

Performance in Motion:

What happens in the open spaces of participation?

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Abstract

This research project investigates how Umberto Eco's 1969 theory "open work" can behave as a methodology for reminding us today of the potential of participatory performance. It will examine participation in the context of the neo-avant garde and probe why it is that Eco's theory, which emerged out of the same era, has been almost completely forgotten.

Primarily, it will investigate how "openness," as Eco defines it, operates within participation. Fusing together this concept with theoretical tools from participation, such as "collectivity" and "collaboration," Eco's theory will re-surface in a contemporary setting. In order to support this re-surfacing and address relevant concerns around 'the political,' it will utilise Chantal Mouffe's political theory, "agonistic pluralism," building an explorative lens for analysing contemporary participatory performance. Through this lens, the research will assert that the concern for 'participation' and the approach to how it is practiced within performance and discussed in theory misunderstands, in this context, what constitutes 'the political' and, furthermore surrounds performance with negative connotations.

The two case studies: Edit Kaldor's *The Inventory of Powerlessness* (2015) and Unfinished Business' *Only Wolves and Lions* (2012) will present how this argument materialises into practice, as what will surface is how, if participation is used as a means, rather than a goal: it has more potential to an openness, which, in turn can constitute agonistic pluralism.

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Abbreviations

OWAL *Only Wolves and Lions*

IOP *The Inventory of Powerlessness*

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“What is the nature of an

Experimental action?

It is simply an action
the outcome of which is not foreseen.”

John Cage, Silences



Introduction

The theatre is filled with a curious energy. There is both frustration and anticipation. It is 15th June 2015, at the Hebbel am Ufer Theatre, Berlin and I am watching a performance of Edit Kaldor's latest project, *The Inventory of Powerlessness* (2014). Some audience members shuffle in their seats, look at their phones, some get up and help themselves to the drink and snacks that have been offered and some sit eagerly forward, as we wait to hear another account of a situation in which someone felt powerlessness. After a pause of a few seconds in the action, Pauline, an 18 year-old participant, who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis, stands up and, for the fourth time, asks the audience if they would like to contribute a story of powerlessness.

....

“Does anyone want to add anything?”

...

There is a silence but before long arms go up in the air and, one after the other, people begin to relay their experiences of powerlessness to the hundred or so people in the room. Some get up on to the stage, some stay seated, and some ask questions or make comments. The performers, who are made up of a diverse selection of the public, sit amongst the audience and, therefore, there is no way of being able to know who knows how this performance unfolds. In truth, no one can be totally sure.

In *The Inventory of Powerlessness*, Edit Kaldor, the theatre-maker at the centre of its creation, implements two processes of participation to create all the content for the performance. The first one through inviting twenty two participants, who become the performers, to come forward with their stories of powerlessness¹, which make up the majority of the content and the second by inviting the audience at each performance to contribute their own accounts of powerlessness. When the process of making this performance begins, the communication that will fill the performative event is completely open for the participants/performers to shape, structure and determine. The audience feed into this communication altering the structure and shape, every time it is performed. In other words, this participation creates an open space for multiple potentials to be realised.

It was this interest in the openness, fluidity and changeability that such participation allows for which acted as a starting point for this research. However, I quickly realised that although the terms ‘openness,’ ‘mobility,’ ‘changeability’ and ‘fluidity,’ are very present within the debate, theorists rarely dig deep into these unknown elements of performances. The debate around participation is much more preoccupied by what type of political situations it can evoke. Defining what constitutes ‘the political’ is problematic in itself² but many of the theorists³ to whom I refer to throughout this paper equate being ‘political’ with working outside of the institutions and practices through which order is created (i.e. governmental policies). Consequently we become stuck in the tensions between what participation means in artistic discourse versus its relationship to the social discourse. In

¹ In chapter 3, I will elaborate on how these participants come to be involved within the process and how this takes shape.

² I will elaborate on this matter later on in this chapter and throughout.

³ Such as Bojana Cvejic, Ana Vujanovic and Bojana Kunst

other words, it is always critiqued with a negative negation; art *versus* reality, art *versus* capitalism and, therefore, the potentialities of the openness that is created is overshadowed.

This thesis aims to loosen our grip on participation by proposing that Umberto Eco's idea of "open work" is a more interesting and more useful approach for investigating and practicing participation in performance. In this context, Eco's theory is a theoretical tool to investigate openness in contemporary participatory performance through the lens of *The Inventory of Powerlessness* (2015) and *Unfinished Business' Only Wolves and Lions* (2012).

i. A Theoretical Patchwork: Openness, Participation and Agonistic Pluralism

Eco analyzed the processes of art in the early half of the 20th Century and outlined this theory in *Operata Aperta* (The Open Work), which was first published in 1969 and then again in English in 1989. His ideas arouse out of the context of avant-garde movements of the early to mid twentieth century. Whilst his focus was on musical composition and literature at the time, open work is also linked with movements in performance such as Fluxus, Happenings and The Situationists International and, as I will go on to detail, his theory also resonates with contemporary performance practice.

It was within this account that Eco coined the term 'openness,' which is the main constituent of what he called 'open work' or 'work-in-movement.' A work-in-movement is defined by a contingent, improvisational process in which the physical, material and communication of the artwork is in constant change. Eco concentrates on the methodologies of artistic processes for materializing a work-in-movement, rather than with the success of the finished product.

Openness, as Eco understands it, can be found in any piece of art. As a spectator, or addressee (as he terms it) comes into contact with the layers of stimulus that the artist presents, they refashion the original composition according to their individual credentials: taste, ideologies etc. From this perspective, every work of art is open because every reception of the work creates a fresh interpretation. However, in let's say, "closed work,"

⁴every new interpretation will have more or less the same meaning. On the other hand, “open work” Eco says is more tangible; the artist is less concerned with how the spectator adapts their work; the artist encourages alternative perspectives through the arrangement of elements. Thus, the artist creates the potential for a multiplicity of meanings. Henri Pousseur, a musical composer, whom Eco identifies as an artist who was creating open work, observes that what makes this approach different to conventional work is how it encourages “acts of conscious freedom” (quoted in Eco 1989, 5).

As this would suggest, Eco’s perspective of openness does not result in vagueness or a pool of infinite possibilities but instead points to a concept that operates throughout a network of possible meanings which the artist systematically constructs. Eco’s approach is a tool for exploring openness as a definite process.

Within the contemporary debate, there has been some discussion around the usefulness of Eco’s theory. For example, in 2005 ‘Maska’ dedicated a whole issue of their magazine to open work, with an opening article titled: *Open Work: Does it Deserve a Theory Today?* Within this article Bojana Cvejic and Ana Vujanovic investigate the contemporary spectrum of experimental practices that has, as they discuss, far exceeded the practices of openness of Eco’s era. They seem to suggest, then, that Eco’s theory is not useful today and this is why it is necessary to employ his theory alongside contemporary theories of “participation,” (Grant Kester and Claire Bishop) and “agonistic pluralism” (Chantal Mouffe). The three create a type of patchwork, which will enable me to argue that Eco’s theory can offer us a renewed perspective on participation. Furthermore, this patchwork will allow me to explore the potential in my case studies rather than the definitive.

Grant Kester’s theory of socially- engaged practice, “dialogical aesthetics,” (*Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (2004)*) also offers some theoretical tools, such as collaboration and collectivity, to address *how* participation is being implemented in my case studies.

On the other hand, Bishop’s discussion of participation, as she writes about it in *Artificial*

⁴ In the following chapters, it will become clearer how “closed work” is defined and how it differs from Eco’s “open work.”

Hells (2012) and *Relational Aesthetics and Antagonism* (2004), will enable me to elaborate on the problematic nature of participation. Bishop's argument around the complacency in which we now consider participatory practice to be 'political' offers a concrete foundation for me to argue that we should shift our focus away from participation. Furthermore, the latter of these publications will aid me to outline how performance theorists have begun to discuss Chantal Mouffe's political theory in order to address alternative proposals for what 'the political' might entail.

Finally, Chantal Mouffe's political theory "agonistic pluralism," (*The Democratic Paradox*, (2000)) acting alongside Eco's theory as the second cornerstone of this thesis, weaves in throughout to knit open work together with more contemporary theories. Within my analysis, it is applied to add more depth to my understanding of openness in my case studies and reflect on what I believe is a better approach to 'the political' in participation.

Agonistic Pluralism is a proposition for an alternative approach to our current political system. In *The Democratic Paradox* Mouffe outlines how the hegemonic structures (i.e. media, governments) through which social order is established are centered around a rationalist belief that it is possible for there to be a universal consensus based on reason (2000, 29). In other words, it perceives that, although we live in a society where there are diverse perspectives and values, these can come together harmoniously, without conflict, to create a rational consensus. This supposed consensus, she argues, suppresses the pluralistic nature of society and creates divisions between different groups or individuals. As a result, we create enemies based on opposite 'sides'- or a 'we' and a 'they.' It creates antagonism which is defined as active hostility or opposition.

On the other hand, agonism is defined as a positive conflict in which individuals acknowledge their differences and accept that there will not be a rational solution in bringing those differences together. As a result they become what Mouffe terms 'adversaries.' Adversaries are 'opponents' who have the same principles but disagree on the meaning and implementation of those principles. This social context is how Mouffe understands the constitution of 'the political' because it allows for there to be a conflict.

At a presentation Mouffe gave as part of *Cork Caucus*⁵ conference at The Institute of Choreography and Dance in Cork she outlined how she understood 'the political.' For Mouffe, 'the political' has to do with social interaction in the public space (2005,153). However, the nature of this interaction is, again, under a lot of disagreement. Many understand the political as a space of freedom and deliberation, whereas Mouffe understands the political as a space of power and conflict (Ibid.).

It is not my aim to examine whether or not my case studies are 'political' as I believe this would take a much larger thesis but rather to explore an alternative approach to participation. In the context of performance, which is not aiming to create an active conflict, we can only propose that there might be the potential for agonism to happen.

In her article *On Potentiality and The Future of the Performance* (2009) Bojana Kunst discusses how the term potentiality refers to the process of how something is actualized. The potential is produced from what we foresee might be possible in the concrete actualization. It is within the fluid stream of a process that a plurality surfaces. The three theoretical foundations- open work, agonistic pluralism and participation- will allow for first zooming in on the processes and secondly giving this potential a substantial lens, agonistic pluralism.

ii. Method

In order to keep my study specific, I have used two performances, and although very different, both work within a textual register and, therefore, are staged and pre-conceived, at least to some extent, before the performative event. They are also both participatory. I have chosen these two performances because we can trace open work within both of them. However, their intentions are very different. *Only Wolves and Lions* works outwards from the focus of participation (i.e. collectivity, collaboration), whereas *The Inventory of Powerlessness* uses participation as a tool to implement a wider intention which is to research powerlessness. I will analyse the two comparatively, arguing that if the focus of a performance is on the intentions of participation then its openness is diminished.

⁵ The *Cork Caucus* was an event held in 2005, bringing together philosophers, artists, thinkers and other creative individuals to investigate political, artistic and cultural issues.

Within my process, I have primarily focused on open work and participation, and through my findings, discovered a more organic way in which agonistic pluralism can feed into this research. I have also interviewed Unfinished Business and Edit Kaldor, as well as watching a registration of OWAL and the live performance of IOP on several occasions, once in Amsterdam and in Berlin, although I only draw examples from the project in Berlin. It is also important that I acknowledge that I have had the privilege of working first hand on *The Inventory of Powerlessness* and, therefore, my observations of rehearsals feed into my analysis. This, of course, means that my knowledge of this performance goes much deeper and whilst, in the course of my argument, I present IOP in a better light, I stress that this is justified via my theoretical framework and is not based on personal preference.

The springboard for the analysis is 'pluralism.' Pluralism, as Mouffe understands it, refers to a social context in which "many voices" can be heard in the public arena and furthermore, are taken into consideration in social procedures (i.e. practicing religion) (GSD Harvard, 2012). Pluralism can only be exercised when there is not an authoritarian order. What she refers to here is an 'order' that is imposed upon a society (governmental policy) that is not open to change. In other words, pluralism surfaces when there is fluidity in how we understand our social reality.

Translating this into performance, pluralism will surface when the artist allows for the infrastructure of the work (i.e. content, action, text) to be contingent or improvised. I will draw conclusions around the potential for pluralism by zooming in on the role of the artist as a figure of authority, through how they implement collaboration and/or collectivity. Both of these terms are heavily weighted within current debate but, in this thesis, they are defined as Bojana Cvejic outlines them in *Collectivity? You Mean Collaboration* (2005). Cvejic discusses how the general consensus amongst artists, theorists and programmers is that collaboration is a space of negotiation of individual differences whereas collectivity only allows for the focus to be on the communication of the group (Republic Art 2005). Through the analysis it will become clear how, if collectivity is constituted then it requires a more significant authority than is necessary for collaboration.

Only Wolves and Lions serves as a method for illustrating the problems with participation

that I will expand on in the next chapter. I apply it to actively address how whilst they implement two social structures (e.g. a meal and a conversation) that suggest there will be process of dialogue and a collaborative production, in fact, how it plays out in the space through the surrounding elements, such as text and action, actually constitutes more of an 'authoritarian order.'

Interweaving the two case studies together, *The Inventory of Powerlessness* will present an alternative to this direct authority within the space and allow me to argue that when the artistic focus is turned away from participation, there is more potential for both pluralism and agonism to surface.

In this first chapter, then, I have outlined the basis for an understanding of my theoretical framework and why I believe that open work and agonistic pluralism can be a more productive lens to use as opposed to solely participation. In chapter 1, I will discuss the recent trajectory of participation in theory and in practice, outlining the current tensions in debate and finally looking at the context of agonistic pluralism and how this can aid in developing open work as a useful framework today. Moving into chapter 2, I will offer more detail to the context behind open work as well as engaging with contemporary theories. Finally, in chapter 3, I will discuss the performances: firstly looking at them as participatory practices and using this to lead me into a more conclusive analysis around pluralism and agonism.

Chapter 1: The Problem with Participation: Repairing the Social Bond

In order to understand the relationship that Eco's theory has with the practice of participation, this chapter outlines the trajectory of participation from the latter half of the 20th Century, placing it within the social and political context so as to articulate why it is that there is this association with participation being 'political.' Moving through to elaborate on the problems surrounding participation and 'the political,' I will introduce Mouffe's theory and how it is being addressed within theory & practice in order to elaborate on pluralism and its relationship to collectivity and collaboration.

1.1 Development of Participation in the 20th Century

In 1974, Marina Abramovic presented one of her most famous durational performances,

Rhythm 0, in which she put the relationship between artist and audience to the ultimate test. Abramovic stood in the space for six hours in front of a table that had 72 objects on it, including honey, olive oil, scissors, feathers and most crucially, a gun. For the six hours the audience were invited, only via a sign, to do to her what they wanted, with or without the objects. In the beginning the audience were restrained but as time passed they became more and more aggressive. They acted collectively to tear her clothes, put rose thorns in her chest and even put the gun to her head. Afterwards she described her experience: "What I learned was that... if you leave it up to the audience, they can kill you" (Ratti et al. 2002, 29). In this performance, Abramovic constructs a performative situation that is almost completely void of her own communication and, therefore, the audience can entirely determine how it unfolds.

Abramovic, who is considered a pioneer of contemporary performance art, was making work such as *Rhythm 0* at the end of the neo-avant garde movement, an era which is considered to be the epitome of art's potential to feed into our social and political discourse. Abramovic and other artists such as Allan Kaprow and Grace Stavros were actively attacking the growing capitalist system. As Gunter Berghaus discusses in *Theatre, Performance and The Avant-Garde* (2005) within this system which was known as Fordism, the rich had become the ruling class and the poor had become the workers that were monopolized within standardized modes of production over which they had no agency. It had created a hierarchal system that had become overwhelming and oppressive (4). Within artistic practice this was materialized into a critique of the hierarchal relationship between artist and audience and the individual "author" function. Roland Barthes argues that the author figure is a modern figure that was only made more significant through the promotion of hierarchy in the capitalist system (Park 2006, 27). According to Barthes the artwork is not attached to the author, as whilst they start the process, it is the spectator or reader that constructs the meaning through their own personal experiences or ideologies (Bishop 2006, 43). Performances like *Rhythm*, then, were an attempt to diminish this hierarchal figure and increase the audience's consciousness to the ruling political and social conditions. As a result, artists were making work that actively engaged the audience in making the art. Audience participation was the form that was being developed and experimented with as a tool to enable artists to construct open-ended processes that

allowed for “the arrangement of some of their constituents either to be left to the public or to chance...” (Eco 1989, viii).

