do not suggest that Raqs is unaware of or insensitive to the tensions and inequalities that pervade these spaces and interactions. Their own work – as artists, curators, theorists, and writers – including *The Sarai Reader* series they conceived and edited, are a rich source of deeply nuanced impressions, theories and speculations gathered from similar geographies and situations. My point is that the manner in which these projects and spaces are written about in art world publications and on websites and project descriptions tend to either eliminate or romanticize the antagonisms constantly at play.

[7] "Khirkeeyaan," *Chitrakarkhana*, 2014, http://chitrakarkhana.net/khirkeeyaan.htm.

[8] For more see "KHOJ," *Khoj International Artists' Association*, 2014, www.khojworkshop.org. For information on Khoj's Commuunity Art programs, see "Community Art," *Khoj International Artists' Association*, 2014, http://khojworkshop.org/program_cat/community-art/.

[9] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso Books, 2012).

[10] Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," 13.

[11] Bishop, 25.

[12] Henri Lefebvre, "Openings and Conclusions," *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 401.

[13] Lefebvre, "Contradictions of Space to Differential Space," 356.

[14] Sunil Kumar, "A Medieval Reservoir and Modern Urban Planning: Local Society and the Hauz-i Rani," *The Present in Delhi's Pasts* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Press, 2011), 48, 57-58.

[15] Khoj is itself located in Khirkee Extension, one such grey zone outside the *lal dora*. In the recent past, there has been new legislation from the Delhi Government to regularize some of these unauthorized developments outside the *lal dora* and re-zone this formerly agricultural land for construction (allegedly in a bid for electoral votes by the ruling incumbent). The precise implementation and fallout of this legislation remains unclear at the moment. See, Press Trust of India, "360 villages under Lal Dora, restriction on farm land eased," Zee News, http://zeenews.india.com/news/delhi/360-villages-under-lal-dora-restriction-on-farm-land-eased_855284.html.

[16] Lefebvre, "Contradictory Space," 349.

[17] "Khirkeeyan01: hauzrani," *Chitrakarkhana*, 2014, http://chitrakarkhana.net/Khirkeeyan/K1.htm.

[18] Grant Kester, "Introduction," The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 7-8.

[19] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[20] Grant Kester, *The One and the Many*, 10.

[21] "Pad.ma - short for Public Access Digital Media Archive - is an online archive of densely text-annotated video material, primarily footage and not finished films. The entire collection is searchable and viewable online, and is free to download for non-commercial use."

"All videos," *Pad.ma*, 2014, http://pad.ma/grid/title/khirkeeyaan.

"Khirkeeyaan," *Chitrakarkhana*, 2014, http://chitrakarkhana.net/khirkeeyaan.htm.

[22] The locations, participants and themes of the other four episodes are summarized below:

KhirkeeYaan #1: Indian Idols (The Hauzrani Spectricals) was set in a Muslim dominated section of the neighborhood – Hauz Rani. It was recorded in three electrical shops and a junk mart. A curious crowd of teenagers and young men gathered in front of the media apparatuses installed at each venue. Someone at the junk mart declared that it was to be an episode of Indian Idol, breaking out into a popular Bollywood number. Later, the assembled youth across the four sites took on screen names borrowed from notorious gangsters of the Mumbai underworld (made household names by the media and Bollywood) – Dawood, Chota Shakeel etc. They played competing gangs in a song and performance contest of sorts, scarcely hesitating to sing at the top of their lungs (often off-tune!), play music, make faces, recite poetry, provoke and curse casually. After editing the episode, the artist transferred it to CDs that were given to the host shops from where the participants could borrow, copy and share forward.

KhirkeeYaan #2: Khirkee Extn. Ki Kancheeyaan brought together a group of Nepali women to welcome a new arrival into the neighborhood. Men and children were categorically excluded from this exchange, being asked to leave at the beginning. Most of the conversation transpired in Nepali. Two of the participating women were based at Khoj, the wives of its Nepali caretakers. On being asked about her background, one woman shared that she was an *adivasi* (tribal) belonging to the Munda tribe (from Bengal) and had arrived in Khirkee through a love marriage to a Nepali man. Jokes and banter flowed, and the conversation felt quite effortless, shifting between their stories of migrating to Delhi, their marriages, and a palpable nostalgia for village life.

KhirkeeYaan #5: Doctor ki Salah created an open and free consultation with a local doctor specializing in Unani or traditional medicine who was particularly interested in responding to questions from children and pertaining to children's health. Questions were asked about common colds, dietary recommendations and restrictions, body weight, headaches and the like. The doctor made some curious remarks - bird flu was attributed to America, encephalitis to

Siberian migratory birds, taking steam with aspirin infused water was prescribed as a solution for the common cold and blemished skin was to be treated with hydrogen peroxide.

KhirkeeYaan #6: Khirkee Gaon ki Lugaiyan was set in the historic section of Khirkee village – the streets around Khirkee Masjid (after which the village is named), the fourteenth century ruins of the Tughlaq-era fortress-mosque structure. The population here differs significantly from Khirkee Extension and Hauz Rani, consisting of larger, joint-family units of upper caste Hindu families who have inhabited the village for generations. The surrounding lanes are dotted with small shops, telephone booths and beauty salons, catering to a slightly more elite (lower middle to middle class) clientele. This episode is set between a woman run telephone booth, a traditional upper caste (Chauhan) village household, the owner and clients at a beauty salon and a feisty domestic maid working in the neighborhood. The artist Anita Dube was planted into the conversation, without the knowledge of the other participants, having walked into the beauty salon at the opportune moment under the pretext of getting a wax. The conversation quickly turned into a confessional, a space where participants could speak and openly opine about the problems in their marriages and households, the effects of television soaps, the joys of being single, the empowerment they earned when their husbands left them or the hardships they endure in raising their children alone.

[23] "Khirkeeyan03: in the lane," *Chitrakarkhana*, 2014, http://chitrakarkhana.net/Khirkeeyan/K3.htm.

[24] "Khirkeeyaan Episode 3 – One Lane (Shaina Anand)," *Pad.ma*, 2014, http://pad.ma/VW/player/00:58:50.077.

[25] Sunil Kumar, 60-66.

[26] Ajay Skaria, "Gandhi's Politics: Liberalism and the Question of the Ashram," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Volume 101, Number 4, Fall 2002), 956.

[27] Ibid., 957.

[28] "Khirkeeyan04: inside factories," *Chitrakarkhana*, 2014, http://chitrakarkhana.net/Khirkeeyan/K4.htm.

[29] Raymond Williams, "The New Metropolis," *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 287.

[30] Friedrich Engels' late nineteenth century analysis of the housing question in industrializing European cities experiencing a working-class population explosion revealed the bourgeoisie's predilection for constantly displacing such communities. Their former shantytowns are either transformed into gentrified quarters or ripped apart under the pretext of infrastructure development, leaving such populations to re-settle in similarly crowded and decrepit quarters elsewhere.

The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere*! The same economic necessity which produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place also. As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers.

See, Friedrich Engels, "How the Bourgeoisie Solves the Housing Question," *The Housing Question* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 77.

[31] Georg Simmel "The Stranger," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 402.

[32] Ibid., 404.

[33] Sara Ahmed, "Introduction: stranger fetishism and post-coloniality," Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[34] Sara Ahmed, "Embodying Strangers," in *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality,* eds. Avril Horner and Angela Keane (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 85.

[35] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Of Garbage, Modernity, and the Citizen's Gaze," H*abitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 73. Later in the chapter he writes,

The bazaar or the street expresses through its own theatre the juxtaposition of pleasure and danger that constitutes the outside or the open, unenclosed space. The street is where one has interesting and sometimes marvelous, encounters. Even when nothing out of the ordinary happens, the place is still pregnant with possibility. And such pleasures are by nature, transgressive because they are pleasures of the inherently risky outside. (75)

[36] Chakrabarty, 74.

[37] Deutsche, xiii.

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invisible Zürichs:
Multiplicity of knowledges in Socially-engaged Art Practice

Cecilie Sachs Olsen

"We didn't look at space as something that was already there, but something that we were part of making. So if we found something funny, we would take a picture of it, and when we found an object we liked, we would bring it. [...]So it was not so much "us" and then "the space" but it was rather about this interaction between us."
Participant statement, *invisible Zürichs*, 2013

The discussions in this paper stem from my practical experience in curating *invisible Zürichs*, a socially-engaged artistic project, with the urban collective, zURBS. zURBS is a Zurich-based NGO collaborating with a range of urban groups and entities to facilitate experimental, participatory workshops, exhibitions, seminars and urban expeditions, to re-imagine urban space. zURBS aims to put to the fore that cities exist not only in the physical environment of the urban, but also in its material imaginary. In other words, urban space can be seen as an entanglement of physicality and symbolism that interweaves various stories, memories, imaginings and experiences.

invisible Zürichs was a two month-long curatorial, developed by zURBS as part of a residency for independent artistic collectives at the theatre Gessnerallee in Zurich in the autumn of 2013. The theatre provided zURBS with a small but significant budget, as well as one of the main theatre stages for two months, in order to create an urban laboratory that would engage the residents of Zurich in rethinking and rediscovering their city. This project forms part of my doctoral research on the ways in which socially-engaged artistic practice may produce new understandings of how we inhabit and think about cities. I define socially-engaged artistic practice in line with Bishop's (2006, 2) definition of participatory art, which marks an artistic orientation towards the social:

"the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; the work of art as an ongoing or long-term project [...] while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or 'beholder' is now repositioned as a co-producer or participant."

In this regard, socially-engaged artistic practice can be seen in relation to the "social turn" (Bishop 2006; Jackson 2011) in contemporary art practice, as well as "relational" (Bourriaud 1998), "context" (Lippard and Chandler 1968) and "dialogical" (Kester 2004) practices.

As a researcher, curating *invisible Zürichs* an opportunity for me to experiment with the possibilities presented by socially-engaged artistic practice to facilitate an open process, enabling participants to co-produce their city. Co-production here points to an open process in which the participants could articulate the experiences of the city in their own terms. This

means that instead of focusing on pre-defined and indisputable matters of fact ("a clean city is good for us!") as promoted at public hearings or citizen's panel, this open process would rather focus on voicing personal matters of concern ("for me a clean city is not so much about removal of waste as it is about the removal of cars"). The aim in this regard was to raise people's consciousness about what Rancière (2004) refers to as the "distribution of the sensible," or a given order that directs how we think about cities and live in them by establishing what and who should be visible, sayable, hearable. In providing a platform for residents of Zurich to question this "distribution of the sensible", *invisible Zürichs* aimed to facilitate a process in which multiple, embodied and marginalized experiences could be expressed (see Tolia-Kelly 2007) and this way potentially subverting the dominant urban sensory order or pointing to alternate orders.

The workshops conducted as part of the project *invisible Zürichs* have evolved from "a place between" theory and practice (Rendell 2010). In this process, I took on the role of both organizer and facilitator of the workshops, as well as researcher carrying out participant observation and post-workshop interviews with participants. The development of theoretical ideas in this paper draws on particular experiences with my own curatorial practice, and at the same time, my practice asks questions of theories of participation and socially-engaged artistic practice. In line with Rendell, I thereby wish to illustrate that the relationship between theory and practice is not one of continuity; theoretical concepts do not necessarily provide "answers" to practice, and practice, in turn, should not be seen as an application of or inspiration for theory. Rather, the relationship between the two is reciprocal: theory suggests paths *into* practice, which then, conversely, asks questions of our research methodologies and approaches. In the following, I will discuss participation as a mode of enquiry that illustrates this reciprocal relation between practice and theory.

Figure 1:
Participant out in the streets looking for "invisible" aspects in their surroundings, *invisible Zürichs*, photo: zURBS

invisible Zürichs

invisible Zürichs consisted of weekly workshops (thirteen in total) that zURBS organized in different neighbourhoods in Zurich. Participants were recruited through a method we called "netwalking" – a form of networking involving walking around the neighbourhood, knocking on doors and establishing contact with specific organizations, institutions, individuals or groups that were located in the area, and inviting them to take part in the workshops. Accordingly, the participants varied from social workers to school children, from a group of recovering addicts to a book club, from elderly people to youth, from activists to urban planners (and so on). During the course of the workshops, the participants were sent out in their neighbourhood in small groups of three to four persons. Their "task" was to search for envelopes hidden in places that the participants might not normally frequent in their day-to-day movement in the city (including backyards, underpasses, staircases, run-down pubs, corner shops etc.). Inside each envelope were various questions that encouraged the participants to look for "invisible" aspects of their present surroundings. This included prompts about elements that might reflect the social and material "layeredness" of the city or that restricted their access to the city, that made the city feel like a nightmare, that manifested the connections between people in the city and so on. The question of how to enable the participants to communicate these "invisible" experiences of the city to each other and other residents of Zurich, so that they would emerge as "visible" and "salient," was the next challenge.

This challenge pointed to the need for facilitating a process that acknowledges and makes explicit the many ways of knowing that exist in relation to how we understand, perceive and act in the world (Haraway 1988; Latour 1987; Shotter 1993; Thrift 1996). Important in this regard was to recognize that participation is not mobilized with specific aims and outcomes in mind, but rather as a situated process produced from a specific context. In order to facilitate such a process, the workshops were oriented around articulating what I call a "multiplicity of knowledges".

Articulating a multiplicity of knowledges

The notion of "multiplicity of knowledges" is inspired by Leonie Sandercock's conceptualization of an "epistemology of multiplicity", which she develops in her book *Mongrel Cities*. As Sandercock outlines a planning imagination for the 21st century "that is utopian and critical, creative and audacious", she emphasizes the need for planning for multiple publics, based on an "epistemology of multiplicity" (2003, 2). This epistemology acknowledges the many ways of knowing and doing that exist in addition to scientific and technical modes. Storytelling is here an important tool for it is a form of knowledge production that enables people to appropriate the story of the city for themselves, distinct from the dominant narrative, and to also potentially imagine themselves in multiple different stories. This form of storytelling is not a given in participatory practice. Often multiplicity and difference is seen by facilitators as something that must be controlled in order to arrive at

general, fixed and reproducible results. Accordingly, the process is guided by particular norms of deliberation that may impede an open form of storytelling. Facilitators may, for example, favor norms that "implicitly value certain styles of expression as dispassionate, orderly, or articulate", excluding participants who do not conform (Young 2000, 6 – 7). Or they may enforce norms that antagonize participants, compelling them to speak of the issues at stake in polarizing terms—framing all difference as "conflict" (Innes and Booher 2000). This points to the need for a participatory approach that frees participants from their usual sedimented patterns, creating opportunities to act on other possibilities for being (Gibson-Graham 2003).

In order, then, for *invisible Zürichs* to facilitate the creation of a multiplicity of knowledges, it was important for us as facilitators to find storytelling "tools" that would enable the participants to articulate and communicate their stories of being-in-the-city on their own terms. This concern led us to focus on the role of found objects as communicative tools: the different aspects of "invisibility" were to be documented and expressed through found artifacts and objects, drawings, photographs, sound clips, scribbled stories, samples of smells in laboratory glasses (and so on). The participants would bring this found material to the theatre stage at Gessnerallee. Here, it would be discussed and subsequently "archived" through a process in which each object or artifact was meticulously labeled with date, finding place and description. Finally, the participants would place the objects and artifacts in "the alternative city archive", named the *stadtARCHIV*, which comprised the whole room. The material was hung from the ceiling, placed inside cardboard boxes or nailed to the walls. The participants were encouraged to relate their objects to the material that was already present in the archive. This way the openness of the process was emphasized, pointing to a process in which various "actants" - workshop participants, artists, objects, - were brought into relation with each other with no sure sense of what the outcome would be. The multiplicity of knowledges was here emphasized by the plurality as well as the many loose ends, missing links and uneven, conflicting, unassimilable but related elements present in the archive. For example, a story connected to a collection of shiny colourful stones from a public park, referring to the hidden beauty of the place, was juxtaposed with a photograph of the fence around the park, referring to the ugliness of its exclusivity; a story based on a photograph of surveillance cameras, referring to the feeling of being constantly controlled, was juxtaposed with a story of the loneliness of the city, as the photograph had predominantly blue colours. This openness of form and these dissident voices recognized the simultaneous coexistence of many possible stories, experiences and perspectives on Zurich.

Figure 2:
Participants and workshop facilitator discussing the found material documenting the "invisible" aspects of Zurich, *invisible Zürichs*, photo: zURBS

Figure 3:
Participants "archiving" an iron board found in the Jewish neighbourhood of Wiedikon, *invisible Zürichs*, photo: zURBS

Order vs. chaos

The *stadtARCHIV* was open to the public, so that people not taking part in the workshops could also follow its development and gain insight to the workshop process. People who encountered *stadtARCHIV* often remarked about the "chaos" or "messiness". Two female art students discussed the archive:

> Student 1: I am sure, when people see this archive, they would say that it is not Zurich. Zurich is not crowded and messy they would say. But they are wrong; Zurich is really crowded.

> Student 2: And I think this archive – made in this way – has to look like this. Like, the official archive in the city needs to be "tidy," it needs to be categorized so that you can easily find what you are looking for. But this archive is not made like that, and so it has to look like this. I think any archive made like this, by the people of the city, has to be messy and chaotic like this.

These comments are reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's notion of "trash aesthetics" (Highmore 2002, 60). "Trash aesthetics" pay particular attention to the marginal, infinitesimal and overlooked materiality of urban space. This way, "trash aesthetics" can be used radically and critically to attend to the everyday; focus on the detritus and backsides of modernity provides an alternative to the modern capitalist focus on growth and progress, and its celebration of the new. As INURA (2008), the international network for urban research and action, points out, Zurich has, for the last decades, pursued a politics of growth, struggling to maintain or improve its role as a global city. As part of its strive for international prestige and recognition, the city government of Zurich promotes an image of a clean and orderly city, promoting an urban realm of new, perpetually replaced, classified, pristine, smooth, polished and glossy commodities. The main downtown street, Bahnhofstrasse, happens to be one of the world's most expensive and exclusive shopping avenues. Along with most of downtown, Bahnhofstrasse is constituted by a host of designed spaces, such as shopping centers and

heritage sites, which seem to produce familiar and homogeneous sensual experiences. Here, harsh, uncanny and ambivalent sensations are kept at bay by the regulation of extraneous sensory intrusion and the production of moderated urban scenes.

Edensor (2007) points to how a relationship with society sustained by a desire for perfect materiality has resulted in an entrenched form of urban habitus that has inured city dwellers to sensory overload as well as the vast complexity and speed of everyday interactions. Hence, the contemporary feeling or sense of urban space is grounded in predictable routines and reduced sensory experience. Any signs of use of urban space are seen as signs of aging, breaking down, decline, deterioration and vulnerability. Accordingly, visible usage is looked upon as a problem that must be avoided at all costs (Boniver et al. 2010). As a consequence, the city is systematically interpreted within the peculiar framework of "problems". A telling example in this regard is a campaign that was initiated by the police department in collaboration with the city government of Zurich relating to the safety and cleanliness of the city. The campaign was based on a series of black and yellow posters that from 2000 – 2005 stated certain rules of conduct (e.g. "do not pee here", "use the bin", "keep order in the tram and bus", "silence!" etc.) under the umbrella slogan "Erlaubt ist, was nicht stört" ("Permitted is what does not disturb"). This campaign can be critiqued for promoting a conception of a calcified urban space that is "pre-treated with a calculus of defined-in-advance geographies of thought and action" (Woodward et. al. 2010, 277). As a result, the idea that there is a predetermined and rational way to how we act in and engage with urban space is emphasized. Multiplicity and difference is here seen as something that must be controlled for the sake of social order.

This approach to urban space is taken further by the city government of Zurich's focus on the notion of "quality of life". In 2012 Zurich was ranked first on Monocle's "Quality of Life Survey", after featuring in several surveys naming it the city with the best quality of life in the world. However, as Deutsche (1996, 276) points out, the slogan "quality of life" "embodies a profound antipathy to rights and pluralism":

'Formulated in the singular, "the quality of life" assumes a universal city dweller who is equated with "the public" -identities that the phrase actually invents. The universality of this urban resident is called into question when we note that those who champion a better quality of life do not defend all public institutions equally. While conservative journalists routinely seek to protect municipal parks, they do not necessarily support public education, for example, or public housing.' (Ibid.)

Deutsche is here pointing to how urban public spaces are endowed with substantive sources of unity. Certain uses of space are deemed self-evident and uniformly beneficial because they are understood to be based on some absolute foundation, such as the 'public good'. INURA observes a similar approach in Zurich: Today, large parts of the inner city areas are becoming privileged spaces for a well-to-do urban middle class, following a strategy of "upgrading of distressed neighbourhoods" implemented by the city government as an attempt to strengthen

the social fabric by luring "stable" and affluent residents. These "distressed" neighbourhoods are areas with a high concentration of migrants and a high level of fluctuation and transience. Hence, although Zurich celebrates diversity and many urban spaces demonstrate integrative potential, the upgrading processes often results in the exclusion of the very groups that created these spaces in the first place (INURA 2008).

The focus on "quality of life" can in this regard be seen to assert a language of common-sense in which urban space refers unequivocally to intrinsic uses and contains an inherent meaning determined by the imperative to fulfil needs that are presupposed to be natural (Deutsche 1988). Space is here seen as a physical entity and an independent object that has got a predetermined function, in which spatial orders appears to be controlled by natural, mechanical or organic laws. It thus appears to exercise control over the people who produce and use it. Accordingly, there is little or no space for producing a multiplicity of knowledges in which urban space is seen as predicated upon the simultaneous coexistence of many possible stories and thus also opportunities to act accordingly. Within this context, participation is activated merely as a reaction to what is already there, rather than generative of new conceptions of urban space. In this former approach to participation knowledge risks being seen as a static and inherent knowing from within, as a pre-existing resource that has to be tapped into, rather than as a process that is constantly produced in the circumstances of a specific situation (see Haraway 1988; Latour 1987; Shotter 1993; Thrift 1996).

Situated knowledge

In the context of *invisible Zürichs*, we, as facilitators, were painfully aware of the risk of instrumentalising participation by seeing it simply as a tool to uncover a perceived pre-defined and static local resource of knowledge. Hence, we emphasized that the alternative city archive should explore the always-unfinished process of making and remaking ourselves through the stories told with the help of the found objects and artifacts. This way, we would be able to "access" the participants' experiences and perceptions of the city, and hence provide insights regarding people's engagement with the urban spaces through which their lives are constituted.

Figure 4:
The *stadtARCHIV*, the alternative city archive of Zurich comprised by found material from different neighbourhoods in Zurich, collected by the workshop participants, *invisible Zürichs*, photo: zURBS

However, when these considerations were applied in practice, it turned out that the findings gathered in the city did not work as mediators and storytelling tools in the way that we had intended: on several occasions we realized that the objects and artifacts were assigned new meanings and stories to them as they were brought into the archive. Rather than, for example, connecting a particular object to the place it was found and telling the story of its (urban) context, the participants would be more occupied with making up new stories in relation to the objects that were already in the archive. As one of the participants – a middle aged woman - explained to me:

> "I just got more into the own story of the objects that were there [in the archive]. Like I didn't relate them back to the city necessarily. You know, it was not a stone that was found somewhere, like a trace of somewhere... but for me it became more this independent world (...). And it made me, kind of - how to say it? - create small stories in a way (...) not really a narrative in a linear way, but sort things into an atmosphere and (...) small stories that I would make up in assembling the things."

Based on similar reactions and statements from the participants of the workshops, we drew the conclusion that the findings brought back to the archive assumed a new meaning in the context of the stadtARCHIV, different from the meaning they had assumed in their initial location in urban space. For example, a group of young history students had found an empty wineglass, a broken piece of a car bumper, a discarded crutch and a concert ticket. One of the girls in the group explained that all these things somehow related to social activities and events that had passed; the wine was drunken, the concert had ended, the car had been in an accident, the leg had healed. However, instead of a further reflection on what these traces of the past meant for her own experience of Zurich, she and the group made a new story around the objects. The story was about broken dreams and futures gone wrong: Unfortunate Hans was supposed to go to a concert with the girl of his dreams, but she dumped him. Instead he then went to have a glass of wine on his own. He got drunk, and as he was biking home, he crashed into a car and ended up having to use crutches.

These and similar events led us to the conclusion that the stories of the participants' genuine and direct experiences of the city were lost. This discovery raised important questions: if this local knowledge developed in intimate familiarity and social interaction with urban space disappeared in the act of materializing, and thus could not be communicated to "outsiders", was the participants' experience of urban space then unavailable for questioning and critique on their own terms? And if so, were participatory tools aiming to question and criticize a programmatic and simplified vision of the world futile?

In asking these questions and, while doing so, re-thinking the participatory process of *invisible Zürichs*, I realized that while we had been focusing so much on "accessing" situated and embodied knowledge, we had in fact stumbled into the trap we were struggling so hard to avoid: we had tried to tap into some form of pre-existing knowledge and in the process neglected its very situated and embodied nature. As several episodes within the workshops illustrated, the archive was not simply a recorder of knowledge, but a producer of knowledge

in its own right. This became perhaps most clear when one of the participants commented on our use of the past tense when we asked them about their experiences in the city; she experienced things here and now, while actively working with the archive. So for her, it was not solely about the past, but also about creating something new for the future.

This comment made me aware that I had failed to see knowledge as a process – that is, something to be produced, always becoming or emerging. In doing this, I had seen knowledge solely as some form of transmission, in which there is something in one mind or body that must be transferred into another mind or body. However, in order to position the multiplicity of knowledge as an alternative to the concern with tapping into local knowledge, knowledge should be seen as something performative, made intersubjectively within particular sets of social relations, times and places (Jupp 2007; Pain 2004; Van Herzele and van Woerkum 2008). In facilitating this form of knowledge production and storytelling, socially engaged artistic practice avoids being merely reactive to what is presumed to be there already, and thus being "predicated on the belief that a particular site/place exists with its identity-giving or identifying properties always and already prior to what new cultural forms might be introduced to it or emerge from it" (Kwon 1997, 108). Instead, socially engaged artistic practice may be generative of new identities and histories. In this regard it can be seen as a medium for enactment, rather than as a medium for representation.

The storytelling by the participants was therefore always in the process of being made. Thus, the alternative city archive could not "capture" certain pre-existing experiences, but should rather be imagined as a simultaneity of stories-so-far, to use Doreen Massey's (2005) term. Hence, it was not so much about the findings in themselves and what they represented, as it was about the discussions, observations and stories they generated. For example: a glass splinter from a broken window in the red light district was transformed into an excerpt of the air in "the frozen state" of Zurich, commenting upon the city's perceived conservatism; a shopping receipt that reveals clear intentions by listing dinner ingredients for two and lubricant prompted conversations about dating and isolation among singles in the city; and the various alcoholic beverages stemming from a newly-built business district lead into on-going critique of these areas as purely being of "work and play" for expats and business men. These stories did not merely recount events and descriptions of Zurich; they endowed the city with meaning by commentary, interpretation, and dramatic structure. As a student pointed out in explaining her experience of the workshop:

> "It made me think that to see a place means not only to see a place and going around finding something, but also to interact with something and fill it with yourself and your ideas. (...) by participating in that project you go into the research of what space means to you."

Urban space was here made legible by translating it into collective narratives that help people shape an idea of how they want to live together and what they would like their city to be like. As a middle-aged male urban planner pointed out after taking part in the workshop:

> "It gets me in a perfect mood because I see how beautiful the city is and how many secrets it holds (...). What keeps me thinking (...) is this question: what is the urban? What is urbanity? And when do I feel positive and well in an urban environment? Somehow, it is when I see evolution and many layers of things grown in the physical structure of the city. So this possibility to grow and change over the years, I think is one of the most important things to create urban space."

The importance of the "layeredness" and the many small (secret) details of the city was emphasized by many of the participants as well as visitors to the archive. These reflections point to an understanding of urban space in which the authority of any one representational mode is challenged. Furthermore, our interaction with urban space is here seen as not relying on its physical form alone, but also through a social interchange that is open-ended and exploratory. In other words, urban space is seen as in a constant process of becoming. It cannot be fixed through endless maintenance or careful design.

Conclusion

invisible Zürichs can be seen as what Purcell (2014, 149) defines as an act of reorientation: "It reorients the city away from its role as an engine of capital accumulation and towards its role as a constitutive element in the web of cooperative social relations among urban inhabitants". The notion of multiplicity of knowledges is here closely linked to the idea of potentiality and transformation, emphasized by an aesthetic where the world is in the making. However, the openness of this approach is also vulnerable to critique. If all knowledge has no foundation other than personal and individual interpretation, we risk falling into the trap of relativism. By creating a dichotomy between liberatory multiplicity, promising a vision from everywhere, vs. an oppressive authoritarian representation, imposing a vision from nowhere, one may deny responsibility and critical inquiry. To avoid this, it is important to locate and situate the production of knowledge and the knowing subject. In this regard, *invisible Zürichs* was concerned with scrutinizing the material, social and political conditions that enable knowledge production, by facilitating a participatory process in which the knowledge that was produced was seen as on-going interventions in social and material relations. The value and necessity of engaging space in discussions on participation is here put to the fore.

Looking at participation in relation to particular ways of representing space may generate processes and outcomes that are open, fluid and sensitive to the multiple and often competing narratives, practices and actions that shape different ways of being in the world. My take on participation in this paper, then, has revolved around this interplay between the explorations and questioning of urban space *within* socially engaged artistic practice and its relation to spatial imaginaries produced *through* socially engaged artistic practice. By offering this distinct view on the relation between participation and spatial representations, I hope to contribute to the wider discussions in this publication, in terms of how we can expand our understanding and use of participation within participatory urban projects.

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Seeing in the Dark:
Unearthing Batumi's Hidden Backyard Treasures

Lydia Matthews

The synthesized term "provotype" was coined by Danish theorist Preben Mogenson to describe a design prototype that is deliberately provocative in nature.[1] Provotypes are created with the intention of being repeated and refined over time, regularly reshaped in response to critical dialogues and contestations. The curatorial structure and evolution of *Batumi Backyard Storie*s, a grassroots urban festival in the Republic of Georgia, is one such provotype, now approaching its fourth incarnation.

This socially-engaged public art project is set in Batumi, a rapidly transforming multicultural and multireligious Black Sea port town with a population of 190,000, a stone's throw away from the Turkish border. *Batumi Backyard Stories* has evolved into an annual, research-based cultural project that takes the form of a multi-venue street festival. Its curators invite teams of artists to temporarily occupy domestic courtyards in Batumi's recently renovated "Old Town", as well as in the neighborhood's abandoned buildings once used by older generations during the Soviet era. For a two week period at the height of the summer's tourist season, multidisciplinary artists interview and collaborate with residents who inhabit the backyards, co-creating art installations and performance events with them. These temporary spatial interventions, which culminate in a well publicized public evening "street festival", reveal unofficial stories typically lurking in the urban shadows—narratives that stand in contrast to the more polished and cliched versions of Batumi one finds in tourist/business brochures. Instead of reinforcing a façade of Batumi that poses as a city welcoming globalization and modernization, this 'ethnography meets contemporary art' project pays homage to the residents' mundane life patterns and practices, sublimated personal memories, and potentially vanishing cultural legacies – past and present, real or imagined.

