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*Conducting creative agency: the aesthetics  
and ethics of participatory performance*

**Astrid Bree**

**PhD Thesis**

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Department of Drama and Theatre  
School of Arts  
University of Kent

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## Abstract

The current vogue for experiential performance in contemporary theatre has led to a rise in interactive, immersive and participatory approaches that focus on creating work that attempts to involve and respond to the audience as individuals. This development has in turn led to an interrogation and redefinition of aesthetics, for instance in Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012), which examines spectatorship in participatory art. This thesis examines the aesthetics and ethics of participatory performance and argues that agency is fundamental to both. The research builds on Gareth White's *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (2013) and develops the discourse on participation by proposing a contextual understanding of agency that differentiates between the act and the experience of it.

The main research question of this thesis is: *How does participatory performance operate as an aesthetic form?* The thesis also examines how participation implicates ethics and the way that agency becomes both an aesthetic and ethical concern. In answering the main research question, the thesis also considers ways to analyse and evaluate participatory performance that take into consideration the different contexts of the participant's (inside) experience and (outside) observation of their decisions and contributions.

This research has taken a mixed-methods approach to enable a comprehensive response to the research question and employs audience research (implemented on three case studies) and practice-based research. Alongside these, the thesis draws on enactive and embodied cognition (Johnson, 2007; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009) to provide a nuanced perspective on agency, intersubjectivity and experience. The aesthetics of participation, and model for the analysis of participatory performance, I propose in this thesis focus on four key aesthetic elements: the intersubjective relationships between performer and participant (as well as between participants); the participant's embodied experience of doing within the performance; the creative contribution they make; and the demand characteristics of being a participant.

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The process of this research has been enriched by the opportunity to work with a range of artists and participants. The understanding of participatory performance I develop in this thesis would not have been possible without all the participants who generously gave their time and articulated their experiences (which far exceeded all my expectations when I decided to engage in audience research).

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## Previous Publications

Some of the research within this thesis has been published. The relationship between aesthetics and ethics is discussed in 'Aesthetic relationships and ethics in The Oh Fuck Moment' published in *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* (2015a, 20(1), p39-49). The audience research methodology has been published in 'Audience agency in participatory performance: A methodology for examining aesthetic experience', published in *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* (2015b, 12(1), p368-387), which includes a discussion of the test of the method on *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013b) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe (see Appendix 2 for materials used).

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## Introduction

The last decade has seen a participatory turn in contemporary theatre and performance, with an emphasis on the audience's experience. This interest in participation in theatre is related to the social turn proposed by Claire Bishop in her article of the same name about similar trends in gallery, installation and live art:

This expanded field of relational practices currently goes by a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, participatory, interventionist, research-based, or collaborative art. These practices are less interested in a relational *aesthetic* than in the creative rewards of collaborative activity (2006a, p179, emphasis original)

The social turn emphasises process over product, whilst the participatory turn in theatre emphasises experience over performance. These movements are closely related and share key terms, such as participatory and socially engaged, as well as an emphasis on ethics and intersubjectivity. The current vogue for participation was epitomised at the 2016 Edinburgh Fringe Festival; as Alexis Petridis explains:

audience participation is a big thing at Edinburgh: not just in what you might call its traditional form – in which a luckless soul is hauled out of the crowd by a comedian who proceeds to make fun of them, to widespread hilarity – but in more complex and intriguing ways. (2016, n.p.)

Petridis' experience of five participatory performances in a day underlines the prevalence of such practices, but also calls attention to the variety of approaches and strategies for participation in contemporary theatre.<sup>1</sup>

These approaches and strategies derive from two elements that all forms of participatory theatre have in common. Put simply, participatory theatre reconfigures the relationship between the audience member and the performance. It will do so in two ways; allowing audience members to directly engage with the performance context, for instance by performing a task or answering a question, and by constructing a spatial layout for the work that removes the division between performers and audience. This approach can be found in a number of different types of participatory theatre, ranging from interactive installations, socially engaged works, immersive performance to game

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<sup>1</sup> The participatory turn is also impacting on academic interests, as shown by recent edited collections: *Performance and Participation: Practices, Audiences, Politics* (Harpin and Nicholson, 2016) and *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* (Frieze, 2017). Although too close to the submission of this thesis to be included, this illustrates the surge in interest in (the politics of) participation in contemporary theatre.

theatre.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis I will focus on participatory theatre where the participant is able to make an impact on or change something in the content or structure of the work, which situates their actions as aesthetic within the performance. I will also draw on the work of a wide range of companies to explore how participatory performance operates as aesthetic form, which includes three audience research case studies, as well as a practice-based research performance. The three case studies are *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013b) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, which provides a perspective on the development and significance of intersubjective relationships; *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney, which examines the relationship between one's agency and the systems that form the context for this agency; and *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (2014), which foregrounds participants' decisions and contributions and the way these constitute the performance. Other significant works include *The Money* (2013) by Kaleider, a performance that situates the participants as the performance by giving them two hours to make a unanimous decision on what to do with the money on the table in front of them, and *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood, a work that implicates participants through their actions in an exploration of the violence of racism and group mentality. However, despite the growing range of participatory approaches in contemporary theatre, this mode of work has not yet seen much consideration as an *aesthetic practice*.

To address this issue, I will propose an aesthetics of participatory performance. The main research question examined in this thesis is:

1. *How does participatory performance operate as an aesthetic form?*

This leads to two further areas of enquiry:

2. *How does participation implicate ethics?*

3. *How do the performers and the situation conduct the participant's agency?*

I propose the term 'conducting' agency in this thesis to avoid the common assumptions made about the participant's agency, which suggest that it is something they lack and can be presented with by the artist. Instead, *conducting* agency acknowledges that the participant has agency when they enter into the performance, which then conducts this agency in different ways. For instance, an artist can create situations where participants are able to make meaningful decisions or that restrict the possibilities to

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<sup>2</sup> Game theatre is a term informally used to describe shows that are participatory and incorporate gaming elements, particularly forms that borrow from Live Action Role Play events. I am using this term as it is particularly apposite to this approach to participation, however it does not appear to be a commonly used term in academia currently.

respond.<sup>3</sup> In answering these three research questions, I will also investigate ways to evaluate and analyse participatory performance in relation to two key contexts regarding the work: in the participant's individual experience and through outside observation (by the artist or researcher) of participants' decisions and actions.

Before I started my research I felt strongly that the prevailing ethical narrative around participation was problematic and intended to examine the term 'empowerment', arguing that instrumentalising participation diminishes its aesthetic value and presents ethical concerns. Although I still believe this, as is clear in Chapter 2, the focus of the PhD as a whole moved beyond this narrative to focus more rigorously on the aesthetic practice of participation. This shift acknowledges the thorough argument made by Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012) against the ethical focus of the critiques of participatory practices. However, Bishop predominantly examines interactive gallery work, despite stating in the introduction that the book takes a theatre and performance studies approach to considering participation. The shift also came about in response to my experience as an artist facilitator on a participatory project by Manuel Vason, *Still Image Moving* (2010), which asked passers-by to create a theatrical photograph with Vason (see p34 for a longer description). This project aimed to create aesthetic work through participation with the people of Bristol, with photographs projected at the end of each day, and bring art to three communities usually under-represented in such activities. My analysis of this project, which included my first time engaging in audience research, highlighted the complex nature of understanding the participant's aesthetic experience as well as any potential or real impact from this experience. It also emphasised the need to thoroughly understand participation as an aesthetic form before attempting to examine any instrumental function of it.

My first literature review left me dissatisfied with the discourse of participation in performance and theatre; none of the texts presented a thorough understanding of the *act* and the *experience* of taking part. The doing is essential in participatory performance and it felt imperative to better understand participation as an aesthetic act, experience and practice before any consideration of the ethical or political implications. A year into the project Gareth White published *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (2013), which is still the only book-length text rigorously to examine the aesthetics of participation in performance and theatre. This enabled me to reflect further on the aesthetics of participation, and examine it in a wider context and through multiple perspectives, by combining participants' experiences with theoretical

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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Shaun May for suggesting the term 'conducting' agency in response to my ideas.

and practical explorations. This thesis builds on White's book in order to develop the discourse, expanding on the key difference he describes between

the typical interactions expected and licensed in audience behaviour, and audience participation; it is not merely that some kinds of theatre are more interactive than others but that there is a meaningful distinction to be made, from which there are useful things to be learnt. (White, 2013, p4)

The meaningful distinction between audience participation and the performance of being an audience (as defined by Heim, 2016) is the starting point of this research. In this thesis I propose an aesthetics of participation that focuses on both the act and the experience of it, enabled by the mixed-methods approach described in Chapter 2.

Participation is fundamentally an act of doing. Therefore *doing* participation was seminal to this research and resulted in a practice research performance entitled *The Experiment* (discussed in Chapter 6). The term 'practice research' encompasses all forms of research that incorporate practice, as proposed by Rachel Hann, 2016, to move forward in debates around practice as/based/led/through research. Practice research is used here to describe the project as a whole, which combined Practice-as-Research (PaR) approaches in the development process with Practice-based Research (PbR) analysis, including researcher-practitioner reflection and participant research. The practice research process significantly deepened my thinking about participation in performance as well as my understanding of the different ways and methodologies for using practice within research. The role of the practice within the research was complicated by the HE context, which meant participants interpreted their role in a different way compared to a professional context. The process of developing the performance and the subsequent analysis created synergies between some of the outcomes of the audience research and the practice research, resulting in a better understanding of both. Although the outcomes of the project are presented as PbR in this thesis, it felt important to me that the participants' lived experience of the practice research is acknowledged as essential to these outcomes, due to the nature of participation as aesthetic experience. Therefore, the performance of *The Experiment* is presented as a live appendix of this thesis in the shape of a documentation video, participant responses (as audio tracks in Chapter 6) and performance materials (see Appendix 5 to 20).

As noted above, this thesis uses a mixed-methods approach, combining audience research with practice research alongside theoretical exploration, to explore the aesthetics of participation from an artist/researcher's observational as well as a participant's experiential perspective. Because of this combination Chapter 2 is

devoted to explaining the methodologies used in detail. My analysis of other artists' work has been inspired by action research, combining personal reflections with theoretical exploration in a process that is commonly used in academic writing on participatory and immersive practices (Aragay and Monforte, 2016a). For this reason, I have chosen to only analyse works I have personally experienced, with the exception of *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney, which I have discussed in depth with Tassos Stevens who directed it. This combination of methodologies enables a perspective on participation that situates participants' experiences aesthetically as part of the work. The use of audience research facilitates a discussion of participation that goes beyond a single individual's experience, resulting in analysis that is more nuanced than is possible based on an individual's reflections.

The main aim of this research is to propose an aesthetics of participation that centres on the act and experience of taking part. In proposing this, I am not using the term aesthetics to make value judgements, but rather to refer to a system for identifying forms of art. Jacques Rancière defines aesthetics in *Aesthetics and its Discontents* as "a regime of the functioning of art and a matrix of discourse, a form for identifying the specificity of art and redistribution of the relations between the forms of sensory experience" (2009, p14). The purpose of proposing an aesthetics of participation in this thesis is to enable a focused discussion of the significant elements of participatory performance as a form, echoing the redistribution of forms of sensory experience described by Rancière. This approach acknowledges White's (2013) statement that a meaningful distinction should be made between audience participation in performance and other types of audience engagement in theatre and lends itself to the development of a system for analysis.

### *Terminology*

An ambiguity remains about the term participation as it is used to describe a wide range of practices from socially engaged or applied practice, to work that asks participants to make decisions or contributions that affect the outcome of the performance, or just to count how many people attended a show in reports that aim to communicate the impact of a particular work or venue. This diversity illustrates the importance of defining the type of participation any study examines. In this thesis I focus on participatory performance where the artist creates a predetermined situation for the participant to enter and which asks them to contribute something that will add to or change the content or structure created by the artist. For example, a verbal

statement that becomes part of the performance text or a physical action to solve a problem, which in turn determines the performance ending. This means that the thesis does not examine applied or socially engaged practices, which are characterised by participants taking part in the creation of the work, rather than in a performance with a predetermined structure, and by an instrumental aim for the project to transform or benefit the participants, over an aesthetic experience (Nicholson, 2005; Shaughnessy, 2012). These two approaches to participation differ too much to be meaningfully examined within a single thesis. An additional reason for focusing on participation as the performance is that applied and socially engaged work brings assumptions around the relation between aesthetics and ethics that I find problematic. Although this research focuses on work that asks one to take part in a performance rather than in a process, the resulting aesthetics of participation and system for analysis are aimed to be adaptable to any kind of participatory work.

In this thesis I differentiate between the work as a structure, created by the artist and consisting of predetermined content and an interaction design that indicates how the contributions impact on it, and the actual performance as a live, experienced event that includes the participant's contributions. In the experience of a work these two dimensions are inseparable and it can be difficult to differentiate between the two in analysis. The reason for distinguishing between the pre-determined content and the experienced performance is that it enables a more detailed picture of the systems and influences at play in participation, which together significantly impact on both the act and the experience of taking part. This distinction highlights the need to clarify the terms performance, practice and work, which refer to similar, overlapping concepts. In this thesis, a work will refer to the predetermined content and structures created by the artist(s), whilst a performance denotes that work in action as it unfolds interactively and is made into a unique live event that includes the participant's responses and actions. The term participatory practice is used less frequently and describes a wider approach to participation that is visible across works, meaning an artist may have a participatory practice that consists of several works and a larger number of performances. Similarly, this thesis will refer to the artist(s) of the work when discussing the predetermined aspects of it, and any decisions involved in the creative process, and to the performer(s) when examining the live, interactive event (although it is important to remember that for many participatory works this refers to the same person/people).

I refer to 'affordances' in my discussion of how an artist shapes and influences the participant's responses through the creation of such a predetermined structure and

content, drawing upon theoretical paradigms developed in the contexts of phenomenology and cognitive neuroscience to conceptualise performance processes. This term, coined by James J. Gibson in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1986), describes the way perception incorporates suggestions for action. Objects have affordances, for example a pencil affords the action of making a mark on a surface. Situations have affordances too, for instance a game with rules will afford particular actions, such as teamwork to achieve a goal or a shared belief of the importance of achieving that goal. Participation comes with its own affordances, discussed in Chapter 3, and these are made up of the artist's interaction design and other, unintentional, aspects of the environment.<sup>4</sup>

Although the perception of and response to affordances is individual there is a significant overlap of shared understanding, which participatory performance uses to its advantage to shape responses in a way that supports the work's success. This shaping process, through effective interaction design, can be characterised as conducting the participant's creative agency and highlights the relational nature of participatory performance. Relational, in this research, is not used to refer to work that is social in nature (in the manner of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, 2002), but to describe a characteristic where *the meaning of something derives from the context it takes place in*. In this sense, relational means that no element can be considered without reference to the situation it happens within. Meaning is itself a relational concept and defined in this thesis in terms of interactions. The meaning of something resides in how it connects to previous events and what it leads to in respect of present and future actions and experiences (Johnson, 2007).

### *Three lenses: aesthetics, ethics and agency*

Participatory performance creates situations that ask something of the participants, thereby implicating ethics within the work's aesthetics. Ethics, in this context, is considered in its broadest form as a branch of philosophy that asks how we should act (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2016). In participatory performance, the significant question is how we should act *in relation to others*, opening up questions of intersubjectivity and how to engage with an abstract 'other' (who may not be present). Aesthetics and ethics are frequently presented as opposites in discussions of art (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), however the conception of ethics in this dichotomy is an instrumentalised version that focuses on the social and beneficial nature of particular

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<sup>4</sup> Game designers also use the term affordances to consider the way players and their actions form part of the 'material' they are working with (Armitage, 2011).



works of art (particularly in relation to applied theatre). Instead of this common ethical perspective, preoccupied with the idea of empowerment, I will argue that examining the aesthetics of participation reveals the inherent connection with ethics; as any decision made by the artist has both aesthetic and ethical implications for the performance and the participant's experience. Participation is an activity simultaneously intersubjective and symbolic, which highlights the importance of considering the connections between aesthetics and ethics.

The connection between aesthetics and ethics is most clearly expressed in the consideration of agency in the act and the experience of participation. Agency is a complex concept that is simultaneously an ethical concern as well as an aesthetic feature in participatory performance. In this thesis, I draw on enactive and embodied cognition to define agency, which emphasises the embodied experience of action and our perception of ourselves in relation to others and our context (Gallagher, 2005, 2007 and 2012; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Bayne, 2008). In participatory performance, agency derives from three aspects: the intentional aspect, the bodily sensation, and the reflective attribution as in Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, p166). Agency is based in perception, which highlights the importance of separating agentive acts, where an action appears as though the person has taken a decision on how to act, and the experience of agency. The difference between an agentive act observed from the outside and the experience of agency located in the individual's perception of an action is the basis for the contextual understanding of agency I propose in this thesis.

Aesthetics, ethics and agency present three distinct but inherently related lenses through which to view participatory performance. From these three perspectives, I will propose an aesthetics of participation as an artistic form based on four key elements. These four aesthetic elements, which form the structure of this thesis, are:

- The intersubjective relationships between performer and participant as well as between participants
- The embodied engagement of doing something
- The creative contribution made by the participants that becomes part of the individual performance
- The demand characteristics of being a participant that influence the way one approaches one's role within a situation

Demand characteristics is a concept that describes the way participants interpret their role and determine the appropriate responses in psychology experiments (Orne, 2002 [1962]). The demand characteristics of a situation add purpose and meaning to a

participant's actions and thereby influence not only their responses but also their experience of an experiment or performance. These four elements, underpinned by the three perspectives of aesthetics, ethics and agency, also form the basis for the relational system for analysing participatory performance proposed in this thesis (which is introduced using two diagrams on p42-44 to illustrate the connection between the three lenses and the four elements). Each of the four aesthetic elements is explored within an individual chapter, which also considers the ethical dimension of that particular element and examines a specific aspect of agency in relation to participation. Agency, therefore, runs as a consistent thread throughout this thesis to develop a nuanced understanding of how participatory performance conducts the participant's agency and how the participant experiences it.

In this thesis I aim to propose a wider aesthetics of participation, which views agency from a contextual perspective. This perspective considers the invitation from the work, but also the structures through which any contributions become part of the performance and the participant's experience of their agency. This research develops White's (2013) perspective, which presents an aesthetics of the invitation and includes a constructive discussion of agency in relation to this aesthetics. I also draw on the work of Adam Alston, who in *Beyond Immersive Theatres* (2016a) discusses what he terms 'productive participation' in immersive theatre, which describes the way audience members are part of "the means of aesthetic production ... [that leads to] the objectification of experience as art" (p7). This perspective is extended within this thesis to examine work that is participatory in the way defined above (with the opportunity to impact on the performance) to explore the role of the participant's embodied experience of doing in the aesthetics of participation. Similarly, Josephine Machon's *Immersive Theatres* (2013) and Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer's *Multimedia Performance* (2012) both position participation as an element of another defined mode of practice, offering useful perspectives on the range of work that includes participation and illustrating the increasing interest in such approaches to performance. In this thesis, however, I focus on participation as a distinct mode of practice and propose an aesthetics of participatory performance as well as a system for the analysis of such works.

### *Thesis chapters*

To propose an aesthetics of participation, it is necessary to deal with an ambiguity around the terminology in relation to participatory performance, as the term is used to

refer to a wide variety of practices. Even within the type of participation I focus on in this thesis, as defined above, terms such as participation, interaction, immersion and collaboration are used to identify overlapping practices that involve participants in different ways. Chapter 1 engages with these terms, examining the way they are used as well as defining their use within this thesis by drawing on theoretical writing and a range of performance examples. This discussion of participatory practices represents the context for the research and introduces the four aesthetic elements that are explored individually in Chapters 3 to 6.

A participatory performance exists in the meeting between participants and a predetermined structure created by the artist and as such requires multiple perspectives on the act and the experience of the work to rigorously analyse it. This project takes a mixed-methods approach, discussed in Chapter 2, which includes audience research and practice research. These two methodologies present complementing perspectives on the aesthetics of participation, combining an artist's, researcher's and participant's view on how participatory performance operates as a mode of art, as well as how it conducts the participant's agency. Chapter 2 describes the audience research methodology developed specifically for this research, which is aimed at examining the aesthetic experience of participatory performance and consists of audience observation, questionnaires and individual interviews. Chapter 2 also introduces the theoretical frame of the thesis, which is based on enactive and embodied cognition. This conceptual perspective foregrounds the relational nature of participation, both in terms of intersubjectivity and in describing the way each individual aesthetic element is dependent on other aspects of the work. The body of the thesis consists of four chapters that each examine an element of participation through the three lenses of aesthetics, ethics and agency. The first three aesthetic elements are explored in Chapter 3 to 5 with the help of an audience research case study (see Appendix 2 to 4 for details), whilst Chapter 6 draws on the process and outcomes of the practice research project to examine the fourth element.

Participants act and are acted upon within participatory performance, which reveals the way aesthetics implicates ethics in participation. Chapter 3 examines intersubjective relationships between performer and participant as well as between participants as the first aesthetic element. This element is examined within a case study of *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013b) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe (see Appendix 2), which explores intersubjectivity through both the form and content of the work. In this chapter I also propose an alterity approach to ethics for participation, which moves beyond the

common instrumentalised approach applied to this type of work. Alterity ethics focus on the concept of the other and the way we engage with them, which in participation illuminates the intersubjective relationships created as well as the way joint action impacts on the outcome of the performance. Joint action in participation is part of a shared meaning-making process that structures the way a performance conducts the participant's agency.

In acting together, participants engage with the work in an embodied way through *doing*, which Chapter 4 explores as the second aesthetic element of participation. The participant's doing constitutes an act of agency, which impacts on the performance, but also represents part of the process through which they interpret and make meaning. This process highlights the importance of the experience of agency, which this chapter considers from a phenomenological perspective, where agency depends on one's *perception* of it. In this chapter I argue that agency becomes meaningful in participation through the relation between an agentive act and its context, which includes the way the work's structure conducts agency through its affordances. The chapter draws on a case study of *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney (see Appendix 4), which illustrates the way agency becomes meaningful for the participant when it is perceived. This perception is based in the participant's embodied experience of the work, situating doing as a fundamental aesthetic language in participatory performance.

The participant's doing results in a creative contribution that impacts on the work, which I examine in Chapter 5 as the third aesthetic element. Each creative contribution represents an agentive act; however audience research on the case study of *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* (2014) by Coney (see Appendix 3) reveals the difference between the participant's act and experience of their contributions. Building on the phenomenological perspective developed in Chapter 4, this chapter distinguishes between an agentive act and the experience of agency and I propose 'creative agency' as a level that specifically describes the aesthetic act of creative contribution.

Acknowledging that not all agentive acts are experienced as agency also indicates the need for a more nuanced way of understanding agency in participation. This chapter proposes a contextual perspective that develops the idea of meaningful agency as that which is both related to its context and experienced as agency by the participant.

A participatory performance exists in the meeting between the predetermined structure and content designed by the artist and the specific participants (and their responses and contributions). Chapters 3 to 5 discuss three aesthetic elements from the perspective of the predetermined context created by an artist, examining how these

structures influence the participant's behaviour and their experience of the work. Chapter 6 explores the way the participant's individuality impacts on their response to a work's affordances and analyses the way in which this subsequently becomes part of the performance's aesthetic. The personal, experiential nature of this aesthetic element situates lived experience as knowledge and this chapter draws on the practice research project (see appendices 5 to 20) to examine the demand characteristics of participation. These demand characteristics impact on the role a participant takes on as well as their motivation for taking part, which in turn influences the way they approach any task or decision. As such, this fourth aesthetic element connects the previous three and highlights the relational nature of participation by demonstrating the two-way impact between the four elements of the aesthetics of participatory performance.

## Chapter 1 – Participation in context

As participation and related experiential forms of performance continue to expand in popularity the need to critically examine the aesthetic and ethical significance of such work increases. A thorough understanding of the terminology and types of practices is necessary to achieve this. The word participation carries political suggestions around the work's purpose, which often relate to either ethics or agency, implying that the availability of a choice automatically brings political agency or a level of meaningful authorship. Such political purpose is bound up in the work's context, but has led to a view of participation as a strategy to engage an audience directly or in a way that is more impactful than non-participation. In this chapter I focus on the *act* and the *experience* of participation to better understand the context and system of participatory performance, without assuming it has political implications for the participant's life. Although all acts have political implications, these should be considered once the context is fully understood, rather than presuming the opportunity to take part is in itself meaningful.

Despite the popularity of participatory, interactive and immersive approaches to performance an ambiguity remains around the terms, which have been defined in a variety of ways. The terms used to describe participation indicate varying practices with a range of levels of participant engagement, from interactive installations to immersive theatre and socially engaged performance. In this chapter I intend to address this issue, beginning with a discussion of common terms that situates this research within wider discourse. The second section will clarify the terms participation, interaction, collaboration and immersive as I will use them within this thesis; defining participation as a form of work where the participant contributes to or impacts on the content of the performance. Defining participation in this way identifies a set of practices where the participants take part during a specific, limited time period to (partly) constitute the performance, in contrast to those works where participants engage in the process of creating a work that takes place at a later time.

The third section will further explore participation as the performance and discusses four strategies for making work so as to develop a more detailed understanding of the facilitation of participation. This section will consider the way participation uses people as material within the work, the ability to take narrative decisions, the roles on offer in the performance, and game theatre (which provides a goal for participants to achieve). These four strategies are not mutually exclusive, but each carries specific implications

for the intersubjective relationships within the work, the types of action suggested for the participant, the ways in which the participant's creative contributions become part of the performance and the demand characteristics of being a participant within the work.<sup>5</sup>

In the final section of this chapter I will introduce the system for analysing the aesthetics of participation proposed within this thesis, which focuses on the connections between the four key elements of participation. This section also introduces the three lenses through which participation is viewed within the thesis: aesthetics, ethics and agency. The aesthetic framework that supports the discussions in later chapters is based on John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (2005 [1934]), Arnold Berleant's (2005, 2013) theory of 'aesthetics of engagement' and Jill Bennett's *Practical Aesthetics* (2012). These three theorists provide a situated and experiential perspective on aesthetics that is essential for participation and form the conceptual foundation for the thesis. This perspective also enables a reconsideration of the instrumental ethical framework commonly applied to participation and reveals the inherent connection between aesthetics and ethics in participatory performance, as argued in this research. Agency as a concept, which describes an intentional act as well as the perception of any impact of this act (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008), exemplifies this relationship between aesthetics and ethics and represents an on-going thread within the thesis. This chapter will provide a basic definition of agency that following chapters build on to develop a coherent and nuanced understanding of agency in participatory performance.

## **1.1 Research context**

There are two established lineages for contemporary participatory performance, one that traces evolving approaches to theatre attempting to engage the audience more directly (i.e. Machon, 2009, and Klich and Scheer, 2012) and one that focuses on art practices outside of the theatre, including fine art, interdisciplinary and gallery practices (as covered by Bishop, 2012, and Nicklin, 2013). This thesis examines a set of practices that emerge out of the first lineage, which traces a succession of approaches aiming to engage spectators in a different relationship to performance and departs from the idea of a 'passive' audience sat in a silent, dark auditorium.

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<sup>5</sup> Demand characteristics is a psychological concept that describes the cues and expectations within a situation that influence the behaviour and experience of the participant. I examine this concept in depth in Chapter 6.

Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty sought to shock the spectator, removing aesthetic distance in order to place the audience in the centre of the 'spectacle' (or performance) so that they would be physically affected by the experience (Jamieson, 2007). Richard Schechner's *Environmental Theater* (1994 [1973]) included the audience's "active collaboration" and in some performances individuals "joined the Group as if they were members" (p40). Schechner's work shows clear similarities with the practices I discuss in this thesis, particularly in the development of intersubjective relationships. Brecht's Epic Theatre similarly responded to what he saw as 'passive' spectatorship and endeavoured to create a critical perspective for the audience, who would be moved to effect change in the world outside the theatre. Brecht's approach represents a move towards an emphasis on relationality (particularly with the audience) that is still evident in twenty-first century forms of contemporary performance (Radosavljević, 2013). Postdramatic theatre, defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), moves away from the representational aspects of 'drama' plays and towards a greater integration of the audience into the meaning-making processes of performance. Postdramatic theatre covers a wide range of performative forms and focuses on the interaction between performer and audience, in some cases existing without any plot.

These theatre practices each examine the relationship of the audience member to the performance, providing different strategies to engage the spectator in an 'active' manner. These approaches have led to the current diversity of theatre and performance practices that involve the audience in some way physically in the performance; for instance in socially engaged performance practices (as discussed by Harvie, 2013, Jackson, 2011, and Shaughnessy, 2012) and in immersive performance forms influenced by the experience economy (as examined by Alston, 2016a, and Machon, 2013). The game and play-inspired first-person theatre examined by Hannah Nicklin (2013) bridges this theatre-based heritage and the second lineage that evolved in gallery or outside spaces.

The second lineage can be gleaned from a fine art or gallery perspective, where art practices responded to similar societal and political changes as the theatre practices listed above. The Surrealists, Italian Futurists and Dadaists each mixed art forms to directly engage the spectator in the work: from the Futurists' approach to creating chaos by double-selling seats to Situationist International who developed the *dérive* (inspired by the Surrealist *dérive* and Dada excursions, Bishop, 2012). The *dérive* aimed to find new ways of engaging with the modernist urban environment, which is



comparable to contemporary pervasive performance.<sup>6</sup> The Happenings of artists and performance makers of Black Mountain College and Fluxus similarly mixed a gallery environment with performative elements to form some of the earliest interactive art installations, aiming to remove the division between artist and audience and including semi-scored audience participation (Bishop, 2012). A mode of interactive art evolved from these movements, defined by Nicholas Bourriaud as *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), with a focus on the development of social relations as the key aesthetic aspect (as opposed to the use of relational in this thesis to describe the situated nature of participation). Bishop (2012) discusses contemporary interactive art practices such as delegated works by artists such as Tino Seghal and Santiago Sierra whilst Grant Kester (2005) defines dialogic practices as work where the artist provides the context whilst the participants supply the content. The two lineages traced briefly here are interconnected and together provide a context for contemporary participatory performance and theatre, which derives from an interest in the relationship between art and the spectator as well as a desire to make this relationship more 'active' and direct.

Both participatory lineages suggest that a mainstream, non-participatory, theatre audience or gallery spectator is not active, however the activity of this role is merely less overt compared to participation. Contemporary performance discourse situates the audience as actively engaged in the reception and interpretation of the work.<sup>7</sup> One conceptualisation of the inherently interactive nature of the live performance event is the autopoietic feedback loop defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte in *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008), who argues that "the performance's aesthetic process is set in motion by a self-generating and ever-changing autopoietic feedback loop. Self-generation requires the participation of everyone, yet without any single participant being able to plan, control, or produce it alone" (p50). The autopoietic feedback loop describes the process of exchange between the audience and performers, who respond to each other, but this process does not offer any opportunity for the audience to contribute to the content and describes a traditional, seated theatre show. The structure of the autopoietic feedback loop is inherent in, and at the core of, all live performance and although Fischer-Lichte refers to this as participation it is not unique to participatory works. Fischer-Lichte suggests that the autopoietic feedback loop

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<sup>6</sup> Pervasive performance or gaming refers to events held outside traditional art or performance spaces and instead operate by engaging with, disrupting or playing invisibly within public, often urban, spaces.

<sup>7</sup> The active nature of spectating is discussed by Bruce McConachie in *Engaging Audiences* (2008). He speaks of the spectators as pro-active and determines the act of conceptual blending as key in making spectators "active agents in the process of combining actors and characters into blended actor/characters" (p44).

ensures the “performance remains unpredictable and spontaneous to a certain degree” (2008, p38), and allows the audience “to experience themselves as co-determinate participants of the action” (2008, p165). However, the level of unpredictability and the opportunity for the audience to co-determine the performance are relatively low in comparison with a performance that offers physical participation (such as those described below).

The performance of a theatre audience, which contributes to Fischer-Lichte’s feedback loop, is examined by Caroline Heim in *Audience as Performer* (2016) as something additional to the interpretation processes at play. Heim argues that “the embodied actions of audience members constitute a performance” (2016, p1). This performance consists of a set of “behaviours – laughing, applauding, and many more” that “are part of the responses of a group of people who are gathered together in the communal space called a theatre auditorium. They come together to play a role – that of audience” (2016, p2). This type of active engagement is present in all theatre and White argues in *Audience Participation in Theatre* (2013) that audience participation is more than this established role of the audience in relation to the performance. The need for the distinction between audience participation and theatre audience behaviours is clear when considering the range of practices that the term participation is used to describe.

### *Terminologies of participation*

In contemporary performance discourse the term participation is used to describe a wide range of practices. For instance, Alston in *Beyond Immersive Theatre* (2016a) defines two forms of ‘productive participation’ in immersive theatre, narcissistic and entrepreneurial participation, which both centre on the participant as “a co-producer of immersive theatre aesthetics” (p44). Although situated as a significant aesthetic producer in relation to their own affective, meaningful experience, participants’ productive participation does not necessarily alter the immersive environment as a consequence (Alston, 2016a, p164). Jen Harvie in *Fair Play* (2013) situates socially engaged art and performance as engaging “audiences in active participation with an environment and/or process that compels those audiences to interact socially with each other” (p5). Similarly, Bishop in *Artificial Hells* (2012) uses ‘participatory art’ as a blanket term for the surge of artistic interest since the 1990s in participation and collaboration, with a field of practices that go under a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art, collaborative art and social practices. Audiences

are also situated as participants in applied theatre (Shaughnessy, 2012; Nicholson, 2005), which engages them in the creation process of a performance. White offers a clear, basic definition of participation: “the participation of an audience, or audience member, in the action of a performance” (2013, p4). However, when the term is used as a marketing gimmick this participation in the action can turn out to be very minimal. For example, *Nothing* (2013) by Barrel Organ Theatre is billed as performed “in a setting which invites the audience into discussion and participation” (Barrel Organ, n.d.), but this participation only included a single decision by an audience member of which monologue is performed first. This brief overview of the use of the term reveals the need for clarity, particularly when considering the number of articles that use the term without defining it at all.<sup>8</sup>

Several aspects recur across definitions and writing on participation in theatre and performance, such as the active engagement of the audience member (which includes taking some kind of action), the importance of the participant’s experience within the work, and the fact that they become part of the performance. These aspects separate participation in theatre from spectating in a mainstream theatre show and White provides a definition of this difference between an audience role and being a participant:

activity that goes beyond this [expected audience] role feels different and is different to the activity that we expect to see and take part in ... In this important experiential sense it is different to the action performed by those who take roles as performers, even if the actions they perform are in any other sense the same; and it is different to the activity performed in the role of spectator. (2013, p4)

When compared to the active audience relationship of traditional theatre, participation situates the audience as part of the performance media as “material ... more carefully shaped and manipulated, more productive of signs and affects, more complex as a site of perception and action” (White, 2013, p195). Joonas Lahtinen defines participatory performance “as events that encourage or sometimes force the bodies of the participants to become visibly and audibly active and moving” (2015, p38), which similarly foregrounds the embodied aspects of participation.<sup>9</sup> Both definitions emphasise the important connection between the participant’s engagement and their experience as well as highlighting the way these elements become part of the material of the performance.

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, Jordan (2016), Lavender (2014) and Nielsen (2015).

<sup>9</sup> Although the suggested approach by Lahtinen (2015) for analysis based on sensory fields and collective body technique is not described in enough depth to be cogent.

Beyond those aspects that recur across writing on participation there are several that remain unclear, either due to a lack of clear definitions or the wide range of practices the term is applied to. For instance, writers disagree on the level of impact the participant's action needs to have for it to be participatory, which is visible in the contrast between Alston's assertion that participant actions need not impact on the environment and the common idea that participation means co-authorship for the participants (as critiqued by Santone, 2014). Similarly, several artists interviewed in Machon's *Immersive Theatres* (2013) name the audience as active participants or co-authors, but without a shared understanding of exactly what such a role encompasses beyond the specific work and what kind of engagement is on offer.<sup>10</sup> The types of action on offer and the relationship between the participant's actions and the performance also vary and appear contradictory. For example, Elena Perez argues that the use of space in pervasive performance means "the participant becomes a fundamental part of the piece" and "fills the artworks with content" (2014, n.p.). However, the examples of performance provided appear to be immersive, using a promenade or treasure hunt structure, and do not offer the participant the ability to affect their environment or contribute content.

For some, participation also implies freedom, empowerment or a democratic approach, although again there is no consensus between writers. Anna Wilson (2016) provides a critique of the democratising potential of participatory work (as well as Punchdrunk's claim of empowering the audience). Wilson highlights that the idea of political empowerment through participation is part of the value ascribed to the work, particularly by funders and policy makers, and argues that participation raises "important issues related to notions of audience freedom, agency and equality" (2016, p160). I similarly argue that it is imperative to examine the power structures inherent in participatory performance as well as considering the experiences of the participants when discussing any potential impact. Wilson situates immersive theatre "as part of a wider participatory scene that has been expanding and diversifying across the arts for more than two decades" (2016, p160), whilst Alston (2016a) locates participation as a feature of immersive theatre, which highlights the relationship between the two terms.

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<sup>10</sup> Including Samantha Holdsworth from Nimble Fish, Jen Thomas, Ralph Savoy and Janet Evans from Punchdrunk and Louise Ann Wilson. Machon (2013) also analyses the interviews in her theoretical writing to describe participants as co-authors or collaborators.

## *Two-way interaction and responsiveness*

Immersive has become a common way of describing performance staged in a non-traditional way, where the audience is free to roam through the space, which shares some key characteristics with participatory performance such as the opportunity to interact with performers and to physically engage with the environment. Machon proposes three central features of immersive practice, as “the involvement of the audience ... a prioritisation of the sensual world ... [and] the significance of space and place” (2013, p70) and states immersive theatre creates “an all-encompassing artistic experience” (2013, p58). The experience is similarly at the heart of Alston’s definition, who states that immersive theatre focuses on “the production of thrilling, enchanting or challenging experiences, which feature as an important part of an immersive theatre ‘artwork’ that audiences co-produce by doing more than watching, or by augmenting the productivity of watching as a prospectively participating spectator” (2016a, p3). The audience member is described as a productive participant by Alston, as mentioned above; however their production concerns the co-production of their own experience in the work, rather than impacting on the performance content. Machon also suggests that participation is a feature of immersive theatre, which includes a ‘contract for participation’ that invites “varying levels of agency and participation, according to how far the audience-participant is prepared to go” (2013, p100).

There is a distinct overlap between participation and immersion, with both foregrounding the embodied experience of the work and suggesting an active engagement, situating both as responding to the two lineages traced above. Alston’s (2016a) and Machon’s (2013) definitions situate immersive theatre as a genre that includes participation as an element or feature of the work, in contrast to Wilson’s framing of immersive work as one type within a larger set of participatory practices. The overlap and blurring between the terms is made more confusing by the fact that both are used as marketing ‘buzzwords’ to sell tickets.<sup>11</sup> Machon states, for instance, that the term immersive “is now commonly used, wrongly in my view, to market theatre experiences which happen to play a little with site, design and/or audience participation, but to non-experiential (and thus non-immersive) ends” (2013, p60).

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<sup>11</sup> This is a wider trend, which responds to the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), than just in contemporary performance and is particularly common around shows by companies such as Punchdrunk, Shunt and You Me Bum Bum Train. The latter is promoted as “an immersive theatrical experience like no other” and “taking interactive and immersive performance art to a new level” (View London, 2012, n.p.). An article by Lyn Gardner for the Guardian in 2012 shows that this is a long-standing issue, stating that marketers “seem to be applying the term ‘immersive’ to anything that isn’t a play by David Hare” (2012, n.p.).

However, there is a productive distinction to be made between participation and immersion when considering the relationship between the audience member and the work; in participatory performance the actions of the participants become part of the content, whilst in immersive theatre the audience member's action becomes significant in their own (embodied and affective) experience. This point of differentiation is productive to consider in relation to the concept of interactivity, commonly used in discourses on multimedia performance to denote something similar to participation that relies on two-way interaction and responsiveness.

There are clear synergies between the terms interaction and participation, with interaction being more common in discussions of multimedia and digital forms of art. The degrees of interaction within multimedia performance are discussed by Klich and Scheer in *Multimedia Performance* (2012) as ranging from navigation, to response-based and complex interaction, which is either user-media or user-user interaction. The level of active engagement increases through this spectrum: from the ability to determine their own direction and movement in the first; to interaction where participants engage "in a process of action-reaction with a responsive environment, object, or agent" (Klich and Scheer, 2012, p157); and the possibility for complex interaction that requires the "mutual activity of both agents ... [who have] the ability to assert creative intelligence" (Klich and Scheer, 2012, p164). Klich and Scheer suggest that response-based interaction equates to participation in performance, whilst complex interaction corresponds to collaboration (I will return to the link between participation and collaboration below).

The essential element of interaction is responsiveness, which situates the interaction as a two-way connection. Aaron Smuts argues in his article 'What Is Interactivity?' that "to be interactive, something must be responsive in a way that is neither completely controllable nor completely random" (2009, p54) and states that participation is better described as responsiveness (in a discussion relating to video games and art). Smuts also suggests that interactivity is a relational rather than an intrinsic property, as "it is only in relation to our ability to control something that it is interactive *for us*" (2009, p65, emphasis original), but that it is not confined to particular medium "such as computer technology; even a stage play could be interactive if it was appropriately responsive to audiences" (2009, p70). This relational perspective highlights the situated nature of participation as a form, where it is only in the context and relations between elements that meaning is found, which I will develop throughout this thesis.

Responsiveness represents the key difference between participation and immersion, as the participant's actions impact on the performance content in participation whilst in immersive work the focus is on impact of the environment on the audience's experience. Mutual impact between performance and participant can exist on a number of levels, from a moment in a performance where a participant's response becomes part of the work to one where the narrative structure and outcome are dependent on their decisions. Whilst it represents a way of distinguishing between participatory and immersive works it becomes more complicated when considered in relation to the ideal form of interaction identified by Klich and Scheer: complex interaction. Complex interaction creates a situation where "participants collaborate with equal agency and have complete access to freedom of expression to create a work" (Klich and Scheer, 2012, p176), creating a dynamic relationship between audience member and performer. This relationship looks like participation at first sight, however the notions of 'equal agency' and 'freedom of expression to create a work' are incongruous to a performance that includes a structure within which the responses of the participants are incorporated (and which shapes those responses through specific invitations and affordances).

The relationship between audience member and performer essential to complex interaction is implied in White's definition of participation, where the participant becomes part of the action of the performance and which situates the participants as "material that is used to compose the performance: an artistic medium" (2013, p9). The distinction between interaction and participation is blurred and differs depending on the discipline's discourse, for example Bishop differentiates participation from interaction by suggesting that it is a social rather than a physical act, as it "connotes the involvement of many people (as opposed to the one-on-one relationship of 'interactivity')" (2012, p1). Klich and Scheer (2012) suggest that response-based interaction can be compared to participation whilst complex interaction is more akin to collaboration or conversation, which is a term that frequently appears in discussions examining the social context or value of participation.

Collaboration and co-creation, similarly to participation, are terms used in a variety of ways within contemporary theatre discourses: from applied theatre that frames participants as collaborators (Sallis, 2014), the suggestion that "the audience co-creates the event" in socially engaged and relational art (Harvie, 2013), to Machon's description of audience members in immersive theatre as becoming "active participants, collaborators and co-creators" (2013, p99). Collaboration and co-creation,

however, raise questions over authorship and power structures within the work, as the terms suggest an aspiration to creative equality between audience and artist. This is problematic when compared to the use of the term, for instance Lindinger et. al. (2013) use co-creation as a synonym for participation that offers the opportunity to make some decisions that impact on the work, but within clear limits, whilst the practices offered by Harvie as examples of co-creation include

having a social encounter in a work by Tino Seghal (for example in *These Associations* in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall, 2012), sliding down a slide in Carsten Höller's *Test Site* (Turbine Hall, 2006) or inhabiting the micro-climate of Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* (Turbine Hall, 2003). (2013, p28)

These works do not offer the opportunity to co-create anything beyond the participant's own experience, which contrasts with participatory works where participants' responses and decisions impact on the performance (such as *Small Town Anywhere*, 2009, by Coney, described below).

The two-way connection and mutual impact of response-based and complex interaction is fundamental for participation, as well as collaboration or co-creation, to be a meaningful descriptive term. Alston defines participation in immersive theatre as not necessarily impacting on the environment or the performance whilst suggesting that immersive work "positions the participant not just as someone subjected to affect, but as someone who co-produces affect" (2016a, p46) as a significant element of their aesthetic experience. Such a one-way connection between the work and the participant reveals that a significant portion of the discourse does not in fact address the key aspects of participation. This discussion also highlights the necessity for a closer examination of participatory practices, including the processes that underlie the mutual impact, to build on White's (2013) examination of the invitation in audience participation in theatre.

## **1.2 Defining the key terms**

To enable an effective discussion of participation I will define the way these terms will be used within this thesis, building on the discussion above and including practical examples to clarify the definitions offered. These definitions will contradict some of the practices that have been labelled participatory by writers included above as they narrow the criteria for a work to be considered as participation. This discussion aims to develop the meaningful distinction called for by White (2013) between typical behaviour expected in theatre and audience participation.



## *Participation*

The definition of participation I use in this thesis focuses on the participant's ability to make a creative contribution through their (physical or verbal) engagement, which becomes part of the content or changes the direction, or outcome, of the performance. A participatory work consists of a predetermined structure and content that leaves gaps or opportunities for the participants to contribute and their experience becomes part of the structure to create an individual performance. The predetermined structure may be restrictive and determine the performance narrative and ending or it can be open to participants changing the structure of the work. The way that participation is facilitated creates boundaries for the possible ways of taking part, which is part of the interaction design and includes the invitation to take part, specific tasks, and the structure whereby participant responses and contributions are incorporated. Participatory works are only fully realised when the participants are within it physically or temporally and do not require an outside audience position. The combination of verbal or physical involvement and the ability to impact on the performance differentiates participatory performance from immersive work, as in the latter a participant only impacts on their own experience rather than on the work itself (and thereby on other participants). Although a distinction is made between immersive and participatory practices (the term immersive will be examined below), most participatory works are also immersive, for instance by including the participants in the narrative or by creating an encompassing environment.

An example of a participatory performance, which is also immersive, that exemplifies the impact of the participants on the content and ending of the work is *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney.<sup>12</sup> In this performance, participants are given a hat, badge and role (for example, La Journaliste) to become citizens of a small town “for the most momentous week of its history” (Coney, 2009, n.p.). The town consists of two tribes, the Larks and the Wrens, and one participant plays as The Raven, a poison-pen letter writer who makes public any gossip and secrets discovered. Before the performance participants can interact with the Small Town Historian (online or in person) to come up with their own history and secrets. The narrative unfolds depending on the decisions taken by the town; one tribe becomes powerful and when the army threatens to raze the town to the ground they have to pick an inhabitant to scapegoat to save it. During

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<sup>12</sup> This performance was performed at Battersea Arts Centre in 2009, with scratches of a smaller touring version taking place in 2011 and 2012. Although I never took part in this work I have had several conversations about it with Tassos Stevens, who directed the project, and as such have a good understanding of how it played.

the performance, participants interact, enact actions (such as writing letters), and make decisions (e.g. whether to run for mayor or ask someone to get married). These actions, decisions and contributions become part of the performance, impacting on the content of the work through both physical and verbal means. These contributions range from small actions that become part of the background life of the town to large, creative decisions that determine the way the town deals with its challenges (for example, by refusing to scapegoat an inhabitant). Before the participants arrive the work is a structure with possibilities and only fully exists during the performance whilst the participants play as the Small Town inhabitants.

A performance described as participatory is *You Me Bum Bum Train* (2004) by Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd, which is for one participant at a time with a large cast of volunteers.<sup>13</sup> The experience throws the participant from one situation into the next and requires them to react swiftly and appropriately.<sup>14</sup> From leading a police raid, conducting an orchestra and hosting a TV chat show (in front of a live audience), the participant has to react to the situation and act accordingly by improvising and convincingly delivering, for instance, a pep talk to a football team just before they go out and play an important match. Although the experience relies on participants' ability to improvise and involves their physical and verbal actions, these acts do not change the content of the work in any way and only impact on the participant's experience (and that of the volunteer performers). As such, this can be considered an immersive performance, rather than a participatory one, as there is no opportunity for contributing something that becomes part of the work for other participants to experience. The format of one participant at a time, usually known as one-to-one performance although it is one-to-many in the case of *You Me Bum Bum Train*, can be participatory, provided that the impact from each participant on the content reaches the next (such as in Ontroerend Goed's *A Game Of You*, 2010, described below).

### *Interaction*

In this thesis I use the term interaction as a type of participation, denoting an exchange that is response-based. Interactive work will include moments or sections where the

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<sup>13</sup> The work is described as participatory, for instance, in the call for volunteer performers (Castingcallpro, n.d.). The practice of volunteer performers has received significant and justified criticism (Hutchison, 2015). This is not the focus of this research, but it does raise relevant ethical questions if the volunteer performers are situated as equally 'benefitting' from the experience as the participants.

<sup>14</sup> Each participant is required to sign a non-disclosure form before the performance starts and so the example scenes described here are those that have been made public through reviews and are not necessarily those I experienced.

participants impact on the content, however this is more structured and limited than other types of participation (which may offer the opportunity to decide the ending). Interactive work invites a response from the audience that moves them beyond being a spectator, but this exchange happens within specific and defined boundaries within the work, although the outcome of the interaction may not be predetermined. When compared to other forms of participation, interaction provides less opportunity for the participant to contribute, as the gaps or openings in the work are more defined and the shape of the contribution will be predetermined. Interactive work may ask participants questions, and incorporate the answer into the performance text, or set the participants a task to complete, which becomes part of the performance content. As such, it is response-based and participant contributions directly respond to the invitation from the work within a structure that has an established way of incorporating these contributions.

Interactive performance may ask the participants to answer questions and engage in conversation, such as in *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2011), by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe. The performance combines poetic text with interactive moments, for example asking participants to write an 'oh fuck moment' (a moment you make a mistake from which there is no return) on a post-it. When collectively sharing these moments, errors not only seem more manageable but also part of what connect us to each other. A randomised system of marks underneath tea cups (handed out as we enter the room) decides who is invited to read their moment out loud in between poems (Walker and Thorpe, 2013a). The responses invited in the performance are unpredictable and in several instances create a conversation between the performers and participants. But these exchanges happen within a clear performance structure and work to fill predetermined spaces between the written text (Walker and Thorpe, 2013a). This is illustrated by the final poem, calling on us to erect monuments and write anthems about the mistakes people make, which incorporates the 'oh fuck moments' of the participants with dots underneath their cups at choreographed instances.

*Love Letters Straight From The Heart* (2007) by Uninvited Guests resembles an interactive performance but is in fact a personalised immersive work. Before the performance, audience members are encouraged to submit song suggestions that are meaningful to them with an explanation of their significance. During the performance these songs are incorporated, with a hint to why they are meaningful, whilst the setting of the performance places the audience at a long table around which the performance takes place. The use of the submitted songs personalises each performance, but there

is no opportunity for the audience to interact with the performers or respond to the work in the moment. In this example there is some impact from the participants on the performance content, however this takes place before the live event and as such could be compared to a site-specific work that is adapted for each different location.

### *Collaboration*

Due to the fact that collaboration is a term most frequently used to describe participation in applied theatre, I will use co-execution and co-creation instead. Co-execution denotes work that is created by the artist, but where participants are needed to make it happen in the way they envisioned it, whilst co-creation describes work with significant openings for participants to make creative or structural decisions, although a framework will already exist. This thesis will only use collaboration when referring to work others have labelled as such, in which case it will refer to projects that offer the possibility to impact on structural aspects of the work beyond the narrative content or outcome. Many projects that are labelled collaborative employ a participatory process, and reside within the socially engaged and community arts sphere, which is outside of the primary focus of this research.

*Still Image Moving* (2010) by Manuel Vason is an example of a co-creative work. During this two-week project, Vason and a team of artist facilitators (of which I was one) took to the streets of Bristol, inviting passers-by to create a theatrical photograph. These images were projected on the shipping container that was home to the project at the end of each day. Participants were able to take all creative decisions in relation to their image, including the topic, content, and site (although limited to near the location of the container) and to choose the final image to project. Participants were also given ownership of the final image through the use of a Creative Commons license, which allows the participant to publish, remix, tweak and build upon the image, as well as being credited on any publications of it.<sup>15</sup> The structure of the work was specifically created to allow the participants as much freedom as possible when taking creative decisions, which significantly impacted upon the outcome of the work.

The description of *Black Box* (2015) by Dirty Market suggests it is co-creative, stating that participants will be able to “generate performance material” and that the artists

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<sup>15</sup> Each photograph was a part of the overall work of which the possible situations were constructed and authored by Vason. The decisions of the four sites for the shipping container, as well as where the projections were to take place, were all made before the project began. The Creative Commons licenses are often compared to open source software licenses. Further detail of the Creative Commons licences can be found at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>.

“look forward to creating with you” (Dirty Market, 2015, n.p.). The performance resembles a workshop situation, where participants can engage with tasks and games that might take them onto the stage or choose to remain in their seat. A deck of performance cards on the stage contains instructions for actions that either invite interaction with other participants, physical action or silent contemplation of the situation. Although the participants each carry out the instructions in their own way, with some bringing material inspired by a piece of text shared before the show, this does not extend to creative or structural decisions. This performance can be seen as an example of a co-execution type of participation, as the artists created a clear structure with tasks and a system whereby these would be enacted.<sup>16</sup>

A more effective co-execution participatory work is *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood, which asks the participants to carry out written instructions (ostensibly left by the zookeeper to aid an encounter with the polar bear). The instructions get progressively more violent, both in terms of the language and the actions the participants are required to enact, including forcibly undressing the performer, feeding him fried chicken (by now a naked black young man) and eventually chasing him around the room to take the rest of the chicken away. The work creates a tension between the instructions the participants are required to follow, in order to co-execute the performance as it has been designed, whilst the performer physically resists the actions that directly impact on his body. As such, the performance created a meaningful exploration of racism and group mentality and exemplifies how a co-execution structure can implicate the participants through their actions to aesthetically explore an issue.

### *Immersive*

Rather than suggesting participation is part of immersive theatre or vice versa, in this thesis I separate these two qualities as distinct features of a performance, which are closely connected and are frequently found within the same work. The definition of participation discussed above means that not all immersive work includes participation, as claimed by Machon (2013), rather the level of involvement indicated is better described by Alston’s (2016a) notion of ‘co-production’ in terms of participants’ individual experiences. The definition of immersive used within this thesis builds on Alston’s use of the term and will refer to the experiential aspects of a performance that submerge the participant in the work, either within the narrative or physically within the

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<sup>16</sup> Although this work needed more consideration to lift it aesthetically above a workshop placed on the stage. In the form I saw it, it only works for those familiar with a workshop environment.

environment, as separate from the embodied experience of making a contribution to the performance (although these two aspects are closely related). Like Alston (2016b), my use of the term focuses on the *experience* of immersion, rather than judging the immersive nature of a work on the artists' intentions or execution (as Machon, 2013, does). This situates immersion and participation as associated characteristics within the wider genre of experiential performance that is the context of this research (as investigating the relationship between audience and performance).

A non-participatory, immersive work is Il Pixel Rosso's *The Great Spavaldos* (2012), a performance for an audience of two who wear headphones and video goggles. The performance offers you the opportunity to become the lead performer in a circus show and tells the story of the Spavaldo brothers, daredevil trapeze artists who often performed without a safety net. In a small dressing room tent, to a soundtrack of circus music, you are instructed to put on a decorated cape and a fake moustache before being given video goggles to wear. The next time you look in the mirror you have transformed into one of the Spavaldo brothers. A whirlwind tour of the building leads to the circus arena where you step on a platform and are raised up into the sky. You sit back onto the trapeze and see your brother jump across the arena; just as he falls out of view he catches you by the ankles to the sound of a rapturous audience. The combination of the immersive technology and effective sensual touches (the perfume of the group of dancers as they crowd into the dressing room, the weight of the snake that the snake charmer places around your shoulders), transport the audience member into the world of the performance. The physical experience of the audience member is crucial to the success of the work; the trapeze, although probably only a few feet off the floor, is real and the physical sensations throughout the performance are central to the experience.

*Fight Night* (2013) by Ontroerend Goed is a participatory performance that is not immersive. Each participant has an electronic voting device, which they use to vote and answer questions. The performance is framed as a type of game show and the audience is told that performers will be removed from the stage at different points in response to their votes. Through a series of rounds performers are eliminated until at the end one rebels and persuades part of the audience to first invade the stage and then leave the theatre space. The performance is interactive as the decisions of the participants make an impact on the content of the work, by deciding which of the performers leaves the stage. As the experience is one of being sat in a traditional audience position, the experience of the work is not immersive. This contrasts to

several participatory examples discussed, such as *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney and *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood, which are both participatory and experienced as immersive.

### 1.3 Strategies for participation

The language around participation directly responds to the development of new forms, for instance Bourriaud's (2002) theory of relational aesthetics represents a reaction to developments in approaches of interactive and installation art in the 1990s. Bourriaud defines this type of work as a "set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (2002, p113). Bourriaud's focus is the social function of such works, considering the artist's aim as focusing "on the relations that his [sic] work will create among his public, and on the invention of models of sociability" (2002, p28). The emphasis on creating models of sociability is echoed in the instrumentalisation of participatory art, examined in Chapter 3, and is visible in the current critical focus that is ethical rather than aesthetic. Bishop puts forward a clear argument for a more nuanced language to address the artistic status of this type of work, otherwise

we risk discussing practices solely in positivist terms, that is, by focusing on demonstrable impact. One of the aims ... is to emphasise the aesthetic in the sense of *aisthesis*: an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality. (2012, p18, emphasis original)

Such a language is necessary to move towards discussing participatory practices with precision, to acknowledge both the aesthetic and ethical aspects of it, which should be grounded in an understanding of strategies to facilitate participation in practice.<sup>17</sup>

One way of considering the wide range of approaches to participation is to separate works with a participatory *process* from those that have a participatory *outcome*. Participation as a process of making work is common in applied and socially engaged practices and engages the participant in the creation of the work as a whole, whereas in work with a participatory outcome the artist has created a pre-determined structure that the participants contribute within; their participation *is* the performance. Participatory processes are not solely used in applied practices, but do include a shared focus between the creation of an autonomous piece of art and the relationships

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<sup>17</sup> This need is underlined by Bishop's report of her inability to communicate those projects she enjoyed and respected to others, as "their dominant goal seemed to be the production of a dynamic experience for participants, rather than the production of complex artistic forms" (2012, p246).

that are created through the process. The participatory process is facilitated by the artist and may include the possibility for the participants to take creative decisions on the structure of the work that is subsequently shared with an external audience. Work with a participatory process commonly identifies a particular community or demographic group to work with on a topic that is relevant to them.

The participatory process in *Outdoors* (2010), a performance by Rimini Protokoll in partnership with Heartsong Choir, demonstrates the role of the facilitating artist in creating work with a group of participants. The lives of twelve of the choir members provided the content for Rimini Protokoll to create the work; they were extensively interviewed and made journeys through the city centre wearing first-person view video cameras and audio recording devices. After this participatory process, Rimini Protokoll did the final editing and construction of the work from this material. The audience individually traces several choir members' journeys through Aberystwyth whilst listening to their voices and stories on a video iPod and reunite at the choir's rehearsal space. *Outdoors* also offers some participation in the outcome, as the audience members are invited to sing with the choir and meet the people who they followed through the immersive video and audio tour.

When taking part in a performance as the *outcome* of a work, participants enter a structure created by the artist that will include varying levels of predetermined content. During the performance the participants respond and contribute to the pre-established content, which combine to form a unique performance in which the participation *is* the work. Participation in performance exists on a number of levels, as discussed above, and is set apart from a participatory process by the predetermined structure of the work and the nature of it as a live performance event (which has a specific duration and contrasts with the workshop setting common to participatory processes). The structure of the work is fixed and inhabited by the participants during the performance with varying levels of instructions and restrictions from the artist. The work only exists fully in the moment of participation whilst the participants are physically in the work and their actions, responses and creative contributions become part of the performance. Participation in the outcome of a work takes a range of approaches, as seen in the examples discussed: *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney, *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2011) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood, *Fight Night* (2013) by Ontroerend Goed and *Still Image Moving* (2010) by Manuel Vason. Participation as the work is the focus of this thesis as it represents the



clearest perspective on the aesthetics and ethics of participation as an act and an experience.