Open work is heavily associated with the avant-garde and the two correlate, as ideas from both merge into one another. However, open work originates and moves outwards from a modernist perspective and, as touched upon in the introduction, this began much earlier in the 18th Century.

The avant-garde and open work share similar political yearnings- to rupture the dominant hegemonic system- but the way they approach how to constitute this in artistic practice is what differentiates them. At the centre-point of modernism within art and open work is the artistic creation, whereas, within the avant-garde, art acts as a means of revolution. Both were exercising, what they believed, was art’s ability to change our social reality.

By the 1990s, these utopian ideals of ‘changing the world’ had become a frustrating inheritance when, of course, the world hadn’t changed and all artistic experimentation was seen to have been accomplished. (Jurs-Munby et al. 2013, 130). Instead artists were struggling to renew political and artistic activism at a time when it was seen to have lost social relevance. However, in the 21st Century, that social relevance has been renewed and there has been a surge in what Lehmann refers to as a “ re-open[ing of] the dialogue between theatre and society...” (Ibid. , 2). Furthermore, there is now such an eclectic range of experimental work that we have overcome this frustration. In the same breath, this era of the 60s and 70s seems to haunt our perception within the theoretical debate when considering *how* it is being practiced today. As Lavery and Williams outline in *Practicing Participation: A Conversation with Lone Twin* (2011), most discussion around participation often centres around the genealogy of participation, rather than actually exploring how it is practiced today (8).⁶As mentioned above, this thesis draws on Grant Kester’s theory “dialogical aesthetics” to zoom in on how participation is practiced today.

Kester discusses how the re-opening Lehmann refers to is a result of numerous social and political events such as the global recession, 9/11 and the Arab Spring. These events, he

⁶ For example, this history of participation occupies a large part of both of Claire Bishop’s book publications *Participation* (2006) and *Artificial Hells* (2012).

discusses, have aggravated a global climate of division and hostility based on differences of religion, culture and nationality and, in turn, artists are responding by attempting to construct ways in which we can overcome this division. In other words they practice “alternative ways of being together” (Kester 2005, 4). This move away from object-based art and towards performativity, process, and social context is how Kester defines “dialogical aesthetics.” This socially- engaged practice could also be referred to as “relational aesthetics,” (Nicolas Bourriaud) “conversational art” (Homi K. Bhabha) or “littoral art” (Ian Hunter and Celia Lerner). The constitution of openness has taken on a completely different shape to the type that Eco refers to in *The Open Work*.

The artists that Eco refers to experiment with the order of representational codes of communication to create a multiplicity of meanings, whereas now artists experiment with *producing* processes of communication through their work to allow for a ‘multiplicity of perspectives’ to surface. The meeting point between contemporary participatory practices and Eco’s “open work” is a belief that these strategies can create new knowledge. Eco believed that through experimenting with our codes of communication, new discursive systems would be created and, in the same manner, Kester et al. believe that these processes of communication create knowledge about how we understand our shared discursive systems (Ibid. , 2). Equally it is this creation of knowledge, in both contexts, that enables for a ‘multiplicity’ or ‘pluralism.’ What’s more, through outlining the way in which Kester understands how this knowledge is constituted, through dialogical practice, we can find clarity between the differentiation between collectivity and collaboration. First though, let me introduce the critique around participation to articulate why it is that there is a need to find an alternative approach to discussing contemporary performance.

1.2 Art vs. Politics

In her polemic book *Artificial Hells* (2012) Claire Bishop brings several questions to the forefront of debate considering this new focus on the social context of performance. One of the central concerns of participation is overcoming the alienating and isolating effects of capitalism which have resulted in a diminishing of community. However, Bishop criticizes Bourriaud, Kester and many others who, she argues, are so concerned with repairing this situation through ‘collaborative production’ that they overlook what is actually occurring

within the art itself:

“ ... Socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond” (13).

In other words, we are not looking closely enough at how this participation is being practiced; rather, we have given it a blanket quality. This critique is only heightened because the term participation has become a household name, not only within artistic discourse but also within our social discourse. As Bishop discusses, today it is used as a business tool for improving efficiency, as well as in mass media through reality television and within politics (e.g. governmental policy) (2012, 11-12).

It is this latter element that Bishop draws on to discuss the problems around participation. During the 90s, Western European Governments were employing participation as strategy for encouraging self-management so as to be able to diminish their role in contributing to people's lives (i.e. welfare). The importance placed on participation was under the illusory aim of what they termed “social inclusion.” This notion of ‘inclusion’ was meant to encourage people to conform to ideals of employment and contribution to society. The snowball effect for art was that governments at the time began to ask how art could aid in encouraging this rhetoric. This question was the springboard and justification for arts cuts, which snowballed into the monopolization of artistic practice. The importance of the art itself was replaced by audience figures and marketing statistics (Bishop 2012, 15). In other words, it was controlled through a political narrative.

The aims of participation within artistic practice are, of course, very different to that within political practice: attempting to recreate notions of community, collectivity and collaboration. On the other hand, its focus on community and collaboration is where it meets the political ideal of participation; they are all based on notions of consensus. The concept of consensus, defined via an English Dictionary simply as overall agreement, becomes much more complex in the wider social context because it refers to a the

hegemonic structures, such as governments which enforce particular narratives through, for example, the guise of 'participation' in society. As a result, it is problematic for art to claim that it offers an 'alternative' social narrative to our reality.

This merging of art and governmental practices have meant that theorists, such as Jurs-Munby et al. and Bojana Cvejic, are beginning to engage with the problems of consensus within participation. To look at an alternative to this hegemonic logic, theorists have begun to ask what role conflict might play in these performances. As a result, Chantal Mouffe's theory often appears as a point of reference to help offer a context to this problematic relationship between art and hegemony.

1.3 Agonistic Pluralism: In Theory

In *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* (2004) Bishop sketches a brief description of Mouffe's earlier conception of "agonistic pluralism," as she wrote about it in 1985, under the name of "agonistic democracy." Mouffe's theory lends a lens for Bishop to question the ease to which relational aesthetics assumes, that by creating situations for communication and connecting, they also construct a democratic situation. As Bishop argues many 'relational' projects rely on the "wholeness" and "togetherness" of a collective within a particular space which contradicts Mouffe's understanding of societies as always contingent, rather than fixed (7). Bishop draws on Mouffe's theory of subjectivity to deepen her argument.

Following a post-structuralist perspective, Mouffe argues that subjectivity is in fact, not rational or 'whole' but instead is "decentred" and "incomplete." To form a sense of identity, individuals need relational situations in which facing "the other" (defined as anything distinct that helps us define ourselves) makes us question our ideologies & perspectives, and can give us a sense of self. Through these interactions, which we have on a daily basis, we are in constant transition, as each new "other" that we come into contact with alters our own identities (Bishop 2004, 66).

From this perspective, if our identities are never fixed, then neither are our societies.

Bishop's argument, then, is that relational aesthetics is ignorant of the pluralistic nature of society as it relies too heavily on the ideal of 'the whole' or 'the community' tied together identifying with one another because they have something in common (2004, 67). In other words, these projects often rely on the fixed context of the projects. To reiterate, pluralism is not just based on a surface presence of difference or diversity, it is how it is materialized into action. For example, Abravomic's performance mentioned in the beginning does not just present diversity, it allows the audience to act on that diversity and, therefore, there is a plurality articulated through the individual actions of audience members who are in no way directed through one specific perspective. Mouffe's understanding of identification enables us to understand why, if collectivity is constituted, then the potential for pluralism to surface will decrease. Through the analysis, I will explore how the organization of the surrounding elements (text, action) constitute the creation of collaboration and/or collectivity and, therefore, effect the communication in the space.

Furthermore, Mouffe is herself engaging with asking how art can contribute to the struggle against "capitalist domination" (Art & Research 2007). It is perhaps as a result of her presence in theoretical debate that artists are starting to implement her ideas into practice as well.

1.4 Agonistic Pluralism: In Practice

It was Lotte Van den Berg's on going project, *Building Conversations* that first drew my attention to Mouffe's theory and I was interested by the fact it was not only being addressed by theorists but also being materialized into practice. Van den Berg explores alternative ways in which we can communicate with one another through constructing several forms of conversation. One of these forms is based on Chantal Mouffe's political theory: "agonistic pluralism." Van den Berg leads a group of five participants to a specially built space but before they can inhabit the space, they must first finish putting the building together e.g. pulling stools up, arranging wooden panels and so on. The first thing which is important when creating a political space, according to Mouffe, is that there is a commonality within the group and through these collaborative actions, this space becomes a shared space where everyone has agency. Then, within this space Van den Berg implements a conversation through first of all finding out what the differences are between

the individuals; this echoes Mouffe's notion that it is important to become 'agonists.' Agonists realize and acknowledge that there are differences without becoming 'antagonists' – enemies. The audience is then directed to engage with these differences by addressing one another. As one critic mentions, this begins politely and with caution but Van den Berg intervenes by offering some of the examples herself and encouraging a sharper opposition. She allows this to go on until they reach a point, a border where it looks like they might become enemies. At this point, she stops them and encourages them, if they wish to approach their opponents, not for reconciliation but for acceptance of their differences. The group goes on with each other, to cook and eat for another several hours because even if they have just addressed their unsolvable differences, they do “still have to exist on this globe together” (Coussens 2014).

In other words, Van den Berg's piece is a nuanced example of a move away from the type of participation that is centred on the comfortable situations of consensual collaboration but rather experiments with encouraging a conflict. My case studies do not try and materialize Mouffe's theory into practice and, therefore, I do not attempt to use it as a concrete framework but rather as an explorative one. Additionally, this is why I chose to separate the agonism and pluralism in my analysis. Thus, whilst Mouffe's theory helps to bring Eco's into modern day context, Eco's theory helps to bring Mouffe's theory into artistic practice, which I will elaborate on at the end of chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Open Work: Then and Now

In outlining the form that open work takes in a contemporary context, chapter 1 offers a springboard to the centre-point of my argument; that we should remind ourselves of the usefulness of Eco's theory open work. Moving into chapter 2 then, I will first address why there has been a shift away from Eco's theory before I elaborate on how open work takes shape, offering a brief outline of the social context to present how it also relates to 'the political.' In the latter half of the chapter, I will bring together Mouffe and Eco's theory to outline their meeting point, pluralism, as well as elaborating on how Eco's theory relates to contemporary theories, such as dialogical aesthetics, in preparation for the analysis in chapter 3.

2.1 Open Work: Understanding why Eco's theory isn't present within debate

Open form, as Eco discusses it, was seen as a revolutionary practice, which in breaking the paradigms of art also rejected the capitalist practices that held authority over them; they broke out of the singularity of hegemonic structures and began to exercise plurality.

However, as I have suggested throughout, in the 21st Century, this ability to be so separate from hegemony comes under heavy criticism. As Bishop's argument suggests over the past twenty years, hegemonic structures have appropriated artistic practice. As Allsopp states: "creativity, autonomy and other similar trademarks of artistic utopias of the 20th Century are becoming driving forces of contemporary economy capital" (2007, 2).

The commodification of these concepts was originally born out of a response that the system of Fordism had to the artistic strategies of participation. As mentioned above, they were a means of resistance that focused on exercising agency, individuality and self-management. Partly as a result of this period of artistic resistance of the 60s, there was a transition within capitalist practice. The capitalist system appropriated and regulated the practices being exercised within this activist strand of art and, in turn, was seen to be positively responding to this resistance in art as it seemed that this activism had stirred actual change. However, as Mouffe argues, this response was only acting to valorise capitalist production (GSD Harvard 2012). This is most commonly known as the transition from 'Fordism to 'post-Fordism.' Post-Fordism is defined as the move away from the monopolization of the worker and the enabling of the worker to have more agency and self-control but, as I discussed in chapter 1, this emphasis on independence is only a strategy in enabling governments to take less responsibility.

It is this relationship between artistic practice and the hegemonic structures that has resulted in the general perspective that art or more specifically in this context, performance, can no longer be truly political. In other words, art and politics (the hegemonic system) are so merged with one another that art can no longer act separately to attempt to resist this system.

Returning to the earlier discussion around the spectrum of experimental practices today, Cvejic and Vujanovic argue that because there are now so many experimental forms, institutions suppress them under one umbrella of 'conceptual art' (2005, 20). In other

words, whilst in the neo avant-garde period these experimental forms were taking shape and still exercising their autonomy from the institutions, now, in a post-fordist period, institutions have saturated them so that these practices have become homogeneous with one another.

Whilst Cvejic's perspective is useful in offering context, it is also relevant to consider what Xavier Le Roy outlines in the same issue of 'Maska', answering this question- 'Open to what?' - openness always operates in relation to existing forms and structures (Allsopp 2007, 3). I would argue, then, that whilst Cvejic might consider open work to have been saturated by the institutions, even during this neo avant-garde period, art was still restricted to some extent by the forms and structures which already existed.

My intention is to zoom in on the performances themselves and not to consider their relationship to the institutions. Cvejic's approach to openness, which mirrors Bishop's approach to participation is based on the relationship art has to 'politics' (institutions) but as the next chapters will present that does not mean it cannot be 'political' (social). As the above discussion presents, this assumption creates a negative perspective, which overlooks what potentiality there can be in artistic practice for 'the political' to occur. I believe Eco's theory, which is centred on the potential that artwork has, can enable us to re-frame performance in a more positive light.

2. 2 Open Work: Eco's Theory

2.2.1 Why there was a move into Open Work

In the introduction to the English translation of *The Open Work*, David Robey discusses how Eco's theory is developed on the basis of *why* there was this shift from the traditional closed work towards open-processes. Eco traces these transitions to earlier developments within paradigm shifts; away from conventions surrounding ideas about 'over-arching' narratives of society (such as religion) and towards a more pluralistic view of the world. The divergence away from 'over-arching narratives' in society only deepened with the development of globalization in the 20th Century. Global mobility after World War I meant there was an influx of development in industry driven by immigration and technological progress. It was at first seen as a positive development in society but, in fact, the newly

diverse societies due to immigration and multi-cultural industry created isolation and, therefore, a break down of family and social ties (Berghaus 2005, 5-6). Openness, then, was the term that Eco coined to refer to the way in which artists were breaking out of the conventional codes of communication (or as Robey puts it 'conventional forms of expression') in order to reflect on their new diverse or pluralistic societies. As Robey explains:

"Conventional forms of expression convey conventional meanings and conventional meanings are part of the conventional view of the world. Thus, according to Eco, traditional art confirms conventional views of the world, whereas the modern open work implicitly denies it" (1989, vi).

This approach in denying the modern world was a technique to attack this new social system of capitalism. Eco believed as did the artists of the time, that it was the arts duty to respond to this new social system of capitalism, so whilst he didn't focus on the success of an artwork, for Eco, art was ideal in form when it didn't allow for conformism and passivity (Ibid. , xviii). Art, Eco believed, had a unique political quality in that it "produces new knowledge that can serve as a basis for changing the world" (Ibid. , xv).

2.3 How Eco Explains Open Work

2.3.1 Modes of Openness

Within Eco's framework, "open work" requires two elements: multiplicity of meaning and audience participation. Both constitutions feed into one another; by having a multiplicity of meanings available for the audience, they then have to participate in constructing the whole work.

In his account, Eco discusses several examples, such as James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and Stockhausen's musical composition, *Klavierstiick XI*. *Finnegan's Wake* constructs all of the semantic content but does so in an unconventional structure; Eco describes how the text is "moulded into a curve that bends back on itself, like the Einstein universe" (Eco 1989, 10). Within the text there is 'suggestion and stimulation' towards several patterns of meaning

which can be interpreted. What the reader has to do is interpret these patterns that are present within the book. Stockhausen, on the other hand, hands over a series of note groupings to the performer who then has to organize them into a structure: they alter the material form themselves.