The concrete backyards are informal communal spaces shared by several families: sites for hanging laundry, parked cars, old children's toys and an occasional folding chair or two. They embody self-organized private zones that local residents co-create—sometimes consciously and at other times unwittingly. By default, these spaces serve as informal and intimate neighborhood "commons". Although a time-honored and familiar residential structure for Batumians, these ubiquitous yards are not immediately visible from the city's streets. Not surprisingly, they are typically undervalued by local occupants, are absent from the official visual propaganda of the city, and are completely overlooked by the region's international tourists. More often than not, these yards exist in various states of disrepair, revealing the poor economic conditions that most of the city's inhabitants experience on a daily basis. Currently, urban developers and governmental organizations deliberately ignore the backyards, instead channeling public and private monies toward renovating exterior facades along Batumi's well trafficked streets and building ostentatious new structures that stand as testaments to Batumi's "futuristic" sensibility (Figure s 1-5). Until now, there has been little public dialogue about the social or cultural value of these hidden domestic arenas, although some local residents who witness their city's rapid transformation recognize that these backyards risk being demolished if the city's "urban renewal" schemes continue on their current path.

Figure 1.
Batumi Downtown Skyline (Photo: Dima Malenko, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batumi#mediaviewer/File:Batumi_skyline.jpg)

Figure 2.
Recently renovated Italianate "Old Town Piazza. (Photo: Keizers, N.d., Batumi, Georgia, wikipedia

Figure 3.
Old Town Batumi, characterized by its elaborate lighting scheme. (Photo: Lydia Matthews)

Figure 4.
The futuristic 12,000 square meter "McDonalds + Fuel Station" in downtown Batumi, designed by Harvard-educated architect Giorgi Khmaladze, winner of the "2014 best commercial building of the year" from architecture website ArchDaily. (Photo: Giorgi Khmalaze: http://www.archdaily.com/355340/fuel-station-mcdonalds-giorgi-khmaldze/)

Figure 5.
Upside down "White House" restaurant serving Georgian food, Batumi (Photo: Lydia Matthews)

Figure 6.
Batumi Backyard Stories poster showing entryway to one of the yards. (Photo: Levan Khujadze)

Figure 7.
Typical Batumi backyard shared by multiple families, 2012 (Photo: Magda Guruli)

These indiscernible architectural zones function as the city's astronomical dark matter, i.e., they are like the unmapped black mass in the night sky that ultimately supports the glimmering stars. The yards are the places where ordinary citizens carry on their daily lives, sustaining this burgeoning city while remaining largely invisible to the public eye. For a brief period every August, however, the *Batumi Backyard Stories* project allows artists, local residents and visitors to investigate several blocks of the Old Town, entering its shadowed driveways that lead to these intimate spaces, thus making them the subject of public attention and inquiry (Figure s 6-7).

The project exemplifies what philosopher Giorgio Agamben has characterized as "contemporary". In his extraordinary essay, "What is the Contemporary?", he states:

> The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light but rather its darkness. . .To perceive this darkness is not a form of inertia or of passivity. . . Rather, the ones who can call themselves contemporary are only those who do not allow themselves to be blinded by the lights of the century and so manage to get a glimpse of the shadows in those lights, of their intimate obscurity. . . The contemporary is the one whose eyes are struck by the beam of darkness that comes from his own time.[2]

Batumi Backyard Stories' curators and artists resist the dazzling abundance of the the town's grandiose lighting scheme that has earned Batumi its reputation as "the Las Vegas-of-the-Black-Sea" ("Batumi, Georgia"), instead revealing what Agamben describes as the town's "special darkness." At a moment of major economic, social and architectural transition in

Batumi, this cultural venture encourages artists to take a radically contemporary approach to their practice, collaborating closely with local residents to explore the poetic and political shadows of their home environments. Together, they identify and highlight the town's potentially vanishing cultural values and rich lore, attempting to provoke as much dialogue as possible about Batumi's future.

Batumi History and Context

Originally an ancient harbor with Byzantine and Ottoman architectural remains, Batumi established itself as a major trade center in the latter half of the 19th Century. By the turn of the 20th Century, it had become famous for its palm trees and pebble beaches, its elegant Russian Imperial architecture, as well as its lucrative Baku-Batumi railway and Batumi Oil Terminal, which transports, stores and ships a variety of petroleum products. The Nobel Brothers and Rothschild families built this oil transportation infrastructure in 1883, and it is currently governed by the national oil company of Kazakhstan, which owns rights to it for the next 49 years. This infrastructural system allows for the export of petrol from Azerbaijan to the Black Sea, where it continues to be loaded onto freighters and exported globally. During Soviet times the city continued as an industrial port and became a popular and desirable vacation destination, appreciated for its lush, tropical climate, and basic, proletarian leisure accommodations. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Batumi fell under the under the rule of Aslan Abashidze, a corrupt warlord who maintained separatist and militarized policies in the region. During the 1990s, the majority of Batumi's poverty-stricken residents could rarely access electricity or running water, and the city's architecture and infrastructure continued to crumble.

To say that Batumi is "not what it used to be" is a profound understatement. Since 2008, this Post-Soviet town has become the focus of aggressive redevelopment and gentrification schemes, made possible by the neo-liberal capitalist policies ushered in by former President Mikheil Saakashvili after Georgia's Rose Revolution. Currently, Batumi amasses 22 types of crude oil and petroleum products for export at the rate of over 5 million metric tons per year, and its tourist industry is sky-rocketing, attracting over one million visitors and investors per year, particularly from Georgia, Turkey, the former Soviet Union and the Middle East. In the past seven years, more than $550 million of state, national and foreign investment has radically transformed the physical and cultural character of the Batumi. Aimed at purging the Soviet past and aligning the city with European and American signifiers, this urban renewal has been characterized by a sudden burst of glass and chrome buildings, multiple casinos, five star skyscraper hotels, hip nightclubs and "theme" restaurants—including a full scale Parthenon, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and an upside down Washington-style White House that serves upscale Georgian food (Cox, 2014). In stark contrast to the dark days of the 1990s, the city now demonstrates a fetishisation of colorful neon lights that brazenly line the streets and building contours of the city's renovated "Old Town" neighborhood. Despite this seemingly glamorous and hyper-illuminated urban face-lift, however, the fissures between rich and poor remain.

Origins of Batumi Backyards Stories Project

Batumi Backyard Stories was conceived and prototyped in response to this accelerated urban renewal program. The idea for the project originated at the Press Café in Batumi in March 2012, within the "Curating as a Social Practice Workshop" that I co-designed with a team of local and international artists and curators, including Johanna van der Zanden, Otto von Bush and Evren Uzer, and Nikusha Chkaidze [3] (Figure 8). This two day intensive exchange, commissioned by the Open Society Foundation Georgia, offered models of modest, socially-engaged projects from around the world that were generated on "low-to-no" monies. The workshop filled with enthusiastic local curators, arts managers and multidisciplinary artists of all ages, who then self-organized around local issues they identified as meriting cultural attention. Together we explored how people from different professional disciplines and cultural backgrounds could learn from one another while playfully co-creating unconventional art projects that respond to contemporary conditions.[4]

The core of the *Batumi Backyard Stories* proposal that emerged from this workshop arose from participants' desire to gain new exhibition opportunities while expanding and deepening their contemporary cultural practices. They complained that art organizations, educational and cultural venues and governmental organizations in Batumi did not adequately foster enough experimental approaches to art practice. While international jazz and film festivals enjoyed much financial support and served as tourist magnets, the visual arts seemed conservative and unsupported by comparison. Even more disturbing was the fact that during a period of four short years, workshop participants had witnessed their crumbling yet charming Post-Soviet port town transform into a poorly constructed tourist spectacle that denigrated and threatened the unique qualities that they most appreciated about their seaside home. The publicly and privately funded architectural renovation that originally promised an aesthetic facelift and renewed economic opportunity for the region was beginning to be perceived as a potential cultural menace. Many of the most beautiful historic buildings were being decimated, and shiny architectural towers disrupted the town's human scale. As workshop participants explained, they felt changes had come at such breakneck speed since the Rose Revolution that there had not been time to critically reflect through public dialogue about what was gained or lost through these urban transformations. Moreover, they claimed the cultural community had not yet found effective ways to either capitalize on this "new Batumi," nor critically respond to its unspoken socio-political agendas.

Figure 8.
"Curating as a Social Practice" Workshop, Batumi Press Café, March 15, 2012.
(Photo: Lydia Matthews)

One workshop team felt compelled to address how "a lack of communal thinking" inadvertently resulted in their passive acceptance of deeply disturbing urban renewal and cultural policies. To counter this tendency, they proposed the *Batumi Backyard Stories* provotype as a way to encourage artists to work together to create a truly contemporary visual arts festival that would contribute to the cultural life of the city. They wanted to provide jobs for artists to research and reveal the more obscured aspects of their city's built environment, along with the endangered or amusing expressions of its "unofficial" local culture. Their strategy was not to overtly take aim at the problematic bright lights of Batumi or its governing bodies, but rather to subversively reveal the metaphoric "dark matter" that surrounds and supports the city from "behind-the-scenes." The workshop team saw their curatorial proposal as a way to capitalize on the tourist industry and the city's penchant for urban festivals, but to do it in a way that celebrated the quotidian rather than the grandiose.

Realizing the Proposal

A leading voice in this workshop group was Levan Khujadze, the artist/owner of the *Vinyl Bar*, known for its low-key bohemian atmosphere and eclectic music. After giving up his profession as a dentist, Khujadze established Micro-Phoni, an NGO that enabled him to more easily secure funding to produce music events. Increasingly interested in arts management, he then re-defined Micro-Phoni's mission to "strategically develop a sustainable platform for dialogue and creative exchange between community, contemporary artists and cultural actors" ("Levan Khujadze" *CECArtsLink*). Excited by his workshop team's *Batumi Backyard Stories* proposal, he led the effort to realize their provotype by developing a small-scale version of the project, launched just five months after the workshop concluded.

Because this kind of complex socially-engaged curatorial practice was new to him, Levan requested that I continue collaborating with him to refine and stage the pilot project. While he embraced the thought of local artists creating research-based installations, he was concerned that visual artists from Batumi did not have enough experience working in a site-specific manner. I recommended that he partner with Magda Guruli (a well established Georgian curator with much international project experience who had also attended my "Curating as a Social Practice" workshop in Tbilisi.) Together they paired more conceptually-oriented installation artists from Tbilisi with younger and less experienced Batumi artists who had local expertise and access to social networks and barter opportunities. We all agreed that at the heart of the project was a kind of radical knowledge exchange, so the staging of the project was as important as its physical outcomes.

By appealing to another workshop participant, Irine Surmanidze, who worked for Adjara's Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, we secured initial seed money to launch the project. Irine enthusiastically advocated for Batumi Backyard Stories and the project subsequently received 1700 Georgian lari (approximately $10K), which allowed the curators

to cover the Tbilisi artists' transportation costs, provide a modest materials budget for the various artist teams, as well as rent a large house for them to use as their project headquarters while conducting their research. The group lived, cooked and worked together for two weeks, sharing the stories they discovered and strategizing about how best to represent and materialize them. In short, they established an intimate creative community and Batumi-Tbilisi cultural network that would remain in place long after the pilot project was over.

The backyard installations that resulted included stories suspended on outdoor laundry lines that were legible only by deploying opera glasses (Figure 9); a video portrait about a beloved resident who no longer lived in the neighborhood; displays of residents' family photographs that reveal specific urban histories; an interactive light and sound installation that visually translated the live data from one backyard's electric meters, pulsating at the rate of various families' energy usage; (Figure 10) a memorial plaque commemorating Iuri Dumbadzea, a recently deceased master craftsman who made musical instruments in his home workshop; and culinary celebrations of the the famous Adjarian khachapuri, an boat-shaped dough filled with salty cheese, butter and egg. In one extremely distressed backyard, Khujadze created a site-specific sculpture: a column of unwanted books, mostly outdated Soviet era technical literature that he collected from the residents and other artists. It propped up a crumbling architectural structure within the backyard—a work so loved by the neighbors that they insisted they keep it standing after the festival was over (Figure 11). The local broadcast and print press enthusiastically covered the events, attracting hundreds of curious, multi-generational viewers.

Figure 9.
Batumi Backyards Stories suspended like laundry, legible from the street by using provided opera glasses. (Photo: Batumi Backyards Stories Facebook page.)

Figure 10.
Pilot project for 2012 Batumi Backyards Stories, wherein data from electrical meters were converted to a light show in the driveway leading to the yard. (Photo: Batumi Backyard Stories Facebook page.)
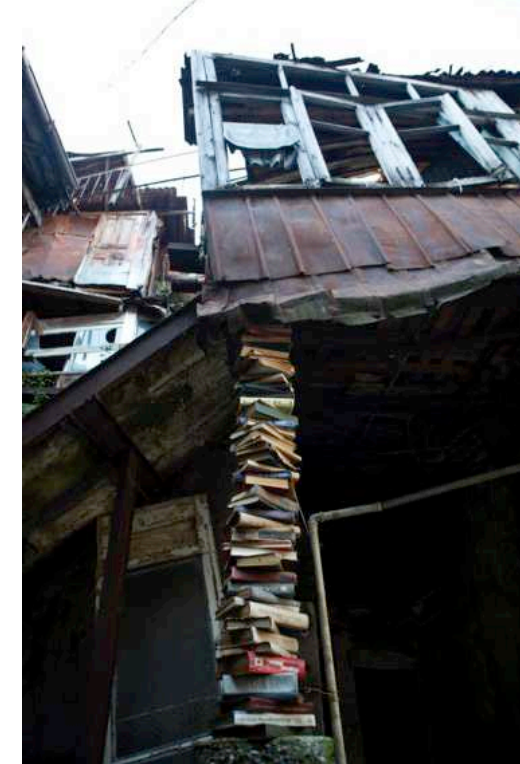

Figure 11.
Levan Khujadze's column of books, Batumi Backyard Stories, 2013. (Photo: Levan Khujadze)

Since August 2012, *Batumi Backyard Stories* has evolved into a more robust annual cultural initiative supporting over 40 artists, funded each year at a slightly higher level by the local Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Autonomous Republic of Adjara (Khujadze email).[5] Each year, Khujadze would scout for new yards and abandoned buildings, engendering the participation of residents so that the selected artists would be able to work effectively in those sites. In 2013 and 2014, the project expanded to include not only Georgian artists, but also artists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Russia, Japan, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States. The international artists either participated through self-funding, barter, or support from other partner organizations such as national embassies, non-profit cultural organizations, and universities. In this way, local funding would remain primarily designated for the Georgian artists (Guruli, email).[6]

Subsequent years' installations included a fascinating reclamation of an abandoned Turkish bathhouse that had been popular throughout the Soviet period, which Khujadze worked with city agencies to secure. Local artist Giorgi Katamadze and others cleaned up and illuminated the space, allowing pedestrians to visit this space for the first time in over a decade. As they walked through they experienced different kinds of spectral phenomena, including full scale video projections of men and women showering (Figure s 12, 13).

Figure 12.
Transforming the abandoned Batumi Bathhouse, 2013. (Photo: Lasha Phalavandishvili, from Batumi Backyards Stories Facebook page.)

Figure 13.
Video of man showering by artists: Zura Chartolani, Amiko Kavtaradze and Docha Ighenti., installed in Batumi bathhouse, *Batumi Backyards Stories* website, 2013. (Photo: Levan Khujadze)

Figure 14.
Mariam Natroshvili and Detu Jincharadze, *Museum of Superstitions*, 2013. (Photo: Mariam Natrovshvili on Natrovshvili and Jincharadze website.)

Included within three rooms of the bath house was the "Museum of Superstitions," co-created by Tbilisi-based artists Mariam Natroshvili and Detu Jincharadze (Figure 14). While in Batumi, this artistic team discovered that there was a commonly held belief that genies and evil spirits dwell in abandoned bathhouses, which inspired them to interview dozens of local residents about their other superstitions or habitual metaphysical beliefs. They tracked down the local Hodja (who serves in the mosque as a fortune-teller, healer, talisman maker), and met other local psychics living in the neighborhood, as well as interviewing people from different professions, including fishermen. The artists "translated" these accumulated superstitions into physical objects and images, most of which they gathered from bathhouse debris, which were displayed as museum artifacts.[7] In their statement, the Natroshvili and Jincharadze refered to their makeshift museum as a "ghost":

> A bath – a place for body purification – a ritual space of getting rid of negative energy is transformed into some kind of archive, the place for remembering and re-thinking superstitions. . . Knowledge, beliefs and habits that were inherited from the ancestors now fade away step by step, over time, leaving no trace. Reading signs of nature, prediction of the near future, learning the language of sea, wind and rain; inventing amulets for wealth and good fate; protection from an evil eye, attempts to change the future – these are reflections of pagan habits, forgotten secret knowledge in peoples' daily life habits.[8]

Khujadze recently reported that since the *Batumi Backyard Stories* installation of 2013, the new government has begun to restore the bathhouse, and plans to use it as the site of a new Batumi Museum. This suggests that the ideas forwarded by the artists and the conversations

stimulated by *Batumi Backyard Stories* can help reshape the local imaginary, and pave the way for more indigenous forms of "cultural restoration" to occur. Enthusiastic about the success of his emerging role as a Batumi-based arts manager, in 2014 Levan Khujadze applied for a prestigious CEC Artslink Arts Leadership Fellowship, which enabled him to spend five weeks exchanging ideas with numerous public art curators in the United States, who will now serve as an expanded cultural network for future projects. He now describes his long-term goals of "transforming of the city of Batumi into the region's cultural center and working with governmental structures to assist and influence the process of establishment of the cultural policy and priorities of the region."[9] Because Batumi Backyard Stories is now established as an annual project, Khujadze and his team of local artists collectively build on their past experiences as they realize various backyard installations and performative events.

Wandering Nighthouse in Batumi

The addition of international artists has slowly enriched the project and helped put Batumi on the global contemporary visual arts circuit. In 2013 I returned to co-curate *Batumi Backyard Stories* alongside Magda and Levan, adding to its budget with grants secured from the U.S. Embassy and support received through the Curatorial Design Research Lab that I direct at Parsons The New School for Design in New York. My primary role that year was to organize the U.S. contribution to the project. I invited Boston-based artists Elaine Buckholtz and Floor van de Velde to adapt their ongoing *Wandering Nighthouse* (Figure 15) to address this cultural context.[10]

Wandering Nighthouse derived its name from a home in pre-industrial villages where a community would gather after dark to share stories and save energy resources before going to sleep. Buckholtz and van de Velde adopted the spirit of such a communal space while imagining a nomadic version of a house. By harnessing the energy generated by a small truck's 12 volt battery, they created a sound and light installation on wheels that could be collectively experienced by passengers and passersby. The artists outfitted the truck with external speakers playing van de Velde's site-specific sound score, which featured local musical traditions. Buckholtz rigged two perforated vinyl records onto small motors on both sides of the vehicle, projecting yellow and blue rotating light patterns onto exterior buildings as the truck moved through the city. Participants were invited to sit on the back of the flatbed truck and share the experience of a mesmerizing ride that took them along a carefully selected route. The piece was a performance, and the people in the back of the truck—as well as those on the streets—were suddenly cast in the role of actors, making up the script as they went along.

Figure 15.
Batumi Backyard Stories, Installation, Elaine Buckholtz, 2013. (Video: Batumelebi.ge television station)

In Batumi, *Wandering Nighthouse* was designed to launch the forthcoming 2013 *Batumi Backyard Stories* festival. The *Wandering Nighthouse* truck's pick up point was the Lagidze Music School building in the Old Town, where we transformed the backyard into an elegant and subtly lit outdoor gathering space. As neighbors from the yard's surrounding homes and visitors gathered for their opportunity to board the truck, Buckholtz and van de Velde's Georgian collaborator, David Dsotze, served as DJ for the evening, filling the yard with a meditative party score that mixed music by the school's namesake, Revaz Lagidze (arguably the most accomplished Georgian composer during Soviet times) with more contemporary electronic sounds. Home-made khajapuri, wine and beer were served, and the local corn-on-the-cob vendor—a common sight in this seaside town—relocated her business to the backyard for the evening. Hundreds of people discovered this otherwise neglected space, sampling the hand-held "optical devices" that Buckholtz had provided as well as fabricating their own lenses out of found materials and crystals in a small makeshift workshop that had been set up on a table. Strangers from various walks of life congregated, co-mingled and shared experiences, reporting back about what they had witnessed while on the truck. The truck made approximately one dozen trips with varying passengers over the course of the evening (Figure 16 and 17).

The route of the *Wandering Nighthouse* not only traversed streets where the selected backyards would be transformed in the days ahead, but also ventured into parts of the city where tourists seldom visit. Passing through the over-saturated, highly illuminated and gentrifying Old Town, the truck's subtle light projections were barely visible—until the lights would strike a building that said "for sale" or was as yet undeveloped (Figure 18). After crossing a main artery of the city, the truck then passed into the less trafficked Arabic neighborhood, where Buckholtz's light projections suddenly appeared vivid, magically transforming the surface of people's homes and businesses. What became visible were neighbors enjoying street life, playing board games or taking their evening strolls. While *Wandering Nighthouse* participants observed these Batumi residents' life in passing, the locals were entertained by the roving spectacle, often waving and chuckling as the truck would pass, eager to learn more about the *Batumi Backyard Stories* festival.[11]

Figure 16.
Batumi residents take turns riding on the *Wandering Nighthouse* truck, 2013. (Photo: Lasha Phalavandishvili, from Batumi Backyards Stories Facebook page.)

Figure 17.
Wandering Nighthouse in the Arabic part of Batumi, 2013. (Photo: Elaine Buckholtz)

These meandering truck rides, while seemingly playful, were meant to provoke thorny questions about what kinds of things can and cannot be easily perceived in the city. They sharpened participants' focus on the contrast between Batumi's excessive use of light in areas of gentrification, and the dimmer neighborhoods that are off-the-beaten tourist track, where less "hip" daily life experiences can be recognized and appreciated. Wandering in a "nighthouse" also cultivated a new way of seeing a familiar environment with fresh eyes, through the altered lens of a contemporary artwork. In short, Buckholtz and van de Velde rose to Agamben's challenge: through their art practice, they enabled people to gaze on their own time so as to perceive not its light but rather its darkness.

Conclusion

In his brilliant *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces (Espèces d'espaces)*, Georges Perec identified the "infra-ordinary" of our daily lives and banal habits, not as boring over-familiar routines but as something that is deeply under-examined:

> What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event. . . the extra-ordinary: the front-page splash, the banner headlines. . .The daily newspapers talk of everything except the daily. . . .What's really going on, what we're experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?. . How are we to speak of these 'common things', how to track them down rather, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are.[12]

Perec suggests that we need "to found our own anthropology," one that will "speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we've been pillaging from others. Not the exotic anymore, but the endotic". The various works co-created between artists and local residents in *Batumi Backyard Stories* do precisely what Perec is calling for through the form of participatory installation art. As if prescribing the core of this project, Perec listed activities that would activate such an anthropology, with one being, "Describe your street. Describe another street. Compare." Such experiences and comparisons allow us to recognize new value in ordinary residents' backyards, which would otherwise be cast off as mundane, bedraggled, or unremarkable. And when these contemporary art works are successful in their provocations, they may even inspire audiences—as well as Batumi's city planners—to re-examine and ultimately debunk the increasingly popular belief that what is old or imperfect in their town must be ignored, demolished, or left publically obscured.

Notes

[1] Preven H. Mogensen, "Towards a Provotyping Approach in Systems Development," *Scandinavian Journal of Information System*, Vol. 4, 31-53 (1992): 31.

[2] Giorgio Agamben, "What is the Contemporary?" in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13-15.

[3] Joanna van der Zanden was the founding curator of Amsterdam's experimental "Platform 21" design museum laboratory; Otto von Busch and Evren Uzer comprise "Roomservices," a husband and wife design studio that fosters participatory urban design processes; Nikusha Chkaidze is a Berlin-based Georgian artist whose family lives in Batumi and Tbilisi.

[4] For a more detailed account of this Open Society Foundation workshop, visit the workshop's website, which includes videos of the workshop teams' socially-engaged curatorial proposals: http://dev.lydiamatthews.com/curating-as-social-practice/. For more information on my previous curatorial projects in Georgia from 2005-present, see: http://www.lydiamatthews.com/filter/Curatorial

[5] *Batumi Backyard Project's* budget has grown gradually. In 2012 the budget was 17,000 GEL (approximately $10K USD); in 2013 it increased to 21,000 GEL ($12,000) + support for foreign artists; in 2014 it raised to 26,000 GEL ($14,000) + international artists funding; for 2015 28,000 GEL ($18,000) has been pledged by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

[6] In 2012 during the first pilot project, all 12 artist participants were Georgian: Irina Torondjadze, Batumi; Lasha Phalavandishvili, Batumi; Irakli Shonia, Batumi; Nina Masalkina, Batumi; Giorgi Katamadze, Batumi; Shota Gudjabidze, Batumi; Vasil Macharadze, Tbilisi; Art Group Bouillon (Natalia Vatsadze, Ekaterine Ketsbaia, Teimuraz Kartlelishvili, Konstantine Kitiashvili, Zurab Kikvadze). In 2013, there were 18 international artists: Giorgi Katamadze, Batumi; Nina Masalkina, Batumi; Amiko Kavtaradze, Batumi; Gocha Jgenti, Batumi; Zura Chartolani, Batumi; Levan Khujadze, Batumi; Mamuka Japharidze, Tbilisi; Mariam Natroshvili, Tbilisi; Detu Jincharadze, Tbilisi; Denis Gonobolin, Tbilisi; Gia Mekvabishvili, Tbilisi; Manana Arabuli, Tbilisi; Samir Salakhov, Azerbaijan/ Baku; Mkrtich Tonoyan, Armenia/ Yerevan; Maria Saphronova, Russia/ Moscow; Elaine Buckholtz, USA/Boston; Floor van de Velde, South Africa/Boston; David Dzotze, Czech Republic/Prague; In 2014 there were 13 international artists: Giorgi Katamadze, Batumi; Mariam Ramishvili, Batumi; Ana Riaboshenko, Batumi; Gocha Jgenti, Batumi; Zura Chartolani, Batumi; Ana Sopromadze, Tbilisi; Musya Qeburia, Tbilisi; Ana Jikia, Tbilisi; Gvantsa Jishkariani, Tbilisi; Oliwia Beszczynska, Poland; Kateryna Radchenko, Ukraine /Odessa; Masaru Iwai, Japan; Rikiya Yamakawa, Japan. To read more about the project and see additional photos, visit the *Batumi Backyard Stories* Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/BatumiBackyardStories

[7] In a Dec. 21, 2014 email to the author, artists Mariam Natroshvili described the local superstitions they represented in their installation: "If you hear a bad news, you should tell it to a stone. If you handle knife to someone, you will have quarrel with this person. You shouldn't sew at night, or else your fortune will be sewn. If you cannot keep a secret, tell it to a pit and "bury" the secret in the ground. If one wants to have money, he/she should put the tooth of a pig in their wallet. You shouldn't throw hair from a comb in the garbage because a bird will take it and use it for its nest, so your happiness will be gone. Breaking a mirror means 9 years of bad luck. If you are going to an important business meeting, you shouldn't look backwards. If girl manages to go under the rainbow she'll become boy and vice versa. You should knock a silver spoon on the first teeth of baby so that she will have good fortune. Once a person dies, his watch or clock in the house will stop. If salt scatters on floor, there will be a fight in the house." (Natroshvili, email.)

[8] To see images and gain further insights into their contribution to the 2013 *Batumi Backyards* Project, visit: http://www.sadarismelia.com/other-works/museum-of-superstitions

[9] Levan Khujadze, "Levan Khujadze" CECArtsLink, http://cecartslink.org/residencies/arts_leadership_fellows/alf_2014.html. Accessed Dec. 15, 2014.

[10] Elaine Buckholtz. "Wandering Nighthouse," http://elainebuckholtz.4ormat.com/wandering-nighthouse-2013. Accessed Dec. 19, 2014.

[11] To see a video of the *Wandering Nighthouse* in motion in Batumi, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvketjtRzL0

[12] Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. trans. John Sturrock. (Harmonsdworth: Penguin, 1997), 205-207.

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♜ Urban Prose

Basketball Now!

Layla Nova Forrest-White

It's June 3, 1992. The Chicago Bulls are playing the Portland Trail Blazers in Game 1 of the NBA Finals, Michael Jordan against Clyde "The Glide" Drexler. The Bulls win this game handily, 122 points (39 of which are Jordan's) to the Blazers' 89—indeed, as many Americans, particularly 80s babies, can tell you, 1992 was year 2 in the Bulls' first Finals three-peat, the second of which came after Jordan's first retirement, thrice more clenching the 1996-8 Championships. Elsewhere on television that night, however, there was another striking performance, equivalent if not in virtuosity to Jordan's, then certainly in its staying power in our cultural memory. The summer of 1992 saw the presidential campaign in full swing, with the incumbent George H.W. Bush clearly leading the field, until, some analysts have argued, the night of June 3, when then-Senator from Arkansas Bill Clinton put on a pair of Blues Brothers Ray Ban Wayfarers, a "party" tie, and played a jazzy "Heartbreak Hotel" on the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. Clinton's resultant "sax appeal" was enormous, instant, sensational—some have it that it carried him all the way to the White House.

Perhaps in an effort to diminish the undeniable gag nature of this stunt, Clinton, over the course of his next two terms as president and continuing into the present, has become something of a spokesperson (along with Wynton Marsalis, former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and others) on the inherent link between jazz and democracy. Such parallels are by no means unique to Clinton et al.; they have long been made not just between jazz and democracy, but also with basketball, another uniquely American, and black, form of cultural expression and play. Fast-forwarding some 16 years to another presidential campaign, who can forget then-Senator Obama's "sax solo" of efficient, non-flashy, team-oriented basketball? In this essay, I will first look at the ways in which these long-racialized practices have been used as metaphors for or models of American democratic practices. My eventual aim, however, is to drop the metaphorical or modeling aspects of these comparisons, and—focusing on park basketball at Mosswood Park in Oakland, California—to show the ways in which the sport is both enabled by democratic conditions, and is also democracy incarnate, democracy in its fleshy, dirty, overcrowded, bodies-touching-each-other reality.

Birth of the Rule

Much has been written on the twin aspects of jazz and democracy; just as much has been written on the twin aspects of jazz and basketball. Though the transitive nature of the argument seems clear to me, less has been written on the democratic aspects of basketball. I will start with the more simplistic ways in which the three practices overlap, while making it clear that in this simplification, each individual form is being evaluated in its best possible manifestation, a manifestation that almost never happens. Considering each form at its very root as offering a structure for how to allow for communal human expression under a set of rules, basketball, jazz, and democracy are linked by the fundamental, albeit vague, principals

of participation and improvisation. Indeed, these concepts are vague enough to produce a form of relative solipsism, what a *New York Times* reporter evaluating a symposium on jazz called the "anecdotal" quality of the evidence, in which "democracy and jazz are both concepts that fit the exact experience of the user."[1] The specificities of such exact experience again slip towards the general, with Marsalis, for instance, arguing for a commonality of "integrity," and as Steve Pinkerton argues concerning Ralph Ellison,

> American democracy insists that we strive both artistically and politically
> to resolve, to seek an end that is both aesthetic and pragmatic,
> transcendent and embodied. Where jazz is concerned, that end takes
> the form of the tonic, a musical resolution [...]. Politically, the desired
> resolution is the sacred telos of Ellison's unique jazz-theology;
> the ideal of pluralistic democracy, what Hickman [a character in
> Three Days Before the Shooting. . .] calls "the mystery of the one in
> the many and the many in the one" (*Three Days*).[2]

This is, of course, the United States' seal's *e pluribus unum*, working for both democracy and jazz. And as for basketball and jazz, many have highlighted the two's shared improvisatory nature:

> The process of musical improvising shares analogies to sport, as jazz
> historian James Collier observes—both "the improvising jazz musician
> and the athlete must train intensely to build up sets of conditioned
> reflexes that enable them to respond without thinking of events that are
> unfolding around them in fractions of seconds."[3]

As jazz, political, and sport critics have argued, their respective forms "stop working" when the set of rules either becomes too rigid, or the ostensible players do not participate. But the meanings and consequences of this "not working" are vastly different, a difference that underscores the ways in which these forms are absolutely not alike; as we have seen lately, a government shut-down is not categorically comparable to, say, aesthetic failure or a bad game. Indeed, as Adorno famously argues, jazz is in fact "psuedo-democratic," in that its "attitude of immediacy, which can be defined in terms of a rigid system of tricks, is deceptive when it comes down to class difference." He goes so far as to say that

> [t]he more deeply jazz penetrates society, the more reactionary
> elements it takes on, the more completely it is beholden to banality,
> and the less it will be able to tolerate freedom and the eruption of
> phantasy, until it finally glorifies repression itself as the incidental music
> to accompany the current collective. The more democratic jazz is, the
> worse it becomes.[4]

Leaving aside Adorno's somewhat mystifying hatred of jazz, I want to better define his uncharacteristically muddled qualification of "worse" for jazz that is more democratic. For Adorno, both democracy and "bad jazz" are banal, repressive, mundane (if this can be taken as the opposite of unable to tolerate "the eruption of phantasy"), and some kind of incidental accompaniment.