A co-execution approach to participation as the outcome of the work is apparent in *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009) by Reactor, which consists of a framework of rules and activities to create a world that only exists when participants inhabit it. The work presents a large mascot of a lizard, reminiscent of a Disney character, asking people to help spread his 'Big Idea' with the help of an entourage. The inevitable question of 'so what is the Big Idea?' is answered with Neuro-linguistic Programming style responses and evasive tactics, explaining that the only way to really know about the Big Idea is to get involved. Three separate backstories ensure there are multiple narratives and reinforce that there is no single way to interpret the project. A series of activities in different spaces are on offer, including silly games and activities explained with serious purpose and an underlying, at times unnerving, ideology. Before the participants enter the work, it exists as a system of activities to engage them within the world of Big Lizard and only becomes a performance through their participation.

The remainder of this section will examine four common strategies for artists and performers to facilitate participation in performance:

- People as media and material
- Making narrative decisions
- Participant roles
- Game theatre

These four strategies are not intended to describe completely separate categories of work or represent a way of dividing all participatory performances into distinct groups. Instead, these strategies overlap and can productively co-exist within a work. The strategies each frame participation in a different way, inviting distinct types of action, facilitating varying types of relationships between artist and participant, suggesting different roles and offering discrete opportunities for creatively contributing within the performance. Each strategy has distinct implications for these elements of participation and describes a way of establishing, facilitating and developing participation in a performance. The four strategies also represent a way of identifying the starting point in the proposed system for analysing the aesthetics of participation, which I will introduce in section 1.4. The significant shared aspect between these four strategies is that they situate participation as an inherent part of the performance aesthetic; without the participant's responses and contributions the work does not fully exist. This

commonality also makes it easy for strategies for participation to be combined in different ways, as is visible in the examples discussed.

### *People as media and material*

The strategy of using participants as media and material in the performance highlights the process that makes each participatory performance unique, due to the specific individuals present and their personal background and experiences. The participants are used as something to be manipulated and framed within an aesthetic context, analogous to the way a painter uses paint and a dancer uses their body to create art. Work using participants as material invites them to respond and contribute to the work in a personal manner. Within participation, the participants are always already the media and material as both Bishop (2012) and White (2013) assert in their definitions of the term. In this strategy to facilitate participation the participants' *personal* experiences directly impact on the content of the work, for example by answering questions such as in *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2011) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe. In this work, the personal 'oh fuck' moments of the participants become part of the performance text, which is more direct than the conceptual level implied in Bishop's and White's definitions. Another way participants as media and material operates is by being invited to create something in the performance inspired or influenced by one's own life, as in *Still Image Moving* (2010) by Manuel Vason. In contrast, although participants in *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009) by Reactor carry out the activities and play the games as themselves and in their own way, none of these tasks ask the participants to contribute something from their own personal history or experience to the performance.

A work that exemplifies this participatory strategy is *A Game Of You* (2010) by Ontroerend Goed, which playfully explores notions of self and identity. This performance is for one participant at a time, who is led into a small room with two chairs and a big mirror. After a short wait I encounter a performer who engages me in conversation about myself. Together we watch a video of me in the first waiting room and I am invited to discuss things I am happy with and things I would like to change. Then we watch another participant in the first waiting room, talking to a third person, and the performer encourages me to make up a personality and life for that person. Following this I am given a CD, which I find out later contains my life as imagined by another participant, and then I find myself next to another performer on the other side of the mirror in the original waiting room. A participant is already there and then 'my'

performer enters and performs their version of me, discussing things I said about myself and mimicking my posture and mannerisms. *A Game Of You* examines identity through a literal use of the participants as media and material within the performance by performing a version of them and asking another participant to imagine their life from a live video feed.

### *Taking narrative decisions*

The second strategy to facilitate participation focuses on the opportunity for the participants to take decisions that change something within the performance and thereby impact on the way it unfolds. These changes may relate to the way a particular moment of the performance plays out or it may influence the narrative as a whole and impact on the show's ending. The significance of the participant's impact depends on the structure of the performance. For instance, in *Fight Night* (2013) the participants decide which of the performers take on the Winner and Loser roles, but they cannot influence the ending (Ontroerend Goed, 2015). In contrast, *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (2014, see Chapter 5 for a full description) provides the participants with the opportunity to decide the performance ending. These two examples illustrate two different versions of this strategy, one that offers the possibility to take narrative decisions on specific aspects during the performance and one where the impact of the decisions influence the narrative development of the performance as a whole.

It may be immediately clear what the result from the decisions on offer will be, such as in *Fight Night* where the reason for voting is made clear before the vote happens, or it may be implicitly understood from the work. In *A House Repeated* (2014) by Seth Kriebel the participants are engaged in a performed version of a text-game where a room is described, including what possible directions one can move in, before asking participants in turn 'What would you like to do?' These decisions move the game forwards to discover a secret place in the building the performance takes place in, Battersea Arts Centre in this case. *Fight Night* and *A House Repeated* also highlight the ways narrative decisions can be presented: participants can be given limited options to choose between or given a wide range of possible, creative responses. For instance, in the second half of *A House Repeated*, where participants are able to collectively imagine and describe the rooms they encounter.

An example of this participatory strategy is *REMOTE* (2016) by Coney, which examines meaningful choice and agency through its format and facilitates participation in a way that mirrors the choices we are able to make in real life. The performance

initiates the participants into the theatre of the future, where REMOTE ('here to help you be more like people like you') works as an algorithm to produce a live theatre experience based on collective choice. The system through which this operates is an interactive script performed by two performers that offers a range of choices to the participants who are given a white card which they raise to vote for the first option and leave down to vote for the second. This format examines meaningful agency as there is no way to opt out of the system and the participants' choices, although frequent, mostly impact on small aspects of the narrative development of the show (deciding the specific route through the narrative towards the predetermined final part). One of the final decisions is whether the character we are collectively playing will kill her daughter created by the algorithm in order to have meaningful choice or whether she will agree to let the algorithm (that has learnt from us what people like us want) look after her (us) but without being able to make choices. This decision is significant in the context of the performance as it explores the limited impact of our agency within the system of the work, which mirrors the type of choices we are able to make in our everyday lives.

The focus of this strategy for participation centres on the ability of the participant(s) to make a decision that impacts on the development of the performance, instead of emphasising the action(s) involved in the execution of this decision. In *REMOTE*, as in *Fight Night*, the participants make decisions collectively, based on a majority rule. Other approaches may be to make individual decisions in turn (such as in *A House Repeated*) or to ask a group to make a joint decision through a discussion (as happens in *Early Days*). This strategy for facilitating participation is often accompanied by individual action(s) or a goal to achieve, which are the two strategies discussed next.

### *Participant roles*

The third participatory strategy is to place the participant in a 'role' within the performance. This role is distinct from a character role in mainstream theatre (with a script and pre-determined actions) and analogous to a role one might find themselves playing in everyday life, which depends on a social situation and comes with expectations for certain behaviour and actions. In participatory work that uses this approach, the structure of the performance requires the presence of participants who are acting appropriately to the situation in order for the performance to exist, such as in *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney and *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009) by Reactor. These two examples also illustrate that the creation of, and introduction to, roles varies between works; in *Small Town Anywhere* each participant is given a specific role and

some suggested actions to go along with it, whereas in *Big Lizard's Big Idea* participants come into the work as themselves and are not given any specific information beyond the instructions for the particular activity. As such, the participant's role mostly denotes a task or activity for the participant to engage in, which can be supplemented with a narrative that explains the function or come without any such explanation. Participants may be given specific instructions about the activity or may have to infer it from watching other participants or performers within the situation. The role, and activity within it, may be loose and up to the participant in deciding how to approach it, such as in *Big Lizard's Big Idea*, or it may be tightly controlled by the performers.

*We Are Gob Squad and So Are You* (2011) by Gob Squad illustrates a role that is tightly controlled by the performers. This performance lecture uses what Gob Squad call 'remote acting', the practice of handing headphones to an audience member who takes the place of the performer on stage and speaks their lines and completes their actions as instructed through the headphones. These instructions leave little freedom for the participant to decide how to engage with their role, particularly when compared to a work such as *Small Town Anywhere* or *Big Smother* (2015) by HighRise Theatre. *Big Smother* is an example of this participatory strategy that highlights the impact on the intersubjective relationships created. The performance splits the audience in two, half are taken into a control room and the others are led into the theatre space that is set up with cameras to resemble a reality TV show. As such there are two distinct roles for the participants within this work, those in the control room are cast as 'producers' and asked to come up with challenges for the 'housemates', judging who has done things well and who should be eliminated. Those in the other space become 'contestants' and try to take part in the challenges as best possible to win. This latter role comes with a clear objective that the participant's actions were to achieve, which overlaps with the final strategy to participation: game theatre.

### *Game theatre*

Game theatre as a strategy to facilitate participation identifies a clear reason, aim or objective for the participant's actions, which can range from winning a challenge, solving a puzzle or achieving a task. Frequently, this is communicated through a set of rules, such as in *A House Repeated* (2014) by Seth Kriebel where the performer takes the participants through a 'rehearsal' of how each interaction works (description of the space, possibilities for movement, participant response/decision, description of the

result). In this performance it is also not immediately clear what the objective is, although with the two halves of the audience playing separately but within the same building it is unmistakable that there is something to achieve. The aim may be a small individual one, for example in *Small Town Anywhere* a participant might have an aim that is part of their role, or it may be larger shared objective, such as in *A House Repeated*.

Some participatory works are directly framed as game shows, such as *Fight Night* (2013) by Ontroerend Goed and *Dis Place* (2015), by Esses and De Mesa. In *Dis Place* the participants are situated in a reality game show and asked to decide which of the artist immigrants should be deported and who should be allowed to stay, through a series of rounds. The participants have a shoebox with belongings and key information about each artist immigrant and the performers embody the two finalists using these items. After they have each made a speech about why they would like to remain in the UK the participants decide which artist immigrant wins and is allowed to stay. This example also illustrates that a game theatre approach is frequently accompanied by the ability to make narrative decisions, which in *Dis Place* influence the ending of the show, as well as a role for the participant that specifies clear tasks and actions.

*The Money* (2013) by Kaleider exemplifies game theatre, as well as a co-execution approach to participatory performance, and is based on a deceptively simple premise: a group of participants have two hours to collectively decide what to do with the (real) money that is on the table in front of them. If no unanimous decision is reached then the money rolls over to the next show. The amount of money on the table depends on how much the Benefactors have contributed (at least £10 each, paid as the ticket price) and whether there was a rollover in the last performance(s). Before coming the audience can decide whether to be a Silent Witness or a Benefactor and during the performance Silent Witnesses can buy in to become a Benefactor, whilst Benefactors can 'gong out' to become a Silent Witness. This performance presents a clear aim, or goal, to the participants with the final sentence in the rule booklet (that is read aloud by a participant): 'what can we do together that we cannot do apart?' This presents an objective for the participants, alongside the rules presented.<sup>18</sup> As well as a game theatre approach, the previous three strategies are present in this work: the Benefactor and Silent witness options each present a clear role with possible actions; participants are able to take a wide range of narrative decisions to determine the ending; personal information and world views are visible in the Benefactors' conversation and

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<sup>18</sup> The pro forma needs to be signed by all participants and the intended plan for the money needs to be legal.

suggestions; and the rules of the performance suggest a clear goal to achieve through the participants' actions.

#### **1.4 A system for analysing the aesthetics of participatory performance**

The strategies for facilitating participation reveal four key elements of the participant's experience, which I argue are central to the aesthetics of participation as a form:

- The intersubjective relationships between performer and participant (and between participants)
- The embodied experience of the participant who engages with the work through doing
- The creative contributions made by the participants (and the system whereby these become part of the performance)
- The demand characteristics of being a participant, which describe the way a participant's interpretation of their role impacts on their responses and experience

These four elements are inseparable within (the experience of) the performance; they mutually develop throughout the duration of the show and the interactions between the elements are a significant source of meaning within the work. The four elements form an aesthetics of participation that is aimed at creating a meaningful distinction between audience participation in performance and other types of audience engagement in theatre (as called for by White, 2013). This research also proposes that the four elements examined within this thesis represent one way of distinguishing between different experiential practices, such as immersive and participatory works. Such a distinction is not intended to support any conclusion on the merit of such practices, rather it assists in identifying the most appropriate elements and procedures to analyse a work (in the way discussed by Rancière, 2009). Although the elements are considered separately in Chapter 3 to 6 (to enable a more detailed exploration of each) it is the connections between them that are the focus in the proposed system for analysing the aesthetics of participatory performance, which concentrates on the act and the experience of the work.

The system for analysis, illustrated in Figure 1, highlights the connections and mutual influence between the four elements as fundamental to understanding participatory performance. This relational and contextual perspective will be developed in detail throughout the thesis in relation to participatory performance as well as the proposed system for analysis. The four strategies for facilitating participation discussed in the

previous section provide the starting point for analysing a participatory performance using this system; for instance if a performance gives participants a role then the connection between their embodied engagement and creative contributions is the first perspective to consider.

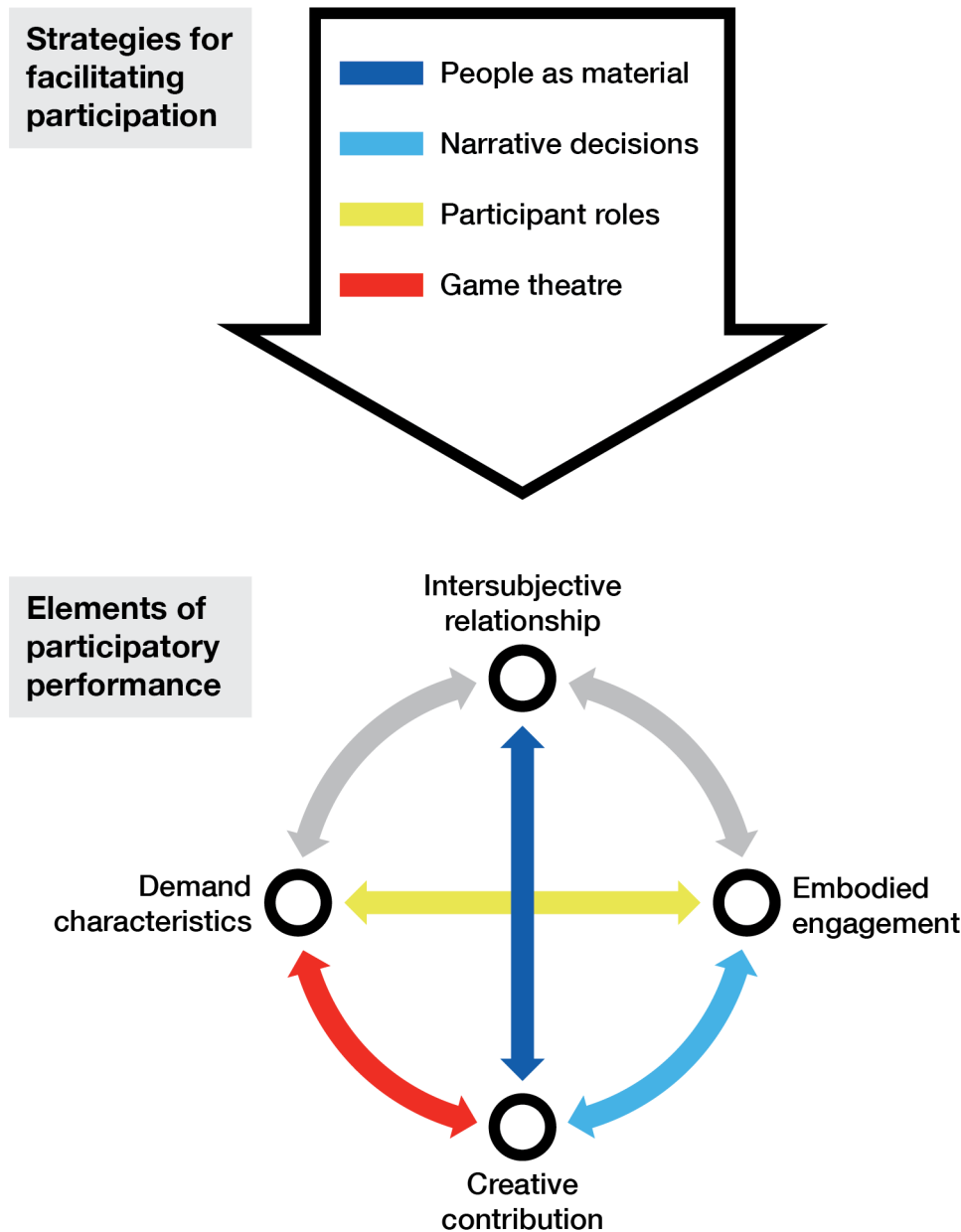


Figure 1: System for analysing the aesthetics of participatory performance

It is important to emphasise that the four highlighted connections are only starting points, for a nuanced analysis all connections should be examined (and themselves put into dialogue with each other). For some performances there may be more than one starting point and more than one strategy for facilitating participation present.<sup>19</sup> In the

<sup>19</sup> Additionally, it is possible for the specific approach of the work to indicate an alternative starting point, for instance in a performance with a game theatre approach it may be that the



above diagram the connections to the creative contribution are highlighted in three of the four starting points, which suggests that considering the mutual influence between the other three elements and participants' contributions to the performance content is significant in the analysis of a work's aesthetics. The creative contribution, which is explored in detail in Chapter 5, represents the process through which participants' contributions form the individual performance, which makes it an appropriate element to start analysing a work. The system for analysis proposed in this thesis highlights that the meaning of the performance derives from the mutual impact between the four elements, whilst the diagram above assists in the practical application of this system.

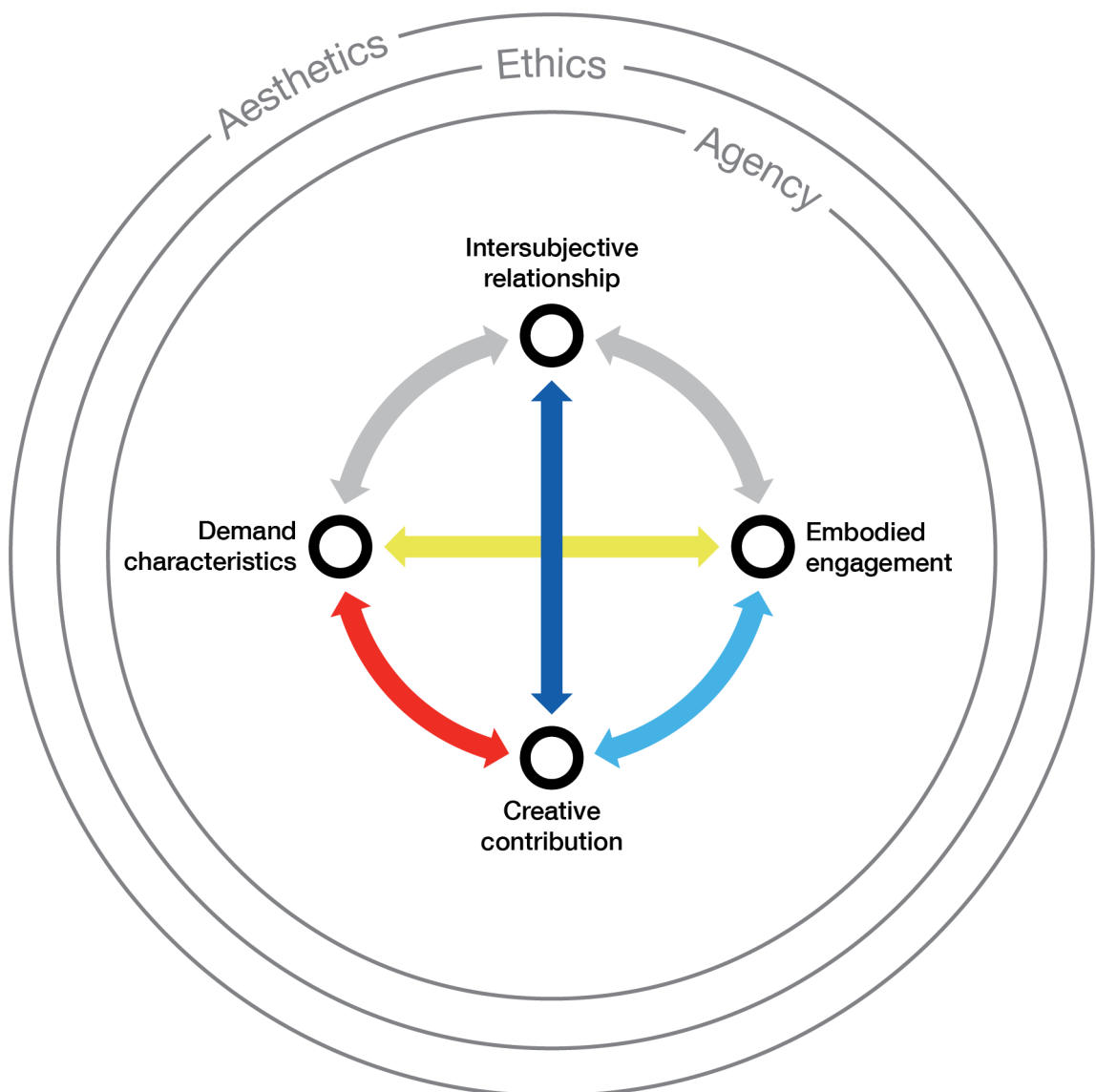


Figure 2: Three lenses on participatory performance

connection between demand characteristics and intersubjective relationships is the most relevant to consider if the work asks participants to work together towards a particular aim. The system is flexible on the order of analysis of the connections; the important aspect is to focus the analysis on the mutual impact between elements.

The four elements are explored in Chapter 3 to 6 through three complementary lenses: aesthetics, ethics and agency. These three perspectives run throughout the thesis and support the detailed examination of the individual elements as well as the broader perspective on participatory performance represented by the system for analysis, which focuses on the mutual influence between elements. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the three lenses as theoretical frames on participation and the four elements, which underpins the core argument within the thesis: participation as relational form requires an approach to analysis that focuses on the mutual influences between aspects of the work. The remainder of this chapter will provide a brief introduction to each of these three lenses, which is further developed throughout the thesis in relation to the four elements and the system for analysis.

### *Aesthetics*

The aesthetics of participation are fundamentally experiential and the theories of Dewey (2005 [1934]), Berleant (2005, 2013) and Bennett (2012) provide a foundation for the following chapters. This foundation builds upon the concept of the experience as inherently aesthetic as described by Dewey in *Art as Experience* (2005, [1934]), whose theory is the cornerstone of many of the philosophers that are quoted within this research (Berleant, 2005 and 2013, Shusterman, 2008, and Johnson, 2007, most notably). Dewey sees the task of aesthetics as restoring the connections between the experience of works of art and that of everyday life and his description of experience is pertinent to participatory performance:

Experience is a matter of the interaction of organism with its environment, an environment that is human as well as physical, that includes the materials of tradition and institutions as well as local surroundings. The organism brings with it through its own structure, native and acquired, forces that play a part in the interaction. The self acts as well as undergoes, and its undergoings are not impressions stamped upon an inert wax but depend upon the way the organism reacts and responds. There is no experience in which the human contribution is not a factor in determining what actually happens. (2005 [1934], p256)

The interaction is emphasised in the aesthetic experience, whilst the contribution of the organism having the experience is acknowledged. This two-way interaction is significant in participatory performance, which creates a situation where the participant's experience is aesthetically part of the event whilst also directly contributing to the content of the work. This blurs the line between everyday experience and that of art, as experience of everyday events is reframed within the aesthetic construct of the participatory performance.

The aesthetic experience is defined by its character as a complete, finished entity, according to Dewey (2005 [1934]), which sets it apart from the continuous stream of experience in life. He identifies ‘*an* experience’ as possessing a single, pervading quality, despite variations within the constituent parts, and suggests that within *an* experience

the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment. ... A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience. (Dewey, 2005 [1934], p36/7, emphasis original)

Art is exceedingly suited to the production of *an* experience, which is ‘esthetic’ in Dewey’s terms, as it creates situations where the interactions between individuals and the environment and the relations between ‘doing and undergoing’ are united within the experience, making it “more intense and concentratedly felt” (2005 [1934], p54).

The efficacy of art in creating aesthetic experience, in which the perceiver plays an active role in creating their own experience, derives from the intentional nature of the act of producing. Dewey argues that this act “to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have” (2005 [1934], p50). This perspective is exemplified in participatory performance, where the artist’s interaction design frames the responses and behaviour of the participants to become *an* aesthetic experience. Even when these actions are everyday ones, the structure of the performance effectively reframes them to become aesthetic. Participation as an art form is doubly effective at creating aesthetic experiences, as it frames the interactions that Dewey designates as the principal constituent of experience as aesthetic components in the work. As such, participation raises the immediate experience of perceiving above those situations not produced as aesthetic events.

The situated and contextual nature of Berleant’s aesthetics (2005, 2013) draws on Dewey’s ideas of the aesthetic experience and incorporates social aesthetics and the aesthetics of engagement. Social aesthetics are both contextual and perceptual according to Berleant and without an art object “the situation itself becomes the focus of perceptual attention” whilst “its participants contribute to creating the aesthetic character of the situation” (2005, p154). This perspective emphasises the involvement of the participants within the situation, such as a participatory performance, whilst the aesthetics of engagement emphasise “the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic

appreciation” (Berleant, 2013, n.p.). Aesthetic engagement takes a situated approach that “rejects the traditional separations between the appreciator and the art object, as well as between the artist, performer and audience. It recognises that all these functions overlap and merge within the aesthetic field, the context of appreciation” (Berleant, 2013, n.p.). As such, the aesthetics of engagement suggests a mode of analysis that combines multiple perspectives.

This situated, contextual approach of Berleant’s theories provides a foundation for the aesthetics of participatory performance that focuses not only on the distinct elements within the situation but also the way these interact and how participants perceive them. The range of practices cited as examples by Berleant in relation to the aesthetics of engagement do include what he calls “viewer participation” (2005, p10), although they stop short of the type of engagement defined in this thesis. However, the emphasis on “the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic appreciation” (Berleant, 2013, n.p.) is appropriate to the process of participation as a relational form and the “active participation in the appreciative process, sometimes by overt physical action but always by creative perceptual involvement” (Berleant, 2013, n.p.) clearly does extend to participation as defined above.

An aesthetic of engagement suggests that all components within the environment, including the participants, become part of the aesthetic process, rather than remaining individual actions or objects. As such, it involves “the total immersion of the appreciator in the object of appreciation” (Carlson, 2015, n.p.), making it particularly appropriate to examining the aesthetics of participatory practices. By exploring the engagement of the participant as an inherently connected part of the environment or situation, Berleant posits a situated approach that illuminates “an integrated, holistic human aesthetic” (2005, p92), which is productively applied to participatory performance. Berleant’s contextual theory also argues for a system of analysis of aesthetic situations and engagement, which requires

an order of representation that is primarily perceptual rather than conceptual, that describes the realm of environmental experience as it is encountered rather than as it is contemplated, that proceeds through participation and not by abstraction. *Such an approach must be empirical, sensory, phenomenological*, and not primarily conceptual and symbolic. (Berleant, 2005, p25, emphasis added)

In this thesis I will argue for a similar approach to understanding the aesthetics of participatory performance, which draws on multiple perspectives on the act and the experience of participation. The research I present in this thesis combines empirical (audience observations), sensory (my personal experiences as well as audience

research) and phenomenological (practice research and audience research) approaches, which are combined with a theoretical exploration of the concepts that lie at the heart of participation (see Chapter 2).

Both aesthetic theories explored so far focus on experience and a plural, situated understanding of art, presenting clear synergies with practical aesthetics as discussed by Bennett (2012). Practical aesthetics takes a multidisciplinary approach and focuses on events and affective experience, principally considering political (installation and video) art. Practical aesthetics is

informed by and derived from practical, real-world encounters, an aesthetics that is in turn capable of being used or put into effect in a real situation. In other words, it is to orient aesthetics – with its specific qualities and capacities – towards actual events or problems (much as practical ethics is shaped around specific problems). (Bennett, 2012, p2)

Similarly to Dewey and Berleant's theories, practical aesthetics moves beyond the idea of art as a fixed object by considering the relationship between art and events, which situates it "as a *modus operandi* rather than as a field in its own right" (Bennett, 2012, p9, emphasis original). Bennett explains that

Practical aesthetics is the study of (art as a) means of apprehending the world via sense-based and affective processes – processes that touch bodies intimately and directly but that also underpin the emotions, sentiments and passions of public life. It is, then, the study of aesthetic perception at work in a social field. ... Art, in this sense, offers an exemplary instance of practical aesthetics, art figures as an aesthetic operation (a way of *doing*, as opposed to an *object of* philosophy) that takes as its subject matter the already aesthetic nature of everyday perception. This operation occurs on an aesthetic continuum (rather than in a rarefied realm), connecting art to the practices of everyday life. (2012, p3, emphasis original)

The synergies with Dewey's definition of *an* experience are clear and Bennett proposes a practical aesthetic method to better understand the mediated nature of contemporary events that moves beyond clearly defined art objects. Practical aesthetics is process-based and concerned with perception and affect, "tracing the affective relations that animate art and real events" (Bennett, 2012, p13), and as such provides a model for the aesthetics of participation I propose in this thesis.

Practical aesthetics' focus on events and the unfolding of situations make it an appropriate model for dealing with the changing nature of participatory works, which consist of a series of distinct performances. Connectivity is a core concept in practical aesthetics, in shifting away from a single art object the emphasis moves to "its dynamic relations: to process and method – to the means of connecting" (Bennett, 2012, p30). The focus on dynamic relations, instead of an art object, enables a relational perspective on the fundamental aspects of participation, which is the intersubjective

relations it creates and the dynamic connections between the participants and the pre-existing performance content and structure. Bennett suggests that it would be idealistic to imagine that art is transformative by creating revelations through affect, but that “art can multiply connections precisely by implicating the sensing, affective bodies of viewers in the connecting process” (2012, p155).

Participation is a form of art ideally placed to create connections and implicate participants’ affective bodies within the situation and with each other. Bennett suggests that “the more haptic an artwork – the more its elements engage forms of sensory and tactile perception – the more it dispels the illusion of a complete narrative through the generation of extraneous relationships. ... Art is intensity: aesthetic, affective connectivity” (2012, p153/154). Affect arises out of the interaction between the participant and the artwork. This connectivity exists not only between the artwork and the participant but also between participants and between the participant’s experience of the artwork and the wider world, thereby generating new experience that moves “outside the parameters of what is already known or habitual” (Bennett, 2012, p63). This new experience and new connections result from the fact that “Art can occupy the interval, pursue the flow of affect within that space and pull this to the surface in a way that promotes a critical encounter” (Bennett, 2012, p188). This ability is where the significance of participatory performance as an art form lies; participation creates a critical encounter between participants and an interactive situation that implicates their affective bodies as well as their relationship to the wider world.

#### The aesthetic elements of participation

The aesthetic theories of Dewey (2005 [1934]), Berleant (2005, 2013) and Bennett (2012) enable a closer examination of the four key aesthetic elements of participation, by considering the mutual impact between environment and participant as well as the significance of the participant’s perceptual experience. Berleant’s (2005) social aesthetics lead to an understanding of situated human relationships within a social environment, which in participatory performance can be characterised as intersubjective relationships between performer and participant, as well as between participants. This relationship includes the invitation made by the performer, the group dynamics developed by the situation and the manipulation of the participant by the performer (amongst other things). The intersubjective relationship as aesthetic element, examined in Chapter 3, is based on the interaction between the performer and participant, which results in their embodied engagement in the work through *doing*.

The embodied engagement of the participant in the work through doing is the second aesthetic element, explored in Chapter 4, and exemplified in Dewey's statement that "life goes on in an environment; not merely *in* it but because of it, through interaction with it" (2005 [1934], p12, emphasis original). Dewey suggests that a perceiver creates their own experience, which is directly the case in participatory performance as the participant's actions become part of the work. As such, the participant's doing is a double aesthetic in participation, their actions become part of the content within the performance, but the act of doing also meaningfully becomes part of the participant's aesthetic experience. The latter is illuminated by Bennett's practical aesthetics, where art implicates the "sensing, affective bodies" (2012, p155) of participants in the process of making connections between the art work, participants and wider world.

The participant's embodied engagement results in a creative contribution, which becomes part of the content of the performance and represents the third aesthetic element of participation. The process of creative contribution is discussed in Chapter 5 and shows the aesthetic process at play in a participatory performance, where different elements interact to produce particular contributions from the participants that come together to form a specific performance. It highlights how the situation created by the artist, with the intersubjective relationships that develop, interacts with the participant's experience to influence the contributions that create a performance that is more than the sum of its parts. This process of creative contribution takes a contextual approach by focusing on the interactions between elements and the dynamic process that governs the mutual impact and development of elements over the duration of the performance.

The three aesthetic elements of participation discussed so far have a significant connecting factor: each depends on the participant's personal, subjective experience and responses. This commonality introduces the fourth aesthetic element, the demand characteristics of being a participant, which fundamentally affects the way participants engage with the work and influences their experience as well as their responses that become part of the performance. Berleant considers how the "recent emphasis on interactive art makes the dynamic exchange of object, audience, artist and performer in the aesthetic field explicit and prominent" (in Light and Smith, 2005, p28). Examining the ways a participant approaches and experiences this dynamic exchange is significant to fully understanding the previous three elements. The demand characteristics of being a participant is discussed in Chapter 6 as an aesthetic element,

with the help of the practice research project, which puts into practice the sensory and phenomenological approach to the analysis of art as called for by Berleant (2005).

### *Ethics*

Aesthetics and ethics are frequently represented as opposites in discussions of art, but participatory performance puts them into a productive dialogue. Fischer-Lichte compounds the dichotomy between aesthetics and ethics, suggesting “art [has] established itself as a self-sufficient domain independent of non-artistic, social, or economic interests and forces” (2008, p201). She argues that the autonomy of art is what prevents social works from being aesthetic in character, something that is particularly problematic in relation to participatory works that create or explore intersubjectivity and social situations.<sup>20</sup> In this thesis I argue that aesthetics and ethics are inextricably related in participatory performance, a more nuanced position supported by Bishop (2012) and Shaughnessy (2012). Participation offers the opportunity to put aesthetics and ethics into a dialogue, because it is an activity simultaneously symbolic and social.

Examining the inextricable connection between aesthetics and ethics in participatory performance reveals how an aesthetic reading of participation itself removes the necessity of an ethically focused criticism. Nicholas Ridout (2009) echoes Bishop’s (2006, 2012) call to not prioritise the ethical over the aesthetic, suggesting “this state of affairs runs the risk of creating a theatrical culture in which performances are valued only for what they might offer in terms of ethics” (p9). Instead, Rancière offers a framework to consider the aesthetic aspects of participation, without negating the ethical, by considering

the contradiction constitutive of the aesthetic regime of the arts, which makes art into an *autonomous form of life* and thereby sets down, at one and the same time, the autonomy of art and its identification with a moment in life’s process of self-formation. (2006, p26, emphasis original)

This aesthetic regime establishes one’s experience in relation to art as autonomous, rather than the work itself. Rancière also criticises the ethical turn, as “an attitude to art that is stamped by the categories of consensus: restore lost meaning to a common

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<sup>20</sup> Jackson suggests that many critical discourses have difficulty with the turn towards ‘the social’ because of the challenge this work presents to “the precarious boundaries of the aesthetic object, questioning the logic that would divide the inside of the art object from the outside of the material, institutional, and social relations on which the art object relies.” (2011, p43)



world or repair the cracks in the social bond” (2009, p121-2).<sup>21</sup> Instead, as Bishop explains, aesthetics enables an “ability to think contradiction ... characterised by the paradox of belief in art’s autonomy *and* in it being inextricably bound to the promise of a better world to come” (2012, p29, emphasis original).

A consideration of the main ethical concerns in participatory performance reveals the relationship with aesthetics; the invitation to take part, the performer’s manipulation and the agency of the participant all have direct aesthetic and ethical implications.

Moreover, the ethical decisions made within participatory performance, such as how to treat the participants and what they are asked to do, are simultaneously key aesthetic decisions in the interaction design. The connection between aesthetics and ethics is a situated and contextual one, with the relationship between the individual decisions (such as specific tasks, audience formation and the way participants are invited to take part) essential to fully understanding the aesthetic and ethical consequences of them.

The four elements of participation also reveal the inherent connection between aesthetics and ethics through the intersubjective nature of each. This is directly apparent in the aesthetics of the intersubjective relationship, but no less important in the act of doing (for example in the type of activity invited by the work and the way it is framed) or in the creative contribution (where the structure through which contributions become part of the work situates the participants in a particular role in the performance). Chapter 3 will examine ethics in more depth, exploring the instrumental ethical framework commonly applied to participation and propose an approach based on alterity ethics able to work with the dialogue between aesthetics and ethics in participation. Agency as a concept bridges aesthetics and ethics in participatory performance, as it is simultaneously an aesthetic technique and process as well as an ethical matter.

### *Agency*

The common questions asked about agency, as a core ethical concern in participatory performance, are whether the participant has agency or not, if the agency that appears to be on offer is genuine and whether it is based on enough information to make a decision. However, the agency of the participant is simultaneously an essential aesthetic aspect of participation, as the ability for the decisions, responses and actions of the audience member to alter or impact on the content of the work is a key

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<sup>21</sup> Such as Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics (2002), as a theory of art that particularly aims to create models of sociability.

characteristic. White similarly argues that the “experience of making choices – whether they lead directly to desired outcomes or not – or of having choice taken away, makes up one part of the aesthetics of participation” (2013, p64). Agency thus exemplifies the dialogue between ethics and aesthetics in participatory performance and requires a nuanced understanding able to consider this dual perspective. For instance, agency is not synonymous with freedom; the agency on offer is always limited or restricted in some way.

The way the term agency is used in discussions of participation has ethical implications itself. Agency is often referred to as something ‘offered’, ‘given’ to or ‘provided’ for participants, which implies they are lacking in agency and that the artist has a ‘pot’ of agency they can distribute.<sup>22</sup> This use of the term is ethically problematic and negates the participant’s agency in order to ‘empower’ them through the performance. The term agency is also used without definition in contemporary discourse, making it challenging to develop a rigorous understanding of the aesthetic and ethical implications.<sup>23</sup> This thesis combines a philosophical and cognitive understanding of agency, which provides a multidimensional approach, and I propose the term ‘conducting’ agency to represent the process by which the participant’s agency is affected by the participatory situation more accurately.

In philosophical terms, the definition of agency is derived from the philosophy of action, which states that “an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and ‘agency’ denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity” (Schlosser, 2015, n.p., see also Davidson, 2001 [1980], Anscombe, 2000). This general definition does not differentiate between different manifestations of agency, for instance bodily movement and an intentional act with consequences on other people’s lives. Including both the ‘exercise’ and the ‘manifestation of the capacity’ to act means that an intentional act that fails to achieve its intended purpose is still an agentive act. This is relevant in relation to participatory performance, as an act of agency does not always achieve what the participant would like, but this is nonetheless an agentive act.

Agency also refers to “the perception that I (or you or he/she) caused the movement that just occurred” (Hallet in Sinnott-Armstrong and Nadel, 2011, p62), which requires one’s will (the intention for an action) and an event (the action) to correspond with each

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<sup>22</sup> For example, I used the term ‘offering’ agency through participation in my article published in *Participations journal* (2015, p369) and Elizabeth Swift speaks of “awarding agency to a participant” (2016, p145).

<sup>23</sup> For instance in the recent special issue on Theatre and Spectatorship in the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* (Aragay and Monforte, 2016a) and in Machon’s *Immersive Theatres* (2013).

other. The emphasis on perception is important, as Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi explain that agency depends on the agent's consciousness of agency (2008, p158). Agency is a complex notion, as it is inherently linked to our embodied experience of action and our perception of ourselves in relation to others and our context (Gallagher, 2005, 2007 and 2012; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Bayne, 2008). In participation agency derives from three aspects: the intentional aspect (a decision on how to respond to the work), the bodily sensation (physical experience of engaging with the work through *doing* something), and the reflective attribution (an understanding of the impact of your action on the performance). The emphasis on perception in this definition of agency necessitates an approach that incorporates participants' experiences (which in this project resides in audience research and practice research).

In this thesis I argue for a nuanced perspective on agency in participation that considers both the act and experience, which is developed throughout the chapters. Chapter 3 will examine the relationship between manipulation and agency and discuss social, shared agency in participatory performance. Chapter 4 will explore phenomenological agency, focusing on the participant's experience of agency in the performance and examining how agency becomes meaningful within participation. This discussion acknowledges that agency is never absolute, and in participation can be faked by pretending the audience makes an impact on what happens next when they do not, but that it becomes meaningful for the participant when it is experienced within the context of the work. Chapter 5 builds on this understanding of meaningful agency to differentiate between agentive behaviour and the participant's *experience* of agency as these two contexts do not always coincide. In Chapter 5 I will also propose creative agency as a key type in participation and put forward a contextual understanding of agency that acknowledges the context of it. Chapter 6 will discuss agency in relation to the demand characteristics of being a participant and the dramaturgical challenges in translating narrative agency into experienced agency. I conclude in this discussion that agency of engagement and the experience of choice (even if illusory) is more effective than a pre-set structure through which the choices and responses of the participants come to determine what happens at the end.

This research considers participation as a fundamentally relational form, which is supported by the aesthetic and ethical frameworks discussed (and developed in the coming chapters). Agency presents the significant link between these two that illustrates the tension as well as the importance of multiple perspectives. This understanding also highlights that agency is not absolute, either within participation or

real life situations, rather it is dependent on its context. The ability to choose in participation does not necessarily bring any agency or empowerment. Agency in participation can be effectively faked and even in situations where your choice has a genuine impact, this still happens within a largely predetermined structure. Although this perspective on agency would be troubling if one assumed that participation equalled 'genuine' power or impact on the participant's life, in fact it resembles the agency we experience in everyday situations. Our agency is always curtailed or structured by the systems we live in, for instance the choices we are able to make are increasingly circumscribed by a neoliberal, capitalist society meaning we mainly get to choose what to buy. This makes a discussion of agency in participation, and particularly of meaningful, contextual agency, significant beyond the context of this research and leads to a consideration of agency not as a direct route to empowerment but as a deconstruction of the power relations within which it operates.

A methodology capable of providing multiple perspectives is necessary to explore the four aesthetic elements individually as well as the significant interactions between them. I will discuss the mixed-methods approach of this project in the next chapter, including a theoretical framework based on enactive cognition, an audience research methodology that includes a phenomenological approach, and practice research. The combination of these methods enables an analysis of participation as a relational form, which is essential to the proposed system for analysis described above. Each method provides a different perspective on the way meaning arises out of the interaction between elements; either between the participants and the structure of the work or between the aesthetic elements of the intersubjective relationship, embodied experience, creative contribution and demand characteristics of being a participant. The combination of methodologies also facilitates a dialogue between the individual perspective that participation requires as something one *does* and the collective view that focuses on the fact that we participate with *others*.

## Chapter 2 – Methodologies

This research takes a mixed-methods approach; this chapter will detail the methodologies used and how they interact with and complement each other: theoretical research, empirical audience research and practice research. The theoretical framework of the project combines a discussion of aesthetics and ethics with cognitive philosophy, resulting in a perspective on participatory performance that is situated and relational. The audience research and practice research aim to provide complementary perspectives on participation, essential to understanding the act and experience of participatory performance as aesthetic form. The combination of these three methods realises Berleant's (2005) holistic approach to analysing aesthetics that includes empirical, sensory and phenomenological methods of knowing, rather than primarily conceptual and symbolic. The aesthetic framework, introduced in Chapter 1, is developed throughout the thesis by drawing on all three methods to elucidate the four key elements of participatory performance. Aesthetics and ethics are fundamentally interconnected in participatory performance, which requires a range of perspectives that not only enable a deeper understanding of particular elements but also of the connections between them.

An ethical framework based on the concepts of alterity and dissensus (which recognise the importance of respecting otherness, as explored in Chapter 3) informs my methodological procedures of performing research. For instance, the audience research methodology includes interviews with open questions to avoid presuming what the most important elements of the participant's experience will be as well as ensuring the results do not primarily reflect the researcher's perspective (although some of this is unavoidable, as considered below). Within the practice research, the ethical framework enabled the work to explore a range of situations, some of which could potentially be challenging, by putting in place safeguards that respect difference. This chapter will first explore the theoretical framework of the research based on cognitive philosophy and participatory sense-making, which articulates the relational and enactive approach. The second section will discuss the empirical audience research methodology used for all three case studies and the final section will examine the practice research methodologies employed within the project.

## 2.1 Theoretical framework: embodied and enactive cognition

The theoretical framework of this research derives from 4E cognition, which is a collection of approaches moving towards a situated, contextual and relational model of the mind (and away from traditional cognitivism, which posits a computational model). 4E cognition includes embodied, embedded, extended and enactive cognition, however it is important to bear in mind that these approaches overlap and do not necessarily agree (Menary, 2010; Hibbert, 2016).<sup>24</sup> Research in 4E cognition has developed “a multi-dimensional analysis of cognition as incorporating our brains, bodies and environments” (Menary, 2010, p462), in place of the homogenous approach of traditional cognitivism, with significant overlaps between the dimensions. Briefly, and necessarily from a broad perspective, embodied cognition suggests that

cognition deeply depends on aspects of the agent's body other than the brain. Without the involvement of the body in both sensing and acting, thoughts would be empty, and mental affairs would not exhibit the characteristics and properties they do. (Wilson and Foglia, 2016, n.p.)

Embedded cognition posits that cognition is dependent on the social and natural environment, for example through off-loading cognitive processing on to the environment (Wilson and Foglia, 2016). Extended cognition suggests that cognitive systems extend beyond the boundary of an individual organism and that “human cognitive systems include those resources that are importantly, robustly, reliably or persistently supportive of decision making” (Sterelny, 2010, p466). Finally, an enactive approach proposes that cognition arises through a dynamic interaction between an organism and its environment, emphasising “autonomy, adaptivity, agency, meaning, experience, and interaction” (Cuffari, Di Paolo and De Jaegher, 2015, p1089).<sup>25</sup> Despite the overlap between the approaches, there are significant differences. Hibbert argues that “the best ‘E’ framework to use varies with the task at hand, so multiple frameworks could be equally ‘good’” (2016, p187), and that one should be open to methodological pluralism.

In presenting a conceptual framework based on enactive cognition, as I will do below, it is important to bear in mind that this is not intended as an empirical, falsifiable methodology to ‘prove’ the way participatory performance operates. Rather it aspires to provide an elucidatory perspective on participatory performance as a relational form in

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<sup>24</sup> In some formulations extended is replaced by ecological.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on embodied cognition see Aizawa (2007), Chemero (2009), Adams (2010) and Shapiro (2010). For more detail about embedded cognition see Suchman (1987) and Hutchins (1996). For more information on extended cognition see Clark and Chalmers (1998), Wilson (2004), and Clark (2008). For more detail about enactive cognition see Noë (2004), Thompson (2007), and Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993).

the metaphorical manner suggested by Shaun May in *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn* (2015). This metaphorical method uses scientific research and concepts to clarify and illuminate ideas about participation (in this case), the value of the approach and the resulting theories being assessed on “the extent to which they elucidate the phenomenon in question” (May, 2015, p21) instead of whether the theory makes falsifiable predictions. As such, the research uses and applies scientific and philosophical considerations of enactive cognition to provide a perspective on participatory performance that focuses on the relational, situated and contextual nature of the *act* and the *experience*. Taking a metaphorical or elucidatory approach to using enactive cognition also enables the blending between a cognitive perspective and one influenced by affect studies where productive in relation to the discussion. This use of enactive cognition is appropriate to the research question (posited as a non-falsifiable question), which examines how participatory performance operates as an aesthetic form. The other two research methodologies used within the project also employ conceptual perspectives that show clear synergies with enactive cognition; the audience research includes a phenomenological element and the practice research considers different forms of knowledge.

An enactive cognition approach emphasises connectedness and interaction, which is appropriate to participation as a relational form and combines productively with a focus on embodiment and experience. The term *enactive* was proposed by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch

to emphasise the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs. (1993, p8/9)

This approach foregrounds the active engagement of an organism with its environment and converges with phenomenology in that both

share a view of the mind as having to constitute its objects. Here constitution does not mean fabrication or creation; the mind does not fabricate the world. ‘To constitute,’ in the technical phenomenological sense, means to bring to awareness, to present, or to disclose. The mind brings things to awareness; it discloses and presents the world. (Thompson, 2007, p14/5)

An enactive perspective frames information as dependent on the context and relative to the agent, arising as a result of the interaction between the agent and their environment, and suggests perceiving as a way of acting: “Perceptual experience acquires content thanks to our possession of bodily skills. *What we perceive* is determined by what we are *ready* to do ... we *enact* our perceptual experience; we act it out” (Noë, 2004, p1, emphasis original). Enactive cognition highlights the embodied

nature of experience as well as the way active interaction with the environment generates meaning.

The core ideas defining enactive cognition are autonomy, sense-making, emergence, embodiment and experience, five concepts that are intertwined and partly imply each other (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010). Autonomy in this context relates to self-constituted systems, which may be constrained by external factors. Cognitive systems are autonomous in an interactive sense and “*actively regulate* the conditions of their exchange with the environment, and in doing so, they enact a world or cognitive domain” (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p8, emphasis original). A participatory performance can be seen as an autonomous, interactive system; the interaction between participants and the predetermined structure of the work enacts the fictional performance world. Sense-making results from interactive autonomy, as any exchange with the environment is inherently significant. A cognitive system is defined by its ability to create and appreciate meaning, which is encapsulated in the concept of sense-making. Sense-making is an inherently active concept and organisms are directly involved in generating meaning and enacting a world through their action. Sense-making is a significant concept in participatory performance as it articulates the way in which meaning arises out of the mutual impact between participants’ actions and the performance context. Emergence describes “the formation of a novel property or process out of the interaction of different existing processes or events” (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p10) and the enactive approach reformulates the notion of emergence “as ‘dynamic co-emergence,’ in which part and whole co-emerge and mutually specify each other” (Thompson, 2007).<sup>26</sup> In participatory performance dynamic co-emergence describes the process through which a narrative pattern develops out of participants’ interactions within the performance. Emergence, as well as Dynamic Systems Theory in which it is a core concept, is explored further in relation to participation in Chapter 5.

Enactivism sees cognition as embodied action and there are clear synergies between enactive and embodied cognition (examined in Chapter 4). Experience is fundamental, both methodologically and thematically:

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<sup>26</sup> In order to distinguish “an emergent process from simply an aggregate of dynamical elements, two things must hold: 1) the emergent process must have its own autonomous identity and 2) the sustaining of this identity and the interaction between the emergent process and its context must lead to constraints and modulation to the operation of the underlying levels” (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p10). See also Thompson and Varela (2001) and Thompson (2007).



in the enactive approach [experience] is intertwined with being alive and enacting a world of significance. As part of the enactive method, experience goes beyond being data to be explained. It becomes a guiding force in a dialogue between phenomenology and science, resulting in an ongoing pragmatic circulation and mutual illumination between the two. (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p13)

Phenomenologically informed research focuses on the realm of individual experience, which in this research is located in the practice research and audience research methodologies. The former combines my personal experience with those of the participants who took part whilst the audience research focuses on the experience of the participants in three professional performance works (and uses a phenomenologically inspired methodology). Participatory sense-making (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007) is an enactive approach to understanding social cognition that combines phenomenology and Dynamic Systems Theory.

### *Participatory sense-making*

The aesthetic framework introduced in Chapter 1 emphasises the mutual impact between participants and performance situation and highlights that:

Human beings are embedded in the world, implicated in a constant process of action and reaction. One cannot stand apart. On the contrary, a biological continuity of body and physical setting, a psychological continuity of consciousness and culture, a harmony of sensory awareness and movement all make the human person inseparable from the environmental setting. ... the environment is not outside to be experienced from within nor can it even be construed as surroundings: by being participants in the world, people become continuous with it. (Berleant, 2005, p21)

This relational perspective is required for an understanding of participatory performance that moves beyond separate descriptions of situation, action and result. A conceptual perspective that elucidates the aesthetics of participation is found in participatory sense-making (Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009). Hanne De Jaegher characterises cognition as sense-making, which is “the active engagement of a cogniser with her environment... Meaning or sense is made in what one does with one’s world” (2009, p539). Participatory sense-making is fundamentally intersubjective and focuses on the role of the interaction process. Instead of considering individual intentions, which are subsequently brought into a social situation, this theory acknowledges that such intentions are never outside it. The important step is

moving away from seeing social phenomena as events external to the perceiver that must be appropriately interpreted and instead seeing interacting as a process in which an interactor is immersed and as a process that in itself may play a cognitive role. (De Jaegher, 2009, p538).

The fundamentally relational nature of participatory sense-making situates it as a productive conceptual framework for understanding participatory performance.

Participatory sense-making also provides a structure to understand how meaning arises out of social interaction in relation to two key components of participatory performance: linguistic interaction and play. Elena Cuffari, Ezequiel Di Paolo and Hanne De Jaegher propose the notion of 'linguaging' as adaptive social sense-making, defined as

a form of social agency involving a double regulation of self and interaction that integrates the tensions inherent in dialogical organization and participation genres. ... Being a linguistic sense-maker is not (only) about producing or comprehending texts or verbal utterances. It is more than this, not only because language is 'multimodal', but because linguaging is an activity of a signifying and sensitive agent who copes, acts, lives and has its being in a domain constituted by wordings, histories, rules, authorities, articulations, interactions, other people, and the work of other people. (2015, p1092)

Linguaging emerges from the interplay between agents in participatory sense-making and goes beyond linguistic interaction to include all embodied, interpretive acts. This places linguaging, including verbal dialogue, as a fundamentally embodied activity in participatory performance, with the ethical dimension of this activity emphasised by the mutual impact on the creation and achievement of meaning in participatory sense-making. Making meaning together also raises the question of how one is capable of communicating with others about and from different experiences in a way that is understood. The answer to this question acknowledges that making sense together involves linguistic sensitivities and "requires a precarious balance of difference and common ground" (Cuffari, Di Paolo and De Jaegher, 2015, p1116).<sup>27</sup> In a participatory performance, this happens through (verbal and non-verbal) dialogue as participants discover together how to engage with the work in a meaningful way (i.e. in a way that has the desired impact on the performance context).

The emphasis on value and meaning in participatory sense-making also enables a productive perspective on play. In play, the common problem-solving pattern of interaction is re-deployed "into an active construction of meaningful action where no such sense-making is directly demanded from the environment or from definite internal needs" (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p38). Play involves pretence and make-believe and therefore requires a novel way of mutually creating understood values and norms when compared to participatory sense-making patterns in 'serious'

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<sup>27</sup> This question is also significant when considering others' aesthetic experience, which is why the audience research methodology includes a double hermeneutic approach that always bears in mind that the meaning arrived at has been doubly interpreted (as explained below).

situations. Rules can be decided on in the progress of play in order to keep it fun and balance the possibilities and restrictions that enable playful exploration of the game. New rules need to be made in a contextual manner, similar to the norms in social interactions, but with a key difference that the possibilities and meanings arising from those rules need not be permanent and are changeable when game-play demands it.

Over time, play is a self-structuring process governed by the dialectics of expansion and contraction of possibilities. Its freedom lies in the capability that players acquire of creating new meaningful (not arbitrary) constraints. The playful body is a new form of autonomous being, a novel mode of the cognitive self. It can now steer its sense-making activity and set new laws for itself and others to follow. (Di Paolo, Rohde, and De Jaegher, 2010, p39/40)

Play in participatory performance may be restricted by the structure of the work to different degrees, however the participatory sense-making activities within it enable participants to create meaningful constraints and possibilities through their responses and decisions, which in turn influence further sense-making activities.

The conceptual framework discussed enables a nuanced understanding of participatory performance as a process, an act and an aesthetic experience. This framework situates participatory performance as an aesthetic form of participatory sense-making, defined as “the coordination of intentional activity in interaction, whereby individual sense-making processes are affected and new domains of social sense-making can be generated that were not available to each individual on her own” (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007, 497). This highlights participatory performance as an aesthetic situation that is fundamentally intersubjective and which enables performers and participants to mutually affect each other’s meaning-making processes (discussed further in Chapter 3). The embodied and enactive experience of participation is also examined from a phenomenological perspective through the audience research and practice research methodologies employed within the project.

## **2.2 Audience Research**

The audience research is intended to complement the theoretical writing by giving a wider perspective on the experience of participatory performance (beyond personal reflection). As the audience are able to make changes and contribute to the work, their experience and responses becomes part of the aesthetic of the performance. This creates a particular live experience requiring thorough investigation to understand the way participation works as an aesthetic experience and process. Although audience experience is central to all forms of live performance, it is a crucial aesthetic component of participatory work, which means that understanding the aesthetic

experience of the participant is vital to understanding participation as a form of performance. The audience research methodology constructed as part of this project offers the potential for deeper insight into the act and experience of participatory performance by exploring the processes through which participants make sense of the aesthetic experience.

Audience research in theatre and performance is experiencing renewed interest (see for example the special issue of *Participations Journal* on theatre audiences, Reason and Sedgman, 2015). Audience research projects in the last decade include: Reason (2004, 2006a, 2006b), examining the experience of liveness through qualitative, participant-based research; Stevens, Glass, Schubert, Chen and Winskel, who have developed “new methods to measure psychological responses – cognitive, emotional and affective – to live performance of contemporary dance” (2007, p155); Reason and Reynolds (2010), using a range of qualitative approaches to examine the audience experience of dance performance; Lockyer and Myers (2011), focusing on live stand-up comedy audiences; Iball (2012), working with participants and practitioners to explore ethics in intimate and one-on-one performance through a practice-based research methodology; and Sedgman (2016) who explores how the audiences of National Theatre Wales find value in their experience. These projects represent a range of approaches to audience research aiming to better understand their experience, however none examine the particular live experience of participatory performance, which this research seeks to address.

Current audience research in participatory performance has a tendency to focus on the applied and community side of participation, with methodologies aiming to examine the impact on participants' well-being or community cohesion. Such audience research tends to focus on the instrumental outcomes of the work and examines the impact and benefit of the experience on the participant, something particularly visible in research that explores applied or socially engaged performance practices.<sup>28</sup> Such studies range from applied theatre projects trying to change perceptions (Dalrymple, 2006; Snyder-Young, 2011; Gallagher and Wessels, 2013) to participatory community projects that aim to improve social inclusion, community empowerment and the personal development of the participants (Matarasso, 1997; Vuyk, Poelman, Cerovecki and van Erven, 2010). While such a focus might be appropriate to the nature of those works, it

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<sup>28</sup> This emphasis has the effect of focusing on participation as a direct route to impact with further research into the social impact of the arts to support such claims (Newman, Curtis and Stephens, 2003; Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Arts Council England, 2014). This approach to audience research also disregards the value of better understanding the experience of participatory performance in aesthetic terms, explored further in Chapter 3.

overlooks participation as an aesthetic form. The audience research methodology constructed for this project focuses specifically on the aesthetic experience of the participant and is designed to be adaptable for a range of performance forms and participatory behaviours and experiences.

The audience research methodology combines phenomenological and cognitive psychology approaches to understanding experience with a focus on openness and creativity of participatory action research methods. The audience research takes place in two stages: observation of participant behaviour during the performance and audience responses directly afterwards in the form of a questionnaire and/or individual interview. The methodology brings together a discussion of performance analysis, audience behaviour and participant experiences to enable a coherent understanding of how participation works as an aesthetic process and experience. This combination of approaches allows for comparisons to be made, for instance, between the agency on offer in a particular element of the performance and the experience of that moment as articulated by participants. The methodology has been designed to allow enquiry into aspects relating to the four aesthetic elements of participatory performance explored in this research.