Both of these, according to Eco, give the audience/performer the same experience as they have to move between a multiplicity of different interpretations (1989, x). However, from my perspective, I think that how an audience interprets meaning (i.e. the codes of communication) completely changes if they themselves alter the material form of the work as opposed to mentally interpreting it. As Young Park discusses in her MA thesis *Understanding "Open Work" in Interactive Art*, (2006) if the details change throughout the process of them interacting with it, through their own physicality, then how they interpret meaning will also change (5). As it has been reiterated throughout, in a contemporary context, we shift away from interpretation of meaning that the artist has constituted through already formed patterns of communication and towards examining the way that the audience/ spectator participate in actually creating that communication. In the same way that Eco understands participating to interpret meaning, we can understand how audiences participate in creating meaning through the methods of openness that Eco outlines: 'univocal' and 'plurivocal'.

2.3.2 Methods of Openness

a) Univocal & Plurivocal

Both 'univocal' and 'plurivocal' methods of openness create a multiplicity that the audience have to work to interpret and, therefore, are according to Eco equal open forms as they provoke "ever newer, ever richer enjoyment" (1989, 42). There is a contradiction though in how Eco outlines the necessary element of a 'multiplicity of meanings' in open work and the way he understands the "univocal" method. A 'univocal' message is constituted when an artist decides to create one meaning but they present it through various channels. For example, in defining the 'univocal', Park uses the example of Aesop's Fables. Her argument is that whilst they are simply described stories in which children can gain enjoyment, adults can understand the metaphorical meanings and can expand these into real life

lessons. The stories are complex and multi-layered but, ultimately, you will come to the same understanding (Park 2006, 6).

On the other hand, a 'plurivocal' method is created by actively experimenting with normative codes of communication and thus forging multiple layers of meaning. As Park outlines, communication involves a system of symbols in which one can express ideas to another and, in turn, interpret others' ideas (Ibid.). Here, Park is referring to the system of symbols that we have all learned and which allow us to express our meanings so that we can communicate efficiently. The central difference between these two is that within the 'plurivocal' the audience have to actively investigate these unknown systems of communication to interpret meaning, whereas, in the 'univocal' method, meaning is more easily passively absorbed.

I would argue that a lot of participatory practices now create a 'univocal' message- the participants act as various "channels" but the nature of what is being communicated and performed is centred and channelled towards a "meaning" or "perspective", which the artist has constructed.

A 'plurivocal' message is more actively ambiguous; it allows for the potentiality of meaning/s to be greater through assembling numerous unrelated channels. This reference to 'unrelated channels' indicates to the notion of there being diverse individuals in the audience. These two terms, 'univocal' and 'plurivocal' will enable me to explore the openness within my case studies, alongside Eco's understanding of 'information theory.'

b) The Creation of Information

It is ambiguity, which, according to Eco, engages its audience and encourages them to participate in constructing a meaning: new information. The ambiguity was mostly created through the arbitrary structure of the work; in questioning and challenging conventional codes of communication, artists were not concerned with creating a coherency or connecting the elements of their work. This is what Allsopp refers to as a parataxis methodology: "to place one beside another" (2007, 5). However, within today's practice of open work the methodology is quite the opposite: hypotaxis: "to arrange under with its

implications of dependent construction or relationship of parts with connectives” (Ibid.). Eco borrows from Norbet Weiner’s understanding of information theory to offer some clarity between the ambiguous nature of open work and the creation of information that, he believes, artwork has the potential in creating. He reverses Weiner’s theory in order to differentiate between ‘meaning’ and ‘information.’

Weiner explains that order is essential to the creation of information and, in turn, informative content derives from the level of organization (Eco 1989, 50). In other words, ambiguity and disorder then constitute the opposite. Eco applies the term “redundancy” to outline his argumentation that disorder and ambiguity are, in fact, what create information.

Weiner understands that to make sure that information is reliable and not interfered with there must be a reiteration throughout, or as Eco calls it, “redundancy.” Redundancy occurs when the ‘meaning’ (constituted by different elements) is reiterated throughout the content. Thus, it becomes predictable and without having to actively engage with the content, the viewer or reader can understand the meaning. Eco gives the example of a Christmas Card you receive from your Aunty- it is something we expect and, therefore, it does not catch our attention, whereas if we get a Christmas Card from a Soviet Leader, whom we would never expect one from, then the information value is more because its unpredictable and adds to what we already know (1989, 58).

Information comes from the fact once the reader/spectator/performer have worked to interpret the meaning- we will have something new. Eco understands that the more disordered, ambiguous and unpredictable the structure, the greater the information will be.

“The more one respects the laws of probability (the pre-established principles that guide the organization of a message and are reiterated via the repetition of foreseeable elements), the clearer and less ambiguous its meaning will be...” (Eco 1989, 93).

To clarify, if something is unpredictable or unexpected then it stirs a curiosity, which, in this context, engages the audience in a more unpredictable participation. Eco’s understanding of information theory will help to articulate how the audience/participants respond in my case

studies. As I will argue, if the space in which the audience are invited to contribute to communication is framed by a reiteration of the artists' authority and/or perspectives, then their curiosity is reduced. As a result, how the audiences decide to communicate is effected. To elaborate on the usefulness of Eco's theory, let me outline where his theory meets Mouffe and contemporary theories of participation.

2.4 Potentiality of Eco & Mouffe: Pluralism

Within both Mouffe's theory and Eco's methodology, the notion of 'pluralism' is a key element. This pluralism breaks out of hegemony and convention and allows for the recognition of, in Mouffe's case, many voices to be heard and, in Eco's case, many meanings to be created. Pluralism for both theorists is about a society; in which there can no longer be "ordered, hierarchal and mappable realities" (Distributed Creativity 2005). Within a contemporary setting I aim to look at how we are actually closer to Mouffe's 'many voices' rather than 'many meanings.'

Mouffe's theory is very complex and multi-faceted and to fully address it and how it can be applied within performance practice would take a second thesis. However, her theory is useful in relation to "open work" as Eco understands it because of the way they understand pluralism to be constituted. 'Pluralism' or 'multiplicity'- in both cases- works outwards from a tangible 'unity.' This 'unity' is what Eco refers to as the artistic intention. In other words, it begins with something concrete but from that centre point there is an ability to disarticulate and retransform constructions.

This is where Mouffe's theory can be useful in articulating the difference between 'artistic craftsmanship' and authority. In her discussion, she differentiates between power and authority. In the context of performance, the artist is naturally within a position of power as it is their task to construct the dramaturgy, direction and concept. Power, as Mouffe understands it, is completely unavoidable within the social (2005, 98). On the other hand, authority is implemented through implementing fixed structures or 'rules,' which cannot be altered. Drawing on Mouffe's theory to reflect on how the artists implement their positions of power, Eco's theory will allow me to employ these reflections through an artistic lens.

Chapter 3: Discussion of Two Performances: *The Inventory of Powerlessness* and *Only Wolves and Lions*

3.1 The Performances:

3.1.1. *Only Wolves and Lions* (2012)

a) Context

'Unfinished Business' is a London-based company, who are made up of artistic director, Leo Kay and producer, Anna Smith. Together and along with other collaborators they make performances that make-work "with a social responsibility and a warm heart" (Unfinished Business Website). In our interview, Leo talked about how he took experiences from his own life and attempted to explore them in a way that reflected a broader scope of our collective experiences. He talked about how he found himself at stage in his life where he felt isolated and detached and then, after hearing a talk by Alain de Botton on aspects of communal life and how this can enrich our experience, he decided to make a performance based on this idea. Over the course of two years and with the help of Anna, as well as, collaborator and performer Unai de Lopez, he made *Only Wolves and Lions*.

b) Performance

If you had wanted to go and see *Only Wolves and Lions* by 'Unfinished Business' back in 2012, you would have been told when purchasing your ticket to bring to the performance one raw ingredient. Before the performance has even begun you have been invited to participate in the process of this performance. On entering the performance your participation is required in the preparing, cooking and sharing of a meal.

As you enter into the space, Leo and Unai- the performers- appear to still be setting up, albeit casually, arranging the table, which is central in the room, arranging glasses and as they come in, laying ingredients on the table. A DJ plays music in the corner and Anna, the producer, also helps to set up. The table in the centre of the room is undressed and on the back of each chair hangs an apron. At one end of the room, there is another table that has bread and other ingredients on it. There are also cooking utensils hanging along one wall. It is made very apparent that you are here to cook. However, this room is nondescript; it is neither a theatre space nor indeed any particular type of space. Bringing yourself and your

ingredient into the room, you are left to soak up the atmosphere and find your place at the table, just like as if you were arriving at a 'real' dinner party. Whether before you have sat down or after, Leo will ask you to 'report your ingredient' to Unai, who is writing down everyone's ingredients on a blackboard. There seems to be no immediate rush. As everyone filters in there is loose conversation between couples and groups; people exchange what ingredients they have brought or offer each other drinks. When it appears everyone has arrived, Unai sits at one end of the table and Leo closes the curtains; the bustling room suddenly quietens as the audience takes their queue that this is the beginning. As the two men, now sitting at either head of the table, cling small cymbals together- lights in purple, blue green and yellow, come on in a domino effect- one after the other. This beginning is then significantly marked as Unai claps his cymbals together and slides them across the table. In a very quick transition, this becomes a theatre space.

3.1.2. *The Inventory of Powerlessness* (2015)

a) Context

The Inventory of Powerlessness is Edit Kaldor's latest project, in which she invites 20-40 participants from one city to come forward with their personal stories of powerlessness. They are invited to take part in a process over the course of several months working with a dramaturge and a mediator, brought into hold interviews with the participants and offer support. This process evolves into the performance presented to an intimate audience. IOP has taken place in Prague, Amsterdam, Berlin and Poznan so far and, according to Edit, is only the beginning of a long-term project which could take years. The central question in creating the inventory is: "How can theatre be a form of qualitative research?" To try and answer this question, she brings together people from one city, from diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds and by reflecting on very specific personal cases of powerlessness, asks wider questions about what may or may not be effecting these experiences: Is it enforced by a social structure? Do family and/or personal relationships affect it? The result of working with voluntary participants for several months comes together to be presented in an hour and a half performance, to an intimate audience, who are also invited to participate to *The Inventory of Powerlessness*.

b) Performance

When the audience walks into the space, the performance appears to have already begun as Frank, a man in his fifties, tells his story of powerlessness. The rest of the audience are sitting on three sides of the stage and it is unclear who is performer/participant and who has just arrived.

...

Frank: I couldn't stand the noise...

...

As Frank speaks, someone on stage, Katharina, is sat at a laptop typing with her back to the audience. What she is typing appears to be a transcription of this story and it is being projected onto a small screen above her, so that everyone can see it. Katharina asks whether he is happy with the transcription, he says yes and then she 'transfers' what is on the smaller screen to the larger screen: the inventory. After a while, and a couple more people have told their stories and a couple more have been added to the inventory, Nenad comes forward to introduce the piece.

...

Nenad: I see many new faces. If you're here for the first time: don't worry.

We'll go step by step.

Tonight we have our largest gathering till now...

...The inherent quality of an inventory is that it tries to be as complete as possible.

And that is also our aim with this inventory.

...

Pauline: To get started I want to encourage you all to think about what you personally know about powerlessness.

Choose an experience. Something close to you, something that is still playing.

Anyone?

....

There is a silence as the audience contemplates this offer. Nenad tells us that afterwards we are invited to stay to discuss these experiences and whatever thoughts might come up throughout. From here on in, then, we, us the audience and them the participants, are making this inventory together.

3.2 Introduction to Analysis

The form of participation suggests that there will naturally be a contingent and improvisational process that allows for pluralism. However, as Bishop's argument suggests, it is these assumptions around participation that are problematic. Additionally, Eco's theory also focuses on artistic intention and artistic process and these, therefore, are also the focus of this analysis.

Intertwining the two performances so as to make the comparison transparent, OWAL will always appear first within each section, (a) followed by IOP (b). Firstly, I will concentrate on the central participatory structures and the strategies they employ to implement these: through 'rules' in OWAL and through the 'dramaturgical structures' in IOP. This analysis will act as a foundation for the rest of the analysis, which will examine 'collaboration/collectivity,' 'univocal/plurivocal' and finally, bringing the two together to conclude around how the potential they both have for pluralism materializes.

As it has been reiterated throughout, OWAL works outwards from participation whereas within IOP participation is a means and not a goal. *Only Wolves and Lions* presents an example of a performance that implements these social structures which allow for dialogue and collaborative production but the way that they are then played out within the performance in relation to all of the other elements actually diminishes the potential for pluralism. On the other hand, *The Inventory of Powerlessness* will present an example of how these elements work together to encourage pluralism.

The performances both implement rules and dramaturgical structures. However, the discussion is lead by the primary method for constructing artistic intention. In the process of IOP, Edit constructs her artistic intention primarily through the dramaturgical structures rather than Leo and Unai who construct artistic intention through direct rules. Through this discussion, it will become clear how these two different approaches effect how the participation takes shape.

3.3 'Organized Disorder': Rules and Dramaturgical Structures

Throughout this thesis, I have reiterated the significance taken from Eco's understanding of how openness is created: through artistic skill and process. Once I have zoomed in on how the artist creates their work, we will better be able to understand how the collaboration and/ or collectivity plays out in the space and, therefore, how much potential for pluralism is constituted.

a) Rules

Only Wolves and Lions is centred on the collaborative structure of a meal, which the audience are invited to prepare, cook and share together. This structure is one that requires collaboration of all the independent members of the audience beginning with everyone being asked to bring one raw ingredient to the performance.

After the audience has entered into the space and the men have taken their seats, Leo and Unai begin to explain together that they are here to explore and challenge our preconceived systems and structures, with the help of the audience, whilst also acknowledging the paradox that is the nature of artistic structure:

...

Leo: ...There's an irreconcilable issue and dichotomy that cannot be resolved very easily in this show. Tonight we are exploring and challenging preconceived systems and structures and at the same time we are imposing systems and structures on to you, asking you to get involved in our game...

...

This idea of exploring our systems and structures stems from, they say, that of our "current crisis." Leo explains that in Mandarin, crisis is symbolized with two cymbals, which represent: danger and opportunity. Thus, he explains, they take a positive spin on crisis. They raise a glass, to crisis.

Two juxtapositions take place here: 1) these two ideas of inviting the audience to work with the artists to explore the subjects of crisis, preconceived structures and community whilst also acknowledging the natural authority that, as artists, they have in the space and 2) inviting the audience to contribute to the discussion on these subjects whilst also defining 'crisis' as celebratory and bringing the audience together to raise a glass, putting

an emphasis on community, therefore, illustrating the perspectives, (community and celebration) which lead the performance. In other words, in the introduction to the performance, Leo and Unai illustrate, not only the subject matters of the performance but also the perspectives which frame these subjects.

These perspectives are then reinforced through several collective actions that Leo and Unai lead the audience through. There are several but in this context I want to focus on the ones that come before the audience is invited to interact, not just physically but also verbally in the space. There are two in this beginning section: a bonobo dance and a song taken from an ancient fairy-tale.

Leo begins to explain how 40% of our DNA comes from these monkeys and describes how their societies take a patriarchal nature where the alpha males rule using violence and aggression. When they have all the audience on their feet, they imperatively direct them to first of all to shake their arms, then their legs, and then ask them to look into each other's eyes. It is, quite literally, a warm up activity. Leo spoke about how these activities were meant to reinforce ideas of community, celebration and preconceived structures within the audience's minds: "...I think that the physical embodiment of that embeds it in your mind a bit" (Personal Interview). The physical embodiment develops the ideas that have already been brought into the space through the text in the beginning. Indicating that there still needs to be another 'warm up activity' for the group to break the tension, the two performers follow on from this dance with a song. Unai begins to clap and through gesturing for the audience to clap along, everyone joins in. This song, Leo tells the audience, was sung when people came together to celebrate two saints who are known for being healers. He points out that he thinks there is an importance in celebration and ritual.