Though some might say that this is, in fact, "bad democracy," as well as bad jazz, I am more inclined to agree with Adorno that democratic rule is more prone to those characteristics than not. But, as Dave Hickey says in relation to basketball and democracy, there is, or should be, a perfect Jeffersonian point, in which the rule liberates rather than governs. Speaking of a famous dunk of Dr. J's, Hickey says:

> And this is never to know the lightness of joy—or even the possibility of
> it—because such joys as are attendant upon Julius Erving's play require
> civilizing rules that attenuate violence and defer death. They require rules
> that translate the pain of violent conflict into the pleasures of disputation—
> into the excitement of politics, the delights of rhetorical art, and
> competitive sport. Moreover, the maintenance of such joys requires
> that we recognize, as Thomas Jefferson did, that the liberating rule that
> civilized us yesterday will, almost inevitably, seek to govern us
> tomorrow, by suppressing both the pleasure and the disputation. In so
> doing, it becomes a form of violence itself.[5]

How, then, in life and in basketball, do we keep the rule as liberation? The latter is certainly easier to assess; as Hickey and others have written, American basketball is the only major sport that constantly adapts itself so as to make the sport as pleasurable as possible, both for the spectator and player, constantly crafting itself into "civilized complexity incarnate."[6] Unlike governmental democracy, both jazz and basketball are highly adaptive and localized, defined experientially as large-scale democracy unfortunately rarely is. This experiential perspective, as "sports philosopher" Tim Elcombe argues, lends itself to basketball's "continuous evolution," in which "[o]fficials constantly experiment with new temporal and spatial aspects of the game, including scoring areas (such as the three-point line) and time features (for example, shot clocks)."[7]

In addition to both forms' constantly evolving rule set, physical and mental training within these conventions actually can create the conditions for these same rules' transcendence—how, as S.W. Pope says, "the virtuoso jazz musician, like the basketball player, can literally perform the impossible (or the previously unthinkable) but cannot be relied upon to do so."[8] This is a curious form of the Jeffersonian point, in that the transcending of the rule cannot be planned for, or even, perhaps, accounted for after the fact by the participants. It is diligence, training, repetition, and practice that enable its other; i.e. muscle memories are the necessary conditions for the body to do something that has never been done before. This type of transcendence seems equally attainable within basketball and jazz, but less so in the more intellectualized and less physicalized realm of democratic action. And yet, much of living democratically in the "bad" sense of Adorno's is precisely this awful banality of diligence, training, repetition, practice. How then does all of this work when it comes together, especially in the larger world of the non-professional? What, if any, are the possibilities for transcendence in city basketball, played in parks, in which there are no officials experimenting with rules, and no guarantee of similar or even comparable skill sets, but instead a multitude of individuals with oftentimes wildly different ideas of not only what these rules might be, but what it means to play in, with, and in complete disregard for, the rules?

Park Rules

By very definition, park, playground or street ball is an urban phenomenon. Though there are surely public parks in suburban and rural areas, the crowded and crowding nature of the park game is possible only in cities. The game of basketball ostensibly remains the same, but in these different venues, different aspects become both more prized and prevalent. As pickup player Isaac Eger hypothesizes, and I agree,

> [New York City's] busy, congested courts have influenced the style of play that takes place on them. For instance, I haven't run across many pure shooters, but I have encountered a lot of athletes with wicked ball-handling skills. My theory is that because the courts here are so packed with players, there is not enough time or space to practice jump shots. [9]

The public nature of the space—particularly in private and commercial urban areas—also influences the game, though in less perceptible ways.

As a girl—my given noun at Mosswood—of little natural athletic talent and few clear ethnic markers, but plenty of tattoos and good will, many of my "less-perceptible" nuances of park basketball are in no way representative of the general nature of the city game. Though it has become less so over the three-plus years I have been playing at Mosswood, I am something of a liability on most teams. I turn over the ball, am distracted by the most amiable of shit talking, and could cry thinking of all the beautiful dimes I've smoked. One of my greatest fears is that video will be taken of me in which my vertical leap is proven to be around two inches. I often find myself guarding children in their early teens, or exceedingly diminutive men. I am, in short, living proof of the democratic nature of the park, in which the merit of pure athleticism trumps all, but a persistence of presence, a certain willingness to show up and stay put, also makes possible a variety of strangely hospitable interactions, many of them minimally to do with the sport itself. I do not mean the social life of the courts—though there is surely that too—but rather the inevitable difficulties in arranging a horde of individuals of different capabilities and expectations into the collaborative efforts of playing a momentary game. In many ways, this is the "downside" of idealized democracy; freedom of speech often means hearing some really dumb stuff. So too at the park; anyone's right to step onto the court can mean for some really bad basketball.

Though it may seem a simplistic point, the social publicness of the park would be impossible without its spatial publicness. American public space is unique in the western world in that many of this country's urban spaces were built with it in mind, a fact that is testament to this country's newness as much as anything else. As Jere French argues, "[i]f churches formed the common basis of neighborhood organization in 17th and 18th Century London, then perhaps neighborhood parks can be seen as providing that basis of commonality for the more leisurely oriented cities of 20th Century America."[10] Indeed, many European parks come from land ceded from royal tracts to public use.[11] In other words, one organizing principle of the American city—rather than the European principles of religion or aristocracy—is the centrality of open, public spaces; spaces meant for the majority within definite parameters. The tightness of these parameters has become increasingly evident in recent protest movements, perhaps most thematically with Occupy and the refusal to cede space. Indeed, the hoop courts remain the most constant, relatively unpoliced public gathering of large numbers of young black men that I have seen, an absence granted by the activity far more than the space; as soon as kids stop playing basketball, police presence increases.

Located between West and North Oakland and occupying some 11 acres, Mosswood has a diversity of spaces, with the hoop courts, located in the northwestern corner, taking up just a small fraction thereof. The life of the park is evolving and dynamic, enlivened, as Jane Jacobs says, throughout the day by a "wide functional mixture of users."[12] As she argues,

> You can neither lie to a neighborhood park, nor reason with it. 'Artists' conceptions' and persuasive renderings can put pictures of life into proposed neighborhood parks or park malls, and verbal rationalizations can conjure up users who ought to appreciate them, but in real life only diverse surroundings have the practical power of inducing a natural, continuing flow of life and use. Superficial architectural variety may look like diversity, but only a genuine content of economic and social diversity, resulting in people with different schedules, has meaning to the park and the power to confer the boon of life upon it.[13]

Curiously enough, however, Mosswood courts' boon of life stems not necessarily from the surrounding neighborhood, but from its famous reputation in Bay Area park basketball---much NBA talent from the Bay is reported to have played at Mosswood, from Jason Kidd, All-Star point guard and third all-time triple-doubler turned somewhat-beleaguered coach, to the 11-ringed Celtic (GOAT?) Bill Russell. Such a storied past has kept this section of the park representative of a demographic that is rapidly disappearing from the city itself: young and black. As reported by the Census from 2000-10, which includes the seismic demographic shifts in the Bay Area caused in part by 2007/8's burst housing-bubble, the black population decreased in Oakland by 22%, and families with minors by some 10%.[14] Though I cannot speak for other parks (but I imagine similar dynamics play out across the country in public spaces), such a constant concentration of what is now a minority in the city is unique to the courts—there is a largely white "old timey" baseball league, a fairly diverse kickball squad, and so on. In other words, the park itself is gentrifying in ways reflective of the neighborhood around it (consider the near-by development of 40th Street into a bike-friendly, parklet-ed commercial strip, as well as ZipRealty's report that median home prices in Oakland more generally increased by some 76% between 2012 and 2013).[15] But for much of the day the hoop court remains the space of Oakland natives from far and wide. I recently drove Big Mike home for his basketball shoes, and we pulled over on the way to talk to his friend Jalen who was walking down the street: "Skyline is there, East Oakland is there, Laney is there, everyone's at the park, get your shit," he said, with far more expletives. And though Oakland is one of only two California municipalities whose populations shrank in the last decade—Oakland's troubled municipal history is an entirely other topic—you would never know it by the constant activity and flux of people at the hoop courts.

There is Joe Buckets with bad knees; Pete with a constantly ringing cell phone; Kukoč—named for his NBA doppelgänger—who has taped professional rules to the side of a wall and constantly refers arguing players over to them; Marco, a self-professed cousin of Damian Lillard with enough physical aptitude to make the claim seem likely; Otis whose glasses break during most games; Charles with slight wasting palsy from Lousiana who professes to put bad juju on the ball when he's losing; Darius who could and should host Oakland's own Haters' Ball; Darius' best friend Brandon who mostly cupcakes on the benches; Rick who really only ever shoots dice; Tobias who can dunk; Marley, called Navajo, who can also dunk; little John who was once picked up by big John in a fight; Mac who once asked me to burn "sensitive material" onto DVDs while he waited outside; a passing guy known as "beat Katt Williams" who insists on playing in heavy rings and bracelets; Kwame who got into a terrible motorcycle accident but can still grab rim easily; Deonte who blew out his knee and lost his scholarship playing college ball but still has the prettiest jumper; Henry the red-shirted Harlem Globetrotter; Sneaky Mike who both is and is not that sneaky; Emeril, better known as Nu Nu who learned his beautiful handles in juvenile hall; Big Mike who is my park little brother; Jeremy who has enough body for a man five-foot-five spread over six feet three; Michelle "Lil Mama" of barely five feet who learned her beautiful handles as a child in Texas; Melly Mel who gets to the basket better than anyone else; Mel who shoots deep-by-NBA-range three-pointers; Dot who wears shirts emblazoned with his name and visage; Gabe, a high school freshman at whom I once shamefully yelled when he was in the seventh grade; a new guy named Crutch who is giving Deonte a run at prettiest jumper; Fat Boy who moves much more quickly and gracefully than his name would suggest; and Mo, for whom the bank is always open, assisting him in his impossible 90% average from the field.

I could go on and on. This does not include the children, the homeless people, the drifters, the girlfriends, tons of other hoopers. This is also Mosswood as it exists to me at this moment in time, and I have spoken to older players who recognize no one on the court, nor the courts themselves with fiberglass backboards and Kaiser-logo'd floors. The kids who aren't currently allowed in the grown games will one day run the courts, and the current young bloods will find themselves relegated to the status of O.G., or, if they're telling it, Legend. Flows of life and use onto the courts shift throughout the day. There is the fairly constant dice game, as well as dominoes on the benches beneath huge old trees, both of which have been broken up and cited by police lately. There are daytime hoopers who avoid the congestion of the early evenings, the lunchtime games, after school camps, the occasional tournament. This is all to say that there are, at any given time, a complex set of abilities, inabilities, desires, frustrations, and motivations at Mosswood—not to mention the personalities! Sometimes, it seems as though this chaos of intersections cannot possibly congeal into any form, let alone a cooperative game. Young men stand around yelling at each other, distracted by outlandish threats of superiority from inferior players, last night's gossip, movement in the NFL or NBA, a girl walking by. The more focused players stand shooting on the court, calling for change after their made shots. What in my mind makes this a scene of democracy is both its messiness and its hopefulness; by agreeing to a certain set of rules, a group of people who want different things for different reasons can help satisfy each other.

And then, it feels like all of the sudden, a game takes shape. Either teams are shot for, or captains pick squads. Ten people for a full court game, each team agreeing upon who guards whom on defense, and then they start. The first team to 16 by two points wins and gets to stay on the court, as someone on the sidelines calls next and picks up four with whom to run. The goal, of course, is to stay on the court as long as possible, game after game, hour after hour. Though it is trite to say, no one individual, no matter his or her talent, can stay on the court alone. Only teams can stay on, and even five pillars, huge dudes with beautiful individual games, can be knocked off if they don't move as a team. And as there are no positions in park basketball—though the larger players tend towards center and forward types, and the small and quick tend to act as the point—and one rarely plays with exactly the same people, thereby limiting the chances for forming comprehensive team chemistry, it means that to move as a team looks different to different players at different times. There is a level of observation necessary—to notice or know your team's strengths and preferences, and to do your best to facilitate those aspects, as well as your own. It is always easy to spot someone accustomed to playing team basketball in how quickly they read not their opponent, but their teammates: when to set a screen; when to help on defense in a potential mismatch, etc. Being a good teammate is in no way a selfless act, but it is its own form of ethics, one associated not with ontological abstractions, but with the localized and experiential ethics of what Bourdieu and others have called "practice." As Thomas McLaughlin says,

> [t]he ethic of basketball is extensive and specific, and, remarkably,
> it is an ethic in motion. In the midst of fast and contested movement,
> with players making the instantaneous strategy decisions necessary in
> an improvisatory game, moral decisions are made with equal speed,
> guided by an ethic[16] that the players tacitly share.[17]

Basketball both produces, and is made possible by, an ethics of engagement that "achieve[s] its undeniably swift and almost instinctive immediacy."[18]

This form of ethics is not, for me, a metaphor for a greater good; time and time again, the qualities of good sportsmanship in the non-professional are transferred to the workplace, or into familial life. McLaughlin, while good at avoiding those pitfalls, relies instead upon the greater good of joy—"[t]he ethic of basketball aims to produce joy; it seeks that heightened state of awareness and rewards the tiny behaviors that make it possible"[19]—which is, I think, as problematic an abstraction as the ontological ethics he is arguing against. Basketball ethics are, like any other form of routinized and antagonized codes of conduct, quite simply, ways to behave. They are experientially-conditioned and continually-adaptive; to imagine that behaviors always have the *telos* of joy is a slightly cornier version of imagining that they always have the *teloi* of justice or truth. Yet this is not to say that joy is not attendant! Basketball is absolutely the most joyful thing I have ever done, and the indisputable best part of any given day. But just as the jazz player cannot be relied upon for transcendence, the gift (one of many) of park basketball is in its unpredictability, in those rare formations of perfection, when everyone and everything, from the sky to the wind, is willing and ready.

These are moments of the sublime, even, I daresay, moments of Schopenhauer's "complete impression of the sublime," in which the beholder of phenomena "perceives himself, on the one hand as an individual, as the frail phenomenon of will," but also "the eternal, peaceful, knowing subject, the condition of the object, and, therefore, the supporter of this whole world."[20] I have only a handful, if even that, of instances of the basketball sublime. As everyone knows, summertime is the best time of year, especially for park basketball. It was the height of a few summers past, and we could play until well past 8 in natural light. Michelle and I had been on the courts since the late afternoon, and we were both already tired as we found ourselves beginning to play a 3 on 3 game with Earl the Pearl as our third. I don't remember who was on the other team, other than they were all men, one of whom was OJ. The game began lazily, but became increasingly competitive, and our team began to gel. Earl began to set picks for my outside shot, and I for his driving lane. Michelle easily stole the ball numberless times from an offense thrown off by her stature, and would clear it to an open and waiting teammate. Soon we were playing rubber matches, or best of 3 games, for multiple sets of 3. The light left the park in a long gloaming, and the ball began to take hazy form, moving through the increasing dark like a comet, and I found myself reaching for its tail, its blurry shadow. The huge tree in front of the court was still there at that time, and it stayed perfectly still for us, shielding the court from the busy thoroughfare of West MacArthur. We played until the constant fear of falling became impossible to ignore, when ankles, landing into unseen blackness, are more prone to roll. We played past the point of exhaustion, past second winds, to the point where your memory reminds you to jump for your shot, but your muscles simply can't. No one made a perfect play, nothing miraculous happened. But for that hour or so, I was part of a perfect organism, doing my best with people doing their best.

Just as basketball both fosters and is made possible by a form of ethics, the precise form of these ethics as they relate to pick up games is, I think, a product of urbanism, of living in increasingly close quarters with strangers. The idealized democratic aspect of this ethic is the belief that what keeps another individual a stranger is an issue of access or proximity; that once ignorance is overcome, a stranger may actually be a neighbor. The possibility of this relationship creates the grounds for a more intimate sociality, even if it falls far short of the Levitical injunction to neighbor-love. And though the inverse of this idea of basketball ethics—that city living is mutually bolstered by playing basketball—is not a "true" claim, I wish it were! I recognize that I am teetering into hypocritical territory; that basketball does in fact extrapolate into a greater good, that of being a good urban citizen. But in this time of massive urbanization, in which the majority of the world since 2009 (and a projected 84% of the global population by mid-century), for the first time in human history, lives in cities—many of which are global metropoles of rapid urbanization without corresponding development,[21] and as we simultaneously see the complex problems in attempting to both export and maintain American democracy, it seems as though basketball and its attendant ethics needn't serve as training for how to live in an urbanized world, but that the urban and urbanizing world take its cues from basketball.

I mean this facetiously and not, but putting basketball first in the order of operations for civic urbanism underscores the ways in which the practices mirror each other, not metaphorically speaking. Both are the product of repetition in small spaces, muscle memories with the occasional flashes of hatred and/or love, the lifetime accumulation of conditioned reflexes. When

and if transcendence comes, it is rarely if ever as heroic virtuosity, but instead as some kind of communal sublime, in which we together, all doing our best, deferring death, stave off the "pain of violent conflict" in favor of the "pleasures of disputation." These joys, as Hickey says, require maintenance, and not systematized forms. At Mosswood, call your fouls if you absolutely must, try to respect the calls of others, shoot the ball over disputed calls, and if the ball don't lie, then that means you were. So how can we, if not by individually transcending the rules, find some form of the sublime within them with others? How can we if not love our neighbor, greatly expand the possibilities for who and what qualifies as neighbors and neighborliness? How can we, in short, make life more like basketball? One easy way: not, as the old slogan of various movements and outlets has it, democracy, now!; but instead: basketball, now!

Notes

[1] Ratliff, Ben. "Marsalis, Clinton and Others Dissect Jazz at Symposium". *New York Times*, December 11, 2003. Accessed October 6, 2014.

[2] Pinkerton, Steve. "Ralph Ellison's Righteous Riffs: Jazz, Democracy, and the Sacred". *African American Review*, Vol. 44. No. 1-2, Spring/Summer, 2011, p. 187.

[3] Pope, S. W. "Decentering "Race and (Re)presenting "Black Performance: Basketball and Jazz in American Culture, 1920–1950" in Deconstructing Sport History : A Postmodern Analysis. Ed. Murray G. Phillips. New York: SUNY Press, 2006. Embedded quote from James Lincoln Collier's *Jazz: The American Theme Song* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.p. 147-8.

[4] Adorno, Theodor. Trans. Daniel, Jamie Owen. "On Jazz". *Discourse*, Vol. 12, No.1 (Fall-Winter 1989-90), p. 50.

[5] Hickey, Dave. *Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy*. Los Angeles: Art issues Press, 1997, p. 156.

[6] Many a sports nut would no doubt argue that American football is likewise adaptive, but as I find the sport without pleasure or complexity, I am inclined to disagree. Truthfully, all major sports have changed their rules, even stodgy baseball. Basketball however, I maintain, is the only sport whose rule system attempts to encourage a rapid style of play.

[7] Elcombe, Tim. "Philosophers Can't Jump: Reflections on Living Time and Space in Basketball" in *Basketball and Philosophy: Thinking Outside the Paint*. Eds. Jerry L. Walls and Gregory Bassham. Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 2008, p. 217.

[8] Pope, p. 165.

[9] Eger, Isaac. " 'I Got Next': Exploring New York Through Pickup Basketball".

New York Times, July 11, 2012. Accessed October 9, 2014.

[10] French, Stuart Jere. *Urban Green: City Parks of the Western World*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1973, pp. 85-6.

[11] Tate, Alan. *Great City Parks*. New York: Spoon Press, 2001, p. 1.

[12] Jacobs, Jane. *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992 edition, p. 99.

[13] Ibid, p. 101.

[14] US Census. Stable URL: www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/citites/Oakland.htm. Accessed October 13, 2014.

[15] Levin, Sam. "Report: Oakland Median Home Sales Price Jumps 76% in One Year," *East Bay Express*, September 25, 2013, accessed March 17, 2015, http://www.eastbayexpress.com/SevenDays/archives/2013/09/25/oakland-median-home-sales-price-jumps-76-in-one-year-report-says.

[16] McLaughlin summarizes the very basics of this ethic as: call the pick; find the open man; rest on offense; if you're cold, stop shooting; reward the player who hustles.

[17] McLaughlin, Thomas. "The Ethics of Basketball" in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 13:1, p. 15.

[18] McLaughlin, p. 17.

[19] McLaughlin, p. 19.

[20] Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Idea*. Trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp. Project Gutenberg.

[21] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. "Urban and Rural Areas 2009". http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/urbanization/urban-rural.shtml. Accessed October 30, 2014.

Ruptures in Neoliberal Space

Assemblages of Difference:
Place-making and Utopian Agonism on the Open-Air House Music Dance Floor

Kavita Kulkarni

The sound of the drum circle is unmistakable: claves, congas, djembes, shakers, cowbells, a tambourine. I hear it as the scene fades in, and realize it's one of the grooves that has this woman with pigtail dreadlocks twirling in the sun. Another comes in about 20 seconds later, and from the clip's title, I know it's being offered by Black Coffee, a world-renowned South African DJ playing a guest set on the decks that afternoon. The beat, bass, and vocals from his track fill the air, resonating from speakers out of view and playing in time with the live percussionists. The camera pans right, almost 360 degrees, until the entire dance floor comes into view. Hundreds of largely black and brown bodies of different ages, shapes, and genders—shielded from the summer heat by a canopy of trees. Most are dancing; some are standing and watching, heads bobbing to the music; a few are holding cameras above their heads; one man maneuvers his way through the crowd with two fistfuls of Poland Springs water bottles in the air. Not all the dancers are partnered up—many seem to be dancing by themselves, for themselves. A deep voice bellows over the system: "Yeeeah... How many of you feelin' Black Cooffffeeeeeeee?!" (The crowd cheers and dozens of hands rise into the air.) "Soul Summittt, Two Thousand Eleven!!" The camera pans left and settles on two dark-skinned men in white t-shirts dancing next to each other, sweat towels tucked into their hands and pockets. As the camera pans back right, the drum circle comes into view, and next to it, a blonde white woman dancing solo, rocking her torso and hips, her arms swinging and undulating in formations you might find in West African-derived dance. To the right of the drum circle, a cipher has formed, and a dancer donning a black t-shirt, cocked red baseball cap, and white sunglasses moves into the middle. After a few seconds of energetic footwork, the dancer falls backwards toward the ground, and, much to the audible delight of the spectators, catches themself at the last minute, jumps back up, and spins, elbows extended, their hands resting coolly on the back of their head...

The scene described above, archived as a YouTube video by user Picha Dis, is from the 2011 season of the Soul Summit Music Festival: a free, open-air, and open-to-the-public house music dance party that has taken place in Fort Greene, Brooklyn since 2001 (Kelley 2011). The event—as envisioned by the party's organizers, DJs Sadiq, Tabu, and Jeff Mendoza— harks back to the neighborhood block parties and park jams of the 1970s and 1980s that contributed to the development of contemporary black urban culture in New York City and beyond. As a dance party dedicated to soulful, underground house music, Soul Summit also recalls the aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of the black and Latino gay underground cultural movements that gave birth to house music during those same decades in New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Newark, and other urban centers in the East Coast and Midwest of the US. Of particular interest to this article is the political potential of the assemblages surrounding the conjunction of song and dance in open-air house music culture, and how various forms of participatory co-production within these settings work to counteract the spatiality of peripheralization and the temporality of extinction imposed on black urban life

in the US. This article also notes the movement of house music culture from underground nightclubs in the 1970s and 1980s to public parks in the 1990s and 2000s, and considers the implications of this move in terms of how various bodies in attendance at these events mediate their participation through music, dance, and documentation. Indeed, one could say that the social and political significance of these events center on their participatory nature, but in the case of Soul Summit, it is not just *who* participates, but also *where*—in public space and in a historically black, rapidly gentrified neighborhood—that matters.

Figure 1.
Before the party starts—a view from the DJ booth. Photograph by author.

Figure 2.
"Black Coffee Soul Summit 2011 Fort Greene Park." YouTube video by Picha Dis (youtube.com/watch?v=lB2DqrpX910)

Soul Summit and the Gentrification of Fort Greene, Brooklyn

I remember clearly the first time I came upon Soul Summit. This was a few years ago when I had moved to Brooklyn from Ann Arbor after graduating from [University of] Michigan. I was visiting Fort Greene Park that day, completely unaware of the party that was taking place. As I walked around, I was drawn to the sound of beats emanating from the top of the hill. The music grew steadily louder as I climbed the hill, and when I reached the top, I was shocked by what I saw. Here, tucked away in this hidden enclave surrounded by trees at the summit of the park, were hundreds of black and brown and queer bodies, dancing, sweating, and celebrating to house music. Men on roller skates, children, young folks, everyone. I was overwhelmed by what I saw; it was alluring. I felt welcome and drawn in to this space and invited to join in a way that I hadn't before, possibly ever. It was a time in my life when I was still negotiating my identity as a young, black, queer woman. I was negotiating my difference and coming to terms with the fact that I was living my life against the norm. But here was a space where that difference didn't seem to matter. This was a celebration of difference—of being brown, of being queer, of loving house music.

Fieldwork Interview with Nicole Lewis, June 2013

In the summer of 2001, New York City DJ Sadiq Bellamy, along with his two partners DJs Tabu and Jeff Mendoza, organized the first Soul Summit Music Festival. Bellamy and his partners had been immersed in house music and DJ culture in the tri-state area for two decades, and were growing tired of the club scene with its black painted walls and underground existence—it was time to bring this culture above ground and on the radar for a wider audience (fieldwork interview with Bellamy, September 2012). The organizers chose the neighborhood of their residence, Fort Greene, Brooklyn, as the venue for this outdoor dance party. Fort Greene, a neighborhood that had been historically black since postwar white flight took place in the 1960s and 1970s, was home to a vibrant black arts movement and community in the mid-1980s and into the 1990s.[1] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the neighborhood started showing signs of what geographer Neil Smith termed "third-wave gentrification," in which the remake of inner-urban areas occurs at a greater economic scale than before (corporate capital investment instead of small-scale capital) and with greater support of state policy, resulting in a "comprehensive class-inflected urban remake" of city landscapes that produces "whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure, as well as residence" (14). In 2001, the first year of Soul Summit, evidence of these changes to Fort Greene was minimal: according to interviews conducted by the *New York Times*, the opening of a sushi restaurant and a corporate real estate office that summer were indication to some residents of what was to come (Newman 2001).

The initial response to and attendance of these weekly, open-air parties was overwhelming, prompting the organizers to change its venue soon after its start in order to accommodate the roughly 600 people that were turning up at each event. With the help of the late Brooklyn City Councilman James E. Davis, the party moved from the smaller Cuyler Gore Park on Fulton Street to the much larger Fort Greene Park, which was, according to Bellamy, still a fairly undesirable public space in 2001, the site of occasional gang and criminal activity. In spite of these conditions, Soul Summit was produced for many years as a weekly event over the summer season. It took place every Sunday during daytime hours and was thus likened to the practice of "going to church" by its participants. In fact, to this day, the party has not deviated from the tradition of taking place on summer Sunday afternoons and ending around sundown. The frequency of Soul Summit, however, experienced a distinct change in 2007; the once weekly party took place only four times that summer, and since 2010, has taken place on average twice a summer in Fort Greene Park. According to the party's organizers, this notable change in frequency was due primarily to the increased permit, insurance, and security requirements imposed on events taking place in the park by the Parks Department, which seemed to mirror the gentrification of the surrounding neighborhood (fieldwork interview with Bellamy, September 2012). These new regulations—such as a $2 million liability insurance requirement—created formidable bureaucratic and financial obstacles for this grassroots endeavor, motivating Soul Summit's organizers to start holding their events in other—and, in most cases, less regulated—outdoor public venues in New York City, such as the Coney Island Boardwalk and Restoration Plaza in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. The irony of being "priced out" of the park was not lost on Bellamy, who noted in

an interview that before the existence of Soul Summit, "no one wanted to use Fort Greene Park," and that it was the consistent presence of music and dance culture—brought to the park in no small part by Soul Summit—that contributed to the dying down of criminal activity and subsequently to the park's appeal as a venue for arts and community events. Despite this partial displacement from the park, and undergirded by the tireless efforts of its organizers, Soul Summit continues to receive global recognition amongst house music aficionados for its success in bringing this culture—along with its emphasis on inclusivity, community, and celebration for racialized and LGBTQ minorities[2]—to a wider and intergenerational audience.

Urban Public Space and Utopian Agonism

Open-air block parties and park jams in New York City have a history that is intimately tied to black urban culture and, rather famously, to cultural formations such as hip hop, whose development as a genre of music, dance, and visual art depended on public space both as a platform for performance and as a site of struggle against private and state interests.[3] Dating back to the mobile DJ movement in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens that took place in as early as the late 1960s, block parties and park jams provided entertainment to those who could not afford, were too young for, or otherwise could not access private clubs and discos.[4] These free, outdoor events were also public demonstrations and celebrations of collective racialized difference and cultural counter-hegemony. Through mixing and sampling, DJs performing at these events would weave together multiple genres of black and Latino music, including R&B, soul, rap, funk, conga, and salsa: genres of dance music that stood in sharp distinction to the European forms of electronic dance music that were dominating mainstream nightclubs in New York City in the 1970s. What's more, the embodied freestyle expression of street dancers, as well as the "illegal" art of graffiti artists, countered the notion that art must follow certain Eurocentric traditions,[5] or be situated in particular venues to be legitimate. According to hip hop scholar Tricia Rose, these various modes of cultural expression "developed a contradictory relationship to dominant culture" (Rose, 1994: 50), and "produced internal and external dialogues that affirmed the experiences and identities of the participants and at the same time offered critiques of larger society that were directed to both the hip hop community and society in general" (60). Certainly, the political potential of these public events was also ushered in by their open

Figure 3.
The dance floor at Soul Summit 2013. Photograph by Arnold J Browne-Bymsha Browne Photography

and free participation, the immediacy of a face-to-face experience, the lack of separation between performer and audience and between art and everyday life, and their challenge to models of governance that center on private property. I would like to make the case, however, that the public performance of 'utopian agonism'— a phrase I evoke to gesture toward the kind of autonomous world-making that presents "oppositional ideologies that function as critiques of oppressive regimes of 'truth' that subjugate minoritarian people" (Muñoz, 1999: 195)—carries political valence in particular for communities assuming a lower status in the hierarchical social ordering of race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, disability, and citizenship, and that these events demonstrate the stakes such communities have in linking a politics of space to a politics of difference.[6] That is, in the realm of urban spatial politics, and particularly when it comes to issues of gentrification and the displacement of minoritarian communities and culture, such events offer an alternate mode of political expression and participation.