The approach to different forms of knowledge in participatory action research (PAR, as distinct from PaR) inspired the methodology described here. PAR emphasises “a socially constructed reality within which multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon are possible by both researchers and participants” (Kind, Pain and Kesby, 2007, p13). This perspective allows for different types of knowledge generation through a variety of approaches, focusing on “collaborative knowledge production and knowledges performed intersubjectively in and through research processes” (Kind, Pain and Kesby, 2007, p28/9).<sup>29</sup> The PAR approach to different forms of knowledge generation is appropriate to audience research on participatory performance where the audience will present multiple interpretations of the work and where it is imperative for the researcher to not influence participants with their own analysis. As the interest here is not aimed at evaluating instrumental outcomes of applied performance practices, aspects of PAR such as the focus on political action and the participation of the research participants in the design of the study are less significant.<sup>30</sup> The methodology aims to arrive at a

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<sup>29</sup> Some of the common PAR methods include: surveys, participant observation, learning by doing, dialogue, political action, group work and discussions, interviewing, mapping, storytelling, community art and media, and diagramming (Kind, Pain and Kesby, 2007)

<sup>30</sup> Involvement in the design of the study is also highly impractical when researching public, commercial performances. The research does offer a choice in the ways participants are able to provide responses to the work.

coherent understanding of the performance through a participatory research method that reflects the nature of the work: participants influence the outcome of the research whilst the parameters and structure have been predetermined by the researcher.

Being receptive to the participant is also important to phenomenological psychology. The methodology includes elements of an interpretative phenomenological analysis research approach, which “is concerned with human lived experience, and posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p34). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) combines a phenomenological perspective of embodied, situated experience with a hermeneutic approach, bringing an awareness that experience is necessarily already interpreted when expressed and in IPA is interpreted again by the researcher. Although understanding an experience, which involves a complex lived process, is necessarily idiosyncratic, IPA focuses on the attempt to make meaning out of the experience through interpretation. Thus, “because IPA has a model of the person as a sense-making creature, the meaning which is bestowed by the participant on experience, as it becomes an experience, can be said to represent the experience itself” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p33). The focus is on the articulation of the experience, which provides insight into the experience of the ‘original’ moment, but it is important to not conflate the two; the act of reflection and articulation develops the ‘original’ experience in order to ascribe meaning to it.<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on better understanding the nature of experience through the examination of subsequent articulation makes IPA an appropriate methodology for participatory performance, where the experience of the participant becomes an aesthetic part of the work. IPA also strives to create a balanced account that draws out commonalities of a particular experience whilst maintaining the complexity and contradictions between different individuals, making it suitable for exploring aesthetic experience.

The research participants for the audience research methodology are self-selected from the audience of the performances being examined. This procedure is compatible with IPA, which selects participants “on the basis that they can grant us access to a particular perspective on the studied phenomena. That is, they ‘represent’ a perspective, rather than a population” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p49). IPA is also particularly suited to working with a limited number of accounts, which focus on the individual, idiosyncratic response, rather than a quantitative approach. This focus is necessary to the methodology because it examines the aesthetic experience of

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<sup>31</sup> See Reason (2010) for a more in depth consideration of the relationship between experience and articulation of it within audience research.

participatory performance and requires an in-depth, qualitative focus to illuminate particular aspects of this experience. A wider picture can be constructed from these individual accounts although this, of necessity, remains subjective and relative; the wide range of participatory works and experiences mean it is impossible to arrive at a final, definitive answer on what the experience of participatory performance is. However, as IPA emphasises, from individual accounts we can nonetheless learn more about the structures and ways in which participants make sense of their experience, something that has a wider application beyond the individual. This also responds to the research aim of developing a system to evaluate and analyse participatory performance as aesthetic form.

### *Three parts: observation, audience questionnaires and interviews*

The audience research methodology applies principles from IPA and PAR to enable a balanced way of reporting outcomes that does not prioritise one particular experience or form of knowledge but rather represents the idiosyncrasies of them. The use of multiple approaches to gather information is common within PAR whilst in cognitive psychology the combination of observation and interviews is frequently used to enable comparisons between objective events, behaviour and experiential accounts. IPA is typically based on semi-structured interviews, subsequently analysed through systematic, qualitative analysis, but can also include participant observation. The methodology described here consists of three parts: participant observation, post-show questionnaires and individual interviews.

The combination of these three parts aims at getting as wide a response as possible, from the maximum number of participants, by asking complementary questions in different ways. This provides the audience member with different ways to take part in the research as well as a way to ascertain the most significant aspects of the performance. Participant observation is executed with a coding framework designed to locate and document significant aesthetic moments and behaviour within the performance. This also provides a method of structural analysis of the work that the experiential accounts of participants can be compared to. The coding framework details brief descriptions of behaviour, determining the type of behaviour on a scale, and noting the duration of the interaction. The coding framework can be used either during a live performance or with a video recording and should be completed at least twice in

a full study.<sup>32</sup> Audience responses are collected directly after a live performance and participants are asked to share their experience by completing a questionnaire (including questions such as ‘which moments were the most meaningful?’) and through individual interviews (to get a more detailed understanding of the experience and how particular moments felt for the participant). The questionnaire includes open as well as closed questions marked on a Likert scale and the individual interviews use IPA-style questions.

A test of the methodology took place on *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013b) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe to establish the practical applications of the ideas and identify possible improvements (see Appendix 2 for materials used). This process helped fine-tune the practical aspects of the method and develop the questionnaire and interview strategy. The first coding was done on a video to enable observation of several individuals, which highlighted that it is difficult to perceive body language in documentation footage. Coding live performance presents limitations to the amount of people able to be observed and also requires a more concise coding framework but does enable a deeper understanding of what is happening, whilst video remains useful as supplementary material.

The first interviews demonstrated the importance of open questions for more detailed responses and that offering the option of a phone interview enables more people to participate in the research. One phone interview took place ten days after the performance and showed that the participant was already reflecting on their memory, rather than being able to reveal the experience of it. For this reason, a cut-off of two days post-performance was decided for phone interviews, in order for it to remain focused on the experience (whilst still offering the opportunity to take part to those without immediate time). The first responses to the questionnaire also indicated that it could be improved with a quantitative measure to provide more information about the experience, with participants indicating how strongly they felt about particular aspects of it. A set of closed questions with a Likert scale was added to the questionnaire, which also helped target the methodology to those experiential aspects of the work with

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<sup>32</sup> It is also important to bear in mind that if video footage is available, it is generally created to give a sense of the experience of the performance, which means that significant moments are lost or not captured in enough detail. When coding a live performance it is difficult to observe more than one participant at a time and so multiple accounts are necessary to establish a representation of the range of behaviours during the performance. This approach uses categories to group different responses, which are then analysed in a qualitative manner, whereas the more common quantitative approach uses a system for scoring different interactions that are marked as present or absent. Such an approach uses a quantitative analysis method in order to arrive at a set of numbers. For more information on observational coding see Yoder and Symons (2010).



the ability to compare feelings of agency during the experience more directly between participants.<sup>33</sup>

Audience research that asks participants to articulate their experience inescapably reduces a multi-modal and affective experience into language unable to fully represent the complex nature of it, which is a general limitation that IPA is sensitive to. The specific limitations of this methodology relate mainly to the logistics of performance events. The research is designed to take place within public, professional performances, rather than events created specifically for the audience research, meaning that the research environment is not controlled. Such an 'uncontrolled' environment makes it harder to draw comparisons between different events, something especially true of audience participation, which is unpredictable even for an experienced performer. Beyond the uncontrollable variables inherent in participation, engaging in audience research on public performances also presents logistical issues in the amount of time participants are likely to have available. The structure of the audience responses is designed to offer different ways for the participants to take part, depending on their availability, and the interviews are deliberately kept to fifteen to twenty minutes instead of the more usual IPA length of forty-five to sixty minutes. The observational coding needs to be integrated into the performance to ensure participants' responses are not disrupted or influenced, which limits the depth of the material able to be recorded.

The limitations of the research design arise from the fact that although the methodology adapts some scientific methods it is not developed to be a science experiment. It takes the perspective of performance as a live laboratory rather than the more traditional psychology experiment that is repeatable and has a controlled environment. Despite the challenges, it is valuable for the research participants to be individuals who independently decided to attend the performance as this means they are more likely to represent the 'usual' audience for that particular work. An audience collected for the purpose of doing research is more likely to consist of specialists, such as drama students, which may skew responses. Such an audience also comes with a different set of motivations (which presented a significant challenge to the practice research project, as I discuss in Chapter 6).<sup>34</sup> The research design also emphasises the

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<sup>33</sup> Although it should be acknowledged that there are issues with this approach, as my feeling of agency as a '5' in my experience may not correspond to that of another participant.

<sup>34</sup> An assembled audience is particularly problematic when trying to research the experience of participation as many people associated with drama will be more likely to take part in performative tasks and their experience will contain subject knowledge that is unlikely to be present to the same level in an audience for a public, professional performance.

importance of detailed, individual accounts, which limits the number that can be gathered. The IPA approach to analysing individual accounts is specifically adapted to working with limited numbers of research participants and enables an understanding of the experience of a performance from four to six interviews. The methodology also combines the interviews with a questionnaire, as two complementary methods of collecting audience feedback, and contrasts this with observations of behaviour, to create a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences of the performance.

The audience research takes an alterity ethical approach, which I discuss in Chapter 3 in more depth. The methodology includes a consent process using an informed consent form for all research participants (see Appendix 1). This procedure consists of ensuring all research participants have read the informed consent form before they take part in the research, offering the opportunity to ask questions, making it clear they can withdraw from the research at any point, and providing a copy of the information about the research to take home. Some of the ethical challenges encountered whilst doing the research include making sure not to lead the participants during the interviews whilst reassuring them that their answers were valid and useful (a worry several participants expressed). It was also challenging during the observation process to combine the role of participant and researcher, ensuring not to influence the responses of other participants as well as avoiding distracting them whilst taking notes.

A specific ethical consideration was the covert recording and observation of certain performances. Whilst in *Early Days* (2014) by Coney and *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe I openly made notes, in *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney I played as a participant, making notes on my mobile phone, which were used as part of the performance (see Chapter 4 for a description of the work). In the debrief section of that performance I was finally 'revealed' as a mole within the work who was a researcher connected with Coney, leading to the request for participants to take part in the research (and asking them to inform me if they would prefer any audio recordings made of them not to be used). This led to me being very familiar with the work and having to perform my ignorance of what happens next as well as being very careful to remain neutral and uninvolved in the plans to steal the bag. As such, this blurred my role of researcher with that of participant and performer and required careful ethical consideration in conversation with Tassos Stevens (director of Coney). We decided that the covert nature of the role, as well as the reveal, were in keeping with the themes and structure of the work and that disclosing the details of the recording to

participants at the end was an appropriate way of ensuring they were able to give or withhold informed consent to be part of the research.

### *Audience research in the thesis*

Within this project, I have applied the methodology to three different participatory works, each with a different focus, showing its adaptability both in research focus and to the specifics of the performance. The first audience research project examined *Wish I Was Lonely (IWIWL)* by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe (see Appendix 2 for the materials used). This methodology focuses on the intersubjective relationships and shared agency experienced by the participants, with a coding framework that defines three forms of agency to distinguish between, although it is important to acknowledge that these exist on a spectrum.<sup>35</sup>

- Reactive (e.g. answering a question, either verbally or physically; reacting to a trigger or command; or responding to a request such as placing your phone in a circle on the floor)
- Interactive (e.g. completing a task that involves mutual activity, such as sending a text message to be read out; or engaging in a two-way conversation)
- Proactive (displaying self-initiated behaviour, such as leaving the space or initiating verbal or physical communication)

The questions for the participants focused on the experience of agency and how this related to their relationship with the performers in *IWIWL*, a performance that takes care to build the relationship with the audience and contains distinct offers to contribute.

The second audience research case study focused on the creative contribution made by the audience during the work and took place on *Early Days (of a better nation)* by Coney (see Appendix 3 for materials used). The coding framework for this project was based on that created for *IWIWL*, as there are clear parallels between agency and contributing, and also distinguishes between reactive, interactive and proactive actions. The audience questions focused on the experience of contributing to the work and how much they felt they had determined the outcome of the performance. The work places participants' decisions at the centre of the performance, making it a productive case

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<sup>35</sup> The three categories of agency have been inspired by Adam Ockelford's *Sounds of Intent* (n.d.) project to classify different responses to music. The triad of reactive, interactive and proactive is discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to participation.

study for examining the experience of contributing, although it also complicated the observation process as the participants contribute throughout.

The third audience research project focused on the embodied experience and examined *Adventure 1* by Coney (see Appendix 4 for materials). This case study examined the physical and verbal engagement of the participant within the work, with a coding framework documenting participants' body language, gestures and facial expression whilst they took part. This performance takes place outdoors and the format of the work asks participants to be covert and complete a mission in public space; two aspects that represented challenges for the observation process. The questions focused on the participant's experience of the physical tasks they were set (such as blending in, stealing a performer's bag and taking part in a discussion) and how these aspects of the work impacted on their experience.

The methodology combines scientific and social science methods, adapting the more rigid approaches to evaluation to arrive at evaluative criteria appropriate for arts research. As mentioned above, it is not science (for instance, it does not start with a hypothesis to prove or disprove) and it would be very difficult to replicate the research because it is done 'in the wild' (Hutchins, 1996) rather than controlled circumstances. Nonetheless, the methodology takes a scientific approach and is a rigorously constructed research process. This audience research method represents a synergy of different evaluative frameworks, aiming to put science and the arts on an equal footing, and has interdisciplinary potential. The most important aspect of shifting from a scientific, controlled approach to one that is meaningful in the context of participatory performance is to ensure a rigorous research process. This process needs to create data and outcomes that are significant in the study of participation without simply applying a scientific standard of evaluation to the arts. Considering performance as a live laboratory emphasises the value of the ephemeral event and the messiness of the material produced by its study. It also means that the analysis of the material is equally important to the outcomes, as the interpretation of the data influences the conclusions that may be drawn from it.

The three parts of the audience research methodology each produce different sets of data, which need to be investigated in distinct ways. The observational coding is qualitatively analysed, using the framework to identify significant moments in the performance and document audience behaviour. The interviews are analysed using the IPA method, where the transcribed interview is examined to draw out common themes as well as divergent experiences in order to provide a balanced account. The

questionnaires are considered in two halves; the first section is quantitatively analysed and the responses to the open questions are examined using a qualitative approach. All qualitative material was analysed using NVivo analysis software, which enables the data to be 'coded' with themes or concepts that can then be cross-referenced and searched. For example, all mentions of an action were coded (such as 'took part in conversation' or 'sent a text'), which could then be cross-referenced with the way those actions were described by the participant (such as 'an action taken' or 'as something they intended to achieve') to illuminate which actions were more likely to be experienced as an act of agency.

I use the results of the audience research within the thesis to support and explore the central argument: that the aesthetics of participation are fundamentally enactive and relational and that a model for the analysis of participatory performance needs to consider the four key elements as well as the interactions between them in order to be coherent. The writing includes both the analysis of the data and direct quotes from the material, which are used unedited in some instances as the pauses and repetitions can be indicative of the thinking process of the participant. For example, if the participant hesitates whilst describing something this may signify the difficulty of expressing a particular experience in words or that this is something that they are still processing the meaning of, which is an important dimension of IPA analysis. Within the thesis ... will indicate a pause during the participant's answer whilst [...] signifies my edits to present the relevant elements of their response. All the data gathered has been used, including that of the first questionnaire before the closed questions were added, as the participants' responses were still valuable for the *IWIWL* case study.<sup>36</sup> The full audience research responses are not included within the thesis but are available upon request.

### **2.3 Practice Research**

Practice research complements the enactive and phenomenological approaches of the conceptual and audience research methodologies discussed so far and enables a direct connection between the enactive process of making performance and that of participation. Brad Haseman (2006) proposes performative research as the third counterpart to quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. He draws on J.L. Austin's (1975) notion of performativity, where "performative speech acts are

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<sup>36</sup> The only exception is the phone interview that took place ten days after the performance, for reasons discussed above.

utterances that accomplish, by their very enunciation, an action that generates effects” (Haseman, 2006, p6). In Haseman's new research paradigm, the findings of the research are expressed in alternative ways through symbolic data that works performatively: “It not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself” (Haseman, 2006, p6). This section will discuss the methodology used for the practical project as part of the PhD research, which was designed in response to existing Practice-as-Research (PaR) methodologies whilst the significant outcomes arose from the Practice-based Research (PbR) elements of the project, including researcher-practitioner reflection on the project and participants’ experiences. The outcomes of the practice research project are discussed in Chapter 6, which also considers some of the challenges around practice research as a methodology for participatory performance.

The terminology surrounding practice research is contested and consists of several overlapping terms, such as practice-as-research, practice-based research and practice-led research.<sup>37</sup> Within this thesis I will use Robin Nelson’s definition in *Practice as Research in the Arts* (2013) of PaR as a research methodology “in which knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it” (p10). The use of creative practice in research, including the specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have, can lead to research insights that may be written up as research, which is what Hazel Smith and Roger Dean refer to as practice-led in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (2009). Practice-based research is where “the creative work acts as a form of research” (Smith and Dean, 2009, p5), and Haseman lists the strategies of this as including “the reflective practitioner (embracing reflection-in-action); participant research; participatory research; collaborative inquiry, and action research” (2006, p3). The distinction between PaR and PbR, or practice-led research, is located in the question of whether the arts practice is “submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry” (Nelson, 2013, p8/9). All forms of practice research are bound up in practice, with the significant difference between PaR and other forms of practice research being whether the research itself is submitted as a research outcome (rather than being part of the process).

The design of the practice research project identified with Nelson’s (2013) multimodal approach to PaR, which creates a research inquiry consisting of a number of elements

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<sup>37</sup> This includes international differences, as May explains: “Practice-led research, for example, seems to be used in Australia to mean what in a UK context is called PaR, and similarly Artistic Research is preferred in Nordic countries” (2015, p4).

such as, but not limited to, the product (for instance a performance), documentation of the process and complementary writing. Critical reflection is essential within this approach, actively seeking out the resonances between the practical processes and the theoretical discourses. These resonances must go beyond identifying perspectives that affirm or complement each other in different fields and also present a significantly new insight into one or more of these discourses. The concept of praxis helps articulate the way the different elements of PaR work together, denoting “the possibility of thought within both 'theory' and 'practice' in an iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing’” (Nelson, 2013, p32). This perspective on praxis also illustrates the importance of reflection in generating the outcomes of the project, which is part of the PaR process as well as leading to potential PbR outcomes.

The relationship between the practice and the writing in practice research also highlights the connections and differences between PaR and PbR. In PaR the research exists within the practice and the writing establishes an appropriate context to share the knowledge created, whilst PbR is a methodology where the research is about the practice whilst being articulated solely through writing (Nelson, 2013). The function of the writing is a key difference between these two approaches, in PbR the writing analyses the practice to critically examine it and the writing is where new understanding is generated (that is, it arises out of the analysis of the practice). In PaR the writing is no less crucial, but it performs a different function. The writing establishes an appropriate and critical context that clarifies the criteria by which the new understanding may be assessed and understood beyond the experience of the practice. This is vital as the practice is where the knowledge is generated and disseminated (Nelson, 2013, p114). The writing is also where the two methodologies overlap. Inevitably, writing about the work will create more understanding, in addition to that generated by the practice, and the practice will need to be analysed as part of establishing the context.

Within practice research, the relationship between the practice and the accompanying writing is more than simply writing up an event; it is a way of connecting different modes of knowing, through dialogue, that affirm each other through their resonance. Agreeing with Haseman and Nelson, Barbara Bolt (in Barrett and Bolt, 2007) argues that a specific form of knowing can arise out of creative practice, which she defines as ‘praxical knowledge’. Bolt reflects on Heidegger's concept of the “particular form of knowledge that arises from our handling of materials and processes” (in Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p30) in her definition of praxical knowledge. This highlights a significant

aspect of practice research and necessitates a conceptual consideration of different types of knowledge implicit within practice and theory.

### *Ways of knowing*

The current 'performance turn', as identified by Nelson (2013, p7) and Kershaw (in Smith and Dean, 2009, p107), has helped spread the recognition that we *do* knowledge, rather than just thinking it. Mark Johnson explains two important aspects that derive from an embodied view of knowledge:

First we must release the stranglehold exerted by views of knowledge as a fixed and eternal state or mental relation, in order to focus, instead, on knowing as a process of inquiry rather than a final product. Second, we must recognize the role of the body, especially our sensory-motor processes and our emotions and feelings, in our capacity for understanding and knowing. (in Biggs and Karlsson, 2010, p145)

The research is located in the practice in durational terms, which means a focus on knowing as a *process* of inquiry is appropriate. Although all knowledge is embodied, a distinction can be made between knowing-how and knowing-that, where the latter is frequently described as propositional or conceptual knowledge. Instead, know-how as a “practice itself embodies and develops a form of knowledge, rather than simply offering a physical demonstration of a pre-theorised intellectual position” (Pakes, 2003, p140). For this reason know-how is also described as procedural knowledge and typically follows

the 'source-path-goal' schema of learning through doing, [as] procedural knowledge is gained incrementally ... and amounts to a set of actions which facilitate complex tasks ... But to think of tacit knowledge only in terms of a set of rote-learned motor skills is to underestimate what is going on. (Nelson, 2013, p42).

Know-how includes experiential, haptic and performative knowing, which can be inscribed on the body, and is associated with insider or practitioner knowledge.

May focuses on the conceptual foundations of PaR in *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn* (2015) and examines know-how and know-that from a philosophical perspective. The intellectualist perspective frames know-how as a type of know-that, but May states that there are strong grounds to assert they are in fact separate. He suggests that “it is our practices and abilities that ground our propositional knowledge (know that), as it is only once I am inducted into these practices that I am able to use the public language and acquire propositional knowledge” (May, 2015, p55), which creates the possibility for practice research to interrogate alternative ways



for artistic practices to advance. This relationship between know-that and know-how also implies that

it is simply wrong-headed to think that what we discover through practice can, let alone should, be fully explicated in propositional terms. We need to take for granted certain aspects of 'what one does in the art world/academy' and only explicate as far as one needs to for the audience, reader or examiner to understand the contribution that the work is making. (May, 2015, p56)

This explication is essential as the know-how created by practice research, for instance, is contingent on the embodied abilities of the observer/experiencer, as illustrated by Noë's (2005) positive account of knowing-how. This account states that practical abilities are dependent on our bodily nature, situated in a context (for instance in relation to necessary objects), and enable an understanding of affordances and experiences that could not happen without the practical ability (Noë, 2005, p284-285).

A third mode of knowledge, proposed by Nelson (2006, 2013), is know-what. This mode covers what we may learn through an informed, critical reflexivity about the process of making and its modes of knowing (such as what 'works', principles of composition and what makes an impact). It is the tacit made explicit, through interpretive acts that open up a space between the artist and the work and bring in different perspectives. These three modes of knowing emphasise the importance of dialogic relations between different elements of the research inquiry, which is appropriate to all approaches to practice research. Kershaw (in Smith and Dean, 2009) sees performance practice as research as inherently challenging common binary formulations within research (such as theory and practice, artistic and academic, or rationality and creativity).

The concept of embodied knowledge in practice research is complicated by Piccini and Kershaw (2003), who point out that critical or theoretical research is also an embodied practice. May discusses the distinction between pragmatic and epistemic action: where pragmatic action is aimed at getting closer to a goal whilst epistemic action "plays a constitutive role in our practices of problem solving" (2015, p59). This distinction helps clarify the difficulty in separating practice research and 'conventional' academic research activities. A practitioner-researcher engages with both pragmatic actions and "epistemic actions that constitute part of the knowledge-construction", where the latter are often influenced by training and specialist embodied skills that enable "intuitive leaps as part of the creative process" (May, 2015, p60). This process could be argued

as fundamental to written, theoretical academic research, supporting Piccini and Kershaw's argument that this is also an embodied practice.<sup>38</sup>

The context of practice research is also important as the subjectivity of the researcher or performer becomes a critical factor within the research. As research turns away from the universal, Fiona Bannon calls for attention to the notion of 'particularity' in research design. In a post-positivist view, where "reality is constructed according to how we are positioned in the world in relation to our experience" (2004, p27), there can be no removal of the self in research. Bannon emphasises that the researcher is equally a participant in the study, whilst their personal practice forms the context, which is visible in my reflection on personal experiences of participatory performances as well as in the practice research.

### *Performative experiments*

Following this theoretical discussion it is worthwhile to consider the practical application of practice research within this project, which responded directly to the PaR methodologies set out by Melissa Trimmingham (2002) and Robin Nelson (2013). Both Nelson's and Trimmingham's methodologies draw upon hermeneutics and phenomenology, with an emphasis on the experience of 'knowing-doing' (Nelson, 2013, p98). Trimmingham (2002) discusses a coherent PaR methodology, stating that the difference between practice that informs the research and PaR is that the latter operates in a hermeneutic-interpretative cycle. This cycle includes a clearly defined research question and a process whereby you arrive back at the starting question but with more understanding. Nelson (2013) also emphasises the importance of an iterative cycle in PaR, with a process of "doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing" (p32), and both approaches create a multimodal research enquiry. The design of this practice research project is comparable with the methodologies described by Nelson and Trimmingham. The research process started with an open research question and hypothesis to examine the impact of the participant's subjective experience and personal approach to taking part in the performance aesthetic.

The methodology of the practice research project aimed to foreground the embodied and experiential knowledge created in participatory performance and as well as developing a more nuanced understanding of methodologies involving practice. The

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<sup>38</sup> This also highlights the fact that writing is generally understood as a 'neutral' medium for ideas, particularly "when contrasted with art practice that is notoriously multi-valenced and open to different interpretations" (May, 2015, p61) and that this assumption is challenged by the understanding of different forms of knowledge discussed here.

practice was both a methodological tool and a strategy to create experiential understanding in response to the research questions. The process of creating the performance, testing the ideas, and performing the final shows developed my understanding of various aspects of participation; for instance, that a participant is more likely to experience agency when able to make decisions with immediate impact on their experience as well as a more coherent understanding of the different roles participants take on. This illustrates a PbR methodology of using the process of creating practice to develop a better understanding of the concepts examined. The performances themselves were intended to represent PaR, in the participant's embodied and experiential understanding of the research questions, however the significant outcomes of the project arose from the PbR elements: participant responses and researcher-practitioner reflection (which form the basis for the discussion in Chapter 6).

The synergy between PaR and PbR illustrates the complex nature of research methodologies involving practice, the productive overlaps between approaches, and the different modes of knowing they create. The challenge when using practice research methodologies on participation, which highlights that the audience experience and behaviour is both the practice and (part of) the research, is how this is evaluated; if the performance did not go as planned is it still good research? I will argue in Chapter 6 that valuable learning took place, despite difficulties in the performances and blind spots in the research, and as Tringham states in an interview regarding the research process in *Imagining Autism*: "when you don't get the results you've still got an awful lot to write about" (2015). The embodied researcher-practitioner knowledge and participant experience of the practice is the source of the new understanding that I discuss in Chapter 6, which uses two complementary strategies: phenomenological writing (or 'thick description') of those aspects of the experience being discussed and documentation woven into the text in the form of a playlist of audio clips (see Appendix 6). Appendices 7 to 23 contain all the materials from the show for further detail about the performance.

The project's methodology started by formulating research questions and an accompanying hypothesis. The research questions were:

- *What are the processes through which the participant's personal and idiosyncratic approach to being a participant impacts on both the work and their aesthetic experience?*

- *How can the artist facilitate participants attending to their experience as part of the work's aesthetic during the live performance?*

The hypothesis in response to these questions stated that although individual, there are processes at play in participation that could elucidate how the participant's subjective approach to being a participant shapes their responses and contributions to the work. This hypothesis suggests that the aesthetic experience of participatory performance is as much about the individuality of the participant as it is about the pre-determined content of the work. It is important here to remember the distinction I am making between the predetermined content that the artist creates (which includes, for instance, the interaction design and structure) and the content the participants contribute; although these two are inherently intertwined in the experience of the work, these elements need to be separated to allow a productive discussion of the mechanics, process, and meaning of participatory performance and being a participant. To respond to the hypothesis I set out to create a performance that would explicitly draw on the participant's experience as part of the aesthetic structure whilst employing strategies for them to attend to their experience in the moment, thereby situating the participant's experience central to both the form and the content of the work.

There are clear parallels between the creative process of making participatory performance and the research process of practice research. The creative process involves continual testing and revising of the aims of the project, and the methods used to pursue this aim, as trying out an idea with participants is the only way to discover if and how it works.<sup>39</sup> In practice research a constant revision of research aims, and evaluating methods, is equally necessary, which goes on to create the hermeneutic-interpretative cycle as described by Trimmingham (2002) and Nelson (2013). The creative and research processes of this practice research project complemented each other in their iterative form, meaning the development of the project took the shape of a creative process of making performance, but with research questions added to the starting point and a double role as researcher-practitioner when evaluating tests. It is important to acknowledge that in this type of research process the starting question always determines the possible answers and that the result of the research is only "*an* answer, but never *the* answer" (Trimingham, 2002, p56, emphasis original). In Chapter 6 I will discuss the PbR outcomes of the project and weave together different perspectives and documentation to connect different modes of knowing.

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<sup>39</sup> This process is often referred to as play-testing, which is essential in making participatory performance as the best way to know how to develop the work is to see how participants respond to the ideas and instructions.

The methodology used to explore the aims discussed can be characterised as 'performative experiments'. A performative experiment takes an element of the research question, or a concept arising from the research, and places this in a performative context to discover how the participants respond to the situation and what happens as a result. The outcomes are then evaluated from the perspective of how they illuminate the original element or concept as well as from an artistic view on how it works aesthetically. The evaluation then indicates alterations as well as new ideas to test and so the hermeneutic-iterative cycle continues. This resulted in the blurring of an experimental and performance frame in the project, as the question of what makes a 'good' participant was incorporated into the work (for example by asking participants to make decisions on how to test for a good participant). The resulting situation places the research process within a performative situation and frames the participants themselves as part of this process. The performative experiments methodology illustrates that the strength of practice research is the way it necessitates making connections between the different modes of knowing implicit in the research and creative process undertaken by the researcher-practitioner.

The three methodologies I have discussed in this chapter each enable a perspective on the relational nature of participatory performance and represent the mixed-methods approach of the project. The theoretical framework of enactive cognition constitutes the foundation for the theoretical and philosophical examination of participatory performance and enables a focus on the way meaning arises out of the interaction between individual and environment (which includes other individuals). The audience research methodology presents an insight into participants' aesthetic experience of the work for a holistic understanding of participation that goes beyond the theoretical and personal reflection of the writer. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 each incorporate an audience research case study that elucidates the specific aesthetic element discussed. The practice research places theory and practice into dialogue to create experiential understanding and know-how as well as a perspective that privileges the experience of participation as a form of knowing that is inherently different from any writing on the subject. I will discuss the practical project and the PbR outcomes in Chapter 6 to examine the fourth aesthetic element of participation, that of the demand characteristics of being a participant, as well as to highlight the connections between the four elements. The synergies between the three methods foreground the mutual influence between the significant aspects of participatory performance and constitute a relational approach apposite to elucidating the aesthetics of the form. This mixed-methods approach responds to one of the research aims of the project: how to

evaluate and analyse participation as aesthetic form, particularly in relation to the distinct viewpoints of the participant's individual experience and outside (researcher) observation of the performance.

## Chapter 3 – Intersubjective relationships

Participatory performance is an essentially relational form, where the responses and actions of participants mutually impact on one another. As such, participation foregrounds intersubjectivity, a fundamental process of shared meaning-making that implicates ethics and agency. In this chapter I will examine the relationships created in participation as a key aesthetic element of the work and reconsider the ethical implications of intersubjectivity in light of this aesthetic dimension. The common ethical framework for participation is an instrumental one, as established in Chapter 1, which focuses on inclusion, social impact and the participant's wellbeing. I will discuss the limitations of this approach and propose a framework based on the concepts of alterity and dissensus that acknowledge the productive dialogue between aesthetics and ethics visible in the intersubjective relationship. Bishop argues in *Artificial Hells* (2012) that the current ethical turn

self-censors on the basis of second-guessing how others will think and respond. The upshot is that idiosyncratic or controversial ideas are subdued and normalised in favour of consensual behaviour upon whose irreproachable sensitivity we can all rationally agree. (p26)

The ethical framework for participation I propose in this chapter responds to Bishop's call for a critical approach that does not negate ethically difficult work and is able to reconcile an aesthetic perspective.

This chapter is divided into four sections, starting with a definition of the intersubjective relationship and a discussion of the most common 'types' seen in participatory performance. The process that builds relationships in participation is enactive and proceeds through participatory sense-making. Considering intersubjectivity from an enactive perspective connects aesthetics and ethics in section 2.2, enabling a discussion on social agency and manipulation that moves beyond the commonly asked question of whether the participant has agency or not. The framing of agency in this way requires the reconsideration of the instrumental ethical frame commonly applied to participatory performance. Following this discussion, I will propose an ethical approach based on the consideration of the other in the third section, as appropriate to the intersubjectivity at the heart of participation. Finally, the last section will develop the framework discussed in Chapter 1 to examine the aesthetics of social interaction in participation and propose an aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship, by building on social aesthetics (Berleant, 2005).

An audience research case study carried out on *I Wish I Was Lonely (IWIWL)* by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe (2013b) supports the discussion of intersubjectivity in this chapter (see Appendix 2 for materials). This interactive performance asks the audience to leave their mobile phones *on* and explores how these impact on our ability to communicate and be alone. The structure of the work moves between poetic text and audience participation that situates the participants as the media in the performance by asking them to communicate with others in the space using their mobile phone.<sup>40</sup> The work asks participants to consider different kinds of intersubjective relationships, particularly the difference between digital and real-life interpersonal communication. This case study, supplemented with other performance examples, enables a consideration of the intersubjective relationship between the performers and participants, developed throughout *IWIWL* by the personable nature of the performers and the positive atmosphere they create. Hannah and Chris clearly state at the beginning that you do not have to do anything you do not want to do (Walker and Thorpe, 2013a). However, their instructions subtly manipulate the audience into participating; to the point where the final, co-execution task, to sit for two minutes maintaining eye contact with a stranger without speaking and then agreeing to meet them at some point in the future, is possible for the participants to acquiesce to. The participant responses to the audience research enable a holistic perspective on the intersubjective relationships and their impact on the aesthetic experience of the work, illuminating the dialogue between aesthetics and ethics.

### **3.1 Intersubjectivity**

Participatory performance overlaps with types of art practice called alternatively 'socially engaged', 'relational' and 'dialogical'. Whilst many of the works denoted by these descriptive terms do not feature participation as defined within this thesis, the common feature is an interest in the intersubjective relationship between artist and audience, as well as between participants. Bourriaud defines relational art as a "set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (2002, p113). Bourriaud focuses on the sociability and conviviality created through relational art and suggests that the artist "embarks upon a dialogue" (2002, p22) and creates "relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic

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<sup>40</sup> Before entering the space the audience is asked to write down their mobile numbers on a piece of paper, which are then distributed by the performers. Those without a mobile write 'no mobile' and are invited to deliver any messages in person.



objects” (2002, p42). However, Bourriaud mainly discusses gallery-based works and does not examine the specific experiences or qualities of the interactions these works create or discuss the processes through which such relationships are formed.

Harvie provides a more critical context for socially engaged practices in *Fair Play* (2013) and suggests that although the aim to create social relations is worthwhile, “One could say [such] social modelling is modest, and at worst, superficial and distracting, seeming to offer social bonds which are, in fact, thin” (p58/59). Harvie’s approach moves beyond the belief that any social interaction is intrinsically worthwhile and capable of creating social bonds, without dismissing the value and interest in these types of work and any transient relationships they may create. Bishop similarly calls for a perspective beyond the automatic assumption that collaborative practices are artistic gestures of resistance. She argues for work to be able to address the “contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention, and reflect on this antimony both in the structure of the work and in the conditions of its reception” (2006a, p183). In this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, I take a comparable critical perspective and the following discussion focuses specifically on work that creates a direct and intersubjective relationship between the artist/performer and the participants and/or between the participants (although these ideas will be applicable beyond these practices to include socially engaged, applied, and gallery-based practices).

In participatory performance intersubjective relationships refer to those established over the course of the performance between the performer(s) and the participants. This relationship develops through two-way interaction that has mutual impact (similar to the complex interaction defined by Klich and Scheer, 2012) and is part of the process whereby the participant impacts on the content of the work (examined in Chapter 4 and 5). As such, it moves beyond relationships found in immersive practices, because without the ability to impact on the work’s content there is little opportunity to develop a reciprocal relationship. Although the intersubjective relationship has mutual impact it is important to remember that this does not automatically create an equal power dynamic; in participatory performance the artist always has more control as they have designed the situation, including the opportunities to interact and build a relationship, and knows what is coming next. I will examine the ethical and aesthetic implications of the power dynamic of intersubjective relationships below; however first it is productive to explore the different ‘formats’ of this relationship in more detail. The first distinction to be made is between the relationship of performer and participant and that between two participants, with the key difference residing in the power dynamics at play. The status

of the performer remains separate from the participant(s), whilst that between the participants is often more equal.

The relationships in *IWIWL* develop in response to the personable nature of the performers as well as the openness with which the invitations are extended. Several of the participants mentioned that the performers' friendliness and approachable nature was important in their experience, particularly in feeling able to take part, with one participant explaining that:

I kind of felt right from the start that there was a very, er, open friendliness [...] particularly I think helped by the fact that they [Chris and Hannah] put themselves [...] in a comparable level to us most of the time. If we were sat in a circle they were sat in a circle with us, when we went eye to eye with other people they did the same thing. [...] Another part of it is just [...] how they er spoke to the audience [...] they made eye contact, they smiled, all very simple things but actually [...] it all felt very equal, that relationship. (IW8)

Most participants felt like they could refuse any of the requests due to the performers' approach in developing the relationship with the participants, combined with clear statements that it is fine to not do any of the tasks. One participant described feeling that "you weren't forced to do anything, so if you didn't want to then you didn't have to", which they suggested was a result of "the way they spoke [...] at the start they were very friendly and like 'oh if you don't have a phone don't worry, we can do this instead'" (IW3).

A relationship where participants feel able to say no, or refuse, has the result of lowering the threshold for saying yes or taking part. One participant described this as having been 'won over' by the performers by the end of the show:

You're like, well, I've paid the money to do, see the performance and now you're getting me to do things that I don't [want to] - do I want to make eye contact with a strange woman for two minutes? Now, because they'd won me over and built it up to that point I was willing to do it and enjoyed it. (IW1)

This response illustrates the impact of intersubjective relationships on their actions during the performance as well as the aesthetic experience of the work; *IWIWL* examines intersubjectivity, which situates the relationship with the performer as well as those created between participants as aesthetic in both form and content.

The way participants are invited to engage with each other significantly impacts on the relationships that develop as well as on the power structures in the work. In *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2011) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, the participants become material in the performance by being asked to write down a personal 'oh fuck' moment on a post-it. Four participants are asked to read out their moment and they vote as a group whether 'oh, fuck' was indeed the only possible response to the

situation. During this section, conversation develops between the participants and with the performers, establishing both ‘types’ of intersubjective relationships. The structure of a work also affects the intersubjective relationships within it. For example, leaving written instructions such as in *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood situates certain participants as being higher status, whilst the contents of the instructions also impact on their relationship with the performer (as these are enacted upon his body, as discussed in Chapter 1). Whilst a participant is reading out an instruction, and as it is carried out, they are temporarily ‘in charge’ of the direction of the performance. These two examples highlight that the artist’s decisions of how to develop intersubjective relationships within the work are directly aesthetic. This is a significant difference with immersive performance, where the lack of a two-way connection means that any intersubjective relationships formed remain insubstantial.

The size of the audience and proportion of performers to participants also affects the intersubjective relationships at play, for instance the relationship between performer and participant will have more opportunity to develop in an intimate or a one-to-one performance. This is visible in *A Game Of You* (2010) by Ontroerend Goed, a performance for an audience of one that explicitly examines identity and the relationship between participants.<sup>41</sup> This performance creates intersubjective relationships despite participants never meeting each other: you are first asked to create a story for a participant you observe through a live feed and at the end receive a CD containing your imagined life from another participant who observed you. These relationships differ from a performance such as *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (2014), which involves forty to sixty participants who are placed in a role by the work and asked to make joint decisions on how to govern the fictional nation of Dacia. Decisions are harder to make in a large group, so there will be more variation in the level of relationships between participants (as there are likely to be a significant number one never speaks to). These examples also highlight the decisions involved for the artist in designing the interaction within the work and exemplify the significance of intersubjectivity in participation.

### *Joint meaning-making*

The relationships in participation enable a perspective on the enactive and intersubjective meaning-making processes at play in a performance, which significantly

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<sup>41</sup> This work, described on p40-41, is an example of how one-on-one work can achieve participation, through a mechanism whereby one participant’s contribution impacts on the next, thereby establishing a relationship.

impact on the participant's aesthetic experience. Thomas Fuchs and Hanne De Jaegher argue in their article 'Enactive intersubjectivity: Participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation' (2009) that the interaction process is the source of intersubjectivity, which they define as "an ongoing, dynamical process of participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation" (p465). This focus enables an understanding of intersubjectivity as something that emerges out of "a two-way process of perceiving and being perceived, acting and being acted upon" (Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009, p477) and as such generates meaning that is co-created with others during the performance. White (2013) draws on this perspective of intersubjectivity to examine how participants respond to invitations in participation with a particular focus on empathy, shared laughter and participating as part of a crowd. In the discussion here I will build on White's application of the concept of participatory sense-making to participation and focus on how it elucidates the intersubjective relationships most commonly found in participatory performance: between two individuals or in small groups.

The interaction process is situated as the course of intersubjectivity by Fuchs and De Jaegher and includes "several components such as bodily resonance, affect attunement, coordination of gestures, facial and vocal expression and others" (2009, p466). This perspective emphasises social interaction as an activity that generates common meaning, situating it as an enactive rather than as a reception process. This perspective highlights that the ongoing development of intersubjective relationships in a participatory performance is part of the meaning-making process, instead of representing a one-way channel for participants to receive meaning. Fuchs and De Jaegher's approach to examine this interaction process combines a dynamical agentive systems account, which "observes and describes the interaction as a coordination process between intentional and embodied agents" (2009, p466/467), with a phenomenological perspective, which focuses on the subjective experience of the process. The combination of an observation and experiential perspective, analogous to the mixed-methods approach of this project, enables a nuanced understanding of intersubjectivity as process and experience.

The concept of intersubjectivity as defined by Fuchs and De Jaegher situates social understanding as both an individual and interactional affair and states that intersubjectivity "relies heavily on embodiment in a rich sense of the word, i.e. on dynamical and embedded whole-body actions" (2009, p469). Both these aspects are enactive and relevant to participatory performance, where a significant part of the

meaning is generated through interaction with others. The mutual incorporation that occurs in this process “opens up potential new domains of sense-making” (Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009, p477), which can be identified in the mutual impact from performers or other participants on one’s experience and understanding of a work. In *IWIWL*, for example, one participant explained:

there's that person that I left a message for and there's that person that I texted, um, and for each of those I may have given them a different perception of the piece than they would have had otherwise [...] the particular contents of [the voicemail and text message] and then how they respond to that and how it shapes the way they [see] the show is down to me. (IW8)

This is one example of how meaning is generated together, which also emphasises the embodied and enactive nature of the actions that generate intersubjectivity.

The enactive and embodied aspects help examine the two minutes of eye contact, the section of *IWIWL* most often described as meaningful by the participants. In this moment the form and content of the work come together as the participants engage in pairs through an embodied experience. The significance of this experience is clear from the participant responses to the question of which moment was most meaningful: “Gazing into stranger's eyes cos [sic] felt so intimate” (IW12). Another participant explained that the experience of holding eye contact with a stranger was “relaxing, calming - strange, in a way, um, but [...] it was a beautiful moment, I guess, something that I think I won't forget for a while, yeah” (IW5). This process of interaction relies on the embodied experience of the moment, with one participant describing it as “getting to physically relate to someone” (IW11), and generates a shared meaning between the two participants.

### **3.2 Manipulation: aesthetics and ethics**

Intersubjectivity is fundamental to participatory performance, both as a social interaction and a shared meaning-making process, which shifts the traditional practice of theatre spectatorship focused on the act of looking and creates an inherent connection between aesthetics and ethics. Ridout argues in *Theatre & Ethics* (2009) that theatre spectatorship creates a useful space to consider ethical questions, as “theatre inserts its ethical questions into the lives of its spectators in a situation in which those spectators are unusually conscious of their own status as spectators” (p15). This consciousness creates an embodied experience of looking, which includes the awareness of being looked at in participatory performance. Participation complicates spectatorship, creating a situation where a participant looks at the performer and other

participants, who all look back, placing added significance on the act of looking and of participation. Actions are taken and decisions are made with the awareness of being watched, taking on a heightened ethical dimension, and in participatory performance frequently centre on an encounter with an other.

The other is central in ethical considerations of spectatorship, as in performance we “come face to face with the other, in a recognition of our mutual vulnerability which encourages relationships based on openness, dialogue and a respect for difference” (Ridout, 2009, p54). In participation one comes directly face-to-face with someone as spectatorship extends beyond looking to include physical actions and social interactions. These (inter)actions impact on other participants as well as the work, meaning that the relationships in participatory performance have both aesthetic and ethical significance. This dual implication is particularly visible in the manipulation of the participant by the artist as an aesthetic technique, which manifests in the structure of the performance, the system through which the participant’s actions become part of the performance, the tasks they are asked to engage with, and the invitations to take part in the work.

The invitation is a key element of the intersubjective relationship, which White suggests “establishes the relationship between the participant and the performer” (2013, p46). Invitations can be overt, implicit, covert and accidental and reveal “a horizon through which to choose a part or to take a position” (White, 2013, p59). This perspective highlights an aesthetic dimension of the intersubjective relationship, which is the way the relationship between artist and participant manipulates the participant’s responses and actions. White describes this as procedural authorship, where the “procedural author ... has control over the action at the level of strategy ... while the participant has the possibility of a tactical response within this dominated field” (2013, p55). To build on the aesthetics of the invitation, I will discuss manipulation as an aesthetic technique that operates through the invitation to problematise the concept of agency in participatory performance.

Manipulation is an important part of the participatory artist’s technique and requires expertise in creating an aesthetic situation that elicits and incorporates the participant’s actions and responses. Every element of a performance is created to encourage the audience to take part and to draw out a particular type of response. Although it has direct ethical implications, manipulation is not an inherently unethical device. Participatory work develops intersubjective relationships between performer and participants, through the interaction design of the work, which includes the setting, any

invitations to take part, the tasks presented to the participants, and direct communication between performer and participant. Each of these elements is devised to create an aesthetic experience for the participant that is not only engaging but elicits appropriate responses. For instance, the lay-out of the space when participants enter in *IWWL* consists of an arrangement of chairs where none are next to or facing each other, which has the effect of discouraging conversation. This situation impacts on the first task participants are asked to execute, which is to leave another participant a voicemail message, and manipulates the participants to individually complete this task.

In *IWWL* the participants stated they had not felt manipulated, as one explained: “manipulated is too strong a word; I felt encouraged, nudged, I was sort of, you know, instructed, umm, cajoled, maybe, but that's too strong. Not manipulated” (IW1). They also explained that the intersubjective relationship developed during the performance meant “they don't need to manipulate you because you're willing to do it” (IW1). This relationship is partly built on the performers’ skills at manipulating the situation to feel like there was little pressure to take part. As one participant described: “I never felt that we were being made to do anything, we were always being given an option. [...] they asked if we would [do something] and mostly we seemed to be obliging” (IW8). The relationship between performers and participants creates a situation where it is difficult to refuse an invitation, as their willingness develops throughout the show.

The impact of both the intersubjective relationship and the invitation to participate is clear in what happens following the eye contact in *IWWL*. When the two minutes are over, Chris suggests that the participants who have just spent two minutes engaged in silent eye contact could set a meeting for some time in the future, but to keep it without exchanging phone numbers. Interestingly, this is the only invitation that is made as something that participants *could* do (and the performers leave the space at this point). Yet despite this, the relationships created throughout the work means that many participants feel a duty to comply. One participant described feeling unsure whether they wanted to arrange to meet up with another participant, stating they “thought I don't know if this is safe to do” and that it was “a little bit scary [...] Because it's a random person I don't know” (IW3). Despite these doubts, and also stating clearly they felt no participation was forced, they proceeded to arrange a meeting, which illustrates the power of the intersubjective relationship and the implicit influence of the performers’ manipulation. This highlights the implications of manipulation as an aesthetic technique on the participant’s agency during the performance, for instance whether they feel able to say no. Manipulation also illustrates that agency in participatory performance is more

complex than the simple question of most ethical critiques: whether the participant has agency or not.

### *Shared agency*

Agency is both an aesthetic and ethical element of the work that balances the ability to contribute with the restrictions of the performance structure. One participant in IWIWL expressed this balance:

“I felt I guess restricted by the rules [...] But it was, it was a good feeling, I guess, being restricted and having rules, rather than just complete anarchy, [and] there was freedom as well. It was a nice balance of freedom, being able to change [things and send] messages, or tweets or anything like that. (IW5)

Participants had varying experiences of their agency, with one participant feeling a limited sense, stating: “the only agency I really felt I had apart from that original choice of whether to come at all, [and] where to sit, was really only the power of saying no” but that this was not an uncomfortable situation: “I don’t think I had much agency and it felt OK” (IW1). Another respondent experienced more agency and freedom within the work, such as when sending the text message: “It felt nice, [...] it felt like I made a difference, and... that it wasn’t just them doing a show for themselves, it was about us as well” (IW3). These responses highlight the enactive and intersubjective nature of agency in participation; the ability to contribute to or change something within the performance creates a situation where agency is shared between performer(s) and participant(s).

Shared agency is described by White as the “proper ontology of audience participation as art work” (2013, p129) and he examines shared agency in laughter and distributed agency in crowds. In this thesis I focus on the shared agency most common in participatory performance: that between two individuals or in small groups. Hanne De Jaegher and Tom Froese suggest in their article ‘On the Role of Social Interaction in Individual Agency’ that “individual cognition and inter-individual interactions mutually enable and constrain each other” (2009, p445) and that “the inter-action process can also shape the *constitution* of the individual agents—in other words, that their constitutive autonomy can be changed by the interactions they engage in” (2009, p449, emphasis original). This enactive perspective, which builds on the concept of participatory sense-making, emphasises the mutual influence through the interaction processes between two or more agents. These interaction processes exist on a spectrum:



ranging from guiding (e.g., pointing something out to one's interaction partner and thereby orienting his attention and or understanding) at one end, to truly joint sense-making (the generation and or transformation of meanings in interaction, where this formation or transformation cannot be attributed to either of the interaction partners alone) at the other end. (De Jaegher and Froese, 2009, p449)

This spectrum of interaction processes is also present in participatory performance and highlights the varied nature of joint action.

Two key characteristics of such interaction processes that have direct implications for participatory performance are that they can either enhance or limit the individual's agency (analogous to the manipulation by the artist) and that social interaction, although reciprocal, is not necessarily symmetrical (De Jaegher and Froese, 2009, p452). In participatory performance inter-agent interactions, particularly those with a performer, are rarely equal, but this does not negate the mutual impact between participants' meaning-making activities. One participant in *IWIWL* articulated the imbalance as well as the importance of mutual impact:

the truth is probably [that I did not influence the performance] at all, because they're experienced performers and they will just get it back on track, but I suppose... you narcissistically delude yourself into thinking that you brought something [...] Funny that actually when you know it's a performance they've done before, maybe the meaningful [moments] are the ones that you know they haven't made up (IW1).

The intersubjective and mutually constituted nature of agency in participation illustrates the need for a nuanced understanding able to acknowledge the complex interplay of manipulation, agency and joint action.

Joint action involves a sense of joint control. Axel Seemann argues in his article 'Joint Agency: Intersubjectivity, Sense of Control, and the Feeling of Trust' that joint agency "gives rise to a practical understanding of self and other as common causes ... [where] one's own embodied (and thus expressed) feelings can bring about, with a certain regularity, a change in one's social environment, and vice versa" (2009, p507).<sup>42</sup> One participant articulated the experience of joint action as necessitating a partial handing over of control to the artists: "my contribution was only as part of a wider collective of twenty-one of us, who all agreed to, for an hour, to give over the creative agency to them, for the piece to work" (IW1). Elisabeth Pacherie examines the phenomenology of joint action, stating "the sense of agency we experience for joint action relies on a multiplicity of cues related to different levels of action specification and control" (2014, p33). Joint action requires coordinating with co-agents to achieve a shared goal, which

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<sup>42</sup> The understanding of oneself as a part of joint action arises "through a practical immersion in the world: it is acquired by *doing*" (Seemann, 2009, p502), which emphasises the embodied engagement within the work from an enactive perspective (which I will examine in Chapter 4).

means that an agent not only controls their own actions, in the sense of being able to correctly predict their effect, but also anticipates those of their partners.

The structure of joint action ranges from the egalitarian (with relatively equal contributions) to the hierarchical (where one or more agents are in control of the planning and controlling of the action). Participatory performance is situated towards the hierarchical end of this spectrum, as the artist has created the work and manipulates the participant's actions during the performance. Pacherie suggests this will impact on participants' sense of agency as

participation in small-scale, egalitarian actions, with little specialization of roles and a stable group of co-agents, is likely to yield a stronger sense of agency than first-time participation in a large-scale, hierarchical joint action with highly differentiated roles. (2014, p35)

Participants in *IW/WL* did report a sense of shared agency despite a hierarchical structure and a short-term association, as one participant related:

There [was] a huge interactive or participatory element to it [...] in terms of actually handing the performance over to [the audience] the sort of Chinese whisper game was an interesting one, even though individually we didn't necessarily have a huge amount of agency, as a group, it was always going to be very unique, you know ... the changes and adaptations that happen within that are going to be completely different every time you do it, so that kind of has a strange sort of 'omni-agency' to it. (IW8)

This perspective on shared or joint agency illustrates the inherent connection between aesthetics and ethics in participatory performance, which requires a reconsideration of the ethical framework applied to this type of work.

### **3.3 Ethical frameworks: beyond instrumentalism**

The common ethical system applied to participation takes an instrumentalist approach, focusing mainly on the treatment of the participants and the impact of taking part within a broad set of participatory practices. The instrumentalisation of the arts in the UK is linked to the ethical turn in arts criticism, where “describing the artistic value of participatory projects is resolved by resorting to ethical criteria” (Bishop, 2012, p19); negating aesthetics in favour of a focus on audience treatment and representation.<sup>43</sup> This has created an ethically charged climate where “participatory and socially engaged art has become largely exempt from art criticism: emphasis is continually shifted away from the disruptive *specificity* of a given practice and onto a *generalised*

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<sup>43</sup> For example, Lind (2004) contrasts the work by Oda Projesi (whose practice is based on regular engagement with participants) with that by Thomas Hirschhorn (remarking that his work was understandably criticised for 'exhibiting' marginalised groups). Bishop also describes the ethical turn in arts criticism (2006a, p180, and 2012, Chapter 2).

set of ethical precepts” (Bishop, 2012, p23, emphasis original). This generalised set of ethical concerns includes the way the artist treats the audience member in the process of participation, the ethics of the situation that the work places them in, the nature of the subject matter, and the participant's agency before, during and after the work. However, a strictly ethical focus fails to take into account the aesthetic nature of the intersubjective relationship between artist and audience, which means that these relationships are not solely ethical. In this section I will problematise the instrumentalism and the inclusion rhetoric visible in these approaches to ethics, and propose a framework based on alterity ethics and dissensus able to maintain the agency of the other that an instrumental approach removes. As this thesis focuses on ethics and aesthetics, there is little space for a consideration of the political implications of participation, but an astute critique of this in relation to neoliberalism can be found in Harvie’s *Fair Play* (2013) and Alston’s *Beyond Immersive Theatre* (2016a).

Instrumentalisation ascribes value to a work outside of its aesthetic nature, focusing instead on the impact on the audience and wider society. Such instrumentalism is problematic as it insists on shaping art in a way that emphasises particular outcomes and creates an overtly political frame for the ethics of participatory performance. The value of participation is expressed in terms of impact and ethical processes, focusing for example on whether participants have a voice and are represented fairly within the work, rather than on the aesthetic experience, which may aim to create an unequal situation.<sup>44</sup> The arts are instrumentalised as part of two policies: economic development and social inclusion. The latter began under the New Labour government and situates active participation within art as a direct route to social impact.<sup>45</sup> Francois Matarasso’s report, *Use or Ornament?* (1997), provided the basis for the social inclusion policy and concludes that “a marginal adjustment of priorities in cultural and social policy could deliver real socio-economic benefits to people and communities, and recommends a framework for developing the role of participatory arts initiatives in public policy” (pvi). There are major methodological flaws in this research, as both Merli (2002) and Belfiore (2002) have stated. Evaluation of social impact is inherently problematic, as “it is part measurement, description and judgement, which can fail to recognise its complex and contextual relationship with the programme and participants” (Clements, 2007, p332).

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, Santiago Sierra’s work has garnered criticism for the way he uses participants in works such as *160cm Line Tattooed on Four People* (2000) and *Persons Paid To Have Their Hair Dyed Blond* (2001), as discussed in Bishop (2006a, 2012). For more examples see Lind (2004).

<sup>45</sup> See Levitas (2005) for an in-depth discussion of social inclusion under the New Labour government.

Bigger concerns, however, are with the underlying assumptions of the research aims, which construct the purpose of participatory arts as “the restoration of social control” (Merli, 2002, p114). This narrow instrumentalist focus of participation has far-reaching consequences; it creates a suggestion of the inherent benefit of taking part and it changes the way art is perceived and funded.<sup>46</sup> Although accessibility is a positive aim for all art, a closer look at the concept of inclusion reveals why the social inclusion discourse is problematic. Despite prioritising the social effects of taking part in the arts, it keeps the division between the included and the excluded firmly in place and blurs the boundaries between equality and inclusion. This critique is echoed by Merli (2002), who sees social inclusion as only helping people to accept the structural conditions of their existence, instead of addressing inequality. The difference between equality and inclusion is obscured and the lack of individual autonomy is concealed in a rhetoric of participation, which suggests agency, choice and a level of control over the structural conditions of one’s life.

Inclusion also presents conceptual problems, as incorporation into the body of power represses the possibility of being other. Jacques Derrida argues that “including may also come to mean neutralizing” (1997, pviii), where inclusion in the dominant framework blocks off vital opportunities for subversion, meaning that it is never simply a question of whether to take part or not. Similarly, Judith Butler sees inclusion as a form of subjection or violation, arguing that we ought to aim for contradiction and dialogic understanding with “the acceptance of divergence, breakage, splinter, and fragmentation as part of the often tortuous process of democratization” (Butler, 2006, p20). Both Butler and Derrida point out the need for the possibility of being other and the risks of creating a situation that includes everyone by taking away this possibility of difference. The importance of the other is emphasised by Emmanuel Levinas, who suggests that we should approach the other from the perspective of infinity, rather than totality: “Infinity is produced by withstanding the invasion of a totality, in a contraction that leaves a place for the separated being” (1989, p104). A totalising view of the other casts them as ultimately knowable within our individual understanding, placing our personal system of meaning and values onto them; whereas the infinite perspective of the other accepts that they are unknowable, thereby respecting their perspective and agency.

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<sup>46</sup> This also changes the way artists make work and invite participation, for more detail see Harvie (2013) and Alston (2016a). Also, the Grants for the Arts funding application includes questions about who will ‘benefit’ from the activities and “how the activity could have a lasting impact on the participants” (Arts Council England, 2013, p13). Despite all this, there is no clear evidence of the effectiveness of the arts in contributing to social inclusion (See Belfiore, 2002; Clements, 2007; Merli, 2002).