These collective actions allow for Unai and Leo to reinforce the way in which they intend to communicate about the subject matter and, in other words, when the audience is invited to communicate in the space, they have been given suggestions not just for topics to discuss but also for approaches to these topics. Firstly, the bonobo dance, as the audience members mirror one another embeds the idea of community; secondly, the song- about celebration- offers a positive, celebratory perspective. An important facet of these

processes is the introduction of direct authority; to implement these actions, they must instruct the audience. This direct authority is then implemented into the process of the meal.

Moving into introducing the meal, Leo, Unai and Anna instruct the audience to decide on what to cook. Unai tells them they have three minutes in small groups to discuss ideas what they will cook. Once the three minutes is up, they discuss as a whole group and once they have decided, Unai tells them they have forty five minutes to cook and Leo directs them to wear their aprons that are hanging on the back of the chairs. Uniformed, the audience disperses across the room.

We can see how the artistic intention is communicated directly in the beginning by introducing the subject matters and, then channelling these subjects through the procedures of collective actions, which allow for Leo and Unai to directly implement their authority. Edit's approach will aid us in understanding how this direct strategy diminishes the potential for pluralism.

b) Dramaturgical Structures

"Normally I am a total control freak but here I had to let go of the control" (Personal Interview).

Here, Edit is referring to the way in which she had to allow a space for the participants, not just so that they could create the content but also had so that this artistic process didn't impose on their personal process of coming to terms with their experiences. As a result, her approach to the process of working with the participants differs between each individual. However, she holds onto control of the form of the performance: the inventory.

The inventory is a digital platform which makes up a literal 'inventory.' It is a digital programme that Edit designed so that they could collect the information produced from each performance and each city, to help her pursue the central aim of this project which is to research powerlessness. As it is now, the inventory is made up of stories from Amsterdam, Poznan, Berlin, and Prague and is a method for connecting all the cities

together and widening the context of each individual performance.

Within the space it stretches across the back wall and is the focus of the performance and as each story of powerlessness is told, someone, in this case, a participant named Katharina, transcribes each story and swipes it across to the inventory. The audience is required to contribute their story of powerlessness so that they can answer the ultimate question: What is powerlessness?

Another important facet of the dramaturgy that Edit employs is the structure of the texts for each participant. The structure of each text does not allow for the 'core' of their powerlessness to be stated at the beginning, in other words, it is the details that are more significant.

E.g.

...

Oleg: "Someone has my apartment door worked with accelerant and set alight because I have become a politically active person in regard to the housing situation in Berlin. Three years ago someone attempted carry out an assassination attempt on me. Someone tried to kill me."

....

Matilda: "I had a dream, a nightmare when I was 7, which has occupied me for a long time. I was persecuted, I do not know by whom, who wanted to kill my family ... eventually I woke up, and since then I have panic fear of burglars..."

...

If we look at both Oleg and Matilda's texts, for example, they only succinctly state their 'powerlessness' at the end of their accounts i.e. "...Three years ago someone attempted carry out an assassination attempt on me..." This attention to the details of someone's experience means that where some of the accounts might be similar -i.e. about illness or immigration- their details are different.

The other significant dramaturgical strategy employed is the arrangement of the seating. Edit places the participants amongst the audience. As well as this technique, the lack of a group is emphasized by the way in which some of them also stay seated within the audience to tell their experiences. In other words, it is not being present on stage that differentiates between them; we can never be sure who is a participant and who is an audience member.

These three dramaturgical strategies create what Edit calls an 'economy,' within which the participants and then the audience have to work within:

"You have to always solve it within the economy you work in – each piece has an economy and you have to work with that. You cannot bring in alien elements. That's how it relates" (Personal Interview).

It is this economy that she creates that leads the implementation of her artistic intention and strategies, rather than the direct authority we can see present in OWAL. Equally, whilst this form is fixed, the procedures for creating the content, as well as the content itself are in constant transformation. Moving on to discuss collaboration and/or collectivity, these approaches to implementing artistic intention and strategy will aid us understanding how they effect how collaboration and collectivity unfolds.

3.4 The Social: Collaboration and Collectivity

a) Collectivity

Within the beginning of OWAL, Leo and Unai introduce how important the audience are to this process. Leo explains that they are not experts but are "just giving it a go." "This is where the first toast of the evening is made: "to not being experts." Here, they lay the foundations for a 'togetherness' and a 'wholeness,' which becomes more concrete through the organization of the performance. The first process of collaboration, for example, follows on from the collective actions in which the artists have reinforced their intentions and ideals.

The first part of the meal, deciding what to cook and how (who will do what task), is directed by Unai and Leo. After the three minutes given to them for coming up with ideas for what they might cook, they then bring everyone back together and lead a conversation on which ideas they will choose. A member from each group is selected to tell the group and Anna writes down each of the ideas and then repeats it back to them so they can decide. Leo leads the conversation as the audience navigates their way with one another, slowly figuring out what their role will be and how they can fit into the process. After all decisions have been made and they have proceeded into making the meal, Leo and Unai's authority is almost completely diminished. For the next hour and a half- as the preparation and eating takes place- there is almost no communication from the two artists (although the audience do get a warning when they are running out of time). In the registration, we cannot gather the detail of what is being communicated and how within this space. We can imagine though that the individuals surface as they get to know each other. This space in, which the audience is given to communicate as they want is, as Leo explained, a preparation for the conversation (Personal Interview). This conversation is implemented to invite the audience to discuss with them the subjects (i.e. community, preconceived structures) outlined by him and Unai in the beginning.

After one hour and a half of the meal-taking place, the process of the conversation is introduced. There is a natural space within the numerous interactions between audience members and this is when Unai taps a wine glass with his knife, indicating that we are moving to the next phase of the performance. He begins to recollect a memory about meals he had as child. With an embodied passion, as he expresses with his arms and mimics his mother calling them in for dinner, he tells this story of the coming together of the whole family, the ritual of the women cooking and the men drinking and finally: the meal. This anecdote is used as a catalyst for further conversation, as Leo asks the audience: "Why don't we have this anymore?" The audience then begins to contribute, after more than two hours, to the communication in the space.

These two structures, which the artists implement, are intended to create a collaborative process, first in cooking the meal and then in discussing topics around the theme of community and preconceived structures. Furthermore, there are elements, (i.e. such as

when Leo and Unai don't communicate in the space during the meal) in which the audience do have agency within the space. However, if we zoom in on how the audience communicate within this space, what emerges is a collective process in which the communication of the 'whole' has more significance than the individual perspective and ideas. In other words, the pluralism is reduced and channelled through the artistic perspective.

Eco's understanding of information theory can help us to understand how the organization of the different elements can effect *how* the audience communicates in the space. To reiterate, the concept of information is useful within a contemporary analysis because it is, according to Eco, different to meaning. Information occurs when a statement, action or image adds to the knowledge we already have. In other words, information is created through the unpredictable and the improbable. Most significantly, in this context, is how Eco outlines the need to 'catch the attention' of the audience so that information can be created. If something becomes predictable, it doesn't engage with our curiosity and, therefore, we don't make an attempt to interpret or, in this case, participate.

Leo and Unai apply these ideas around 'celebration,' 'ritual,' (i.e. the song, Unai's story etc.) as well as, 'collectivity' and 'togetherness' (i.e. collective actions) in different formats throughout the performance. For example, raising the glasses, collective actions, the rules surrounding the meal and the anecdotes (i.e. Unai's family celebrations or Leo's story about the song). As a result, they create what Eco calls a redundancy; through reiterating their ideas, especially in these beginning processes, when it comes to the space where the audience are invited to participate it has become predictable.

As a consequence of this reiteration, before inviting the audience to communicate in the space, they influence the nature of the conversation. Within the half an hour or so that the audience are given the space to discuss, many subjects arise: economy, technology and urban isolation. Occasionally we hear the voices of Unai or Leo but they are not dominant and almost everybody around the table speaks. However, there is one significant factor- all of the participants follow on from one another. What I mean by this is that they either add to what the previous participants have been talking about by agreeing or adding an

anecdote or smoothly transition to a new but related topic. In other words, they follow on from this type of narrative that has been created throughout by the performers. The suggestion then is that the reiteration puts an emphasis on the collective and encourages the audience to be a community as well as one which conforms to the ideas and rules that the artists implement.

We can see that the focal point of communication within this performance comes from that of the 'collective,' as whilst individual's perspectives and ideas might come through temporarily, they are then channelled through the ideas and perspectives that Leo and Unai have brought into the room. Art critic Miriam Kwon criticizes this type of creation of community, as it is ignorant of individual identities. The artists, in this case Leo, Unai and Anna impose a specific "narrative" via their ideas and perspectives, as well as the procedures of the performance (e.g. collective actions) which they make it difficult for the audience to alter. In other words, they create, what Kwon refers to as "a monolithic collectivity over and against the specific identities of its constituent members" (quoted in Kester 2004, 158). Kwon's argument is that this re-assertion creates "unified subjects," who no longer perceive themselves as "mutable" (Ibid.). In other words, the audience, as individuals, comes to understand that they cannot influence the social narrative through their own perspectives within this temporary space.

We can see, then, that the artists create a situation for collectivity and thus one in which their authority is so present that it is difficult for the audience to influence the space. On the other hand, in *The Inventory of Powerlessness*, collaboration is created through all processes of the creation & performance.

b) Collaboration

The process within each city begins with a call-out for individuals, who are asked to come forward with their stories of powerlessness. They are required to send in basic information and a brief outline of their experience. Anyone that applies can take part and no one receives payment. Additionally, there is no contract and anyone participating only has to give as much time to the project as they would like.

Over several months, the dramaturge, in this case, Arved Schultze, as well as Franziska Seeburg⁷, work with the participants who have come forward to find out more about their experience of powerlessness. In the beginning, it is Franziska's task to facilitate meetings, one- on one, with the participants. From transcriptions of these interviews, Edit will encourage Franziska to ask questions about specific elements, her aim to find what she calls "the core of their powerlessness." However, in the beginning, the participants are simply encouraged to discuss their stories at length and offer as much detail as they want. By going through the process of having to articulate their experience and being encouraged to discuss it, they can themselves reflect back on it. Whilst it is Edit who directs this, in some way, asking the participants & Franziska to look at specific factors, how they articulate this or details they chose to enclose is completely up to them.

Gradually, Arved and Franziska begin to hold workshops with small groups of participants. Here participants begin to discuss amongst one another what connections might be made between the stories and what questions about powerlessness might appear. However, the entire group only come together in the last two or three weeks and even then, depending on availability, it might not be everyone. Throughout the whole process, right up until the performance, there are very few occasions that all of the participants are all together; on some occasions participants do not even take part in all of the performances.

This process of collaboration is then carried through into the performance, as they invite the audience to contribute to the inventory. The audience is reminded of this invitation to contribute throughout within what appear to be natural pauses in the action. In this particular performance, there were several contributions. Sometimes the audience got up on stage and sometimes they stayed seated but they are all handed a microphone- voices booming across the space. As the inventory gets larger, individuals begin to connect their stories to one another, either by literally asking Katharina to draw a line between the two or by adding a hash tag ('#'). So, for example, if you add a hash tag to your story, the system of the inventory automatically connects it. Throughout, the participants also attach hash tags to their stories and these hash tags act as a way of connecting the stories.

⁷ Franziska is brought into to mediate between the artistic team (Arved, Edit and the production team at Hebbel am Ufer) and the participants.

The digital interface of the inventory acts as a method of creating a distance between the 'collectivity' that evolves through this collaborative process in the live space. Whilst it requires individuals to project their own ideas and perspectives on to this subject matter so as to construct the inventory, with only one subject matter being discussed- powerlessness- this is not enough to argue that there is pluralism within the space. However, if we zoom in on whether or not the participants create information in the space, we will see, as with *Only Wolves and Lions*, how this affects the way that the audience communicate in the space.

In the beginning of the performance, the topic of powerlessness is introduced along with the format (the inventory). Whilst Nenad and Pauline suggest asking questions, as well as contributing to the inventory with stories of powerlessness there is very little 'opinion' or 'perspective' imposed on how the audience's contribution should unfold or in what way. Furthermore, they are encouraged to move around the space and are even told where the fire door is, just in case they would like to leave.

Whilst the subject matter has been reiterated, quite literally, the perspective from which that subject is approached is never made concrete: it is made up of over 20 participants (and audience members) who tell their diverse accounts of powerlessness. This lack of any particular perspective is only brought to the fore by the overwhelming amount of unique experiences told throughout. As a result, the audience has to stay engaged if they want to find out what this particular account is about.

This seemingly fluid process of the performance manifests itself in IOP through a more independent engagement from the audience. Whilst in OWAL the audience members 'follow on from one another' to create this type of narrative, in IOP they not only relay their experience, as the form encourages but they also make comments, ask questions and have been known to completely disrupt the performance. In other words, they are motivated; not only to participate, as they are invited but also to question what is occurring in the

space. For example, in one of the performances in Amsterdam, an audience member interrupts the action completely:

“ Please stop, I am having a physical reaction against this information. Can we take it to the next level” (Personal Interview).

Others amongst her agreed and there begins to be a tension in the space, as some audience members want it to carry on and some are asking for it to be stopped. The participants, for the first time, come together as a group to attempt to resolve the situation, and, after some conversation in the room, the performance comes to an end before it is scheduled to.

Whilst, the audience understands after some time “how it works,” the coherency/order in which these accounts are told never becomes clarified. Furthermore, there is no direct authority in the space and this allows for individuals to surface and collaboration to develop.

Through understanding, firstly, the authority within the space and, therefore, what type of communication unfolds within the project/performance and secondly reflecting on how the content is arranged and the resulting response from the audience, we can come to realize the ‘method of openness’ that occurs in the performances.

3.5 Method of Openness:

a) Univocal

Eco’s ‘univocal’ method can be complex, but ultimately, it is defined by the singularity of meaning. Translating this into a contemporary context, the ‘univocal’ method is understood as a portrayal of only one perspective, which, in the same way as Eco describes, your understanding will never stray away from the strict control of the author (1989, 6). This can become evident through exploring the hypotaxis methodology they employ. Whilst Leo and Unai do not create a “linear narrative,” we can see a clear connection between all of the

elements and how they have a relationship to one another and resulting implications for what happens next.

In our interview, Leo spoke about how they had wanted to remove themselves directly from the content, so they instead created the script from secondary sources, such as philosophers and social scientists who reflected their own ideas and thoughts on the subject matters they wanted to address: community and social and political infrastructures. In other words, they translate their own ideas through the words of others: creating the illusion of a “multiplicity of perspectives.” Meanwhile, if we refer back to how this takes shape within the performance through reiteration and, therefore, a redundancy, Leo and Unai channel all potential new perspectives through their own.

In our interview, both Anna and Leo spoke about strategies they had applied as to achieve this. The song about the saint, for example, in which Leo articulates the significance of ‘celebration and ritual’ comes just before they begin to discuss the how the meal will take shape. The meal, then, is framed by a collectivity (through clapping all together) based on celebration. Anna spoke about how this was intended to create reference points for the audience.

“It kind of gave a buzz word for references ... they were things that people could grab hold of later on...” (Personal Interview)

Leo spoke about a similar methodology that they put in place for the second element of participation: the conversation, which is framed in the same way as the meal. Unai’s personal narrative that acts as a springboard for further discussion is also based on the notion of celebration, ritual and the ‘togetherness’ of his family. Leo follows it by directing a question to the audience: “Why don’t we have this anymore?” Leo described how they ‘allowed’ for the following to take shape:

“You allowed the conversation loose in the field and you let the conversation run around but you knew if the conversation, like, at the fence you had the little conversation catchers...” (Personal Interview)

All of these strategies are employed to keep the performance within the realms of the subjects they introduce so whilst there are many different elements of the performance: they are all centred around community and social and political infrastructures. The parataxis method within IOP can present how it enables for more pluralism to surface.

b) Plurivocal

On the other hand, Eco describes a 'plurivocal' message as one that does not involve a "compulsory" formulation of meaning; rather the artist channels many messages through diverse semiotic systems (1989, 42). This mirrors the way in which *The Inventory of Powerlessness* consists of many individuals who communicate in the space through perspectives independent from that of other participants or indeed the artist.