In this section, I draw from theories on radical democracy by David Harvey and Chantal Mouffe to set up the "why" in regards to thinking together struggle (agonism) and utopian politics. In turn, I offer a provocation that addresses the "how." I argue that the performance of utopian agonism offers a minoritarian model and practice of political utopia predicated on the free expression and celebration of an essentially subaltern difference. This model can be distinguished from the more neoliberal, multicultural models of political utopia based on the institutionalization of equality and thus the neutralizing of difference—an "adaptive hegemony" in which institutions use "difference to foster capitalist distribution while curtailing social redistribution for underrepresented folks" (Ferguson, 192). I argue that house in the park events, like Soul Summit, exemplify this politics of utopian agonism through the performance of certain relational and participatory sensibilities on the open-air house music dance floor, which are furthermore sustained through new formats of mediation such as user-generated video. In addition, I argue that such public assemblages of utopian agonism not only have political value for minoritarian subjects in particular, but that it is precisely this alternate ethos of utopian politics that is foreclosed when urban public space is regulated, surveilled, and policed through the tools of liberal bureaucracy that essentially serve to neutralize spaces of difference.

The study of utopian politics has much relevance to the field of urban geography, and particularly to the study of the design and use of public space. David Harvey traces the connection between utopian thought and urban space in Part III of his book Spaces of Hope (2000) entitled "The Utopian Moment." Harvey outlines the changing imaginaries associated with "the city" from the time of Plato to the contemporary era in order to demonstrate that "urban politics is fraught with deeply held though often subterranean emotions and political passions in which utopian dreams have a particular place" (157). Harvey goes on to characterize two types of utopian thought: utopianism of spatial form versus utopianism of social process. The former emphasizes physical space and geography; the latter, time and history. Harvey is critical of projects of utopianism that center on spatial

ordering because these utopias have in practice "been achieved through the agency of the state or capital accumulation," and are "typically meant to stabilize and control the processes that must be mobilized to build them" (173). Utopianism of social process, on the other hand, such as Marxist historical materialism or Hegelian thought, "have the habit of getting lost in the romanticism of endlessly open projects that never have to come to a point of closure (within space and place)" (Ibid.). Harvey's resolution is to posit a dialectical, spatiotemporal utopianism in which "the idea of imaginative spatial play to achieve specific social and moral goals can be converted into the idea of potentially endless open experimentation with the possibilities of spatial form" (182). This spatiotemporal utopianism, according to Harvey, can be thought of as a sort of world-making that never ends, and that it is up to us to "recognize that societies and spatialities are shaped by continuous processes of struggle" (189). This dialectic mode of utopianism is, then, fundamentally agonistic, or, at least, connotes a utopic spatiotemporality that is never fully resolved.

As argued by political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, cultural practice and artistic expression are perhaps the most appropriate and necessary performative interventions to ensure the achievement of a spatiotemporal utopia in this mode of struggle and conflict. Mouffe sets up her argument by establishing the political as essentially agonistic (based in struggle and conflict), and positing that it is neoliberal ideology that suggests that political issues are "mere technical issues to be solved by experts" through rationalist and individualist thought (2008, 6–13). In modern liberal society, the essentially agonistic ontology of politics is mediated and neutralized through hegemonic ordering and the "expression of a particular structure of power relations" at the exclusion of others (Ibid., 9). At the core of a true, vibrant democracy, however, resides a strong sense of this agonistic struggle and a coming to terms with the notion that opposing hegemonic projects can never be reconciled rationally. Accordingly, this agonistic model of politics positions public space as a "battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation" (Ibid., 10). In this battleground, critical artistic practice—that is "art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure" (Ibid., 12)—plays a decisively combative role, contributing to the interrogation of hegemonic structures or worldviews. Indeed, Mouffe argues that art can be distinguished as "utopian experimentation, attempts to imagine alternative ways of living: societies or communities built around values in opposition to the ethos of late capitalism" (Ibid., 13). This disruption of public space by artistic production is a performative gesture; it is not the content nor even the form of the production that is most significant, but rather its function to unsettle the dominant hegemonic ordering of the space and the social relations that are sanctioned by this ordering. I wish to take this line of argument a step further by insisting that in the realm of urban spatial politics, the normative relationship between urban public space and utopian agonistic experimentation, as put forth by either Harvey or Mouffe, must be triangulated by the spatial history of minoritarian cultural expression, as it is the social status and sensibilities of production associated with minoritarian cultural expression *in particular* that allow utopian politics to maintain their agonistic edge.

Assemblages of Actionability: the DJ, the Dancer, and the Documentarian

August 10, 2014. It's about 5pm, and a couple thousand people have made their way to the summit of the park, many of them dancing on the packed, 50 by 100 foot concrete dance floor, some standing on the periphery as spectators, many more in the picnic areas surrounding the dance floor, lounging on blankets, sitting in folding chairs, chatting, laughing, filling up plates and cups for friends, loved ones, and perhaps even strangers. The vast majority of the crowd is black: African American, Afro-Carribean, a mixture representative of the black and Latino communities living in central Brooklyn and New York City in general. Sadiq has invited me up to the DJ booth during his set, a 15 by 40 foot tented area a few concrete steps above and to the north end of the dance floor. He has just mixed in a classic contemporary house track—"I Love Days Like This" by British soul and R&B singer Shaun Escoffery, remixed in 2001 by Brooklyn's own DJ Spinna—and the crowd responds with enthusiasm to the familiar chord sequence that starts the song off, a simple but seductive exchange of C major and C minor syncopated steadily against the 4/4 beat]. Many in the crowd seem to know the lyrics, and sing or lip-sync along as they dance, their voices collectively audible every time Sadiq brings down the bass on his mixer, which he tends to do during the soulful and exuberant chorus—"I love days like this, yeaaah! I love days like this!"—turning it back up for the break and throbbing bass line—"Here comes the suuuunnn... I love the suuuunnn..."

Figure 4.
Drummers at Soul Summit in 2012. Photography by Annette Bernhardt / Flickr

Figure 4.
The dance floor at Soul Summit in 2012. Photograph by Annette Bernhardt / Flickr

Figure 6.
Dancer at Soul Summit in 2012. Photography by Annette Bernhardt / Flickr

In this section, I argue that the relational and participatory sensibilities of open-air house music culture, as well as its modality as a counter-hegemonic expression and celebration of subaltern difference, serve both as a model for politics and as a political enactment through the performances of three central actors: DJs, dancers, and the documentarians whose mediated participation through informal videography serves to protract these functions into the online world through social media. In order to do justice to the political potential—or, 'actionable' elements, to quote Thomas DeFrantz [7], [8], [9]—within this expressive culture, my proposal of and approach to this triangular configuration of the DJ, the dancer, and the documentarian draws inspiration from performance studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz when he wrote, "Performance studies, as a modality of inquiry, can surpass the play of interpretation and the limits of epistemology and open new ground by focusing on what acts and objects *do* in a social matrix rather than what they might possibly mean" (1996: 12). This mode of identifying what texts, objects, and acts *do* rather than what they mean recalls the recent turn within urban studies toward methodological approaches that rely on theories of networks and assemblages, in which actors, objects, spaces, and practices are understood to continuously interact to generate complex and contingent urban experiences. This approach to scholarship serves well to uncover *in a way that also cultivates* the dense and dynamic, participatory and relational assemblages of utopian agonism that underlie the democratic potential of minoritarian cultural formations in urban public space.

The DJ's Dialectical Challenge

The house music DJ curates a non-linear timeline of historical and cultural artifacts, i.e. tracks within his or her set, that presents direct material and audible relationships between the past and the present of black music. While the choice of music and subgenre differs with each DJ and/or event, the focus on black electronic dance music—that is, dance music that evolved from the musical traditions of the African diaspora, including but not limited to gospel, soul, jazz, funk, salsa, samba, bossa nova, and reggae—is a standard across house music parties. The relationality of the track list is achieved through the basic modus operandus of the DJ, namely by intermingling their set with tracks from the distant and recent past with those of the present in a demonstration of their rhythmic, melodic, and/or other syntactic connections. For example, a popular up-tempo funk or jazz track from the 1980s—Stevie Wonder's 1982 "Do I Do"—might be mixed with a deep house dance track produced in the 1990s—such as Scott Grooves' 1998 "Expansions" featuring Roy Ayers—and it is the seamless blending of the two that produces a relationality in which a powerful cultural artifact from one time period is retrieved, remembered, and given contextual relevance within and in relation to another. There is a relational aesthetics at play here in the practice of the DJ: the work of art is not a static object but rather an open-ended provocation that exists first in the continuous dialectic between tracks that is only temporarily resolved in the act of mixing, and second, in the DJ's dialectical challenge to listeners to identify and take pleasure in the set, who may then perform one of a variety of embodied responses (eg. dancing, singing, leaving the dance floor, etc.). This practice of mediated relationality by the house music DJ serves to sustain the collective memory of an imagined black community by bringing trans-temporal artifacts associated with black culture into the mix. And, as is often the case, it is not just the musical qualities of the chosen track that reverberate with the crowd; mutual recognition and celebration of a track as part and parcel of the history of black music and of the experience of blackness begets a mode of participation that unifies and strengthens the relational bond of an imagined community whose physical proximity on the dance floor is but one commonality.

Affective Agonism on the Dance Floor

The embodied experience on the dance floor exemplifies the performance of relational and participatory sensibilities within house music culture, as well as of house music's agonistic expression of counter-hegemony. This happens both in the mode of social dance, in which participants dance together on the dance floor, and in the mode of "ciphers"—circle formations of dancers on the dance floor in the middle of which individuals take turns showcasing their moves. DJ Frankie Knuckles, the "Godfather of House Music" who passed away in 2014, addresses the potential of the former when asked to describe the sensation of spinning records for a crowd and hitting that "sweet spot":

> Collectively the room becomes one. Everyone's vibes connect. It's like a cosmic, invisible umbilical cord, and I'm the 'Mothership.' Nothing but love and respect is fed to the crowd thru the music I'm playing.... At this point it becomes a 'LOVE AFFAIR' between me and the folks in the room. Together we all fall in love. ("Frankie Knuckles")

This affective experience of participating in a crowd of people dancing together in the same groove, in which the experience of the individual is relinquished, if temporarily, to the sensation of collective being, is what performance studies scholar Jill Dolan would call the "utopian performative" in which "utopia can be imagined or experienced affectively, through feelings, in small, incremental moments that performance can provide" (460). These sensations are compounded by the delight—and difficulty—of moving poetically, gracefully, and often assertively on a dance floor thick with other twirling bodies. Moving to the music means simultaneously respecting the movements of others physically close to you, so that the dance floor becomes a dynamic, extemporized organization of bodies and gestures both synchronized to the beats and differentiated by individual modes of expression. In this mode of "dancing together," there is no singular star that is determined to be the leader. Even in the configuration of a "cipher," a dancer with the right amount of bravado and skill can usurp the limelight from another dancer for a moment, but, again, no one figure assumes a permanent position of prominence.

Outside of the embodied configurations on the dance floor, house music dance styles themselves offer an antagonism to dominant Western institutionalized notions of legitimate dance production, particularly in house music's mode of improvisation, or freestyling. Brian Polite, a dancer and founding member of New York City's dance collective Afro Mosaic Soul, describes the openness of dance styles that can be found at events like Soul Summit, and how this sensibility can be traced back to The Loft, a dance party organized by DJ David Mancuso in New York City beginning in the 1970s:

> You had people with modern dance backgrounds, people with martial arts backgrounds, people with African dance backgrounds, salsa, tap, freestyle street dancers—it was one of those things where people brought their own styles however they danced to the Loft, and because everything was open, you could modify however you felt... And you're watching these basically reject-ballerinas and world modern dancers that are just like, screw what they say at the school—I'm gonna dance how I want to. And they're letting loose and changing up styles that weren't supposed to be changed, that were supposed to follow a particular school or technique. And they're creating their own.

Whereas, by definition, minoritarian bodies and cultural expressions are denied full legitimacy within a hegemonic paradigm because of their essential "otherness," the ability and imperative to employ creativity, innovation, deviation, and virtuosity on the house music dancefloor grants the minoritarian dancing body a pleasureable freedom in its agonistic performance against such limitations.

Figure 7.
"Soul Summit Music Festival @ Fort Greene Park 7.13.14." YouTube video by Sick Syn (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTxjwmew7BQ)

The Counterpublicity of Informal Documentarians

While the formal documentation of dance and performance has a history as extensive as the history of dance and performance itself, the type of documentation I am interested in aligns more with what Muñoz described as "acts that are representational *and* political interventions in the service of subaltern counterpublics" (1999: 147, original emphasis). Informal videographers that are present on the scene of open-air house music events like Soul Summit are themselves participating and performing bodies that contribute to this public assemblage of utopian agonism. Their acts of documentation are actionable in more than just the realm of representation; they also perform "counterpublicity" by producing the very subcultural circuits in which the demonstration and celebration of minoritized difference and cultural counter-hegemony are able to circulate, particularly through social media. These videographers, who proliferated on the house music dance floor with the advent of digital video technology and video sharing websites like YouTube and alongside the revitalization of open-air dance music events, became a common sight at Soul Summit and other house in the park events in the mid 2000s, participating alongside dancers on the dance floor. By "disassembl[ing] that [majoritarian] sphere of publicity and us[ing] its parts to build an alternative reality" (Muñoz 1999: 196), these videographers sustain and transmit the utopian agonistic sensibilities of house music culture online and through social media. Currently, a search for "Fort Greene Soul Summit" on YouTube yields close to three thousand relevant results. The scenes within these videos vary, ranging from high-angle shots that depict the immensity of the crowd packed on the concrete dance floor; to point-of-view shots that convey a sense of being on the dance floor amongst the dancers; to clips of the ciphers, the drum circles, the DJ booth, and of picnicking participants off the dance floor. Together, these videos comprise a digital archive of this cultural site, event, and of the practices within the culture of house in the park. It is an archive that is constantly updated and reorganized according to user inputs, uploads, downloads, and the proprietary algorithms of YouTube. As argued by media and cultural studies scholar Sheenagh Pietrobruno, this practice of "social archiving could potentially capture intangible heritage as an ongoing process that might challenge the distinctions maintained by official safeguarding practices" (2013: 1260). Interviews with these documentarians indicate three primary functions of their practice— identification, transmission, and global kinship networking—that render them cultural co-producers and mediated participants of open-air house music culture.

The first is the ontological identification of the event as culturally significant and one that merits documentation. The recognition on the part of these archivists that the significance of these events is greater than the sum of their parts (i.e., dancing, listening to music, and picnicking) pays homage to the particular value this cultural phenomenon has for the marginalized communities that have historically participated in it and to the surrounding neighborhood as it rapidly changes demographically. One YouTuber—Lekule, an African American man who has lived in Fort Greene since the early 90s—discussed his desire to capture the spirit of the neighborhood of Fort Greene through his video recordings of Soul Summit, much in the same way that Spike Lee, one of his greatest inspirations, captured the spirit of black Brooklyn in the 1990s through his films:

> Soul Summit is like literally my backyard. I tell people about this experience, but … you can't put it in words. [My YouTube Channel] became me logging that, cataloguing that…. Being in there, and being enraptured in the music and experience, it kind of made me feel like [Spike Lee's] movies. It's a spiritual kind of… it's an experience. That's why I wanted to capture it…. And I felt like I should be documenting it. After a while, as things started to change, like after 9/11 happened, and then all the baby carriages started coming, and then I was looked upon like the outsider—really I started to be looked at like, what are you doing here? So by 2004 or 2005, it was really like, now I'm just invisible.

As Lekule describes, the act of recording is itself an ontological device that allows him to make tangible, to bring into existence beyond the event, the ineffable spirit of Soul Summit and of the surrounding neighborhood. And the importance of this act of identifying, or "cataloguing" in his words, is amplified by the changes he has witnessed and the invisibility he began to feel as a resident of a gentrifying neighborhood.

A second function of these informal videographers is the transmission of house music culture's embodied heritage for the sake of education and the creation of future histories. With the onset of video-sharing websites like YouTube and relatively inexpensive recording equipment, participants, particularly those who wished to safeguard this culture for future generations, began to record events that were foundational to house music culture and share them online. One Soul Summit YouTube archivist—Alejandro, a Puerto Rican and Dominican man who was born in Brooklyn and has been in the dance scene since 1990—discussed how YouTube has allowed him to pass along the heritage and tradition of house music culture to others:

> Basically, I love sharing what I love [and] connecting people to the legacy. Because, like I said, I'm second generation and [house music] got passed on to me…. And as much as I love technology… and can be a techie, there's still something about tradition that's so vitally important, and for me it just nurtures my spirit in a way when I feel connected to the legacy and to something traditional. I like being connected to something from the past, something that gets passed down, and I guess that this is my way of passing it down.

Alejandro, like many other Soul Summit YouTubers, recognizes house music culture as part of his identity, and ensuring the continuity of this culture meant that he was connecting this part of his identity to something greater—a tradition that was passed down to him and that he desires to pass on to future generations.

While this second function is focused on preserving the roots of house music culture, the third function is geared more toward its routes, particularly in the production of kinship networks surrounding house music dance. That is, the informal archive of shared online videos as a whole has contributed to the extension of house music culture—spreading to places in Europe and Asia especially over the past 10 years—and plays a role in the continuous recreation of what house music dance is and looks like. Dancers turn to YouTube to explore different styles and individual expressions of street dance, whether through battle or cipher videos, instructional videos, or videos of individuals dancing to overlaid music tracks. The creative expansion of house music culture is ushered in by this dynamic form of archiving, fostering its diversity and continuous evolution as dancers artfully interpret and build off of what they watch, and, in turn, produce their own videos to upload. One YouTuber, Sick Syn, a young African American man born and raised in Brooklyn who has danced in the NYC house music scene since 2003, discussed the importance of viewing and producing YouTube videos as a dancer:

> Once I started listening to the music, I was like ... I want to see more, so of course I just went on YouTube and typed in "house," "house music," and "house dance." And the first video that popped up was by this guy named Conway, and it was him dancing in his hallway and out in the street...and from there I just looked at the related videos.... I watched a lot of videos... and found out that battles were taking place in like Japan, France.... As far as house, YouTube is just great because you see all the stuff and you get inspired.... I filmed my first video at home, I posted it up, and was like, alright, time to do more, and it's been on since. Getting the views and hits was never a big thing for me.... The 300 [followers] that I do have, they like what's going on, and surprisingly out of that number were dancers ... from Paris, Japan, a lot of followers from Russia. To me that is greater than having 3,000 followers in America. People overseas looking at this and actually commenting, that actually gives me a bit of a drive.

For dancers like Sick Syn, the growing, dynamic, and global archive of house music culture on YouTube serves as a source of education, inspiration, and opportunity to contribute to the future of its practice.

Figure 8. "SOUL SUMMIT MUSIC FESTIVAL @ FORT GREENE PARK; BK." Youtube video by Sick Syn (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDDhpKmRS-s)

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Like house music culture itself, there is a participatory and relational sensibility to this informal digital archiving practice. Videographers and YouTubers of different ages and backgrounds participate in the continual reconstruction of this archive by their video uploads and downloads, as well as other user inputs. And by tagging uploads with various search terms that then group them with other videos—as well as by accessing YouTube's "related videos" function—YouTubers are able to affirm the relational organization of this archive and of YouTube as a whole. These new social techniques of "tagging," "liking," and "being liked" offer new ways of social interaction, and create subcultural circuits that produce virtual counterpublics that work in conjunction with the liveness of house in the park events.

The Politics of Place-Making and the Participatory Affirmation of Difference

When people amass on the street, one implication seems clear: They are still here and still there; they persist; they assemble, and so manifest the understanding that their situation is shared, and even when they are not speaking or do not present a set of negotiable demands, the call for justice is being enacted. The bodies assembled "say" we are not disposable, whether or not they are using words at the moment. What they say, as it were, is that we are still here, persisting, demanding greater justice, a release from precarity, a possibility of a livable life.

Judith Butler (2011:1)

On May 23, 2011, *The New York Times'* online supplement, *The Local*, published an article that confirmed what many long-time residents of Fort Greene had been witnessing over the past decade, that, according to census figure s, "Fort Greene and [neighboring] Clinton Hill's black population [had] declined by a third since 2000," (Cozier) from 65 percent of those neighborhoods' cumulative population in 2000, to 47 percent in 2010. Two months later, The Local published an article recapping Soul Summit's "first, and second-to-last" dance party of the season. Noting that it was the second summer in a row that the party happened only twice in the park, the author explains that "[t]he popularity of Fort Greene Park has limited events like Soul Summit from being held more frequently," and cites a statement from the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation:

> Fort Greene Park has received many permit applications for events of all kinds, including concerts, which Parks now limits to two per summer for any applicant, in order to accommodate the high demand for events in this park (Rohwer, July 20).

The majority of comments responding to this article, as well as to other articles covering Soul Summit in *The Local* from 2010 to 2011, speak to one interpretation of this phenomenon:

DIMPLES: I was raised in Fort Greene and yes the neighborhood has changed drastically. There were never bike lanes in our neighborhood, nor were there a trillion dogs running

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through the park unleashed.... when other events go on no one complains about it but let a bunch of people of color get together to enjoy a day of relaxation and there is a big hoopla. (Rohwer, July 11)

ROBERTO: ...i'm sorry, to consider ending Soul Summit is pathetic. particularly given the history of fort greene as an african-american arts enclave... (Hill)

BONITA APPLEBUM: ... before ft greene became what it is today-take that any way you wish- we had more free events and very few complaints... (Eckert)

KIANA: Let's just keep it real.....GENTRIFICATION.... (Hill)

LEE HAIRSTON: Now that the real estate has attracted a "new element" to the neighborhood, the systematic "reduction" of the Soul Summit parties in Fort Greene has become the focus for many of the "newly revised" community. How arrogant to come into a community, rich in a pre-existing culture, and work to weed out any & all "undesirable activity" THEY deem inappropriate. This, in my opinion is activity rooted in classism & racism. TRAGIC. (Hill)

NJVISUAL: I wonder why is everyone is tap dancing around the real deal. i remember when Fort Greene was wonderfully afrocentric, full of wonderful well read and artistically creative, people of color. During one of my drives through Fort Greene on my way to soul summit and looking for a parking space last summer. IT dawned on me that the complexion of the community was radically altered. Suddenly there seems to be a bombardment of white, stroller pushing yuppies who have been priced out of manhattan and now "this neighborhood looks real good" ... and in very typical fashion has decided that this is now theirs and they will run it the way they want. (Hill)

With inflections of disappointment and indignation, these commenters read the foreclosing of Soul Summit from Fort Greene Park as symptomatic of the greater trend of racial, economic, and cultural displacement in the surrounding neighborhood.

Figure 9. Ladies playing cards at Soul Summit 2012. Photograph by Annette Bernhardt / Flickr

The politics of place-making, implicated at the crossroads of urban spatial politics and the politics of difference, sits at the root of these comments and centers on a key question—who gets to decide the meaning of a space? These commenters gesture toward the notion that the imaginaries and sensibilities associated with Fort Greene and Fort Greene Park are ultimately being decided by the influx of newcomers (nonblack and higher income residents) into the neighborhood—newcomers who might acknowledge its cultural history but lack the will or ability to sustain its particular mode and ethic of sociality. The cultural capital of Fort Greene, afforded by its history as a neighborhood where black artists—jazz musicians, actors, visual artists, filmmakers, poets, and writers—lived and thrived in the late 20th century, eclipses the reality that the very bodies that work to sustain the imaginaries and sensibilities produced by assemblages of black cultural expression were in decline.

This article has argued for the importance of public spaces of utopian agonism, using Soul Summit and the assemblages associated with open-air house music as a way of understanding how these events offer an alternate modality of urban spatial politics and, in particular, one in which a participatory, relational sensibility facilitates, rather than forecloses, difference. That is, the relational and participatory sensibilities of open-air house music culture offer an ethics of space, time, and difference that activates minoritarian bodies through a democratic and agonistic mode of politics that is always in formation, never fully achieved—an 'actionability,' that is positioned to continually upset the existing social order. In effect, the organizers of Soul Summit, by providing a particular embodied experience and sensorium of Fort Greene and Fort Greene Park, incite an alternate sociality based on the acceptance and celebration of difference that counters the experience of minoritarian displacement felt within many gentrified communities.

As of 2015, the organizers of Soul Summit continue to bring the culture of open-air house music and its associated histories, imaginaries, and sensibilities to the residents of a rapidly gentrifying Brooklyn. While in the foreseeable future, the event will continue to take place at least twice a summer in Fort Greene Park, it has begun to disperse to other outdoor public venues where producing this event does not involve $2 million insurance plans, security bonds, or complex permit processes. Sadiq and his two partners make no money off their venture; instead of charging admission to their parties, they opt to expand their assemblages of production to include local fundraising efforts and sponsorship by small businesses within the community. It is important to them to keep the event free—donations are welcome, "if you have it, if not, just come on in" (fieldwork interview with Bellamy, July 2014). Through this ethic of radical acceptance, the organizers of Soul Summit, much like the original facilitators of underground dance culture for racialized and LGBTQ communities in the 1970s, offer an alternative imaginary and mode of participation for urban life and public space—a platform for the performance of a utopia that neither disregards nor reduces difference, but rather sustains it through a mode of collective, participatory celebration.

Notes

[1] See Nelson George's illustrative account of the Fort Greene black arts movement and community in the mid-1980s and into the 1990s in his documentary Brooklyn Boheme (2011).

[2] The notion of house music culture as an embodied response to the marginalization of queer black communities, as well as a celebration of this collective marginality, is documented in a number of histories and ethnographies of the subculture, including: *"You Better Work!" Underground Dance Music in New York City* by Kai Fikentscher (University of New England Press, 2000); *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* by Fiona Buckland (Wesleyan University Press, 2001); "The House the Kids Built: The Gay Black Imprint on American Dance Music" by Anthony Thomas (http://history-is-made-at-night.blogspot.com/2008/04/expect-to-read-lot-this-year-about-20th.html); and "An Alternate History of Sexuality in Club Culture" by Luis-Manuel Garcia (http://www.residentadvisor.net/feature.aspx?1927). For an aural history of the origins and development of house music, see *Midwest Electric: The Story of Chicago House and Detroit* Techno produced by Afropop Wo rldwide (http://soundcloud.com/afropop-worldwide/midwest-electric-the-story-of)

[3] See Bill Brewster and Frank Boughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (New York: Grove, 2000); Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, Yes Yes Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-hop's First Decade (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002); Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Viking, 1998); Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: University of New England, 1994).

[4] See *Founding Fathers: The Untold History of Hip Hop*, directed by Ron Lawrence and Hassan Pore (2009).

[5] See Naomi Bragin's illuminating discussion of choreocentricity (and furthermore her excellent analysis of the politics of mediated black performance in the context of turf dance) in "Shot and Captured: Turf Dance, YAK Films, and the Oakland, California, R.I.P Project" in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Volume 58, Number 2, Summer 2014, pp 99–114.

[6] The practice of utopian agonism that I am proposing is akin to the process of "disidentification" that performance studies scholar Jose Muñoz introduced in his book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). While Muñoz illustrates the performance of disidentification through examples from the performance, literary, and visual arts, I wish to present this notion of critical world-making in a different context—to consider scenes of utopian agonism that have a stake in urban public space and open participation as their site and ethos of production (respectively). In this way, I wish to consider how the utopian sensibilities of minoritarian performance problematize the tools of liberal state governance in urban spatial politics.

[7] Dance and African American Studies scholar Thomas DeFrantz argues that black performativity maintains a communicative ability through "expressive culture, including music and dance, that perform[s] *actionable* assertions" (66, my emphasis)—that is, black performativity involves gestures of expressive culture that *incite* action. The difficulty for scholars of black social dance, he continues, is that this actionability resists "inscription and interpretation from an exterior, immobile microanalytic perspective," because only the "visual effects" of its "corporeal orature" are accessible by the analyst (67). While the figure of the DJ and the dancer within black expressive and urban dance culture has been extensively addressed within both popular and scholarly writing (see Endnote VIII) these analyses (with some notable exceptions—see Endnote IX) tend to be limited in their understandings of the *actionable power* of these cultural formations, as they are based on their explicitly discernible and historical elements, such as prominent figure s, sites, lyrics, and the discrete physical movements of the dancers.

[8] See Bill Brewster and Frank Boughton, *The Record Players: DJ Revolutionaires* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2010); Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010); Jonathan Fleming and David Mingay, What Kind of House Party Is This?: The History of a Music Revolution (Slough: Mind in You Pub., 1995); Tony Fletcher, *All Hopped up and Ready to Go: Music from the Streets of New York, 1927–77* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009); Sheryl Garratt, *Adventures in Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture* (London: Headline, 1998); Tim Lawrence, Hold On to Your Dreams: Arthur Russell and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973–1992 (Durham: Duke UP, 2009); Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970–1979* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); Simon Reynolds, Energy Flash: A Journey through Rave Music and Dance Culture (Berkeley: Soft Skull, 2012); Jesse Saunders and James Cummins, House Music—The Real Story (Baltimore: Publish American, 2007); Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005); Dan Sick, *Techno Rebels: The Renegades of Electronic Funk* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2010); Raven Smith, *Club Kids: From Speakeasies to Boombox and Beyond* (London: Black Dog, 2008); and C. J. Stone, Fierce Dancing: Adventures in the Underground (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

[9] In particular, *You Better Work! Underground Dance Music in New York City* by Kai Fikentscher (University of New England Press, 2000) and *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* by Fiona Buckland (Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

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O collective Happening in Shanghai:
"Loose Space," Participation, and
What Sustains between Instantaneity and Permanence

Chiayi Seetoo

On a Sunday in June 2014, in a vast empty lot southeast of Tongji University in Shanghai, a rare free public arts event, titled *O collective Happening*, took place. The event lasted from the early afternoon till late into the night and drew a diverse and international crowd—visitors who had planned to attend, curious neighbors drawn by the unusual happening, and construction workers on this site, who stopped by. Flyers were pasted featuring a big "O" and an arrow sign underneath on the long white wall, on one side of Siping Road, framing the site. This was a mysterious script outside of the city's normative sign system guiding passers-by and visitors to enter the little-noticed, semi-open space—designated on the official city map as "257 Fuxing Road."

Beyond the white wall, visitors and residents of Shanghai continued their Sunday activities in the marked spaces of home, office, market, department store, cinema, restaurant, park, museum, or theater. Inside, over the span of eight hours, embodied, visual, sound and participatory art works ranging from performance art, film screenings, and dance, to experimental music, on-site micro-filmmaking, installation art, and a free graffiti wall, presented an unusual deviation from the habituated scripts of urban life.

Figure 1.
O collective Happening. Photo by Mayura Jain.

Figure 2.
Original steel structure, *O collective Happening* Photo by Nunu Kong.