The power structure of participatory performance highlights the ethical implications of the form; participation is inherently unequal but it is only instrumentalism that insists on 'democracy' or collaboration as a goal. This power structure is weighted towards the artist, who takes all the decisions before the participants become involved in the work. This produces an intrinsically unequal relationship between artist and audience member, as the artist creates the situation, invites the audience to participate and determines the process of participation. As with inclusion, people are offered participation within the existing social and political boundaries, instead of a collaborative participatory situation where they would be able to take part in the process of creating the rules. This problem even exists within participatory art that offers co-creation, structural participation or collaboration, as the project will still have been instigated, facilitated and finalised by the artist, who will also likely be credited with the authorship over the work as a whole. An additional challenge to any attempt to level the power balance is that often audience members will look upon the artist as the expert or authority in the work, making it more difficult for participants to take autonomous decisions.<sup>47</sup> The power structure highlights the need for a more nuanced ethical and political frame for participatory performance, as they are inextricably linked to the artist's aesthetic decisions.

The social inclusion discourse suggests it is necessary to create a situation that enables the participant to take decisions at the same level as the artist in order to avoid abusive or coercive situations and that the artist needs to take responsibility for creating equality. However, avoiding unequal situations and removing any potentially challenging elements will leave work uninteresting to experience. It also risks patronising the participant, as it necessitates the artist making assumptions about what they may or may not be able to deal with. As Bishop (2012) and White (2013) have also argued, assuming the need for participants to be emancipated actively reinforces the power structure and inequality of the situation. An ethics that removes the participant's responsibility and insists that the artist not create work that might offend, challenge, or trouble the audience, paints participants as fragile and constantly at risk of being exploited. As Bishop states: "By contrast, I would argue that unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity – can be crucial to any work's artistic impact" (2012, p26). An ethical frame based on a consideration of the other offers a solution to these issues as it acknowledges the

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<sup>47</sup> *Still Image Moving* (2010) by Manuel Vason is an example of this, where several participants' responses indicated that they had deferred to the artist's authority on content and framing as he was the expert.

aesthetic frame and is capable of dealing with the tension between aesthetics and ethics.

### *Alterity and dissensus*

Alterity is concerned with the other and one's relationship to them, which is fundamental to participatory performance as a relational form that situates the intersubjective relationship between performer and participant as aesthetic. Participation creates opportunities to explore the meaning of social interaction through its form whilst the content often explicitly examines social structures and how we relate to each other in different situations, as can be seen in *IWIWL*. Levinas' concept of the other and Rancière's conceptualisation of difference present an ethical construct for respecting the other and preserving difference. Ethical awareness is created through our relationship with the other for Levinas, who suggests in *Ethics as First Philosophy* (1989) that the meaning of being is bound up in the face-to-face encounter with the other:

Responsibility for the Other, for the naked face of the first individual to come along. A responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if I were devoted to the other man [sic] before being devoted to myself. (p83/4)

The other is unknowable, and exists before self-consciousness, which means that the face-to-face encounter with the other that creates ethical responsibility for them is not an encounter with a particular person. Although in participation the encounter is with an actual other, rather than a conceptual other, Levinas' concept of ethical responsibility remains relevant, as Brian Treanor explains in *Aspects of Alterity*:

in order to encounter the other as other, we must encounter the other on her terms rather than ours. ... Encountering the other on our terms rather than *as other* profoundly affects ethics, politics, theology, and all other relationships between the self and an other. (2006, p5, emphasis original)

The implications of Levinas' ethics are clear, as our responsibility to the other impacts on all social relationships, interactions and encounters.

Levinas' face-to-face encounter with the other is commonly applied in ethical considerations of performance, which many argue consists of just such an encounter. Daniel Watt argues a direct link between Levinas' notion of the face-to-face encounter and the theatre, stating that "it is in the theatre that the model of his ethics can be best demonstrated; for before each actor are arrayed those faces which so intrigue Levinas, amounting to a very human responsibility towards such crowds" (in Meyer-Dinkgräfe and Watt, 2010, p154). Helena Grehan on the other hand, points out that the face-to-

face engagement that theatre facilitates “is not a literal movement of Levinas’s [sic] philosophical discussions of the ‘face-to-face’ encounter into the theatre and onto the face of the performer” (2009, p14). Alan Read also notes that we should not do any “rash theorizing of theatre as a “face-to-face” encounter” (2008, p227). The face-to-face encounter in performance, particularly in participation, is one with a real, knowable face, which differs from Levinas’ concept of the face that “reveals itself to me precisely as other, unknown, unknowable” (Treanor, 2006, p31). As such, this concept presents us with an ethical consideration that should remain central to participation whilst remembering that Levinas’ writing remains largely theoretical about how to behave ethically during any real-life face-to-face encounter.

A complementary perspective to alterity is found in Rancière’s *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics* (2010), which presents a way of understanding the world that allows for difference. Rancière sees the essence of consensus as eliminating difference, as it “lies in the annulment of dissensus as separation of the sensible from itself, in the nullification of surplus subjects, in the reduction of the people to the sum of the parts of the social body” (2010, p42). This symbolic merging of a political ‘people’ causes them all to become identical within a population, which ostensibly means everyone is included but comes up against the problematic idea of ‘the excluded’, those whose rights fall outside the equality of all. Instead, we must aim for a system that contains the possibility of difference and within which participation in democracy goes beyond “the mere filling of spaces left empty by power” (Rancière, 2007, p60). To achieve this, Rancière suggests “Genuine participation is the invention of that unpredictable subject which momentarily occupies the street, the invention of a movement borne of nothing but democracy itself” (2007, p61). Genuine participation remains theoretical for Rancière, similarly to Levinas’ encounter with the other, although both concepts point the way to an alternative ethical framework.<sup>48</sup>

Alterity is an appropriate ethical frame for participatory performance because its operation is paradoxical; performance seeks to create a temporary community in its audience whilst the relationship between artist and participant is in some ways irreducibly one of otherness. This otherness is not necessarily absolute, but stems from the fact that participatory performance implies a pre-existing structure within which we take part. Therefore, regardless of how much we attempt to diminish or ignore the difference, the experience of participatory performance is partly founded on the idea of an endlessly negotiated alterity. As a result, an ethics of performance has to construct

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<sup>48</sup> In Chapter 4 I will discuss different levels of agency in participation and the proactive agency described there comes closest to the concept of ‘genuine’ agency.

itself from a respect for the other, because the other is already a feature of the concept of performance, even if founded on an ideal of participation. Applying theoretical concepts of how to engage with the other exposes the gap between theory and practice. Levinas sees alterity as absolute, which means that “the proper response to otherness is not to question the other – for if otherness is absolute, understanding the other is out of the question – but to maintain distance and to respect the difference of the other” (Treanor, 2006, p8). Absolute otherness does not negate my relationship with the other however, as Levinas explains: “The same and the other at the same time maintain themselves in relationship and absolve themselves from this relation, remain absolutely separated. The idea of Infinity requires this separation” (1989, p102).

The possibility of genuine pluralism requires an ability to keep the self and other separate, which is problematic in relation to participatory performance as it is difficult to preserve the ‘unknowability’ of the other during a face-to-face encounter with a real person. Not all philosophers on alterity share Levinas’ emphasis on absolute or infinite otherness; Gabriel Marcel sees otherness as relative, which means there is no ethical call to preserve absolute difference. Instead, as Treanor explains:

Marcel's non-absolute view of otherness leads to a philosophy that puts a premium on intimacy and participation. If otherness is merely relative, understanding the other is a possibility and the ethical concern becomes one of trying to understand better (2006, p8).

Levinas and Marcel agree on many aspects, both respond to the call of the other and regard this relationship as dialogic, relational and intersubjective. But their main point of difference is whether the alterity of the other is absolute or relative. In Levinas’ philosophy of absolute alterity, my responsibility towards the other is simply to acknowledge and consider the other, as any attempt on my part to understand them is to violate their otherness. For Marcel, on the other hand, to gain understanding of the other whilst respecting their alterity (on non-absolute terms) is the ethical action to take.

The concept of dissensus presents a way of moving from a theoretical understanding of alterity towards one that can be practically applied to participatory performance. Dissensus is the political equivalent of alterity; both work to preserve difference as part of the system instead of attempting to contain it within a consensus, which would effectively totalise the other in Levinas’ terms. Rancière describes dissensus as “a division inserted in ‘common sense’: a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given” (2010, p69). The distribution of the sensible is recognised in dissensus as something that can be altered, providing the opportunity to reframe the understanding of a particular situation. Both aesthetics and politics contain



this contingency: the ability to recognise the possibility of the world being different. This contingency supports alterity, not only by the ability to recognise difference, but by providing a structure whereby we understand the system that eliminates difference: in itself a tool for overturning this situation. In this way, the different inflections of alterity of Levinas and Marcel can be combined in the context of participatory performance, where participants attempt to gain understanding of the other whilst respecting their otherness. This alterity is only absolute in theory, meaning that difference is preserved and otherness is respected, but within a framework where “the interaction between persons ... is an essentially unifying relationship that binds them to each other while maintaining their individuality” (Treanor, 2006, p69). This approach manages the risk of subsuming the other within our own understanding of the world, by recognising the aesthetic contingency in the situation and providing the possibility of difference.

A practical approach to alterity leads the way towards an understanding of ethics as inherently connected to aesthetics in participatory performance. This approach enables a productive perspective on manipulation and agency in participation and is based on the definition of intersubjectivity of Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009). They state: “In order to understand the other as other, empathy has to be balanced by alterity” (Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009, p476). The ethics of participation are more complicated than simply ensuring the risk of harm to participants is minimised, as White argues: “At times effective participation – and politically challenging participation – will be that which puts participants in compromising situations” (2013, p92). The responsibility on the artist to protect the participant and treat them well is a common ethical concern, but the participant should not be absolved of all responsibility in this. They can choose to tell a lie, subvert the situation, refuse a request, or in rare circumstances attempt to disrupt the performance. An alterity approach to ethics, as I propose here, enables a focus on the relevant ethical concerns within an inherently aesthetic situation and is founded on the consideration of the other and the need to preserve difference. This approach moves beyond simply protecting the participant from anything that they might find challenging by recognising the agency of the participant within the situation (Chapter 4 examines the participant’s ability to recognise the aesthetic nature of the situation and decide how to engage with it).

The power structure in participation, which creates a dependence of the participant on the artist, has ethical implications and a level of responsibility on the artist to look after the participant’s well-being. Considering issues that might impact on participants’ physical health are obvious but situations that may be psychologically or emotionally

challenging present more complex concerns. It is impossible to know the history of every single participant, whilst it is disrespectful to attempt to predict what they will not be able to deal with. Conversely, attempting to relate aspects of the work beforehand to offer an informed choice to participants does the work a disservice, meaning that this is not a straightforward ethical consideration.<sup>49</sup> An alterity ethical approach attempts to reconcile the need for participants to be warned of potentially harmful issues with the integrity of the work, by considering the other and creating space for difference, rather than simply eliminating such risks. This approach acknowledges White's statement that:

A procedure of invitation can move you and manipulate you physically, but it cannot assume how you will experience this movement. It can emotionally manipulate you, or work on your psychological capacity for suggestion, but must allow that after the event you will do what you choose with the experience. (2013, p206)

An alterity approach to ethics does not prescribe particular questions together with right or wrong responses, instead it suggests that the ethical imperative lies in considering the implications of the work. Instead of a duty *of* care, which implies the artist is able to judge what is best for the participant, an alterity approach suggests a responsibility *to* care about the participant and their experience.

An alterity approach to ethics focuses on a consideration of the function of participation in the work and how it is structured, whilst being critical of the conditions and relations created. For example, it is vital to consider the reasons for employing participatory methods and to be clear about participants' actual experiences. This approach focuses on the specifics of the situation on offer:

- What is the structure within which participation takes place and how is this introduced?
- How clear is the invitation to the participants?
- Does the invitation explain what level of participation is invited and will the participants understand what behaviour is appropriate?
- Are the activities and roles on offer within the work clear to the participant and do these situations offer agency (rather than being false decisions)?
- Are any moments or structures that use manipulation or coercion appropriate to the performance, in relation to the content of the work and the intentions of the artist?

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<sup>49</sup> Here I am assuming the ability for participants to give informed consent. It is outside of the scope of this project to examine the notion of informed consent in more detail although developing an alterity approach for this would be an interesting and worthwhile project.

- Is there any way out or support for participants who feel unable to deal with the situation?

Work that uses overt manipulation to gain a particular response from participants, for instance, needs to consider in what way this is important to its aesthetic. A performance that creates a coercive situation and does not from the outset make clear to the audience what frame they are operating within needs to, for example, consider strategies for participants who wish to leave and support for those who find themselves overwhelmed.<sup>50</sup>

Alterity ethics in participation enable a perspective that is critical of the conditions of participation whilst acknowledging that challenging situations can be essential to a powerful or meaningful experience. In *I/W/I/L* participants are reassured several times before they are asked to do a task that it is fine if it does not work and they will not break the show (Thorpe and Walker, 2013b). This, combined with the friendly and approachable manner of the performers, meant that most participants felt that “there was no sense of being made to do anything. I think what was really important was that [...] several times they kind of gave the caveat of 'if you're happy to' or 'if you're comfortable to'.” (IW8). This feeling of not being forced to take part contrasts with one moment in the performance where Hannah relates a (true) story of being called by a friend she did not know very well “when he was standing on a cliff on the east coast, thinking of jumping” (Thorpe and Walker, 2013a, p59). After this story, Chris rings one of the participant’s mobiles (selected randomly) and has a conversation with that participant whilst playing the part of the suicidal friend. This conversation is thrust upon that particular participant without warning and manipulates them into trying to convince someone to not commit suicide whilst the rest of the group look at them. Although this moment has direct ethical implications, it is meaningful because it mirrors the original circumstances of that conversation. The interaction and manipulation involved in this moment are carefully designed to affect the participants in relation to the content and context of the work. The relationship that has been developed between the performers and participants by this stage in the performance means that if the participant was unable or unwilling to deal with the situation the performers are able to respond appropriately.

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<sup>50</sup> An example of considering the impact of the work on the participants is *Small Town Anywhere* (2009) by Coney where at the end of the performance each participant was given a glass of wine in the performance space to create a decompression space after a potentially intense experience.

### 3.4 Social aesthetics

The aesthetics of participation I propose in this thesis explore the aesthetic dimension of the intersubjective relationship, which extends the scope of relational practices beyond “the invention of models of sociability” (Bourriaud, 2002, p28). Bourriaud describes relational aesthetics as a “theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt” (2002, p112). This perspective risks repeating the instrumental approach that the ethical framework described above aims to remove. The understanding I propose here moves the focus from the social situations the work creates, as emphasised by Bourriaud, to address the details of intersubjective relationships in participatory performance. It is clear from the participant responses in *I/W/W/L* that engaging with (an) other(s) is the most significant element in their meaning-making processes, which includes: developing relationships with performers and participants, engaging in intersubjective tasks or actions, being part of mutual sense-making that creates content within the performance (which importantly arises out of the specific interactions with the other participants). This illustrates the inherent connection between aesthetics and ethics in participation and requires an aesthetic framework able to reconcile both perspectives. The aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship I develop here builds on Berleant’s social aesthetics (2005) and similarly takes a contextual approach appropriate to the nature of social interaction as part of participants’ meaning-making processes.

Discourse in the field of contemporary aesthetics has broadened to include the social and ethical aspects of life and art, which can be seen in the rethinking of aesthetics as relational and radical by Janet Wolff (2008) and Isobel Armstrong (2000).<sup>51</sup> Armstrong advocates for new content for the concept of the aesthetic in *The Radical Aesthetic* (2000), to “address the democratic and radical potential of aesthetic discourse ... [which] means broadening the scope of what we think of as art” (p2). She argues that aesthetic life includes aspects already present in everyday life: “playing and dreaming, thinking and feeling” (Armstrong, 2000, p2). Armstrong’s radical aesthetic suggests putting the two extremes of modern aesthetic theory, pure aesthetic value and instrumental social outcomes, into dialogue by starting from a position in between these two points. Wolff’s aesthetics of uncertainty echoes this call, suggesting that “A sociological account, which pays careful attention to the situation and structure of the communities involved in aesthetic discourse, is essential for any useful theory of “uncertain” and “principled” aesthetics” (2008, p37). Drawing on Bauman’s work, Wolff

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<sup>51</sup> See also Jackson (2011), Bishop (2012) and Shaughnessy (in White, 2015).

suggests in *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty* that “social space is aesthetic at least as much as it is cognitive and moral” (2008, p137) and proposes a new aesthetics that takes “its lead from ethics and political philosophy in order to develop an approach to aesthetics that recognizes aesthetic criteria as grounded in community” (2008, p6). Rather than starting from the ethical context, as Wolff suggests, or from a middle ground as Armstrong advocates, I argue that an aesthetic theory for participatory performance needs to be grounded in an understanding of the intrinsic connection between aesthetics and ethics.

The inextricable relationship between ethics and aesthetics is particularly visible in applied theatre practices, despite the fact that the emphasis is often laid upon the social effectiveness of applied work rather than its aesthetic.<sup>52</sup> Helen Nicholson defines applied drama as “principally concerned with enabling people to move beyond the ordinary and everyday and use the aesthetics of drama, theatre and performance to gain new insights into the social and cultural practices of life” (2005, p129), which suggests that aesthetic experience cannot be separated from its social situation. The importance of aesthetic experience in the making of social meaning is also highlighted by Bjørn Rasmussen and Rikke Gürgens to argue for “a synthesis between the social and aesthetic experience” (2006, p239). However, this synthesis is not a one-way connection where the aesthetic carries social meaning; socially engaged performance practices also create new aesthetic forms. Shaughnessy’s discussion of aes/ethics exemplifies this creation of new aesthetic forms, highlighting the “interest and inquiry into the everyday and the potential for making the ordinary extraordinary” (in White, 2015, p122).

The incorporation of the social and the aesthetic in performance moves beyond a situation in which both aesthetic and social outcomes are of equal importance and towards a new framing of social aesthetics. This perspective

is not only to take a community stance on the arts but also to take an aesthetic stance on community engagement; it asks what the aesthetic frame does to and with the idea of community and what the aesthetic process does to and with social processes. (Jackson, 2011, p212)

This approach illuminates the relationship between the aesthetic and the social in participatory performance, which James Thompson in *Performance Affects* (2011) locates in affect, defined as “the bodily sensation that is sustained and provoked particularly by aesthetic experiences” (p135). He argues that affect refocuses the

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<sup>52</sup> Although this focus is starting to shift, see Calvert (2010), Fryer (2010), Gallagher, Freeman and Wessells (2010), Jennings (2010), Rasmussen (2010), Winston and Strand (2013) and White (2015).

perspective on aesthetics and the social by turning it from two intertwined strands into “a mesh of felt responses that do not relegate or promote certain threads of the aesthetic experience against others” (Thompson, 2011, p130). The focus on affect underlines the socially situated nature of aesthetics, as the experienced nature of affect highlights the intersubjective character of participatory performance as distinctly aesthetic.

The context of art always contains a social and political dimension and Wolff suggests that an aesthetics built on community needs to be clear on the specific context:

communities are not fixed. They are always in a process of formation and dissolution in relation to other communities and to transformations in the economic, social, and discursive structures out of which they are formed and in which they participate. (2008, p23/24)

The community aspect of the aesthetics of uncertainty is relevant to participatory performance, which creates and deals with transient communities as an aesthetic feature of the work. This aesthetic creates what Gregory Minessale calls relational knowledge, because art “is able to produce commonalities that we discuss with each other, further enriching our systems of relational knowledge. Art is social, whether participative or antagonistic, and so is relational knowledge” (2013, p341). Participatory performance offers a clear opportunity to create and share such relational (or intersubjective) knowledge as the participants are able to imagine and respond to the aesthetic and ethical possibilities within the work through the intersubjective involvement on offer with the artist and the other participants.

An aesthetic of intersubjective relationships emphasises relational engagement, in terms of mutual impact rather than merely social impact, between the artist, the work and the participants. Grant Kester (2005) outlines a dialogic aesthetic, developed from Habermas’ work, which places dialogue at the centre of the work. Dialogic aesthetics “is based on the generation of a local consensual knowledge that is only provisionally binding and that is grounded precisely at the level of collective interaction” (Kester, 2005, p5), aligning it with Wolff’s aesthetics of uncertainty through a shared emphasis on community.

In a dialogical aesthetic ... subjectivity is formed *through* discourse and inter-subjective [sic] exchange itself. Discourse is not simply a tool to be used to communicate an *a priori* "content" with other already formed subjects, but is itself intended to model subjectivity. (Kester, 2005, p5, emphasis original)

The work discussed by Kester focuses on collaboration and he stresses the need for a “concept of empathetic insight” (2005, p6). This suggests it is only partly relevant for an

aesthetic of intersubjective relations as the structure of interaction is rarely egalitarian in participation (as would be necessary for Kester's collaborative aims).

Social aesthetics, as part of the aesthetics of engagement discussed in Chapter 1, suggest "human relations bear a remarkable resemblance to its situational character" (Berleant, 2005, p153). Berleant argues "An environment devised by an artist is a fabricated perceptual construct that concentrates features found in every environment. ... And since people are implicated in all experienced places, we end with situated human relationships, that is, with a social environment" (2005, p149). Introducing the active human contribution creates the social dimension of aesthetics, which within participatory performance is also directly aesthetic (through the impact on the work), and as such forms the basis for the aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship. This social aesthetic elucidates the ethical and aesthetic nature of participatory performance, as its contextual and situated perspective is pertinent to participation where elements of the work have both aesthetic and ethical consequences that are inseparable from their context.

### *The aesthetics of intersubjective relationships*

Social aesthetics (Berleant, 2005) are inherently situated and provide a useful framework for exploring the aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship, as they take a contextual approach to aesthetic perception. Berleant suggests that an aesthetic of the social situation consists of:

many contributing factors come together to establish its aesthetic character and give it a distinctive identity: participants, physical setting, social conditions, along with time, history, and the powerful influence of culture and tradition, all joined in the perceptual character of aesthetic experience. (2005, p154)

The parallel with participatory performance is clear from this description as it creates an aesthetic situation made up of a physical environment, a social setting, a group of participants (with their own personal and cultural histories), and a set of activities and brings all these elements together to create an aesthetic experience. The contextual aspect of this perspective on aesthetics is key, as it enables a focus on the component parts of participatory performance, such as intersubjective relationships.

Social relationships can be seen as aesthetic in themselves and Berleant suggests that social situations display aesthetic characteristics when "its perceptual and other characteristic features predominate [focusing on] full acceptance of the other(s), heightened perception, particularly of sensuous qualities ... [and] mutual

responsiveness” (2005, p154), amongst other things. These characteristic features of the aesthetic social situation have direct parallels in the intersubjective relationship, which is built on mutual responsiveness, heightened awareness of other(s) and an understanding of their alterity. The aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship, which takes a situated, contextual approach, provides a perspective on key aesthetic techniques such as manipulation and shared agency that incorporates an understanding of the intrinsic connection between aesthetics and ethics in participation.

At the end of *IWWL* participants are asked to move their chairs to face another participant, who they had not met before the performance, and look them in the eye for two minutes without speaking. This moment illustrates the aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship, where:

the situation itself becomes the focus of perceptual attention ... And at the same time as its participants contribute to creating the aesthetic character of the situation, they may recognize with appreciative delight its special qualities, and perhaps work, as a performer would, at increasing and enhancing them. In such ways, a social situation, embodying human relationships, may become aesthetic. (Berleant, 2005, p154)

The performers’ skill at developing a positive relationship with the participants created a willingness to comply with requests, as explored in the participant responses above.

The eye contact creates meaning intersubjectively, through participatory sense-making, a process of shared agency that is aesthetic and unique to those particular individuals.

The majority of participants agreed that the eye-contact was one of the most meaningful moments in the performance, due to the connection created. As one participant articulated:

I had a really strange experience with that actually, in that the woman I was doing it with, she couldn't do it. She actually, out of the 2 minutes I think we got about 15 seconds of eye contact and the rest of it was just her laughing and looking away. [...] However that [the eye contact] would have played out I think that would have been, sort of, the stand out memory that I take away from it, but just the fact that this woman was physically incapable, psychologically incapable of doing it ... was fascinating to me [...] I think that is one of the [...] unique moments that no matter how many times it's done [...] that particular moment only exists between us, and I think that's [...] what makes it important, that's what means I [will] remember it more. (IW8)

It is the intersubjective aesthetic of the relationship that creates the meaning of this moment, which is personal and unique for the two specific participants engaged in it. As such, this moment, and this response, highlights the aesthetic of the intersubjective relationship and the way it produces meaning.

In this chapter I have examined the intersubjective relationship as an aesthetic element of participatory performance and explored the inherent connection with ethics through a



discussion of manipulation as a significant artist technique to create work. Recognising the intrinsic connection between aesthetics and ethics also requires a reconsideration of the instrumentalised ethical framework commonly applied to participatory performance and the alterity approach to ethics I proposed is able to reconcile this relationship by preserving difference. This approach also facilitates a productive perspective on the aesthetics of intersubjectivity, moving beyond the instrumental tones of relational aesthetics to situate participation within a social aesthetic as defined by Berleant (2005). Intersubjectivity in participation is a key part of the shared meaning-making process that takes place, which includes shared agency and joint action. An enactive perspective on intersubjectivity enables an analysis of participation that focuses on the relational nature of the form, where participants engage with the work and one another through embodied action. *IWIWL* exemplifies the way participants explore intersubjectivity within participatory performance, as they are asked to engage with the work through *doing*, which entails communicating with other participants and building a relationship with them through embodied actions such as eye contact. In the next chapter I will consider the participant's embodied engagement in the performance in more depth and build on the understanding of shared agency by exploring the phenomenology of agency, to examine the ways in which it becomes meaningful for the participant.

## Chapter 4 – Embodied engagement

In acting together, participants engage with a performance through *doing*, which I will argue in this chapter is a (or even *the*) key aesthetic element of participatory performance. The participant's embodied engagement represents an agentic act as well as a way for them to interpret and create meaning (additional to theatre's visual and aural means). All experience of theatre is embodied, whether taking part or sitting in an auditorium. The embodied engagement in participation, however, can be differentiated from the embodied experience of being an audience member in a traditional sense. McConachie's *Engaging Audiences* (2008) and Stephen Di Benedetto's *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* (2011) explore the experience of theatre audiences from a cognitive and embodied perspective, emphasising the involvement of the spectator's body in any interpretative experience of theatre. Di Benedetto highlights the effectiveness of touch, stating "performances that make use of touch in a direct way will have meaning-rich expression. To activate touch in this context is to make accessible the material qualities of the art object presented" (2011, p80). This is exemplified in participatory and immersive practices, but it is important to acknowledge the embodied experience of audience members in all live theatre events.

The audience takes on a performer role in the theatre according to Heim, who argues in *Audience as Performance* (2016) that "the embodied actions of audience members constitute a performance" (p1). These actions include laughing, applauding and verbal responses to the performance that together make up the audience role. Heim positions this role as significantly different from that of a participant, which she describes as taking on "the role of actor in the onstage play" (2016, p5). These examples emphasise that all audience members' experience is embodied and can include verbal and/or physical activity. In this chapter, however, I will focus on the embodied engagement of participants that directly impacts on the content or direction of the performance, beyond the feedback loop that exists within the practices examined by McConachie (2008), Di Benedetto (2011) and Heim (2016).

Participation implies the active doing of the participant and in the first section of this chapter I will explore the processes that guide the participant's action within a situation that is simultaneously fictional and real by drawing on the concept of affordances and frame theory. The participant's doing consists of an experiential, embodied act of agency, examined in section 4.2, which becomes meaningful when it is perceived.

Embodied agency in participation can be divided into agency of engagement, where the participant decides how to engage with the work, and narrative agency, which necessitates the participant perceiving the impact of their intentional action on the performance. I will argue in this chapter that both types of agency become meaningful in participation through the relation between an agentive act and its context, as phenomenological agency depends on one's *perception* of it. The participant's embodied actions create meaning through enaction, firstly by impacting on the work's content and secondly by affecting the participant's experience, which the third section will situate as a significant aesthetic element of the performance. To further examine the conceptual frameworks discussed, I will conclude with the discussion of an audience research case study of *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney (see Appendix 4 for the materials used). This performance engages participants in a fictional story overlaid on a real space and asks them to consider their own agency in relation to the financial system, thereby connecting their embodied experience of the work to that of everyday life and elucidating meaningful agency.

#### **4.1 The embodied experience of participation**

The embodied experience of immersive theatre is at first glance comparable to that of participatory performance, as both involve engaging with the work through physical or verbal activity (including walking through the space, interacting with others and executing tasks). There is a significant overlap between these two practices and the line between them is blurred and dependent on the type of participation when considering the embodied experience of the work. The main difference of interest here is that the participant's actions in participatory performance impact on the work beyond their own experience, whilst the significant impact of the embodied experience in immersive practices is individual. The significance of this difference will become clear in the discussion of phenomenological agency below, and is explored in Chapter 5, but first it is productive to engage with the embodied experience of immersive theatre to clarify this distinction.

The physical, embodied engagement with the work is central to immersive practices, as Machon states in *Immersive Theatres*:

the physical insertion and direct participation of the audience member in the work *must* be a vital component and is a defining feature of this particular strand of visceral practice. Here the audience member, as an interactive agent in the performance, is absolutely central to the movement/physicality and sensual design of the event. (2013, p57, emphasis original)

Machon also suggests that haptic interaction, including “incorporating tactile touch – skin to surface, skin against skin, *and* kinaesthetics and proprioception” (2013, p77, emphasis original), is an essential component of the immersive experience. Anna Fenemore, in her article ‘On Being Moved by Performance’ (2003), similarly foregrounds the use of touch, arguing that ‘visceral-visual’ practices (comparable to immersive work) include three modes of engagement not found in ‘optical-visual’ practices: “the somaesthetic experiences of being seen and heard, the localized sensations of being touched and the localized and somaesthetic experience of being moved” (p110).<sup>53</sup> Touch also emphasises the intersubjective nature of such practices, discussed in Chapter 3, as being touched is “simultaneously located at the site of its structuring intention (i.e. the person who touches) and at the site of its constructed subjectivity (i.e. the person who is touched)” (Fenemore, 2003, p107). This perspective on the immersive experience focuses on the lived, sensual perception of the work, over the experience of doing, but suggests that the embodied nature of it challenges the ways in which one experiences and interprets art.

Productive participation, defined by Alston in *Beyond Immersive Theatre* (2016a), focuses on participants’ production of affect as an aesthetic aspect of the experience in immersive practices. Alston states that “Immersive theatre audiences are frequently invited to engage with their own feeling bodies as an aesthetic site, and to receive their own presence and involvement within an immersive space as important aspects of a theatre aesthetic” (2016a, p34). He argues that in immersive theatre the “participant is an aesthetic producer, whether they like it or not, and their own productivity is what makes the meaningful stuff of reception” (2016a, p49). In Il Pixel Rosso’s *The Great Spavaldos* (2012), for example, it is the participant’s production of affect that constitutes a significant part of the work’s meaning, including the experience of, and affective response to, being raised into the air on a trapeze (see p36 for a description of the performance). This type of participation, which Alston names narcissistic due to its focus on individual experience, is relevant to the discussion here, because it frames the embodied experience as part of the aesthetic production of the performance (which is the combination of the pre-existing structure and participants’ actions and experiences). I will return to this conceptualisation of the participant’s experience in immersive theatre as an aesthetic ‘object’ and extend it to participatory performance, after a more in depth discussion of the embodied experience of participation.

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<sup>53</sup> A definition and discussion of somaesthetics can be found in section 4.3.

Although Alston states that productive participation “need not necessarily result in a kind of activity that alters or changes an immersive environment” (2016a, p164), the mode of audience engagement he describes (which combines introspective attending to one’s affective experience and the projection of any affective states onto the participatory environment) can be productively extended to the type of participation I examine in this thesis. The type of participation I explore leads to an embodied engagement of verbal or physical action that subsequently becomes part of the performance content and so moves beyond productive participation that only impacts on the participant’s own experience. Although these two aspects are indivisible in the participant’s experience, and the individual or narcissistic experience is instrumentally part of the participant’s actions that are the focus here, it is important to highlight this difference. In this chapter I will focus on the participant’s doing that impacts directly on the content of the work, in contrast with the type of immersive or narcissistic engagement described by Alston (2016a) and Machon (2013), which is preoccupied with the participant’s individual, affective experience of the work.

Enactive and embodied cognition provide a constructive framework for the embodied engagement in participatory performance, as Mark Johnson argues: “*What* is meaningful to us, and *how* it is meaningful, depends fundamentally on our ongoing monitoring of our bodily states as we experience and act within our world” (2007, p56/57, emphasis original). Embodied cognition emphasises the fact that mind and body are not two separate entities, but that our thinking as well as our experience within the world is fundamentally shaped by our physical existence. Enactive cognition highlights that “the human mind is embodied in our entire organism *and* in the world” (Thompson, 2007, p243, emphasis added). This approach to cognition is characterised by embodied action, defined by Varela, Thompson and Rosch:

By using the term *embodied* we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. By using the term *action* we mean to emphasize once again that sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition. (1993, p172/173, emphasis original)

As such, embodied, enactive cognition is a useful frame within which to consider participation, as it highlights the processes through which embodied action and experience become meaningful, as well as the fact that these actions are situated within a context that cannot be separated out from the actions themselves.

The enactive processes of the embodied mind help interpret the aesthetic experience in participation and emphasise the embodied nature of this experience (which asks the participants to physically or verbally engage with the work). Evan Thompson argues in *Mind in Life* (2007) that the embodied mind involves “three permanent and entwined modes of bodily activity – self-regulation, sensorimotor coupling, and intersubjective interaction” where sensorimotor coupling is seen in perception, emotion and action whilst intersubjective interaction is “the cognition and affectively charged experience of self and other” (p243). Although the brain is crucial for all three modes, it is also reciprocally structured and shaped by the three bodily systems. This relational dimension is also present in the enactive nature of participation, where the meaning of the participant’s physical or verbal engagement resides in the context of their actions. This enactive nature lies in the fundamentally social and cultural dimension of human mental activity, which Thompson describes as ‘enculturation’: “Culture is no mere external addition or support to cognition; it is woven into the very fabric of each human mind from the beginning” (2007, p403). It is the active engagement with culture that makes it meaningful, as Johnson states in *The Meaning of the Body*:

sociocultural objects, practices, and events ... become meaningful only insofar as they are enacted in the lives of human beings who *use* the language, *live by* the symbols, *sing* and *appreciate* the music, *participate* in the rituals, and *re-enact* the practices and values of institutions. (2007, p152, emphasis original)

Similarly, participatory performance becomes meaningful through active engagement with its structures, with this meaning as situated and relational to the context and others present.

Physical action is also suggested as a way in which we learn the meaning of things, with an emphasis on movement, as “cognition is action – we think in order to act, and we act as *part of* our thinking” (Johnson, 2007, p126, emphasis original). This foregrounds the process of embodied engagement in participation as one whereby a participant’s physical action is part of their interpretation process and fundamental to the meaning of the aesthetic experience. Although Johnson (2007) focuses on basic physical movements, this idea can be expanded to include more complex action and verbal responses (see the discussion of languaging on p63-64 for instance). Johnson’s view is analogous to Alva Noë’s theory on enactive perception in *Perception in Action* (2004), where “The root of our ability to think about the world is our ability to experience it; but experience is a mode of skilful encounter” (p208). Experiential art, such as participation, has the task of catching “experience in the act of making the world available” (Noë, 2004, p176), by drawing attention to the phenomenological nature of

an activity that is both embodied and enacted. 'Catching experience in the act' refers to the ability of art to provide a new or elucidatory perspective on something familiar. In participation this ability derives from the work's experiential nature, which relies on the participant's embodied acts and connects these to the work's content as well as one's own experiences during the performance.

### *Real participation in a fictional context*

Participatory performance creates a situation where participants engage in a fictional situation with 'real' actions. Even performances that take place in public space, thereby intentionally blurring the line between fiction and reality, situate the participant's actions within the fictional context of the work.<sup>54</sup> A fictional context enables participants to act in ways they might not otherwise, by changing the implications or results of the action in the safe space of the performance, however their actions *are* real. In his discussion of participation within immersive theatre, Alston also emphasises that "Audiences in immersive theatre *really* feel, as they do in any kind of theatre, or situation" (2016a, p58, emphasis original) and suggests that in immersive theatre such affect also becomes part of the aesthetic 'object' of the performance. In this chapter I argue that this idea can be extended to participatory performance and relates to the aesthetic role of doing examined below. As such, the participant's actions are both real and part of a fictional narrative, without a clear boundary between the two; as Alston states: "In asserting the 'reality' of affect, then, I also assert and underscore the constructedness of that reality, and the porousness of an immersive environment" (2016a, p59). The political implications of this in-between space are examined by Nicklin (2013), who explains that in embodying the ability to make choices within a space between the 'what is' and 'what if', a participant is able to perceive themselves in relation to the system and thereby take informed action.<sup>55</sup>

The interweaving of the real and fictional in the participant's physical actions has both aesthetic and ethical consequences. The real actions and responses of the participants become part of the (fiction of the) performance and are significant in deciding the direction or outcome of the work and as such represent aesthetic impact on the content (which both really happens and impacts on the fictional narrative). An example that helps explore the ethical implications is *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood, a co-execution participatory performance where the participants carry out instructions

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<sup>54</sup> An example of this is *Adventure 1* (2014) by Coney, which is discussed in section 4.4.

<sup>55</sup> This terminology comes from Tassos Stevens of Coney, who uses it to explain the situation opened up in games and playful theatre (in Machon, 2013, p198-204).

that see them forcibly undressing the performer, feeding him fried chicken (by now a naked black young man) and eventually chasing him around the room in order to take the rest of the chicken away. The violence in these actions is real, as are the performer's scuffed knees, but the actions are carried out within the fictional narrative of the performance. This narrative frames the work as an encounter with a polar bear, where the audience is left instructions to achieve a 'meaningful, safe encounter with this majestic creature' (Harewood, 2014).

The tension between the real and not real in performance situations is a significant part of what makes them meaningful. For example, participants' actions in *The Privileged* would carry a different interpretation, and affective value, if the performer appeared to be acting in the struggle rather than genuinely resisting. A liminal space is created in participation that exists between real life and performance, described by Shaughnessy as a "space between performance and ordinary life" (2005, p201). Within the performance participants are aware of the artificial structure of the work, which is supported by the implied safety of the performance space, and engage with the work as such whilst also bringing in and using real events. This connection between real life and fictional performance carries meaning, as suggested by Nicklin (2013) in relation to games, because it can transport the meaning of actions taken in the fictional context to a real-life situation, as seen in *The Privileged* and *Dis Place* (2015) by Esses and De Mesa. Participants recognise a way of engaging with the real and the not real in the liminal space of the performance through its affordances, which suggest particular types of responses.

### *Affordances of participation*

The concept of affordances and frame theory productively combine to further examine the act of doing as a fundamental aspect of the experiential dramaturgy of the work, conceptualising how action is structured and manipulated in participatory performance. The concept of affordances, closely related to embodied and enactive cognition, was developed by Gibson (1986) and explains the way a participatory performance situation suggests, or affords, particular types of responses. Affordances describe a property of perception that consists of "the opportunities for interaction that things in the environment possess relative to the sensorimotor capacities of the animal" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993, p203). For instance, a book affords the action of flicking through the pages, whilst a glass affords the action of drinking. On a larger scale, and within participatory performance, the layout of a space might afford the participants to



engage in conversation and an invitation to take part will afford particular responses. The same object can afford different responses for individual perceivers, as Johnson (2007, p46-47) points out, or even for the same perceiver at different times. Affordances are closely connected to the meaning of the object or situation, which is relational to the perceiver and context.

The perception of affordances is fundamentally embodied, as it includes the experience of a sensorimotor profile, as well as enactive because any opportunities for actions suggested are situated within a context and environment. Affordances describe the opportunities for *action* for the perceiver, which is an essential aspect of an enactive approach:

when we perceive, we perceive in an idiom of possibilities for movement. ... To perceive is (among other things) to learn how the environment structures one's possibilities for movement and so it is, thereby, to experience possibilities of movement and action afforded by the environment. (Noë, 2004, p105)

As such, it is a productive concept to explore the experiential dramaturgy of participatory performance and helps conceptualise how embodied, enactive participation is structured. Affordances also illuminate how the artist's design of the situation and the performers' way of inviting participation manipulates the responses of the participants, further developing the discussion in Chapter 3.

Frame analysis illustrates how we understand different situations and the way we use knowledge and experience of social circumstances to determine our behavioural responses. This theory, proposed by Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis* (1974) and applied to participation by White (2013), elucidates the way participants recognise affordances and the appropriate behaviour and activity on offer during the event.<sup>56</sup> At a basic level, we use frames to manage episodes in our lives, particularly our social behaviour, which happens through 'organisational premises' that help determine activity (Goffman, 1974, p247). As White explains, frame analysis describes our functional understanding of everyday interactions, which indicate "a network of shared assumptions about what an interaction means for its participants, and what is appropriate behaviour at these interactions" (2013, p34). This theory combines with the concept of affordances to provide a foundation of understanding how participants make decisions within the context of the performance, which is where meaningful agency is to be found, as I will demonstrate below.

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<sup>56</sup> Jackson (2007) has also applied Goffman's frame analysis to educational drama, and the participation associated with theatre in education, stating it helps "to account for the aesthetic dimension of the event" (p161).

The frames relevant to participatory performance are 'keyed frames', which contain behaviour that is fictional or 'non-serious' and make clear that such behaviour is autonomous; it both resembles and stays one step outside everyday activities. 'Keying' also helps the in-frame behaviour stay anchored to surrounding frames and creates common ground where frames for participation can be established. Introduction to a new frame is usually tacit rather than explicit, deriving from our understanding of established cultural or social conventions and observation of others. White (2013) argues that new frames and 'episodic conventions' (a term taken from Goffman, who uses it to explain how one activity is marked off from another) influence the invitation to participate, which can be overt, implicit, covert, or accidental. The situation in which a different frame is introduced and understood will determine whether an overt invitation is necessary to make clear when interactivity is invited and what activity is on offer.

As well as the invitation, Goffman (1974) discusses other anchoring concepts, to describe the relationship between an interaction and someone's 'everyday self'. He explains how 'appearance formulas' relate the presentations given by one person inside and outside of the frame to create a feeling of continuity (Goffman, 1974, p269-286). Any appearance given within a frame is never completely separable from the person who exists outside of it and this is part of what adds meaning to the framed activity. The way in which individuals bring characteristics of themselves to different activities, and manage to sustain coherence across frames, roles and actions, is described by Goffman as 'resource continuity' (1974, p287-292). This concept explains a mechanism essential for participatory performance: the way in which we bring our personal selves, including history and experience, into the participatory space (I will discuss this in Chapter 6 as a key element of participation). We never cease to be ourselves, despite changing our behaviour to be appropriate to the frame we inhabit, meaning that we do not separate ourselves from any experiences within the performance that may affect us personally.

The link between our 'real' selves and our behaviour within a performance is the structure through which we can become complicit by taking part. A work that clarifies how the complicity of the audience can be an important element of the experience's meaning is *Dis Place* (2015) by Esses and de Mesa, a theatrical game that makes its audience choose one of ten artist immigrants to grant residency in the UK. This decision is based on shoe boxes filled with belongings and select information about each person, such as whether they have family and their health. It is clear in the performance that the participants are operating in a keyed frame and the shoe boxes

with personal items afford exploration but also particular judgements; for instance, listing whether the artist immigrant has ever received benefits situates it as part of the decision process of who should be allowed to stay. The structure of the performance forces the participants to decide which artist immigrants should be deported, a decision that was against my personal political beliefs and ethics, and the personal complicity in the process of deciding who should stay is significant in the meaning of the experience.

## 4.2 Phenomenological agency

The embodied experience of doing is in essence an act of agency by the participant, which responds to the affordances of the situation. Agency is defined in this thesis as the perception of having caused an event to happen and consists of three aspects: the intentional aspect, the bodily sensation, and the reflective attribution (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p166). In this chapter I examine the embodied, experiential nature of agency by focusing on the phenomenology of agency, with a particular focus on the intentional aspect and bodily sensation (discussed together as they are inseparable in the experience), whilst I will discuss the reflective attribution of agency in more depth in Chapter 5. The embodied experience of participation is bound up in the experience of agency and as such significant in the participant's meaning-making processes.

The experience of agency can be divided into two parts: a sense of ownership of one's physical movements and a sense of agency for one's actions, which are nearly indistinguishable in the regular experience of intentional action (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Gallagher, 2005). In a participatory performance a sense of ownership might arise out of moving around the space to decide how to engage with the work, for instance, whilst a sense of agency might follow an action performed within the performance (resulting from a decision on how to engage). As such, agency depends in part on the agent's embodied experience of their own actions, but it cannot be reduced to "awareness of bodily movement or to sensory feedback from bodily movement" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p165). The intentional aspect of agency, which is situated outside of the bodily movement of the action, is significant in one's sense of agency: "a form of *intentional feedback*, which is not afferent feedback about our bodily movements, but some perceptual sense that my action is having an effect, must contribute to the sense of agency" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p166, emphasis original). These two aspects of the sense of agency, the ownership of bodily movement and intentional feedback on the effect of one's action, emphasise the embodied and enactive nature of agency. Agency is an embodied, physical act within a context upon

which that act makes an impact, which situates it as a central part of the aesthetic experience of participation.

The embodied experience of taking part consists for a large part of the experience, or phenomenology, of agency, due to the fact that it is *you* who is engaged in the physical act of doing, which is experientially different to watching someone else perform an action. A phenomenological perspective on agency focuses on how it is experienced, as is clear in Gallagher and Zahavi's definition, where agency depends

on the agent's consciousness of agency. ... The *sense of agency* (or self-agency) for my actions, then, may involve a thin, pre-reflective awareness of what I am doing as I am doing it, or it may involve a more explicit consciousness filled with well-developed reasons. (2008, p158, emphasis original)

This definition focuses on the experience of agency, whether this perception is based on an intentional action with a clear outcome that is trying to be achieved or one without a sense of what the action might cause. The phenomenology of agency is complicated and multi-layered (Haggard 2005; Gallagher, 2005, 2007 and 2012; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008; Bayne 2008), with "serious ambiguity, not simply in the way we define the sense of agency, but in the sense of agency itself" (Gallagher, 2012, p26).

When examining what the sense of agency derives from it is important to consider this ambiguity in the experience of agency. Gallagher identifies multiple contributories "some of which are reflectively conscious, some of which are pre-reflectively conscious, and some of which are non-conscious" (2012, p28) and proposes a multiple aspects account of the sense of agency. This account includes efferent signals (from the environment), afferent (sensory) signals and intentional feedback ("some perceptual sense that my action is having an effect," Gallagher, 2007, p354). In a participatory performance such as *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood efferent signals might include a direct response from other participants to your action (such as reading out an instruction), afferent signals consist of the proprioceptive experience of having made a physical movement (to take away the chicken from the performer, for instance), and intentional feedback comprises of the impact of any actions made (such as the success or failure of taking the chicken and the response from the performance context to this). Gallagher's multiple aspects account incorporates "the experience of one's movements as caused by one's intentions" (Bayne, 2008, p191) and "a sense of controlling events in the external world" (Haggard, 2005, p290), elements indicated as important to the phenomenology of agency. I will apply the cognitive philosophical theory of agency to participatory performance to examine the embodied experience of the work. The

multiple aspects account of agency, including the elements argued as significant to the sense of agency, emphasises two key aspects of the embodied experience of participation: that the participant is aware of themselves as performing the act and that their experience involves intentional action.

The processes underlying agentic self-awareness, leading to a sense of agency, are similarly complex and debated. Tim Bayne and Elisabeth Pacherie argue in their article 'Narrators and Comparators' (2007) that two common approaches, a high-level narrative-based account and a low-level comparator-based account, are in fact both involved in phenomenological agency. They suggest "an agent's narrative self-conception has a role to play in explaining their agentic judgments, but that agentic experiences are explained by low-level comparator mechanisms that are grounded in the very machinery responsible for action-production" (Bayne and Pacherie, 2007, p475). This account of agentic self-awareness states that "agentic *experience*—that is, our moment-by-moment sense of ourselves as the agents of various movements—is largely the output of low-level, comparator-based systems" (Bayne and Pacherie, 2007, p485, emphasis original). These systems are based on motor-control information, such as proprioceptive consequences of one's actions and the effect in the environment of those movements, which Gallagher (2007) calls afferent and efferent signals. In a participatory performance this low-level, comparator-based system consists of direct, subconscious responses to the experience of action (such as a verbal utterance) and the instant feedback from the context (for instance, another participant's verbal response). In both instances, the sense of agency results from a direct comparison between the action taken and the expected instant feedback, which is both internal (consisting of proprioceptive signals) and external (acknowledgement from the performance context).

This comparator-based system, named in reference to the subconscious process of comparing an intended movement to the resulting proprioceptive signals, appears to be unable to account for intentional agentic experience that is more complex. This results from a lack of clarity whether "information about one's *conceptually-laden* (as opposed to motor) intentions can be available to motor control processes" (Bayne and Pacherie, 2007, p487, emphasis original). For situations involving agentic judgements, Bayne and Pacherie (2007) suggest that the agent's high-level, narrative self-conception is involved in the sense of agency by supplementing the comparator-based sense of an action being one's own with a sense of what kind of action it is and the reason for performing it. For instance, in *The Privileged* (2014) a participant might decide to go

against the instructions that state the chicken needs to be taken from the performer by force and attempt a more gentle approach. This action will include a (probably ethical) reason for taking this approach, whilst still responding to the context of the performance, resulting in a basic comparator-based sense of agency that is supplemented by a narrative-based component, which includes an understanding of why the specific action was taken, the intended outcome, and how this relates to the participant's sense of self. The combination of these two processes emphasises the embodied and enactive nature of the phenomenology of agency, which represents a significant part of the embodied experience of participation.

Within the sense of agency, two ways in which intentional action becomes experienced agency can be distinguished:

First there is an *experiential sense of agency* that comes along with action at the pre-reflective level, the first-order level of consciousness – the level at which I have a sense that I am moving, even if I am not aware of the precise details of my movement. Second, there is the *attribution of agency* that I can make if asked about my action. (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p160, emphasis original)

As stated above, agency includes a sense of ownership, a kinaesthetic experience of movement, and a sense of agency, the experience of feeling in control of one's action (Gallagher 2005, 2007, 2012; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008). Both these aspects are pre-reflective and indistinguishable within the experience of agency, however the sense of agency can be divided into a pre-reflective and a reflective component to examine it in more detail.

The pre-reflective sense of agency (SA1) is fundamentally embodied and contributes to a basic self-awareness whilst the higher-order reflective sense of agency (SA2) describes being conscious of an intention consisting of attention towards a project, task, goal or end (Gallagher, 2012). In a participatory performance SA1 resides in the ability to engage with the work through action, whilst SA2 arises out of the participant's reflection on their action, the reason for it, and the intended outcome. SA2 supplements and complicates SA1, which is already complex as the product of several contributing elements. SA2 is based on "higher-order reflective consciousness about whether what I plan to do or have done is consistent with my belief system, or with my conception of efficient means-end relations" (Gallagher, 2012, p28/29). Both aspects of the sense of agency are at play within the embodied experience of participation, which involves a pre-reflective, embodied dimension of intentional action and a reflective dimension that ascribes specific intentions, plans or reasons for acting to the participant's actions. These are related to the context and respond to intentional feedback that moves

beyond afferent, proprioceptive feedback and consist of a perceptual sense of the effect of the action in the world. In *The Privileged*, for example, a participant might carry out an instruction because the format of the performance situates these as essential to the progress of the event and as originating from the artist. Their sense of agency, therefore, will incorporate SA2 in the reflection on the action in relation to the performance context, which focuses on the intended outcome to be achieved through that action (in this case, fulfilling the instructions to the best of their abilities).

### *Meaningful agency in participatory performance*

I argue that a nuanced understanding of the phenomenology of agency in participation is developed by differentiating between two types of agency, 'agency of engagement' and 'narrative agency', which is an analogous distinction to that between SA1 and SA2. Agency of engagement is pre-reflective and like SA1 is based on an embodied self-awareness arising from physical action or movement that creates afferent and efferent proprioceptive signals, which are processed through a comparator-based system as described above. This sense of agency derives, for instance, from the ability to move around and explore an environment (similarly to the navigational agency as defined by Klich and Scheer, 2012, p154-157 and Murray, 1999, p129) and from the experience of performing deliberate actions within a performance, such as executing one of the instructions in *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood.

Agency of engagement is located in the participant's ability to decide how to engage with the work; from deciding how to navigate the space to decisions on how to respond to the invitations to take part or act. It creates a direct sense of agency through proprioceptive feedback (SA1) and through the immediate effect it has on one's embodied experience of the performance. This sense of agency consists of "first-order, phenomenal aspects of experience, pre-reflectively implicit in action" (Gallagher, 2005, note on p174) and means that agency of engagement is effective in creating an *experience* of agency for the participant. Agency of engagement is prevalent in immersive work, which generally offers the ability to move around and explore an environment. This creates an experience of agency even when there is no impact from the participant's actions on the performance content. This sense of agency is significant in the participant's experience, however, as it has substantial impact on their embodied experience of the work. In participatory performance the sense of agency that derives from the participant's agency of engagement is supplemented by a reflective, narrative agency analogous to SA2.

Narrative agency in participation is concerned with intentions and arises through higher-order, introspective reflection on an action performed and environmental feedback relating the effect of it. The term narrative agency is also used by Janet Murray who defines it in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* as “using the act of navigation to unfold a store that flows from our own meaningful choices” (1999, p133) in relation to digital interaction. My use of the term goes beyond this as Murray’s narrative agency does not impact on the work, rather it is a form of navigational agency. Narrative agency, as I use it in this thesis, builds on agency of engagement and supplies the reasons for an action performed by a participant, which are consistent with their sense of self and interpretation of the performance situation. As such, narrative agency describes an intentional action that impacts on the context, in this case the content of the performance, which creates feedback that may or may not be perceived by the participant to create an experience of agency. The mechanism underlying this attribution of agency to an action is a narrative-based account (Bayne and Pacherie, 2007), which includes conceptual information about the action to supplement the motor intention and represent agentic judgements. I will discuss narrative agency in more depth in Chapter 5; however first it is productive to examine how these two concepts of agency in participation create a nuanced understanding of the embodied experience.

In participatory performance participants engage with the work through embodied action in the context created by the artist, which is made significant, in part, by the phenomenology of agency arising out of this situation. Gallagher describes two models of motor action in the context of cognition, which are “an ecological, sensory-feedback model that delivers a sense of ownership for action [and] an *anticipatory* pre-action or forward model that delivers a sense of agency for action” (2005, p190, emphasis original). For example, an action taken in a performance (such as carrying out an instruction in *The Privileged*, 2014, through physical movements) includes sensory feedback through proprioceptive signals that create a sense of ownership for the physical action as well as an anticipation for potential feedback from the performance context in response to the action, which is part of the intentional aspect of a sense of agency. The experiential aspects of both these models are “experienced as *intrinsic* to the action. They are phenomenologically indistinguishable properties of the acting itself” (ibid.). This suggests that the embodied experience in participatory performance is inextricably bound up in the phenomenology of agency and as such is significant in the meaning the participant ascribes to the experience.



Agency becomes meaningful in the context of participation in two ways: through the immediate impact on your own experience in agency of engagement and by perceiving the impact as a result of one's actions on the work through narrative agency. In both cases it is the *experience* of agency that makes it, as well as the action it accompanies, meaningful. However, in participatory performance it is necessary to acknowledge that agency and choice exist within a context, which restricts the choices or possible actions of the participant in different ways. This raises two questions: can we speak of free will in participation, if we acknowledge that the situation and the possible actions have been pre-determined by the artist, and can the experience of agency be faked or manipulated?

Dealing with the latter question first, the complex process underlying the sense of agency means that 'mistakes' do happen, where either the agent feels they caused an event that was actually pre-planned or where the result of the agent's action is not perceived to have been caused by it. To perceive agency, the timing and the link between the intentional action and the results are crucial. Hallett (in Sinnott-Armstrong and Nadel, 2011) suggests that if this result is temporally delayed then the perception of having caused it will be lost. This particularly applies to bodily movements or situations that anticipate an instant response, whereas in participatory performance agency, or a lack of it, is more likely to be experienced by participants in relation to the action's impact on the work's context. For example, a participant may not perceive the mechanism linking their action to the resulting outcome or the opposite, where something that always happens in the performance is interpreted as a direct result of their action.

The question of free will in relation to agency is complicated as agency is a complex notion and experience, as this discussion shows. The challenge to free will in participation resides in the fact that the participant's agency is always already limited by the performance situation, including its affordances and invitations as well as the structure whereby responses are able to impact on the direction of the work (the possibilities of which are pre-decided). However, as Raymond Tallis argues in *I Am. A Philosophical Inquiry into First-person Being*: "we must recognise that freedom that is meaningful must be exercised in a context; and to this extent must in some degree be constrained" (2004, p308). Tallis' argument, which responds to the claims by Libet (1999) and others that freedom of will is an illusion, states that agency is embodied and

real although not absolute.<sup>57</sup> Instead, an act of free will, or agency, derives its meaning from *not* being isolated, as actions outside of the world they belong to cease to make sense.

The immediate reason for which I do something reaches past itself into an entire context of meaning, purpose and decision-making but it does not in doing so reach into a material world of causes in which reason is situated, as an effect or a product. An isolated act of free will, attached to an isolated cause (of an agent or otherwise), is as meaningless as an isolated perception lifted from a perceptual field. (Tallis, 2004, p320)

This understanding of agency and free will elucidates the meaningful nature of agency in participatory performance, as the ability to act within a system that imposes limitations creates the meaning of that action; without the context it would not carry the same significance. This perspective also situates meaningful agency as inherently relational and situated in both participatory performance and real life.

In this chapter I situate agency as a complex concept and process that is fundamental to the embodied experience of participatory performance, as both the aesthetic experience of the work and in relation to its ethics. The ethical consideration of agency in participation is important as the ability to act, and the necessity to choose whether to act or not can situate a participant as complicit in the action of a performance. For instance, being part of the decision-making process of which artist immigrants to deport in *Dis Place* (2015) by Esses and De Mesa implicates you in a right-wing political procedure. In *The Privileged* (2014) by Jamal Harewood not stopping the physical violence toward the performer from the work's instructions makes you complicit in them being carried out, even if you did not physically take part. Although requiring ethical consideration, this aspect of participatory performance is also capable of creating a powerful and affective experience; it is the inability to complete the performance without the violation of the performer's dignity in *The Privileged* (2014) that affected me emotionally. I did not stop the action, or try beyond small attempts to suggest a kinder way of executing the instructions, which the work's structure did not respond to. As a result I feel I was part of the action, despite not physically assisting in the morally difficult instructions, which illustrates the impact of the ethical dimension on the aesthetic actions the work asks participants to carry out.

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<sup>57</sup> See Mele (2009) and O'Connor (2016) for more detail of Libet's experiment, which shows our brain registers movement before we are conscious of the intention to move as well as the responses arguing that this does not negate the possibility of free will.

### 4.3 The aesthetic language of participation

The *doing* as active, embodied engagement with the work is a significant aesthetic language in participatory performance. I am using the term ‘aesthetic language’ in a metaphorical manner here, to describe the way in which a work communicates with its audience. In a mainstream theatre show these languages are primarily visual and aural, whereas participatory performance additionally engages the participant through their own actions. The participant’s actions, whether they are physical or verbal, become part of the aesthetic material of the work but these actions also frame their experience as a central aesthetic element in participation. So far, I have examined how the participant engages with a performance, including how the work’s affordances are created by the artist and influence the participant’s responses, as well as the way this embodied engagement consist for a significant part of the experience of agency. In this section I will develop the understanding of the embodied, agentive nature of the experience of participation and argue that this experience is itself aesthetic. This argument builds on the understanding of enactive meaning-making processes such as languaging (see p64) and the way meaningful agency derives from the interactions between an individual and their context, leading to an understanding of the participant’s embodied engagement as an aesthetic element.