Although the audience are invited to participate in the communication in both performances, how that takes shape is very different. Whilst in OWAL the audience members 'follow on from one another' to create this type of narrative, in IOP they not only relay their experiences, they also make comments, ask questions and have been known to completely disrupt the performance. In other words, they are motivated; not only to participate, as they are invited but also to question what is occurring in the space.

This concern for finding the connection between elements of our lives that Allsopp addresses is still present within IOP. However, the dramaturgical method of how the different elements are assembled resembles the parataxis technique that Allsopp links with Eco's theory.

The most significant difference that is apparent between OWAL and IOP is that, whilst in IOP the different accounts of powerlessness are linked together (via hash tags and/or making connections between them), they do not have an implication on one another. Furthermore, the connections made between these stories are separated from the communication in the live space as they are represented on the digital inventory. As a result, the inventory has an interdependent relationship to all the individual stories; it does not exist without them. However, what happens in the live space is completely without any interdependency. Through allowing for the participants (and as a result, the audience's)

accounts of powerlessness to be individual and not dependent on one another, there is more potential for pluralism to become present.

Having discussed how dramaturgical strategies are employed, how this affects collaboration/collectivity, as well as, zooming on the method of openness, now I will bring the two performances together to expand on how they create the potential for pluralism.

3.6 The Potential for Pluralism

The central difference between these two performances is the way in which the artists position themselves and implement their social status as artists. As reiterated throughout: it is this comparison that can enable us to articulate how much potential there is for pluralism.

In discussing how dialogical collaboration is constituted Kester outlines, in the same manner as Mouffe, the necessity for artists to acknowledge how our identities are constantly in negotiation. They are formed and re-formed by our interaction with others. Dialogical practice does this, Kester argues, by creating artwork not based solely on the artists ideas/perspectives/ intentions or indeed, from individual participants, but instead through the intersection of different identities. Through the lens of Jürgen Habermas' "ideal speech situation," Kester believes that these dialogues should produce a process of communicative interaction that is not based on social and material differences (authority, power, resources) but rather more instrumental forms of communication- such as argumentation and self-reflexivity (2004, 109). What he means here is that communication should not be based on "prior positions" (i.e. the artist as a figure of authority) but instead should evolve from genuine argumentation on your perspectives. Thus the artwork should not be based on "representing pre-existing judgments" or simply "representing subjects" (Ibid., 156).

We can see how this is materialized in *The Inventory of Powerlessness*. Edit's position, as artist, is one of vulnerability and openness; through this collaboration, she also learns how the performance will take shape. On the other hand, in *Only Wolves and Lions*, the content and frame of the performance is not contingent which, as Mouffe suggests, is a requirement

to enable pluralism to materialize. As I have reiterated throughout, before the performative event Leo and Unai have created structures to channel the content through their perspectives and ideas. Furthermore, the communicative interaction that unfolds is based on the “social differences” between artists and audience because Leo and Unai impose their authority.

On a most basic level, they apply authority through directly communicating the ‘rules of the performance’ (i.e. wearing an apron, giving them time limits on activities). This authority is reinforced through the way in which they introduce the context of the performance; not only do they introduce a framework (subject matter, structure of performance) they also introduce them through their own perspectives. This is only echoed in the way that the foundations for the dialogue are built upon Unai’s personal experience.

These perspectives or ideas, which they impose on the audience through collective actions, are reiterated throughout- the raising of a glass, the song based on ‘celebration,’ Unai’s anecdote about his family celebration. When it comes to the space in which the audience can contribute to communication, then, they are restricted to these parameters; they have learnt the ‘order.’

Edit Kaldor avoids this unifying quality that occurs in *Only Wolves and Lions* by not imposing her own perspectives onto the framework she creates. The framework does not constitute of linguistic components (such as directly imparting rules) but of dramaturgical structures. In other words, she does not direct the framework in a particular perspective, rather allows for the artistic structure (the inventory) and the sole subject matter (powerlessness) to lead on the creation of content.

Mouffe’s understanding of the relationship between pluralism and authority becomes transparent through exploring these two examples. In allowing herself to be ‘open’ to the transient nature, not only the performance but also the process, Edit reduces her authority and, in turn, encourages a pluralism- as “many voices” can be heard in all elements of the project. On the other hand, Leo and Unai constitute a potential for pluralism through the dramaturgical structures of the meal and the conversation. However, by directly imparting their authority and reiterating an ‘order’ the potential of these two structures diminishes.

Chapter 4: Conclusion: The Potential for Agonism

“In this openness one experiences the plurality of ways that life comes into being and is exposed to the plurality of possible actions” (Bojana Kunst, 2009).

Bojana Kunst here is referring to the potential within processes of performance before we can know how the final and fixed form will take shape. It is this potentiality-rather than actuality- that I have intended to draw our attention to within my case studies. The nature of physical or dialogical participation indicates this very unfixity that can open up the space for a ‘plurality of life.’

However, of course, we have to consider the artist’s position in this process; as Park states: “being an artist requires skilled craftsmanship as well as philosophical insight.” (2006, 27) It is the artist whom puts the decisions into motion and, in the case of participation, enables a space for the audience to actualize them. In my opinion, if we are to deny this craftsmanship in favour of the constitution of collaboration and how the audience can exercise agency, then we deny the essence of this discourse, which requires *artistic* skill. It is these artistic strategies and formulations, which I believe, enable us to distinguish between art and politics.

Agonistic pluralism enables us to draw attention to the artistic craftsmanship because whilst Mouffe encourages ‘pluralism’ in her theory, this does not mean there should be a complete dispersion but rather, she argues, there needs to be a ‘common bond.’ This ‘common bond’ is based on rules from, which communication is played out. This commonality differentiates from the ‘consensus’ we can see appearing in participatory practices because for it to acknowledge the plurality of ideologies amongst its audience or participants, there needs to be the ability for these constructions to be fluid. In other words, the communication in agonistic pluralism is not about trying to find a rational solution through compromise of conflicting individuals but instead accepting that every social structure is contingent and that the presence of ‘the other’ is not one that needs to be fought against.

I argued within my analysis around the position of the artist, that in *Only Wolves and Lions*, Leo and Unai apply their social power as artists in an authoritarian way and, therefore, they created a fixed context. Through several processes within the performance: i.e. collective actions, raising of a glass, framing the conversation with their own personal narrative, they create an authoritarian order. Their artistic intention then becomes an authoritarian one that decreases the potential for pluralism. As I discussed using Eco's theory, the reiteration of this authority, which creates the order, is what diminishes the potential for pluralism to occur in this space. We can see this materialize in the way that the audience follows through with the narrative the artists have already constructed.

On the other hand, in *The Inventory of Powerlessness*, the power relations are not implemented through an authoritarian order; they are fluid through the collaborative process of creating the content. Edit creates a 'common ground' through the subject matter (powerlessness) and the inventory but the meaning, structure and implementation of these are always in transformation.

On the surface, these two performances seem to be the same in form; they both require participation from the audience or from individuals who come forward to be part of the process. However, the difference and the resulting 'potential' of both pluralism and agonism in the performance are constructed through the approach to participation.

The participatory factor of IOP is a method for exploring questions around powerlessness. Edit enters this project, with questions such as: What is powerlessness? What can we do with this information? Can theatre be qualitative research? The participants act as a channel for discovery in that process: their role is not to fulfil a goal around "participation" but to contribute to a research process, unrelated to any of the aims of participation. In opening a dialogue to carry out this research, without imposing any preconceptions or judgments, a form of knowledge is generated at the point where both perspectives meet. In this context, that knowledge is to do with powerlessness and how we collectively define it. In other words, Edit puts herself in a position of vulnerability and openness in which she discovers, alongside the participants, how the performance will unfold. The artistic skill

surfaces not through content but through the dramaturgical strategies (i.e. the arrangement of the space, the inventory).

The difference, then, in OWAL is that Leo and Unai work outwards from participation: “creating a temporary community” being their central aim (Personal Interview). In attempting to do this they construct two social structures, the meal and the conversation but the process of framing these processes with authority and reiteration of perspectives these apparently ‘collaborative’ processes puts more focus on the ‘collective communication’ of the whole group. It is a grouping together of the audience through their own perspectives.

In the beginning, I discussed how the term ‘potential’ was important because neither of my case studies actively intend on creating a conflict, rather it is my intention to present a solution to the critique around consensus in participation. Both of these performances have the potential to create both pluralism and agonism, through creating a situation for dialogue. It is the situation for dialogue which can present the diversity of the audience or participants.

However, Mouffe argues that Habermas’ conception of the ideal speech situation of inter-subjective exchange based on argumentation or self-reflexivity rather than conflict or social power, is still based on consensus. Her argument here suggests that any form of agreement connotes consensus, whereas, I would argue that it is necessary for there to be some agreement or negotiation made but that the consensus can only be constituted in the wider frame of the performance. What I mean by this is that whilst an agreement can be made on the communication that occurs within an ‘inter-subjective exchange’ and, therefore, the content of the performance, in order to create a political space there should not be a fixed ‘order’ and/or perspective. For example, within OWAL, the content, which is created through localised ‘inter-subjective’ communication amongst audience and artists, is in itself allows for pluralism. However, then this communication is projected into the ‘order,’ constructed by the artists and, therefore, the pluralism that may or may not have surfaced is overshadowed.

Taking Mouffe's perspective into account, neither of my case studies could ever fully constitute agonism in the way that Mouffe understands it but it is apparent that through lack of authoritarian order and openness to transformability, IOP has more potential to create agonistic pluralism.

As Mouffe's theory suggests, it is openness that actualizes agonistic pluralism. The participatory paradigm misunderstands the idea of openness in terms of creating performance that is 'political.' It understands the 'political space' as one of freedom and public deliberation. It denies the political space as one of conflict and antagonism and as a result it creates a 'closed' space for consensus- a space which excludes those that might disrupt or intrude, thus mirroring the hegemonic structures it is trying to resist. If we are to be political, we need to allow for the 'plurality of life' to surface through allowing for a positive conflict; not between enemies but between adversaries who acknowledge differences because we do, in the end "still have to exist on this globe together." If we could move our attention away from participation, as we understand it now, and towards the openness that participation creates: we could begin to argue that performance is resistant, or offering an 'alternative to our reality.'

I hope to have planted seeds for a way out of the web of problems surrounding participation. Mouffe's theory is being addressed more and more within debate around performance and, as I have presented here, "openness" is how it can be constituted; looking forward then, the next stage of this research is to delve deeper into Eco's theory and how it can be useful in a contemporary setting. Here, I created a patchwork from these three theoretical strands; the next step is to create a solid foundation, a new formulation of open work. In turn, this would set things in motion for addressing how we can be political in the 21st Century.

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Appendix I

Unfinished Business Interview Transcript

25/04/2015

H= Hannah Woods

A= Anna Smith (Producer)

L= Leo Kay (Artistic Director)

H: Ok, so, my first question is: Can you talk to me about your inspirations for the piece, please?

L: Inspirations for the piece? Erm, er, so, a... pretty much all of the work I've made with the company, with Anna have come from my personal life, so, I-I-inspired, I mean inspired by things that have happened within my life and desires and needs that I've felt present in my life and, then erm, a recognition that if I'm feeling... this way that I'm probably not alone in this culture and there's probably a larger, a larger theme within my, my feelings and therefore the work probably has a larger resonance than just being therapeutic for me. And so, at the point that I came up, or considered making a piece of a work erm... I was feeling a lack of community and, I was feeling very troubled and and er very detached and isolated in that moment. And a

friend pulled me out of a dark place and took me to an afternoon of discourse and films and activities surrounding ecology called Green Sundays erm, which Jessie ran. And there was there was a short film by philosopher Alan de Botton, who's a contemporary philosopher whose written several sort of semi philosophical books but also quite insightful books about how we experience living now and how philosophy can help us to live. And he wrote about a philosopher called Epicurus. And he created the first commune, or the first registered commune in ancient Greece and he lived there with his sister and friends and they ate together and they lived quite a sort of, sort of basic life. But they, there was a lot of philosophies that came out of and there are a lot of quotes around food and communal experience and living... and around the pitfalls of consumerism and the false gods of that culture then that resonate still now and he said that "only wolves and lions eat alone, you should not eat, not even a..." and that's a paraphrase but that's really what he, he felt that, one of his beliefs was that what we, that what you need or what fulfils humans is communal experience and sharing our fundamental anxieties surrounding life and if we can have those anxieties reflected back at us by other people who share them and experience living in a similar way because they live in a similar culture and so our relationship to love and to death and to money and, to, you know, these sorts of things, if we can share what we feel and have a similar sort of er, experience reflected by other people then we don't feel so alone and this raises our sense of wellbeing and belonging in a, in a cultural context so this was the starting point for Only Wolves and Lions. Initially I wanted to do a, a durational piece which would have lasted a month, where I filled my diary, where I would of filled my diary with breakfast, lunch and dinner. I would of sort of lived in a, lived in a place, or in a kitchen or a and basically I couldn't of eaten on my own and whatever people came and whatever the bought but would be what ate and there would be conversation topics etc. etc. So that was the initial idea for the project and then I started to develop the idea and realised it that a, that, it could be a communal performance experience. And Anna and myself started researching different philosophies and the first manifestation was that we applied to go to a performance symposium in Greece, er, which happened in 2012 surrounding...

A: 2011...

L: 2011 surrounding crisis, performance in crisis//

A: It was right when Greece was teetering on the edge and there were protests in Athens and like, it was right in the thick of, like, real crisis in that country and so they designed this symposium to kind of//

L: explore the theme

A: Yeah

L: And so we spent four days of me writing a script and then telling it to Anna and Anna doing feedback and me re-writing etc. We spent this mad, sort of four day process before we went, erm, getting together these cards together, which were these 40 cards of my writing and a lot of the opinions I had surrounding these themes. And we took it over there and Anna acted as performance technician, erm, and I held the cards and myself and Anna sort of ran the event. Basically I sweated on the inside for three hours, it was so hard, it was like, because what I

realised was that... when you make statements that come from your, yourself and you open yourself to critique and if you're in a room with intelligent critical thinkers and you say "I believe this..." then, then your open for any... at every step of the way I was getting bombarded with objections or opinions or agreement or reasoning and the whole, the whole event was really successful but was so tough. So, anyway, that was the beginning of it that was the inspiration...

H: Wow, thank you. What was the name of the guy, when your friend took you to that event?

L: Alan de Bouttin.

H: Thank you

L: He wrote a couple of really interesting books, one was called *Religion for Atheists* where he talks about throwing the baby out of the bath water and how there are certain aspects of religion which are really useful and erm, you know like communal eating and stuff like that and I there's a nice chapter or two that I reckon could link up nicely and he also wrote 'constellation of philosophers', which has a whole section on Greek guy.

H: That sounds great thank you, sounds like a good lead. I'm just trying to think, I think you answered my//

L: Ask them again cos//

H: Well what I was going to say, oh no hold on a second, did you take any inspirations from any other performances?

L: Pause. Erm...

H: Laughter

L: I think one performance, one performer that inspired me to engage in close up and stripped back work that referenced and drew on academic material, or academic material or thought was Hannah Hurtzig's BlackMarket of Ideas.

H: Yeah, yeah

L: Just because, it was er, and so I think in the background that was probably inspiration but it was a distant inspiration but it just allowed me to see that if you put a task in front of someone or you, you have information to give to someone and you engage in conversation then that's just as theatrical as the performance on stage or yeah... That was one of, one of the inspirations at the time or a few years before that that kind of changed the way that I was perceiving a performance context. *(To Anna)* Yeah, Any other... performance inspirations?

A: I mean would you say doing the live art speed date?

Pause

A: Interactive, quick fire, responding

L: I dunno...

A: Or would, I don't know, maybe this is in another question but the performance and methods and the conversational up close nature of the performance was a sort of step on from a show we had done previously so might worth talking a little bit about that, I dunno.

L: Yeah

A: Might be in another question but it was a performance for a very small audience...