Curated by a group of young, international artists in Shanghai, the event's bilingual title—*O collective Happening* in English and *O Jiti xitai* O (literally, "O collective outdoor stage") in Chinese—traced and linked meanings of "participation" in art and performance across Euro-American and Sinophone cultures and genealogies; they also reflected the international make-up of the artists and audience. The "O" corresponded to a large ring-shaped steel structure (7.4 meters high and 23.7 meters in diameter), an architectural model built for the seismic test of the new China National Exhibition and Convention Center in west Hongqiao, Shanghai, temporarily idle at the time of the performance. The model and the empty lot belonged to the Department of Civil Engineering of Tongji University. Here, beams, columns, and posts in steel intricately intersected, forming a porous cylindrical "wall" that enveloped a circular platform on the ground level. Reflection on the architectural uniqueness of the site figured prominently within the curation of this cross-media event. Co-curators Francesca Gotti and Lorenzo Malloni are Italian architects who came to Shanghai to pursue Master's degrees in architecture from Tongji University in partnership with Polytechnic University of Milan; the other co-curator, Nunu Kong, is a Chinese independent dance and performance artist based in Shanghai. Francesca also has a background as a dancer. Other participating artists included architects, urban planners, dancers, or performance artists.[1]

The curators' idea of creating an arts event in this striking site of idling semi-construction was supported by Professor Jiang Shouchao of Civil Engineering at Tongji and the site manager, architect Jiajing Zhang (JJ), who conceptualized and named the structure "iNest Temporary Museum" (*Niaowo linshi meishuguan*). The title added another temporal and spatial layer to the event; besides associating the shape of the structure with the natural world (the "nest"),[2] the function of the space was reconceived as one that showcases art (*meishuguan* is more accurately "art museum") but that is nevertheless "temporary," contrary to the type of temporality normally attributed to museums as places that house, preserve, and exhibit the past. JJ acquired 10,000 RMB in sponsorship funds (about 1,600 USD) for the event from the construction company that undertook the seismic test.[3] *O collective Happening* was launched under the soft framework of Tongji University, "iNest Temporary Museum," and modest private sponsorship. The bulk of the planning and implementation was undertaken by the three young curators; they and all the participating artists—recruited through an open call, apart from one invited artist—contributed their labor for free, with sponsorship funds spent primarily on publicity, set-up, and clean-up of the space.[4]

After two decades of rapid urban development, Shanghai today is not short of opportunities for exposure to the arts; theaters, concert halls, museums, galleries, festivals, and biennales abound, operating within different frameworks of public and private, and with both domestic and transnational funding. What distinguished *O collective Happening* was its international and

interdisciplinary nature, strong bottom-up planning and implementation, and unique spatial-temporal reformulation within the urban environment. The event activated what Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens theorize as 'loose space,' that is, urban public space "appropriated by citizens to pursue activities not set by a predetermined program."[5] Although the site of *O collective Happening* is not strictly a public space, it is nevertheless publicly accessible and expresses key characteristics identified by Franck and Stevens in terms of the ambiguity and thus 'looseness' of function and landscape character. Specifically, the idling status of the site, suspended between the seismic test and its unknown future, corresponds strongly with the "leftover and abandoned spaces," one vital type of 'loose space' that Franck and Stevens describe:

> Lacking officially assigned uses, leftover spaces and abandoned spaces lie outside the "rush and flow" as well as the control of regulations and surveillance that come with the established uses of planned urban public space. They are the negative or void to the city of named and fixed types of open space (park, plaza, street, sidewalk)—the 'other' places, what Ignasi de Solá-Morales calls *terrain vague* (1995). Calling them 'superfluous landscapes,' Nielsen (2002) sees abandoned spaces as the 'backsides' of the designed, 'primary' spaces of public life, which he sees as controlled and scripted, following the model of the theme park and the mall. Also called 'no man's lands,' 'indeterminate spaces' and 'free zones' (Groth and Corijn 2005), abandoned and leftover spaces, temporarily free of official planning and commodification, are appropriated for other uses. [...] La Varra calls these spaces and their uses Post-It City: 'a fragile and fragmentary network which filters into the tightly woven structures of urban public space' (2001:428).[6]

As will be revealed later, the site of *O collective Happening*, besides being a 'spatial void' in the city of Shanghai, is implicated in the city's globalizing process, as a curious necessity and leftover.

Franck and Stevens emphasize that it is people's actions—recognition, appropriation, and making use of the space—that create a 'loose space'. Indeed, the site of *O collective Happening*, already quite 'loose' in its physical and social conditions, was further 'loosened' and transformed by the organizers and attendants. Through artistic and creative means, *O collective Happening* brought together and animated different types of participation, or durational engagement centered on relationships and experiences of the participants. The event facilitated such participation by embracing the dialogical, the intersubjective, the embodied, and the experiential for its audiences and organizers.

Figure 3.
O collective Happening.
Photo by Nunu Kong.

Because of the specific history and quality of the site—with visible piles of construction debris and fully exposed steel structures—contemplation about contemporary urban existence was either consciously provoked or emerged organically, and figured compellingly in some of *O collective Happening's* presentations. Thoughts concerning the rapidly changing cityscape, building, demolition, dereliction, memory, and preservation, rubbed up against experiments in "relations" between people, space, and performance. This made *O collective Happening* exceptional, particularly in light of Shanghai's history of urban development and the city's diverse and contemporaneous artistic scenes. The wealth of reflexivity and stimulation encouraged through open, creative, and artistic experience and process also speaks to the "virtues" of 'loose space' that Franck and Stevens underscore, ones that arise from qualities of "possibility, diversity and disorder," in direct opposition to "certainty, homogeneity and order," qualities that control-inclined civic governance and discourse tend to uphold.[7]

Although much of what made *O collective Happening* innovative and exceptional emerged from its interdisciplinary quality, disciplinary fault lines did exist. One such conceptual divergence occurred around the question of what sort of temporality an event like *O collective Happening* would embody—"durational," as mentioned above, or "instantaneous" (shunshi) as seen by JJ, who measured performance (defined as the event or the "happening") against architectural materiality and permanence. This conceptual rift is worth contemplating as it raises important questions about how the arts are situated in place, and how participation is situated in Shanghai. Against the pursuit of architectural monumentality and persistence, the "instantaneous" may seem oppositional and progressive; however, this idea risks undermining or overlooking, the experience and labor of the people, whose situation and inhabitance in space over time is as much the material of the urban as is the maintenance of infrastructure—buildings or otherwise. Departing from the paradigm of the oppositional, from which this conceptual slip in part derives, I raise instead the question of sustainability. What "sustains" between the instantaneous and the permanent?

In what follows, I first sketch the process of post-reform urbanization of Shanghai and the contemporaneous urban, spatial, artistic, and participatory scenes that have emerged, in order to elaborate on the larger context of *O collective Happening*. I then review and offer readings of aspects of the event, drawing on my experience as a live participant. Finally, I reflect on the event in light of competing temporalities summarized above. The production of space and time in the urban is under debate, as I inquire into where "sustainability" and concern for the human stands.

Post-reform Urbanization, Developmental Monstrosity and the Arts

As a public arts event situated in the urban space of Shanghai in a site embodying traces of the city's urban development, *O collective Happening* explicitly dialogued with the broader discourse and milieu of urbanization and contemporary art in Shanghai. In light of Shanghai's post-reform urbanization, changes and features of Shanghai's urban landscape interrelate with the city's art spaces, as well as with the context (and content) of other public arts projects contemporaneous with *O collective Happening*. The juxtaposition also helps illuminate the distinctiveness of *O collective Happening*.

Figure 4.
O collective Happening.
Photo by Tom Lee Petterson.

In the post-reform era of China, from 1978 onwards, several Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzen and Guangzhou, underwent rapid development. The impacts are most explicit in drastic changes to the urban built form. For the city of Shanghai—from the 1986 Master Plan for Shanghai to Deng Xiaoping's 1992 designation of the city's role in leading the whole country into prosperity—urban development directly translated to urban image-remaking through architecture.[8] The 1990s in Shanghai were characterized by a building boom and vast demolition. Enormous blocks of housing designated as decrepit were marked with the big Chinese character *chai*, "demolish," while new real estate and spectacular architecture flourished.[9]

The venue of *O collective Happening*, containing the quality of a "construction site" within the urban landscape, makes reference to this urban development phenomenon shared by other growing Chinese cities. That the main steel structure was built as a testing model for the new China National Exhibition and Convention Center (an example of iconic architecture, boasting the pronounced shape of a gigantic four-leaf clover), further allows for this venue to exceed the merely referential and metaphorical, and present itself as genuinely imbricated within the city's globalizing development.

Urban theorists have identified "iconic architecture" as a marketing tool for cities with globalizing aspirations. Leslie Sklair defines iconic architecture as "buildings and spaces that are famous for professional architects and/or the public at large and have special symbolic/aesthetic significance attached to them."[10] To become a "global city"—characterized by nodes, networks and global flows of people, goods, services, ideas, and images—a city seeks to derive its status through iconic architecture. Such built form helps it gain global attention and thus regional and world capital, mobilized by a transnational capitalist class.[11] In Shanghai, the Lujiazui financial district in Pudong (the east of the Huangpu River), now lined with ultramodern skyscrapers including the Oriental Pearl Tower (1994), Jin Mao Tower (1999), Shanghai World Center (2008), and Shanghai Tower (2008), exemplifies such architectural iconicity deeply embedded in global capitalism.[12]

The success of Shanghai's city-branding is not exclusive to generating an architectural iconicity of the new. Opposite the Huangpu River is the Bund, the historical waterfront that holds an equally iconic place, with architecture harkening back to the semi-colonial era of pre-World War II Shanghai. In a way, Shanghai's self-image-making as a global city is really marked by *strategic* architectural iconicity, selectively enfolding the futuristic and the historical, embracing new skyscrapers of striking formal design alongside colonial era architecture reinvested with commercial and touristic value. This historical architecture recalls the city's former status as the "Paris of the Orient" in the 1930s. Together, they become the icon and postcard image of Shanghai that the world's spectators have come to know.

Amidst the frenzy of building and demolition, the massive loss of urban form has drawn great attention. Artists, including some involved in *O collective Happening*, have addressed this issue in their practice, exploring themes of urban past, loss, nostalgia, and memory. While concerns for preservation are strong, Shanghai's phenomenal urbanization turns even architectural "preservation" to commercial profit reaping. The renowned case of Xintiandi (2001) exemplifies such a paradox; originally decrepit, low-value *shikumen*[13] housing from prewar Shanghai was selectively "preserved" and repackaged into an area of chic, fashionable, and expensive high-end bars, restaurants, and retail outlets.

Many of the arts and cultural spaces in Shanghai also took on the form of architectural iconicity; The Shanghai Grand Theatre, Shanghai Oriental Art Center, Himalayas Art Museum, China Art Museum, and even K11 Art Mall, all boast extravagant designs. Urban geographer Lily Kong pointed out that for global cities to derive their status, particular forms of cultural capital are required in addition to networked nodes of global flow, and a prominent means of generating such cultural capital is to create new "cultural urban spaces" such as grand theatres, museums, and libraries.[14] Often monumental for obvious reasons of visibility and tangibility, these structures intend to enliven a certain kind of cultural life to "attract and sustain global human and economic flows."[15] While Kong's study centers on government-led endeavors, Shanghai's current art spaces contain a mixture of government and private interests that share global capitalist pursuits.

A contrasting art space of significant renown is "M50" (50 Moganshan Road) by the Suzhou Creek in the inner city of Shanghai, a once spontaneously-formed cluster of artist studios and galleries. Since the 1990s, artists first moved into the warehouses of closed-down factories for cheap rent, gradually forming the distinct arts district that it is now. However, frustration in the face of development persists here. Artists based in M50 fight to keep the developers' bulldozers away and now precariously survive on rising rent and uncertainty of the site's fate, despite some, but still insufficient, official recognition for its economic and city-branding value.[16]

O collective Happening's grassroots initiation and organization is akin to M50 but differs significantly in its appropriation of urban 'loose space.' The art spaces mentioned above, including M50, have accumulated clear and specific meanings of arts engagements; in a way, urban public life in these clearly demarcated art spaces are as scripted as the themed environments of amusement parks and malls. Another key aspect of *O collective Happening* is its nature as a public arts event, and Shanghai has witnessed many such events that also unsettle given meanings and functions assigned to specific urban spaces. In the latter half of 2014, a series of high-profile, high-impact arts events took place here. From May to July, French photographer JR devised a photobooth truck that traveled and parked in different spaces in Shanghai for the general public to instantly take and print out large black-and-white headshots that were then pasted over the walls and grounds of different public spaces.[17] In July, New York-based Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang sailed a dilapidated fishing boat filled with fake animals in Huangpu River to the dock of Power Station of Art to open his solo exhibition *The Ninth Wave*.[18] In October 2014 as part of the China Shanghai International Arts Festival, a

week-long "arts carnival" took place on the campus of the Shanghai Theatre Academy. For a low entrance fee visitors experienced a wide variety of indoor and outdoor arts events including performances, visual exhibitions and screenings, talks, workshops, and creative markets.[19]

Unlike *O collective Happening*, these events operated within prominent institutional frameworks, with interests in different degrees and forms of symbolic and real capital. Their high-profile, high-impact quality also tended to fall toward the spectacular. This is not to undermine institutional arrangements and support and neither to deny the potential for provocations rooted in local urban history and textures, but to point out that certain tendencies do exist for arts produced in such conditions. To offer some counterpoints, two other projects are worth mentioning that directly concern memory and oblivion in the wake of rapid urban development, themes that also went into some of *O collective Happening's* presentations. The first is *The Wrinkles of the City* (2010), also a project conceived by JR, in which he interviewed elderly people of Shanghai, took photo portraits of them, printed the photos in monumental sizes and pasted them across sites marked for demolition. Stirringly provocative are the aging lines and countenances of the close-up faces of the local elderly, which appeared unexpectedly on crumbling walls against high rises under construction looming in the background. The interviewees' personal stories were published in both English and Chinese in a separate photobook.[20] That JR is a foreign artist may beg further consideration of the conditions and limitations of participation in relation to legal citizenship. The second project concerning memory and oblivion against rapid urban development is the exhibition *Dinghai Qiao: Art Practice into History* (2014) that connected art with more sustained local research to reflect on the state of the outlying Dinghai Qiao neighborhood in Shanghai, marked for the continued, if dwindling, existence of socialist workers' housing complexes built since the 1950s. These housing complexes once filled the landscape of Shanghai as a socialist industrial city.[21] The exhibition of *Dinghai Qiao* manifested a quiet, unspectacular participation in the little-noticed part of the local. This project was undertaken by the First Emerging Curators Program of the Power Station of Art, Shanghai (the first state-run museum of contemporary art in mainland China, established in 2012).

O collective Happening—Intersecting Frames and Urban Participation

In light of the specific ways *O collective Happening* was situated in and against the environmental and discursive scenes of Shanghai's urban development and contemporary arts, the event itself reveals how it relates to and reflects on Shanghai's urban development, and further, to ideas and practices of community and participation in the urban. The history of the site itself, the conceptualizations of the project, and the actual content of the event are entry points into teasing out some of these insights and provocations.

Figure 5.
The Apparatus of the City's Memory, O collective Happening.
Photo by Chiayi Seetoo.

Figure 6.
Ritual Memory Icon 1, O collective Happening.
Photo by Chiayi Seetoo.

The 'loose space' appropriated for *O collective Happening* is not just any urban space devoid of defined meaning and function, but is interwoven with the city's larger globalization process. In fact, the site already traced periods of its own developmental promise, idling, and reuse, parallel to but eventually falling out of Shanghai's urban development. Tongji University had planned to turn the vast empty lot into a creative park, but the project has long been suspended. Around the summer of 2013, the idle space was temporarily adopted for building the architectural model for the seismic test of the new China National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) in west Hongqiao. The future Convention Center will include hotels, corporate offices, and exhibition and convention halls, capitalizing on its adjacency to the transportation hub of Hongqiao, where the airport and high-speed train station converge.[22] Indeed, it is a perfect case of an iconic architecture that facilitates the necessary flows required of a global city. Moreover, the connection between the ring-shaped steel structure and the Convention Center makes the site of *O collective Happening* more than just the negative, void, or flipside to the named, fixed, primary, or designed spaces of public life; rather, it is the leftover and left-out from the city's globalizing progress, if also a necessity as one stage of the development (the seismic test space) for Shanghai's iconic architecture. The implications of this will emerge clearer in later discussions.

Architect JJ named the ring-shaped steel structure "iNest Temporary Museum" for the event. For him, the conception of a "temporary" museum, the idea of the "instantaneous" (shunshi) offers of critical promise against dominant architectural pursuits that prize monumentality and permanence. It should be noted that the "instantaneity" conceived here does not refer to the rapidity of building (and demolition) that characterized Chinese urbanization in 1990s. Rather, it evokes the temporality of the momentary appearance and physicalization of a "happening." This is what co-curators Fancesca Gotti, Lorenzo Malloni and Nunu Kong proposed, (with their own conceptualizations and agendas), in contradistinction to architectural monumentality and permanence—Shanghai's most pronounced spatial-temporal preoccupation.[23]

JJ's embrace of instantaneity in some ways echoes the dematerialization and institutional critiques that have inspired visual artists to make performance art in Euro-American contexts. [24] In a different conceptual vein, co-organizer Francesca Gotti's desire to appropriate the space for an arts event privileges the opportunity to generate and reflect on "relations." Francesca is interested in how arts participate in the social context, much like how architecture participates in the environment. The "relations" that interest her concern those amongst

people present at the event, between people and (public) space, and between performer and audience. It was bringing people to this unfamiliar and strange site, unmarked by spectacle or consumption (like the majority of spaces in Shanghai), and to stimulate them to think about "relations" through physical, tangible arts experiences—contact, voice, movement, objects—that inspired her to create *O collective Happening*. It was not planned as a "festival," or a "meeting," but as a "happening" in the sense of a "situation," a "moment limited in time," in which things could "grow," "develop," "open up," rather than "finish."[25]

Although Francesca is aware of Allan Kaprow's famous "happenings," Kaprow's practice was more peripheral in her conceptualization.[26] Guy Debord's "situationism"—involving critical urban interventions and practices like walking in abandoned sites and construction sites, and Italian architect Francesco Careri's concept of "walkscapes"—treating "walking as an aesthetic practice," or an "architecture of landscape," are sources that inform her praxis as both an architect and dancer.[27] However, the call for proposals for *O collective Happening* was more open-ended than citational—simply detailing the information and physical attributes of the site, the format of the event as a series of multi-arts presentations lasting for several hours, and examples of the wide-ranging possibilities of arts presentations.[28]

The Chinese title added another layer of spatial, social, and performing arts genealogy to the mix. Nunu Kong created the Chinese title *O Jiti xitai*. *Jiti* is the direct translation of "collective"; *xitai* in Chinese conjures the image of traditional outdoor stages where Chinese song-and-storytelling performances and various kinds of *xiqu* (Chinese opera) are performed, all functioning as a kind of ritual and entertainment embedded in everyday folk lives.[29] This traditional Chinese performance genealogy was cited to frame and evoke the public, outdoors, communal, and artistic performance qualities projected in the event. It was left to the audiences, with varying cultural-linguistic attachments, to interpret and imagine the event and to the live participants to realize its actual "happening."

I participated in *O collective Happening* as a contributing artist, audience member, and friend of the curators. A female performance studies researcher holding graduate degrees from U.S. universities, a Taiwanese versed in both Mandarin and English, a recent inhabitant of Shanghai, I am non-Western but also non-native, harboring a unique quality of foreignness to and familiarity with Chinese culture. Below I submit a series of accounts and ruminations (echoing the spirit of the presentations) of the more memorable pieces and moments that stirred provocations for me. They subtly address issues of urbanity, relations, construction, memory, and meaning.

For dancers like Francesca and Nunu, physicality, embodiment, duration, and even the ephemerality of performance are not a means of disrupting certain aesthetic conventions and economies. These aspects are already central to dance or embodied performance. The new environment simply foregrounded these characteristics of their practice. The move away from enclosed and sometimes lofty proscenium stage to an open air site where spectators could come and go induced a new set of conceptions and strategies for performance. Fixed choreography was overtaken by improvisation and audience participation was central to the aesthetic schemes.

Figure 7.
A Bunch of Good Looking Bad Buys, O collective Happening. Photo by Nunu Kong.

Figure 8.
Zoo, O collective Happening. Photo by Tom Lee Patterson.

While most of the performance pieces took place in the circular platform inside the ring, treating the site exactly like what the event's Chinese name suggests, a *xitai*, an outdoor stage, Nunu's piece completely withdrew from the framework of "proscenium stage performance." Instead, she brought the audience to another corner of the lot and turned them into actors for an on-site micro-filmmaking work, titled *A Bunch of Good Looking Bad Guys*. The participants were instructed to perform the most "villainous" look they could make with the scarves, straw hats, huge goggles, and mock weapons provided by Nunu. It turned out that as most of the participants were quite young, the "badness" they performed almost inevitably exuded a kind of cuteness, or the budding, wide-eyed qualities of *moe*, the discourse from Japanese popular culture that has also powerfully entered Chinese young people's everyday lexicon and performance. This unwitting twist of the villainous ironized the motto "Don't judge a person by their looks." From the pronouncement of "good looking bad guys," to the instruction for acting up the "villainous" "look" for the camera, and to the unexpected turnout on the set, the hyperbolic twists and turns on the surface could potentially stir one's thoughts beyond the superficial. At question was the obsession with the visible that camera, and by extension screen culture, enhances and feeds into, and how the visible has come to be interpreted as the direct sign of the "good" or the "bad," terms that are often simplistically used to designate a person's intention or some kind of inherent morality, and more relevant to modern civic terms, what ensures or endangers security. I began to think of how locating the "bad guys" has become one of the most common ways of maintaining "security" in modern civic governance, and "looks" turned out to be the easiest thing to turn to. Much violence has been done in its name across global urban spheres, often masking the real "bad guy."[30]

Francesca's piece *Zoo* utilized the aesthetic feature of the ring-shaped platform to unsettle conventional performer-audience relationships. The audience was first instructed to get up from their seats and move to the circular platform and told that they would be taken to "visit the zoo." As the audience was still adjusting themselves to the new stance and vision, some of the collaborating artists began to imitate the audience members' actions from the ring. When more and more people discovered the potential "rule" of this game or performance, some began to make funnier and more exaggerated movements to test the limits of imitation by the artists

in the ring. At times, these artists also departed from strictly mirroring the actions in front of them, performing even funnier twists of the actions in response. A kind of dialectical bouncing between looking and being looked at, action and passivity, surveillance and agency, and pleasure and subjection emerged and expanded until the time-limit was reached. I was greatly affected standing in the circle watching all the actions that happened around me, all the while conscious of myself being part of this grand spectacle. Questions about how form facilitates function and impact came to mind. The circular platform recalled acts of display and watching invested with power and pleasure with which the "zoo" is commonly associated; the dynamic was then playfully highlighted and further experimented with through a deliberate shift in vantage point and stance for those present. Particularly, it is the shape of the circle in which one's performance cannot find a back, a corner, or an end that made the ambiguity of the boundaries between surveillance, counter-surveillance, exhibition, and self-exhibition palpable. The "zoo" is the metaphor and citation of an aspect of modern human culture translated into modern urban planning—one can almost always find a zoo in a major city, and the circular platform recalls such architectural precedence and resonance from the Colosseum to the circus, where spectacle and acts of watching and performance intersect with slavery, violence, animals, and buffoonery.

Site-specificity took other shapes as well. Francesca and Lorenzo Malloni exhibited an installation at the smaller adjacent square platform, titled *Ritual Memory Icon*. Quaint objects such as pipes, teacups, teapots, incense burners, and small bird cages in different sizes were lined up vertically like mini-towers—bigger ones on the bottom and smaller ones on the top. To me, these objects evoked dim-sum places, teahouses, and a bit of fantastical otherworldliness. They embodied at once the delicate, the intimate, the hand-made, and the dated. The Oriental Pearl Tower came to mind, as the Tower too professes replicative layering in accumulated sizes (in the form of bright pink "pearls"). This structural association loomed strong for me when I cast my eyes to the photographs below that showed these delicate installations erecting fantastically into the sky out of the low-rises of old neighborhoods of Shanghai. The commentary on the contradictions of urban development was readily apparent. I was struck by the explicitly artificial production of the city's simulacra, in which the hyper disjuncture between the soaring tower and the low-rises remained, but the original—that is, the Tower—and its extravagantly outdated futurism of material and symbolic power was displaced by the quaintly stacked teapots and cages in impossible scale.[31]

The issue of where memory lies in the urban was most directly addressed in artist and urban planner Ana Martin Juste's performance *The Apparatus of the City's Memory*. Exploring the question "How do we experience 'city'; how have our ancestors through history experienced the growing mysterious urban development?" Ana cited and reinterpreted seven Western literary, filmic and musical texts in English.[32] She placed cardboard pieces cut in the shape of jigsaw-puzzle pieces on the ground and asked audience members to pick up one piece at a time, which would then trigger a specific text that she would perform. Eventually the words "collective memory" were revealed underneath the puzzle. The interactive performance was aimed "to involve the visitors and [...] to make them navigate 'the apparatus of the city's memory.'"[33]

Poignant and challenging, Ana's performance and the instruction to navigate it, however, underwent an unwitting twist by a little boy among the audience, who, not understanding English and undisciplined by the frame of this performance, conducted a parallel performance by placing, quite carefully in his own aesthetic order, pieces of green bristle grass he had been collecting, along the rim of the platform on which Ana was performing. The boy did respond to Ana's recitation, if not to the content per se, as he slowed down, ducked, and steadied himself along the rhythm and volume of Ana's voice (and was also careful not to interfere or block her) as he performed his own ritual.

The little boy had been secretly decorating the seating area with this grass for a while, adding his personal touch to the environment, driven not by external purposes but a pure desire to decorate, beautify, and simply have fun. Indeed, while the curators had appropriated and transformed the site for the event, the little boy—and many other participants—performed their own forms of "participation" on the spot. The loose programming in between performances and the overall friendly physical environment transformed by the curators— colorful hammocks and "benches" made with wooden boards across the columns—enabled people to casually socialize or play amongst themselves, not necessarily having to always connect with the "arts" in presentation. It was in this newly created condition, within which attendants felt comfortable enough to spontaneously engage and improvise modes of "relating" with others and the space that a specific kind of "participation" emerged. "Participation" in O collective Happening privileged the embodied and the relational— forming dialogues and intersubjectivity among people and between people and the space— as an experience unfolding over time. The experience encompassed not only the intellectual, but also the affective and the emotionally felt, as simultaneous and intertwined, uneven and complicated, and individuated and communal. What Franck and Stevens embraced in theorizing 'loose space'—"possibility, diversity and disorder"—resonated strongly in *O collective Happening*.

Figure 9.
O collective Happening. Photo by Nunu Kong.

In Search of the Sustainable, *O*

Echoing the spirit of *O collective Happening* as Francesca conceived it, more questions are "opened up" than tidily answered or "finished". In retrospect, publicity was one big challenge. Although the event was well attended, participants were most often from the direct or extended circles of the curators and artists and the foreigners present were mainly study-abroad students.[34] This type of event had never taken place before and was not strictly attached to any corporate or official framework, the 'trade-off,' one might say, of the relative autonomy of bottom-up organizing was lack of support including publicity. However, the fact that the neighbors—mostly local Chinese senior citizens, some of them bringing their grandchildren—and workers on the site found the event interesting and stayed, forming momentary interactions with other participants, added unexpected diversity to the crowd and revealed other possibilities for the site and the questions it raised concerning "relations" between people and urban space. We might begin by asking: if for most urban residents, foreign and Chinese alike, the specific site is "strange" and "loosely" undefined, what is the space's relationship to those who live nearby or work on this site?

Many people asked whether *O collective Happening* would continue. The curators themselves were uncertain about this. Was it just a one-time thing, what JJ referred to as the "instantaneous," when placed in relation with the macro spatio-temporal conditions of urban existence and architectural monumentality, or does it endure in any way? This brings me to the question of "sustainability," but rather than diving into the pragmatics surrounding the temporal duration of any event, such as fundraising and organizational structuring, I want to reflect on the conceptual entry points to the event itself. The slight difference between how JJ and the curators framed *O collective Happening*, yields insights into how we might envision the relation between human interaction in and with urban space, and sustainability.

First, is a "happening" instantaneous or durational? From JJ's architectural perspective, it was "instantaneous," and it was this instantaneity that seemed to perform a critical opposition to monumental permanence. Francesca, by contrast, was more concerned with "relations" that stem from human interactions and experiences, as participants and audiences encountered space and each other. "Relations," are of the temporality of the durational; they are formed over time. When Francesca talked about the idea of the "moment" with a "limited time" for the happening, she was referring to a marker of duration rather than the shortness of timespan. Is an eight-hour event "instantaneous"? By what measure do we assign temporality to human energy, experience, relating, participation, and labor?

Figure 10.
O collective Happening, from left to right, Francesca Gotti, Lorenzo Malloni, Nunu Kong. Photo by Chiayi Seetoo

JJ's concept of "instantaneity" could also be applied to the steel test model and facilitated a certain conception of "sustainability." The information about the test model is also included in the public call for O collective Happening; it describes how the model is "built for the task, and dismantled when the task is over," (*jiyong jijian, yongwan jichai*) and that to reuse it until its demolition is a way to "fill in the temporal and spatial void after an incidental happening" (in this case the seismic test), which may align with some concepts of "sustainability."[35] If one takes a moment to probe underlying assumptions, it becomes more apparent that the way "sustainability" is conceived of in the public call places the "space" first; "space" as it is tied to the material it holds (the building), and it is when the space is emptied of its function based on its material holding, becoming the spatial void, that it in turn produces the temporal void. In other words, "sustainability" is conceived in terms of *what happens to the space. O collective Happening* functions as an event that fills in the "void" of this site.

What *O collective Happening* inspired me to search for, however, is "sustainability" in terms of engaging people in relation to the space. Both ways of conceiving "sustainability"—as whether or not a space still holds any material or performs any function, and how people are engaged in relation to their situation in space—entail spatio-temporal formulations, but the slight split in orientation at this point may lead to a greater difference in how we engage with the urban. If we seriously consider "sustainability" with these split orientations in an urban framework, we may begin to sense the greater divergence in their potential consequences: Is "sustainability" concerned with structures and materials (literally and metaphorically) in the city, or the people in relation to the city (and its structures and materials)? Moreover, *which* structures and materials, and *which* people? In question is also the way resistive politics is privileged and conceived through an oppositional paradigm. To frame a "happening" as "instantaneous," overlooks and potentially undermines the creation of enduring "relations" that stem from the people, their experiences and efforts. If the "instantaneity" of a "happening" comes across as progressive in relation to architectural permanence, the underlying logic of this argument may have already sidelined or even neglected concern for human interactions.

In searching for conceptualizations of urbanism that can provide a framework to consider more deeply how "participation"—*as durational, human-centered activity and experience*—relates to the urban, I find Lily Kong's articulation illuminating. Kong has outlined the three-fold concept of sustainability for her study of urban creative space—environmental, cultural, and social—that articulates the centrality of human experience. Environmental sustainability concerns "sustainability of urban spaces as valuable repositories of *human* (personal and social) meaning and simultaneously as livable, rejuvenated spaces" (my emphasis).[36] From environmental sustainability stems cultural and social sustainability that privileges indigenous cultural idioms, local identity, social inclusion, and community bonds.[37] "Participation" that centers on durational, human-centered activity and experience in relation to urban space is an important foundation for a politics of urban sustainability that foregrounds sustained *human* meaning in their environmental, cultural, and social ramifications, so much more than filling in the "void" of the space or by its extension the potential tendency to privilege the maintenance of the structures and materials of the city.

While these questions are opened up by *O collective Happening*, the event was built on transient foundations. The appropriation of urban 'loose space' is inherently of the "temporary"; the steel structure had a temporary existence as well, although in service of another "sustainability"—seismic prevention—of the *real* monumentality, and we may contemplate the profound allegory it composes for the particular and accelerated urbanizing phenomenon of Shanghai and many other global cities. The art district "M50" exemplifies a more established model of bottom-up, spontaneous appropriation and creation of art space in urban Shanghai, although within the city's "paradoxical simultaneity of (un)sustainability," as Kong has also pointed out, it is surviving in precarity.[38] In the end, whether or not *O collective Happening* can endure in any way is like the real "O" itself, in suspension

O

(Open, zero, zen, collective, circle, embrace, bonding …)

Notes

[1] Relevant information about *O collective Happening* can be found on its event website; "O Collective Happening," Event Website, accessed November 28, 2014, http://ocollectivehappening.weebly.com/.