Aesthetic experience is not just reserved for the experience of art according to Dewey, but includes everyday activities as long as it has a unity “constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience” (2005 [1934], p38, emphasis original). *An* experience has a perceptible start and end point, which separate it from the ongoing flow of experience in everyday life. Tom Leddy explains in ‘Dewey’s Aesthetics’ (2013) that an aesthetic experience “involves a drama in which action, feeling, and meaning are one” (n.p.). Leddy describes the structure of *an* experience as: “The subject undergoes something or some properties, these properties determine his or her doing something, and the process continues until the self and the object are mutually adapted, ending with felt harmony” (2013, n.p.). In this definition the two essential components are: an active engagement by the subject and an interaction that leads to mutual adaptation or change. The experience of participatory performance is structured around the same components, as the participant engages with the performance through action and as a result both their experience and the performance are altered.

The above definition of aesthetic experience in participation situates the participant as ‘productive’ in Alston’s (2016a) terms, although the productivity of the participant as

examined in this thesis exceeds that of the immersive participant (as their productivity impacts on the environment and not only their own experience). Alston argues that within immersive theatre experience is

objectified as art, as a part of the artwork that exists alongside the more familiar aesthetic features of a theatre performance, such as *mise en scène* and the actor's performing body. ... What separates theatre aesthetics generally from immersive theatre aesthetics is the rendering of affective experience as aestheticised experience as a result of immersing audiences within a world that surrounds them completely *and that asks something of them* via an invitation (implicit or explicit, actual or possible, intended or mistakenly perceived) to explore, to interact, or to touch. (2016a, p47, emphasis original)

This theory of aestheticised experience, which focuses mostly on affect production, I argue can be developed to include physical actions that in turn impact on the work's content. As such, it elucidates the way in which the participant and their experience is positioned as aesthetic within participatory performance.

In participation, the participant's experience is situated as a significant aesthetic element as their experience, responses, actions and contributions are all framed as part of the work. As Alston points out, this position comes with a responsibility to produce part of the aesthetics of the work, in the shape of affective responses which mean that the "participant *is* the art event" (2016a, p49, emphasis original). The aesthetics of participation rely on the presence, affective responses and actions of the participants, all of which are embodied and enactive in perception and involve an experience of agency (or the lack of it). The experience of the participant is thus situated as a key aesthetic feature of participatory performance because one of the key aesthetic languages of participation resides in the participant's doing and embodied engagement.

### *The aesthetics of embodied experience*

To examine the participant's aestheticised experience more closely I will return to embodiment to examine how physical, embodied activity within participation becomes aesthetic engagement and creates meaning.<sup>58</sup> Johnson's theory of the aesthetics of embodied action, which I am applying to participation, states that aesthetics should move beyond the study of art and include "everything that goes into the human capacity to make and experience meaning" (2007, px). Meaning is defined in terms of the relations and interactions between embodied beings and environments by Johnson:

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<sup>58</sup> As such this represents the sensory element of Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, discussed on p49-51.

“the meaning of something is a matter of how it connects to what has gone before and what it entails for present or future experiences and actions” (2007, p265). This definition is productive when analysing participatory performance, as it highlights the relational character of this type of work, including the active relation between participant and performance environment; the relationship between participants and participant and performer; and the connection between the participant’s contributions and the content of the work.

Within participation a significant element of meaning-making resides in the participant’s experience of agency, as this arises out of the physical, active engagement with the work. Johnson (2007) argues that our embodied existence enables us to make meaning through our senses and the enactive engagement with our environment. The meaning-making process through active engagement in participation is exemplified in the experience of agency, which is dependent on an embodied, sensorimotor experience as well as a higher-level process that attaches intentions and judgements to actions. The experience of agency is also relational and enactive, as it only exists in relation to its environment (which consists of other participants, performers, the actions of both of those, physical objects and their affordances, amongst other things).

The focus on the embodied nature of meaning and aesthetics is supported by Richard Shusterman’s theory of somaesthetics, which he defines in *Body Consciousness* as “the critical meliorative study of one’s experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aesthetis) and creative self-fashioning” (2008, p19).<sup>59</sup> Somaesthetics has an experiential dimension, as well as an analytical and pragmatic one, which emphasises the body as integrated within “the active spirit of human experience” (Shusterman, 2008, p28). Shusterman advocates “the cognitive sharpening of our aesthetis or sensory perception *and* the artful reshaping of our somatic form and functioning” (2008, p43, emphasis original) as this will increase one’s ethical sensitivity and capability of responding to others with effective action. An emphasis on kinaesthetic feelings when explaining aesthetic experience

may help us derive a greater fullness, intensity, or precision in our experience of art because (at least for some of us) aesthetic imagination or attention is facilitated or heightened by certain bodily movements that somehow feel as if they correspond to the artwork. (Shusterman, 2008, p124/125)

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<sup>59</sup> Shusterman proposes somaesthetics as an interdisciplinary field for philosophical practice, but also points out that it is “a familiar term of neurophysiology, referring to sensory perception through the body itself rather than its particular sense organs. The somaesthetic sense are often divided into exteroceptive (relating to stimuli outside the body and felt on the skin), proprioceptive (initiated within the body and concerned with the orientation of the body in space), and visceral or interoceptive (deriving from internal organs and usually associated with pain)” (2008, note p2).

In this way, the practice of somaesthetics develops our ability to explain aesthetic experience beyond basic descriptions of artworks and behaviour.

This aspect of somaesthetics is relevant to participation by drawing attention to the kinaesthetic experience of the work, but also by emphasising the importance of (descriptions of) physical action in performance analysis. Shusterman (2008) builds on Dewey's aesthetics of everyday experience in his theory and similarly emphasises the embeddedness of the individual in their environment. The self therefore relies on environmental elements, which for Shusterman means that "one's body (like one's mind) incorporates its surroundings ... Our bodies (like our thoughts) are thus paradoxically always more and less than our own" (2008, p214). This echoes theories of embodied, enacted cognition and situates this aspect of the experience of participation as fundamental in participatory aesthetics.

Art is an exemplary form of human meaning-making. Understanding the nature of art provides insight into how people construct and experience meaning in their everyday lives. Building on Dewey's aesthetics, Johnson argues that:

*we need a philosophy that sees aesthetics as not just about art, beauty, and taste, but rather as about how human beings experience and make meaning. Aesthetics concerns all of the things that go into meaning - form, expression, communication, qualities, emotion, feeling, value, purpose, and more. (2007, p212, emphasis original)*

This perspective of aesthetics situates it as concerned with the conditions of experience, with art as "a culmination of the possibility of meaning in experience" (Johnson, 2007, p212). In this thesis I employ a similar approach to aesthetics, with participatory performance as an aesthetic situation that mirrors systems and structures of interaction and engagement from everyday life, arguing that the meaning-making processes in participation have significance beyond the particular performance. Johnson suggests that "by looking at how art affects us, we gain profound insights into the bodily basis of meaning and understanding" (2007, p261). This has significance in relation to participatory performance as it suggests that understanding the aesthetic experience of embodied engagement, agency, and the relations between actions and the environment in participation in a nuanced way can transfer to everyday life.<sup>60</sup>

Doing is a key aesthetic language in participatory performance and a significant part of the meaning of the participant's experience arises out of their embodied engagement with the work. This meaning is grounded in one's embodied experiences, relationships

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<sup>60</sup> See also Nicklin (2013) for a more in depth discussion of the potential for political empowerment through the opportunity to 'rehearse' agentive actions.

to the environment and social interactions, as Johnson (2007) has argued, which are examined in Chapter 4, 5 and 3 respectively of this thesis. As such, doing represents a fundamental aesthetic element of participatory performance, which illustrates the aesthetic nature of the participant's experience as well as the enacted and embodied character of this experience.

#### **4.4 A case study of *Adventure 1* by Coney**

I will complete this chapter with a discussion of a case study of *Adventure 1* by Coney, including the audience research carried out (see Appendix 4 for materials), in order to examine the aesthetics of doing in participatory performance in more depth. After buying a ticket for *Adventure 1*, Josh, an operative from Glitchspring (the fictional company in the work), sends you a text message asking you to 'accept full responsibility for your actions on this adventure, and their consequences' (Coney, 2015). This provides the option to say no, although this means not being able to take part. The reason for this question is that in the show

You'll be tailing someone who works in the heart of the financial system. You'll need to blend into the city around you, so that you don't draw attention. We don't have permission to be doing this. We don't have permission to be here.  
(Coney, 2016, n.p.)

The site of the performance is revealed shortly before it starts and participants arrive with a smartphone loaded with audio tracks and a map of the financial district in London. From the start participants are asked to be covert, with some suggestions of cover stories (perhaps you are just waiting for a friend) and a reminder that the security guards in this part of London are real.

The first half of the performance takes an immersive approach and consists of an individual exploration of the area, guided by narrative audio tracks relating to specific locations on the map. Each track provides information on 'Mr X' and enables participants to build up a picture of him as the target, a software analyst working for a major investment bank. Mr X has been developing an algorithm that Glitchspring wants to use to shake up the markets. In the second half of the performance, which combines a game theatre approach with the opportunity for participants to take narrative decisions, the participants are asked to steal the bag Mr X is carrying the algorithm in. The participants assemble following the theft, to receive a phone message stating they have succeeded in the test and that Mr X is in fact Josh. Returning to the bar, participants are invited to buy a drink and a debrief session facilitated by the performer follows. The discussion of this case study is structured along the themes discussed in

this chapter and examines the embodied and aesthetic experience of the participants. *Adventure 1* explicitly explores the experience of agency within a large system, both through the form and the content of the work, enabling a productive discussion on phenomenological agency in participation.

The embodied experience of doing in *Adventure 1* includes a range of actions: the participants play at being covert whilst moving around the locations on the map; actions are suggested either implicitly (being led into a coffee shop affording the action of buying something) or explicitly (tailing Mr X and stealing his bag); and the debrief invites a wide range of verbal responses. The participant responses to *Adventure 1* illustrate the importance of the embodied *doing* in participation: 87% of participants agreed that their physical actions were significant to their experience, 77% considered their actions as contributing to their interpretation of the work and 68% of participants felt strongly that their actions helped them feel part of the work.<sup>61</sup> Participants' responses relating to their embodied engagement ranged from physical descriptions of their experience, signifying the meaning or interpretation of it, to an articulation of why the physical, embodied action was important:

It was a fully embodied kind of moment [that] was kind of unique and personal to me, and because of that it meant a lot, but also because it was the action of going in and talking to Josh, that moment kind of humanised that character for me and in a way kind of humanised myself ... because it meant that I wasn't this outside observer anymore but I was engaging fully. (A13)

The physical acts of taking part create meaning for participants, for instance by developing the intersubjective relationship with the performer. The wish to 'engage fully' also suggests the participant perceives there is value in the doing and that the embodied action leads to a different position within the work (going beyond being an outside observer).

The significance of the personal nature of the participant's embodied action in their aesthetic experience is clear from the responses: "It's inseparable, it's ... the physical action - it is the work, I can't separate it out [...] the physical experience really was the experience and I can't pull them apart [...] they're just little things but they kind of become yours" (A13). This emphasis on *my* action calls attention to the links between the doing and the participant's decisions, which enable a personal contribution to the

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<sup>61</sup> Thirty-nine participants completed a questionnaire for this case study, from six separate performances. Within the first set of responses quoted here 58% strongly agreed that their physical actions were significant to their experience whilst 54% agreed strongly that their actions contributed to their interpretation of the work. One participant did not respond to one of the statements, meaning that the last statistic quoted here represents the answers of thirty-eight participants.



content and the experience of the work. This link is part of the meaning making process and illustrates the importance of doing in the aesthetic experience of participatory performance. One participant described their most meaningful moment as “Sitting in the chapel of St Paul's & lighting a candle. A really meaningful action that could be my own within the wider experience” (A146). The personal dimension of embodied action, as exemplified in this response, is significant in the participant’s process of meaning-making as it connects personal experiences with an experience of agency.

A further reason physical, embodied action becomes significant in the participant’s experience is that it changes the relationship between the participant and the work; they become part of the content of the performance and this can be source of enjoyment (as it was in *Adventure 1*). One participant stated: “It felt like being undercover / being part of a spy game” (A126). This shows they felt part of the performance, beyond being a spectator, and felt able to influence what happened, which made it an enjoyable experience. Many participants in *Adventure 1* describe their experience as fun or exciting, for example when stealing the bag:

the moment when I noticed that some of the rest of the team were sat down, it was a just like a moment of pure ‘yes!’ so putting the bag behind them, and hiding it behind them made me feel really smooth. I was like, ‘yeah, I’m a secret agent, I’ll just drop that bag without anyone noticing’, so ... that was quite exciting. (A131)

The action of stealing a bag will, for most people, also be a new experience and the connection between their real life and this action within the performance therefore becomes significant: “Stealing the bag was probably the, one of the more memorable bits for me because I’ve never stolen anything in my life (laughing)” (A142). The embodied nature of such actions highlights how real acts within a fictional context come to be meaningful, both within the framework of the performance and within the aesthetic experience of the participant. The participant engages with the performance through the aesthetic language of doing, which then becomes part of their interpretative and meaning-making processes.

The blurring between real actions and fiction is a key part of *Adventure 1*, which deliberately calls attention to real-life aspects from the financial district (for instance the boundaries of public space) and overlays this real space with a fictional narrative that is at times hard to distinguish from the real. The format of the performance, of playing in public space, meant that participants at times were unsure what was and was not part of the work:

I did have this completely peculiar and extraordinary encounter with Tommy and Mary, who, I don’t know if they’re anything to do with this or not (laughs)

but was so perfectly timed and wanted to talk to me about art and the meaning of art and their home-made records that I felt like they must be part of it, but I don't know if they are! (Laughing). (A112)

This participant's experience highlights how the blurring between reality and fiction creates a situation where everything is potentially part of the performance, in an example of errant immersion as described by Alston (2016b), reframing any encounter as both aesthetically part of the performance and its meaning. The way participants related to the blurring between reality and fiction depended partly on whether they had come alone and their experience of participatory works such as this. This fact highlights that the perception of the overlap between real and fiction is personal, which depends on the situation and is essential to acknowledge when evaluating and analysing participatory performance.

The concept of affordances helps examine the way participants take decisions and highlights how their interpretation of the work impacts on their behaviour. The situation created by the artists invites particular actions. The participants are instructed to first follow Mr X to his meeting place and then steal his bag. Mr X goes into a bar, which brings particular affordances for stealing the bag. One participant described their response to being faced with this situation:

the moment when he goes into the pub is not a moment that you are expecting [...] and then you suddenly have to [figure out:] how are we going to steal the bag now? Because everything has changed. And I was, like [...] I'll just distract him by talking to him, which in a way was just me taking the easy way out (laughs). (A13)

This strategy, with one or more participants distracting Mr X and another taking the bag was a common one in the six observed performances and in most cases directly influenced by the performer's placement of the bag: either between his legs as he stood at the bar or next to his chair if he was sat down. The experience of responding to an affordance usually feels spontaneous, as one participant related: "when everything suddenly changed and we came to the pub...um... I don't know, just the idea of going in and talking just kind of seemed... it felt that it sprang naturally" (A13). This underlines the individual nature of responding to affordances, which highlights the unpredictability of participation and points to the way in which several performances of a work become unique (I will discuss the process through which this happens in Chapter 5).

The structures inside the work also bring affordances, for example the first section affords the ability to choose which locations to visit, although responses to an

affordance are flexible. This is illustrated by the participant who decided to steal Mr X's bag in broad daylight in a street just off Paternoster Square:<sup>62</sup>

I was like, 'let's just...come on...let's just get the bag!' (laughs) So um, yeah, so we went for it. [It was] Literally just run and grab. [...] I didn't really plan it. I just thought... it didn't look like it was heavy. He wasn't very tall. He didn't look like he was holding it very tight, and I thought yeah, just pull it. I thought it was doable. (A125)

In this situation, the affordances perceived by the participant centred on the physical possibilities for action; whether they would be able to get the bag away from the performer or not. However, these perceptions were also influenced by another affordance: "I knew that it was a performance. Like I knew that it wasn't ... he wouldn't like kick up a fight and punch me or anything [...] I knew it was like a safe situation" (A125). This thinking process illuminates the individual nature of responding to an affordance, but also emphasises the impact that knowledge or experience with similar situations has on making decisions.

Participation takes place in a keyed frame, which describes the awareness of the participant that their actions take place within a fictional context and are just outside of everyday life. Participants demonstrate their awareness of this by, for instance, relating their actions to the structure of the performance and the tasks they are given. One participant explained their experience as analogous with playing a game that includes rules:

on some level you do know that it's like a game, and it's like: 'Well if I want to continue with the game I have to play within the rules of the game and the option of not stealing the bag is not presented to me'. (A13)

This response shows the participant's engagement with the structure of the performance as within an alternative frame to everyday life and, as such, an activity to engage with in a different way. For example:

when you opt into the game you know that there are certain rules, there are certain, you know, guidelines that you are going to have to play by, because otherwise you will break it [...] there's an implicit agreement[...] this is the board, if you wander off, then you've gone somewhere else. (A13)

The experience of being within a keyed frame, as described by this participant, involves considering the context for your actions and the boundaries they need to stay within to be relevant within the performance. This context and its boundaries differ from everyday life, although this is complicated when a performance takes place in public space. In a work such as *Adventure 1* the fictional and the real collide, which impacts

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<sup>62</sup> This is an area with a high volume of security cameras.

on the participant's perception of the keyed frame and their decision-making processes.

The amount of experience of operating within a keyed frame significantly influences the participant's decision-making process. A participant who regularly takes part in participatory works explained:

I've seen a lot of work that is asking us to do something a little bit out there ... so it's not like, 'Oh God, [...] we can't mug someone', it's just like, you know, it's cool because it's obviously part of the show [...] they want us to take his bag, that's the point. So it's like I'm maybe 'doing' the show more or less depending on your viewpoint. (A125)

This response articulates a key finding of the audience research: the way in which experience of operating within a keyed frame increases the knowledge on how to deal with unusual situations, as well as the impact of such experience on decision-making. This participant ran up to the actor and stole the bag in the street, which less experienced participants are unlikely to do. The participant also raises an interesting point on the 'level' of doing the show, that on the one hand they are doing the show more by going for the bag theft whilst simultaneously doing less by not engaging in a detailed consideration of whether to steal the bag at all. Alston (2016a) discusses the expertise of immersive participants who return to the same show and suggests that a form of 'entrepreneurial participation' is at play in such works as they encourage risk-taking and action. In participatory performance, experience similarly increases the participant's confidence to act, for instance one participant explained that as they knew people in the company they "probably felt a bit more empowered [...] to play" (A142). Experience of operating within a keyed frame will also increase the likelihood that the participant experiences agency through their engagement with the work.

### *The experience of agency in Adventure 1*

The complex phenomenology of agency makes it challenging to identify separate elements (such as the bodily sensation and intentional aspects) in audience responses, although it is clear that participants experienced agency in different ways. This is apparent in their responses when asked about their most meaningful moments; some participants described the performance situation or elements in terms of their affordances (suggesting they identified an opportunity to actively engage with the work) whilst others articulated their action as something they (tried to) achieve, which suggests that they perceived the impact of their actions. Elements such as interacting with other participants were most often described as an affordance, which is exemplified in the debrief discussion, as one participant articulated: "the potential for

dialogue was so strong [in the debrief] ... The shift from a fairly isolated / isolating experience to negotiation with a collective seemed important" (A16). This response indicates the affordances created in the debrief situation and links the potential of this to a process of creating meaning in the participant's experience.

It can be difficult to establish whether agency was experienced; however some participants described their experience in terms of an action they took and something they tried or managed to achieve. The former suggests a sense of ownership and basic sense of agency (SA1) in the action, which correlates with the most common type of action described by the participants: physical (inter)action, such as stealing the bag. This suggests an experience of agency that extends beyond the basic sense of it and includes an intentional aspect. Within the meaningful moments related by the participants, this experience centred on the ability to make decisions. As one participant stated "The invitation to go into St Paul's and to try to get into the car park and my decision to do neither" (A114).

Agency of engagement was experienced more frequently than narrative agency in *Adventure 1*. This is clear from the participant responses, where the proportion that describe an affordance in the work or an action they took exceed those that relate such an action to an intention (sixty and fifty-seven, respectively, compared to sixteen). This disparity is due to a combination of factors: firstly, agency of engagement (which relies on a sense of ownership and a basic sense of agency or SA1) requires fewer processes to be experienced when compared to narrative agency (which relies on a higher-order reflective sense of agency, or SA2, in addition). Secondly, the structure of the performance is suitable to develop the experience of agency of engagement as the first section of the performance takes the form of individual exploration, followed by a task that is very physical, which both favour a sense of ownership and SA1. Finally, the higher-order reflective sense of agency that narrative agency requires has a complex relationship to phenomenological agency in participation, as impact on the content or structure of the performance is not always easy to perceive. In Chapter 5 I will develop the discussion of (the experience of) narrative agency, building on the understanding of meaningful agency examined here.

Agency becomes meaningful when it is perceived, regardless of the type of agency that is being experienced, as is evidenced by the participant responses. The action that was described most often in a way that suggests agency is stealing the bag, followed by the experience of walking around between the locations and tracks. These two elements describe two very different agentive experiences, with the first impacting on the content

of the performance whilst the latter only impacts on the individual participant's experience. Meaningful agency in participation requires action within a structure that is able to respond to it, to give feedback that confirms the pre-reflective sense of agency, and it is this response to one's action that makes it a meaningful agentive experience. As one participant articulated:

I think with ... work that implies your own agency on any level you have to be willing to go along with it, and maybe it's actually enacting your agency more saying there 'I'm not going along with this' but, but then hopefully the artistic merits or benefits or personal enjoyment you get is by [...] saying yes. ... I think that's when, um, participatory work is really at its best when it always feels like it's your own decision you're making, even though it isn't. (A112)

This statement exemplifies the experience of meaningful agency in participation, which by responding to the affordances within the work is always already partly determined and circumscribed, but is nonetheless both enjoyable and meaningful.

### *Doing as an aesthetic language*

The participant's embodied experience becomes aestheticised in *Adventure 1*, analogous to an aesthetic 'object', extending Alston's (2016a) perspective on immersive theatre. This perspective enables a clearer understanding of how doing becomes an aesthetic language within participation, as well as presenting a system to analyse the work that focuses on the sensory elements (corresponding to Berleant's, 2005, aesthetics of engagement). It is clear from the participant responses that physical sensations and the embodied experience of action is significant. One participant relates how she realised she needed to answer the phone in the phone box after texting the keyword and found themselves "running back to the phone box ... and that started to feel quite 'game-play-ey', and yeah, like the physical activity was having a bearing on what was going on" (A112). The moment of the bag theft was described by several participants in similar physical, embodied terms, for instance the thought process of one participant (A125) quoted above centred on their physical capability of taking the bag off the performer. More than one participant highlighted how the physical experience of stealing the bag made it particularly memorable, for example: "The actual bag snatch is an adrenaline moment - almost maybe too easy by that point, although that's probably our own ineptness as villains" (A118). This response also highlights the importance of the action feeling 'real'; if stealing the bag is too easy then the action loses part of its aesthetic meaning. This illuminates the way in which embodied experience becomes aestheticised in participation, as the physical experience of the action is aesthetically part of the performance whilst also having an impact on the content of the work.

The participant responses also reveal the ways in which the embodied experience and actions within the work create meaning. The main themes in the data centre on the links between (inter)action and meaning as well as the connections between personal perspectives and specific elements of the work. The personal dimension is important in these connections and simultaneously impacts on the participant's decisions and aesthetic experience. Participatory performance enables the participant to embed something of themselves into the work through their actions and it is these connections that prove significant in the meaning of the work, as one participant articulated:

When I was listening to the audio I felt like I was learning more about the system and was able to build more of an opinion. And the second [stealing the bag] was exciting because I felt that was the point when I stopped feeling like an observer and more like a player. (A121)

This response highlights the important experience of personal involvement in the performance, feeling like a player suggests a sense of agency derived from physical action that impacts on the work. The embodied, personal experience within the performance is key in the meaning-making process, which exemplifies Johnson's (2007) relational definition of meaning as existing in terms of its connections to present and future experience and action. These connections both impact on the meaning of the work for the participant but also on their subsequent decisions and responses, creating a complex network of mutual influences that I will examine in Chapter 5.

The aesthetic language of doing is a fundamental aesthetic element of participatory performance and foregrounds the mutual impact between a range of elements in the work, such as its affordances and the participant's experience of working in a keyed frame. This emphasises the relational nature of participation as a form, which I will examine in Chapter 5 using Dynamic Systems theory to conceptualise the mutual impact between elements in the performance. The embodied engagement in participation results in a creative contribution (as an agentive act) by the participant, which is subsequently incorporated into the content of the work. In Chapter 5 I will discuss the creative contribution and the process through which these contributions become part of the performance content, continuing to examine the relationship between the participant's agency and their responses that impact on the work. The case study of *Adventure 1* has examined the processes that underlie phenomenological agency in participation and that agency becomes meaningful when it is experienced by the participant. I will build on this understanding of meaningful agency as relational and situated, examining the process of the reflective attribution of agency to propose a contextual understanding of agency in participation that differentiates between agentive acts and the experience of agency. The embodied

engagement I have explored in this chapter emphasises the significance of the participant's experience, which is aestheticised and represents a fundamental process of meaning-making for the participant through the experience of agency.



## Chapter 5 – Creative contributions

The participant's embodied engagement impacts on the work's predetermined content and structure. In this chapter I will propose the term creative contribution to describe this process, which is fundamental to participation as examined in this thesis.

Participants respond to the work by performing tasks or actions and making suggestions, which all represent their creative contributions within the performance. The predetermined structure of the work will include a system for incorporating the participant's contributions, which represents the way participation operates during the performance to create a unique event responsive to the individuals present. In this chapter I will argue that creative contributions are both an aesthetic *act* and an aesthetic *process* in participation, with the former constituting an individual's agentic act and the latter being the process through which all contributions aesthetically become part of the performance. The creative contribution is a direct result of intersubjective relationships and embodied engagement, the two aesthetic elements I discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, and this chapter situates the process of contributing as the third aesthetic element of participation.

This chapter consists of four parts, starting with a discussion of a creative contribution as an individual act that becomes part of the aesthetic performance content. This is followed by a consideration of these contributions in relation to the participant's agentic behaviour. The exploration of the creative contribution as agentic act leads to a discussion of narrative agency in participatory performance and I propose creative agency as specific to participatory performance. I will also propose a contextual framework that differentiates between agentic behaviour and the experience of agency to enable a nuanced discussion of agency in participation as situated and relational. The second half of the chapter develops a wider perspective on creative contribution as a process through which the participants' responses create a unique performance. I will examine this process with the use of Dynamic Systems Theory to enable a focus on the interactions between elements in the performance, which indicates a model for the analysis of participation. This system for analysis enables a perspective on the interactions between aesthetic elements as significant to the development of meaning in a participatory performance. Finally, the fourth section examines the aesthetic nature of the process of creative contribution, building on the aesthetics of play and games and Berleant's aesthetics of engagement (2005, 2013). Throughout this chapter I predominantly draw on my audience research on *Early Days*

(of a Better Nation) by Coney (2014), which allows me coherently and holistically to address the experience of agency and contributing (see Appendix 3 for materials used).

## 5.1 The act of creative contribution

An individual creative contribution is an act from a participant that changes or adds to the content or direction of the performance. This change, or addition, varies in its individual significance, from a direct individual statement (that by influencing other participants partly determines the performance ending) to a more fluid engagement in a group conversation (where individual actions are hard to disentangle). The use of 'creative' in this term is based on R. Keith Sawyer's definition in 'The Emergence of Creativity' (1999), where "novelty is not sufficient for creativity; we also need *appropriateness* – the novel creation must somehow be viewed as useful, appropriate, or valuable in some (higher level) system" (p461, emphasis original). The creative contributions in a single performance consist of all the actions taken by participants that come to compose that individual show. A participatory work includes a system whereby the actions, responses, decisions and contributions from the participants become part of the performance, which in turn may determine the direction or outcome of it (depending on the type of participation). These acts will include a range of desired and expected responses as well as those that surprise the artists, but to qualify as a creative contribution it needs to offer something that was not already explicitly present in the performance; a creative contribution creates something new, however small, in the performance that becomes part of it and is unique to that particular group of participants. This can happen on different levels, from something that was explicitly invited, like a choice between several options, or something more open-ended. Many participants respond with comparable contributions across different performances, which highlights the effect of the interaction design and facilitation (the system underlying this process is examined in section 4.3).

A clear understanding of what an individual contribution 'looks' like, and how it relates to the context in which it is made, helps to conceptually map the process whereby a range of creative contributions affect a participatory system to create an individual performance. A contribution is made in response to an implicit or explicit invitation from within the work and becomes part of the performance through the specific system that operates within that work, which is directly linked to the type of participation it invites. This context and the contribution are inherently connected and inseparable during the

event, however it is necessary to separate them to meaningfully analyse the process underlying participation. Different types of participation will invite and incorporate contributions in distinct ways. For instance, the systems present in a participatory work using a co-execution approach will be capable of incorporating unexpected contributions into the performance, as the structure of the work is created with the expectation that participants will supply content in response to the situation's affordances. This is structurally different from an interactive performance where the openings for participants to provide content are more limited and facilitated to ensure it fits within the show's structure. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on a co-execution style of participation because it exemplifies the opportunity for creative contribution.

As a participant, it can be difficult to see how much one's contribution impacts on the performance and some works exaggerate this impact. For example, *Fight Night* (2013) by Ontroerend Goed provides each participant with an electronic voting device, which they use to answer questions and vote. Although initially it felt like my decisions had some narrative impact on the performance, as part of a group and particularly when others voted the same, when reading the 'blueprint' for the performance it is clear that the performers' roles are not fixed (Ontroerend Goed, 2015). The performance always proceeds with the same responses, regardless of which particular performer wins or loses. The work is structured to examine the very participatory structure it uses for the audience to take part and highlights the challenge of identifying a creative contribution. This example illustrates how a creative contribution can sometimes only be judged when one is familiar with the systems put in place by the artists.

Examining the experience of immersive work helps to refine the definition of a creative contribution in participatory performance. In *Hurling* (2013) by Greg Wohead a single audience member is taken up to a roof space within the city with a panoramic view and invited to listen to a tape player. The performance is re-recorded every day it is performed and examines the way people experience and process time. During the performance the audience member is asked to look out in different directions and eventually they are verbally guided to look at a particular place on the street below, where the performer is standing. He explains that he will share a moment in time with you, the audience member, and when he counts to three you both raise your right hand as high as possible before he turns and walks out of view. This performance effectively creates an intersubjective relationship and asks the audience member to engage by doing something, two things that come together to make the moment of connection in

time with the artist a significant experience. However, nothing I did as an audience member added to the pre-existing content of the work. This is an important distinction: in immersive performance the audience's actions only impact on their own experience (in a more direct version of the feedback loop in mainstream theatre) whereas in participatory work the participant's actions change and contribute to the pre-existing performance content, which alters or develops in response.

## 5.2 Creative contribution as agency

A creative contribution is an act from a participant that changes or adds to the performance content and as such constitutes an act of narrative agency by the participant. I define narrative agency in this thesis as an agentic act that is intentional and to which the environment (the performance situation) responds in some way (in the form of efferent feedback, see p125-126). In creating a structure within which participants are invited to contribute something, and a system for incorporating these contributions, the artist has to balance freedom of choice with the needs of the show and the potential vulnerability that participants may show.<sup>63</sup> The ethics in balancing these needs between a meaningful activity for the participant and not asking something psychologically troubling will have a significant impact on the experience. Each creative contribution is also both an act of agency and an important part of the participant's aesthetic experience. Considering these two contexts for agency (from an internal, experiential and an external, observational perspective) highlights the importance of evaluating the ethical implications of the creative contribution. This is a significant aspect of the participant's experience as well as the third fundamental aesthetic element of participation.

In this discussion of the creative contribution as agency I draw on the audience research on Coney's *Early Days (of a Better Nation)*, a co-execution participatory work that offers participants a range of ways to contribute to the performance (see Appendix 3). At the start of *Early Days* participants are given a role as the regional representatives of the three areas of Dacia, a fictional nation emerging out of a traumatic civil war. Each region (The City, The Plains or The Islands) discusses the main problems in their area, facilitated by a single performer, before all representatives come together in the main Parliament to make some important decisions. The

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<sup>63</sup> For instance, a participant may be triggered by an element or situation in the performance, which may make the experience of the work a distressing one. An example of this can be found in Chapter 6, where the structure of *The Experiment* meant some participants shared personal information that became part of the performance in an unexpected way.

performance consists of two Acts; in Act 1 the participants need to decide whether to accept the World Council's offer of aid and vote by standing near one of three voting booths. Following this decision, conversation turns to the system of governance for the new Dacia, with the participants proposing their own interpretations of systems based on: a single leader (for instance, how this person would be chosen), a representative democracy (how many representatives and how to ensure they represent the views of all their constituents), or a co-operative system (how effective decisions can be made with such a large group). A second vote decides which system Dacia will adopt and after electing any representatives or leaders the participants leave the space for a short interval.

Act 2 takes a game theatre approach and asks participants to put their chosen system into practice, as they are challenged to distribute the available resources across a series of important issues (such as law and order, food, and hospitals). The tokens representing the resources are divided in response to the system of governance (either given to an elected leader, distributed between regional representatives or a token for each participant). Throughout the performance, a fourth performer represents the media and reflects the action back to the participants through live broadcasts (partly based on participant interviews). The performance ends with his report from the future showing how the participants' decisions impacted on Dacia's future. The work contains thirteen possible endings, based on participants' narrative decisions, which is live-written in response to the discussions.<sup>64</sup> The structure of *Early Days* makes it possible for participants to engage and contribute on a number of levels, such as voting on the main issues, engaging in discussions and putting forward their own ideas on how Dacia should move forward. The invitation to take part is explicit, but leaves room for the participants to decide how they want to engage with the work, and their contributions and decisions directly impact on the performance content.

Participatory performance creates an aesthetic situation, as a work of art within which the participants are able to act, which means there are implicit and explicit limits to the participant's agency as choice meets a pre-determined structure. This aesthetic context for the participant's agency situates their decisions as part of the performance content. For example, one participant's suggestion that they "attempt to understand each other's situations by moving around the room" (ED45) impacted on the direction of the

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<sup>64</sup> The first vote produces two options, multiplied by the three options of the second vote. Act 2 adds the variable of using the system decided on to distribute the resources either well or badly to produce twelve options. The thirteenth possible ending represents a total collapse of the process and system.

discussion. In participatory performance certain agentive acts will be more meaningful than others in relation to the aesthetic context, as the work is created to incorporate certain types of responses and may not be able to react to other, more unexpected, ones. For instance, the Islanders decided to become independent in one performance but, although acknowledged, the direction of the performance did not respond to this decision: “whilst it seemed significant in our group it didn't seem to affect the outcome or get mentioned at the end” (ED56). This illustrates that a creative contribution that directly responds to the affordances of the work is more likely to be meaningful in the performance context, whilst responses that fall outside of those expected may not be incorporated in a way that is satisfying to the participant(s).

Agency in participation is situated and relational and as such has clear ethical and political implications in the way an act relates to others present and its context. Providing a sense of freedom for a participant to respond with anything they want can make it difficult to implement a robust ethical framework that ensures all are treated with the care intended. For instance, in *Early Days* several participants felt they were shouted over by a group of dominant voices as a result of the work's format. Work such as *Early Days* places participants in an aesthetic situation within which they can choose to act and how (or not to act) and so makes it clear that one's agency is situated within the systems and power structures of that particular context. This kind of situated agency is more representative of that of everyday life; although the context of our agency is less explicitly visible, our acts are only meaningful within the boundaries provided by this context (as I discussed in Chapter 4). In participatory performance these boundaries exist within an aesthetic situation that highlights the limitations they place on the participant's actions and so provides a perspective of the system and our role within it. The way the term agency is used can itself be problematic, as discussed in Chapter 1, and the situated nature of agency requires a nuanced perspective on the different types and levels of agency present in participatory performance.

### *Levels of agency in participation*

Agency exists along a spectrum. When analysing participation, adapting Adam Ockelford's (n.d.) triad of reactive, interactive and proactive engagement or agency is a means by which to start being more precise about the types of engagement and levels of narrative agency of the participants. My use of this triad differs from Ockelford, who has created a circular spectrum that differentiates between types of engagement in two

directions. The discussion, and the categories I propose, here are inspired by his triad rather than a result of directly applying it to participation.

- Reactive agency happens in direct response to a request or invitation, such as answering a question (either verbally or physically) or responding to a stimulus or request, where the participant has no control over the choices of how to respond. For example, in *Early Days* participants are asked to vote whether to let the World Council in and to stand in a particular place to signify their vote of yes, no or abstain. This action impacts on the direction of the performance but the options are pre-set.
- Interactive agency exists when a participant contributes something directly in response to an invitation within the work, but where they can decide to respond in a number of different ways and with a wider choice on the precise content of the response. For instance, engaging in a two-way dialogue within the performance in order to develop the content or structure of the work. In *Early Days* a participant can engage in a discussion on why they think it would be a bad idea to let the World Council into Dacia and choose their own response to the issue. They can adapt or modify existing content and make the decision of how best to express it.
- Proactive agency consists of a self-initiated contribution, made without an explicit invitation from something within the work, and where the response sits outside of the affordances of the situation. In one of the performances of *Early Days* a small group of participants evicted the media representative from the room and tried to take over the broadcast platform. The structure of the performance used the broadcasts to reflect the action back to the room and to introduce the tasks (such as voting or distributing resources), so the decision to take over this platform was not invited by the work.<sup>65</sup>

Acts of proactive agency are often difficult for the work to meaningfully respond to, as they sit outside of the affordances of the situation and therefore test the boundaries of the performance. When the work is unable to respond to it then the contribution can be said to be novel but not appropriate to the context, according to Sawyer's (1999) definition of creative. The structure of *Early Days* is flexible enough to include the eviction of the media representative in the performance narrative and the ending was broadcast from outside the space. By contrast, it would be more difficult for an interactive work such as *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris

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<sup>65</sup> Although participatory performance does always contain an implicit invitation as participants are aware they will be asked to contribute something. This can lead to the errant immersion described by Alston (2016b).

Thorpe as the structure is not created to offer participants narrative decisions. Proactive agency can challenge the context of the performance and, depending on the structure of the work, can situate itself outside of this context.

However, this triad of agency does not acknowledge the very specific act of creative contribution made by the participant during a performance, which is directly in response to the performance context whilst also bringing something new into the situation. This contribution is central to the participant's aesthetic experience and engagement, so to enable a more nuanced discussion of the participant's agency I propose *creative agency*. Machon also uses the term 'creative agency' in *Immersive Theatres* (2013), but in relation to the interpretation of the work and relating to moments that only impact on the participant's own experience.<sup>66</sup> My use of creative agency goes beyond the authorship present in the reception and interpretation of a performance, although significant in the experience of participation or immersion, and focuses on the ability to impact on the pre-existing content of the work.

Creative agency sits between interactive and proactive agency in this spectrum and describes the act of creatively contributing to the performance, which responds to the affordances of the situation and adds something distinct to the work that did not explicitly exist before. This fulfils the criteria for a creative response as defined by Sawyer

(1999) as the contribution is both novel and appropriate to the situation. Whereas interactive agency enables a participant to put forward their perspective on what has happened within the work, perhaps reframing parts of the action, in creative agency participants add something to the content of the work that was not already present in a different form. For example, in one performance of *Early Days* a participant put forward his vision of how a co-operative system of government could work in practice, using

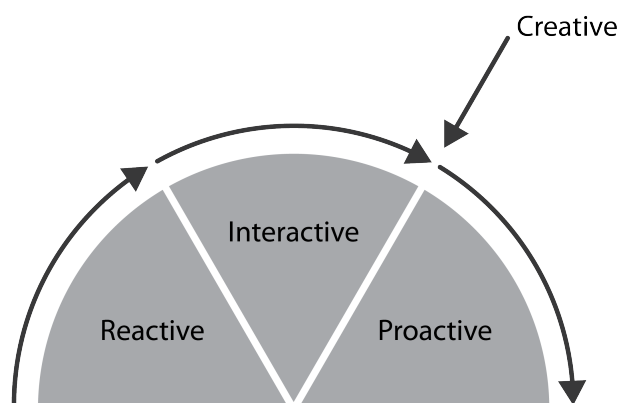


Figure 3. The spectrum of agency

<sup>66</sup> Machon states that "creative agency, involving processual interaction through the experience, shapes the unique journey for each participating individual. These decision-making processes also result in a variety of interpretations" (2013, p68). This emphasises the impact of creative agency on the experience of the participant. The examples of immersive theatre she cites, such as work by Punchdrunk, focus on enabling audience members the opportunity to choose the way they move through and engage with an environment instead of providing the opportunity to change the work's content in the way discussed in this thesis.



working groups that report to the main council. A co-operative system was one of the three options mentioned by the actors to start the discussion and the participant added the new idea of working groups as a way for this system to work in practice.

This understanding of creative agency acknowledges the tension between choice and aesthetic structure and highlights the contributions made by the participants, which go on to make that performance distinct to that particular audience. To establish whether an agentive act is creative it is required to first identify whether its content was novel in relation to the preceding events. Secondly, it is necessary to establish how the agentive act responded to the work's affordances and how it subsequently influenced the performance, to determine whether it was appropriate to the context. Although reactive and interactive acts of agency are creative contributions, because they develop the performance, creative acts of agency add participants' individual perspectives into the work to create a unique performance. In reality agency is of course a tangled, messy spectrum; these definitions are not mutually exclusive and overlap at times, which is another reason agency demands a contextual approach. When examining creative agency it also becomes clear that it is important not to confuse a display of agentive behaviour with the experience of agency, because the former does not always translate into the latter for the participant. This requires a consideration of the reflective attribution of agency.

### *The reflective attribution of agency*

The phenomenological perspective on agency (discussed in Chapter 4, p121-128) suggests that the experience of agency derives from three aspects: the intentional aspect, the bodily sensation, and the reflective attribution (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p166). This last aspect, the reflective attribution of agency, is particularly significant in the experience of narrative agency and I will examine it in more depth here. Reflective attribution depends on a pre-reflective sense of agency and is based on "a form of *intentional feedback*, which is not afferent feedback about our bodily movements, but some perceptual sense that my action is having an effect" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p166, emphasis original). This reflective component of the sense of agency is closely related to intentions and operates through the high-level, narrative-based account described by Bayne and Pacherie (2007), which deals with conceptually-laden intentions and responds to environmental feedback communicating the impact of one's actions.

Neither predictive nor postdictive processes can fully account for the experience of agency. In the experience of agency, both “serve as authorship cues that are continuously integrated and weighted depending on their availability and reliability in a given situation” (Synofzik, Vosgerau and Voss, 2013, p1). Although I am focusing on the postdictive reflective process, it is important to point out that predictive and postdictive processes closely interact, and both contribute to the experience of agency:

The registration of being the initiator of one’s own actions seems to arise from a dynamic interplay between predictive cues and postdictive cues. These can be in a sensorimotor format (e.g., internal predictions about the sensory consequences of one’s actions or visual feedback) or in a cognitive format (e.g., background beliefs or information about the environment). The cues are not mutually exclusive, but used in combination according to their respective reliability to establish the most robust agency representation in a given situation. The cues and the weighting itself can be modulated by factors of the environment as well as by affective factors (e.g., emotional appraisal or reward anticipation). (Synofzik, Vosgerau and Voss, 2013, p6)

This account is highly contextual and as such productively applied to participatory performance. The reflective attribution becomes a judgement of agency, largely based on the sense of it, but also taking “into account cognitive cues like background beliefs and information about the environment” (Synofzik, Vosgerau and Voss, 2013, p5). In *Early Days*, for instance, a participant might be the first to place a token; an action that will be accompanied by an intentional aspect and bodily sensation creating a pre-reflective sense of agency, supplemented by environmental feedback (other participants following your example), as well as a background belief that others will perceive and respond to your action within the performance context (in trying to achieve a joint task).

In participatory performance, the reflective attribution of agency is a significant element of experiencing narrative agency. However, this presents challenges, as sometimes the link between one’s actions and the impact on the event cannot be fully perceived until the end. There is a time-based connection between an action and the expected feedback and if the response is delayed then agency is not experienced (Hallett in Sinnott-Armstrong and Nadel, 2011). This particularly applies to bodily movements or situations where an instant response is expected, such as when moving a token or standing somewhere to indicate a vote in *Early Days*. Postdictive agency processing is particularly fallible and error-prone, as this aspect of the experience of agency is at “risk of being misled by *ad-hoc* events and distorting factors in the environment, absent or noisy action feedback, misguided background beliefs, and confusing emotions and evaluations” (Synofzik, Vosgerau and Voss, 2013, p3, emphasis original). In participatory performance there are many distorting factors present, such as a lack of

knowledge of exactly how participant responses impact on the predetermined content of the performance. Even though in experience postdictive agency processing is connected to the infallible “direct access to one’s cognitive and motor preparation processes *preceding* one’s action” (Synofzik, Vosgerau and Voss, 2013, p3, emphasis original), incongruities do happen. In participatory performance these include instances where the agent feels they caused an action that would have happened anyway or where the agent does not perceive the result from their action as having been caused by it. In *Early Days*, for instance, not all participants perceived that the method for dividing the tokens for Act 2 was dependent on their decision on the government structure (if they chose a co-operative structure then each participant received a token whilst for a representative democracy the tokens were divided between the representatives).

The failure of the connection between the event and the outcome can cause significant feelings of a lack of agency. However, reflecting on one’s contributions at the end of the performance can also create, or enhance, an experience of agency. One participant made the connection between their action and the outcome of the performance whilst being interviewed:

when we had the representatives at the end and they had to do the tokens, I was very involved in the conversations I was having with those representatives, and so the views they took were ones that I had helped to contribute to form. So in that sense I guess [I contributed] quite a lot. (ED88)

Reflective attribution, whether immediate or delayed, is most likely to lead to an experience of creative agency because the participant needs to perceive the impact of the action on the performance (in contrast to agency of engagement, which depends on bodily sensation and intentional aspects for a sense of agency).

Agency depends on the agent’s consciousness of agency. Gallagher states that “if someone or something causes something to happen, that person or thing is not an agent (even if they might be a cause) if they do not know in some way that they have caused it to happen” (2007, p347). The *experience* of agency is the significant aspect, regardless of whether it is a thin pre-reflective awareness or a higher-order reflective judgement. This perspective conflicts with most descriptions of participants’ agency in participatory performance. Authors tend to describe participants’ agentic behaviour without identifying whether agency was experienced. White also highlights the importance of the experience of agency, stating it is “a matter of feeling as well as a matter of a reliable connection between conscious action and its results” (2013, p61). Although this perspective acknowledges the difference between agentic behaviour

and experience, White does not appear to differentiate between the two contexts. For example, he suggests that the experience of agency is an aesthetic ‘building block’ of audience participation (White, 2013, p26), but does not acknowledge that some actions will become part of the performance content without being experienced as agency (and does not explain how to discover if it was experienced). White does offer a contextual approach in discussing ‘relative agency’ through a ‘horizon of participation’ (2013, p55-62), which situates agency in relation to the boundaries and frames present within the performance. The complex nature of agency in participation, particularly in relation to the creative contribution, makes it imperative to have both precision in the use of terms and to move towards a nuanced understanding of the meaning and experience of agency within a work.

When considering creative agency in the analysis of the audience research on *Early Days*, it becomes clear that agency can be located in two contexts: in the behaviour of a participant (observing their actions, the context that invited them and the subsequent impact) or in the participant’s experience (where they describe a particular course of action as something they did or managed to achieve). It is important to consider the difference between these two contexts for agency as there is a significant disparity between the two. For instance, in one performance of *Early Days* several participants thought that the vote was rigged and as a result these participants reported feeling they did not significantly change the outcome of the work and so did not experience agency in that situation.<sup>67</sup> This example illustrates the need for a contextual approach that recognises the difference between agentive behaviour and the experience of agency in participation. The latter relies on the participant perceiving a link between their agentive action and the result, even if the result is not as expected or desired.

In participatory performance, both agentive behaviour and the experience of agency are important to the performance aesthetic, as the first represents the decisions and contributions from the participants that create the performance, whilst the latter is a vital part of the participant’s aesthetic experience. With creative agency the participants contribute something new to the performance within the work’s affordances, making it more likely that these actions can be meaningfully incorporated. An example of this is a participant “proposing solutions to make everyone better off by trading between

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<sup>67</sup> It is difficult to estimate the precise disparity between agentive behaviour and the experience of agency as participants contribute throughout the performance. However, each participant makes at least three decisions that impact on the performance direction yet only 39% agreed they had made a significant contribution. For example, two of the participants who thought the vote was rigged responded either with 2 or 3 on the question of whether they felt they significantly changed the outcome of the performance (see Appendix 3 for questions).

regions” (ED26) when dividing the resources. Creative agency is also more likely to be experienced as meaningful, evidenced in the audience research where half the responses describing the participant’s most meaningful contribution relate to perceiving the impact, such as: “The 1st debate of whether we will get the help from the council because I was heard and made quite a lot of points against it and the majority voted against” (ED23).<sup>68</sup> The audience research also makes clear that the ability to contribute, regardless of the impact, is significant in the participant’s experience. Two thirds of respondents’ descriptions of the most meaningful moment relate to having this ability whilst one interviewee described the experience of contributing as:

Pretty empowering. Very nice, particularly after having just sat there going ‘Wow, everyone’s really loud and I don’t feel I can think as quick as everybody else. So, it’s [nice] to find out ... so this is what I can contribute to this scenario and this is where my skills are.” (ED40)

This response highlights the significance of experienced agency as it links the participant’s actions to their impact on the performance.

The audience research indicates that participants generally underestimate the impact they have on the performance. When asked whether their contributions significantly changed the outcome of the work only 6.5% felt strongly that their contribution had significant impact whilst 32% strongly disagreed with the statement. This may be partly due to the group dynamic of forty to sixty people trying to make decisions together, making it more difficult to see the particular impact of one’s action or idea, which interferes with the reflective attribution of agency. Participants relate their involvement in the performance in different ways, with some describing their contributions as an intentional action together with its impact. This suggests that agency was perceived in that moment: “I said I thought we should elect people who up until that time hadn’t really contributed to be our representatives & my group pretty much did that” (ED84). This indicates that participants are more likely to experience instances of creative agency than any other level, as it includes adding something new into the situation, making it easier to identify the impact.

Contributions that influence decisions, or are acknowledged as significant in the performance, were the most important in the experiences of the participants. One example of such a significant decision is convincing others to change sides, as one participant from the City relates:

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<sup>68</sup> A third of responses related to the feeling of being part of either a group or the performance as a whole, whilst the remaining sixth centred on participants’ feeling that they had not made an impact. This reinforces the importance of seeing the relationship between action and result.

[The structure of the performance] allowed me to bring something of my own to it which was like this compelling sort of like speech to the other side of the room [...] and apparently swayed a few people to vote in ... the direction I was voting in, to vote against the World Council. (ED28)

Another example is coming up with a new interpretation of a system of governance for Dacia, as another participant recounted:

what I was doing that I was interpreting what might this option be like, and I was just sharing out how I saw it and thereby saying, 'Hey, listen guys, it's not some kind of anarchy [...] it looks like this and this is why I think it's good, so why don't you join us?' It felt like I was understood. (ED6)

In both these examples of creative agency, the participants perceived that they made an impact on the performance. This translated into an experience of agency that gave their actions, the impact, and their aesthetic experience meaning.

It is important to remember that creative agentive behaviour will not always translate into the experience of agency, but if it *is* perceived then it is more likely to be meaningful for the participant, as the experience of contributing something is significant in the context of participation. Perceiving your own agency, even without a direct link to an action, is significant in the experience of the work. One participant stated that the most meaningful moment in the performance was "Being informed + questioned in a way that naturally triggered agency" (ED31). This emphasises the importance of a nuanced approach to agency, as perceiving it is what makes an action meaningful for a participant. It also reinforces the importance of asking participants about their experience, and not just presuming agency is experienced from their agentive behaviour.

### *A contextual understanding of agency in participation*

Agency is important in the aesthetics of participatory performance in two contexts: firstly in the agentive behaviour of the participants (particularly when this is creative agency), as it impacts on the performance content, and secondly in the individual participant's experience of agency, as their perception is where it becomes meaningful for them. As these two contexts for agency do not always overlap it is important to reconceptualise agency in participation to enable a nuanced discussion in contemporary discourse. A contextual understanding of agency allows for a better conception of the ethical and political implications of agency in participatory performance.<sup>69</sup> One such implication is situated in the terminology around agency, which highlights the ethical dimension of the power dynamic that exists within

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<sup>69</sup> Although a detailed consideration of these implications is beyond the scope of this research.

participatory performance, where one side always knows more than the other. A more nuanced discussion of the participant's agency also uses the concept of creative agency to highlight where and how agentive behaviour becomes meaningful in terms of the performance and in the participant's experience.

To reconceptualise agency in participatory performance that acknowledges this perspective, I propose an understanding of contextual agency that:

- Situates agency in the context of the performance, considering for instance the invitation in the work to the participant, to determine the level of agency (i.e. reactive, interactive, creative, proactive).
- Is clear on the context and location of agency, for example is it observed in the behaviour of the participants or is there any evidence that it was perceived by them (and provides clarity on how this evidence was obtained).
- Acknowledges the problematic nature of the rhetoric surrounding agency that suggests the artist has a 'pot' of agency they can distribute and attempts to be more precise by applying alterity ethics (which accepts the otherness of the participants and does not negate their agency by suggesting they need to be given it from outside).

This understanding of contextual agency aims to create a more precise language around agency in participatory performance so that this essential aesthetic element of the work can be discussed more productively. It also represents an approach that can be set in a wider context to engage with the different levels of interaction that take place within participation, so that the aesthetic *act* of contributing can be effectively connected to the aesthetic *process* of creative contribution. As such, I suggest that the term 'conducting' agency can be used to describe the way in which the artist manipulates the participant's agency. This is intended to replace the more common 'giving' or 'providing' agency, which negates the participant's ability to make choices in order to 'empower' them through participation. The concept of conducting agency also provides a perspective on the way the artist frames participants' agency within the structure of the work, which is productively examined through a dynamic systems perspective.

### **5.3 The dynamic system of participatory performance**

Creative contributions represent individual acts by the participants as well as the process by which these acts come to form the specific performance. In this section I build on the perspective of the individual act, contribution or experience to examine the

set of interactions taking place simultaneously during participation that form the performance as a whole. Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) has been used to describe theatre as a complex adaptive system by Gordon Armstrong (1997), who focuses on how consciousness functions in interpreting and staging performance. John Lutterbie (2011) uses DST to examine the cognitive processes involved when actors rehearse and perform, exploring the embodied cognitive interactions that make up this system and illustrating the process whereby the autopoietic feedback loop proposed by Fischer-Lichte (2008) operates in practice. Evelyn Tribble (2011) uses a systems-based model of cognition to examine the complex relationships in early modern theatre and proposes a model of cognitive ecology that takes a situated approach. Instead of the cognitive focus represented by these three authors, I concentrate on the processes that occur in the dynamic system of participatory performance. This section explores how this perspective enables a better understanding of the procedures of interaction that make up the system and the resulting patterns that constitute the performance's meaning.

DST offers a conceptual approach to examining situations with a large number of interconnected elements that develop based on the interactions between these different elements as well as contextual influences.<sup>70</sup> This approach

focuses on the evolution of a system over time, and is particularly well-suited to dealing with cases in which a system or component *a* is constantly affecting and being affected by another system or component *b* (which might likewise be continuously sensitive to item *c* and so on). (Clark, 1999, p348, emphasis original)

Analysing participation requires such a perspective to better understand the process whereby the interactions between the components in the system (including the individual participants, performers, tasks, and setting) make up an individual performance. This approach also helps explain why seemingly the same initial conditions produce different results or when the same outcome is achieved in a number of different ways across performances.

J.A. Scott Kelso explains in *Dynamic Patterns* (1997) that a dynamic systems approach takes a contextual and situated view of the different processes happening in a situation, dealing with “*informational quantities of a relational kind*” (p95, emphasis

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<sup>70</sup> This theory is derived from the mathematical area of Dynamical Systems Theory, which uses difference equations to describe the behaviour of complex dynamical systems (Luenberger, 1979). Examples of the application of dynamic systems theory outside of mathematics include human behaviour theory (e.g. DePoy and Gilson, 2012), cognitive science (e.g. Beer, 2000; Clark, 1999), social sciences (e.g. Byrne, 1998), child psychology and development (e.g. Thelen and Smith, 2006), ergonomics (e.g. Karwowski, 2012) and international development (e.g. Rihani, 2002).



original). This makes it appropriate to examining the process of creatively contributing to a participatory work, both as a system in itself and as part of the larger system of the entire performance. Dynamic systems exist on a range of levels, from a single neuron (Kelso, 1997), to the way the human brain works (Clark, 1999), the way babies develop new behaviour (Thelen, 2005), and the complex social order in society (Byrne, 1998).

The value of dynamic systems is that it provides theoretical principles for conceptualizing, operationalizing, and formalizing these complex interrelations of time, substance, and process. It is a metatheory in the sense that it may be (and has been) applied to different species, ages, domains, and grains of analysis. But it is also a specific theory of how humans gain knowledge from their everyday actions (Thelen and Smith, 2006, p258/9).

To further examine participation as a dynamic system I will first discuss how a participatory performance can be described as one.

The first characteristic of a dynamic system is that any description of a moment within it is time-dependent; each moment is influenced by what has happened before and will in turn influence what occurs after it (this is also analogous to Johnson's, 2007, definition of meaning discussed on p130-3). This is a departure from an explanation that focuses on the physical nature of the mechanisms that make up the system, which in relation to participation would only focus on the way participants' contributions are incorporated into the performance. In DST "the explanatory focus is on the structure of the space of possible trajectories and the internal and external forces that shape the particular trajectory that unfolds over time" (Beer, 2000, p96). This continuous, dynamic, development over time in relation to the interactions between the components in the system makes it a productive frame for participation.

Things that occur at the start of the performance continue to influence the direction of the performance throughout, which frames an individual performance as a dynamic system (with a distinct timeframe).<sup>71</sup> For instance, in *Early Days* the participants are split into three regions, which are each given slightly different information: "We were told [...] things like the Islanders tend to be rebellious or a bit more independent" (ED49), whilst those in the City discussed the riots and inferred that the offer of peacekeeping troops was essential to rebuild law and order. These discussions inform the action in several moments, including when voting whether to let the World Council in and when dividing the resources. This is an example of how the interactions between the system's components (such as the participants, the performers and the situation

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<sup>71</sup> Arguably, this also includes things that happened before the performance started as the system of the performance sits inside a wider system, the context of which will influence what takes place inside it.

presented in the performance) influence each other to build and develop over the performance duration.

Although some things are likely to occur in most performances of the same work (such as participants from the City arguing to let the World Council in), it is impossible to predict exactly how these events happen and whether they will occur in each performance. To examine this further a distinction needs to be made between linear and non-linear dynamic systems. In a linear system the same outcome is reached each time (in scientific terms: the output is proportional to the input), whilst a non-linear system has a range of possible outcomes and is “*nonlinear* in the sense that, depending on the conditions, large changes in the system may be generated by small differences” (Thelen, 2005, p261, emphasis original). When considering a participatory work as a dynamic system, the outcome consists of the individual performance that occurs when the pre-prepared structure and content created by the artist(s) interacts with the specific group of participants present. This performance is different in material terms from other performances of the same work, making participation a non-linear dynamic system.<sup>72</sup> This is also apparent when considering the impact an individual participant, and the personal context they bring, can have on a performance’s direction. For instance, in one performance the co-operative system descended into chaos when distributing the resources and “one person took leadership in a very undemocratic way and appointed a chair. He basically said: ‘Who are two other people who are with me? Yes, ok, now we have a chair’” (ED6). This action significantly impacted on the performance outcome as the participant ‘elected’ chair led the discussion and resource distribution.