H: Are you talking about Life: Making a Meal of it?

L: No

H: Oh sorry//

L: It's called Its Like You Were Knocking and it's about my Dad and my Granddad and myself, erm, and it was, originally, it was for an audience of 15 people, erm in a small bedsit style room. And, so, I engaged in sort of dialogue with the audience at one point and I get the audience to write at one point and we have a drink together and we gamble together. And so, that was probably... Where would I have got that writing thing from then, before that? Just trying to think, its hard to remember, either you make it up or you just go and see something that has something like that in it, erm, erm but. Yeah so, then, I went to see Ontroed Goed, see them a show doing Internal, and how that... there was one on one elements and there was interaction and alcohol and it just sort of made me see, I think that the reason I put the writing element into Its like he's knocking because I wanted the audience to journey into their own narrative and their own biography and so I wanted and because for about 25 minutes its all very stripped back, just me in this room and its very intense and there's a musician that joins me. But I wanted them to stop thinking it was just my thing and it I wanted it to be much about communing and sharing than presenting to an audience. So, asking them questions about their own narrative, their own history was a way to trigger their personal memories and so what I found from the feedback was that from that point on, people weren't really thinking about me, they kept on being// them journeying into themselves and so it was more about themselves than mine. And Only Wolves and Lions was er and exploration of how responsibility you could maintain in a through line and an arc, a dramaturgical sort of arc experience and yeah... yeah... so... I think the influences on my work at the time, though not on... But also, a rebellion against Punch Drunk because I was so disinterested in... and Secret Cinema and stuff because I was so disinterested in sort of character based er, interactions where I felt like I was humouring the performers by being in the experience and no if, we're going to be in an experience together, lets be in it together, me and you and be there and so it was sort of a reaction against this entertainment industry element of new theatre.

H: Yeah, there's a lot of that around at the moment.

A: And maybe another influence, that came later on was the idea of the clowns, and the way that you, the interpretation of the character of the clown in *Only Wolves and Lions* is subtle but.

L: Yeah, yeah definitely, and actually in *Its Like his Knocking*, it's a, there's an element of clowning that's very much about just being responsive and present and in the moment and that doesn't mean funny, that just means being alright with whatever's just, whatever's happening and accepting it and just riffing off it. And so in it's like... there, because I was so close to the audience, you had to strip back. And the more you make a pre-tense, the more the audience can smell it erm, so, you know, and with *OWAL*, I felt I was engaging clown technique without character. And I think, then, yeah, and yeah.

H: And what were your initial aims for the piece and did they change throughout?

L: Initial?

H: Aims, so not just what ideas but what you wanted to achieve... or... If there wasn't one that's absolutely fine.

L: Getting away from isolation and the false gods of our time, in our contemporary culture in relation to consumerism and capitalism and...//

A: The sort of thing was like, how far can it go? How much responsibility...How much chaos can you exist within? And still, like, have a kind cohesive profound experience for people...communicate some of the, like research and ideas that we had whilst handing over a massive amount of responsibility and in the direction... And yeah, existing in that chaos and finding out how far you can push it. Not in to be shocked or anything but to push the boundaries of what people will take on.

L: I mean, I mean, we, so, so when we made it, after we performed it in Greece, we went, I ran a workshop in the South of France for a week exploring the form and personal biographical material. And we were already aware that it would be great to hand over some of the responsibility of the show to another performer and then in, in that, and the workshop was hosted by a company called Abrama, in a ---, which is a performance research space in the South of France and one of the members of Albra was a guy called ---, performer and theatre maker. And he joined the workshop and he was brilliant in it and made a really really great piece of work which I was already looking for a performance provocation for after the meal had been served to open up.

A: We'd been thinking about inviting different artists to come and create a provocation, which would open discussion and so the initial idea was that different people would come every night and present something in some way, or suggest something. And that would be the spark of, of a group discussion.

L: Yeah, yeah, and so we were looking for something that could sit after the meal that could open up political and social discourse around the table. And er, and what --- and I created really

fitted and was really interesting and talked about old culture and contemporary culture and industrialization and social encounter and the loss of social context, family context in Northern Spain. It brought up a lots of themes and issues that were relevant and so I invited him to be in the show with me. And so then we used some funding that we got from England to go over to, to a, a er, festival that they were co-creating, where they live in the Basque country in Northern Spain and we worked for four days, again, like ridiculous, ridiculous, sort of just ridiculous, I came over and in four days I handed him the script and he was like “ I can’t say, this your thinking dada” and also, we were finding quotes that held the same the ideas but didn’t put us in the line of fire. So then, we started to really search, to get quotes from philosophy books or social theories books etc. so then, then we would say, you know, “we read in this book or, somewhere. That they said this “ and then we would read these quotes and me and --- were on these 40 cards with numbers on the back so we could see where each other were, were. And we worked through the script, so the script was on cards, but that also allowed the audience, er, it created an egalitarian sort of context, where we weren’t the knowing artists, we were all in this together although, although there was this well, they could break in or someone interrupted then we would just skip two cards and show each other where we were and it pushed us further forward. And it, and it was mayhem, the performances were mayhem, because we were having to jump backwards and forwards and and looking at each other and “what the fuck, how we going to get back to that, they’ve interrupted us just before we were meant to be doing a silent, like meditation, so I’d be kind of going, doing this whole speech about life speeding up and the Uno would interrupt and ‘maybe we should slow down’ and often people would come in and say ‘I disagree or dadadada’ and then suddenly they’d break my flow and me and Uno couldn’t come in and then we’d have to be in this argument for ten minutes and then, we’d be like, fuck it, we’re going to have to break and have coffee because we’re too far in. So you know, it was just a massive learning experience, the whole creation and performance of OWAL but what I was going to say...

A: I forgot what the question was

H: The question was, what were your initial aims

L: Yeah, the initial aims were to create, to test the boundaries of what was possible to hold and that continued to be an aim throughout the development of the piece.

A: And yeah, it was sort of part of your research really and our work into like, we had this way of tracing it like ambiguous platforms for performance. So looking at creating a space that could be seen as a performance but could also be seen as not a performance, so just people having dinner and doing something together and what it, what it, when that’s ambiguous.

L: When its not clearly defined that we’re the performers and they’re the audience, so like ILHK, people often said afterwards that, they forgot they were in a performance, it just left like some late night living room conversation with you having the honour of telling these stories for some of it then they’re kind of remembering and then they’re in a performance again ... So its holding this space where they are just really connecting and they sort of forget, people often said they felt like they were just in a party with friends, like, engaged in a really interesting conversation, in OWAL. So yeah... it was exploring the platforms of performance.

H: Yeah that's really in line with what I'm researching because this guy, Umberto Eco who wrote this book about openness, like in 1962, openness, yes, but within the artistic framework and he talks about chaos and controlled chaos. In that way, what happens in the framework of the artist's intention or script or... so you're idea about asking how far can it go in that space, it really resonates... Ok, you've kind of already answered this but I'm going to ask it anyway, but you can be brief about it, erm, can you explain a little bit about how you made the piece, so collaboration, research devising, you've mentioned all those things but in particular relation to how it worked in relation to this particular performance? So how was it important for this performance in particular?

L: I mean the thing about this performance, is that its very alive and evolving and we didn't have, and it relies so much on the audience. Its form relies on the audience, its content relies on the audience, how it works relies on understanding how audiences negotiate a space as themselves and are given license to be themselves and to be as free as possible. It had to be developed with audiences, so every time we performed it, every time we got the opportunity to perform it, we would sort of spend, between 2 and four days madly rehearsing and refining and you know. I remember even after myself and Unai had been doing it probably for eight months as in a thing there and a thing there and a thing there, still the third or fourth time we got together there was this, he would bring an article about uprisings in the North of Spain and we'd have this massive sort of political dialogue asking how to engage. And this was part of the source material that we were excavating from ourselves or bringing to the front of our tongues so we were capable of engaging in dialogue with the audience that felt relevant or pertinent and new and contemporary. So, it was as much about us being conscious that we were conguits and had to resonate at a high level of attention, so this there was a sort of training in that, we got together to train in that so when we actually did the show in a couple days when we did the show we were alive with ideas that we felt were relevant and if there was an opportunity we would go "yeah, its interesting because we were talking about this yesterday or that or just." do you see what I mean? So it was like we got together to train as well as edit and refine and discuss what worked and what didn't and what felt uncomfortable. We would rehearse this script which was these pages and often well not often but I think three years throughout the two years that we performed or one and a half years that we performed it together we would have to rewrite the whole thing which would take three hours or something onto these cards but that process was rewriting or reediting because we'd have so many scratch's and changes, little new sentences written on them and cut pages and you know, new jokes, or timing. And we would need to be on the same page for us to be able to turn it over on to the next page and still see where the other person is and so it was a process of refining the project as we performed it. It couldn't have been done any other way.

H: So you never rehearsed it with, like, a pretend audience lets say?

L: No, no, no.

H: You talk about these cards; did you have them during the performances?

L: Yeah

H: So the audience could see the script as it were?

L: Yeah they could see, they could see the interim interaction between us. Like I say, I think it gave them some agency because it wasn't, because it wasn't hidden, we weren't, we weren't the masters. It was clear that we had this information and that we were provoking a conversation with them, that we were using these as tools, because the more that we stood up on --- with all of this knowledge and you know, this wonderful ideas that we pretended we'd made up on the spot the more distant it felt.

H: Was it always intended for outside of theatre space?

L: I mean I don't think we ever thought it was an inside theatre piece, I think we've done in it a couple of theatres...

H: Oh, I didn't realise, I thought you'd only done it...

L: I think we've done it in a couple of theatre spaces, I'm not sure where... It works best in broken spaces; it worked best in spaces that were falling apart or half built or before renovation. When we first made it and performed in Greece it was in a derelict hotel, which was occupied by this art symposium and it had smashed glass and wood and concrete and sprayed anarchy signs and it just felt like you were making the future and and, I think that that feeling that there aren't rules, that you can shape what the space will be like gives the audience agency and an opportunity to say, like when we did it at a really posh space in Bradford and it was sort of glass and exposed brick and everything was perfect and it just felt, it felt like you were inside someone else's environment talking about alternative possibilities so it felt quite hypocritical in some way. Or like you are play-acting.

H: Ok, so you have tried it in theatre spaces

L: I think we have, but I'm not sure, I can't remember, Anna probably remember would. Usually, we did it at the mac in Birmingham but we asked them to, we did it in their art studios, so if we did it in art centres we usually tried to find alternative spaces for it or else we did it in chapels or this or that.

H: I heard a lot about it when it was in Manchester actually.

L: Oh yeah we did it in that chapel.

H: And, my, I was looking at your website and your previous work and I thought, but I maybe was wrong, that Making a meal of it was a kind of research for OWAL? No?

L: No, Life MAMOI, it was like a sister project in some way; it was part of the family of OWAL. But no no, it ran alongside it, it was an intergenerational project. So we worked with young people of 16 and older people over the age of 60 and we worked with them two days a week for a month or so and created this interactive meal and sharing but they made all the food and offered the food to the audience. It was a one off... and each dish had a meaning and a story behind it for one of the performer, participants.

H: Oh, that's nice and so, we're getting to the specific questions but I'm just having a look, give me a second. Well, I didn't want to make any assumptions about the piece and in terms, of course I could say it looks like you've done or like you think this and I just wanted to, obviously you know I'm researching participation and I just wondered if you could talk about, what are your thoughts on the relationship between artist and audience and how you think this should operate in the performative space.

L: What are my thoughts between artist and audience?

H: On a more general level, the next question is how do you create this relationship in an OWAL but...

L: I, I became disillusioned with presentational performance in general about eight years ago, ten years ago. I started off in physical theatre and my aspiration was to make beautiful images and magic on stage. And then by the time I got to my early thirties, you know people like dv8, complicate and you know, so, different sort kind of European dance theatre was really inspiring to me and those sorts of contextual of performance which were really interesting in the 80's and 90's, but by the time I got to my early thirties I was bored and I felt like something was missing and I was losing inspiration and then I saw a few things in Europe and a few artists who were working on the live art scene who started to show me that there were others way to communicate that... And I started to work a lot with spoken word artists and direct spoken word artists and spoken word artists bring themselves to the stage often and they talk a little bit more but they haven't got the depth of understanding of form that live art or theatre makers have so, it was sort of looking at these two influences that were around me and I started to want to make work that explored authenticity and I think that I was also exhausted by hiding elements of myself and I wanted to see what elements of myself I didn't have to hide and I think that's a sort of on going artistic drive. How, I mean, I don't think its possible to be completely authentic and I don't think its possible, I don't think there is a truth. It probably depends on the frame, I could tell my biography in sixty different ways like I was holding a truth in there but there is no one truth. I, I think that is a cotuianle desire and inspiration, impulse to make work that connects with audiences and invites audiences to be present and themselves and for me, or the artist I'm working with to be present as themselves and to explore the possibility for the creation of transformation of experiences and so, healing and transformation are big buzz words in my intentions, for the work. So yeah, yeah creating opportunities for audiences to really, understand things differently or experience the world differently. Or experience the world differently. I feel that the more experience the audience brings the more engaged that is so its not passive, so you're not just being presented to and feeling catharsis but you actually active as an audience. Or you feel allowed to and supported in expressing yourself, the more likely there will be that something shifts and I think why I'm interested in interaction and participation and the more powerful means of transformation for both the artist and the audience, you know.

H: So its not that, for example some artists, really want to achieve complete equality between artist and audience, and its not that, I don't really think that's possible....

L: That wasn't my driver; my initial drive was to create a space where, definitely where, it's not so much about presenting and the audience being impressed it's more about sharing and the audience being transformed.

H: Ah ok... And how do you create this relationship in OWAL?

L: Through the cards, through giving them license to move around the space, through, in relation to the preparation of food so there's an hour where they have total agency and I suppose at some point accept their suggestions so if someone says "Well what about this..." or "Shouldn't we all just sing a song now." and... you're like "oh, well that's the end of the show where we all sing a sing " but you cant really...

H: So you do allow them to do that, if they make suggestions?

L: Yeah, if they make suggestions either carefully crafting a journey out of their suggestion or allowing them to express it. But not to cut them off and as "no no this is our show"- how far can you allow them to feel like it's their experience as well? So that, that's how we create a shared experience.

H: Ok, thank you. And //

L: Oh and inviting them to clear up the mess or not. You can tell if it's a good show or not because they either stay and clear up or everyone goes off after about eight minutes... Its true... Like when it was a bad show, you're like that was pretty, oh it's alright, no... it was definitely a weird show. Oh there's one person that stayed- they felt sorry for us. If it's a good show they are there for half an hour an hour. They finish clearing up with us, have a dance.

H: What is the relationship between the artistic intention and allowing for the audience to feed into the actual communication happening. For example, what I mean, what I was particularly interested in, I read somewhere in one of the reviews about the script that you have and I mean you've kind of talked about it already but how, I still can't quite grasp how you've written a script and then how you allow for the audience to feed into it.

L: Well that's why we have it on card... Because that allows for it not to be concretely memorized that you cant let go of it. Because if you memorize it to a point where, where you have this through line of thought and then when someone comes in, and someone interjects. Its quite disturbing to that through line and so by keeping it here then when someone interjects then when you look away, you can still know where you are, if that means letting go of a couple of cards. There's a fluidity by not putting it to memory, it allows for the audience to engage, interject and deviate and then allows us to kind of work our way back into the script. As interceptively and intelligently as possible. Or, or really matter of fact, like "going back to this, there's a quote which says..." and you just sort of bring it back in and because you're being really transparent there's no question, there's no sort of problem with it, its just you refer to the cards.

H: And is that the only, I'm just thinking about what you said before, so I can when I'm transcribing this interview- you talk about wanting it to be a transforming, well a transformative experience and healing and how do you...//

L: I mean That's a, that's a grand aspiration, that, at its worst it's a nice meal and its best it has the possibility to transform the way people perceive the way people perceive what is important in their lives and you know a few people throughout it, throughout the history of it, in the time we performed it, a few people said that they, they re-thought what was important in their lives from that experience and they would make steps towards making space for some of the thoughts that were in there.