[2] The neologism of "iNest" itself may evoke a range of associations, from Apple products (with the initial "i" and a certain creative class associated with it) to another iconic structure, the National Stadium in Beijing designed by the Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron for the Olympic Games in 2008. The Stadium's interweaving steel beams locally earned it the nickname "Bird's Nest" (niaochao). The naming was not particularly favored by the three curators of O collective Happening.

[3] Shanghai LANKE Building Damping Technology Co.

[4] All the performances and art pieces were solicited through an open call for proposals, except for the experimental music performance duo Yasen Vasilev and Christian Berg, who were invited by Francesca. The majority of the funds were spent on hiring workers to clean up the space, which was originally littered with construction debris and massive amounts of cords for the seismic test. Francesca, Lorenzo, and Nunu also did additional work to decorate and set up the space, such as installing "benches" made of wooden boards in between columns and creating a relaxing area hung with colorful hammocks.

[5] Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens, *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.

[6] Ibid., 8.

[7] Ibid., 17.

[8] Cary Y. Liu, "Encountering the Dilemma of Change in the Architectural and Urban History of Shanghai," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (March 2014): 120.

[9] Liu, "Encountering the Dilemma of Change in the Architectural and Urban History of Shanghai." See also Xuefei Ren, *Building Globalization: Transnational Architecture Production in Urban China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) and Weiping Wu and Piper Gaubatz, The Chinese City (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[10] Leslie Sklair, "Iconic Architecture in Globalizing Cities," International Critical Thought 2, no. 3 (September 2012): 349.

[11] Sklair, "Iconic Architecture in Globalizing Cities."

[12] Ibid.; Lily Kong, "Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status," *Political Geography 26* (2007): 383–404. The phenomenon of Lujiazui district is not simply architectural but a megaproject of urban boosterism and capitalist globalization entailing a vast designated zone in the urban landscape.

[13] Xuefen Ren, "Xintiandi: New Heaven and Earth," in *Building Globalization: Transnational Architecture Production in Urban China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 110–23. *Shikumen* ("gates-wrapped-in-stone" in Shanghai dialect) is a popular style of housing built in colonial Shanghai *blending* western and Chinese features, such as slate-gray bricks, French windows, courtyards, stone gates, and stylistic arches at the front door. Households are linked together forming dense, long neighborhood lanes (*lilong*) that are representative of old Shanghai.

[14] Kong, "Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status."

[15] Ibid.

[16] Lily Kong, "Making Sustainable Creative/Cultural Space in Shanghai and Singapore," *The Geographical Review 99*, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–22. In the same text, Kong also articulates "the normative policy script" of "creative-economy strategy" that has captured official imaginations in Asia, taking shape in cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Taipei, and Seoul. This was, in part, prompted by the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s and the need to seek alternative economic strategies. The abundance of monumental art spaces in Shanghai are a form of cultural capital for a global city and attest to how the regional circulation of the creative-economy script (whether directly official or not) has made its imprint on the urban landscape. The case of M50 shows the relevance but also the limits of Shanghai's urban creative-economy script in enabling it to thrive.

[17] "Inside Out Photobooth Truck," *Close-Up in Shanghai by JR*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.jr-closeup.net/en/.

[18] "Cai Guo-Qiang: The Ninth Wave," *Power Station of Art*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.powerstationofart.com/en/exhibition/detail/690kt.html.

[19] "R.A.W.! Land," *China Shanghai International Arts Festival*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.rawland.cn/EN/Project_2. R.A.W. stands for "Rising Artists' Works," a platform to present works by young and emerging Chinese and international artists.

[20] "The Wrinkles of the City by JR," *Gallery Magda Danysz, Shanghai-Paris*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.magda-gallery.com/en/wrinkles-city-jr; JR and Magda Danysz, *The Wrinkles of the City: Shanghai* (New York: Drago, 2011).

[21] "Dinghai Qiao: Art Practice into History," *The 1st PSA Emerging Curators Program, Power Station of Art*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.powerstationofart.com/en/exhibition/detail/719cu1A.html.

[22] Jiajing Zhang, Interview with the author, June 30, 2014. The National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai is collaboratively built by the Ministry of Commerce of China and Shanghai Municipal Government, scheduled to complete in 2015; "National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai)," Official Website, accessed November 28, 2014, http://en.cecsh.com/index.aspx."

[23] Zhang, Interview with the author.

[24] Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[25] Francesca Gotti, Interview with the author, November 9, 2014.

[26] For reference to happening in the vein of Allan Kaprow and the associated artists in New York in the 1950s, see Mariellen Sandford, ed., *Happenings and Other Acts* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995).

[27] Gotti, Interview with the author. For reference to Guy Debord's Situationist International, see Tom McDonough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004). For reference to Careli's "walkscapes," see Francesco Careri, Walkscapes (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili SL, 2002).

[28] "Call for Proposal, O Collective Happening," May 2014. The call describes "performance forms such as theater, dance, music, and performance art and live participation and happening of visual arts forms such as photography, painting, and graffiti," further encouraging "interdisciplinary artists and even amateur arts lovers to participate and create."

[29] *Xitai* is different from " *juchang*" as "theater"; juchang refers more to modern theater arts or theater space often associated with the proscenium stage inside an auditorium.

[30] When I discussed with Nunu Kong the association I had of her piece, she expressed appreciation but also confessed that she did not intend any social commentary when she conceived the piece; Nunu Kong, Interview with the author, June 20, 2014. My perception was informed by the discourses I was exposed to, from recent police shootings of black subjects in the U.S., such as the murders of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, to perceptions of minority ethnicity in the context of China, to which I was new. A pronounced incident that linked "security" and ethnicity in China happened not long ago before *O collective Happening*. In March, 2014, a violent killing of civilians in Kunming railway station in Yunan Province, recognized by Chinese officials as organized crime by Xinjiang separatist terrorists, have added to the ways Uygur ethnicity in China have been perceived and profiled by the dominant Chinese Han ethnic imaginary, translated into a burst of all kinds of popular and intellectualized discourses circulated at the time; for reference to the incident, see for example, Celia Hatton BBC News and Beijing, "China Separatists Blamed for Attack," BBC News, accessed December 2, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26404566.

[31] In Francesca's conception, teapots, teacups, pipes, incense burners, and bird cages represent Chinese "ritual," which pertains to the concept and formation of memory; Francesca Gotti, Interview with the author, November 14, 2014. I felt differently about these objects, informed by my own hybrid cultural experience, including my experience and understanding of Chinese culture from my upbringing and ongoing encounters with Westerners' imagination and perception of Chinese culture; there seemed to be a "Chinatown-ness" in these object that is also exotic and fascinating to me, in an endearing but also ironic way. Francesca's abstract of this research exhibition states the intention "to free stereotypes around the image of the city, the communication between people and urban material, to play with the concepts of image, identity, history, language and start an understanding of the city with new eyes, judging less and leading more. Deconstructing the knowledge we have of these concepts, by de-contextualizing their visual translation, remixing, recomposing in an apparent random order which in fact reflects on the mind set with which we look at reality, the name we give to things, the meaning we decide for them in our context and in any other context," in Francesca Gotti and Lorenzo Malloni, "Ritual Memory Icon, research exhibition," 2014.

[32] Ana Martin Juste, "The Apparatus of the City's Memory," *O Collective Happening Program*, June 15, 2014. The texts range from "'The God of the City'(Georg Heymn), 'Citizens' (Alfred Wolfenstein), 'Traveling' (Gottfried Benn), 'I don't know if history repeats itself' (Yehuda Amichai) to the poetry slam 'Fruit tea' (Franziska Holzheimer), extracts from the Movie 'Medianeras' (Gustavo Taretto), song lyrics from a band called 'Moop Mama' who are dealing with for e.g. the video surveillance in the city and something self-written."

[33] *Ibid*

[34] To the disappointment of the curators, although the event was under the framework of Tongji University, somehow no other Chinese students from Tongji showed up. It may be that channels for University-wide publicity were not utilized, or that Chinese students are not used to going to this kind of event, as Francesca speculated. WeChat, the preeminent mobile app of text messaging and social networking in China, turned out to be the most effective channel of publicity, although its relatively "closed" design (only allowing one to see posts and comments by people in one's direct "friend circle") may have also limited the potential for the publicity to circulate more broadly. Gotti, Interview with the author.

[35] "iNest Temporary Museum," Event Website, *O Collective Happening*, accessed November 28, 2014, http://ocollectivehappening.weebly.com/4047931389200202610232654264153930-inest-temporary-museum.html.

[36] Kong, "Making Sustainable Creative/Cultural Space in Shanghai and Singapore," 3.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 4–5.

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Squatting in Non-Spaces:
Queering Art and Identity in Global China's Guangzhou [1]
Jenny Lin

An*Other* Triennial

Under the provocative title, "Farewell to Post-Colonialism," the curators of The Third Guangzhou Triennial – Johnson Chang Tsong-zung, Gao Shiming, and Sarat Maharaj – announced their lofty goal: to free post-colonialism from ossified institutionalization and overly academic or token political correctness.[2] Now we may doubt the ability of a triennial (or biennial, or any other large-scale spectacular art world event) to liberate a radical intellectual discourse such as post-colonialism.[3] Yet, despite valid critiques of "biennialization as banalization," the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial succeeded in taking seriously post-colonialism's limits through a series of relevant symposia, publications, and artworks that confronted shifting post-colonial conditions vis-à-vis issues of globalization foregrounded by the exhibition's eminence as an international art event and situatedness in one of the world's primary manufacturing capitals. Resisting any hasty bid farewell, this paper aims to refresh the discourse of post-colonialism by examining the queer identity and spatial politics of the Guangzhou Triennial, and in particular the featured work, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, by Hong-Kong born United States-based artist Simon Leung. *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, I argue, queers language and bodily gestures to expose the constructedness and fluidity of identity, and crafts a non-space that mimics, with disobedience, the non-space of Guangzhou and the cosmopolitan mythologies rampant in both the city and global art exhibitions.[4]

Squat and Show Me

Squatting Project/Guangzhou, an eighteen-minute long, two-channel video installation created specifically for the Guangzhou Triennial, critically engages the "Farewell to Post-Colonialism" theme, while problematizing the exhibition's global status. The work appropriates a scene from Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan's 1991 film, *Center Stage* (*Ruan Lingyu*), which details the life and tragic demise of beloved 1920s-30s era Chinese movie starlet, Ruan Lingyu. Addressing class hierarchies through the bodily position of squatting, the appropriated scene features Ruan Lingyu, played by actress Maggie Cheung (Zhang Manyu), squatting with film director, Cai Chusheng, played by Tony Leung Ka-fai (Liang Jiahui). The director comments, "Two thirds of people in China [squat]. They can't help doing it. They squat to wait for the mandarins and landlords to slap them from behind. They squat to get insulted or for help."[5] Ruan Lingyu adds that people also squat for rest, while admitting that she herself has not squatted since becoming a movie star. "Don't sit on high," the director says, "squat and show me."[6] *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* translates the scene's dialogue to and from English, Cantonese, and Mandarin, and into traditional and simplified Chinese characters. The onslaught of linguistic signifiers incorporates both the film's original subtitles and the artist's own translations, which collectively become illegible for most viewers.

For Leung, translations and resultant miscommunications queer language by exposing language's cultural constructedness and limitations; squatting similarly queers the body by underscoring how our physical positioning is embedded in and shaped by cultural and socio-economic conditions and power dynamics. Squatting is a position commonly embodied by working class people in Asia. The squatter is driven by economic necessity, by the need to wait, and to always be on call. Workers squat in fields or on city streets to rest, but the squatter's rest is always temporary. To squat is to remain perpetually ready to spring into action upon demand. If one elevates their social standing, they may cease squatting, and instead "sit on high," as the actress of *Center Stage* confesses to do after becoming a movie star.

Squatting Project/Guangzhou offers diasporic reflections on class, gender, and cultural performativity by looping additional scenes of various squatting scenarios: Chinese security guards and workers squatting on a sidewalk in Vietnam, young white people squatting in front of an artificially constructed cityscape, ethnically Chinese children squatting in a cruise ship elevator and for a photo shoot, practicing Cantonese phrases (drawn from *Center Stage*) with their grandmother, a group of Asian American twenty and thirty-somethings who recite lines from *Center Stage's* squatting scene before squatting collectively in a plaza in Los Angeles' Chinatown, a drag performer squatting alone in a nightclub. Through filmic appropriation and adaptations, intentionally contaminated translations, and a constructed center stage set that divides the installation and makes it difficult to see both channels at once, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* fashions a queered non-space that unravels the mechanisms of identity construction and critically parallels the global site of the Guangzhou Triennial.

Figure 1.
Simon Leung, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou,* installed at the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial, "Farewell to Postcolonialism," Guangzhou, China. Image courtesy of artist.

Dislocated Guangzhou

The case of the Guangzhou Triennial in Mainland China, which was never fully colonized, but much of which was forcefully occupied by British, US, German, French and Japanese powers from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century (still referred to in the People's Republic of China as the country's "Century of Humiliation"), poses a set of unique questions when it comes to issues of post-colonialism and art's globalization. In a publication produced in conjunction with the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial, curator Maharaj offers a telling indication of the differing views on post-colonialism held by the exhibition's participants and spectators. Opinions diverge widely, Maharaj writes:

> On whether China had colonized itself first with communism and then with global capitalism. On whether this made [China] unlike other colonial subjects of Empire. On whether China was simply swapping roles from underdog to top dog. On whether unease with the 'other' and the unlike was about the incapacity to recognize difference without assimilating it to 'our norms.'[7]

It seems fitting that many of the Guangzhou Triennial's exhibited works, like *Squatting Project/ Guangzhou*, deal with place and placelessness, since the critical potential of "Farewell to Post-Colonialism" was heightened by Guangzhou's location and distinct urban identity.[8] Far from Beijing, the country's political capital, the southeastern city of Guangzhou neighbors Hong Kong, which, because of its emergence as one of Asia's thriving post-World War II "Tiger Economies" under Britain's capitalist system, became a model within leader Deng Xiaoping's post-Mao (post-1976) era economic reforms. Developing at breakneck speed in the past two and a half decades of China's so-called "post-socialist" (post-1989) present, Guangzhou constitutes a liminal space, home to the transitory and a city itself in constant transition. Located in Guangdong Province, Guangzhou was positioned as one of China's earliest Special Economic Zones, a city open to free market trade and placed under much fewer economic restrictions from the central Chinese Communist Party. An industrial manufacturing capital, Guangzhou is a city that many people living outside of China have never heard of, but which likely produced many of their belongings, including clothes, shoes, appliances, food products, electronics, books, and stationery.

Since the late 1980s, Guangzhou has become an epicenter of China's so-called "floating population," a term used to describe the millions of migrant workers, many of them young women who come from rural towns to work in factories, in the country's eastern coastal cities and Special Economic Zones. Journalist Leslie Chang details migrant workers' lives in the manufacturing cities of China's Guangdong Province:

> The city does not offer them an easy living. The pay for hard labor is low – often lower than the official minimum wage, which ranges between fifty and eighty dollars a month. Work hours frequently stretch beyond the legal limit of forty-nine hours per week. Get hurt, sick, or pregnant, and you're on your own....But suffering in silence is not how migrant workers see themselves. To come out from home and work in a factory is the hardest thing they have ever done. It is also an adventure. What keeps them in the city is not fear but pride...To go out and stay out...is to change your fate.[9]

Today, Guangzhou houses millions of floating migrant workers. Denied the same rights as urban locals because of their lack of a city residency card (*hukou*), these floaters fuel Guangzhou's mind-boggling fast-paced global and civic expansion by laboring in factories and on construction projects.[10]

In 2008, the speed of the city's construction was highlighted by the construction of Times Museum (*Shidai meishu guan*), one of the Guangzhou Triennial's annex spaces. Times Museum, which showed *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* in its lobby, was still being built just one day before the exhibition's opening (as illustrated in one of Leung's subsequent video projects).[11] In addition to this down-to-the-wire construction, the museum's name (the use of the plural *Times* in English signifies both up-to-datedness and coexisting temporalities) and architecture (designed by starchitect Rem Koolhaas, Times Museum occupies different floors of a soaring residential high-rise, and intends to structurally intervene in the living space) exemplify the unprecedented rates of change, accelerated senses of time, grand scale, and all pervasiveness of development in China's mega-cities. Guangzhou, with its constant influx of migrants, steady flow of globally exported goods, and never-ceasing urbanization operates as a non-space, a nexus of incessant temporal and cultural collisions.

This non-space is epitomized in the city's ubiquitous Karaoke, or KTV bars. Imported from Japan via Taiwan, Guangzhou's KTV bars are popular venues for businessmen and high-ranking officials to entertain and make deals. Inside many of these KTV bars work hostesses, who in some cases double as prostitutes, many of whom started out as migrant factory workers. In 1999, cultural anthropologist Aihwa Ong observed that Guangzhou's KTV bars, with their pop videos from Taiwan and Hong Kong, provide "the first step into the glamorous overseas-Chinese world of wealth, modern sexuality, and sophisticated fashion."[12] Going to KTV bars can be very expensive (exceeding a worker's monthly wage), but, as Ong writes, people still go because, "it is viewed as an investment in a different future and an expression of many people's desire to leave socialist China and enter the world of overseas Chinese modernity."[13] However, for many people in KTV bars, and especially the hostesses who staff them, the TV

screens playing foreign pop videos in private rooms are their only, un-opening windows to an outside world. While the quantity of goods produced in and exported from Guangzhou daily is so vast that it nears the unfathomable, most Chinese people living in Guangzhou have far less flexibility when it comes to border crossing.

Drag and Disobedience

One of *Squatting Project/Guangzhou's* most striking sequences is set in a nightclub that resembles the central dance floors of Guangzhou's KTV bars, with their "strobe lights and blaring disco music accompanying gyrating dancers."[14] Empty aside from a lone performer, the nightclub in *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* also conjures the more private singing rooms of KTV clubs. The scene features a squatting drag performer, enacted by part-Chinese, United States-based transgender artist Wu Tsang. Clad in a skimpy costume, high-heels and make-up, Wu dances, mostly while squatting, to throbbing disco music. He then squats in stillness while the music continues to pulse. This sequence was shot in the Silver Platter, a Latino drag bar in Los Angeles, where Wu hosted numerous art events in the mid-late 2000s and which was featured in his subsequent film, *Wildness* (screened at the 2012 Whitney Biennial). In *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, the Silver Platter, shot after hours, becomes a kind of private disco. The black and white checkered floor serves as both dance floor and squatting platform; the windows and walls are covered in shiny copper-colored paper and strings of red lights. Here, the nightclub, like a KTV singing room, appears as an insular interior, offering no more than glimmers of an outside world.

In their respective inner worlds, both drag performer and KTV hostess perform gender, adorning, for instance, typical signifiers of female sexuality and commodity fetishism, such as high-heeled shoes. Yet, the KTV hostess, unlike *Squatting Project/Guangzhou's* drag performer, would never squat while entertaining clients on the dance floor. The hostess is forbidden from being seen in this base position; a worker squats to wait, a woman squats to pee, people squat to defecate. Guangzhou's KTV hostess, while likely a migrant worker, must appear to inhabit a social standing higher than that of the city's common factory girl. Her bodily posturing must uphold the illusion that she is part of the glamorous, cosmopolitan hyper-reality deceptively offered by Guangzhou's KTV bars and discos. The KTV hostess, like the movie starlet of *Center Stage*, is trained by patriarchal society to "sit on high."

In contrast, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* drag performer squats, rejecting and rendering constructed the female performer's expected position. By squatting, Wu Tsang, who already has a trans-body, is doubly subverting normative gender expectations. Inhabiting a position that the female performer would typically be disciplined out of, Wu performs gender parodically and with what queer theorist Judith Butler calls "disobedience." Butler warns against the feminist denunciation of drag as "a colonization in reverse," recognizing that parodying identity with disobedience can effectively unsettle oppressive expectations regarding uniform subjecthood, while giving voice to those who are often voiceless.[15]

The squatting drag performer of *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, like the installation's colliding nexus of languages and varied images of squatters in multiple contexts, exposes the performativity and cultural constructedness of identity, fashioning a queer non-space that exists within and in resistance to the non-space of Guangzhou.

Splitting the Difference

At the Guangzhou Triennial, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou's* double projections were installed in a room with a painted red interior. Viewers entered the room through a set of stairs, onto a raised stage. This *center stage*, which ran down the middle of the room, was coupled with the lowly positioned projections, prompting some viewers on the platform to squat to see the projections, while also making it impossible, whether one stayed on the stage or descended the stairs to each side, to view both screens at once. This dual viewing impossibility parallels the impossibilities of a universal art viewer, of a universal squatter, and of language, especially when translated, to ever completely communicate. The center stage design pushes viewers to make their own meaning of the double projections, which, because of their varied settings and multiple languages, amplify viewers' own social, cultural, and linguistic limitations.

Throughout *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, viewers encounter intentionally complicated Chinese and English translations of fragmented texts that queer normative understandings of cultural identity as inherent and fixed.[16] The video installation reveals that language, like bodily gesture, is not constructed by individual subjects, but rather constructs subjecthood and identities, which in turn remain in flux. One related translated sequence from *Squatting Project/Guangzhou* discusses a listener's response to a radio program, which problematically details what are assumed to be inherent differences between Chinese and western artists:

> The difference, according to the experts, is that western artists are driven by interior motivations; while Chinese artists, because of the rapid changes in China in recent years, are influenced by external forces. The metaphors of "the internal" and "the external" are dependent on the picturing of physical bodies as the grounding for psychological life. Alone in his car, in traffic that does not move, he conjures these bodies...The first is an expansion of an abstract shape, like a red glowing flame from the center of a torso, outward, until it fills the entire picture in his mind. The second is a cacophony of flashing electronic neon colors and sounds, spinning around and then compressing a man's head. He doubts the ability of these images, and the ideas that inspired them, to withstand serious scrutiny.[17]

Figure 3.
Simon Leung, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou,* installed at the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial, "Farewell to Postcolonialism," Guangzhou, China. Image courtesy of artist.

The accompanying projections, the first shown with English text and the second with Chinese characters, consist of 1) a darkened outdoor café with no people, but the ambient noise of pouring rain, street traffic, and muffled speech in an indiscernible language, and 2) a solitary white man walking through and squatting in sunlit nature.

The juxtaposition of these scenes is intentionally jarring, as each image projection departs radically from the other (darkened urban café vs. bright outdoors). The inability to fully read these scenes (even if viewers are bilingual in Chinese and English, they are unable to make out the muffled conversation in the café or to penetrate the inner thoughts of the solitary man) and the impossibility of watching both at once (because of the installation's center stage) underscores that gesture and speech are not complete within themselves, and do not emerge from some internal source like a mythical glowing flame in the western artist's torso. Viewers' intentionally limited experiences with *Squatting Project/Guangzhou's* dual projections, translations, and various squatting sequences serve as reminders that languages and bodies are always culturally embedded, shifting (like pronouns) depending on the speaker and receiver, and capable (whether through translating, conjugating, or squatting) of being queered.

Squatting Project/Guangzhou's multiple translations respond to Leung's own linguistic disorientation in Guangzhou where his native tongue, Cantonese, was frequently not understood by the city's increasing numbers of Mandarin-speaking denizens. While Cantonese has traditionally been the language of Guangzhou and all of Guangdong Province, this has shifted in recent years because of the recent influx of migrant workers, many of whom speak their own local dialects, and speak Mandarin as a common language upon arriving in Guangzhou. These linguistic shifts have become a source of contention in an already tense climate, where acrimonious clashes between local urban natives and migrants are common. "Can the Squatter Speak?" asks Leung at a symposium held in conjunction with "Farewell to Post-Colonialism." In his talk referencing Gayatri Spivak's foundational post-colonial text, "Can the Subaltern Speak," Leung describes the complications associated with the multiple languages at work during the Guangzhou Triennial – English, the lingua franca of the art world, Cantonese, the local language of Guangzhou, Mandarin, the common language of Mainland China and its millions of migrant workers who also speak local dialects, simplified Chinese characters, used in Mainland China, and traditional Chinese characters, used in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Pointing to the limits of translation and his purposeful creation of a project that cannot be entirely read by any one viewer, Leung concludes:

What I give up here…is the 'ideal viewer' – the assumption that art, seen under the rubric of the international exhibition, can produce a 'cosmopolitan we.'… To address, simultaneously, local, national, and international viewers is to neither assume that they can come together as 'one,' or are mutually excluded from one another, but like the internal difference that situates one form of Chinese from another, to perform an ethos of proximity in difference.[18]

Squatting Project/Guangzhou images the complications and limitations of language and bodily gesture, and the ability of translation and squatting to queer post-colonial identity formation. This

queering serves as a critical strategy illuminating the stakes of globalization, while demanding, in the context of the Guangzhou Triennial, that viewers return to post-colonialism and reflect on the potentials of a queer post-colonial art to create a non-space that protests fixed identities and maps displaced urban subjectivities and shifting formulations of collectivity and difference.

Coda: Umbrellas of Occupation

As I wrote this essay, Hong Kong was experiencing the longest and most heated series of pro-democracy protests since the city's 1997 handover from British colonial to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule. Throughout the summer and autumn of 2014, tens of thousands of student-led protesters assembled publically to critique Beijing's policies, and especially the recent announcement that Hong Kong will hold direct elections in 2017, but that voters must choose from a list of CCP-approved candidates. In the final days of September 2014, protesters under the "Occupy Central" movement flooded Hong Kong's primary financial district, and riot police responded with tear gas and pepper spray. Images and footage of the protests show crowds of people shielding themselves from billowing clouds of gas with colorful umbrellas. In gestures of linguistic queering, protestors utilized Cantonese puns and wrote signs in traditional Chinese characters, defying the Mandarin and simplified characters commonly used in Mainland China. The Hong Kong protests stirred great anxiety, especially amongst those who recall Beijing's 1989 pro-democracy movement and the Tiananmen Square protests' violent conclusion on June 4th that solidified the CCP's ironclad rule. Hong Kong, unlike Beijing, holds a unique position as a former British colony that previously afforded certain civil liberties and voting rights that many citizens now resist relinquishing. The current unrest in Hong Kong reveals the complexity of the city's post-colonial condition, and provides a haunting backdrop for this essay's consideration of the Guangzhou Triennial, held in a Mainland Chinese city that neighbors Hong Kong and epitomizes China's post-1989 CCP-supported global capitalist expansion.

Figure 4.
Simon Leung, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou,* installed at the 2008 Guangzhou Triennial, "Farewell to Postcolonialism," Guangzhou, China. Image courtesy of artist.

也有贴在镜子边框的月历照片

Squatting Project/Guangzhou features a brief choreographed dance sequence that is critical, but easy to miss. On one screen a single figure performs the simple dance, while the other screen showcases two parallel dancers, who finally squat in unison. The dancing figure s are seen only from behind. They wear street clothes and hold plastic bags in each hand. They step to the left, step to the right, and make wide arm circles, swinging their bags. All of these dance movements, aside from the squatting, mimic the movements of Beijing's so-called Tank Man, the lone figure who blocked an oncoming line of military tanks near Tiananmen Square on the day following the June 4th, 1989 crackdown. While Tank Man became the most widely internationally circulated image of this failed pro-democracy movement, all footage of the tense standoff and photographs of Tank Man were forever banned within Mainland China. *Squatting Project/Guangzhou's* parodic performance of Tank Man's small but radical gesture of protest marks a simple but provocative act of disobedience. Like the protester armed with only a plastic bag or umbrella, the squatter occupies a queer position in a non-space, a position poised to sharpen post-colonialism's critical edge by unsettling the authority of the globalizing command.

Notes

[1] This essay grew out of a conference paper I delivered at the 2014 Association for Art Historians conference, in a panel entitled, "Colour Me Queer." I am very thankful to the session's conveners, Natasha Bissonauth and Alpesh Kantilal Patel, and participants for their initial feedback.

[2] Wang Huangsheng, Director of the Guangdong Museum of Art, the Triennial's primary host, introduced the curatorial theme as such, "'Farewell to Post-colonialism ...is not a superficial denial of the importance ...of this intellectual tradition...The severe political conditions under post-colonialism have not receded, but in many ways are even further entrenched under the machinery of globalization. However, as a leading discourse in curatorial practice and criticism, post-colonialism is showing its limitations in being increasingly institutionalized as an ideological concept. Not only is it losing its edge as a critical tool, it has generated its own restrictions that hinder the emergence of artistic creativity and fresh theoretical interface," Wang Huangsheng, "Preface to The Third Guangzhou Triennial," in *Farewell to Post-Colonialism: The Third Guangzhou Triennial*, eds. Johnson Chang Tsong-Zung, Gao Shiming, and Sarat Maharaj (Guangzhou: Guangdong Museum of Art, 2008), 30-31.

[3] For critical analyses of art's globalization, see, amongst others, George Baker, "The Globalization of the False: A Response to Okwui Enwezor," *Documents 23 (2004): 20-25*, Saloni Mathur, "Museums and Globalization," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78.3 (2005): 697-708, and Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[4] My use of the term *non-space* follows Judith Butler's theorization in "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," wherein Butler writes, "There is no subject prior to its constructions, and neither is the subject determined by those constructions; it is always the nexus, the non-space of cultural collision, in which the demand to resignify or repeat the very terms which constitute the "we" cannot be summarily refused, but neither can they be followed in strict obedience. It is the space of this ambivalence which opens up the possibility of a reworking of the very terms by which subjectivation proceeds – and fails to proceed," Judith Butler, "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," in *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, 2nd ed., eds. Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 238.

My adherence to Butler's queer theory here, and my paper's considerations of queered art, and identity and spatial politics aim to contribute to the burgeoning discourse surrounding queer Chinese cultural studies, established by important texts such as, Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue, *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), David L. Eng, "The Queer Space of China: Expressive Desire in Stanley Kwan's Lan Yu," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 18.2 (2010): 459–87, and Petrus Liu, "Why Does Queer Theory Need China?" *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 18.2 (2010): 291–320. I see my focus on queering art and identity in the context of the Guangzhou Triennial as an intervention into and way of linking the relatively distinct fields of contemporary art theory, Chinese studies, and urban studies.

[5] Cai Chusheng *Center Stage*, directed by Stanley Kwan and performed by Tony Leung Ka-fai (Hong Kong: Golden Way Films, 1992), DVD.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Sarat Maharaj, "Counter Creed: Quizzing the Guangzhou Triennial 2008 according to James Joyce's 'Catechetical Interrogation," *Printed Project: 'Farewell to Post-Colonialism,' Querying the Guangzhou Triennial* 11 (2008): 9.

[8] Other related works include Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Old Land New Waters*, a video installation that responds to the fraught histories and mythologies of Vietnam, while picturing the everyday contributions of Vietnamese women to rebuilding a society in the aftermath of war, Wu Shanzhuan's *The Yellow Flight*, a faux-waiting room and proposed itinerary for a passenger departing from Beijing and flying backwards around the world, transferring at every international airport before arriving in Hong Kong, and Maria Thereza Alves' relocation of a patch of earth from Guangzhou's Liwan District, a concentrated area of migrant workers, into the courtyard of the Guangdong Art Museum.

[9] Leslie T. Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008), 11.

[10] In the early 1990s, amidst the city's rapid development, Guangzhou-based avant-garde art collective, Big Tail Elephant Group, created works and performances that critiqued the city's so-called progress. Big Tail Elephant member Lin Yilin, for instance, took hours to slowly and laboriously move bricks in the formation of a wall across Lin He Road, a busy street in Guangzhou. Blocking traffic with this Sisyphean task of destruction and construction, Lin mimics Guangzhou's urbanization while resisting it through blockage and slowness.