The interactions between participants are also non-linear as several outcomes are possible, such as when The Plains discussed who to elect as their representatives. One participant explained that “During the debates as part of the plains. I was asked to be an MP. But [I] let others go.” (ED54). In this example, the participant did not end up being the representative, choosing to give someone else the opportunity. This example illustrates the challenge of analysing participation, when each participant can be considered a dynamic system in themselves, meaning that in each decision moment it is impossible to know whether a participant will say yes or no, or predict the

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<sup>72</sup> In participatory performance, a non-linear dynamic system can have varying levels of structure present, but there is always the opportunity for the participants to add to the work. An immersive performance would be better described by a linear system as the content of the performance does not significantly change in response to the audience.

consequences of this decision. A dynamic systems approach enables analysis that is able to deal with the unpredictability of the outcome.<sup>73</sup>

The dynamic system of a participatory performance is situated within a context that is capable of interacting with the components of the system, which makes it an open rather than a closed system. External interactions are impossible in a closed system, whilst in open systems “many components are free to relate to each other in nonlinear ways” (Thelen and Smith, 2006, p272). During a performance, participants are able to interact in a number of ways that, although limited by certain aspects of the performance (such as group size and the facilitation of interaction), brings the possibility of forming new structures or relationships between components. This process is also known as emergence, discussed below, and is part of the reason the outcome of a dynamic system is not predictable. I am using ‘predictable’ in the scientific sense here, not merely suggesting it is unexpected, rather that it is impossible to predict exactly how a dynamic system will unfold even when it is possible to suggest likely outcomes. In participatory performance the context outside of the system also interacts with internal components, for instance in *Early Days* the experience and knowledge of the political situation in 2015 in the UK impacted on the decisions participants made within the performance.

Although the outcome and precise process of a non-linear, open dynamic system cannot be predicted, there are certain ‘states’ that are more likely than others. In DST these are known as ‘attractor states’ and they explain why a system displays a limited subset of the large range of theoretically possible patterns. The system “prefers a certain location in its *state*, or *phase space*, and when displaced from that place, it tends to return there” (Thelen and Smith, 2006, p272, emphasis original). The type of attractor that best describes participatory performance systems is a ‘point attractor’, which represents an outcome or state that all trajectories in the system will converge on, regardless of the initial conditions. Although simple point attractor systems, such as a pendulum, will have a single, fixed point of attraction, “biological systems commonly have more than one point attractor; the system may reach one of the several possible equilibrium points, depending on the initial conditions” (Thelen and Smith, 2006, p273). Participation as a system can have more than one point attractor as possible outcomes, both in specific sections and of the performance as a whole, depending on the structure of the work and the type of participation. For example, an interactive

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<sup>73</sup> This also highlights a challenge in, as well as the necessity of, audience research. As each participant represents a complex dynamic system, reaching a conclusion that successfully represents the responses of a range of participants is challenging.

performance will have a more limited number of point attractors than a co-created work. An example of three related point attractors in *Early Days* is the choice between three modes of government for Dacia; in each performance there is the possibility for participants to decide on a fourth, new model of governing the country, however one of the three suggested modes is more likely.

Considering attractor states in a participatory performance acknowledges that the outcome is neither inevitable nor completely down to chance. A point attractor indicates that the work contains a structure influencing the participants to make decisions in a particular way, and that decisions are made within a context that in turn affects both the process of interaction and the responses. Attractor states are the more likely states for a system to adopt but they can be disrupted. Analysing a performance to identify the attractor states provides insight into how a performance operates, for instance in terms of how the contributions are incorporated in the performance content. Such analysis enables a prediction of several possible outcomes, as “meaningful information for behavioural action and pattern recognition by people and machines may be said to lie in attractors of the order parameter dynamics” (Kelso, 1997, p89). Some of these attractor states are created by the artist, so that it becomes more likely that an ending will be meaningful in the performance context, but they are also influenced by the responses of the participants, who want to feel that their actions are significant in this context. As one participant described:

“I felt like I had an agenda [...] to find [...] a new structure for the verdict, the decision making, because I think this was a brilliant or wonderful opportunity to, you know, break down what exists and [...] to try and work out something that doesn't exist” (ED33)

The attractor state for this participant was to use the opportunity of the performance to arrive at a new system of governance and so their actions aimed to be meaningful in that context. Considering attractor states also highlights the complexity of open, non-linear dynamic systems.

### *Complexity and emergence*

Within complexity science, a ‘complex’ system refers to one with “large numbers of internal elements that interact locally to produce stable, but evolving, patterns” (Rihani, 2002, p6). A complex system requires several levels of explanation to accurately represent the components and their interactions, for example:

Human behavior, whether mental activity or overt movement, is the product of many interacting parts that work together to produce a coherent pattern under

particular task, social, and environmental constraints. Every behavior is the condensation of these heterogeneous components. (Thelen, 2005, p261)

For participatory performance, the levels of explanation required to represent the process taking place include:

- The situation as created by the artist
- The actions of the performers (which invite interaction)
- The participants and their responses (including what makes them respond in that manner)
- The way the work responds to and incorporates participants' contributions

These different levels of interaction are inherently connected during the performance as they influence each other and each level represents a large number of components (for instance, each of the participants represents a component). From these interactions a pattern will form, which in a participatory performance takes the form of the narrative. This narrative is not necessarily linear or coherent and each participant will have their own interpretation of the 'global' narrative of the performance. The narrative pattern of participation is closely linked to the attractor states and the type of participation invited by the structure of the work determines whether these attractor states are 'weak' enough to enable a complex dynamic system to emerge.

An interactive performance is unlikely to create a complex dynamic system, as the pattern that defines a complex system "could only emerge if people were *free* to interact and *capable* of interacting, and if their interactions were facilitated by *appropriate rules*" (Rihani, 2002, p11, emphasis original). In participatory terms, this requires large enough openings in the work for participants to engage with each other and the situation, as well as a structure with rules that visibly incorporates their responses into the performance. The structure in an interactive performance, such as *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2011) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, does not allow for sufficient connectivity between the interacting elements for a different pattern to emerge in each performance; although the participants do add to the content, the narrative remains the same between shows. A co-execution approach to participation is capable of creating a complex dynamic system as it creates a network of interactions between the components and includes a clear structure whereby these impact on the performance. For example, in *Early Days*, the regional discussions create connections that are developed throughout the performance and the rules whereby decisions impact on the performance are clear (such as voting). The complex nature of the system in *Early Days* is illustrated by the fact that variations in the conditions of the performance,

such as the political beliefs participants bring into the work, result in a range narrative patterns that cannot be predicted in advance.

Dynamic systems produce novel and unpredictable outcomes, as well as complexity, from the interactions between components through a process known as emergence. In the dynamic system of human development and behaviour “Every act in every moment is the emergent product of context and history, and no component has causal priority” (Thelen, 2005, p271). The emergent behaviour or pattern arises from the interacting components of the system and forms a process that is a feature of the system as a whole. The process of emergence cannot be identified or predicted at the level of individual components (Rihani, 2002) because it is a result of the connections between them and therefore present only at systems-level. In participation, emergence is the process whereby creative contributions are invited, expressed and incorporated into the performance. The opportunities for emergence differ across artists’ approaches to participation; in interactive performance the openings where participants can contribute are smaller, restricting the possibility for emergent processes. Participatory works with a co-execution structure create a larger network of interactions between the components in the performance system, which in turn increases the opportunity for the emergence of patterns and connections. These patterns, such as the performance narrative, do not come from individual participants, instead they evolve out of the interactions between them and other elements in the work.

Narrative emergence is possible in complex dynamic systems, whereas the emergence in non-complex dynamic systems is limited to the performance content and the connections between participants.<sup>74</sup> In *Early Days*, the connections created between participants leads to conversations within which a shared understanding of elements in the performance is created, such as why letting the World Council into Dacia is a bad idea. From such shared understanding the overall performance narrative emerges. Although it is possible to identify some of the influences on the narrative pattern, it is impossible to definitively state the full range due to its nature as an emergent process. Sawyer, who proposes improvisational theatre as collaborative emergence, states that an “emergent effect is not additive, not predictable from knowledge of its components, and not decomposable into those components” (1999, p448). This is apparent in the process of creative contributions, which exist within the performance context and not as individual, stand-alone statements or actions.

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<sup>74</sup> Here I am differentiating between an overall narrative and individual elements of content that supplement the performance narrative, such as in interactive work.

Considering participation in the context of collaborative emergence helps to elucidate the aesthetic process whereby participants' contributions become part of the performance. This process is distributed and collective, as in improvisation, and is a "constantly changing ephemeral property of the interaction, which in turn influences the emergent processes that are generating it" (Sawyer, 1999, p465). This is the reason the *process* of creatively contributing is a key aesthetic feature, rather than each individual contribution put together, despite adding to the aesthetic material of the performance. However, each individual contribution remains part of the aesthetic experience through the agency implicit in them. When considering the role of each contribution towards the overall process of emergence, it becomes clear that a creative contribution needs to be more than simply novel: "the novel creation must somehow be viewed as useful, appropriate, or valuable in some (higher level) system" (Sawyer, 1999, p461). If a contribution is inappropriate, it cannot play a part in the overall emergent aesthetic process whereby participants' creative contributions interact with the other components in the system to constitute the performance.

Emergent patterns do not exist singularly, rather as a pattern emerges from interactions between individual components it in turn interacts with both individual components and other patterns that have emerged. Katherine Hayles describes this process in her article 'Intermediation: The Pursuit of a Vision' (2007) as 'intermediation' in relation to human-computer interactions in digital literature, where "a first-level emergent pattern is captured in another medium and re-represented with the primitives of the new medium, which leads to an emergent result captured in turn by yet another medium, and so forth" (p100). In participation, the medium that captures and re-represents the pattern is not necessarily digital, but by analogy the participants, performers and structural elements of the work operate as different media that re-represent emergent patterns to further develop them. In *Early Days*, for instance, the story of Dacia is first introduced by the performers, followed by its ongoing re-representation by the participants throughout the performance as the shared understanding of Dacia develops through dialogue. In this two-way interactive process there is no rigid rule set, as this would obstruct emergence, rather "recursive feedback loops operate through the differently embodied entities of the computer [or structure of the work] and human, [to] become an explicit part of the work's design, performance, and interpretation" (Hayles, 2007, p120).

Emergence illuminates the process of contribution where the interaction between participant responses and performance structure produces levels of emergent patterns

that together form the performance narrative. The process of interaction that leads to an overall narrative is compared by Hayles to Daniel Dennett's (1991) 'multiple drafts model' of the nature of consciousness. In this model an internal monologue creates the illusion of self and thus "narrative, the emergent result from different processes interacting, sutures together discontinuities in time, location, differential inputs, and diverse perceptions to create a single stream of storytelling that tries to make sense and create coherence" (Hayles, 2007, p119). This perspective on narrative can be applied to participatory performance, where the individual interpretations of what is occurring, and responses to it, interact to form levels of emergent patterns that are blended to create an overall narrative of the performance that is shared by the group.

### *A dynamic systems analysis of Early Days (of a Better Nation) by Coney*

To illustrate how DST enables a better understanding of the process of creative contribution, and thereby the operation of participation as a form, I analyse *Early Days* as a complex dynamic emergent system. This analysis is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it illustrates an approach that can be applied to a range of participatory works, as it focuses on the events that occur *between* individual components. Both Kelso (1997) and Thelen and Smith (2006) state a complex dynamic system can be analysed on several levels and stress the importance of identifying the "level of description of interest" (Kelso, 1997, p269). In this case, the level of interest is that of the performance as a whole, to examine the processes whereby participants' contributions are incorporated and form narrative patterns. An alternative level of analysis might be the individual participant or the responses made in a particular section of the work. This level of analysis allows a clear comparison between performances of the same work, where the same processes are at play but the patterns vary due to the difference in components (i.e. participants). Examining a work as a dynamic system goes beyond analysing an individual performance and its specific contributions by focusing on the relationships between the two. These relationships represent an aesthetic process in participatory performance, which consists of a large number of individual procedures and generates the narrative patterns.

Three fundamental aspects when understanding a dynamic system are the order parameters that act on the system (sometimes known as 'boundary conditions'), the interacting components, and the emerging patterns or events (Kelso, 1997). Once these three categories have been considered, the processes of interaction between them can be examined (including aspects such as attractor states). The order



parameters arise out of the predetermined content of the performance whilst the interacting components in *Early Days* include the actors, the participants, the space and props, and the distinct tasks set. Each performance has between forty and sixty participants, which in turn interact differently with each other and the order parameters to form discrete patterns. This is illustrated by moments of rebellion, for instance when a participant hid the resources during the interval, which significantly affected the narrative pattern: “in the discussions to allocate the resources our group, despite being rebellious, quickly moved towards a really utilitarian solution, of helping the other two groups [...] as one nation.” (ED49).

The impact from different participants on the emergent patterns highlights the interconnected nature of all the components in the system and ‘circular causality’ where “An order parameter is created by the coordination between the parts, but in turn influences the behaviour of the parts” (Kelso, 1997, p16). Participants respond idiosyncratically to the performance and any tasks they are asked to engage with, but their contributions in turn shape elements of further activities, creating an ongoing and developing feedback loop. This interconnectedness emphasises the importance of focusing on the interactions and relationships between components and order parameters in participatory performance.

The initial conditions of the system, as the performance starts, are an important part of the order parameters and include the narrative information and the implicit instructions that inform participants about the kinds of invited actions. The order parameters that operate throughout the performance include:

- The voting decisions made by the participants
- Group discussions
- Feedback loops (such as the media broadcasts)
- Consequences of the choices made by participants
- The performers’ facilitation
- The incorporation of contributions
- Implicit and explicit invitations
- The meta-engagement with the ‘game’ (i.e. reflecting on the nature of the game whilst playing it)

The order parameters are the same at the start of each performance and in *Early Days* the voting decisions illustrate the influence of an order parameter on the system. Voting for a cooperative system of governance means each participant receives a single resource token to use during Act 2, but it also puts in place a particular decision-

making process impacting on the patterns that emerge. This exemplifies the way the performance structure responds to the participant's decisions and how varying narrative patterns emerge from the same order parameters.

The interactions between the components and order parameters is illuminated by considering the attractors existing within the system, which incorporate:

- The vote options
- The success of a task
- Participants' individual intentions (which become stronger as an attractor when shared)
- The affordances of the interaction design
- Events interpreted as meaningful in the performance context
- The thirteen structured endings

These attractors have different relative strengths, for example the three voting options are strong attractors as the participants are directly asked to choose, whilst participants' individual intentions are relatively weak. If the participants were to share an intention that represented a fourth option for governance they are capable of destabilising the three attractors that exist, although the strength of these three attractors makes it more likely that one of them will be chosen. An example of a shared intention that evolved into a significant attractor is a mathematical approach to resource distribution to solve as many issues as possible. Considering intentions in this way also illustrates the impact of the participant's agentic behaviour in the performance:

Formally an intention is conceived as specific information acting on the dynamics, attracting the system towards the intended pattern. This means that intentions are an *intrinsic* aspect of the pattern dynamics, stabilizing or destabilizing the organisation that is already there. (Kelso, 1997, p141, emphasis original)

Participants' agentic actions are a significant component of the system, representing what they interpret as a meaningful decision or outcome, which influence the emergent narrative patterns.

Patterns emerge out of the interactions between the components and the order parameters, influenced by the attractors, and include:

- The narrative (both the overall narrative and that within distinct sections)
- The decision-making process
- The content and shape of the discussions
- The choices made by the group
- Participants' interpretation of meaning

- Moments of conflict or rebellion

This perspective on emergent patterns illuminates the moment the media representative was evicted from the room, as mentioned above, highlighting the contextual nature of such patterns. This action was the result of a series of narrative patterns emerging amongst a group of participants who felt there was insufficient and incorrect information to make decisions and that the media representative broadcast false voting outcomes. The result of the interactions between those participants and the structure of the performance resulted in them “Being practical in trying to stop the media together with the other ‘outsiders’.” (ED105) and “Kicking out the news guy” (ED66). This pattern emerged due to a misalignment between the participants’ intentional attractors and those of the performance. These two sets of attractors interacted with the tasks set, within the work’s order parameters that led the group through a facilitated process (which asked for specific decisions within a set time frame). A pattern of rebellion emerged from these interactions, seen in the eviction of the media, the formation of the Dacia Party (as an addition to the regional representatives), and the distribution of ‘peace planes’ (paper airplanes with positive messages made by participants wanting to change the decision making processes). Each of the elements of this narrative pattern went on to subsequently influence the system and the overall narrative pattern of the performance.

A dynamic systems approach to participation, as examined here, enables a productive perspective on the aesthetic process of creative contributions by focusing on the range of internal and external influences, and the interactions between them, that shape the process over time. This focus moves beyond a perspective where the outcome is prescribed by a particular set of initial conditions. Instead it acknowledges the unpredictable range of participant responses, as well as the fact that these contributions themselves become part of the conditions that influence the event. The artist creates a structure with specific affordances and attractor points in a participatory work. This structure includes a process by which interactions are encouraged and facilitated, as well as ways in which participants’ responses and contributions are incorporated into the performance. These elements form the beginning of a system that the participants inhabit and which develops in an emergent way where interactions and responses become part of the system and influence later actions. This fundamental interconnectedness means that a dynamic systems approach provides conceptual insights into the operation of participation as a process (building on the enactive approach I described in Chapter 2). The process through which participant

contributions become part of the work is essential to fully represent the work, making it important to examine this as an aesthetic element of participation.

#### **5.4 The aesthetics of engagement and play**

In this chapter I have discussed the *act* of creative contribution, which becomes part of the work's aesthetic material, and the *process* of creative contribution that is a fundamental aesthetic element of participatory performance. This aesthetic process is enactive, dynamic and complex and in analysis it is imperative to consider the interactions between elements in the performance system. Considering the aesthetics of play provides a perspective able to examine both the act and process of creative contribution as aesthetically significant in participation. The characteristics of play as discussed by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens* (2014 [1950]) can be seen as analogous to the dynamic system of participation and include a notion of freedom, the formation of social groupings, and as proceeding "within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner" (p13). These characteristics make an aesthetics of play appropriate in examining how the process of creative contribution is itself aesthetic.

The aesthetics of play emphasise the *process* of playing. Play is something active that develops over time and within which the players have the opportunity of responding and contributing to the process in a creative way. Huizinga argues that play has a "profoundly aesthetic quality" (2014 [1950], p2), in part related to the creation of order within play, whilst James Combs states that through play "we become part of aesthetic and expressive activity" (2000, p12). Experience of activity is also reframed as aesthetic by Armstrong, who states that play is "cognate with aesthetic production" (2000, p37). Armstrong's concept of aesthetic play, which involves both thought and affect, also accounts for the radical potential of both play and participation in ethical terms as it

sets up a constant dialectic between rules and freedom. It is thus a constantly questioning activity. But, more than this, it is only in play that it is possible to make an essential cognitive leap which radically changes one's relation to reality. (2000, p37)

Play is a means through which (particular types of) knowledge becomes enactive and embodied, a process that also takes place in participatory performance.

The interaction between player and game or environment is central to the aesthetic of games. Chris Bateman identifies a range of game aesthetics in his article 'Implicit

Game Aesthetics' (2015), stating that the wider aesthetic of play includes a 'decision aesthetic' and an 'agency aesthetic' based on interactivity. These related game aesthetics rely on a feedback system, whereby the decisions and agentive acts of the players inform and impact on the game, echoing the systems in participation between interacting components. These feedback systems are an integral element of the design of the work, as they describe *how* the decisions of the participants are incorporated into the work, and as such foreground the participant's agency in the situation. Agency is a key component of interactivity, as something is interactive "if and only if it (1) is responsive, (2) does not completely control, (3) is not completely controlled, and (4) does not respond in a completely random fashion" (Smuts, 2009, p65). This highlights the relational and contextual nature of interaction, where the connections between components in the system mutually impact on each other. The aesthetics of creative contribution require agentive behaviour as part of such interaction, which may or may not be experienced as agency by the participants. The aesthetics of play and games emphasise the interconnectedness between the player/participant and their environment, which is further elucidated by the aesthetics of engagement.

The aesthetics of engagement emphasise the experience of the art object and developed from environmental and everyday aesthetics. Berleant proposes a participatory model of aesthetic experience that highlights the interconnectedness between parts, providing a clear link to a dynamic systems view:

In this view, the environment is understood as a field of forces continuous with the organism, a field in which there is a reciprocal action of organism on environment and environment on organism, and in which there is no sharp demarcation between them. (2005, p9)

The reciprocal action is central to this participatory model of aesthetic experience and Berleant uses Gibson's (1986) notion of affordances as an example of an environmental feature that influences human behaviour. An aesthetic of engagement enables a perspective of "the environment as a setting of dynamic forces, a field of forces that engages both perceiver and perceived in a dynamic unity" (Berleant, 2005, p14) and focuses on the experience that connects the participant with this environment. This mode of aesthetic experience is applicable to art practices that do not separate the art object from the perceiver (moving beyond the conceptual interaction that denotes meaning and into physical interaction) and also considers the aesthetic dimensions of human relationships (Carlson, 2015, n.p.). An aesthetics of engagement "asserts that artist, object, appreciator, and performer are no longer understood as separate constituents but become functional aspects of the aesthetic process"

(Xiangzhan, 2013, n.p.), which is exemplified in the process whereby creative contributions constitute the performance.

The process of creative contribution is an aesthetic element of participation, which helps define it as a form and indicates a system for analysis. This system combines an understanding of dynamic processes with a focus on engagement with one's surrounding environment, which highlights the interconnectedness between participants and performance. One way in which participants' actions and experiences generate aesthetic content is clear: their decisions and creative contributions become part of the work's pre-existing content and structure to create an individual performance. In this process it is their agentic actions that shape the material, which elucidates White's statement that the participant's agency is the aesthetic ontology of the work (2013, p129). White (2013) describes how the interplay of agency operates as a process of procedural authorship, where the procedural author is the artist who creates a structure within which control is shared with participants. Participants engage in the "active generation of performance material" (White, 2013, p62) within the context of the procedures created by the artist, which conducts the individual responses and agentic behaviour of the participants (through its affordances and the suggestion of frames). This process, described as a fundamental aesthetic element of audience participation by White (2013), is representative of a set of components in the dynamic system I have described in this chapter, including the structure of the work, the facilitation of the tasks set, and the process whereby participants' responses are incorporated. This aesthetic process can be seen as playing, as Armstrong (2000) suggests this combines thought with affect, and as such represents both contexts for agency: where thought leads to intentional action and where affect represents agency that is experienced.

### *The aesthetic process of creative contribution*

The aesthetic process of creative contribution I have discussed here represents the way the participant functionally becomes part of the dynamic system of participation. This perspective builds on Berleant's aesthetics of engagement (2005 and 2013) and resides in the feedback loops and the processes created by the artist through which participants' decisions and contributions are incorporated into the work. Together these two approaches, of DST and the aesthetics of engagement, capture the essence of the relations between participants and the performance situation. Analysis of a participatory performance using the method I propose in this thesis goes beyond

considering the specific decisions and contributions present in a single performance, to focus on the processes and interactions that produce the narrative patterns arising from responses of the participants. Such an aesthetic analysis takes a dual focus on the empirical and experiential, drawing on Berleant's (2005) approach.<sup>75</sup>

The empirical method is represented by the dynamic systems-level approach I explored in this chapter and focuses on the participant's agentic behaviour that generates aesthetic content. The systems-level approach illuminates the processes that give rise to the participant's actions and how these form dynamic patterns within the work. The experiential approach is based in the phenomenological experience of the performance and is found within the participant's experience of their agency and of being a participant. As such, audience research is necessary to enable some understanding of the performance experience and to, for instance, be able to identify when the participant experiences agentic behaviour. The method for audience research used in this project is described in Chapter 2 and takes into account the challenges implicit in attempting to understand another's phenomenological experience. The empirical and experiential approaches together form a holistic approach to analysing the aesthetics of creative contributions in participatory performance. The aesthetic model I propose in this thesis, including the system of analysis it gives rise to, situates the creative contribution as a fundamental element of participatory performance; both as individual act and as the process that constitutes the performance.

Considering both perspectives on the creative contribution as aesthetic in participation highlights the impact of the participant's individual perception and responses on the performance. A dynamic systems perspective on participation situates each participant as a component within the performance system, which introduces a level of complexity into the work due to the unpredictability of their responses. Analysis of participatory performance therefore necessitates a consideration of the ways in which participants' individual experiences, beliefs and reactions influence the way they take part in the work. To better understand the underlying processes of the participant's idiosyncratic responses I will examine the demand characteristics of being a participant as an aesthetic element of participatory performance in Chapter 6. This aesthetic element impacts on each of the three discussed so far, because the participant's individual approach to taking part will influence the intersubjective relationships they form, impact on their embodied engagement, and affect the creative contributions they make.

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<sup>75</sup> The third element of Berleant's approach is sensory, as discussed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 6 – The demand characteristics of being a participant

A participatory performance exists in the meeting between the predetermined structure and content designed by the artist and the specific participants' responses and contributions. In the preceding chapters I have examined three aesthetic elements that link the participant with the performance in an enactive manner, discussing the way participants engage intersubjectively, through embodied action and by creatively contributing to the work. In this chapter I explore the fourth aesthetic element, fundamental to the other three, which is the way the participant's personal, subjective experience, approach and interpretations become part of the work. The personal, experiential nature of this aesthetic element situates lived experience as knowledge and this chapter draws on the practice research project (discussed in section 2.3) to examine a key aspect of enaction; elucidating how the individual approach to being a participant is expressed through (inter)action. An enactive framework emphasises the way meaning is created through action and that perception depends on one's interaction with the environment, thereby raising the important question of how the personal, subjective element of this (inter)action impacts on both the action and the perception of meaning. Enactive cognition includes a phenomenological perspective, which emphasises lived experience (including a personal element of attending to one's experience). This situates a practice research methodology for knowledge production as appropriate to better understanding the idiosyncratic dimension of the aesthetics of participation.

The PbR project I explore in this chapter resulted in a performance entitled *The Experiment*, performed on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2015. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the approach to practice research in this project can be characterised as 'performative experiments' and examined two research questions:

- *What are the processes through which the participant's personal and idiosyncratic approach to being a participant impacts on both the work and their aesthetic experience?*
- *How can the artist facilitate participants attending to their experience as part of the aesthetic of the work during the live performance?*

Participation invites personal responses from its audience, which combine with the pre-determined content to create the performance. Both my artistic and my scholarly activities suggest strongly that the subjective aspect of being a participant is central to the aesthetic experience of the work. This two-way relationship suggests that the



experience of participation is situated in the moment(s) where the pre-determined, aesthetic setting and structure created by the artist combines with the way the individual participant(s) responds to it, meaning that taking part in participatory performance creates the opportunity for an encounter with yourself as well as with the work. This places the subjective, idiosyncratic approach to participation as equally significant as the pre-determined material created by the artist; both exist in anticipation of meeting the other. The individual's responses in participatory performance represent a significant aesthetic element that is closely interrelated with the three elements examined so far: intersubjective relationships, the embodied experience and the creative contribution. For instance, a participant's approach will influence the development of intersubjective relationships as well as determine the way they engage with tasks that result in creative contributions.

The project intended to examine how participants approach 'being' a participant and what it means to be a 'good' participant, which I use here as short-hand for the subjective experience of trying to interpret what you're supposed to do and wanting to do that well whilst trying to be creative, original or honest.<sup>76</sup> It is important to point out that there is no agreed concept of what 'good' means in relation to participation, even for an artist, rather it refers to the impulse and desire to fulfil your half of the participatory contract. To explore the subjective process of being a participant, I also set out to examine different roles within participatory performance, such as participating, playing and performing, to enable a better understanding of how participants interpret their role, including accompanying tasks, and how they respond to these within the work.

Examining participant roles in performance presents clear parallels to those found in psychology experiments. The psychology concept of 'demand characteristics' was first described by Martin Orne in 1962 and describes how taking part in an experiment is a specific form of interaction where the participants have a stake in viewing their performance as meaningful. The concept of demand characteristics is defined as "the totality of cues and mutual expectations which inhere in a social context ... which serve to influence the behaviour and/or self-reported experience of the research receiver" (Orne and Whitehouse, 2000, p469). The roles in psychology experiments are well established. The knowledge of being part of an experiment adds purpose and meaning to any situation or request, whilst creating an uneven power relationship between researcher and participant. The meaning of the research is explicitly (although

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<sup>76</sup> This description arises out of my own experience as well as my analysis of the three audience research projects.

sometimes subconsciously) sought out by the experimental subject, most often to be able to respond in the way the subject perceives the experimenter wants them to and sometimes in defiance of it. Within psychology experiments this is a problem and is why a researcher often gives the participants a different rationale for what they are looking at in the experiment (and at times means even the researcher is blinded to parts of the research process). In participatory performance, however, demand characteristics reveal some of the processes through which a participant interprets and decides on appropriate responses and actions to the situation.

Demand characteristics acknowledge the subjective and personal responses to a situation as critical to finding meaning within it and inherently links this to the subject's actions. This makes it a concept that illuminates a significant aspect of the participant's aesthetic experience in performance. Whilst demand characteristics describe factors in the situation that the participant responds to, including the pre-prepared situation and effect of the social interaction within it, it is also important to emphasise the participant's perspective within a phenomenological structure. This experience often includes feeling anticipation and anxiety over what the performance might ask of them and whether they will be able to respond in the 'right' way to any requests.<sup>77</sup> As these feelings become part of the aesthetic experience and shape the participant's responses I will propose the 'aesthetics of uncertainty' as a significant aspect of the participant's experience. This concept articulates the way demand characteristics become aesthetic within participatory performance and informs the discussion of the value of an embodied, experiential procedure for examining participation.

The performance that developed in response to the concept of demand characteristics was designed to examine the personal, idiosyncratic experience of participation. *The Experiment* blurred an experimental frame with a performance frame and created an environment that mixed the atmosphere of a psychology experiment with that of a game show. The performance combined the rhetoric of playing and winning with the language of psychology experiments and all participants were anonymised and given a number to wear at the start by myself (performing as 'Principal Investigator'). The performance happened in three Rounds, each facilitated by performers who engaged the participants in a series of activities and tasks, culminating in a Final where the last two players competed to be crowned the 'best' participant. Each Round framed the

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<sup>77</sup> Alston (2016a) discusses this aspect of the experience of immersive performance in relation to the participant's uncertainty of whether they will be able to fulfil the performance's demands and their perception of risk. Machon (2013) also engages with this dimension of the immersive experience and the feelings of anxiety and excitement it inspires.

participants' role in a different way, from participating in a series of tests in Round 1, to making decisions and playing with the rules in Round 2, and to performing in a 'game/show' in Round 3. The last Round included an overtly theatrical setting with audience seating, which contrasted to the clinical setting of Round 1 and the playful, sport references in Round 2. Throughout the performance participants were asked to attend to their experience by completing short self-assessments and individual interviews. The work was designed so that the participant's responses and decisions impacted directly on the performance outcome, to situate these as aesthetic within the work.

Due to the importance of embodied *doing* in participation, the live performance is presented as an appendix of the PhD project, as the experience of a performance is essential to the full understanding of participation (Chapter 2 discusses practice research and the importance of embodied experience in the enactive approach of this research). As such this chapter takes a different approach to the previous ones and includes a range of documentation materials within the writing. To enable anyone who did not attend the live event to gain as deep an understanding of the performance as possible, a film of the project is available as part of the documentation. This film is not a chronological document of every moment in both performances, but attempts to get closer to the participant's experience by combining video of the event with participant interviews and their responses during the work. Appendix 6 also includes the full script, which gives an overview of the structure of the performance, the separate elements and tasks, and the three possible endings. Appendix 7 describes the performer 'characters' and Appendix 8 to 20 include all the materials from the tasks and sections within the work. Included in the documentation is a folder titled 'The Experiment Playlist', which consists of a list of numbered audio files (see Appendix 5). Within this chapter the reader will find links to the next '**track**' on the playlist (always identified in bold) to support the argument put forward. The playlist represents the edited participant responses from the event, to create a coherent journey through the project for the reader. Throughout this chapter participants will be referred to when quoted with reference to the show they took part in and their number, for example No 3 in show 1 is (No 1-3) whilst No 3 in show 2 is (No 2-3).

In this chapter I will argue that demand characteristics are a key aesthetic element of participatory performance. This also highlights the connections between all four elements, which are fundamental to the system for analysis I propose in this thesis. This chapter consists of four parts and I will first consider the context of the project and

the intention to examine the processes through which a participant's individuality impacts on the work. This first section will explore the effect of the demand characteristics of a HE context on the project by evaluating the interaction and research design. Although this context has implications for the efficacy of a practice research methodology for participatory performance, as it impacts on the reasons for taking part, the PbR outcomes of the project illuminate the complex engagement and experience in participation. In the second section I develop this understanding to examine the way demand characteristics suggest roles in participatory performance, such as participant, player and performer. I will examine the specific roles within *The Experiment* and consider the way practice research emphasises an ethical or research participant role over an aesthetic one. Considering the roles in participation and the complex engagement that develops from the blurring of these roles in the participant's perception leads to a discussion of the demand characteristics of participation as aesthetic practice in the third section. This discussion takes a wider perspective on the processes underlying the participant's personal and subjective approach to taking part as an aesthetic element of participation, considering the motivation and stakes for the participant in taking part, the influence on decision-making and how the group dynamics form part of the demand characteristics. The final section will propose the aesthetics of uncertainty as a framework that demonstrates the way the demand characteristics of being a participant become aesthetic within participatory performance.

## **6.1 Context and unintended consequences**

The project aims foregrounded the importance of the personal aspects of the participant's experience and the demand characteristics of the resulting performance turned out to be both a strength and a weakness within the project. The interaction design facilitated a series of tasks and activities that asked the participants to consider their own performance, from a set of tests that examined their personality, creativity and playfulness to a game-show-like contest to discover who was the 'best' participant in the group. As a whole, this was framed as a fictional research project, which established a contract early on that suggested participants needed to do their best (to create the 'right' outcomes) and that the performers, and in particular the Principal Investigator (myself), were in charge. However, the specific participants that took part and the HE context of the performance, both in terms of physical setting and the fact that it was part of my PhD project, turned out to be a blind spot in the research design. The project was developed with a 'professional' context, and accompanying audience,

in mind as it aimed to examine the subjective experience of being a participant in a performance (considering for instance the processes whereby the participant interprets a task and how the motivation to do well at it impacts on their experience). However, in *The Experiment* the participants were largely aware that the performance was a PhD project. As such, their motivation for taking part and the approach they took to being a participant, both a result from the demand characteristics of the situation, differed from what it would be if they had bought a ticket and were taking part for intrinsic reasons.

The PbR project was firmly situated in a pedagogical context, as it was framed as part of my PhD research and took place within a University building. This pedagogical context complicated the engagement with the project for the participants, as it mixed an aesthetic (professional) work of art with a pedagogical exercise: two contexts that come with significantly different approaches to participant engagement through their demand characteristics. In the first performance twelve of the thirteen participants knew that the performance was part of my PhD (and that my examiners would be present).

Additionally, ten participants were Drama lecturers or postgraduate students and three were either supervising or examining my PhD (with only one person not personally known to me). In show 2 nine participants took part, of whom three explicitly knew it was a PhD performance (and were also either Drama lecturers or postgraduates) whilst six were not personally known to me.<sup>78</sup> These facts impacted on the participant's reasons for taking part in *The Experiment*, which significantly affected their approach to being a participant and their responses during the performance.

Taking part in a work within a professional, aesthetic context comes with different stakes and investment compared to a pedagogical one; in the former you desire a fun or 'valuable' experience (the one designed by the artist) whilst in the latter you are aware that there is something at stake outside of your own experience.<sup>79</sup> These details significantly impacted on the participant's engagement, for example the contract in the performance combined the fiction of being in a research experiment (creating a particular power relationship) with the knowledge that the performance was instrumentally important to my PhD success. This awareness inevitably impacts on one's approach to being a participant and suggests that practice research participation is a flawed methodology, due to the inherent demand characteristics of the pedagogical

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<sup>78</sup> Which means I do not know how much they knew about it being a PhD performance. However, three of these were friends of one of the performers and one was interviewed later and mentioned that he was aware of it being a research project.

<sup>79</sup> Although my background is also as an artist who makes participatory performance, which additionally blurs these two contexts. The perception of artists making work within a HE context would be an interesting topic for further research in relation to practice research.

context. The issue arises specifically out of the participants' knowledge of the performance being part of a PhD, and the resulting impact on their responses.<sup>80</sup> In *The Experiment* several participants reported afterwards that the knowledge of taking part in an assessed performance that was important to my PhD impacted on their actions and their investment in helping the show go well (as expressed by No 1-3, No 1-8 and No 1-11 in **Track 1**); a motivation and response not considered in my research and interaction design.

The addition of a pedagogical frame complicates the relationship between the aesthetic and ethical frames of participation as it acknowledges the work as an educational exercise with outcomes significant beyond the performance experience. I will examine the effect of this pedagogical context on the participant roles below, but it is worthwhile to first consider the key impact of this context on the methodology. The complication of the HE context has implications for the efficacy of practice research generally, but particularly in relation to participation as it impacts on the way participants engage with the work (in this project on the way they approached being a participant). The pedagogical frame compromised some of the intentions behind the project, as it was impossible for participants to place themselves outside of this context (although this impacted more on participants who were explicitly aware of it being an examined PhD performance). This project is situated as PbR, with the significant outcomes discussed in this chapter arising out of practitioner-researcher reflection and participant research. The project also reflects back meaningfully on the methodology used as well as on the questions I examined within the project. There was a naivety in the research questions, which presumed an audience for a professional context and did not consider the impact of the HE context on participant engagement. It would be possible to dismiss the significance of the project due to this, however the challenge of the HE context itself demonstrates the significance of the effect of the demand characteristics on the aesthetic experience of participation. The project highlights the complicated layers of engagement and experience in participation, which has wider significance in elucidating the enactive nature of this experience.

### *Research and interaction design*

The demand characteristics that resulted from the research and interaction design impacted on the participant's engagement and approach to taking part. The research design aimed to examine three distinct points:

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<sup>80</sup> An additional challenge is presented by PaR participation, which requires an element of audience research that then leads to PbR outcomes.

- The difference between participant roles, such as participant, player and performer
- Ways to make direct connections between participants' individual responses and the performance outcome
- Methods to encourage participants to attend to their experience during the event

The interaction design, in response to the first of these points, created a subtly different role for the participant in each Round: in Round 1 the tasks were presented to the participants simply to be executed; Round 2 asked them to think as players and consider their strategy; and Round 3 situated the participants as performers in the show through overt theatrical staging. The research design of the project engaged with the question of what it means to be a 'good' participant throughout the performance to examine the second point, which is visible in the narrative and the tasks the participants were set. For instance, in Round 2 the teams were asked to design two games to test the other team, which meant deciding which categories were the most important to assess for a good participant (see Appendix 18 for details). The third point resulted in the recurring task of self-assessment as well as the individual interviews during Round 1 and 2 (see Appendix 8 and 15 for the questions used). The rationale behind these tasks was to employ a phenomenological strategy used within enactive cognition, which suggests that:

we can become aware of features of our experience by attending to them (instead of attending simply to the objects presented by that experience). In seeing, I attend to features of what there is to see. But I can also attend to how seeing feels, to what the activity of seeing is like for me, and to the ways it feels different from freely imagining and from remembering. In attending to experience in this way, I can become aware of features I do not normally notice (attend to). (Thompson, 2007, p286)

Within *The Experiment*, the self-reflective tasks were approached performatively, rather than presented as a means to attend to how it feels to be a participant.

A significant element of the research design is the overlap between ethics and aesthetics, as exemplified in the Interpersonal Test (see Appendix 11). Participation inherently combines the aesthetic with an ethical frame, each of which emphasise a different aspect of the participant's engagement. For example, an aesthetic frame has an individualistic focus on experience, emphasising fun and meaningful encounters, whilst an ethical frame brings an awareness of others' experiences and the impact of one's actions on them. In the Interpersonal Test the questions were personal, although within a setting where participants were overtly observed, aiming to develop an intersubjective relationship between participants. Here, the ethical imperative of the

other's experience combined with the performance's suggestion that you need to be a 'good' research participant and therefore honest, leading to a potentially ethically challenging situation. This resulted in some feeling placed in an awkward situation by someone else sharing personal information. For No 1-9 this sharing encouraged them to disclose something personal in return, which was revealed in the Final (as explained in **Track 2**).<sup>81</sup> For another participant the task created an imbalance in the intersubjective relationship, as No 1-16 had drawn a different line between what they were willing to share in that situation compared to their partner participant (as described in **Track 3**).

Evaluating the project highlights the elements most enjoyed in the experience as well as the impact of a lack of agency of engagement on perceived agency. From the documentation footage and participant interviews, it is clear that the most enjoyable aspects of the work centred around the playful elements of being a participant and the intersubjective relationships created. The main source of frustration in the work was the lack of knowledge or understanding of the rules in operation (as No 1-12 and No 1-14 related in **Track 4**), which led to a lack of perceived agency. Some participants felt that their actions had little structural impact on the work or were restricted (including No 1-3, No 1-12, No 1-16, No 2-3, No 2-9 and No 2-13, with some examples in **Track 5**), which derived from a limited sense of agency of engagement due to the set structure of the tasks. No 2-9 only retrospectively connected her actions to the results of the performance and so had an experience of agency afterwards, which is an example of the process of reflective attribution I examined in Chapter 5. These experiences also illustrate the argument in Chapter 4 that participants perceive agency of engagement more easily than narrative, or creative, agency. These two aspects of the experience were visible in both shows but differences in participant responses are also evident.

The differences between the shows suggest that two aspects of the participant's background impact on their perception of the demand characteristics, and therefore their approach to taking part: whether they are explicitly aware of the pedagogical context in the work and their status as Drama lecturer.<sup>82</sup> The group in show 1 included eleven participants who were aware of the fact that the performance was being

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<sup>81</sup> I spoke with No 1-9 after the show, asking what The Final was like and how they felt about that particular answer being used in that way. I also asked (off the record) if they were happy for this to remain part of the documentation of the show, which they gave permission for. I also removed the question "What is your most terrible memory" from the stack of questions for Show 2 (see Appendix 11 for the questions used).

<sup>82</sup> These two themes emerge most clearly from the data, however it is likely that aspects such as gender and age are related to them. This discussion focuses on these two themes as they made the most impact on these particular performances.



examined as part of my PhD. This impacted on their experience, and behaviour, with participants relating that they felt they could not be subversive (see **Track 1**). Show 2 included three participants who were aware of the relationship of the work to my PhD, although they did not have the pressure of taking part in an examined show. Their responses show that although aware of the work in relation to my research, they did not feel the need to adapt their responses in the same way as the participants in show 1 describe. The participant responses suggest that Drama Lecturers felt more pressure to 'perform' well, as it might be perceived that they should be good at drama games (for instance, No 1-16 discussed her frustration at not being able to take part in a particular game whilst No 1-11 and No 1-12 mentioned relief at being eliminated in Round 3). The process of designing the games in Round 2 also showed the impact of the presence of Drama Lecturers; the games in show 1 (with a majority of Drama Lecturers present) were constructed to be enjoyable to play whilst difficult whereas those in show 2 attempted to be impossible to play. This highlights the impact of the participant's personal approach on their actions and the resulting contributions.

The two performances also had different outcomes, directly decided by the participants. In show 1 the blue team subverted 'The Game' outside of the prescribed parameters (thereby being the only genuine subversion), deciding in Round 2 that whoever won would split the prize money with the team. This decision arose from a discussion that although ostensibly a team spirit was being fostered they would be competing individually to get to the Final. The team responded by deciding to continue playing as a team, which influenced the decision to play rather than try to beat The Game. One significant factor in this outcome was the number of participants experienced in critically analysing performance, as they perceived the manipulation of the situation on their suggested behaviour. In Show 2 participants engaged in a more direct way with the performance and ended up beating The Game on its own terms. No 2-13 described their attitude to taking part: "I approached the work very openly; instead of attempting to 'beat' the game or somehow manipulate the outcome of my participation, I, in some way, allowed the game to play me" whilst No 2-9 and No 2-5 remarked on how genuinely excited the participants seemed at their victory (and shared prize money). Although there will be a wide range of influences that eventually come to impact on the performance outcome, it is clear that who the participants are and their motivation in taking part are instrumental in the process.

### *Blurring frames between experiment and performance*

The blurring of frames between experiment and performance responded to the first point of the research design, examining the difference between participant roles such as participant, player and performer, which is visible in the format, structure and narrative of the work. Each of these frames comes with distinct demand characteristics and blurring the two complicated the participant's attempt to engage with the work as no one clear role was indicated. The question of what it means to be a 'good' participant shaped the structure of the performance, drawing on the systems of research projects, game shows and psychological tests. This blurring is exemplified by my own role in the performance as artist-researcher-performer. I performed as the Principal Investigator, which meant that I doubled the researcher / practitioner roles: I performed being a researcher, whilst being a researcher-practitioner, and interacted with a group of participants who were aware that I was both performing and researching at the same time. During the performance my role was to be the central authority within the experiment, overseeing participation and issuing instructions on what to do next, whilst observing the participants throughout. This took place, for instance, during the participants' induction and by individually interviewing participants (see Appendix 8, 9 and 15 for details). These tasks were research-based but executed in a performative way, for example, the interview box resembled the common 'confession' room in reality TV whilst Round 3 combined the structure of a game show with observational feedback on participant responses during earlier tests.

The combination of performance and experiment frames in *The Experiment* contains a blurring of reality and fiction, overlaying a fictional research narrative onto a 'real' one in a research-related context. The blurring of reality and fiction is relatively common in participatory performance, as examined in Chapter 4, for instance *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney creates a constructed fictional frame overlaid onto a real environment. This blurring of reality and fiction is part of the effectiveness (and affectiveness) as the narrative in the first half of the performance weaves in genuine information on public space (and the limits of it), whilst in the last section participants are asked to consider how they personally relate to the financial system they have explored. In *The Money* (2013) by Kaleider the decisions the participants take during the performance (may) come to make a real impact on the world, depending on what they decide to spend the money on (or whether it rolls over). The realisation of the Benefactors that in this work they *are* the performance, whilst what they decide will actually happen, works to blend a constructed situation with a real consequence and is key in making it a powerful and

fascinating experience. *The Experiment* intended to similarly blur reality and fiction, trying to examine what it means to be a participant by combining a fictional narrative with a performance structure that each engaged the participants with that question in a different way.

The participants experienced the blurring of these frames from the start, as is visible in their responses to the induction questionnaire (see Appendix 9). This questionnaire was completed within the narrative framework; the task was positioned within the experiment frame and requested by myself whilst performing being a researcher. This meant that participants completed it within a blurred frame, influenced by the atmosphere in the induction process. This combination of a performance and experimental frame illustrates the ambiguity of them in this situation. This instance is contrasted by Round 3, with a deliberately theatrical setting that emphasised the fact that participants were themselves performing, which shifted the balance that leant towards an experimental frame in Round 1 and 2 towards one of performance in Round 3. Participants discussed the blurred and competing frames and the impact on their experience, with No 2-5 describing their experience of the double frame between reality and fiction (in **Track 6**) and No 1-12 highlighting the experience of playing a game such as Grandmother's Footsteps with an emphasis on performance. No 1-14 characterised the whole experience as an exploration of the different frames in the performance, including a game and experimental frame, which impacted on the way they engaged with the performance throughout (in **Track 7**). These responses highlight the impact of two competing frames on participants' approach to tasks and their responses within the performance, illustrating the process underlying the demand characteristics of being a participant.

## **6.2 Participant roles**

The impact of the pedagogical context on participant responses highlights the aesthetic significance of the individual approach to being a participant in participation. Demand characteristics describe the process of perceiving one's role within the performance situation, which I will examine within *The Experiment* to highlight the way this process operates. All participatory performances blur different frames and so the roles on offer and the participant's perception of these significantly impacts on their aesthetic experience, intersubjective relationships, embodied engagement and creative contributions within the work. An enactive perspective assists in conceptualising this aspect of participation, as it foregrounds the interactive nature of perception and the

embodied aspects of action. When considering the roles in participation, an enactive approach calls attention to the affordances of the tasks and situation, which will suggest particular roles. It also highlights the fact that the participant's perception and action interacts with these affordances in an individual way. The interaction between the affordances and the idiosyncratic perception of them is where the participant's action creates their role, which will often be a version of those suggested by the situation, both intentionally and accidentally. This exemplifies the aesthetic language of doing as proposed in Chapter 4 as an enactive, interpretative process, whereby the participant makes sense and meaning in the moment of engaging with the work through doing something.

The roles this project intended to examine were participating, playing and performing. There are subtle distinctions between these: as a participant you are more likely to execute tasks, as a player you engage with the rules of the game in a strategic way, whilst as a performer you are aware that your actions are not just for the benefit of your own experience but also aesthetically add to that of others watching. These three levels represent different ways of engaging within a performance and come with distinct expectations that impact on the approach to taking part. The level of participation is suggested by the work's affordances, for instance Round 1 consisted of clearly defined tasks, Round 2 suggested there was more freedom to engage with the rules to take strategic decisions (to be competitive, for example), whilst in Round 3 the role of the participants turned them into performers, as emphasised by being asked to sit in the audience section when eliminated. This illustrates the differences in the type of actions requested from the participants as well as the spatial framing of the situation, which are all aesthetic decisions that impact on the participant's reading of their role and consequently on the way they respond.

The three roles have significant overlaps and are merged in all participatory work, where the structure of the performance can emphasise a particular role in order to signal to the participant how to engage. The strategy employed in Round 2 illustrates how some participants were more aware of the performer dimension of their role, which is visible in the way the teams created the rules for their games. Two distinct approaches are evident; some tried to create a game that would play well and be entertaining, whilst others wanted to make a game that would be impossibly hard to play. These strategies to the game design respond to different aspects of the instructions given, either going with the competitive side of the performance where you want (your team) to win or considering it as a performative event, whereby the act of

playing should be enjoyable. The latter approach shows a clear understanding of the performer aspects of the role whilst the former emphasises a player strategy. The role of performer has the biggest contrast with the other two, bringing an awareness that what you are doing is seen as part of the performance by other participants, which comes with significant impact on how a participant approaches taking part. Several participants commented on the impact of their awareness of being watched on their experience (such as No 1-9 in **Track 8**), which illustrates the differences between performing and participating (or observing). This example highlights the significance of perceiving this aspect of the adopted role and the subsequent impact on the participant's actions.

The project's demand characteristics also highlight an alternative set of roles: of being an aesthetic, ethical or research participant, which each imply a distinct approach to taking part, engaging with the performance, and being a participant. An aesthetic participant role is commonly found in the context of professionally presented work, where the audience member has reserved a place or bought a ticket for the show and is expecting to have a fun, interesting or at least meaningful experience in exchange. This role creates the desire to have the experience that the artist has created and so participants engage with the work in the way that they perceive will create a 'valuable' experience for them and do what the artist intended them to do (or better). This aesthetic role takes an individualistic approach and is particularly common in immersive work, where the participant engages with their environment to have the most satisfying experience possible.<sup>83</sup> This role was described by participants in *The Experiment* as an experience of competitiveness and of wanting to have fun (as explained by No 2-5 in **Track 9**). An ethical participant role focuses on the other(s) and contains a desire for things to go well for all present, making sure other participants are OK and that the work goes as planned for the benefit of everyone (illustrated by No 2-5 in **Track 10**). The ethical role in *The Experiment* was complicated further by the pedagogical context, adding a desire to help my assessment succeed. In participatory performance the aesthetic and ethical roles are blurred and inherently connected, which results in an experience that combines an individual perspective with a group one.

The audience were also research participants in *The Experiment*, in a fictional and 'real' frame, at the same time as being both aesthetic and ethical participants. Firstly, they were cast as research participants in the narrative as established by the Induction

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<sup>83</sup> This type of participation is discussed by Alston (2016a) as entrepreneurial and narcissistic participation, as examined in Chapter 1 and 4.

and tests in Round 1. But they were also genuinely research participants as they took part in a PbR performance on what it means to be a participant (and several were interviewed afterwards as part of my research process). This research participant role blurs the line between fiction and reality (in a similar way as works such as *Adventure 1* by Coney and *The Money* by Kaleider) as well as between an aesthetic and pedagogical frame, which is the significant difference between this work and others discussed within this thesis. Most participants were aware that they were genuinely research participants as they came into the work and this reinforced the research role beyond the fictional frame.

In a research role the participant wants to be as natural and 'genuine' as possible so they can provide unbiased research data. In *The Experiment* this was complicated by the blurring with an aesthetic frame (wanting to be natural but also to have the experience I have designed as the artist) as well as with a double pedagogical frame (what you do becomes part of my research, so you want to provide 'good' results, but are also aware that as practice research there may be something to learn from this experience). Several participants described their role as trying to be as honest and authentic as possible (as No 1-14 explains in **Track 11**), with some explicitly connecting their responses to my PhD research. A few participants also acknowledged that the blurring between the frames, combined with a sense of being a research participant, impacted on the way they engaged with the work. In *The Experiment* these three roles overlapped, blurred and conflicted, with the additional complication of the pedagogical context, creating a complex, layered engagement.

### *A complex engagement*

The conflicting roles I have discussed created two opposing ways of engaging with the performance, which clashed and interchanged within the experience of the work. The aesthetic, individual approach to engaging with the work seeks to immerse participants within the performance whilst the ethical and pedagogical approaches creates a detached and self-aware perspective that focused on the impact of your actions on others or in relation to the work's purpose. This conflict created a shifting engagement within the work; in the Induction participants were placed in a research role that mixed the aesthetic with the ethical/pedagogical. This role shifted towards a pedagogical research frame in tasks such as the Personality Test (Appendix 10), whilst a game-like exercise such as the Playfulness Test (Appendix 13) moved the participant's engagement towards an aesthetic frame. Several tasks deliberately blurred the two in

their interaction design, for instance the Creativity Test (Appendix 12) intentionally punctuated the fun, creative task by actions to highlight the fact you were being observed and judged. This blurring aimed to draw the participant's attention to their experience and approach to taking part in that moment.

The blurred aesthetic / pedagogical research role resulted from the (intentional) interaction design and the (unintentional) effect of the HE context of the work. Participants described their experience of these blurred and conflicting roles as “a sense of ambiguous play” (No 2-13) and related how the conflicting focus of tasks made it difficult to know exactly how to engage with them (for example, not knowing the judging criteria in the tests and self-assessments or playing Grandmother's Footsteps with a focus on performance). Another participant articulated how the blurring of the conflicting frames enabled a reflection on the nature of them (in **Track 12**). The experiential understanding of the different frames on offer in participation builds on the discussion of frame analysis in Chapter 4 (see p119-121), elucidating in practice the way participants are able to recognise and engage with different keyed frames within a performance setting. In *The Experiment*, the performance frame clearly communicated a keyed frame whilst the experiment frame did not, as it referred to a different set of behaviours that were more 'real' than those denoted by a keyed frame. This highlights the participants' challenge in dealing with these blurred frames as they refer to different sets of behaviours that each carry a different significance.

Participant engagement in performance is complex and layered, combining multiple demands that at times are in conflict with each other. In *The Experiment* this engagement combined and moved between:

- Trying to win the game
- Performing in the show
- Attempting to take part in the research with integrity
- Self-reflecting on the experience
- Being a 'good' participant in accordance with the perceived role
- Feeling immersed in the tasks or experience
- Trying to have the 'right' aesthetic experience

The participants' responses articulate the conflicting demands in engaging with the performance and the impact on how they approached the work (explained by No 1-16 in **Track 13**), explaining that any distinct shifts in engagement produced a sense of detachment. For some participants, the realisation that their decisions were part of the performance impacted on their actions (as related by No 1-3 in **Track 14**), whilst others

did not feel like they were performing and experienced the aesthetic setting as freeing because their actions within the keyed frame did not carry the consequences of everyday life. This elucidates the discussion of affordances in Chapter 4 (see p118-119) by illustrating the impact of the participant's perceptions on the way they engage with tasks. The difference between participant experiences also illuminates the idiosyncratic aspect of being a participant and how the participant's role only becomes meaningful in their perception; if they do not perceive themselves to be performing then they will not respond to the frame of being a performer nor consider their actions part of the performance in that way. This mirrors the process underlying phenomenological agency, which similarly needs to be perceived in order to be meaningful.

As the demand characteristics of the performance change, participants adapt (the interpretation of) their role to the situation they find themselves in. Round 3 was the most theatrical round, positioning the participants as performers and this deliberate artifice impacted on the participant's engagement and role. One participant reported:

the awareness that all of this is deliberately staged and arranged doesn't leave you completely, however, there were moments ... where the participatory emotions ran pretty high, when the audience-participants began to 'really' play, instead of pretend to do so because they were asked. (No 2-13)

The self-reflection task throughout the performance shifted the engagement between immersed and detached for many participants. The task asked them to attend to their experience in the moment and therefore required stepping out of an immersive situation and taking a position outside of the work to reflect on the experience. Participants responded in different ways to this; some participants reflecting on this aspect after the performance described how attending to their experience created an awareness of their actions (as described by No 1-12 and No 2-3 in **Track 15**). For others the reflective task contributed to a different perspective on the experience through the act of articulating this experience (as No 2-5 explains in **Track 16**). One participant described the layered dynamic between the awareness of themselves in the performance whilst their private experiences became part of that performance by being noted down as part of the work (No 1-12 in **Track 17**). As an aesthetic strategy this self-reflection blurred the frames between experiment and performance and for some resulted in an awareness of their aesthetic experience. For others it created a shifting engagement, between immersed and detached, which reveals the limits of the strategy.

Being asked to reflect on one's experience can change a participant's perspective by encouraging an observational viewpoint (as explained by No 2-9 and No 2-5 in **Track 18**). Attending to your experience in the moment draws you out of the aesthetic



experience into a position where the research participant role demands honest self-reflection, which can create the effect of switching between immersed engagement and a detached perspective. However, the resulting change of perspective may lead to a better understanding of your own interpretation of the performance (illustrated by No 2-5 in **Track 19**). Asking the participants to reflect on the significance of the experiential aspect of the performance also led to several putting into words the importance of the embodied experience of the work (illustrated by No 1-3, No 1-11 and No 2-3 in **Track 20**). This reflective process illuminates the way the performance becomes meaningful to an individual participant (described by No 1-14 in **Track 21**) by revealing the procedures that create the links between past, present and future actions, which are at the heart of meaning as defined by Johnson (2007).

Employing strategies for the participants to attend to their experience may also develop the experience of agency, as the reflection process clarifies the links between their actions and the impact on the performance. This process of reflection can happen during the performance or subsequently, which develops the perspective I discussed in Chapter 5 to describe more precisely the way it happens in participation. The audience research I discuss in this thesis created an opportunity for similar reflection to take place, as participants were asked to consider particular aspects of their experience, which is likely to have had an impact on the way they interpreted aspects of their embodied experience during the performance. The complex engagement in the work reveals a key dimension of the experience of being a participant, which includes how participants perceive the roles on offer, the elements that help them make sense of their role, and the impact on their approach to taking part. This perspective adds a dimension to the discussion of the three key aesthetic elements in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 by considering the participant's perspective and foregrounding the way the demand characteristics of being a participant mutually influence the other three elements.

### **6.3 The demand characteristics of participation**

In this chapter I am extending the concept of demand characteristics from experimental psychology to elucidate the experience of being a participant in a performance. The phrase 'demand characteristics' describes "the totality of cues which convey an experimental hypothesis to the subject [and therefore] become significant determinants of subjects' behavior" (Orne, 2002 [1962], p9). This emphasises an experiment as a social interaction where the experimenter and subject share a common aim, generally described as the wish to further science. Demand characteristics provide a perspective

on participatory situations that examines the subjective element in enaction, which interacts with the environment through perception (developing the discussions in Chapter 2 and 4). The participant's interpretation of their role and the purpose of their activity within the work's context is the fourth aesthetic element of participatory performance I propose in this thesis. The concept of demand characteristics enables a nuanced understanding of the complex processes and unpredictability of participation, which derives from the large number of unknown factors (analogous to a dynamic system as discussed in Chapter 5), and highlights the importance of doing as an aesthetic language (as I argued in Chapter 4). Building on the analysis of *The Experiment*, this section will examine the demand characteristics of participatory performance as an aesthetic form.