H: And what the///

A: Sorry I disappeared...

H: I'm just trying to think, how do you relate that to, no actually, forget that. I'm going to move on. You also talk about a bit early, when you worked with Unai, obviously without this audience that are so important to this piece and trying to anticipate what feels uncomfortable or what... Could you go over that again, just because one of my questions is how do you anticipate what might happen in these spaces beforehand.

L: So, it's through the process of further developing the project that I realised that that the more personal opinion you put into it, the more in the line of fire you put yourself. And because it was a project about politics and philosophy, if you didn't place the opinions as musings that you'd come across then people, then it was open call to be criticised and attacked and questioned and supported.

A: It was so much about the twenty people around the table and as valid as the two artists leading it, having too much weight given to two people saying what they think or what they feel about this didn't really hold didn't really ring true with the ambitions of the piece of having equality between artist and audience. So yeah, by presenting the ideas as ideas that have been drummed up thousands of years ago by Greek philosophers, or observations of the way things are, it was much more open to people being equally valid to share their opinions... Instead of criticizing one person, it was responding to an idea. Which was important in this room of twenty people.

L: You know, and sometimes, we ventured back into our own opinion in the conversations but not in the statements so when it got into discourse or argument it was like, we were, but when we did that because we had a weight of authority, in the group naturally by being the hosts, it sometimes, it was little bit deafening to the discourse because we were giving this opinion and half the people in the room might be sort of a little bit awestruck or you know, because it you're going to a performance and that person or these people do have a status and so if you use that use that status to say "well, no this is what I think about,..." people would be agreeing with us and its like, although I do think that, Id prefer for someone else to be giving this opinion.

A: Its also because we've read a lot of books, not read a lot of books, not true at all but we've read a few paragraphs of a few books, we'd had time to chat and think about these ideas in making the show. So although we were attempting to be with the audience, not in the know, we did know more about what was going to happen or often they might have preformed ideas about a topic that had come out of the previous meal the night before or a conversation we'd had making the show, you know there was a kind of, the more we did it, we had to step back from giving personal opinion and had to allow the audience space to be the kind of main contributors- so that there roles became more like facilitators in the conversation and interjecting in moving up or on or changing the direction//

L: Absolutely and it was that sort of, yeah, there were a few hook holes, in some of, kind of like, sort of like, you allowed the conversation loose in the field and you let the conversation run around but you knew if the conversation, like, at the fence you had the little conversation catchers, so you'd bring the conversation back into the script and you'd kinda do that without the conversation really noticing and sometimes you got that right but it sometimes felt abrupt or unnatural, or like you weren't being completely with the audience, you were pushing the pace. Because it's like the pace of the show, the conversation had its own ripples in terms of the time you needed to mull over ideas.

A: I think the process of making the show was essentially performing the show, over the two years of doing it, it kind of became more predictable what people would talk about and when they would talk about those things. And because the performers became more skilled at delivering the ideas more subtly throughout the piece it became more manipulative//

L: Yep, it became less interesting as a show to do.

A: Yeah, the direction of conversation became more predictable didn't it?

L: Mm. It didn't become easier to do, it was like, we got another performer into do it, because Unai lived in the Basque country and had a kid in the time so we had to get a new performer in. So, but, it was always edgy to do and would be a success or a failure and you couldn't really determine what it'd be apart from you could feel the energy between myself and the other performer and or my energy or her energy or Unai's energy were up and buoyant and bubbly or were more stable and a little bit tighter and that might suggest it was going to be a tighter show and not quite as free. But it definitely became less interesting.

H: And did you find, that your, I mean I assume it will vary from show to show as well but did you find that your mood or your energy levels, that the audience responded to them? So if you were tired.

L: Yeah, of course. It becomes more effective because of the proximity. Sometimes you just have to accept that you want to be on the sofa eating noodles and sometimes you can warm up and change your energy and sometimes you just cant. But sometimes, also, you.... Yeah...

H: Sorry, I just, I'm going a bit off my questions but I just remembered something that I wanted to ask. How many people were in the room that weren't audience? So there was a DJ wasn't there.

L: There was a DJ, myself, Anna and Unai

H: And were there ever hosts of the theatre or space you working in?

L: Yeah, sometimes, we tried to get them to be part of the audience.

H: Ok, thank you... Just so you know, I've only got three questions to go. But you've also already answered some of them so you can go over them quickly. I was reading about the moments where you make people make monkey noises and sing a song- and I just wondered if you could talk me through these moments when you lead the audience through collective memories and what roles these specific moments of direction for the audience play in the piece as a whole.

L: I mean, I think that, that they were, they were, icebreakers, they happened really close to the beginning because it was important to say that this isn't average 'sit down and where you can hide' this is going to be, going to be, you know, there were loads of signals within the experience that you know, just talking about doing the monkey noises and stuff like that and saying it was an icebreaker and sort of signified it was going to be quite a different experience and that it was an experience we were all going to be doing together and that they were going to be a part of and it was a little bit provocative and playful.

A: It was a little bit like, once you've done that, you realise it wasn't as bad as you thought it might be beforehand and so I think it eased people into the cooking thing, element of it and this embarrassing thing which is actually more embarrassing than cooking.

H: Sorry, I just had one other thing about that. It was a structural strategy, obviously, but also, was it a strategy in getting the audience to communicate in the space further on in the space?

L: Well the monkey thing, you know we got them to make noises, so yeah, so it was an icebreaker but it was vocalising their...

A: It kind of gave a buzz word for references, in that introduction, so this idea about the difference between bonobos or chimpanzees or quotes from... they were things that people could grab hold of later on and I think that the physical embodiment of that embeds it in your mind a bit. And something to reference back to, and possibly to keep the conversation in a realm of themes.

H: Cool, thank you. And you talk about, sorry, you've also already answered this but you talk about community and contesting the fragmentation or isolation of our culture and I mean, can you, I know its obvious but you can talk about, the things you do to contest this- isolation or fragmentation.

L: I think that, I think that something that is quite dominant within the piece is the sense of ritual so we use toasts and we use a dance at the end and singing together and breaking bread together and making food together and all these communal rituals and engagement with other people. And we also sort of make that suggest the quote that Epicurus said that if we share our

fundamental anxieties with other people and have them reflected them back then we no longer feel so alone and so we engage with that and put provocations in conversation that allow for people to share these anxieties and Unai and I's story was very much provoked this question of whether we are losing community and what the implications of that is in our culture and what might be replacing those elements and whether they are satisfying or fulfilling. So I think through all these actions employed and provocations within the conversation we attempt to address the, our beliefs, in a fragmenting, and effect of community and what effect that has on human wellbeing.

H: And you talk about negotiation and not just allowing for complicity in the space and how do you balance what you want out of the performance and the openness that the audience fill in? Which I know, again, I know you've already answered this question.

A: Its subtle as well I think, subtle performance techniques that are required in managing the conversation, to keep it in a place where it is open, because I feel that we have seen it shut down as well. We've seen examples where there has been a freedom to express yourself and a difference in opinions to, without there being a kind of amonisity. I feel I feel like we've seen both. I think it comes down to combination of all of the elements and everything that comes before that conversation and the way that the discussion is held by both performers. And it is down to personalities in the room, occasionally you have a curve ball personality that just wants to really like, throws it out of wack and there's not much you can to manage that and you can mitigate a little bit but sometimes there were characters that really just did completely throw all of the techniques//

L: All of the techniques, the building blocks that you create that attempt to an open and accepting temporary community. There'll be someone who is getting too drunk or someone who has a weird psychology that wants to disrupt, or someone who misreads one of the comments or statements and puts that together with something else they've misread or something they've read properly and and then that rebels against a suggested silence and creates tension in the room. So, its very, yeah, its very, it's a subtle negotiation.

A: The more relaxed and open the performers could stay the more open the audience were//

L: Yeah there was a fundamental correlation

H: And that correlated with them also not just agreeing with what you said...?

L: No, no, giving them the confidence to not agree//

H: Yeah, that's what I mean yeah.

A: Often the best conversations weren't like people, like people stating polarized opinions it was just 'this is my perspective on this/ this is my experience and this is an observation I've made.' It was like; it was the times that people felt like they had to defend their point of view or a side of the argument. It was, that wasn't really very, very productive because it shut people down and it, it stopped those people who maybe didn't align to either one of those sides taking part.... So as much.... The more that the performers could encourage responses which weren't

like, solely about, like “I believe this and I think is what I think is right” but were more about observations, experiences and perceptions of where we are. And then that made for really interesting, often personal. Mixing the personal with the social or political//

L: And thoughtful and revealing and those, those moments where people actually felt comfortable enough to do a... talk about those feelings, often in relation to loneliness or in relation to isolation in the community or in relation to their family, you know, anxieties they had. When they, when people felt confident enough to do that that was the real....

H: Ok, I've got one last question and its very simple: Do you see this performance as an exploration of all the things you've talked about or is there, in your mind a specific measurement of its success?

A: One measurement of success, there were a few people who would express that they had a really profound experience and often they weren't the people that you would expect, even to come in the first place. And I think there's something successful in that, its sort of like, very interesting project, for us to develop performance ethics //

L: And it developed our practice as a company massively. We learnt an enormous amount because it was process as performance and we have taken on that to our next project. ... So it developed our company ethics and, we try, in this new show to make and eat lunch with these people all the time in this process we've been running for a year and a half, there's an understanding of the importance of breaking bread and community and that element of community we were exploring in change my mind, we've continued to explore the possibility be it of, in a creative performance context... so its had a massive influence on our work and we have run different projects from that. So I think its probably successful in that way and also in that it created a buzz, it had a buzz around it. People were telling us that we could make phenomena out of it because it worked so well as a concept but we were resistant to commdoifying it//

A: Cos I think a lot of the fundamental successes in it would not have survived the commodification of it so, the small scale of it, we did it with more and really twenty people are the maximum that you can have of meaningful conversation around one table. And so, to suddenly expand it, that would not of retained the integrity.

L: And if we'd franchised it and got different people into perform it where myself and Anna weren't, well then you have to devise new stories because the stories that were woven through it were mine and UNIs and that's possible but it just felt like “What are we doing?” What would we be doing to do that? And so, erm, I think, it had a buzz around it, in that it was an inspiring idea and easily understandable concept and access.

H: Sorry, what I actually meant was... not necessarily what were the successes but whether the success of it was important or whether it was simply about an exploration. Obviously there were shows were you said “that wasn't that good” but did that matter. Well. Sorry.

L: No no, I understand, As in, we were trying to create a positive temporary community where transformation of ideas and audiences understanding perception of their own lives was

possible. So, and where it was resonant and rich and engaging and gave people a temporary, recognition that three or four hours of exchanging with other people can be magical. And so, that was our aspiration for the work. So when that didn't happen it was as uncomfortable as when a show is not successful //

A: also though, when it didn't happen those were the times when we had to think about why it didn't happen. And because the show was developed incrementally developed over two years, it was kind of those performances that really pushed it forward so, you know, you needed both experiences//

L: You needed the failure to learn

Appendix II

Interview transcribed with Edit Kaldor.

15/01/2015

E: Edit Kaldor

H: Hannah Woods

This interview was held as part of a wider research project on Edit's work and, therefore, also present at the interview: Dineke Rieske (D) Aisling Marks (A) and the translator of the performance Francesca Hegt (F).

D: Can we start with your process- first- what your inspiration is

E: It is determined by my background, so I studied literature and then normal theatre directing. But then I started to work with a company called loft theatre; they were a Hungarian company living in New York, coming out of a specific tradition. I worked seven years with one director, that's still very present in how I work. They were before called squat theatre, they were quite influential in the 80's, I don't know. And they had a theatre building in New York and they did, they lived in the building and they did a lot of storefront performances, so the audience were sitting inside and they were playing outside. And they were very much part of this downtown Chelsea scene... and performances were coming out very organically out of their living situation. But basically that approach of not so much separating life and theatre, I got from there. Also, I think this is an interesting in form; we made performances where only this part of people could be seen. And its all very conservative now compared to the things we tried out then, especially Holland, its not theatre if its not. Basically that's very important and that has a lot of consequences because I think what is very specific about my work is relation to audience and relation to representation. Representation is anyway the biggest question in theatre, the biggest decision. And so I am not interested in working with actors but for me it's a very strange concept this somebody pretending to be somebody and then trying to bring something up. So I guess it's very coherent what I'm doing. I am just interested in a stage presence that is not related to representation but to the impossibility of trying to communicate something or formulating something. So process, then works the following way. Ah maybe something that is very important that has to do with my background I guess is that I just had a really turbulent life. Up to a certain point. But we emigrated, as a kid we were in a refugee camp, erm then I went to New York when I was 16 alone. I was swimming around and very often I didn't have a place to stay so it's a lot of experiences. So in that sense, by the time I went to Das Arts, I was 30 or something and id lived in so many countries and so many parts of society and I guess that just changes my relationship to theatre. I just see it as this amazing place without any purpose, you know, and...

H: Sorry, you see theatre without any purpose?

E: Yes, it's a space where you don't need to, it's a very concentrated space, a very trustful space. People come and they are ready to engage and somehow ready to focus. But there is no, there

is no, you don't have to make the customer happy. It's just a free space. That for me, is what is so interesting.

D: Is this why you produce your pieces in theatre spaces? Is it that concentration from your audience that you want?

E: Yes, it's that concentration, attention and the associative space-, which is, er, especially made for theatre. For me it cannot be performed somewhere else because then it is another thing. It's a totally other thing. So yeah. Erm...

D: Someone in the audience asked, would you do this in a community centre? I think we had this question.

E: Yes, it's a very different thing- then we don't need an audience, in a community centre, you know. For me, this piece is explicitly theatre. The whole idea is to open up the space to other kinds of experiences. I would very much like that the audience would be as mixed as the performers, that's, but that did not work at Frascati but it would be a very different discourse or something. I will try it in Berlin and in Poland to make sure the audience is more mixed.

H: You've never worked outside of the theatre space have you?

E: I'm sure I've done somewhere something but not particularly//

H: But it's not something you consider?

E: Oh, I think about it, last year we gave a workshop at DasArts, with Ant Hampton, who always works in the street or the library, we gave a series of workshops in different countries, based on something we did at Das Arts, that was shouting in public space, also in Utrecht we did it with some students. And then we were thinking of making a performance based on that but, no, I mean I, I like, smallness of gestures and you need the attention for it. Like if you do it another space, like if you go to a museum, you just go "ah ah" and then you're gone. There's something touching and a bit perverse us sitting there together so closely, we are waiting for somebody to show us something, and in fact that situation I like, I like a lot. And then I like not to do the work for the audience. And the process, so in a way, what I try, what I try, there is something once I read by Jerome Bel that the audience always wants you to overwhelm them and if you don't do it they get really angry and I don't want to overwhelm them. What I do is try to put... PAUSE... So, so, first of all, I like not to approach the audience as a group, like that's why I don't like applause, we had some kind of experience and then all of it is washed out by doing the fact that then we are going to do this which is much stronger than anything, because you're active and in a group and that's really great but for me, it really pushes out what I'm looking for. SO, I guess what I like to do is put stuff on stage that is weaker than the audience. Then let the audience decide, like somehow make a connection to it, like with the inventory, do you go away, do you step up do you push it away, do you allow yourself where you just don't care or do you try to care do you, what do you do with it? Or do you say not my expectations, please stop it... that its really that reaction that I'm working for. To see//

D: Do you have an idea what you want from your audiences or is it more wait and see?

E: No of course, I want this range, I work for this range, for this decision moment. I don't want everyone to leave, or everyone to stay. I want to find that point where a decision has to be made. I don't want them to have a uniform response. And, yeah, about process, in general I always know the form. SO I knew I wanted this overwhelmingly lot of people and stories that you cannot process, that you cannot relate, so that I knew. And I knew that I wanted them to be different and I knew that I wanted some kind of representation that is not overtaking it but somehow following on the digital. And I always know, in the beginning, because that's the relation to the audience or something. And after that I go and look, look for the people, usually I do huge auditions... And then it stayed like that.

D: How is the call?