[11] Leung documents the rapid construction of Times Museum in the video project Time Museum Time (2008-2010), shown in the 2010 exhibition, "Spectral Evidence," curated by Steven Lam, in Hong Kong's 1a Space.

[12] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 50. Ong's text was written as Mainland China was in its relatively early stages of opening up and economic reforms. At this time, overseas culture appeared as something particularly desirable and out of reach. Nowadays, the wealth and financial opportunities within Mainland China and especially its Special Economic Zones have in many cases overtaken their overseas counterparts. Economic disparity, nonetheless, remains a huge problem and defining feature within Mainland China.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Butler, "Gender is Burning," 240-243.

[16] Art historian Virginia Soloman discusses Leung's Squatting Project/Guangzhou as "appropriating forms of queer sociality to structure [a] consideration of how speech, understood broadly as both verbal and non-verbal communication, interpolates a politicized public. Queer sociality functions within...Leung's performances," Soloman argues, "as a mode of everyday living that is always already political. It presents a critique of autonomous identity and fixed and whole subjectivity, and also insists upon the collective possibility offered by performative, contingent identification," Virginia Solomon, "Politics of Queer Sociality Music as Material Metaphor," in Farewell to *Post-Colonialism*, 314.

[17] Simon Leung, *Squatting Project/Guangzhou*, video installation exhibited at "The Third Guangzhou Triennial/Farwell to Post-Colonialism," Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, 2008.

[18] Simon Leung, "Can the Squatter Speak," *Printed Project: 'Farewell to Post-Colonialism,' Querying the Guangzhou Triennial* 11 (2008): 43.

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Negotiating Informality:
Social and Economic Strategies of Latino Food Vendors in San Francisco's Mission District

Ginette Wessel & Sofia Airaghi

Introduction

In the US, the practice of street food vending has historically been perceived as an unorganized and marginal activity conducted by minority populations. Urban historians have traced adverse views from a variety of prejudices that relate to unsanitary practices, low-economic status, and illegality.[1] Unfavorable views can also be linked to the mid-20th century modernist planning and design ideals that created orderly, auto-centered city streets and did away with activities perceived as inefficient and unproductive that impeded upon this view. [2] In 1963, anthropologist Clifford Geertz studied street markets and bazaars in Indonesia claiming that they hampered the development of a western-style, firm-centered economy. [3] Opposed to efficiency and organization, he suggested street vending relied on practices rooted in local customs and social exchange. Growing anxieties over the sanitation of food handling throughout the 19th and 20th centuries also contributed to a widely held view that food prepared on the street was unhygienic and unhealthy.[4] Given these judgments, little research addresses the potential benefits street vendors bring to communities and the constraints that vendors face when operating a productive business.

While there is scholarship that investigates vending in developing countries,[5] few have attempted to explore the ways in which vendors support the low-income American economy. The lack of attention is linked to vendors' low levels of economic productivity, ethnic unfamiliarity, and perceived illegality of undocumented work practices. Only recently have the US government and restaurant industry started to document the number of food vendors in cities. Today, food vending is gaining validity as a respectable and stable occupation among affluent population with the recent growth of new, vibrantly branded, and highly equipped food trucks. Public acceptance on behalf of middle-income populations combined with a declining US economy has prompted this diverse and increasingly trendy food industry to grow rapidly in recent years.[6] Local organizations that focus on food accessibility are also beginning to find vendors resourceful in areas that lack food options.[7] While these trends promote broader acceptance of street food vending, little is known about the impacts on the established population of Latino vendors or why government officials and city residents still recognize them as illegal, low-income, and unsanitary.[8]

Formal and informal sectors of the economy are most often posited in binary terms, with informality placed in a subordinate position to those activities conventionally accepted as legal. However, visual, social, and legal variances occur between these general categories creating a spectrum of possibilities. For example, formal sectors such as restaurants may hire undocumented workers to lower production costs or neglect to file taxes, whereas informal sectors, such as street food vending, have established vendor associations in an effort to navigate the regulatory climate of municipalities. These devious business practices and self-organized collaborative efforts blur clear definitions of informal and formal sectors. Furthermore, the wide variety of food vending types, such as paleta and tamale pushcart vendors, taco truck vendors, and gourmet food truck vendors, also convolutes any clear definition of informality. A range of different vendors may be identified depending on social and cultural backgrounds, cultural foods, food prices, and types of vending units. Considering the pushcart vendors who legally operate with permits and the gourmet vendors who fail to document workers because of high insurance costs, formal and informal categories do not apply. Yet these nuances are ignored in city-wide policies that seek to manage vending growth.

Mapping the Discourse of Informality

Informality has traditionally been discussed and analyzed in developing countries where declining economic productivity, reduced investments, and limited technological progress perpetuate the growth of unregulated activities and limit the growth of the formal sector. [9] In the US, however, planners and policy makers have assumed that informal activities are either limited in scope, and therefore safe to ignore, or criminal in nature, and thus need to be opposed.[10] Informal economy discourse in the American context is largely based in studies of low-wage employment among ethnic groups and immigrant neighborhoods, particularly the Latino barrios of southwestern states.[11] Amongst this demographic, official citizenship is low and the means of acquiring documentation is challenging, which leads many to find work outside of the documented employment sector. Street vendors, garment workers, construction workers, gardeners, janitors, window washers, nannies, and day laborers are some of the many forms of low-wage employment addressed as informal.

In the 1970s, British anthropologist Keith Hart's research in Ghana became well known for referring to small-scale enterprises as the "informal sector." Discontent with the ambiguity among western terms such as *low-productivity urban sector, underemployed and unemployed*, and *traditional sector*, Hart claimed there were "axes of differentiation [within small scale distribution types of employment], such as the nature of the trading medium (market stalls, roadside booths, hawking) and, more importantly, the commodity being traded".[12] Hart argued the distinction between informal and formal sectors rests on self-employment versus wage-earning jobs that are recruited on a permanent and regular basis. He further categorized informal income opportunities as legitimate and illegitimate, distinguishing activities such as hustling, gambling, smuggling, and petty theft. Moreover, Hart acknowledged the position of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which reported in 1972 that the informal sector consists of a range of self-employed persons conducting jobs characterized by ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprise, small scale operation, and skills acquired outside the formal school system.[13]

A substantial amount of scholarship focuses on the organizing logic between informal and formal economies suggesting that the informal economy in many countries is related to the rise and uneven nature of global capitalist development.[14] During the period of economic restructuring in the 1970s informal activities expanded due to the impact of international competition, which led to diffusion of low labor costs across countries and workers reacting against the state's regulation of the economy (e.g. taxes and social legislation).[15] Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes note, "informalization is not a social process developing outside the purview of the state; it is instead the expression of a new form of control characterized by disenfranchisement of a large sector of the working class . . . the loss of formal control over these activities is compensated by the short-term potential for legitimation and renewed economic growth that they offer".[16] Furthermore, the relationship between governments and informal activities becomes most apparent during periods of economic recession and high unemployment.

Trends in Current Vending Research

While geographers studying the US informal economy in the 1980s relied upon quantitative analysis of employment growth, state regulation, and market dynamics to explain the conditions under which the production of informal activities existed, anthropological and sociological scholars have also analyzed informal activities on the ground, with careful attention to the operations and stories produced by participants.[17] This approach allows for a rich and more full description of the heterogeneity of activities occurring and the variety of factors that lead individuals to make occupational choices.

A variety of these works specifically address informality and food vending in cities such as Portland, Los Angeles, and Silicon Valley. Christian Zlolniski's work shows that vending and janitorial employment is not merely a carelessly improvised set of survival strategies undertaken by unskilled immigrants disconnected from Silicon Valley's formal economy, rather he finds that many vend to supplement other wages they earn in low-skilled jobs in the formal sector or that vending represents an employment alternative to the low-paid and labor-intensive jobs in the formal economy.[18] Zlolniski's work, along with Weber and Muñoz's research on food vending in Los Angeles, reveals the significance of personal and family circumstances, such as childcare, spouse schedules, and elderly care, that factor into choosing a flexible type of self-employment.[19] Also, Mark Vallianatos advocates for the legalization of sidewalk food vending in Los Angeles citing a number of benefits such as improving access to healthy food, opportunities for entrepreneurship, and neighborhood vitality, walkability, and safety.[20] Another research effort investigating Portland, addresses the importance of an open, flexible, and inclusive regulatory approach among governments when managing street vending, particularly for immigrants and those without ready access to capital.[21] Moreover, these investigations improve the knowledge gap between regulatory management of vending and vendors' daily operations and economic challenges.

Tracing Vending Activity in the Mission District

This research investigated the presence and stories of Latino vendors in San Francisco's Mission District over a ten-week period, in the summer of 2014. Given the lack of information regarding vendors' operations and economic challenges, our study uses ethnographic and grounded theory methods to understand street vendors' family and social obligations, daily work habits, and work-related decision making. Before entering the field, the geographic limits of the study were defined as the Mission District (District 9), an area in San Francisco with a dense Latino population.[22] The rich history of Latino food vendors in the region and other California cities reinforced the decision to focus this demographic. First, the density of Latino vendors in the neighborhood was mapped by walking throughout the neighborhood at various times of the day, surveying the environment, and keeping in mind the locations of transit stations, parks, and elementary schools that generate activity with vendors (Figure 1). Vendors were chosen at random and observed to understand their flow of business. If the vendor was available to talk, they were first engaged in casual conversation. Vendors were informed that we were researchers investigating their work as a vendor, and that their identity would not be revealed.[23] We attempted to affect the setting as little as possible by remaining self-aware of our own presence in the space when patrons were present. Often, vendors were willing to answer questions while taking care of business simultaneously. Towards the end of the conversation, we confirmed the vendor's willingness to have follow-up conversations in the future.

Figure 1:
Mission District vendor map. Source: Authors.

Eight vendors were interviewed of the seventeen total vendors identified throughout the ten-week period: three food truck vendors, two vendors with trailers, two pushcart vendors, and one vendor with a portable table.[24] We interviewed this select eight based on their willingness to share knowledge, yet their spatial distribution in the Mission District and their variety of vending types (e.g. mobile trucks, stationary trailers, and pushcarts) provided a representative sample of the vending landscape. We talked with six men and two women, one vendor in his 20s, two vendors in their 30s, three in their 40s, and two in their 50s, all Latino from Mexico or Central America. Of the eight vendors we spoke with, all but one were owners of their establishments, some had been in the US for decades while others were more recent immigrants, and they each had experience working in the restaurant industry. Despite the fact that the majority of vendors identified were male, we were able to speak with two female vendors, one in her early-30s who sold tacos at a weekly market, and the other woman in her mid-40s who sold hotdogs from a pushcart. Pushcart vendors were hesitant to share their stories on a couple of occasions and while the precise reasons are unknown, we conclude that these vendors may be concerned with protecting their business against police or health code enforcement or news media, occurrences that further contribute to perceptions of vending as illegal. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, lasted from thirty minutes to two hours and consisted of open-ended questions about the basic processes of vendor operations, employment history, family and friend networks, and geographic migrations. Follow up conversations were conducted after reviewing the initial conversations to clarify ambiguities in vendor responses. Additionally, vendors' locations were observed and documented using field notes, sketches, and photographs.
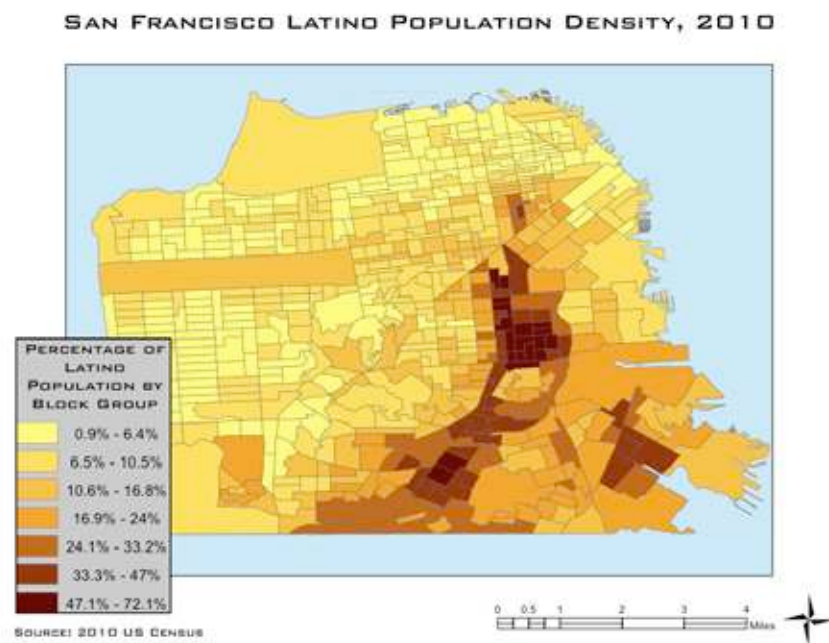

SAN FRANCISCO LATINO POPULATION DENSITY, 2010

PERCENTAGE OF LATINO POPULATION BY BLOCK GROUP

0.9% - 6.4%
6.5% - 10.5%
10.6% - 16.8%
16.9% - 24%
24.1% - 33.2%
33.3% - 47%
47.1% - 72.1%

SOURCE: 2010 US CENSUS

Figure 2:
US Census Bureau, "San Francisco Latino Population by Block Group: 2010."
American Fact Finder. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml.

The Physical and Cultural Landscape of Vending

Beginning as a religious Spanish settlement, the Mission District was named after the oldest building in San Francisco, the Mission San Francisco de Asís, which was constructed in 1776. In the early 20th century, the neighborhood expanded with Irish immigrants who were later displaced with the rapid arrival of Latino immigrants in the postwar period. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Mexican, Central American, and Puerto Rican immigrants seeking work replaced waves of European immigrants that moved to suburban areas.[25] By the 1970s, San Francisco's Latino population had reached over 70,000.[26] Today, these transnational connections from San Francisco to various parts of Latin America are well formed and constantly adapting. More recently, local residents are concerned that gentrifying forces, brought about by the influx of young high-income professionals, are pricing out much of the existing population, as housing and rental costs increase.[27] City-wide eviction notices increased 57 percent in the past five years[28] and in the Mission District the Latino population has declined by 22 percent since 2000.[29]

Figure 3:
Balmy Alley, Mission District, San Francisco. Source:
Author photograph, Nov 11, 2014.

Despite these socio-economic changes, the Mission District is still the heart of Latino culture in San Francisco with a 41 percent Latino population compared to 14 percent in San Francisco as a whole (Figure 2). Visually, there are many aspects that culturally link this neighborhood to homelands in Central and South America. Colorful murals, commercial signage in Spanish, and several bilingual schools and community centers are a few examples of Latino expression. The Mission District has become famous for its bountiful tradition of vivid murals and street art, especially Balmy Alley, which is lined with artwork that depict different aspects of history, social movements, spiritual and religious figure s (Figure 3). As Summers Sandoval states, "once in the city Latinas and Latinos engaged a multifaceted process of "homemaking," re-creating the tastes, sounds, and sights of the familiar".[30] These material elements of the landscape create links to other countries and are a vibrant hybrid of cultural references, expanding notions of home, citizenship and belonging.

Food vendors primarily congregate on Mission Street between 24th Street and 16th Street (Figure 1). This area has high car and pedestrian traffic and is also a main passageway for buses and the underground train system. The Mission District houses seven public elementary schools and the children and parents, especially those who walk or take public transportation to get to school, are a significant customer base for the vendors. During summer breaks, vendors see less business and therefore have a less routine vending route. In addition, Mission Street is a main commercial thoroughfare with high numbers of Latino markets, clothing stores, electronic repair shops, pawn shops, thrift stores, liquor stores, bodegas, banks, bars, restaurants, cafes, and clubs that together form a hub of Latino culture in San Francisco and several vendors choose their location based on this reality. Vendors strategically locate their operations in the Mission corridor to reach their Latino customer base and to use their location to assure the perception and presentation of their cultural authenticity.

Although many food vendors in the Mission District do not receive a great deal of coverage on social media or in the blogosphere, many are able to achieve a high level of physical visibility. Vendors maximize this visibility by displaying large bilingual signage, raising colorful flags, and placing memorable visual and cultural imagery on their trucks or trailers (Figure 4). Additionally, their visibility on the street forms a cultural connection for the community through the representation of their business.

Of the eight vendors we spoke with, we choose three vendors to pursue further conversations with based on the variety of their business experience and willingness to participate in follow up conversations. Each vendor migrated to the US, established a business, and acquired vending licenses at different points in time. Bernardo, originally from Mexico City, has lived in the US for over 20 years and worked in the restaurant and automotive industries until opening his own taco business out of vending trailer two years ago with the help of his wife and brother-in-law. Another vendor, Javier, also came to the US 20 years ago, but from El Salvador, and worked in restaurants until he started his bacon wrapped hot dog business three years ago with just $150 dollars that he had borrowed from his mother. Unlike Bernardo and Javier, Cesar has been between Honduras and California for the past four years and worked for the Red Cross in Honduras before working in a food truck selling burritos and hamburgers. Each of the vendors' businesses have approved health permits from the county and parking permits either with the Public Works Department at the City of San Francisco or property owners.

After analyzing the stories of these three vendors, it is apparent that they have an integrated relationship with the street and play an important role in the daily happenings of the neighborhood. Vendors who have lived in San Francisco for several years become an integral part of the community. Bernardo mentioned, "My life is already made here and this country has granted me good opportunities. It gave me my legalization, my papers, I have opened my path here."[31] In addition to establishing ties with the community, food vending locations simultaneously become a site for social interaction and unity within the urban landscape serving as a gathering place for family, friends, and neighborhood acquaintances. For instance, other food vendors and friends working at nearby restaurants and stores frequently visit one of the hot dog vendors we interviewed. At any given moment, the three stools situated in front of the vendor's trailer may be filled with patrons chatting about soccer, news, or recent crimes in the area. The vendors also spend a significant amount of time with their own families in public space as many elders and children come along to help. Additionally, the vendors' repeated presence on the street creates a dual role of food distributor and guardian of the community. By having this active and noticeable presence 8 to 12 hours a day that creates repeated engagement and interaction in the street, the vendors establish themselves as anchors in the community.

Vendor Spatial Organization and Adaptation

Vendors pursue different spatial strategies depending on their unit type, their location options or lack thereof, and their customer base. Pushcarts, which have considerably lower startup costs and are often a point of entry into running a vending business, are the most spatially flexible. Although pushcart vendors typically do not have permits to vend in the Mission District, the regulatory authorities and police often overlook these mobile units as long as they do not pose a threat to security or block sidewalks. Javier, who owns a trailer unit, expressed his grievances that he preferred not to vend at the Pride Parade because not only were the permit fees too high to ensure making a profit, but police unfairly enforced his trailer while ignoring pushcarts who are able to move at a moments notice. In these situations, pushcart vendors have more points of access to customers; however, their businesses are typically less sustainable. Furthermore, pushcart vendors generally tend to stay in the same location in an unofficial claiming of territory to maintain continuity with customers. While some vendors strategically locate farther away from competing vendors who are selling the same product, other vendors who have established relationships may vend together with separate carts (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Street vendor on Mission Street. Source: Author photograph, July 3, 2014.

Figure 5: Street vendors selling fruit and flowers on the plaza of a subway station. Source: Author photograph, July 10, 2014.

In the case of Bernardo, he originally wanted to locate his trailer on the main thoroughfare of Mission Street but because of high permit fees for city streets, he ended up privately renting a neglected portion of a car wash lot a couple of blocks away. Bernardo's distance from the main thoroughfare means he had to invent creative ways of advertising his business. He stated, "In the beginning, only my family knew that I cooked, that my tacos were good, but from there I would stand outside at the door and I would tell people to stop and try. They would come to eat, and the word would spread."[32] Although he is slightly farther away from the concentration of pedestrian traffic and other businesses he is able to avoid interaction with the City of San Francisco for spatial permitting, utilize outdoor seating, and host a jazz band on the weekends (Figure 6). Over time he has been able to create a more welcoming environment by negotiating an enclosed seating area with the lot owner over concerns of children wandering too close to the street.

Figure 6:
Street vendor located on the edge of a car wash lot.
Source: Author photograph, July 10, 2014.

Cesar, an employee on a taco truck owned by a restaurant family, recounts the history of the establishment and says that the truck has been parking in its exact location since 1996. The owners originally chose the location for its proximity to the neighborhood health clinic which functions as a central point in the community. The truck has always parked on the side of the street closest to the clinic with its serving window directly facing the parking lot and the pedestrian flows from the subway station towards the residential area of the Mission. On one occasion, the truck parked on the opposite side of the street and business suffered roughly a 50 percent decline. Not only is location important but equally so is orientation within the space, as other points of reference and overall visibility in the urban environment can help increase patronage.

When vendors choose their location, it is a conscious decision that is informed by social networks and the urban landscape of schools, commercial areas, and transit points (Figure 1). Yet vendors who are told to move locations due to new public right-of-way regulations or are given a limited number of parking options by the City of San Francisco are very aware of their constraints and in response, they develop other methods to compensate and compete.

Economic Strategizing Among Latino Vendors

The physical and economic conditions of the Mission District ultimately test the entrepreneurial skills of Latino vendors. While some may be forced to close their vending operations due to lack of profit, others prevail by establishing self-sustaining businesses. Contrary to popular belief that street vendors have few business skills and choose vending as a last resort occupation, our conversations revealed that vendors actively pursue their livelihood with vending. Vendors must also negotiate a variety of parameters established by the limits of space, time, and regulatory bodies in their daily operations. Over time, these challenges strengthen their entrepreneurial skills and street knowledge allowing them to make strategic business decisions that increase their opportunities for upward job mobility such as scaling to their vending business or owning a brick-and-mortar restaurant.

Daily Operations and Constraints

Each vendor in the Mission District operates within specific spatial parameters imposed by the sidewalk, the public street, or private property. Sidewalk vendors must navigate a narrow width of pavement predominantly allocated to the continuous movement of pedestrians. Staking an unobtrusive location on the edge of the sidewalk means that they must work from small scale vending units that are mobile, both limiting the variety of food they are able to prepare and requiring physical strength. Conversely, public parking spaces along streets allow for more full-scale vending trucks and trailers, but require an expensive initial fee of $764 and $135 annually thereafter. These vendors use personal automobiles to occupy the metered parking space overnight. Privately owned properties carry the fewest regulations in commercially zoned areas and are the preferred choice if located along a thoroughfare. Short-term lease agreements negotiated between the vendor and the property owner typically allow for greater flexibility in terms of space for seating or storage. However, these vendors are often concerned about displacement with the onset of new development. In addition, each space has its own physical assets and obstacles. Noise, direct sunlight, car pollution, graffiti, lack of pedestrian traffic, and wide streets impact a vending business; yet, nearby destinations such as Best Buy, Costco, or a hospital can provide consistent pedestrian traffic.

Navigating spatial parameters requires vendors to have working knowledge of land use and vending regulations in the City and County of San Francisco. Many vendors expressed the lengthy and expensive process of obtaining a vending permit for a location. Others expressed the need to properly handle and prepare food on a continuous basis in case a health inspector

visits unannounced. Javier immediately pointed out his County Health Department certificate that officially approves his operations. With great pride in the cleanliness of his trailer, he also compared his business to fellow unpermitted vendors who he felt were doing a disservice to their customers. He went as far as to describe the improper handling of hotdogs from a fellow vendor who picked up large quantities in Los Angeles and drove them unrefrigerated to San Francisco. From Javier's point of view, the police should be more supportive of his work and focus their efforts on food handling practices among unlicensed vendors. Unlicensed vendors are also aware of regulations and are able to leverage their mobility when being approached by police. As such, vendors will congregate and look out for one another (Figure 5). According to city policy, all vendors, licensed or unlicensed, should be aware of how to properly operate their business.

Just as permits can be a challenge to obtain and maintain, all vendors stressed that a lack of sufficient finances made it difficult to start or expand their business. Borrowing money from family and friends, rather than taking out loans, is preferred among the vendors. The small amount of food that the unit can hold and the relatively low price points, at $2.00 for a taco and $3.50 for a bacon wrapped hot dog, often translates to small profits and slow growth. Per our conversations, some vendors described the exact cost of ingredients, the best stores to locate the most affordable food, and clever ways to minimize waste. Each vendor recalled a difficult time of slow business and agreed that financial planning can determine a business's success. Low profit margins also present a barrier to advancing to a current vending unit, operating multiple units, or even opening a brick and mortar location. Owners shared a vision for advancement where they could employ others, work less, generate more income, and continue to grow as an established business owner.

Connected Economies

Tracing the path of a vendor's daily operations reveals a variety of linked economic activities. Multiple times a week, vendors purchase goods from wholesale markets such as Restaurant Depot or Costco. These wholesale companies provide a variety of ingredients and offer supplies that span the needs of an entire business from perishable foods to propane refills. Their role in the everyday life of vendors is essential as the food vendor operators depend on their low costs and regular stock of supplies and ingredients. With regards to the vending unit itself, owners house them in storage facilities, commissaries, and unused parking lots. Furthermore, automobile manufacturing and repair businesses are essential for designing trailers and trucks to fit the proper kitchen equipment to code requirements and fixing worn engines.

The restaurant industry is another economic actor that generates competition and serves as an incubator for future business owners. Per our field conversations, vendors in general believe that restaurants pose little threat to their operations unless they serve comparable food products. Conversely, restaurants are more likely to express discontent towards vendors for fear that they could take their business. While no direct instances of restaurant conflict arose in conversation, some city officials are known for siding with the protectionist views of restaurant associations.[33] Viewed differently, this tension could lead to healthy and creative economic growth through marketing and food experimentation.

The recent development of web-based firms such as ZeroCater and Cater2.me act as a mediator between downtown office workers who order lunch in groups and vendors' ethnic foods in the Mission District. Initially hesitant to take part in ZeroCater's services due to the 20 percent share of profits collected per order, Bernardo eventually agreed to join the company after increasing the price point of his food to compensate for the added fees. Today, catering orders through ZeroCater's website provide nearly half of Bernardo's profits and serve as an ensured revenue stream leaving him less worried about business stability. Bernardo mentioned, "Now business is very strong [from ZeroCater]. I don't have to worry about whether or not I had sales today [at the trailer], because I know that I have this income [from catering] as well."[34] In this instance, online catering services connect Bernardo's business with distant office workers in the Financial District and provide him with access to a new lunchtime clientele. Catering orders through ZeroCater make street vendors visible to office workers, allow vendors to scale their business to maximize profits, and sustain vendors during periods of slow business. At the same time, ZeroCater achieves significant profits through a percentage of low-priced foods.

During fieldwork, new wave food trucks that serve gourmet meals emerged as an operationally separate set of vendors based on the close proximity of the South of Market (SOMA) Street Food Park to the Mission District. The park, which opened in 2011, is well known among the area's burgeoning technology firm office workers seeking outdoor food options. The expensive rental space in the park and competitive menu prices were the primary reasons the Latino vendors preferred to remain at their current locations. Despite these distinctions, we observed business professionals frequenting the Latino vendors. Our observations lead us to conclude that Latino vendors, who serve low to high-income customers in a good location, may have an advantage in attracting more customers over new wave food trucks that primarily cater to medium to high-income individuals.

Conclusion: Informality, Place, and Agency

Informality as a way of describing street vending activity reinforces ideas of inadequacy as compared to the formal employment sectors. In the food vending industry, informality may refer to unlicensed vendors, undocumented immigrants, unsanitary food handling practices, and low-income employment that are each reinforced by ethnic unfamiliarity, linguistic barriers, and presence on the street. These views drive efforts to regulate street vendors, disempowering those with small businesses that do not conform to policies or visions of empowered officials. Through our observations and conversations with vendors in the Mission District, we find that these perspectives neglect vendors' efforts to sustain families and build community. We found that vendors had control over their businesses, ways to compensate for difficult times, knowledge of regulations, educated backgrounds in the food service industry, clear and informed decision making processes, and a vision for how to advance their business in the future. Most vendors showed us how they overcome obstacles when negotiating the constraints of time, space, and regulatory bodies. These vendors also activate and participate in urban space by creating a social atmosphere, acting as neighborhood guardians. Their repeated presence creates a familiar setting for the community and represents a strong cultural sector of society.

Our research led us to discover the inventive ways in which vendors develop a robust network with old and new industries to support their daily operations. Technology firms show the productive ways to grow and expand vendor's profits by bridging disparate populations and increasing access to customers. Notably, our research shows little relationship between the new wave food truck industry and Latino vendors in the Mission.[35] Their lack of interaction suggests that the new wave industry targets a customer population with moderate to high income and that their location choices in urban space reflect this demographic. Furthermore, we observed a variety of trends among vendors that destabilize categories of formal and informal activities, such as building social ties within a community through repeated presence in a location, locating on private property to establish permanency in a neighborhood, and negotiating over temporary leases on private property to obtain permanent structures. Moreover, vendors' ambitions to eventually own a restaurant show their desire for a formal fixed business.

The shifting social demographics and rising cost of land in the Mission District present new challenges. Increased enforcement, limited available private property, and the loss of networks of friends and family who may need to relocate, are some of the potential issues. In a competitive land market, debates emerge over legitimate uses and appropriate social groups. Converging opinions between vendors and nearby property owners also leads to active contests and litigation over the right to use space. Regardless of these setbacks, this research shows vendors are highly adaptable with established skills sets and operational strategies for upward mobility.

Without a more complete understanding of vendors' activities, policy and investment measures will continue to contradict or neglect vendor operations and needs. City officials would be well advised to consider equitable treatment of food vendors and avoid blanket policies that neglect their diverse circumstances, including use of the limiting categories of formal and informal economic activities.

Notes

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[20] Mark Vallianatos, "A More Delicious City: How to Legalize Street Food," in *The Informal American City: Beyond Taco Trucks and Day Labor*, ed. Vinit Mukhija et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 218.

[21] Ginny Browne, Will Dominie, and Kate Mayerson, "Keep Your Wheels On: Mediating Informality in the Food Cart Industry," in *The Informal American City: Beyond Taco Trucks and Day Labor*, ed. Vinit Mukhija et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 257.

[22] In Mission District, 41 percent of the population is of Latino ethnicity and 37 percent of residents speak only Spanish at home, San Francisco Planning Department, "San Francisco Neighborhood Profiles," American Community Survey 2006-2010, http://www.sf-planning.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=8779.

[23] Vendors were assigned substitute names during data collection to maintain anonymity.

[24] After interviewing eight vendors, we transcribed conversations from Spanish to English, reviewed data for follow-up questions, and began initial coding. Follow-up interviews were conducted with five vendors. After multiple trips to the field, we determined eight vendors, including follow-up interviews, would provide detailed knowledge of vendor operations.

[25] San Francisco Chronicle, *A Changing Mission: To Whom does San Francisco's Oldest Neighborhood Belong?* Directed by San Francisco Chronicle, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, http://www.sfchronicle.com/the-mission/.

[26] Tomás F. Summers Sandoval Jr., *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community & Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 122.

[27] San Francisco Chronicle, *A Changing Mission*, Directed by San Francisco Chronicle, 2014; Lee Romney, "Upscale Culture and Gang Violence Share a Small Space," Los Angeles Times, September 21, 2011, accessed September 10, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/21/local/la-me-mission-district-slayings-20110921

[28] For the year ending February 28, 2015, 2,102 eviction notices were filed with San Francisco Rent Board; The San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition, *San Francisco's Eviction Crisis 2015*, accessed April 24, 2015, http://www.antievictionmappingproject.net/EvictionSurge.pdf

[29] Rigoberto Hernandez, "Latinos Make Gains Everywhere Except the Mission," *MissionLocal*, June 23, 2011, accessed April 24, 2015, http://missionlocal.org/2011/06/latinos-make-gains-everywhere-except-in-the-mission/.