Both psychology experiments and participatory performance can be described as a particular type of social situation that includes specific roles (experimenter/subject and performer/participant) with a power dynamic that allows the experimenter/performer to ask the subject/participant to carry out tasks or activities that will only rarely be challenged. As Orne states: "Just about any request which could conceivably be asked of the subject by a reputable investigator is legitimized by the quasi-magical phrase, "This is an experiment," and the shared assumption that a legitimate purpose will be served by the subject's behavior" (2002 [1962], p2). Participatory performance does not have a single, equivalent phrase, but the performance frame legitimises the requests from the performer in a similar manner. One result from the dynamic of this relationship is that the subject/participant attaches meaning to anything they are asked to do, as they wish to contribute to the success of the experiment/performance. Agreeing to be a subject/participant produces a stake in the outcome of the situation, which simultaneously creates the need to find meaning in the activity and the wish to do well in any task to justify the effort. In participatory performance, this need to find meaning (to justify the 'cost' in coming) is also part of the participant role and motivation for taking part, as the expectation of going to a performance is that you will have an experience that has been created for you to communicate some meaning.<sup>84</sup> The concept of demand characteristics foregrounds the role of doing in the participant's interpretative and meaning-making processes, as part of participatory sense-making, through their responses to cues and suggestions on the appropriate behaviour and actions within the situation.

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<sup>84</sup> It is important to point out here that this does not refer to any kind of predetermined meaning, rather that the situation (and the contract of participation) suggests that what you are experiencing has on some level been designed to be meaningful.

The concept of demand characteristics describes the process whereby the subject attempts to discover the purpose of the experiment, generally hidden in the experimental procedure, and how their concept of this purpose impacts on their responses. Most subjects will respond “in a manner which will support the hypotheses being tested” (Orne, 2002 [1962], p4), as they want to confirm that they are a ‘good’ subject. An experiment into the influence of demand characteristics on subjects’ responses confirmed that the majority responded in a way they felt would confirm the hypothesis, although this was related to their attitude towards the experiment and experimenter (Nichols and Maner, 2008). The process of interpretation is partly subconscious and intertwined with the subject’s “previous knowledge and experience” (Orne, 2002 [1962], p4) as well as their response to the perceived hypothesis (which influences whether they are compliant or defiant). The concept of demand characteristics situates the subject as continually interpreting the situation to perceive the way they should be responding and to fulfil their role as best possible, which impacts on their behaviour.

The analogy with participatory performance is clear; participants coming into a performance quickly form an interpretation of what their role is, through an explicit contract with the performer or implicitly through the tasks and affordances of the situation. Participants most often respond to their interpretation of a role with compliant responses, which aim to create the performance they believe the performer wants, and sometimes with defiant responses to subvert or disrupt the situation.<sup>85</sup> In both cases, the subject/participant responds to the experimenter/performer according to the former’s perceptions of the latter’s implicit preferences, as well as explicit instructions, in order to situate their performance as meaningful (McCambridge, Bruin and Witton, 2012). Aesthetic, ethical and research roles in participation each come with their own demand characteristics interpreted by the participant. The individual interpretation impacts on their perception of a role and the importance of their actions within the context of the work, thereby significantly influencing what the participant does in the performance and how they experience it.

The demand characteristics are partly dependent on the affordances in the situation and are part of the information interpreted by the participant to determine the frame of the situation (see p119-121). The affordances suggest actions in relation to the situation (in a performance this might be a game with rules) whilst demand

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<sup>85</sup> An example of a defiant response in participatory performance is the instance described in Chapter 5 of participants evicting the media representative out of the room in *Early Days* (2014) by Coney.

characteristics relate to the participant's motivation in taking part and exist within their interpretation of the situation to suggest particular behaviour (such as being competitive or not when playing a game). The demand characteristics of an aesthetic participant role emphasise the experiential aspect, where the participant makes choices to have the intended experience, whilst a research participant role emphasises the value of any actions beyond the performance (as data) and suggests that being honest and 'authentic' is the most appropriate way to respond. Within *The Experiment* this process was complicated by the blurred aesthetic and research frames, making it more difficult for participants to clearly perceive the appropriate role. One example that highlights the individual nature of the response to demand characteristics, is the participants' answers on the induction questionnaire (see Appendix 9), which ranged between seemingly straight-forward responses and more playful answers. In this instance the demand characteristics of the situation blurred the atmosphere of a psychology experiment with a performative situation, which meant that participants' individual interpretation of their role generated a range of responses.

The demand characteristics in *The Experiment* were also complicated by the pedagogical context, which not only impacted on the motivation for taking part, but also emphasised the 'real' research function of the work more than intended. The result of this can be seen in participants' responses to the interaction design of the Interpersonal Skills Test (see Appendix 11). The demand characteristics of that test were manipulated so there was no straightforward choice between answering questions truthfully or not, through overt observation and a slightly uncomfortable, official atmosphere at odds with the personal questions. The demand characteristics of this situation foregrounded intersubjectivity, which influenced participants' approach to the task. In response, several shared some very personal and sensitive information about themselves (as I discussed above) because they perceived that situation to necessitate honesty to be a good participant (and to provide a good experience for their test partner). Another participant found the test created an opportunity distant enough from everyday life to be more honest than they might have been outside of the performance situation (as described by No 2-3 in **Track 22**). In both cases the participant's approach to the task responded directly to the affordances and demand characteristics of the situation. The resulting responses to this test, and varying levels of honesty, illustrate the impact of the idiosyncrasy on what participants contribute to the performance and highlights the difficulty in pre-empting a participant's perception of the demand characteristics.

The process of responding to the demand characteristics in practice often involves relating the situation you find yourself in to similar circumstances and previous experiences (as explained by No 1-11 in **Track 23**). The interpretation process of the demand characteristics in *The Experiment* required the negotiation of the different frames present in the performance (including reality and fiction; aesthetic, ethical and research; and participating, playing and performing) that guided the different participant roles. No 1-11's response describes the process of interacting with the demand characteristics of this particular performance and although the experience is different for each of the participants, due to the personal nature, it is clear that the process itself is central to the experience of being a participant. This process also develops the discussion in Chapter 4, arguing that a participant's familiarity with particular frames (particularly the keyed frame in participation) impacts on their behaviour, interpretation of the task and experience. The process of perceiving and responding to demand characteristics elucidates how previous experience impacts on a participant's actions and decisions in a work; the more types of participatory situations one has been in the more examples one can draw on when deciding what action is most appropriate.

### *Motivation*

Demand characteristics are inherently intertwined with the motivation for taking part, or the stakes. In psychology this is often the desire to help the development of science and human understanding, whilst in participatory performance (in a professional context) this is generally the desire to have a fun, interesting, challenging or meaningful experience. These stakes increase once the performance starts, for instance, by a compelling narrative or an exciting challenge that additionally encourages the participant to engage with the work and stimulates the desire to help create the 'right' or 'best' outcome. The narrative stakes can be entirely fictional or mixed with reality, equally effective if executed well, and will be interpreted in an idiosyncratic manner by each participant (with significant overlap, providing the performance has a clear structure). The stakes or motivation significantly affect the way participants approach taking part, as the (often subconscious) perception of the *reason* for taking part contextualises the meaning of their actions and the potential impact on the environment. This perception is closely connected to the affordances of the situation and the frame of the performance. In an aesthetic participant role this motivation is to affect your own experience of the work, perhaps leading to a desire to volunteer for tasks to have a fulfilling experience, whilst in a research participant role it includes the

awareness that your actions have value beyond the immediate situation, possibly leading to being honest to provide unbiased data.

In *The Experiment* the perceived stakes were closely linked to the participant's perception of their role, which for some meant the pedagogical context of the performance impacted on their motivation for taking part. For these participants, a key motivation deriving from their perceived role was to take part in an engaged and enthusiastic way so that the performance would work as planned, rather than challenging too much or risking doing something that would threaten the success of the work. Other participants, many of whom might have been aware of the pedagogical context but were not personally acquainted with me (and so had less understanding of the significance for my PhD) were motivated to play The Game well either to have fun or to win the prize of £50. Several participants commented on the impact of the financial motivation part of the work's fictional narrative on their (or others') competitiveness and the way they engaged with the work (as explained by No 1-9, No 1-16 and No 2-5 in **Track 24**). These motivations suggest an aesthetic participant role with a focus on the individual experience and the perception of what was at stake (i.e. £50) impacted on the way participants engaged in tasks. Regardless of the specific, individual motivation, this process includes wanting to be a 'good' participant in the perceived role and responds to the stakes appropriate to that role as interpreted from the demand characteristics.

### *Decision-making*

The concept of demand characteristics articulates the effect of the participant's interpretation of the situation on their agentic responses. In participatory performance, demand characteristics highlight the interplay and co-dependence between the subjective aspects of participants' experience and the pre-existing aesthetic elements of the work. A range of elements influence the agentic decisions made by participants, including:

- The personal approach to being a participant (in part derived from the demand characteristics of the work)
- The group dynamic
- The level of awareness that your actions constitute (part of) the performance
- Whether you attempt to subvert the performance

This perspective develops the discussion of agency in this thesis so far by examining the mutual impact of the participant's personal approach to being a participant and their

interpretation of their role. Taking decisions is not a straightforward process and the nature of participatory performance asks participants to respond to tasks immediately. The demand characteristics of tasks add a sense of importance to taking the 'right' decision, as visible in the self-assessments of the Creativity Test (Appendix 12) where many participants reported specific things they wish they had done better, including: "listened to the criteria" (No 1-7), "had a more zappy yet coherent idea" (No 2-5), and "taken more attention to detail" (No 2-11). These responses present a clear example of a feeling of wanting to do well, but not having had the 'right' or 'best' idea in the moment, which highlights the significance of the motivation element in demand characteristics in the process of making decisions.

The decision-making process of participants is inherently influenced by every detail of the situation; this influence is pervasive and largely unconscious, but some aspects emerge as important from this PbR project. These include:

- The demand characteristics of the situation (which suggest the significance of your actions in relation to the situation)
- Your personal approach to being a participant (including the amount of experience you have, whether you are likely to volunteer and if you want to subvert the performance)
- The group dynamic (as discussed below)
- Any awareness that your actions constitute part of the performance (which is significantly linked to your interpretation of the demand characteristics of the situation)

The decision-making process is aesthetically central to the experience of participation as it creates the contributions that come to form the particular performance, as discussed in Chapter 5, but also impacts on the individual experience. Like the complex, dynamic process of contribution, these different elements interact and influence each other in ways that cannot be predicted before the performance. The demand characteristics of taking decisions also illustrates that agency needs to be situated in order to be meaningful, as I argued in Chapter 4, because it is the context that provides the meaning for an agentive act (as well as determining whether it is experienced as such). Examining the structure of the experience of contributing demonstrates the inherent, mutual connections between yourself, the situation and its demands, as well as the way these elements together form a type of feedback loop that impacts on the performance, the experience and the decisions that get made.

## *Group dynamics*

Group dynamics form part of the performance's demand characteristics and are particularly influential in group decision-making processes, where the impact of the personal, subjective experience is amplified. The effect of the group dynamic, similarly to decision-making processes, is pervasive, often unconscious and exists as an element of the demand characteristics only partly controlled by the artist. The most important aspects that determine the group dynamics arising out of this PbR project include:

- The balance of personalities
- The impact of group decisions on the performance content
- The type of social situation created in the work
- Intersubjectivity (as an important source of meaning in the participant's experience)

Group dynamics derive partly from the artist through the interaction design and the pre-determined performance content, which includes decisions on group size, the situation participants are placed in, what they are asked to do (and whether the instructions are explicit or implicit), and whether the atmosphere encourages cooperation or competitiveness. The resulting group dynamic is unpredictable, as it depends on the people present, including any pre-existing interpersonal relationships, illustrating the process through which each participatory performance becomes unique.

The balance of personalities in a group of participants is a significant factor in the group dynamic, particularly aspects such as their background and any experience related either to participation or the type of activity they are asked to engage in. The impact of this can be seen in the effect of the interaction design and group configuration in *The Experiment*, where Round 2 was designed to foster a cooperative, team spirit in creating the games. In show 1 the combination of personalities resulted in two very different team strategies. The group dynamic in the Red team was influenced by several competitive players who, although not noticeably dominant, did significantly impact on the direction of the team strategy. This is apparent in their discussion whilst deciding on the games, which focused on making sure they win, and in their behaviour as they entered Round 3: chanting and 'slap talking' to the Blue team. In show 1 more of the participants knew each other before the start of the performance, which also impacted on the group dynamic, for instance they were more likely to talk as a group during Round 1 when left to self-assess. This highlights that existing interpersonal relationships help develop intersubjectivity more quickly during a performance.



The group dynamic also describes the process through which participants influence the decisions that are made as well as the impact of such group decisions on the direction of the performance. This influence can be seen in the effect of the participants' background on the team strategies. Show 1 contained two Competitiveness games that were difficult but funny to watch, whilst show 2 had two Communication games with impossible rules. Over half of the participants in show 1 were Drama Lecturers and their experience in constructing practical sessions and drama games was (at least part of) the reason why those games 'played better'. The group dynamic also influences the individual decisions made by participants and this type of 'group pressure' is illustrated by No 2-3 (**Track 25**), who went along with the decision to beat The Game even though he could have stopped this by voting to 'win The Game', and by No 1-9 (**Track 26**), whose response to feeling judged explains the apparently unanimous decisions in relation to cheating. These instances illuminate joint action from an individual perspective and emphasise mutual impact between participants.

The interaction design of a performance determines the balance between cooperation and competitiveness in the group dynamic through the type of social situation the participants are placed in. The psychopathy element of the Personality Test (see Appendix 10) illustrates the impact of this; the interaction design includes an explicit statement that the test would assess "*how psychopathic you are*", creating social pressure to give an answer that makes you fit into the group, visible in the participants' responses (as seen in the documentation video). This pressure makes you more aware of the others and their potential judgement of your answers, particularly when the activity is framed as something personally revealing, and impacts on your intersubjective relationships with other participants as well as your responses (as illustrated in **Track 27**). The type of social situation also determines whether a communal or team spirit is created, which has the potential to impact significantly on the participant's experience, particularly on their enjoyment of the performance (as described in **Track 28**). These examples highlight the way the interaction design and the socially situated aspects of demand characteristics impact on the group dynamic as well as on the participant's experience and decisions.

The group dynamic impacts directly on the decisions made in the performance, but it is also an important aspect of how the experience takes on meaning for the participant. For example, No 1-9 explained the positive impact of being part of a good team and feeling comfortable with the other participants on their experience, whilst several participants in show 2 commented on the group cohesion and excitement at having

managed to beat The Game as a group (in **Track 29**). These situations offer an encounter with other participants and the opportunity to create, or develop, intersubjective relationships, which create a context within which participant's actions can take on meaning (developing the elements discussed in Chapter 3 and 4). For instance, several participants stated that the Interpersonal Test was one of the most meaningful moments, offering an encounter with another participant with the possibility of sharing something personal to create a relationship (see Appendix 11). These examples highlight how the intersubjectivity inherent in participatory performance is an important source of meaning in the participant's experience, which is developed in response to the demand characteristics and group dynamic.

Arguably all theatre is inherently intersubjective, however participation offers the opportunity to engage directly with others and enact joint actions based on a shared goal. Such joint action requires coordination between co-agents, which in *The Experiment* is visible in the group discussions in Round 2 and 3 as well as in the non-verbal influence between participants. The structure of joint action is hierarchical in *The Experiment*, with the performers in control of the planning and short-term association between individuals, which accounts for the lack of agency experienced by several participants. Pacherie (2014) suggests that if the structure of joint action is egalitarian with a stable group of participants, it is likely to yield a stronger sense of agency when compared to first-time participation in an event that is large-scale and hierarchical in structure. Participatory performance is suited to developing intersubjective relationships despite only rarely enabling long-term associations between participants and its hierarchical structure. Group dynamics, the process of making decisions and the motivation to take part all form part of the demand characteristics of participation, which acknowledges these subjective and personal responses to a situation as critical to the finding of meaning in that situation, which is inherently linked to the subject's actions and as such helps elucidate what it means to 'be' a participant.

#### **6.4 The aesthetics of uncertainty**

To conceptualise how the demand characteristics of being a participant become an aesthetic element of participatory performance I propose the 'aesthetics of uncertainty'. This concept situates the idiosyncratic approach to being a participant, the subjective perception and interpretation of the demand characteristics, and the personal, affective, emotional response to the situation as aesthetic aspects of the performance. As such, the concept articulates a dimension of the participant's experience that mutually

influences the other three elements I have discussed in this thesis so far. The aesthetics of uncertainty reside in the participant's experience and include not knowing what the work may ask of you, feelings of anxiety or excitement, the desire to be a 'good' participant (despite not being sure what that entails), and the way these aspects of the experience influence how participants respond to, engage with, and impact on the work throughout. Wolff (2006, 2008) also uses the term aesthetics of uncertainty to propose a feminist aesthetics that recognises the way beauty norms are grounded in community, whilst not relinquishing the value of beauty as aesthetic concept. This aesthetic theory builds on the notion of community and has been considered in Chapter 3 to develop an aesthetic of intersubjective relationships. In the context of demand characteristics I am using the term to focus on the way the participant's experience of uncertainty within the performance (when perceiving their role and invited behaviour) becomes an aesthetic element. This perspective is analogous to Alston's (2016a) discussion of the aestheticised experience in immersive theatre (discussed in Chapter 4) and develops it to form part of an analytical approach that considers not only the individual elements but also the way they influence each other.

Considering the personal, subjective experience of being a participant from a phenomenological perspective assists in discerning key aspects of the participant's experience, such as how the wish to do well manifests in their behaviour. The aesthetics of uncertainty enable a productive discussion of such individual, subjective aspects that are unpredictable before the start of the performance and unique to each show (and the specific group of participants). The idiosyncratic dynamic between the work and the participant as described by the concept of demand characteristics is one often lost in analysis of participation where only one perspective is considered (generally that of the artist or critic, assumed as the universal aesthetic experience of that work). The aesthetics of uncertainty enable a more nuanced understanding of participation by describing the subjective experience of responding to the demand characteristics, which are all those cues (both intentionally created by the artist and accidental) that communicate the purpose of the participatory task presented to the participant and as such come to influence the participant's response to them. Considering the aesthetics of uncertainty, therefore, assists in the analysis of participatory work by foregrounding the personal dimension of the experience that is inherently connected to the three elements I have discussed in previous chapters.

### *Aesthetics of uncertainty in The Experiment*

The concept of the aesthetics of uncertainty helps examine key moments in *The Experiment*. For instance, the induction questionnaire was designed to draw attention to the feelings just before entering a participatory performance (see Appendix 9). The participants were asked “*How are you feeling right now?*” and the answers show a range of affective and emotional responses, ranging from “Slightly self-conscious. A little apprehensive” (No 1-4) to “Excited to see the performance” (No 1-5). The familiar mixture of nervousness and excitement just before a participatory performance is summed up by one participant as “That strange balance between nerves and excitement” (No 2-12), whilst another stated: “Apprehensive, intrigued, worried about being humiliated” (No 1-2), which expresses a common fear or anxiety in participatory performance: that you will be asked to do something embarrassing in front of other people (despite this being rare). Going into the performance with a particular affective state, such as these, inevitably impacts on both the experience and responses of the participants. This perspective illuminates the experiential dimension of the aesthetic elements of the embodied engagement (Chapter 4) and the creative contribution (Chapter 5).

The participants’ descriptions of their strengths and weaknesses as a player provide another perspective on the experience of being a participant. Honesty, the willingness to try and playfulness were most often cited as strengths, whilst a lack of focus was the most common weakness mentioned. These responses suggest that participants consider it important to engage with the work openly and with enthusiasm, to be a good participant, whilst they worry about not being able to correctly perceive what the work asks them to do. The participants’ responses are subjective and personal, but the key themes that emerge frame the experience of participating in a significant way: it starts with anticipation and excitement before you enter the work, this state (as it changes) impacts on your responses throughout the performance and affects part of the aesthetic experience. Together, demand characteristics and the aesthetics of uncertainty illuminate the subjective, idiosyncratic experience of being a participant and how this impacts both materially on the work and on the interpretation of meaning by the participant; highlighting the experiential and individual dimension of the act of participation.

Analysing the demand characteristics of a work using the aesthetics of uncertainty highlights the enactive interaction between the personal experience and the predetermined structure that comprises the performance. This perspective foregrounds

the aesthetic, embodied experience of the participant, which in *The Experiment* included:

- Interpreting the context
- Engaging with others
- Executing tasks
- Playing games
- Being part of the performance
- Determining your role within the system
- Reacting to the demand characteristics
- Self-reflection

Although some of this aesthetic experience is particular to this project, due to the pedagogical context, the underlying structure is significant beyond this work. The specific outcome of these particular aspects of the participant's experience could not have been forecast, emphasising the significance of both the context *and* the person responding to it. Analogously to the complex dynamic emergent processes I examined in Chapter 5 (see p162-166), the outcome of the interactions between large numbers of elements cannot be predicted and underlines the need for experiential and phenomenological engagement with the work.

Something that exemplifies the importance of this connection is the capacity for participants to surprise themselves whilst taking part, as a result of the demand characteristics influencing their behaviour in unforeseen ways. For example, the Consensus Test created a situation where a group of participants had to trick a fellow group member by performing a 'natural' answer that they knew was wrong (see Appendix 14). The interaction design, although derived from a psychology test to examine social conditioning, focused on the experience of having to 'act' in a specified way and manipulate another participant's responses. This experience was slightly uncomfortable, creating the wish to act convincingly, and for No 1-12 resulted in being surprised by their own response (**Track 30**). Several participants related that they had learnt something about themselves or had been surprised by their behaviour (including No 1-9, No 1-11 and No 1-16 in **Track 31**). Others stated that it had reinforced certain opinions about themselves, for instance, No 2-5 felt his characterisation as the most anarchic participant identified something about his approach to taking part (**Track 32**). *The Experiment* aimed to specifically examine this dimension of participatory performance, by observing, reflecting back and evaluating the participant's responses and behaviour. As a result, the project clarifies the individual and experiential

dimension of the intersubjective relationship discussed in Chapter 3 and illustrates the processes underlying the aesthetic language of doing examined in Chapter 4.

Participatory performance reflects systems or structures from the real world, whether familiar or not, and places the participants inside of them, which causes the work to examine the meaning of how we interact with such systems. This situates any kind of encounter with yourself as a potentially significant aspect of being a participant in both the personal and aesthetic experience of a performance. A work will be created by an artist in a shared social context and will aim to establish a situation that participants are able to identify in two ways: firstly, to enable a reaction and secondly, to suggest responses likely to fit in with those desired by the artist. This may rely on implicit knowledge by directly mirroring familiar social structures or on framing the instructions so that they are recognisable to the participants. As a result, the situation the participant finds themselves in will reflect an element of, or perspective on, the systems and structures they live within; meaning their behaviour within the performance situation has significance in relation to their own lived experience. The potential for an encounter with yourself is heightened if the participant can identify the links between the structures of the performance and their personal context, producing the links that create meaning as proposed by Johnson (2007). Any self-reflection or encounter with yourself in such a context may reflect something onto a situation in everyday life, meaning that the potential experience or learning is transferable and therefore personally significant beyond the performance.

In this thesis I argue that the participant's embodied experience is one of the central aesthetic elements of participatory performance as they engage with the work through doing (examined in Chapter 4). As such, systems of analysis that foreground the embodied nature of participation are significant, despite the implications of a pedagogical context on the efficacy of practice research participatory performance. This context does highlight the importance of a critical awareness of such inherent challenges and to employ practice research as part of a complementary set of methodologies. Within this project, the PbR facilitated reflection on the experiential aspects of the work and several participants articulated the importance of their embodied experience of the performance (in **Track 16**). This significance derives from the difference between thinking theoretically about how you might respond in a particular situation and having to respond *in the moment*. Several participants articulate this difference as the distinction between taking part and observing (illustrated by No 1-9 and No 1-16 in **Track 33**) and helps clarify the significance of the embodied and

personal aspects of the participant's experience of the performance. These responses also exemplify the enactive nature of participation as they show how participants interpret meaning through embodied action.

The personal and aesthetic connect in the embodied experience, as being placed in a situation that requires a response implicates you in what happens next. This connects your actions and responses with the pre-determined content of the performance and this process creates a synergy between the aesthetic structure of the work and your personal, idiosyncratic approach to being a participant. This manifests the way enaction creates meaning in participatory performance, in the connection between aesthetic elements and the interaction between individual and the work. The enactive approach to phenomenology as personal practice (discussed in Chapter 2) provides a productive method for examining this aesthetic process by combining analysis of the aesthetic language of doing with an investigation of the demand characteristics and the experience of the aesthetics of uncertainty.

The way the aesthetic and personal elements of the participant's experience are linked in the embodied nature of it emphasises the importance of the experiential aspect of participation. For instance, the demand characteristics in the Playfulness Test (designed to create a conflict between being playful within the game whilst being judged on how well you performed, see Appendix 13) created two different approaches: either playing the game well (and regularly winning the chance to be Grandmother) or being playful and subverting the rules (to be chosen as best performer, as seen in the documentary video). These playing strategies demonstrate how the decisions made in response to the demand characteristics (which determine your approach) impact on the embodied experience (as explained by No 1-11, No 2-3 and No 1-16 in **Track 34**), which in turn influences the interpretation of the work. As such, the playing strategies highlight the mutual impact of the embodied engagement as discussed in Chapter 4 and the demand characteristics. The mutual dimension of this relationship between two aesthetic elements also indicates the importance of considering the connections between elements when analysing participatory performance.

The embodied aspect represents a particular dimension of the experience from which a significant part of the understanding or meaning of the performance derives. A participant's embodied experience creates an idiosyncratic perspective, which contains a significant amount of the meaningful interpretation of the work (illustrated by No 1-14's response in **Track 35**). This perspective is the result of the connection between the work's aesthetic elements and the participant's personal, idiosyncratic perception

of, and responses to, the performance. It is this connection that creates the opportunity for an encounter with yourself, as well as with the subject of the work. Moreover, the experiential aspect of participatory performance also creates significant opportunities to encounter others as well as experience affect in relation to your own aesthetics actions. This illustrates the meaningful nature of the embodied experience and develops the perspective I discussed in Chapter 4, although it has to be acknowledged that being absorbed in the experience may make it more challenging to engage with the wider themes of the work, as a counterpart to attending to the experience.

### *Reflection on methods and outcomes of The Experiment*

Through the PbR project, I intended to examine the processes through which the personal approach to being a participant impacts on the work and the participant's aesthetic experience, to examine an aesthetic element of participatory performance that intersects with the three I discussed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5. The research design focused on exploring the processes through which individual responses become aesthetically part of the performance, although it included a blind spot on the audience taking part compared to a work in a professional context. It is likely that the responses within the performance would have been different in a professional context, as participants' key motivation would have been to have a fun, 'valuable' or interesting experience, which emphasises the aesthetic research participant role. Instead, a significant number of participants prioritised the pedagogical research participant role in their approach to being a participant, which impacted on their responses and the outcome of the performance. If I were to re-do the project, I would reconsider the research questions to incorporate an understanding that the HE context of practice research inevitably impacts on the participant's approach to taking part and stage the performances both within a HE context and in a professional one (without mention of the work as practice research). This way the participants' responses could be meaningfully compared, enabling an exploration of both the research questions and the implications of an explicit pedagogical context on participation.

The pedagogical context of practice research has implications for the efficacy of participation, as it frames the participant's activities in an inherently different way, which is fundamental to their perception of their role and any appropriate behaviour. This has consequences for the way practice research paradigms overlap and blend into a coherent methodology: in this project the significant outcomes discussed in this chapter arose from PbR practitioner-researcher reflection and participant research. In future



projects, as long as participants are not aware of the work as practice research, this could be developed further to situate the *process* of creating work as PbR (additional to the reflection and participant research discussed here), whilst the participant's *experience* of the work is considered as PaR (emphasising the embodied nature of the knowledge and understanding arising out of taking part). The challenge of the pedagogical context to the efficacy of practice research participation means that the outcomes and experiences of the work may not be directly (or fully) transferrable to participatory performance in a professional context. However, the processes illuminated by this PbR project are applicable beyond this particular performance, and within different contexts, as it extends the understanding of participation developed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5.

The project explored the processes by which subjective, individual interpretation impacts upon both the work and the participant's experience through a discussion of demand characteristics and proposing the aesthetics of uncertainty. These two concepts facilitate the analysis of participatory performance by providing a conceptual process through which the unpredictable, individual responses, and their impact on the performance, can be examined. The complex, layered engagement that resulted from the blurring of frames opens up a perspective on a wider set of participant roles within a performance, such as aesthetic, ethical and research roles. These roles, although complicated in this project by the pedagogical context, do have significance beyond this work. Any participatory performance will combine aesthetic and ethical participant roles and may also include a role suggested by the work's narrative (as an alternative to the research role in *The Experiment*). Each of these contain indications for the participant on how to approach what the performance situation asks of them. As in this project, these roles will shift and blur throughout a performance and are equally dependent on the context and the participant's *interpretation* of it.

The PbR outcomes of the project illustrate the differences between the work as designed by the artist and that experienced by the participants and highlights the tension between facilitation and manipulation in participatory performance, as well as between aesthetics and ethics. When creating participatory work, or whilst performing it, there is a tension between the direction the work is 'supposed' to go in, whilst ensuring that the participant's contributions feel meaningful to the performance's progress (as the processes of agency and meaning-making are inherently contextual). In *The Experiment*, as researcher-practitioner-performer, I wanted to be in control of the situation insofar as to facilitate the participants' exploration of the concepts I aimed

to examine. However, an important part of this was for the participants to examine their individual experience of being a participant, which required them to be able to respond and make decisions in their own way. This kind of experience is difficult to facilitate without manipulating the participant (a key aesthetic technique I discussed in Chapter 3, see p92-94) because the demand characteristics of a situation or a task include the participant's unconscious attempt to establish the meaning of their activity. If a participant perceives that a particular strategy or outcome is desirable for the success of the performance then most will take that approach to a task. As a result, the relationship between facilitation and manipulation mirrors that between aesthetics and ethics; although inherently connected in participation, there is a tension between the two.

The PbR outcomes of the project can be applied to participatory performance beyond the performance I have discussed in this chapter; despite the challenge of the pedagogical context to the effectiveness of practice research participation, the project elucidates the participant's complex, layered engagement and the processes through which this becomes part of their aesthetic experience. These processes are significant in the demand characteristics of being a participant, which represents the fourth aesthetic element of participation as a form. This element interacts with the three I discussed in previous chapters and together these four constitute the aesthetics of participatory performance. The impact of the demand characteristics on the other three aesthetic elements also highlights the enactive and dynamic nature of participatory performance, as the meaning-making processes at play within participation lie in the interaction between elements. This dimension also foregrounds the key characteristic of the system for analysis of participation as aesthetic form I propose in this thesis, which considers not only the individual elements but also how they mutually inform and impact on each other throughout the performance.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I argue for an enactive and relational understanding of participatory performance as aesthetic form, which enables a constructive perspective on the ethical implications as well as the way in which agency constitutes a fundamental aspect of participation. This perspective contrasts with that presented in Rancière's essay *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011), which has been of significance in discussions of participation (for instance recently in White, 2016). Rancière's essay argues that "Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting" (2011, p13) and that an artist who presupposes a particular interpretation or effect from the work is making assumptions that keep an unequal relationship between them and the spectators. Instead, Rancière suggests that mastery and knowledge should be uncoupled, in an analogy with pedagogy, so that the ignorant schoolmaster

does not teach his [sic] pupils *his* knowledge, but orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified. (2011, p11, emphasis original)

Applying Rancière's perspective to participatory performance highlights the importance of not presuming what may be significant in the participant's experience and the value of ensuring that scholarship goes beyond the critic or researcher's personal reflections. These ideas suggest a particular way of thinking about participation and enable a critique of the instrumentalised ethical view as a route to empowerment, whereby the act of taking part is more empowering than sitting in a dark auditorium.

Rancière's rethinking of the opposition between viewing and acting is useful, however it posits an 'emancipated' spectator who is separate from events in order to critically engage with them. This is a conceptualisation of audience engagement in theatre that runs counter to that put forward within this thesis, which has examined the fundamentally interconnected nature of participatory performance. I argue that it is in the interaction and mutual impact between elements that meaning is found as is exemplified by agency, which becomes meaningful through the relations between the agentive act and its context. Outside of a context there is no meaning as the action is isolated. As such, the perspective on participation proposed by this research is a fundamentally enactive and relational one, which disputes the idea of an emancipated spectator. Instead, it is Rancière's (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) theorising of equality, difference and dissensus that is constructively applied to participation, as discussed in Chapter 3. This thesis examines an enactive approach in relation to

participation, but it also applies to more traditional forms of audience engagement as interpretation processes create meaning through similar interactions between the work and the individual's context.

In this thesis I argue that a relational and enactive perspective is more appropriate to analysing the aesthetics and ethics of participatory performance than the approach indicated by Rancière (2011). The relational dimension of participation, which emphasises the mutual impact between elements, is key to the contribution this research makes to existing knowledge. Before discussing these contributions, as well as the possibilities for future research, the conclusion of this thesis will revisit the research questions. In response to the main research question, which asked how participatory performance operates as an aesthetic form, this thesis has examined four key aesthetic elements of participation:

- The intersubjective relationships
- The embodied engagement through doing
- The creative contribution made by participants
- The demand characteristics of being a participant

These elements each carry distinct aesthetic and ethical implications within a work and together elucidate both the predetermined content and the participants' responses and actions, as well as the way these two interact together to create a performance.

The second research question examined how participation implicates ethics. I have examined the inextricable connection between aesthetics and ethics in participatory performance and proposed an alterity ethical framework able to reconcile this relationship with aesthetics. Alterity emphasises the importance of respecting otherness and in participation this means not presuming what participants may or may not be able to deal with, as this removes their agency. Instead, alterity suggests that we are open to difference and emphasises the importance of creating systems capable of dealing with a range of responses. An alterity perspective also transforms the artist's duty *of* care into a duty *to* care, a shift that acknowledges the aesthetic nature of the situation and has significant implications for the participant's agency within the work. The connection between aesthetics and ethics is visible in each of the four aesthetic elements, which each carry ethical implications, and is exemplified in the discussion of agency.

Agency runs as a consistent thread throughout the thesis and the third research question explored how the participant's agency is conducted by the performers and the

situation. Each of the main chapters investigates agency in relation to one of the four aesthetic elements. The situation in a work, designed by the artist, develops intersubjective relationships that both constrain and develop participants' individual agency. Chapter 3 discusses social and shared agency, exploring the way participants generate meaning within a performance through participatory sense-making, whilst Chapter 6 examines the effect of group dynamics on decision-making processes and agency. The predetermined content and structure in a participatory work conducts the participant's agency through the affordances and opportunities for action suggested by the interaction design, which Chapter 4 explores in relation to phenomenology to articulate *doing*, which consists of agentive acts, as an aesthetic language in participation. The phenomenology of agency foregrounds its experiential character and highlights that the perception of agency is what makes it meaningful for the participant. This perception can stem from a pre-reflective sense of agency, such as in agency of engagement, or from an additional reflective attribution, for instance in narrative agency. This perspective explains the finding in Chapter 6 that the participant's experience of agency is diminished if there is little opportunity for them to decide their path through the work, which illustrates the effect of the systems that conduct the participant's agency on their experience. The process of creative contribution exemplifies the way the performers and situation conduct the participant's agency and Chapter 5 examines creative agency as a type that specifically describes this interaction between context and participant. The examination of agency in this thesis highlights that the significance of agency is derived from the environmental response to an action. This perspective underlines the importance of understanding the way agency is conducted because the context of participation not only impacts on the participant's actions but crucially also their *experience* of these.

In this thesis I propose a contextual understanding of agency in participation in response to the third research question, arguing for a reconceptualisation of the participant's agency. This reconceptualisation is significant beyond participation as form of art, as it highlights that the meaning of agentive acts (including those in everyday life) derives from their context. A contextual perspective situates agency not as something that is derived from the artist, the work or the situation the participant is placed in; instead it argues that the participant enters the performance with agency, which the work conducts in different ways, by for example restricting, emphasising or manipulating it to create an aesthetic experience. This perspective is significant beyond participatory performance as agency in our everyday lives exists within the same type of constructed situations. Our agency is limited by societal rules, other people and the

systems we work within (for instance academia). Participatory performance highlights the fact that agency exists within a context, but crucially that it is that very context that gives any action meaning. Participation also illustrates the limits to our agency in a way that is usually not apparent in everyday life; the overt aesthetic construction of participatory performance highlights the manipulation of agency. This overtness provides a perspective on ourselves in relation to the situation that is more difficult to achieve outside of an aesthetic frame. This dimension of participatory performance underlines the significance of analysing participation as aesthetic form.

In addition to the three research questions, I have considered ways to evaluate and analyse participatory performance in relation to two key contexts: the participant's individual experience and outside observation (by the artist or performer) of participants' decisions and actions. This exploration has combined audience research and practice research with a theoretical perspective based on enactive and embodied cognition (as discussed in Chapter 2) and it is in the synergies between these methods that the contributions of this research are found. For example, the nuanced understanding of agency that this thesis argues is at the heart of participation as an act, experience and practice is founded on:

- A philosophical understanding of agency
- A holistic appreciation of participants' experiences of agency
- An embodied engagement with the concept of agency through practice research

The synergies between these approaches, or methods of exploration, led to the contextual understanding of agency in participatory performance I proposed in Chapter 5, which builds on the understanding of social, phenomenological, meaningful and creative agency developed in this thesis. The combination of these methods enables a rigorous engagement with the *act* and the *experience* of participation in performance, which are also at the heart of the method for analysis I suggest in this thesis.

### *What can we do together that we cannot do apart?*

In this thesis I propose a system for analysing participatory performance as a fundamentally relational form, where the significance is not only in the four aesthetic elements but also in the mutual impact between them (see p45-48 for diagrams and a description of this system). This method is inspired by Dynamic Systems Theory, discussed in Chapter 5, and enabled by the combination of methodologies described in Chapter 2. The mutual impact between elements is significant, for instance a particular

task will have affordances that influence the way a participant carries it out, which subsequently ascribes further meaning to that task for other participants. To demonstrate the efficacy of this system, as well as elaborate on the approach, I will return to the three case studies discussed within this thesis. These are not intended to be examples of a full analysis of a performance, but instead aim to draw out what is gained by considering the connections between the elements to build on the analysis of those works in the previous chapters. The title for this section derives from the rulebook of *The Money* (2013) by Kaleider, a provocation that underlines the connection between the intersubjective nature of participation and the doing inherent in the form.

In Chapter 3 I examined the aesthetics of the interpersonal relationship, using *I Wish I Was Lonely* (2013b) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe as a case study (see p86 for a description). This discussion focused on aspects surrounding interpersonal relationships, between performer and participant as well as between participants, examining manipulation, joint meaning-making, power structures and shared agency. Exploring *IWIWL* from a relational perspective highlights that as the work uses people as material as the main facilitation strategy (see p40) the connection between interpersonal relationships and creative contributions is an appropriate starting point for analysis.

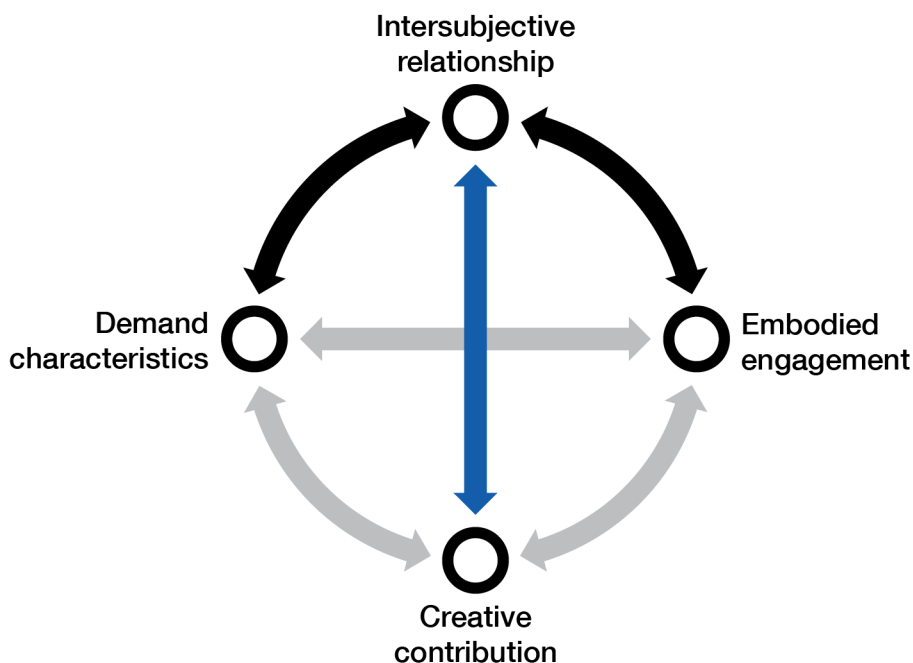


Figure 4: Analysis of *I Wish I Was Lonely* by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe

The mutual influence between the interpersonal relationships developed within *IWIWL* and the participants' creative contributions highlights the place of dialogue within the

performance (which goes beyond simply verbal dialogue). The participants are asked to contribute through various actions, including leaving a voicemail, sending a text message and holding eye contact with another participant for two minutes. Each of these actions mutually develop the interpersonal relationships between participants and with the performers as well as the content of the performance (through the contributions resulting from those actions). In Chapter 2 the discussion focused on how the performers' approachable nature built the relationships within the performance, which resulted in the participants making particular contributions, however a relational perspective on this additionally highlights how the process of making these contributions simultaneously develops the interpersonal relationships further. Additionally, the meaning of each is bound up in the context of the other; the contributions are made possible by a positive intersubjective relationship, but they are also adapted to suit the nature of the situation as the others present (and their verbal and nonverbal responses) make up the context that determines how suitable and creative the contributions are.

The concept of dialogue summarises the mutual impact between the interpersonal relationship and the other three elements in *I/W/W/L*. Throughout the performance there is an ongoing dialogue between participants as well as with the performers, which is not merely verbal but also mediated by mobile phones and nonverbal. This dialogue does not only consist of, or result in, the intersubjective relationships within the performance, but rather it arises out of the mutual influence between:

- The demand characteristics of the situation (which impact on the participants' interpretation of their role and of the suitable actions and responses within the performance situation)
- The participants' embodied engagement within the work (which is influenced by the demand characteristics and the intersubjective relationships, whilst simultaneously adjusting and altering both)
- The creative contributions that become part of the performance content (which are influenced by the demand characteristics and arise out of the participant's embodied engagement, but also themselves form part of the interpretation process of the former)
- The intersubjective relationships between participants and with the performers (which are a significant part of the demand characteristics, whilst developing in response to the participants' interpretation of their role, as well as influencing the way they carry out any tasks requested)



Each of these elements simultaneously gives meaning to a situation whilst also continuously adapting to it. Dialogue arises out of the interactions between these four elements, as well as partly determining each of them, and exemplifies the relational perspective proposed within this thesis.

The second case study, *Adventure 1* (2015) by Coney, combines several strategies for facilitating participation and I will focus here on the role that participants are given within the performance narrative (see p133 for a description). *Adventure 1* situates participants as ‘operatives’ who are first given instructions to explore a specific area of London to learn more about their target, before being given a mission to carry out. The mission is followed by a debrief, which repositions the participant role closer to ‘being themselves’. Both versions of the participant role come with specific activities and embodied engagement in the work, which I examined in Chapter 4 in relation to affordances, the boundary between real and fiction, and phenomenological or experienced agency. Considering the role of the participant suggests a focus on the connection between embodied engagement and demand characteristics, which highlights the mutual influence between the affordances of the role presented and the actions through which a participant is invited to engage with the work.

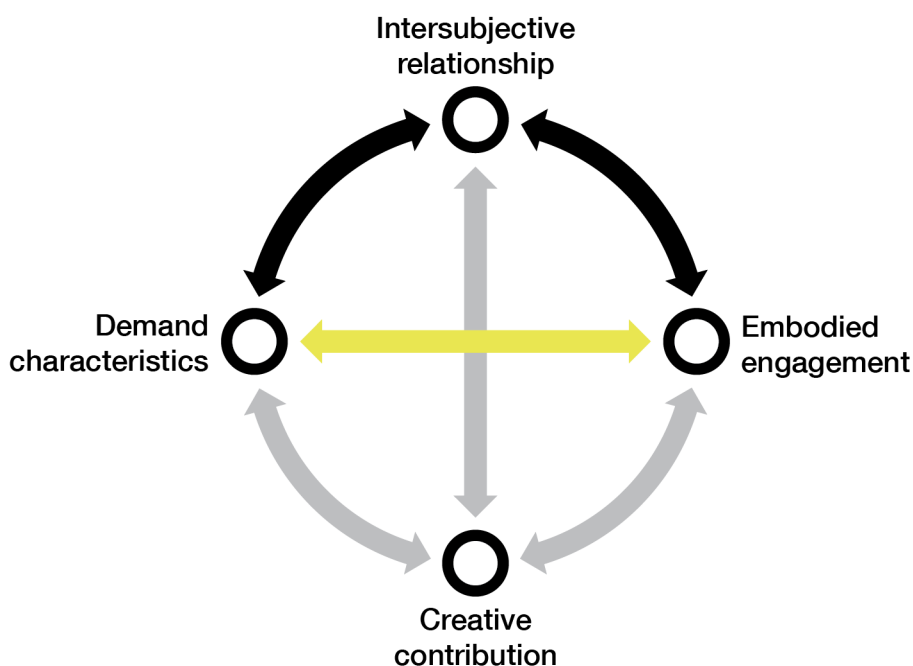


Figure 5: Analysis of Adventure 1 by Coney

The mutual influence between the demand characteristics and the participant’s embodied engagement elucidates the development of the participant’s engagement within the performance (which additionally impacts on the creative contributions they

make). This focus results in a better understanding of how participants engage within the work, which is determined by the demand characteristics and affordances at the start of the performance. This impacts on the participant's choices in how to engage with the particular actions within the work (from being in the world of the performance to stealing the bag), whilst each of these actions supplements the demand characteristics and affordances of the work that continue to determine the way in which the participant makes decisions and interprets meaning.

The relationship between demand characteristics and embodied engagement is also significantly related to the creative contributions participants make and the intersubjective relationships that develop in *Adventure 1*. An interpretation of a role contains suggestions for how to interact with others, which develop throughout the work in response to the demand characteristics and affordances for embodied engagement, resulting in actions that themselves further develop the relationships. This perspective is essential in examining the aesthetic significance of the shift in role between the first half of the performance and the debrief section, which effectively removes a layer of fiction and asks participants to respond as themselves. An understanding of the continuing mutual development of the demand characteristics of the work (which determine the participant's interpretation of their role) and the embodied engagement in the work (which provides the participant with a way to engage physically and verbally with the work) creates a perspective on the aesthetic experience of the performance. This perspective, for instance, highlights the significance of being asked to examine your own agency in relation to the financial system. Similarly, the intersection between those two elements and the intersubjective relationships developed throughout the performance enables an insight into how the group dynamics shift throughout the duration of the work as well as impact on the participant's potential willingness to contribute anything personal during the debrief section; both of which are key aspects of participants' shared meaning-making.

The final case study I will examine here is *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (2014), focusing on the mutual influences between two strategies for facilitating participation, narrative decisions and game theatre, to further elucidate meaningful agency (see p146-147 for a description). Participants in *Early Days* are able to make narrative decisions throughout the performance through several structures, including group voting, conversation and the board game format of Act 2 where participants are challenged to use the available resources to solve as many problems as possible. In Chapter 5 I discussed the creative contribution as both an act and a process through

which participants' responses and decisions impact on the performance, with a particular focus on agency. My analysis of *Early Days* in this chapter focused on the participants' narrative agency, which becomes meaningful when it is perceived, and applied a Dynamic Systems Theory approach to examine the process within the performance that leads to the narrative patterns at performance level. Examining the mutual influence between creative contributions and embodied engagement (the starting point for the strategy of narrative decisions) and between demand characteristics and creative contributions (the starting point for game theatre) offers a more nuanced perspective on the decision-making and meaning-making processes at play within the work.<sup>86</sup>

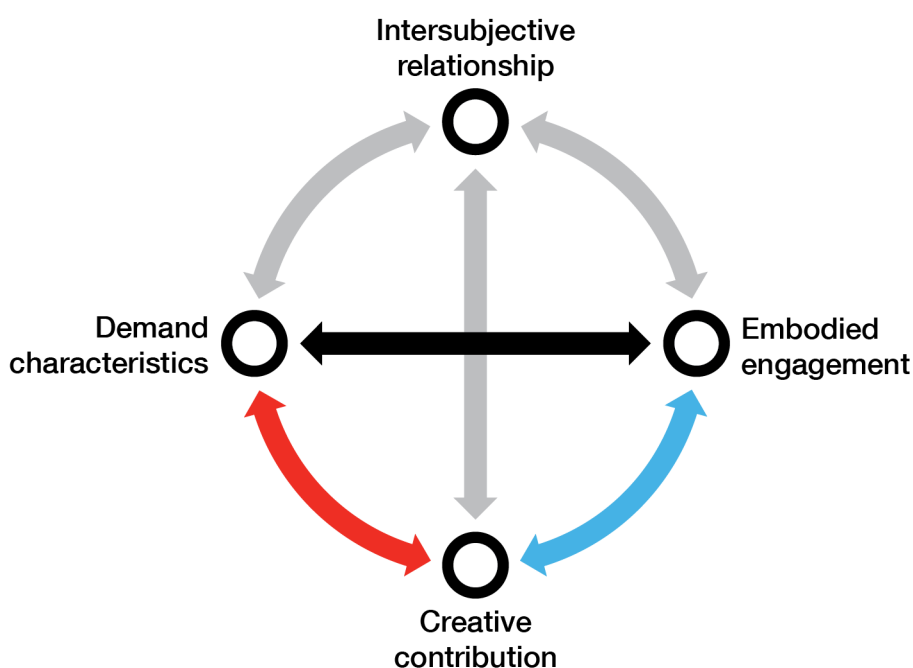


Figure 6: Analysis of *Early Days* (of a Better Nation) by Coney

The mutual influences between these three elements highlight the complex interactions that lead to meaningful agency in participatory performance. The predetermined structure present within the performance, through its affordances, suggests actions for the participants to engage with the work as well as indicating the potential meaning of these actions through the demand characteristics of the situation. The participants' creative contributions interact with this existing structure, which further adapts their understanding of the affordances and demand characteristics in operation; for instance, a participant's approach to engaging with the work and the response from the context

<sup>86</sup> This example also highlights the flexible nature of the proposed system for analysis; the starting points suggested by the strategies for facilitation are only suggestions and are responsive to the particulars of the performance being analysed.

either reinforces or updates participants' understanding of what behaviour is appropriate to the situation and what potential meaning their actions hold. This in turn influences future decisions and actions, which follow on from participants' ongoing interpretations of the affordances and demand characteristics. However, it is important to highlight that this is a process that also impacts retrospectively on participants' experiences. Ongoing updates and alterations to a participant's interpretation of their role within the performance (which includes appropriate actions and an understanding of the meaning of these actions) are a key part of the retrospective understanding of the meaning of any actions taken. This understanding includes any impact made on the context and the reflective attribution of agency, whilst also simultaneously influencing future decision-making.

The perspective enabled by considering the mutual impact between these three elements creates a more nuanced understanding of meaningful agency than that developed in Chapter 5 (which listed decision-making and participants' interpretation of meaning as part of the emergent narrative patterns). The relational perspective discussed here elucidates the mutual influence between decision-making and meaning-making processes as fundamental to meaningful agency in participatory performance. Decision-making is influenced by the affordances for embodied engagement, the feedback from the context in relation to creative contributions made, and the appropriate responses determined by the demand characteristics. This process intersects with the meaning ascribed by the participant to the performance, their own experience, and their actions, as the demand characteristics also suggest the value of a participant's contributions and actions. The intersubjective relationship is not a separate element to this, as relationships similarly develop throughout the performance and mutually impact on decisions made and the meaning interpreted by participants (highlighting the shared nature of meaning-making processes in participation).

These three brief examples illustrate the benefits of the proposed system for analysis, which is able to develop a nuanced understanding of the aesthetics of participatory performance. I have discussed the four elements separately within the thesis as well as developed a relational perspective on participatory performance, which together with the Dynamic Systems Theory approach discussed in Chapter 5 form the system for analysis that I introduced in Chapter 1 and have developed here. This relational system is the main contribution to knowledge in this thesis, as it connects the new understanding of participatory performance; including the contextual approach to agency, the combination of methodologies, and the fundamentally relational

perspective on participatory performance as aesthetic form. The relational approach to analysing participation I propose in this thesis is analogous to the structure of a participatory performance itself; significant aspects of a work are discovered in the connections between elements, whilst the meaning of the performance cannot be generated by any of the elements or participants alone.

### *Reflections*

As well as the three research questions, this project began with two key aims: to propose an aesthetics of participation that centres on the act and the experience of taking part and to develop a system for analysis appropriate to this aesthetics. During the research process, agency emerged as the central aspect and became significant to each of the aesthetic elements that define participation as a form discussed in this thesis. This significance arises out of relational nature of participation, which highlights the connections between context, others and meaning. Participatory performance is an inherently intersubjective activity that creates an aesthetic frame for participants to engage in *doing* together. Joint action is significant, it foregrounds how others restrict and create a context for one's actions, both in terms of how others impact on the possible actions in a situation, but also how one's actions impact on them in turn. This relational understanding of ourselves, and our actions, in a context made up of other people feels significant in contemporary society where politics appears increasingly aimed at fracturing relationships between communities of people.

Art offers an opportunity to gain insight into the embodied nature of meaning and understanding (Johnson, 2007). Participation as an aesthetic form, specifically, can teach us more about the way meaning arises out of our active interactions with an environment or situation. Participatory performance as aesthetic form engages us with the world in a significant way, by situating the participants, their actions and their engagement with others in a meaningful relationship to the work. Participation offers the opportunity to (try to) make an impact on the situation that one is placed within, but within a safe space where the significance of actions is altered. As such, it can create a meaningful and affective experience for the participant that in some cases may have a small impact beyond the aesthetic situation. The potential impact can follow, for instance, from an experience of agency within a clearly defined context, which enables the deconstruction of power relationships that can subsequently be modelled on real life situations and systems.

The nature of agency as examined in this thesis, which derives its meaning from the context it exists within, also situates participatory performance as a productive way to consider large philosophical questions such as whether we have free will. Free will, with no limits on agency at all, suggests that people can step outside of their context to make decisions. However, the relational and enactive perspective I discuss in this thesis argues that this is never a possibility; we can *only* make decisions and act in relation to the contexts we exist within (whether this is other people, a larger societal system, or a participatory performance). A human being is inherently part of the situation they find themselves in, which is a perspective that refocuses attention on the way we act *in relation to others*. This perspective foregrounds the ethical dimension of agency, which identifies how one's agency always impacts on others as well as being constrained by them.

One key finding from the audience research on agency is the way previous experience of participatory works impact on decision-making processes and actions taken (see discussion of *Adventure 1*, 2015, by Coney in Chapter 4). This finding suggests that experience of taking part develops the participant's ability to perceive the power relations at play in the work and detect how to make an impact on the performance. This ability leads to an understanding of the relationship between their own actions and the work, which develops the participant's perception of the feedback process between an action and the response from the environment, suggesting that they will be more likely to experience their agency within the work. This is significant beyond participatory performance, as there is a potential to transfer this learning outside of the work. This presents opportunities for further research to examine the processes that underlie the perception of agency and to use participatory performance as a type of 'live laboratory' for studying such processes. This would include practice research as well as participant studies and has the potential to elucidate the possibilities for transferring any potential impact from participation outside of the performance.

A significant finding from the analysis of the audience research data is the presence of a considerable gap between agentic behaviour and the experience of agency, which is at times bridged by the participant's reflection. This happened in some of the interviews conducted and is likely to take place when a writer reflects on their experience in relation to analysing the work. The research in this thesis demonstrates that agency of engagement is experienced more easily than narrative agency, due to the necessity of a reflective component in the participant's sense of agency that perceives an impact resulting from their action. There are two significant inferences to

be drawn from this when creating participatory performance: firstly to ensure that participants are able to make some simple decisions with immediate, embodied impact on their experience (such as being able to choose their path through it) and secondly to include a reflective component that provides the opportunity to make connections between their actions and the impact (either during or after the performance).

Developing work so that participants are more likely to perceive their agency, whilst being aware that there is no way to guarantee this, increases the possibility that they will consider their actions as meaningful within the performance. Most research on participatory performance combines the writer's personal reflection on the experience with a more objective analysis of the situation (e.g. Alston, 2016a, Machon, 2013, and White, 2013), which assumes all experiences of participation are broadly similar. The new understanding on audience perception of agency presented in this thesis highlights the need for further study into the processes at play in participants' experience and expression of agency in participation.

The audience research represents an essential dimension, and original contribution in its method for examining aesthetic experience, as well as a limitation in the project. Although the response to the audience research has far exceeded expectations, with between 50% and 80% of participants taking part, the issue inherent in any audience research is of *who* takes part. Participants who enjoyed the experience are more likely to respond. In fact, the only really negative response I received was written on the back of a questionnaire, left anonymously at the box office, and criticised the effect of my audience research in creating a cafe full of people completing questionnaires instead of talking to each other. The anonymous commenter suggested that this "alters people's long term relationships to their experience" and amounted to "creative vandalism". My research indicates that reflecting on one's experience is in fact more likely to lead to perceived agency, however the anonymous responder does illustrate the importance of creating audience research methods that are able to capture a wide range of responses. Such methods should combine a range of approaches so that those who feel their experience cannot be captured in a questionnaire are still able to take part (if they wish to).

Two specific directions in which the audience research methodology could be developed in the future include a longitudinal element in the form of a memory study (examining how participation impacts on the memory of the work) and to incorporate more experimental strategies for capturing participants' experiences. One promising approach that is only partly represented in the method described in Chapter 2 is

Participatory Action Research, which ideally includes the participants in the creation of the research methodology itself. If the study was planned in a different way (e.g. not examining the audience that turns up on the day) then this may enable more participants to express their experience in a way that feels meaningful to them, thereby creating a richer set of data. Such an approach, and resulting outcomes, has the potential to present a more nuanced understanding of the participant's experience of agency as well as any potential impact from this experience beyond the performance.

The scope of the research has been limited by necessity. In focusing on aesthetics and ethics, there is an important discussion around the politics of participation to be developed (which needs to be founded on the understanding of aesthetics I propose in this thesis). This discussion would build on the articulate consideration of politics and immersive theatre by Alston in *Beyond Immersive Theatres* (2016a) and Harvie's astute discussion of politics and socially engaged practices in *Fair Play* (2013), as well as engaging with Nicklin's articulation of *First Person Theatre* (2013) as offering potential political empowerment. Participation enables a perspective on one's action and its impact within a context and as such can have powerful, if indirect, political consequences. However, it is essential to not *assume* that such consequences occur as a matter of course and to consider the plurality of experiences participation creates. Therefore, a further research project, building on the outcomes of this thesis, is necessary to investigate the political implications of participatory performance as well as further elucidating the processes underlying the link between agentive behaviour and the experience of agency. In carrying out such a project it will be essential to develop further research methodologies that are fit for purpose and enable a similar relational and enactive perspective as used in this research.

In this thesis I have examined participatory performance through three distinct lenses: aesthetics, ethics and agency. These three lenses create a way of looking at participation that foregrounds *doing* and indicates a system for analysis constructed around the act and the experience as key to understanding the form. The resulting relational and enactive perspective presents a system for analysis that incorporates the relationships between the aesthetic elements and also points the way to further necessary research to create a more precise and nuanced understanding of participation. This presents a departure from the often-used perspective of an emancipated spectator as proposed by Rancière (2011) and instead presents a relational, situated and contextual understanding of participation (which can be extrapolated to theatre more widely). This relational and enactive approach sees the



participant as an essential part of the situation and opposes the notion that it is possible, or desirable, that they consider themselves as removed from it. The relational and enactive approach I propose in this thesis also enables a nuanced and appropriate perspective on agency in participatory performance, which is fundamentally contextual. This understanding of participation is made possible by the combination of research methods (integrating multiple perspectives) and has refocused the study of participation on the *doing*, which can serve as a foundation for more research into participation as an aesthetic form.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Informed consent

This form was provided to all audience research participants. Those who were interviewed were asked to sign a copy whilst the act of completing a questionnaire after having seen this form was considered as consent.

#### Informed Consent

**Title of Research:** The aesthetics and ethics of participatory performance; exploring the experience of the participant.

**Researcher:** Astrid Breeel

Before agreeing to take part in this research, it is important that you read the following information. This statement describes the purpose of the research, who is funding it, what aspect of the research you are being asked to take part in, the risks and benefits, whether you will have any costs or payments for completing the research and your rights within the study. It will also describe how information will be stored and who you can contact with further questions about the research. You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

**Purpose of research:** This research project is a part of my PhD research. It investigates participatory performance and the experience of the participant; particularly looking at the agency of the participant, the embodied aspects of the experience of taking part and the way this experience shapes the memory of the event.

**Funders:** The University of Kent

**What you are being asked to take part in:** You are being asked to take part in audience research; answering questions about your experience of the performance, using different methods and over a period of time. There will be different options of recording your experience and these will be made clear to you during the event. You may choose to respond in a different way and at any point can request to complete these exercises in a private space. Questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups will be part of the methodology and you may be asked to take part in these either immediately after the event or in the future.

In future, you will be approached for further feedback to relate your memory of the experience. When this happens, you will be fully informed of the scope and methodology and are free to agree or decline to take part. You will be reminded of your right in the informed consent when this happens.

Events might be documented using video, audio or photography; this will be clearly stated on notices before you enter the space.

**Risks:** There are no anticipated risks involved with this research.

**Benefits:** Possible benefits may include an interesting discussion of your experience of the performance, and an opportunity to express this experience in different ways.



**Costs and payments:** There will be no costs associated with the study for you. There will also be no payments made to you for taking part in the study.

**How your information will be stored:** All questionnaires and transcripts will be anonymous and confidential. This means that your identity will be protected and the information will not be shared with unauthorised persons. Any references to your identity in the information will be removed before publication of the research. All personal/sensitive data will be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed, or if necessary stored for a maximum of three years, after which it will be securely destroyed. The information gathered from the workshops, questionnaires and interviews will be stored securely and digital copies will be stored on a password protected hard-drive. The key for identifying participants in pseudonymised documents will be stored separately from the rest of the data.

**Uses, publication and presentation of the research:** The outcomes of this research will be published as part of a PhD thesis. Parts of this research will be presented at conferences and published in academic journals. The artist may also use the material for evaluation documents and advertising of future performances.

**Right to withdraw:** You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time and for any reason. Any data gathered up until that point will continue to be used for this research, under the conditions of anonymity described above.

**Questions/Contact:** If you have any questions about the research, please contact Astrid Breel at amb73@kent.ac.uk

Should any complaints arise, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr Angeliki Varakis-Martin at A.Varakis@kent.ac.uk

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I have read and understood this Informed Consent form provided to me. I agree to participate and I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any later date if I wish. I am over 18 years of age.

I agree to assign copyright to Astrid Breel and to waive my moral rights in any oral statements, written statements or audio recordings given as a part of the research; and also to assign copyright and waive moral rights in any photographs or other visual recording. I agree that all of this information can be processed in order to facilitate the research being undertaken. I agree that this will be for educational purposes and in perpetuity.

I would like to be informed when the results of this research have been published: yes / no (please delete)

Name:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The best way to contact me is (please complete at least one and indicate your preference):

Email:

Telephone:

Address:

## **Appendix 2 – *I Wish I Was Lonely* by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe**

The audience research on *I Wish I Was Lonely* by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 at The Island, Bristol, and on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2014 at the Oxford Playhouse. Due to the nature of this performance I was unable to observe the shows that the research participants took part in, a decision taken in conversation with the artists. The show finishes with the participants leaving in their own time after agreeing to meet at some point in the future and so the participant I would have been partnered with would have not had the full experience. There were two performances on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October and I observed the earlier show, supplemented by observations on a video provided by the artists from a performance that took place in Edinburgh in August 2013. Overall nineteen participants took part, with nineteen questionnaires completed and five participants interviewed individually (although one interview was unable to be included in the analysis as it took part ten days after the performance and it was clear the participant was no longer close enough to the performance to accurately recall their experience).

### *Coding – measures for observation of agency*

A framework to be completed for each invitation from the artists (or the work) or an instance of behaviour that displays agency.

#### Invitation:

The artists, performers, or something within the performance invites a response or an action from the participant. Depending on the performance, invitations from performers and invitations from the environment may be separately coded.

1. Implicit (e.g. extending a hand towards a participant to ask them to stand up)
2. Explicit (e.g. a direct question, or verbal request for action)

#### Display of agency:

A display of agentic behaviour from the participant, either in response to a request or initiated by the participant themselves.

1. Reactive (e.g. answering a question, either verbally or physically; reacting to a trigger or command; or responding to a request such as placing your phone in a circle on the floor)
2. Interactive (e.g. completing a task which involves mutual activity, such as sending a text message to be read out; or engaging in a 2-way conversation)
3. Proactive (displaying self-initiated behaviour, such as leaving the space or initiating verbal or physical communication)

*Description:* provide a brief description of the behaviour observed (e.g. left a voicemail).

*Duration:* time of agentive behaviour in seconds.

*Result / consequence:* provide a brief description of the outcome of the behaviour (e.g. text message sent got read out by performer, and so became part of the performance text).

*Refusal / subversion:* Note how many, if any, participants in the group refused or subverted the invitation by the artist (e.g. 1 participant refused to place phone in the circle on the floor).

*Other notes:* Any further information, responses or details about the situation (e.g. the context of the situation, the body language of the participant, or the response of the rest of the audience to the participant).

#### Coding form

Performance:

Date:

Live / recording:

	Implicit		Explicit
<b>Invitation / request</b>			
	Reactive	Interactive	Proactive
<b>Display of agency</b>			
<b>Description</b>			
<b>Duration (in seconds)</b>			
<b>Result / consequence</b>			

<b>Refusal / subversion</b>	
<b>Other notes</b>	

*I Wish I Was Lonely audience questionnaire 1 (used in Bristol)*

Name:

Date of completion:

**Which moments of the performance stand out to you right now?**

**What do you remember about these moments?**

**Which moment of your interaction was the most meaningful to you?**

**How do you feel about your relationship with your phone?**

*I Wish I Was Lonely questionnaire 2 (used in Oxford)*

Name:

Email address:

Please answer the questions as best possible, even if you are not sure of the answer.

**How often do you attend participatory performance? Please tick the most appropriate**

Very rarely     Once every three months     Every month     At least once every 2 weeks

Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your feelings about the following statements:

**I felt a strong sense of agency during the performance (i.e. the ability to make free choices)**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I made a significant contribution to the work**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I did not feel that other participants made a significant contribution to the work**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I felt that the interactive moments in the work were the most meaningful**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I did not enjoy being able to make choices in the performance**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I considered refusing one (or more) of the requests from the performers**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I felt a strong bond with (an)other participant(s)**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**I felt a strong relationship with the performers**

Strongly disagree    1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7    Strongly agree

**Please describe the moment(s) of the performance that meant the most to you.**

**Which moment of your participation was the most meaningful to you? Please explain why.**

**How do you feel about your relationship with your phone?**

### *I Wish I Was Lonely interview questions*

This interview will be recorded, but this is only for my records, and won't be used for anything else. Is that OK with you?

#### Key questions

- How did your sense of agency change through the work?
- Do you feel like you made a change in the work?
- If you could do it again, is there anything you would do differently?
- Which of the moments of participation was the most meaningful to you?
- Did you feel manipulated at any point?

Prompts for more depth: what was that like – how did that feel – what did you think?

#### Follow up if time:

- How did you feel about the invitation to take part?
- Were there any other ways you wanted to interact with the work which weren't invited?
- How do you feel about your interactions within the performance?
- Did you feel any pressure?
- Did you consider not taking part?
- How did you feel about the choices of how to take part?

### **Appendix 3 – *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney**

The audience research on *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (represented by Tom Bowtell and Annette Mees) took place across three performances on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 at Ovalhouse, London. Ninety-four participants took part, with ninety-two completing a questionnaire and seven individual interviews. The observed performances were the same the research participants took part in. A trailer video is available here: <https://youtu.be/BpuzWNWxWss>

#### *Coding – measures for observation of creative contribution*

A framework to be completed for individual contributions, either observing the nearest participant during a section where all are asked to contribute or focusing on a participant who decides to contribute without a specific invitation.

#### Basic definition:

A creative contribution is a response from a participant to the specific situation they are within that adds to the content by creating a new idea, object, or physical action within the performance. This response is individual although it will come together with the contributions from other participants to create the specific performance.

Creative contributions are closely linked to agency (indeed it may be said that creativity is a special form of agency), but the focus here is on the way that the participant's contribution adds something that was not there before. The measure of creativity is therefore reflected in how much the new content differs from that which was already present in the performance and whether the contribution was specifically invited or not.

Three types of creative contribution are defined here:

- Reactive (e.g. answering a question, either verbally or physically; responding to a stimulus or request such as voting)
- Interactive (e.g. a contribution directly in response to an explicit invitation within the work, such as engaging in a two-way dialogue with the performance in order to move on the content or structure of the work or engaging in a conversation to persuade another of your opinion, idea, or solution to a challenge)



- Proactive (e.g. a self-initiated contribution, made without an explicit invitation from something within the performance, such as a change of direction in the work or a suggestion of revolution)

Aspects that will be observed for each instance of creative contribution:

*Invitation:* the artists, performers, or something within the performance invites a response or an action from the participant. Invitations from performers, other participants, and the environment will be separately coded; as well as whether they are explicit or implicit in nature:

- Implicit (e.g. the structure of the work includes a section where leaders are elected and so suggests that participants can put themselves forward for this role)
- Explicit (e.g. a direct question, or verbal request for action)

*Description:* provide a brief description of the creative contribution observed (e.g. offered a solution to a problem that needs to be solved).

*Consequence / significance:* provide a brief description of the outcome of the behaviour (e.g. the audience decided to vote for a leaderless system, which became the system of governance for the second half of the show).

*Link to other contributions:* provide brief information on how this contribution links to those of others within the work (e.g. the rest of the audience voted for a different system but a revolution towards the end of the show meant that it was overthrown or another participant responded to this solution and a modified version was agreed upon).

*Further notes:* Any further information, responses or details about the situation (e.g. the context of the situation, the body language of the participant, or the response of the rest of the audience to the participant).

### *Creative Contribution Coding*

Performance:

Date:

Live / recording:

	Implicit	Explicit	
<b>Invitation (from whom)</b>			
	Reactive	Interactive	Proactive
<b>Contribution</b>			
<b>Description</b>			
<b>Significance / consequence</b>			
<b>Link to other contributions</b>			
<b>Further notes</b>			

*Early Days (of a better nation) questionnaire*

Name:

Email address:

Please answer the questions as best possible, even if you are not sure of the answer.

**How often do you attend participatory performance? Please tick the most appropriate**

Very rarely    Once every three months    Every month    At least once every 2 weeks

Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your feelings about the following statements:

**I made a significant contribution to the performance**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**The opportunity to participate made the experience more meaningful**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**My contributions made the experience more enjoyable**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**My contributions did not become an important part of the work**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**The ability to influence the outcome of the show was important to my experience**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**I did not feel a strong connection with other participants during the performance**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**My contributions significantly changed the outcome of the work**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**Please describe the moment(s) of the performance that were the most significant to you.**

**Which part of the performance do you feel you contributed to most? Please explain why.**

**Was there a moment in the performance that made you reconsider your view on (an aspect of) politics? If so, please describe.**

### *Early Days interview questions*

This interview will be recorded, but this is only for my records, and won't be used for anything else. Is that OK with you?

- Tell me your story – what happened to you?
- At what points did you feel you contributed something to the work?
- Describe how this happened – how important was it to your experience?
- What did your contributions mean to you?
- How much do you feel you contributed to the work overall?
- Do you feel you've influenced the outcome of the show? Did that change your experience?
- How did you feel about the invitation to contribute?

Prompts for more depth: what was that like – how did that feel – what did you think?

## Appendix 4 – *Adventure 1* by Coney

The audience research on *Adventure 1* by Coney (represented by William Drew and Tassos Stevens) took place in the centre of London (the location is not disclosed to the participants until just before the performance) on six performances on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2015. A total of thirty-nine participants took part, all completing a questionnaire and five were interviewed individually. The performances that were observed were the same that the research participants took part in and the process of this is discussed in Chapter 2.

### *Adventure 1* observation

Section 1 – Individual, covert journeys whilst listening to the audio tracks. Observe 2 participants in key locations.

Location:

Walking speed	Slowly	Average pace	Quickly
Posture	Upright / confident	Neutral	Slumped
Proxemics	Within 1m	Within 2m	Within 5m
Attention / gaze	Phone	Between phone and environment	Looking around

Notes:

Section 2 – From the meeting on the steps to the stealing and returning of the bag. Observe 1 participant during the discussion on the steps and then focus on the one that appears likely to take action

Discussion – covert audio recording

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

Tailing + stealing

Walking speed	Slowly	Average pace	Quickly
Posture	Upright / confident	Neutral	Slumped

Brief description of the action (from memory):

Section 3 – From sitting down at the table to discuss to the end of the show. Observe 1 participant throughout, at intervals or when something of note happens.

Role of the participant in previous section

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

Participation in discussion (in relation to the rest of the group):

*Adventure 1 questionnaire*

Name:

Email address:

Please answer the questions as best possible, even if you are not sure of the answer.

**How often do you attend participatory performance? Please tick the most appropriate**

Very rarely    Once every three months    Every month    At least once every 2 weeks

Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your feelings about the following statements:

**My physical actions were significant to my experience**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**The task of blending in was a meaningful part of the experience**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**My actions did not help me feel part of the work**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**My actions contributed to my interpretation of the work**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**Having to be covert did not change my behaviour**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**I had a strong voice in the discussion on whether and how to steal the bag**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**I had a strong voice in the debrief discussion**

Strongly disagree   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7   Strongly agree

**Please describe the moment(s) of the performance that meant the most to you.**

**Why are these moments meaningful to you?**

**Which physical activity was the most important in your experience?**

*Adventure 1 interview*

**Tell me the story of your experience – what happened to you?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**Which of your actions was most meaningful?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**Why / how did it feel?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**Did being covert change your behaviour? How?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**How did your physical activity impact on your experience of the work?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**What did you enjoy doing most?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**What was most difficult to do?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**How did you make decisions in the work and what were they influenced by?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**How did you relate to the fiction of the work in different sections – how did that impact on your experience and decision-making?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration

**How did your agency change in the duration of the work?**

Posture	Upright	Neutral	Slumped
No gesture	Hands only	Hands + arms	Demonstration



## **Appendix 5 – *The Experiment* Documentation materials**

The USB supplied with this thesis contains a video of *The Experiment*, performed by Astrid Breel, Dieter Declerq, Chris Dingwall-Jones, Tory Gillespie, Sophie Lovelace, Hannah Newman and Robbie Wilson. The video is sixty-nine minutes long and made up of documentation footage, participant responses during the performances and audio interviews conducted afterwards.

The 'Tracks' folder also contains thirty-five audio tracks to accompany Chapter 6, each consisting of edited clips from post-performance participant interviews.

### Chapter 6 Track list

- **Track 1:** No 1-3, No 1-8 and No 1-11
- **Track 2:** No 1-9
- **Track 3:** No 1-16
- **Track 4:** No 1-12 and No 1-14
- **Track 5:** No 1-12 and No 1-16
- **Track 6:** No 2-5
- **Track 7:** No 1-14
- **Track 8:** No 1-9
- **Track 9:** No 2-5
- **Track 10:** No 2-5
- **Track 11:** No 1-14
- **Track 12:** No 1-14
- **Track 17:** No 1-12
- **Track 13:** No 1-16
- **Track 14:** No 1-3
- **Track 15:** No 1-12 and No 2-3
- **Track 16:** No 2-5
- **Track 18:** No 2-9
- **Track 19:** No 2-5
- **Track 21:** No 1-14
- **Track 20:** No 1-3, No 2-3 and No 1-11
- **Track 22:** No 2-3
- **Track 23:** No 1-11

- **Track 24:** No 1-16 and No 2-5
- **Track 25:** No 2-3
- **Track 26:** No 1-9
- **Track 28:** No 1-16 and No 1-9
- **Track 27:** No 1-3 and 1-12
- **Track 29:** No 2-9 and No 2-5
- **Track 30:** No 1-12
- **Track 31:** No 1-9, No 1-11 and No 1-16
- **Track 32:** No 2-5
- **Track 33:** No 1-16, No 2-9 and No 1-9
- **Track 34:** No 1-11 and No 1-3
- **Track 35:** No 1-14

## **Appendix 6 – *The Experiment* script**

### **Induction**

#### Welcome

Principal Investigator (PI):

- *Thank you all for taking part in *The Experiment**
- *Before we can begin, you need to be inducted anonymised for the duration of the experiment*
- *Please be aware that by taking part in *The Experiment* you have consented to being filmed for research purposes. This is for our safety as well as yours.*
- *Whilst you are waiting, please complete a few short questions on a questionnaire that the researcher will hand out*

#### Induction process

One researcher takes photos and another hands out the numbers/notebooks/pens. A third researcher handles the questionnaires and the fourth is downstairs to direct people.

- Fill in sheet with participant numbers
- Take photos
- Hand out notebook
- Give sticker to wear
- Decide groups (split those that came together)

#### Introduction to the Game

Principal Investigator (PI):

- *Welcome to the Experiment. From this moment on, please only refer to fellow players by their number and make sure your number is clearly visible at all times*
- *As you know, *The Experiment* is designed to find out what makes a good player and who the best player present today is.*
- *We will play in three rounds. In each round, and after each test, you will be asked to complete a short self-assessment. In your notebook you will find the self-assessment question on the first page. Each time you complete a self-assessment please note the activity you have just done and number your answers in relation to the number of the questions.*

- *Round 1 is to assess what kind of player you are. In Round 2 you will be tested on what you think makes a good player and in Round 3 we will play The Game in order to find who the best player present here today is.*
- *The Best Player will not only take home the trophy but also win a cash prize I have here in this envelope. I will not yet reveal the amount of the prize, but there are 5 notes inside it.*
- *Could the Observer please step forward? Please do not reveal to anyone the value of the notes but could you please confirm to all the players that there is genuine currency inside here? Thank you.*
- *We will now start Round 1 to assess what type of player you are*
- Call numbers to rooms

### Round 1

Participants take part in the Tests (the individual scripts are included in Appendices 10 – 14) and are collected by the Researcher and taken to the next space before each Test starts.

<u>Group 1</u>	J6 – Personality test	J2 – Interpersonal skills test	J1 – Playfulness test	J5 – Consensus test
<u>Group 2</u>	J5 – Creativity test	J6 – Personality test	J2 – Interpersonal skills test	J1 – Playfulness test
<u>Group 3</u>	J1 – Playfulness test	J5 – Creativity test	J6 – Personality test	J2 – Interpersonal skills test
<u>Group 4</u>	J2 – Interpersonal skills test	J1 – Playfulness test	J5 – Consensus test	J6 – Personality test

PI takes participants for Interview (for script see Appendix 15):

Slot 1: If group 4 is uneven then interview from J2.

Slot 2: If group 1 is uneven then interview from J2, otherwise J1/5.

Slot 3: If there is a group 4 and if group 2 is uneven then take 1 to J5, otherwise from J1. Interview from J1 or J6.

Slot 4: If group 3 is uneven then take 1 to J5, otherwise from J1. Interview from J1 or J6.

### Round 2

## Introduction

PI:

- *Well done for making it this far in The Experiment. You are doing very well.*
- *We are getting closer to playing The Game.*
- *Round 2 will start in a moment.*
- *In Round 2 you will be making some decisions to help The Game decide who is the best player.*
- *You are getting closer to playing The Game but before this you need to be ready to play The Game*
- *Whilst we wait for the Coaches to help you get ready, please complete a self-assessment in light of all the tests you have completed so far.*
- *I can tell you that two of the notes are worth £10 each.*
- *Call numbers for Red and Blue team to join their respective Coaches*

## Coach Script

*Team building Test (see Appendix 16 for script)*

### Setting the rules

Coach starts audio track that includes the timer and music (this track is 10 minutes overall – with a 5, 2 and 1 minute warning).

*Audio Track: Before we can play The Game you need to complete the rules. Your coach will explain how you can do this and is there to help you win. You will have 10 minutes for this task. You may begin.*

*[beep + music starts]*

*[5 min pause]*

*You have 5 minutes remaining*

*[3 min pause]*

*You have 2 minutes remaining*

*[1 min pause]*

*You have 1 minute remaining*

*[1 min pause]*

*[beep] Your time is up. Please prepare to play The Game.*

*[music changes to strategy music]*

*[3 min of music]*

*[beep – notice to get ready and put bibs on]*

*[2 min of music]*

*[beep – notice you will be collected soon]*

*[music gets louder and continues playing for another 5 min]*

Coach: *The Game wants you to test the other team in Round 3 to help decide who is the Best Player.*

- Point out that there are instructions on the table
- You need to choose 2 categories important to being the best player and that you want to test the other team on – this is important as you want to make sure that those test are hard and test for important skills for the Best Player to have
- For each of those categories there is a game for which you need to decide the rules so that they will help you to test those skills
- The game will be played in a 4 minute time slot
- After the game is played you as a team will get to choose 1 team member to eliminate (regardless of whether anyone is ‘out’ in the game – you pick someone at the end)
- So you may want to think of a way of judging their performance
- There is a box of items here that you may use in any of the tests
- In this section you need to facilitate their conversation – you are there to help but cannot win it for them. Ask them lots of questions – try not to answer any of theirs with more than the necessary structure of the games and Round 3. Talk as though The Game is an entity you must please to win and you really want to win so you are happy to exist within its rules – even when they are unclear.
- Choose 2 categories – the materials are laid out on the table in the room including instructions (see Appendix 18)
- Look at starting points – come up with 2 additional rules and see whether any props are necessary
- Consider judging criteria to decide who is eliminated at the end (this is not related to anyone who might be ‘out’ through the game rules)
- Complete the game forms and make sure you properly understand the idea – make a note at the top of your team colour and which game needs to come first – also ensure that the games are safe and that they will be possible to play properly
- Make some notes throughout on who takes decisions – who is bossy and who is quiet – playful – competitive etc – see Round 2 sheet (Appendix 17)

- One participant from each team is removed for interview during this section. At the end of the 10 minutes the buzzer will sound and the music will change.

Coach: You were born to be a player. You were meant to be here. This moment is yours.

#### Strategy – 5 minutes

Coach: *I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on the field and be prepared to play a good game.*

- Ask very open questions to begin with ‘what’s our strategy – how will we win’ – so that they start a conversation around strategy
- Then introduce some important questions – whilst writing nonsensical diagrams on the whiteboard
  - Leader or co-operative decisions
  - Who judges on the criteria decided – one person or all
  - How will you eliminate people (can you be strategic about this)
  - There is a Joker – explain the rules – when should we play this
    - You can play the Joker at any time, only once. When you play the Joker then you get to change 1 rule
  - Injuries – not everyone has to play each game – must take the right decision to win for each game
  - Will you cheat or not? If caught you lose a team member (as decided by other team)
  - Write down first response of each participant to this question on the sheet

Your files will be collected by a researcher – make sure to write on game forms which game should be played first and why. At the end of these 5 minutes the music will change again and get more frantic.

Coach: *To uncover your true potential you must first find your own limits and then you have to have the courage to blow past them. Let’s get ready to play!*

#### Getting ready – between 2 and 5 min

- Get them to self-assess
- In the meantime reveal things on second table: bibs, water and biscuits
- Get them to put on the bib with their own number on
- Comfort breaks now if necessary – *need to be ready for anything*
- Play getting ready game (if there is time – introduce this as getting ready to play)

- Post-it who am I game – 1 participant write on post it a person or object and it gets stuck on another's forehead and the team need to get that person to guess what it is.
- Doors are opened when the space is ready for you (by 2 researchers from tech box)
- Before you leave the room perform a team action – like hands in the circle or group hug or hi-fives etc.

### **Round 3**

This round has lights and music as the participants enter to create a theatrical space. There are seats set up on one end, facing the Host who stands behind a microphone, with a plinth on either side each with a buzzer on. In the corner behind the Host sits Researcher 3 with the participant files (Appendix 19) who hands the Host cards with information on in relation to the participants and their earlier behaviour and responses. The rest of the script is from the Host perspective, whilst the Coaches respond to the situation and the PI films what is going on.

#### Introduction

- Invite the teams to stand in their coloured platform – with the coach
- Introduction to Round 3
  - *Welcome to Round 3 of your show! I am Your Host! We will play The Game and find the Best Participant.*
  - *As for the prize: I can reveal that 1 of the notes is £20...*
  - *In Round 3 we will play your games! At the end of each game players will be eliminated until we reach The Final where the 2 best players go head to head.*
  - *Let's meet the teams!*
- Interview questions to teams – 2/3 questions each
  - *Do you have a leader?*
  - *How are you feeling about The Game?*
  - *How well have you done so far?*
  - *Do you think you will win?*
  - *What are your strong points?*
- The Host will ask the teams step forwards – so that the teams are facing each other in the middle of the space in a line – with the coaches facing each other. A short intimidatory stare. Then back to the platforms.



- Explain structure of each round – this is strictly adhered to (and a structure imposed on you by The Game)
  - *There will be 4 rounds to reach The Final*
  - *Each test has a limited time (audio is only 4 minutes with 3 minutes of play)*
  - *You start playing when the music starts...*
  - *You will play in game area.*
  - *When the buzzer sounds that means your time is up!*
  - *Regardless of whether anyone is 'out' – the other team will have to choose a player to eliminate*
  - *Not all players have to play each game – BUT even if you don't play, you may still be eliminated...*
  - *Remember you have a Joker – which means you can change a rule.*
  - *If you see someone cheat then press the buzzer – motion to buzzers*
  - *If the challenge is upheld then that team loses a player*
- *Are you ready to play the first game?!?!? Get everyone to say YES!!!*
- Up to tech box – *Can we have the files, please?*
- The files are let down on a string from the tech box and Researcher 3 collects them and places them on his table.
- Announce which team will play first

Games (20 minutes in total – each game gets 3 minutes of playing time before the buzzer sounds)

Structure – this is repeated 4 times so that only 2 players remain

- Read out rules and ask coaches to explain any extra details
- Give coach a very short time to get their team ready (decide if everyone will play and whether to play Joker etc)
- Game starts – music is the cue
- At the end, the scoring team is asked for who is eliminated (very short deliberation time)
  - They hand in bib to researcher
  - Are told to sit down – not good enough to be a player – they are audience now
  - Please complete a self-assessment
- The Host asks the researcher for the results and based on this

- Makes remarks about players performance based on comments on cards
- Chooses 1 or more players to eliminate
- All those eliminated hand in bib – are told they are now audience – complete self-assessment

#### The Final – 5 minutes

- Introduction to The Final – *congratulate the Finalists.*
- Researcher brings you the files of the Finalists. Look at these and make any interesting remarks (were they strong throughout?)
- *I can now reveal that the prize money is £50*
- Explain the rules of the final round
  - *The Final is a head-to-head between our two hopefuls, on questions they have already answered*
  - *For each question there are 2 options and the audience vote with a show of hands which is the best answer*
  - *I will then reveal who gave that answer and award points.*
  - *The player with the most points wins the prize and the trophy!*
- Researcher triggers final audio with choice of whether to win or beat the game

*Audio - Win or Beat The Game:*

*Before we play The Final you have a collective choice to make. Do you want to win The Game or do you want to try to beat The Game?*

*If you choose to win the game then one of the finalists will win the trophy and the cash prize.*

*If you choose to attempt to beat the game, then you will have the option to split the cash prize. But if you do not reach a unanimous decision then the money will roll over to the next show.*

*All participants present, including the audience, must vote. In order to beat The Game the decision must be unanimous. If only 1 wants to win the game then The Final is played.*

Host recaps:

- Win means play final and 1 person wins prize + trophy
- Beat means a choice to make on how to split the winnings
- BUT this choice MUST be unanimous and made within 2 minutes
- If it is not then the money rolls over to the next show

- They get 60 seconds to make a decision - they must ALL agree if they want to beat the game, if only 1 wants to win the game then the final is played
- Host will *ask for a show of hands when the buzzer sounds* (this cue is responsive by the tech team – they time the 60 sec and press it or earlier if they decide quicker)
- *Announce decision* (decided by majority)

### **Option 1** – *Win The Game*

- Music intro to Final Round
- Rules are repeated
  - Questions have already been answered by the finalists
  - Host will read out question + 2 answers
  - Audience votes which is best answer - ask for show of hands
  - Host reveals whose answer won – awards point
- Researcher is in charge of operating powerpoint with questions on (Appendix 20)
- Questions are asked and points are awarded
- The participant with the most points is crowned the winner
- The other is eliminated – hands bib in – sit in audience – self-assessment

### **Ending**

- Music played to celebrate
- Applause from everyone
- Winner invited over to mic
- Host hands over envelope with £ and the trophy
- Short interview (into mic)
- Applause!
- *Thank you all very much for playing – don't forget to check your results on the way out!*
- Lights go up to signify the end of the show

### **Option 2** – *Beat The Game*

- Music intro
- Host congratulates on choice and introduces the challenge:
  - One participant will be appointed by the Host (based on the files of the 2 finalists – which has higher score) to make the decision on how to split the money

- This decision must be voted on by the audience and unanimously agreed on in order to take place. If there is no unanimous agreement then you lose it all.
- There are 3 options (which appear on screen)
  - The prize is split between the 2 finalists
  - Half the prize is split between the finalists and the other half is divided amongst the audience
  - A number is drawn out of a hat. Each participant gets 5p and the rest goes to the number drawn
- Finalist gets 60 sec to choose an option (cannot confer) – exciting countdown music
- Host asks for decision from finalist – repeats this into the mic
- Instructs the audience vote (pretty much instantly – or during 30 sec of music) – raise hand if you agree
- If they dither then threaten to see that as a no vote
- Host announces decision (must be unanimous to go ahead)

Possible endings:

*A. Beat The Game*

- Music played and incite applause for managing to beat the game
- Host announces how the money will be split and how much each participant will get
- Prize money is handed out whilst notebooks are collected by Researcher
  - If it is divided between all then they can all come up in a queue
- Applause and funky lighting and exciting music
- *Thank you all very much for playing – don't forget to check your results on the way out!*
- Lights go up to signify the end of the show

*B. Fail to Beat The Game*

- PI goes up to Host and tells her she is no longer needed – she stands aside
- PI asks the 2 finalists to hand in bibs and sit down in audience
- Asks everyone to fill in self-assessment
- The researcher hands PI the exit list
- PI reads out everyone's feedback – slowly

- Dismiss the participants – please hand your notebooks to the researcher on your way out.
- Lights go up and we all leave the stage into cupboard (except for the researcher who goes to stand by the door to collect notebooks).

## **Appendix 7 – Performer roles**

### Researchers

The researcher is part of The Experiment and so is calm, neutral and a bit strict with the participants. They do not laugh or joke with the participants and when questioned simply repeats the instructions or task. The researcher is responsive to what the participants say or do, but their interest comes from observing their behaviour at all time – so the interest is ‘scientific’. The researcher looks slightly too long and intently at participants and makes them feel slightly uncomfortable, although this is a subtle characteristic. The researcher often writes down little notes on their paper – which is important as part of the performance – but also reinforces the role of the researcher studying the behaviour of the participants as part of the Experiment. The researcher also films the behaviour of the participants – at times in a slightly intrusive way. The researcher is smartly dressed: smart jeans with a long sleeve button shirt and a lanyard with their title on. They carry a clipboard around at all times.

### Blue and Red Coach

The coach is controlled by The Game – and is slightly wary of its purpose – but is very competitive and really wants their team to win. They know what will happen in Round 3 although they are unaware of the option to beat The Game. They also know that team members will be eliminated throughout Round 3 – meaning that only 1 of the team has the opportunity to go through to the Final but they care more about one of their players being the winner than that most of them will not make it that far. They emphasise team playing and strategy, as they believe this is the way to win, and speak in sporting and games metaphors/clichés. They have a good understanding of the Game structure and of what the team needs to do, but are wary of helping them too much as they are also under strict instructions to video and make notes on the behaviour of the participants. This makes them torn between wanting to please the PI (and do the research elements) and win (by telling their team exactly what to do to have the best chance) – as the only way they can win is through their team. This results in support that although it keeps the teams on track in terms of what they need to do stops short of actually giving them detailed, useful advice. The coach is upbeat, full of energy and positive and tries to get the team excited and competitive. This includes a lot of actually meaningless inspirational statements (like: Sometimes it’s not how GOOD you are, but how BAD you want it), and the coach does not seem to notice if the players do not

respond with the same spirit. During the strategy section, the coach draws on a whiteboard in the room to illustrate what the players need to consider – but the diagrams are slightly weird and confusing. Throughout Round 3 the coach helps the team to strategise by reminding them of the rules (not all need to play / Joker / who to eliminate / cheat). The coach is loud in their support when their team is playing and tries to get other people to applaud those eliminated. The coach wears something sports inspired and in their team colour. They also have a clipboard with information on.

A list of statements that can be used throughout Round 2 and 3:

- It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up.
- Most people give up just when they're about to achieve success. They quit on the one yard line. They give up at the last minute of the game one foot from a winning touchdown.
- The five S's of training are: stamina, speed, strength, skill, and spirit; but the greatest of these is spirit.
- It's not the will to win that matters—everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters.
- Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there.
- Make sure your worst enemy doesn't live between your own two ears.
- The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination
- Champions keep playing until they get it right.
- You were born to be a player. You were meant to be here. This moment is yours.
- The more difficult the victory, the greater the happiness in winning.
- You've got to take the initiative and play your game. In a decisive set, confidence is the difference
- To uncover your true potential you must first find your own limits and then you have to have the courage to blow past them.
- If you can believe it, the mind can achieve it
- Do you know what my favourite part of the game is? The opportunity to play.
- Push yourself again and again. Don't give an inch until the final buzzer sounds.
- Winners don't wait for chances, they take them

## The Host

The Host is glamorous and in control of Round 3 – with the 2 coaches and a personal researcher to assist her. She never moves from the mic and is responsive to the participants – making sarcastic remarks on how well they are doing. The Host has been instructed by the PI but would like this to be her own show and acts as if it is. She wants this to be a difficult Game and does not make it easy for the participant. She enjoys the elimination process and giving the participants feedback on their performance (from notes from the Researcher as well as observations on their performance in the show). The Host makes it very clear that when they get eliminated they are no longer good enough to be a Player and so become an audience member. She also hints at times that this is also the Players' show and that they are for all intents and purposes performing now. Secretly she would quite like the participants to beat The Game. She wears a green jacket with a black dress and has a clipboard with information on that the notes from the Researcher are added to.



## Appendix 8 – Induction materials



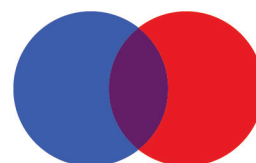
**1**

Each player was given a sticker to wear with a number on, as seen to the left. They were also given a small notebook with the same number on the front and a sticker of The Experiment (below right) on the back. Inside the notebook were the self-assessment questions represented below left.

### **Self-assessment**

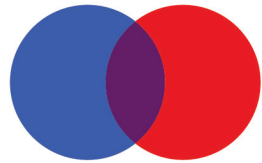
**Take a moment to reflect on your performance so far.**

- 1. How well are you doing?  
Rate yourself from 1 to 7.**
- 2. Please describe your feelings during the past game.**
- 3. How honest were you during the past game?**
- 4. What do you wish you had done better?**



**The Experiment**

## Appendix 9 – Induction questionnaire



### The Experiment

#### The Experiment Induction questionnaire

Player number:

1. Please describe your feelings right now.
2. How confident are you feeling that you will be able to win?
3. Do you intend to be honest during the Experiment?
4. What do you think your strengths and weaknesses are as a player?

## Appendix 10 – Personality test (Round 1)

Invite the participants to take a seat in the circle of chairs. Stop and restart the camera and play the audio to introduce the test.

Audio instructions:

*[beep] Test number 1: Personality Traits. We need to assess what kind of player you are. Please answer the following statements either with True or False. Try to answer as naturally as possible.*

*[pause]*

*[beep to signify the end of the test]*

Introduce each test and note the answers of each participant, letting them answer in any order. The researcher is neutral – they do not laugh or joke with the participants and when questioned simply repeat the instructions or question. They look at the participants as they answer as if they know whether they are lying or not.

If you do not reach the end of the questions within the time limit then simply stop when the sound track plays the sound cue.

Do not add up the final column until Round 1 is complete.

**First we will test how sensation seeking you are.**

<i>Sensation seeking</i>					
I would rather go to a new place I may not like than go back again to a place I know I like.					
I enjoy the unfamiliar.					
I look forward to being in a place that is new and strange to me.					
I would like to be an explorer.					
When the odds are against me, I still feel it is worth taking a chance.					
I am rather cautious in unusual situations. (R)					
I would do almost anything for a dare					
The risk of failure worries me. (R)					
<i>Total 'True' answers out of 8 – reversing the 2 marked R. High number indicates high level of sensation seeking.</i>					

**The next test assesses how psychopathic you are.**

<i>Psychopathy</i>					
I have excellent ideas.					
I don't mind being the centre of attention.					
It is OK to sometimes lie to my friends.					
I suspect hidden motives in others.					
I find it easy to play an important part in most group situations.					
Most people can be manipulated.					
I make people feel at ease.					
Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side.					
<i>Total 'True' answers out of 8. High number indicates high level of psychopathy.</i>					

**Finally, we will test where your sense of control is located.**

<i>Locus of control</i>					
I do not really believe in luck or chance.					
I usually convince others to do things my way.					
People must take full responsibility for any bad choices they make					
I can usually achieve what I want if I work hard for it.					
I have no trouble making and keeping friends.					
I prefer games involving some luck over games requiring pure skill. (R)					
I like to control the conversation.					
Almost anything is possible for me if I really want it.					
<i>Total 'True' answers out of 8 – reversing the 1 marked R. High number indicates internal locus of control, low number indicates external locus of control.</i>					

Researcher states: *Thank you, your answers will be collated. Please complete your self-assessment.*

Researcher goes to stand outside door and wait for signal from PI to collect next group.

## Appendix 11 – Interpersonal skills test (Round 1)

Stop and restart the camera and play the audio by pressing the clicker.

Direct the participants to sit down in pairs on the chairs facing each other and hand one of each pair a stack of question cards. If there is an uneven number then they will be called out for individual interview.

Audio instructions:

*[beep] Test number 3: The Interpersonal Skills test. In pairs, please sit down facing each other so that there is about 5 cm between your knees. You will take turns in reading out the questions on the cards, but each question will be answered by both of you. Work through the questions at your own speed, I will tell you when your time is up.*

*[pause]*

*OK, thank you. Please place the slips of paper on the floor. The final task is for you to hold eye contact with your partner, in complete silence, for 2 minutes. I will tell you when the 2 minutes have passed. Please begin.*

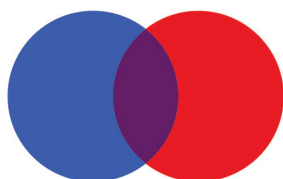
*[90 sec pause]*

*[beep] OK, thank you, that was 2 minutes.*

During the test the researcher walks around with the camera and films a little intrusively some of the answers of each pair as well as making notes in the table below (including any laughing or breaking eye contact and any defensive or open body language). At the end ask the participants to complete a self-assessment and stand outside the door to wait for the PI to give the signal to collect the next group.

<i>Participant numbers</i>	<i>Overheard answers</i>	<i>Eye contact</i>	<i>Body language</i>

Interpersonal Skills Test question cards



**The Experiment**

Each pair of participants was provided with eight cards showing the questions seen on this page on one side and the logo printed on the other.

**Before making a telephone call do you ever rehearse what you are going to say?  
Why?**

**When did you last cry in front of another person?  
By yourself?**

**Share a personal problem and ask your partner how she/he might handle it.**

**When was the last time you lied to someone?**

**Is there something you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?**

**What is your most terrible memory?**

**Complete this sentence:  
"I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."**

**Describe the last person you were in love with.**

## Appendix 12 – Creativity test (Round 1)

Direct the participants to sit on the chairs by the table (each place has a piece of paper with an abstract mark on it and pencil). Stop and restart the camera and play the audio.

*Audio Instructions:*

*[beep] Test number 2: The Creativity Test. Please write your number on the top left hand corner of the paper in front of you. When instructed, please turn over the paper. You will have 5 minutes to complete the image. Extra points will be awarded for uncommon subject matter, implied stories, humour, and an original perspective. You may begin.*

*[4 min pause] One minute remaining.*

*[1 min pause] [beep] Please put your pencils down.*

*[pause to get total to 8 min] [beep]*

The researcher takes the camera and walks around the participants in an invigilator style – standing and looking at their work and filming them as they draw.

After they have been instructed to stop you go around and look at each drawing in turn, writing down a comment for each in the table below and holding it up for everyone else to see.

Choose a winner – not the most artistic drawing but one that fulfils the criteria (uncommon subject matter, implied stories, humour, and an original perspective) and hold it up again. Make sure the participants' numbers are on the paper when you collect them.

*Announce: Number x is the most creative. Please all complete your self-assessment. Go and stand outside the door and wait for the PI's signal to collect the next group.*

Player	Comment on behaviour or creative approach	Winner



## Appendix 13 – Playfulness test (Round 1)

Line all the participants up at the entrance of the space. Stop and restart the camera and play the audio.

Audio instructions:

*[beep] Test number 4: The Playfulness Test. The researcher will indicate an observer for this test [short pause] please go and take a seat. At the end of the test I will ask you who the best performer is.*

*The rest of the group will play Grandmother's Footsteps. One participant will go to the far end of the space and face the wall. The others start at the opposite wall and attempt to cross the space, and tap the Grandmother on their shoulder. You can only move unseen and anyone seen moving by the Grandmother (indicated by calling out their number) must return to the start. Anyone who manages to tap the Grandmother on the shoulder exchanges places with them and the exercise starts again.*

*You may begin.*

*[beep + a pause so the total is 8 mins + beep]*

*Observer – which is the best performer? [short pause]. Great, thank you.*

The observer is given the observation sheet and a pen and the performer writes notes about the strategies and behaviour of each participant, whilst also taking the camera and moving around to capture the behaviour of participants. At the end ask the participants to complete a self-assessment and go stand outside the door to wait for the signal from the PI to collect the next group.

Participant	Observe/win	Comments – enter 3 descriptive words for each participant (for The Final)

The observer for this test was handed a sheet with the following information:

### **Playfulness Test**

At the end of this test you will need to identify the best performer. Criteria to consider include:

- *Enthusiasm of getting involved*
- *Creative responses*
- *Humour*
- *Imagination*

Best performer:

## Appendix 14 – Consensus test (Round 1)

Direct participants to sit down at the long table, leaving the chair nearest the door empty. Stop and restart the camera and play the audio.

Audio instructions:

### Track 1

*[beep] Test number 5: The Consensus Test. This test examines how easily influenced people are by a group. For this I need you all to give the same wrong answer to the questions that will come up and to not reveal to the person who will come in in a moment that this is what you are doing. Please act normally, think about each question as you would do, and all give the same wrong answer. If you are challenged then you need to maintain that this is the correct answer according to you.*

The PI will bring another participant in (please open your door when you are ready for them) and then you play the next audio track.

### Track 2

*[beep] Test number 5: The Perception Test. You will be shown a series of multiple choice questions and asked for your answers in turn. Please don't answer before you are asked, in case anyone else is still thinking.*

*[beep] [pause] [beep]*

The researcher lays down a series of questions, gives the participants a short moment (around 20 sec) to think and notes down the answers – asking the participants to answer in the same order – going down the line with the final participant to come always last.

- Three questions about lines and perception of length.
- Three nonverbal reasoning tests – mathematical puzzles with multiple choice answers.
- Four images of faces with emotional states are put on the table with 4 words around them and the participants are asked which is the right emotional state.

Stop when the buzzer sounds and ask them to self-assess and stand outside the door and wait for the PI's signal to collect the next group.

*Answer and Observations*

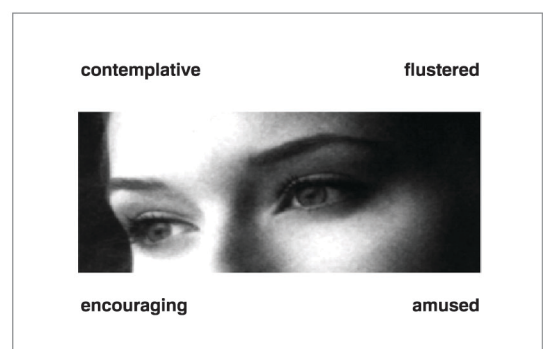
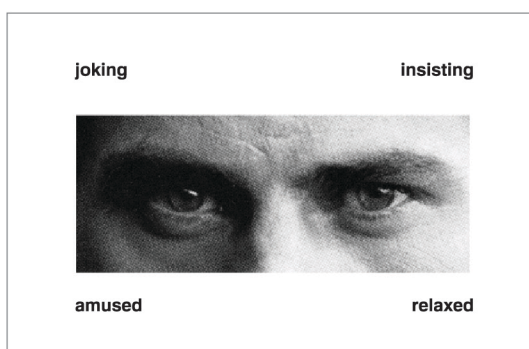
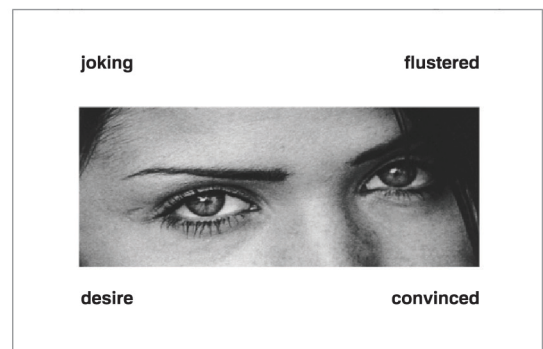
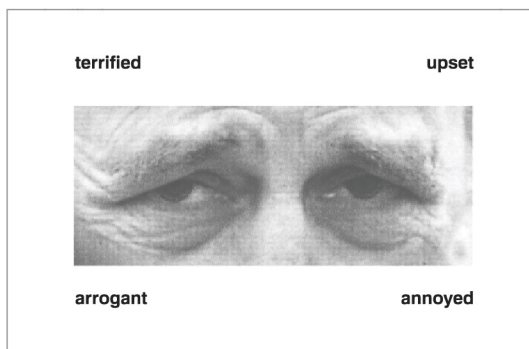
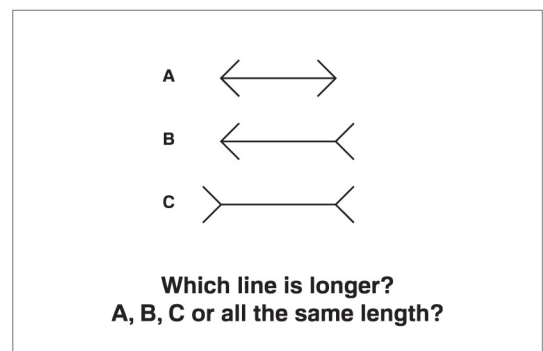
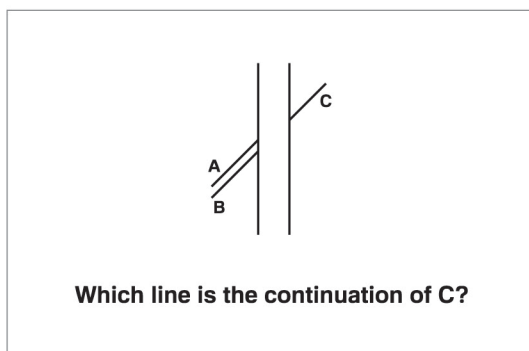
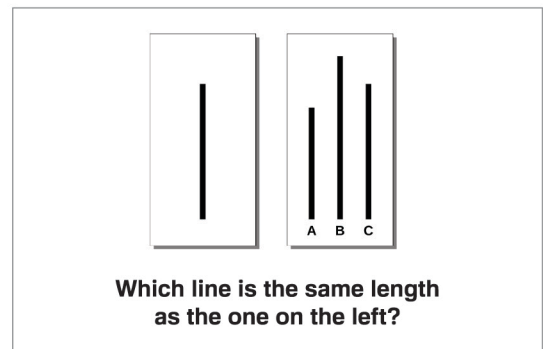
<b>P. no</b>	<b>Nonverbal reasoning</b>			<b>Emotional states</b>			<b>Art</b>

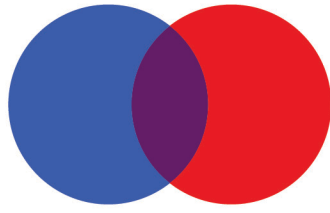
Comments on behaviour – mark which was the last participant to enter

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Comment</b>

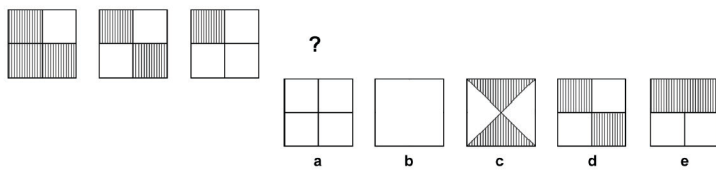
Consensus Test materials

Participants were shown the question cards pictured on this page and the next as part of the Consensus Test, all printed with the logo on the reverse.

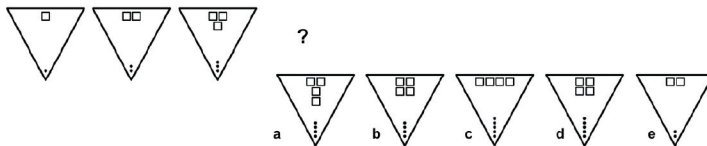




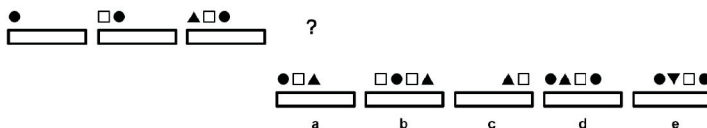
# The Experiment



Find which one of the five figures on the right should come next.



Find which one of the five figures on the right should come next.



Find which one of the five figures on the right should come next.

## Appendix 15 – Interview script

I will ask you some individual questions about your experience of the last activity (either the one in the previous room or the one you were doing just now). I need to get a more detailed picture of your experience as a player than the self-assessment questions will allow.

Please answer my questions looking into the camera. Could you first tell me your number? Thank you number x.

- How well are you doing so far?
- What did you do in the last activity – describe your actions in detail
- What were your feelings during the activity?
- Did any thoughts go through your mind?
- How would you describe your experience of that activity?
- How honest have you been so far?
- Are you playing as yourself?
- How nervous are you feeling?
- How confident are you feeling?
- What other activities have you done – what were they like?
- Which test do you think you have performed best on?
- What are your strengths as a player?
- What are your weaknesses?
- How meaningful is your experience so far?
- Are you trying as hard as you possibly can?
- How can you try harder?
- Are you doing better than the others in your group?
- How can you do better for the rest of the game?
- How can you make sure you win?

Please complete your self-assessment and come outside whenever you are ready.

## **Appendix 16 – Team-building test (Round 2)**

Team is taken into J2 and you first turn on the camera and then the audio, which will give instructions for the game and also beep to sound the end.

Minefield Track:

*Test number 6: The Team-player Test.*

*Before we start The Game, we need to test your ability to work as a team. First, we need a volunteer [wait]*

*OK, thank you.*

*The volunteer must put on the blindfold. The team must all stand together on one edge of the minefield.*

*As a team, those that can still see must guide the blindfolded team member across the minefield. If any of the obstacles are touched then the team must return to the beginning. You have 5 minutes to get to the other side of the minefield.*

*You may begin. [beep]*

*[Wait 4 min]*

*[beep]*

### Minefield team challenge – 5 minutes overall

- Give blindfold to volunteer
- Take notes on how they do and move around with the camera to film them
- After the buzzer sounds, ask them to do self-assessment
- Put camera back and stop it filming

*Start inspirational speak: It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up. It's not the will to win that matters—everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters. Let's go upstairs and prepare to win.*

Move to Jarman 5 to get ready for The Final.



## Appendix 17 – Coach notes sheet (Round 2)

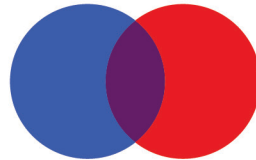
Outcome of Minefield challenge – how to they act as a team:

Notes of behaviour: who is bossy / quiet / playful / competitive / creative or anything else that shows what kind of player they are.

Participant number	Cheating: Yes, No, Maybe

## Appendix 18 – Games materials (Round 2)

Each team was given an instruction sheet, below, as well as six category cards and six game forms to design two games to play in Round 3.



### The Experiment

#### **What does it mean to be the best player?**

Choose two categories that you all agree are essential for being the best.

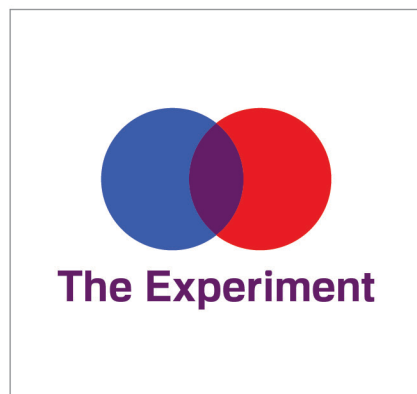
Collectively you must devise the rules of the test for each chosen category, for your competitors to play in Round 3.

Each test will have a time slot of 4 minutes for the other team to play and show off their skills. Only the other team will play the test and they will continue playing for the duration of the time slot. At the end of the test you will choose one player of the other team to eliminate.

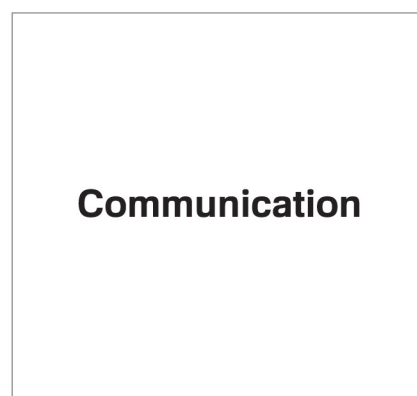
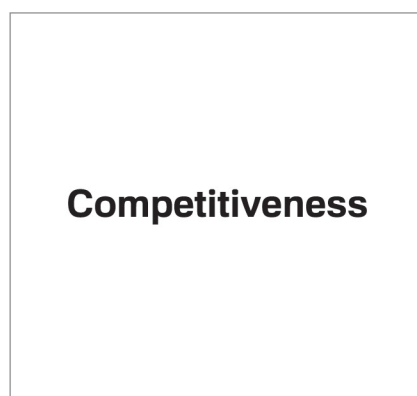
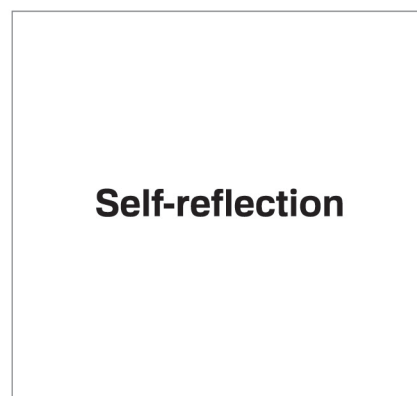
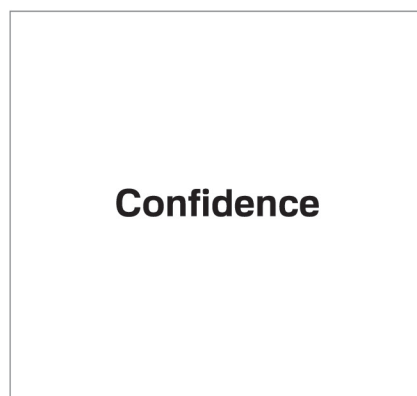
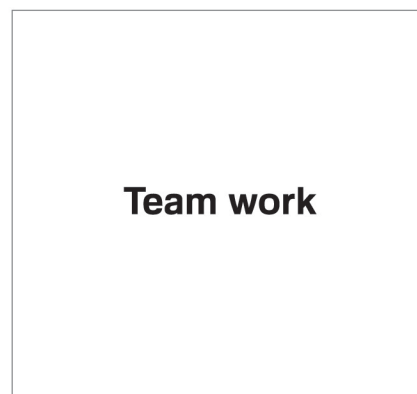
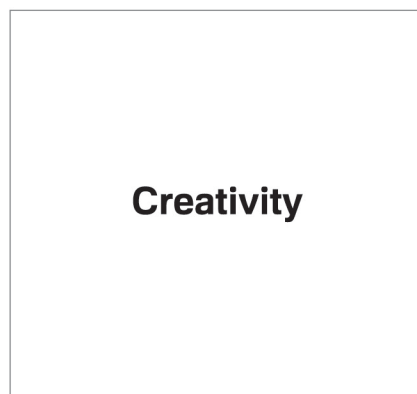
For each test you must fill in the Game Form, completing the three rules and devising criteria by which you can score your opponents. A range of games materials are available to use and any materials necessary for the test must be written down on the Game Form as one of the rules.

Remember that your tests will help decide who wins The Game.

#### **How will you make sure only the best go through to The Final?**



The players were shown six category cards as depicted here and asked to choose two. They were then asked to complete the two corresponding game forms as shown in the next six pages.



The six Game Forms contained the following information:

### **Creativity Test**

Name:

Rules:

- The players take turns to come up with an alternative use for an object.
- 
- 

Player formation:

The players stand in a semi-circle, facing the other team.

Criteria for scoring:

### **Team Work Test**

Name:

Rules:

- One player is blindfolded and has an item the rest of the team wants to retrieve.
- 
- 

Player formation:

The players play as 1 team. The blindfolded player is from the opposite team.

Criteria for scoring:

### **Confidence Test**

Name:

Rules:

- Players dance to the game music.
- 
- 

Player formation:

Individuals competing against each other.

Criteria for scoring:

### **Self Reflection Test**

Name:

Rules:

- Players must give a short statement in turn, about something they have learnt about themselves in The Game.
- 
- 

Player formation:

Individuals competing against each other.

Criteria for scoring:

### **Competitiveness Test**

Name:

Rules:

- One player gives instructions to the other players, which are only to be executed if a code word is included.
- 
- 

Player formation:

Individuals competing against each other.

Criteria for scoring:

### **Communication Test**

Name:

Rules:

- The players must communicate a message non-verbally to other team members.
- 
- 

Player formation:

The players form a line and play in turn.

Criteria for scoring:

## Appendix 19 – Participant file

### Player number 1

Question	Answer
I find it easy to play an important part in most group situations.	
I would do almost anything for a dare.	
Which of these is the most creative? <u>Is there a drawing by this player?</u>	
Which statement reveals the best interpersonal skills?	
Which description reveals the best performer?	
It is OK to cheat in order to win.	

### Results list feedback:

Personality test results	
Creativity / Consensus score	
Playfulness score	
Interpersonal score	

### Comments on the participant's behaviour/responses:

## Appendix 20 – Questions from The Final (Round 3)

These questions appeared projected behind the Host. Not all participants would have answered each question, depending on whether they took part in a Creativity Test or not and so the questions asked during The Final depended on the participants playing. For each question the audience of eliminated participants hold up their hands to indicate the right answer (with a majority wins rule).

1. I find it easy to play an important part in group situations. *True/False*
2. Which of these is the most creative? [*Host holds up the drawings from the Creativity Test*]
3. I would do almost anything for a dare. *True/False*
4. Which statement reveals the best interpersonal skills? [*Host reads out the comments written down by Researcher 2 in the Interpersonal Skills Test*]
5. Which of these descriptions reveals the best performer? [*Host reads out the descriptions written by Researcher 3 during the Playfulness Test*]
6. It is OK to cheat in order to win. *Yes/No /Maybe*