[30] Sandoval, *Latinos*, 116.

[31] Original statement in Spanish: "Ya mi vida esta hecha aquí y me a brindado buenas oportunidades este país. Me dio mi legalización aquí, mis papeles, me he abierto camino yo aquí."

[32] Original statement in Spanish: "Al principio, solo mi familia sabia que yo cocinaba, que mis tacos estaban buenos pero de allí yo me ponía allí afuera en la puerta y yo le decía a la gente que pasaran a probar. Venían a comer y ya se corría la voz."

[33] Erin Norman et al. *Street of Dreams: How Cities Can Create Economic Opportunity by Knocking Down Protectionist Barriers to Street Vending* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Justice, 2011), 20.

[34] Original statement in Spanish: "Entonces ahorita esta muy fuerte, ahora si que no me preocupo si hay venta o no hay, porque yo se que tengo esta entrada también."

[35] Later research will examine if the regulatory climate emerging with new wave mobile food vending impacts established vendors in regard to negotiating new spatial constraints using a methodology consistent with this analysis.

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Planning Cases

Beyond Bottom-Up in San Francisco:
Public-Private Initiatives and the Potential for Proactive Citizenship

Antje K. Steinmuller

Introduction

Public space—by its original definitions a place of debate and struggle—is characterized by its continuous formation and reformation through public dialog and participation.[1] The move of large tech companies like Twitter to San Francisco[2] has contributed to growing densification and gentrification in the city, disproportionately affecting black and Latino communities. In response to ongoing displacement and evictions of both working-class and middle-class citizens, San Francisco is experiencing a surge of advocacy and activism shaped by multi-faceted bottom-up organizing and protest movements around the privatization of public space. Such actions have lead to significant outcomes including a political revisiting of the Ellis Act,[3] a California State Law that allows landlords to legally evict tenants as a way to "go out of business". Additionally, a tech shuttle pilot program that charges corporations a fee for the use of city bus stops was approved in January 2014.[4] In San Francisco, small-scale, public-private or hybrid models for shaping neighborhood public space are increasing in popularity as a modality of citizen participation. While urban planning literature has offered critiques of this model, it is timely to examine specific and ongoing cases, their differing articulations of participation, and potentials for inclusiveness in the city.

This article presents a reflection on citizen alliances that emerge within current models of public-private partnerships and evaluates them for their potential as new forms pro-active citizenship. It highlights three San Francisco case studies that transform and activate public urban space: 1) the Parklet Program; 2) the Living Alleys Program; and 3) and Proxy SF. The case studies are located within the overlap of San Francisco's Hayes Valley and Market-Octavia neighborhoods. This area experienced significant demographic changes due to an influx of largely white, well-educated middle-class residents during the dot.com boom and (ensuing bust) of the 1990s,[5] as well as transformative physical changes with the removal of the Central Freeway, which truncated the neighborhood until its replacement with a wide surface boulevard in 2003. Prior to 2003, the Freeway's presence delayed homogenous gentrification and contributed to the evolution of the triangle between Market and Hayes Streets as an "in-between" place, "a place that [supported] a variety of lifestyles, ages, and incomes. Its varied but close-knit pattern of streets and alleys, along with relatively gentle topography, [making] it very walkable and bike-able."[6] While Hayes Valley's main commercial district largely caters to a young demographic with a lot of disposable income, the overlapping Market Octavia and Hayes Valley area retains both economic and ethnic diversity.[7]

The case studies presented here employ public-private hybrid strategies, which are intended to be applied beyond the boundaries of the Market Octavia and Hayes Valley neighborhood. However, the construction of these projects within the same urban context facilitates an understanding

of their differences. The projects draw from temporary citizen-activist provocations,[8] and embody a co-option or formalization of activist tactics into planning programs and strategies. The analysis of each case study outlines its conceptualization, formation, and process of implementation as a formal urban project, and concludes with a critical review of the resulting urban spaces, participatory models, and community alliances and networks.

The Parklet Program

Figure 1.
Parklet with seating and bike parking sponsored by The Mill cafe
on Divisadero Street (Photographs by author, 2015)

Project: Activist Roots

In 2005, members of Rebar Art and Design Studio fed a parking meter for the legal limit of 2 hours and turned the parking space into a temporary park, laying out sod and adding a potted tree and bench. Known as the *PARK(ing) Project*, the intervention responded to the disproportionate amount of space designated for cars in San Francisco, and called attention to "the range of possible activities for [the] short-term lease"[9] of public urban space represented by a metered parking space. Over time, the creation of an annual *PARK(ing) Day* transformed this one-time intervention into an open source project with citizens in over 150 cities participating worldwide. Rebar provides both a critical manifesto and a manual[10] for those interested in participating. "*PARK(ing) Day* has effectively re-valued the metered parking space as an important part of the commons—a site for generosity, cultural expression, socializing and play."[11]

Process: Formalization and Implementation

Building on the success of *PARK(ing) Day*, the San Francisco Planning Department's Pavement to Parks Program[12] initiated the *Parklet Program* as a way for local business owners, residents and community organizations to convert parking spaces into publicly accessible pedestrian open space. The program is a collaboration between the Planning

Department, the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA). Understood as "temporary sidewalk extensions", the first parklets were installed in 2010. The Parklet Program allows any citizen to apply, and provides a detailed manual that explains the permitting process, pertinent code issues and material requirements. The Planning Department reviews the initial location and proposal in a first round, before a detailed proposal and construction documents can be submitted for a building permit. Approved parklets receive a 1-year renewable permit. Parklets typically provide amenities like seating, planting, and bike parking. They reimagine the potential of city streets to foster neighborhood interaction. Five years into the program, the highest concentrations of parklets in San Francisco are located along the commercial corridor of Valencia Street in the Mission District. Parklets in close proximity to each other also exist in other commercial areas like Hayes Valley and Divisadero Street (Figure 1).

Figure 2.
Parklet sponsored by Arlequin cafe in Hayes Valley
(Photographs by author, 2015)

Figure 3.
Privately sponsored parklet without seating on Valencia St.
(Photographs by author, 2015)

In their Park(ing) Day Manifesto, Rebar defines parklets as a form of "generous urbanism": the "creation of public situations between strangers that produce new cultural value, without commercial transaction. [T]here are no absolute "consumers" or "producers" for this type of art, only participants with varying levels of responsibility for instigating the situation."[13] However, in the formalized version of city-approved parklets, the majority of applicants to date are business owners.[14] Although a sign marks each parklet as a public park, many are designed to provide outdoor seating for customers of adjacent eating establishments (Figure 2). They provide appealing spaces, but their location and furnishings contribute to public perception that parklets are extensions of adjacent businesses. Critics bemoan that the idealism of Rebar's first Park(ing) Project has been replaced by a standardized toolkit for the proliferation of parklets that, more often than not, serve commercial interests and begin to signify an aesthetics of gentrification. However, exceptions do exist: a private resident installed a parklet as an extension of a residential front yard (Figure 3), and several bike shops across the city have sponsored sidewalk extensions whose design characteristics are autonomous from the sponsor's street front (Figure 4, 5).

Figure 4.
Parklet sponsored by Freewheel Bike Shop on Valencia St.
(Photograph by author, 2015)

Although individual parklets may not equally invite public use, the permitting process includes both explicit and implied participatory components. In addition to the conventional neighborhood notification period, the Parklet Manual mandates community outreach as a part of each project. Applicants are encouraged to obtain letters of support from neighboring property owners, businesses, and the local merchant association or business improvement district. While consensus amongst neighbors is not required, each application is assessed by the breadth and diversity of the support it receives. When businesses apply for parklet permits, they often collect customer's signatures in support of their application. Many applicants host open houses or community meetings where members of the neighborhood can both learn about the proposal, and contribute design suggestions.[15] In addition to feedback

opportunities during the development and the implementation process, the Pavement to Parks program conducted a detailed study of parklet use in summer 2014.[16] The results, obtained largely through intercept surveys, revealed heightened neighborhood interaction, perceptions of enhanced safety, as well as a desire for additional small open public spaces in other areas of the city. Observations of activity types and intensity of use in tandem with user satisfaction summaries have provided an additional avenue for citizen feedback, which may be used as the Planning Department continues to develop the project. As parklets slowly become a predictable vernacular in San Francisco, lessons learned can serve as guides for the evolving parklet typology, from supporting institutions and non-profits in addition to businesses, to actively encouraging increased partnerships with schools.[17] The Exploratorium's Portable Parklet and another at the Museum of Craft and Design are examples of existing non-commercial parklets.

Figure 5.
Parklet sponsored by Rapha Cycle Club on Filbert St.
(Photograph by author, 2014)

Formalized community input on the implementation of parklet projects resembles the reactive participatory model employed for most of San Francisco's new construction projects, where public comments are solicited as part of the permitting process. Still, the mandate for community support anchored in the parklet program provides a framework for community members to meet and discuss larger neighborhood issues. In some cases, a parklet proposal has led to alliances between independent, local businesses, with several adjacent businesses collectively sponsoring a project. Such neighborhood partnerships foster a greater sense of autonomy around individual parklets, which become a multi-stakeholder piece of the public realm rather than an extension of a particular business. Due to the small scale of a parking space and the relatively low cost of a parklet project, the program is designed for individual citizens and business owners to become pro-active in transforming a small part of the street space for a specific use.

The Market Octavia Living Alleys Program

Project: Activist Roots

In the 1990s, the collective *Reclaim The Streets*, a creative activist group in London, launched an unconventional series of protests against car domination of city streets: street parties to be enjoyed by all. Their tactics ranged from the construction of a sand pit for children on a busy intersection in Islington, to the installation of a bouncy castle on a street in Brighton, and grew to engage spontaneous street parties across the globe, including Sydney, New York, Tel Aviv, Berlin, and Amsterdam. In the summer of 1996, a street party attracted several thousand citizens to the M41 motorway at Shepherd's Bush in London. Under the cover of techno music and dancers on stilts, four men dug up the street and planted trees.[18] The goals of Reclaim The Street's parties and interventions embraced increased pedestrian traffic, garden space for urban residents, community interaction, and the perception of streets as shared and collectively owned space. While the original street interventions were temporary and event-based, contemporary efforts to reclaim a livable public realm from car-dominated city space follow both the goals and tactics of these earlier protests.

Process: Formalization and Implementation

San Francisco's Living Alleys Program is a community-based project that fosters citizen-initiated long-term transformation and enhancement of street space. The program's two-year pilot project, defined in the Market Octavia Area Plan, began in 2013. The plan calls for traffic-calmed environments[19] in the alleys located in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, and articulates a process in which "residents can participate in the design and implementation of improvements to their alley".[20] Like the Parklet Program, the Living Alleys Program seeks to convert street space into "safe, active, and sustainable public places with amenities for people to sit, relax, and engage with others"[21]—a "front yard" for public enjoyment. The alleys are narrow one-way streets, flanked by a mixture of low, residential buildings and small-scale commercial buildings.

At times, the backside of larger, institutional buildings also faces an alley. The alleys currently serve as connectors for pedestrians and cyclists traveling to Market St., the Civic Center area, and Patricia's Green Park at the core of the Hayes Valley neighborhood commercial district.

One alleyway enhancement, located on Linden Alley at Gough St. and completed in 2010, served as a test project for the program (Figure 6). It was designed and initiated by Lorin Sagan and David Winslow, whose architecture office is located on this stretch of Linden; Winslow now serves as project lead for the Living Alleys Program. The test project's 5-year journey to realization pioneered a mix of individual residents' sponsorship, pro-bono design and engineering work, and matching Community Challenge Grant funding. Following the methodologies of this test project, the first comprehensive implementation of the Living Alleys Program solicited project proposals from local property and business owners, institutions and non-profit organizations via a Request For Proposals (RFP) issued in October 2013. The goal of the RFPs was to identify three pilot projects. The proposed designs were expected to provide infrastructure for a range of possible uses within the street space while addressing traffic calming. Like the parklet projects, all proposed amenities of a Living Alley must be free and open for public use. The Request For Proposals provided information about traffic calming strategies, guidelines for the integration of landscape with parking, accessibility requirements, emergency vehicle access, and information on drainage and underground utilities.
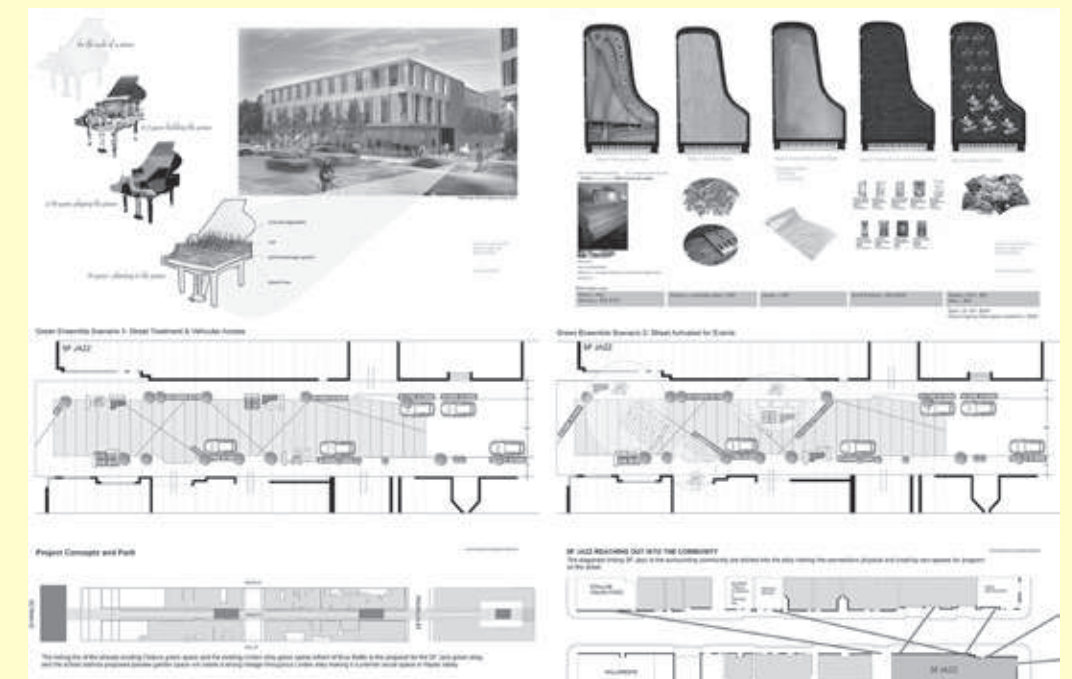
The challenges of citizen-initiated changes to public infrastructure are apparent in the ongoing pilot projects. Sponsors feel the pressure of a commitment tied to significant financial responsibility and long-term stewardship while grappling with the particularities of a shared sense of ownership (with the community) over the spaces. Three pilot projects were selected through the first Request For Proposals: one was developed by a group of residents; another was sponsored by a local non-profit organization and music venue, SF Jazz; and the third was developed by local business owners. The group of residents in the first project abandoned their plans once the financial implications became clear. The SF Jazz team partnered with a group of architecture graduate students from California College of the Arts (CCA) and its Center for Art and Public Life. In the framework of a seminar, student teams developed comprehensive phased designs for SF Jazz's block of Linden St. that included interim event tactics related to SF Jazz's engagement with the community through music lessons and performances, physical changes for outdoor seating and alley greening over time, as well as potential partnerships for sponsorship, financing, implementation and event programming (see Figure 7-9). While this collaboration generated rich conversations between SF Jazz, members of the San Francisco Planning Department, and student designers about potential short and long-term additions to Linden St., the community outreach required for an intervention along an entire block and its financial implications have presently halted SF Jazz's follow-up on the project. The third proposal, initiated by members of the Absinthe Group, restaurant owners on either side of Ivy Alley, proposed to strengthen the pedestrian connection between busy Gough St. on one end of their block of Ivy, and the San Francisco Symphony and Opera on the other. The project includes plans for landscaping, lighting, seating, and a series of large-scale murals on the blank building walls that characterize this block of Ivy. The popularity of David Winslow's project on Linden and Gough Streets is an example of a 'Living Alley' that fosters activity and interaction between residents and visitors. It has enhanced the street's identity through the choice of materials in the interventions, using a combination of granite curb stones, concrete and weathering steel to define different spaces for native planting and seating near the local coffee shop.

Citizen participation and alliances have been integral in the formation of Living Alleys; as part of the program launch, Planning Department staff held three community meetings that addressed future visions and desires (meeting 1), assistance in developing proposals (meetings 2), and a forum for discussion of emerging proposals (meeting 3). The meetings helped shape the content of the Request For Proposals, as well as the development of an alleyway sponsor toolkit. Ongoing dialog between Planning Department staff and project sponsors connects sponsors with local designers and other support,[22] and continues to inform the future of the program. In addition to community engagement through public meetings, the submission of a proposal requires letters of support from a variety of sources including the local Community Benefit District, neighborhood associations, local residents and businesses. Such requirements encourage community members to engage with each other to actively shape changes in their neighborhood. The project initiators of the Ivy St. proposal have held their own community meetings and conducted intensive outreach to a larger network.
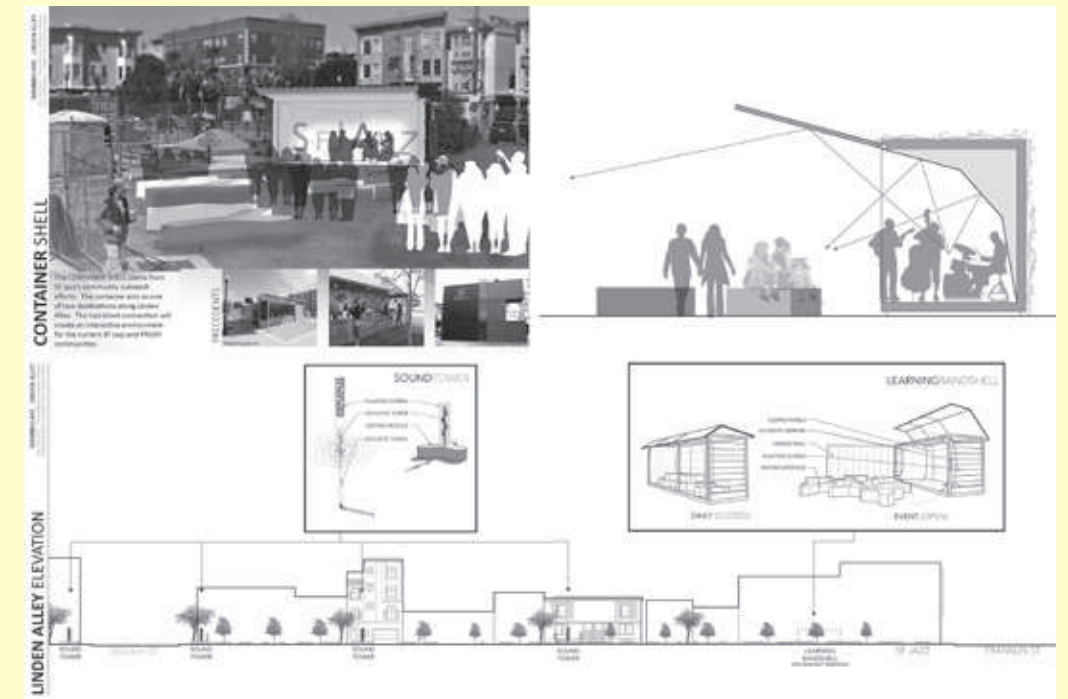

Figure 8.
Soundscape , student project for Linden St.: This proposal envisioned a connection between the container-based pop-ups at Proxy SF, and SF Jazz through a series "sound towers": urban furniture combined with sound installations. Sheltered seating that can be converted into temporary bandshells marks the end points of this sound-based urban connection and produces informal urban venues for jazz music students. (Work by Tyler Jones-Powell, Dustin Tisdale and Garrett Rock, Active Urbanism Seminar, California College of the Arts, 2013)

The complexity and scope of an intervention in an alleyway block necessitates the formation of neighborhood partnerships as an essential factor in both schematic development and long-term success. A critical component of the proposal selection criteria was community stewardship and a strategy for collective fundraising, implementation and maintenance. The difficulty of these collective, multi-stakeholder projects was demonstrated in the pilot projects; of the three only the Ivy Street proposal initiated by the Absinthe Group is currently moving forward. This project has strong leadership that has reached out to a wide range of participants and contributors, creating a network beyond the boundaries of the alleyway and neighborhood—residents and business owners are working together, an urban designer has contributed pro-bono work, student muralists have been invited to produce site-specific work, and grant applications are underway. The SF Jazz proposal also envisioned the development of partnership networks, but these did not come to fruition as the sponsor's priorities shifted.

The scale and scope of a Living Alley project requires sponsors to be pro-active and inclusive in their outreach to the community. Implementation of individual projects requires significant funding, however, the alliances mandated by Living Alleys ensures that a project could not be executed by a privileged few. Living Alleys provides a framework for a diverse set of values

and desires to be integrated into each project, fostering ownership and long-term stewardship amongst community members, as well as strong collaborative relationships between the City and project sponsors.[23] In response to the challenges of the two-year pilot study, the Planning Department has included shorter-term measures into its Living Alleys Toolkit; here "Living Zones"[24] complement the original "Shared Streets" goal. "Living zones" are areas for purely pedestrian use, created with short-term traffic calming interventions like movable concrete planters. The impact of Living Zones on the larger traffic network will be assessed over time and some of the projects may be converted to long-term interventions. The introduction of Living Zones aims to lower the threshold for neighborhood groups to pro-actively transform street space collectively while still mandating inclusionary outreach.

Figure 9.
Soundscape , renderings of the proposed "sound towers" and the "learning bandshell" in front of SF Jazz, 2013. (Work by Tyler Jones-Powell, Dustin Tisdale and Garrett Rock, Active Urbanism Seminar, California College of the Arts, 2013)

Proxy SF

Figure 10.
Proxy SF open space in January 2015 with the Aether Apparel Store in the stacked containers in the back. (Photographs by author, 2015)

Project: Activist Roots

Proxy is a temporary venue of renovated shipping containers and truck-based vendors located on two adjacent, city-owned lots in the Hayes Valley neighborhood (Figure 10). Since opening in 2011, the site has hosted a mix of food vendors, pop-up retail and cultural

events. Architect Douglas Burnham, principal of Envelope A+D and founder of Proxy SF, rents the land from the City of San Francisco and describes Proxy as a framework for changing content responsive to the shifting needs and desires of contemporary urban culture. The project draws inspiration from two radical hypothetical projects: 1) Archigram's 1969 "Instant City", where balloons, trucks and trailers activate vacant landscapes through deployment of media content; 2) the Italian collective Superstudio's utopian "Supersurface" project—a massive, connected surface for social interaction. Responding to the sterility of the post-war modernist paradigm, these hypothetical projects were activist provocations that anticipated the nomadic networked pop-up culture of today. Proxy's strategies for activating vacant land with changing temporary uses also draws from several contemporary European projects, including the RAW Tempel in Berlin-Friedrichshain and the Pioneer Fields on Berlin's Tempelhof Airport.

Process: Formalization and Implementation

Proxy is situated on land that became vacant after the demolition of the earthquake-damaged Central Freeway. The Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association fought for the Freeways removal, which began in 2003. Octavia Boulevard, a tree-lined, multi-lane surface street, replaced the former freeway route, and the remaining land was slated for the development of affordable housing. A widely publicized competition for architectural proposals was held in 2005 and the architecture firm Envelope A+D was selected as one of the winners. However, the economic downturn of the following years halted development on the former freeway parcels. In response, the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development issued an RFP, seeking entrepreneurs to lease these unused spaces for temporary programs until they could be sold and developed. "The theory was that these so-called placeholders would generate retail and cultural activities, which, in turn, would rejuvenate the neighborhood". [25] Envelope A+D proposed "a programmatic matrix of possible temporary uses, . . . part city-wide festival, part neighborhood block party".[26]

Figure 11.
left : Streets of San Francisco Bike Tours space; right : Basic Training Fitness Pop-Up space and stage (Photographs by author, 2015)

The Mayor's Office accepted Envelope's proposal for the site, but responsibility for funding the endeavor lay with Envelope. The City collects rent for the two lots that Proxy occupies, which is supported by the vendors who pay for the design and customization of shipping containers that serve as their base on the site. Envelope A+D is the curator of Proxy's content, through their own connections to local vendors and artists, as well as through an open application process. Vendors' leases have varying durations and Proxy's content operates on several simultaneous time scales: "rooted" vendors with daily opening hours, regular weekly events, and varying cultural programs that occur throughout the year. Over the course of Proxy's implementation, city administrators have supported the project by adapting and streamlining the permit process. The legal definition of "temporary" varies by city department, and the project's implementation has required ongoing dialog and collaboration amongst city officials to re-frame a range of municipal regulations, from utility payment processes to the requirement for container insulation.

Figure 12.
Container-based pop-ups of eating establishments: Ritual Coffee (left), Smitten Made-To-Order Ice Cream (center), Biergarten (right) (Photographs by author, 2015)

Public Space, Participation and Potential

Within the context of the previous two case studies, Proxy's rent-based model produces a more commercially oriented urban space. Envelope A+D is the developer, curator, and producer of a changing urban condition—they are responsible for the project's economic sustainability, attention to materiality, design, and diverse programming. Envelope A+D's ability to create a strong dialog between neighbors, vendors, participants, donors, fabricators and members of different city departments is due, in part, to their unique position as an 'intermediary' between the City and local citizens. The firm has honed a set of skills specific to the project—navigating territories within and outside conventional architectural expertise—from fundraising to curation, advertisement, and community engagement. The strategy behind Proxy, and the resulting urban space, has been described as a success story in local and national newspapers, magazines and blogs.[27] Proxy's popularity with both local citizens and the press is due, in part, to its changing content, tailored to the neighborhood's character as a shopping and dining destination for both young people and families. Most recently, urban fitness pop-ups (Figure 11) and infrastructure for an outdoor movie theater complement the food and clothing vendors (Figure 12). As a project that relies on commerce and curated events to create an active urban

space, Proxy fits well into the surrounding high-end shopping district on Hayes Valley's main corridor and caters to an upper-income population. While some of its events are free, it is less concerned with providing a space the can accommodate a range of activities by people of all ages and incomes as might be the goal for a publicly-funded plaza or park. However, Proxy's strategy for bringing together local institutions, citizens, vendors and curated events, has inspired Douglas Burnham's new project NOW, located in San Francisco's Hunters Point neighborhood, a traditionally low-income, industrial area of the city. One of the objectives of this second project is to build upon Proxy's strategies to create a vibrant public space in a historically underserved neighborhood, engaging a more diverse population and context.[28] The successes of NOW to date highlight that the core of Proxy's strategies lies in building alliances and activities based on the specific characteristics of a local site, and can be transferred to a range of different contexts.

The Proxy project engages several participatory strategies; the City of San Francisco's initial Request For Proposals and approach to interim use of vacant land demonstrates a willingness to support new typologies of public urban space proposed by citizens, and brought to life through collaborations with local businesses and neighborhood associations. The initiative to develop an interim use for the vacant lots in Hayes Valley was, in fact, brought to the City by members of the neighborhood,[29] and Envelope's proposal evolved in close dialog with the neighborhood association. During Proxy's initial development, these conversations ensured a close connection between the needs and desires of the neighborhood association with the projects flexible programming[30]. Envelope A+D still attends the regular neighborhood association meetings and presents upcoming programmatic alterations for community input. Additionally, Proxy—as a strategy and "content machine" for a flexible urbanism—offers local artists and vendors an ongoing Call For Proposals in four categories: retail, food, event/play, and art. This pop-up model is a testing ground for their local vendors and start-up businesses. Pop-up events like "The Planned Disappearance of"[31] presented by the local gallery *Department of Architecture* in 2013 included installations, performances and public talks on the topic of temporary structures in the context of new technologies and material efficiencies. The event featured local artists and thinkers. An open-air movie theater and curated film series is scheduled to open in 2015 and is currently being crowd-funded. Finally, Proxy's unconventional financial model has relied on rent from vendors in addition to donations from neighborhood residents, foundations and philanthropists, and is currently filing an application to become a registered non-profit organization.[32]

Akin to the Living Alleys Program, Proxy's urban strategies for activating vacant lots rely on strong and sustained leadership. As an 'intermediary' responsible for developing the initiative as well as curating rotating vendors and events, Envelope A+D pro-actively manages the spatial and temporal scale of the project by leveraging existing leadership within the neighborhood association, forming strong alliances with city departments, and splicing together a broad network of sponsors, vendors, and participants who keep the project active and changing. Proxy's original three-year lease has been extended until 2021. Given that the alliances and networks are formed around the pro-active outreach of an 'intermediary' rather than of members of the neighborhood, the question remains what lasting impact or empowering effect these alliances have on the local community itself.

Conclusion

The process of formalizing pro-active, provocative, and direct-action tactics into planning programs and strategies changes the nature of citizen engagement. In many cases, the complexity of long-term interventions in the public realm distances direct participation from physical outcomes or events, as citizen involvement is dispersed across many stakeholders and issues. The public-private partnerships reviewed here are examples of frameworks through which pro-active private initiative *can* occur in collaboration with local input. Each program encourages citizen participation and necessitates a range of alliances. The case studies also highlight issues of private and public funding; given the cost and scale of an intervention in public space, businesses are a principal stakeholder in the production of the emerging "public spaces". As a result, the new urban spaces are frequently linked to consumption and/or serve a narrow segment of the City's population, rather than being used by a range of citizens as an integral part of the public realm. Despite this trend of private leadership, many of the examples encourage broader citizen involvement in project initiation as well as execution, rather than participation in response to interventions that have already been planned by a single entity. With the growing scale of public space intervention, as in the Living Alleys Program, up front public-private alliances have helped to ensure that a variety of perspectives and needs are taken into account and that larger collaborative networks are formed.

In order to produce truly public space, 'a place of debate and struggle', it is critical that diverse sets of voices—in terms of race, ethnicity and income—are represented in local collaborations. In San Francisco, inclusive public-private partnerships have the potential to shift the focus from a reaction against the larger homogenizing forces of gentrification towards the specific local diversity of values and needs. Such emerging citizen alliances have the potential to lead to lasting citizen empowerment and to future initiatives that strengthen neighborhoods and contribute to connecting people to their city, both those who have lived here for decades as well as new residents.

Notes

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[14] Robin Abad Ocubillo (SF Pavement to Parks Parklet and Research Lead), interview by Antje Steinmuller, San Francisco, November 25, 2014.

[15] Ibid.

[16] San Francisco Planning Department, *Citywide Assessment of Parklets & Plazas - Summary of Data Collected for Summer 2014 Public Life Study* , by Justin Panganiban and Robin Abad Ocubillo (San Francisco, September 2014).

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[27] see for example John King, "City's Little Boxes, But These Look Pretty Good", *SFGate* , November 13, 2011; Allison Arieff, "It's Time to Rethink 'Temporary'", *The New York Times* , December 19, 2011; Mitchell Schwarzer, "The Emergence of Container Urbanism", *Places Journal* , February 2013; and Gisela Williams, "From No-Man's-Land to Must-See", *Financial Times* , May 09, 2014.

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[30] Douglas Burnham, "Proxy: An Experiment in Flexible Urbanism," *On Site in the City* , 11/001 (Sept. 2011): 32.

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[32] Douglas Burnham, interview by Antje Steinmuller, Berkeley, CA, November 25, 2014.

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Poles in place, Canberra, SIEV X Memorial, Canberra.
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Page 101-102:
Casa do Vapor,
Credit: http://constructlabnet/projects/casa-dovapor/

Page 163-164:
Participants and workshop facilitator discussing the found material documenting the "invisible" aspects of Zurich, *invisible Zürichs*,
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Page 217-218:
The dance floor at Soul Summit in 2012.
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