E: Here, it was, we did some calls, through theatres and then we went out to look for people. Well, the call, first it said 'theatre project' dadada but then we realised we shouldn't call it a theatre project. All those people who wanted to do something in theatre left. So we asked questions about powerlessness, like are you interested in this topic and do you have knowledge about it. And then, we went to look for them, like the guys from the refugee camp, we invited them. And the most important thing, we said to everyone that they had to find what you wanted to get out of this, otherwise it makes no sense. We will not be able to, its not gonna be really fun or something. So everyone made a decision and there were different things for everyone to figure out.

H: How did you select?

E: We didn't select because the concept was very inclusive. The people who came through theatre and actually only a few of them stayed, or we kept, we did select a bit, like we discouraged people, like there was, people with stories like you know, "my boyfriend doesn't really understand me" and it was very, when you put it between other things, the person said like "yeah its actually not powerlessness so I don't have a story." Erm, and there, we worked individually with other people. We worked in groups and in small groups and then individually. And then other people, there were also people who met the people one rehearsal before the performances. So for me it was important they weren't such a group, by Sunday they became such a group group but yeah...

H: But there were some people, I was talking to someone and he told me he was there throughout the whole process and there were some people who had just come in for one performance, or there were. So there weren't the same people.

E: No no, I mean it was suddenly like everybody's grandmother or grandfather died, they were like four funerals the week of the performances. It was very strange. I'm not so... Yeah. Its not not, don't think of it.. It won't happen to you. No, it was just kind of coincidental, people could come or they could not come or erm... And we didn't pay the people, which was kind of a necessity because normally I want to pay everybody. But here we didn't pay most people but we didn't get the subsidy for theatre.

H: So you paid some people?

E: A few, yes, we paid those who really needed it. And we always had food, for those who really really needed the money.

H: And you paid the actors?

E: I paid the girl who was typing because she had a lot of work. And the actors? Who were the actors? We kept it a secret.

H: Sorry, there were the teenagers...

E: Ah yes, a little bit yes. And a few who couldn't make the time without it. Who we felt that, yes it really makes a difference. I wish... In a way it was good not to have that relationship. Now we are busy looking for the nicest presents for everybody. Which is difficult... There was one woman who stepped out after the premiere and then she said "I cannot tell it as my own story, I don't have a relation to it and so I don't want to do it anymore."

H: What like shed become detached from it?

E: Yes yes... And erm, in a way that freedom. And we always said "you only have to do it until its meaningful to you. Don't do it, or don't it for us or something". So in a way, that made it easier, not having that whole engagement.

H: I don't want to dwell on the money thing....

E: Yes, that's why you shouldn't publish it, because we didn't declare it. But it didn't come it. It never really came up, we just said we didn't get the money and then, there were some guys, who like the refugees who if they were here during the day they wouldn't have any money. Or so, they come three times to eat in the theatre. But it has to be. And yeah so...Erm... So yeah, most people know, we were quite open but we didn't talk about money. People got a little bit. We worked very hard but we got very little pay.

D: One more general thing, when you look for a new project, do you really look for a new project, you actively search for something?

E: This is why I told you about my turbulent life because in a way that has saved me, I have all those years that I kind of, I always have a project. I have tens of projects in my mind. I'm always a few years thinking about something. And this one, I was very interested in powerlessness. So I made a performance about dying and child abuse...

H: You always work with technology?

E: Yes but its not so much... You are also working with technology. It's so much a part of our lives. There's this weird thing about stage and what you put on stage. Like putting a table and two chairs on stage is a very weird thing, it gets so present and so stupid and so. . You know. So... I think I try to avoid having to put something else. And I think it's a thing that performers

and audience share and that is transparent. That's why, its more the screen, and the... it's a very interesting thing for metaphors.

D: You said that representation could be one of the issues and could be triggering your decisions, what would be the ideas about representation that you would be handling in this particular performance?

E: Well, several things, I mean, most obviously, how can, well, what is such a person on stage that is not totally prepared or not totally in control? 2. What is, how can you communicate an experience, how can you not communicate, its more about that. And in telling it, and in summing it and placing in the context of other experiences. It's like three steps of alienation of that. And erm, and erm, how can you be there as audience? I mean, you saw Sunday I guess? That was a very strange performance. It was very strange.

D: How was it different from the others?

E: Oh very different, about half the performance. Well, there was Sunday, one of the audience members came in and told a story about her Mother and that kind of turned the mood into much, yeah I mean she took much longer, she was crying. She decided to come back. She came the night before. I mean basically, it was more, the thing itself was more, everybody much more emotional. I mean the resistance from the audience was very big and er, they just stopped it. They just said "Yeah, now its time to do something else, or go to the next level." They stopped the whole thing. There were comments that it was too much. Someone in the audience said they "felt a bodily resistance to this performance, its too much, when am I going to get something else, what can I do? I feel powerless." I mean that is the whole concept, so... So usually, I mean it would like ok well we have a discussion later or it would go on, or the question would be left hanging but here the question, called in other questions to other people and that's why... It became a discussion.

H: Its so interesting...

E: Yeah it was interesting and not interesting, there I think a more mixed audience would of helped cos there were a couple of really dominant people and I heard from others later on that they were fine with listening that they would of liked to have heard more, so... I think it was a bit more of a less polite situation, it would have been more difficult for some people to dominate it. And what for me, it was interesting, in a way it was another kind of outcome of that mechanism of making audience powerless by overwhelming them, I mean it its full circle. Because some people blame others, some people take it on themselves, others walk away. But it was too much for me about theatre. Maybe about, I come with some expectations to Frascati and then it was a bit...

H: It felt that or someone said that?

E: Someone said that. Yeah Yeah. I was happy that they stopped it and solved it because what wouldn't have been good if people would of kept going. So I would of then interfered but they kind of solved that but erm.

F: The performers you mean....

E: Yeah

H: How did they solve it?

E: They really went into, a erm... With the microphones they kind of formed a front and they were really answering the questions and trying to figure out what it was that they audience wanted. They were trying to really get it out of the performance, what way can we do? And then it became a discussion because they couldn't get past this, they couldn't move forward; they really tried to keep it going.

D: I was just wondering, we didn't really, they listed these questions throughout the performance but then, did people talk about this in smaller groups? Because it didn't happen as a whole anymore.

E: Yeah, I mean on Sunday it didn't happen but yeah it'd happen sometimes, in smaller groups, it happens sometimes and sometimes very different conversations happened. For instance, People going up to certain performers with similar experiences and talking about that. So that, I mean tis in a way, I didn't want to push it, because it was too long already to really have. So it was more like a guideline, like you can do this er but there were in the other evenings, there were conversations, the first evening it was too much premiere hype... But yes. The premiere was too long, I cut it after that, by 20 minutes.

D: What did you cut?

E: Ah, well it was interesting for me, it says something about the process. For example there were two more stories from the guys from the refugee camp and in fact we decided it was too many. We cut, erm... I don't remember exactly, but it seemed very obvious dramaturgically, like ok, we don't need that and that. And what for me was so interesting, I mean that no one had, that no one, when we, I mean also how we approached it its not like ,the decision, I mean the whole process had to be quite democratic because you can not just say well, your trauma is nice but its too long now. But we did say, it was a constant process. But people also just understood. When stuff was cut, they said like "Yeah, we felt that too."

D: Well, yes it was about the process, what it means for them, the lines probably don't matter as much.

E: Yes but it matters that you think you can say what you want to say. That does matter. For instance there were also some things that I could not cut. Like originally I cut but then the performer came up to me and said "No no I'm going to tell it" and then I said "ok you're going to tell..."

D: Yes, because I was wondering how it took shape, did you make you made decisions and back, was it organic or...?

E: No, we took some decisions but then it made itself a bit, a bit because we knew that things had to be kind of contrasting. This thing of what had more or less weight but I made a lot of decisions that also came out of things can not become too meaningful. Because then they start to dominate. Because then everything starts to fall apart or come together in a sense, it would of made much, the audience happier I think but but the concept ... And erm.. Yeah. I mean the thing about putting people before, that was a kind of buffer because two similar experiences, you know. And it was clear in the beginning it had to be as varied as possible and then some lines said out. So it was, a lot of puzzling. And it changed, after the premiere we changed the order and they never got it totally right. And you could not rehearse this too many times because it becomes forced or automatic. So, and and basically, people were given a choice, like "What is for you important?" So we really started following that and within that edited it.

H: So you, just for my clarification, you started with this idea, your intention to talk about powerlessness and then you allowed them to talk about they wanted from the performance, or what they needed or what they...

E; Well, well, I gave them that mind set and then they made decisions. But for instance the guy, then I also made some and and then then, feeling for who is this important? For example, the guys who talks about epileptic seizures but we had twenty other stories similar so I said, "I'm sorry, lets stick with the first one." So in a way, yeah, in a way, the guy who with the stepfather that was beating him, you know, for him, I gave much more space. And things, I didn't restrict him because he never talk to anyone about that before. And now, he was each rehearsal taking it further and we also talked and followed through and go further... SO there I couldn't say "Hey it's nice but maybe can you cut those two." I mean I did give, I gave for everybody, and each text had a form. I mean a kind of structure and they had to understand that structure so they could re-create it. And then a lot of new stuff came in during the performance and interestingly what came in was anger, that was for me quite interesting that most of the stuff that was added was anger. Yeah...

H: Erm, each text had a form

E: Yeah each text had a form, like the one man with one sentence you know, that was the form. There was a guy who had like like, my my my, how do you say it? Debt, debt went up between 8,000 to 11 without me making more debts. Like he would have preferred a form of, you know, half an hour, but, like was with him that was the strongest. And he was very cool about it. And I said "you don't need to say more, you know it's..." erm...

H: You must have had to work to get that generosity from... to get that openness from them...

E: Yeah, it was kind of a personal process, so so, people were, and we were very transparent about stuff. So it was not like "Yeah we think it would be best but ok "yeah this is why it works best" in one sentence but he became the poster boy for the show so...

H: So your strategy for making them generous was to be transparent with them?

E: Yes, and make them responsible for the whole and for for me that was quite, quite erm satisfying, for example with the last performance, although I thought "I should of thought of this, I should of trained them better" and I will do it like that. And I will train small group better to be able to handle this more but er, er, if we do it here again but also when when we do it in Berlin and Poland. I did not work enough, first there was a much larger group of commentators that were responsible and er, then we kept reducing it. And I did not work enough with them. But yes, transparent and taking responsibility for the whole. So for instance, like Ali, with the guy, how he has a really, he's imprisoned with his whole family, and breaks his knuckles and fights with the police and he has angry side... And for me, it was very kind of touching, that when on Sunday when they were kind of saying it was enough. And he is the last one and he is the last one and he has a huge long story and then he was saying to the other performer like "I want to say something, I want to say something." and she said "What do you want to say?" and he said "I want to say that we told them that the door was open" so in a way, in fact in understanding this, how its working. Rather than saying "hey why do you come here if you don't, er, you know." Just working within the rules of the whole game is really nice. You know what I mean? So that it's like, its like, in the last performance they did not mind. The people who did not get to tell their story was like "yeah we knew... nobody was like, oh but we would like so much" because it was not like that. It was not like "ohh I want to tell my story." But still it was rough for the group, yeah.

F: But I think the discussion was really good afterwards

E: Yeah, I met yesterday with Leo who was very much the, guy with the stepfather, and we talked about it.

....

His mother came again and he invited his stepfather but then not again. There was an awful lot happening that we didn't see.

F: Yes because I think, thinking about what you're saying about what do people want to get out of it but that changes of course along the way because people come unexpectedly maybe or family members or friends or just audience members who start to talk. I mean I saw that a lot, people started connecting and they get things out of it they did not expect- it can be positive but also maybe confronting or, or.. (to edit) there's a role for you to play in that? Or do you think they can handle it by themselves

E: I think most people can handle it. So already from the beginning there were people who we thought were too fragile to participate and then we were very clear for them. We said it's not for you; it's too close to your experience still. And then during who are three or four people we think are fragile and we have kind of divided the follow up with them. And we meet on Sunday... and we will kind of check with people, we kind of divided that, there are more than four people who are fragile and other 6 people who are prone to depression... We have a kind of amateur after care.

We also kind of connected....

....

The old lady for example... it was very touching, she wrote a poem on the last day and so on the last day she said, actually I wrote a poem and maybe I can read the poem instead of my text. And the poem was very cute and so I said "... ". It was a caterpillar that always lives in the rotten stuff and then comes one little sunshine and then she comes out and then becomes a..." So, it was so cute but she's an extremely intelligent woman and in a way she's never dealt with it... She's never told anyone. She once wrote a book of poetry where she hinted to what had happened to her kind of and she gave it to all her children but she said they never said anything about it. So, so for her it was, this was really, in a way this was help for her. From the beginning, she said she didn't want to be with people she said I don't want to have coffee, or eat cookies... I just want to come and do it. And then I saw that her and one of the refugee boys were talking for 45 minutes after, so so she kind of connected to the guys from the refugee camps the most... And then the mother of the guy who's stepfather was beating him connected to the woman who was watching, so you know, it's a weird, people get something.

.....

A: And this idea of powerlessness because someone said, someone said in the script "the more you dwell upon powerlessness the more you become powerless. So I wonder for you, the whole idea was to bring about some kind of catharsis, to help the people. Or erm, I also wondered if you were using theatre of the oppressed or forum theatre model.

E: A little bit because I am thinking about what is theatre good for. This whole idea of useful art and useful theatre... But to some extent, with the catharsis, I don't want to solve it its just there's a lot of shit out there... I was myself surprised we got so many abuse stories and who never talked about it. So in that sense... As a whole.....

I think the silence about it is, I mean I think that isolation makes powerlessness worse so I think trying to find a way to talk about it is useful somehow. And it breaks the whole taboo this whole thing about keeping so much to ourselves is a weird social taboo thing. Obviously, you start such a project and everyone comes so there obviously is a need to talk about it. We are so putting the other side in front, when we present ourselves.

F: there's also the question that came up from the audience, "Why are we coming here to see this happening?" I wonder how you feel about that and during the process how you, did you want to,

E: Because that's one of the, if you say oh they have a problem and luckily I don't know powerlessness, is one of the. The whole mechanism of the performance, the idea of the inventory and that there are millions of cases is to put audience in this powerless, overwhelmed position and then find a way, how to deal with it. Do you try to empathise? Do you feel guilty that you are indifferent after the tenth story do you walk away? Do you come on stage and tell? Do you think about your suicidal ex wife...?.. How do you relate? I am looking for some awareness of how you relate personally to the environment. There is this reflection... this performance puts you in touch with how you are relating to the world.

A: What do you think of the comment is this theatre?

E: It's a very open space, this intimacy of strangers, it's the only space where the intimacy of strangers can happen without implication... Every single work I have ever done it has been reviewed and asked: Is it theatre? There is this undecidability. I wish people would take more chances

H: You a//

About freedom, we had to give this freedom to some people or to all but with some, it was important they felt free and also feels somewhat spontaneous but, for example with --- the guy from Africa. I have very heavily edited, somethings I just said no you have to go from here to here rather than starting from a statement and then explaining. You have to start with experience and finish with conclusion and it cannot be longer than this and within that, there was a little bit of freedom otherwise he would of dominated the whole thing. Even in the days before and so, finding this balance... You cannot be forever searching for the words, so so, there was a lot of freedom but also a lot of restriction.

A: What were the restrictions?

E: Availability, people dropping out

I don't want the audience to be a group and I didn't want them to be a group because as soon as they are a group you cannot give any freedom anymore because they start connecting things and I didn't want them to start connecting things. And I didn't want them to be present as a group. That was probably more alienating. They were probably alienating away... By Sunday they were a group and in someway the audience then become a group.

H: Somebody, one guy from Het Huis thought it was dishonest in that way, the audience were lead to believe spontaneous.

E: Page 89: Dramaturgy of undecidability, Lehmann. Its not about fooling the audience, its just so that you cannot say well guys, I'm going to lay back because for sure this all fiction, they get their payment, they go home they have a perfect life, they are just actors. Just, it's not about fooling the audience it's about not knowing and that puts audience in a different, you cannot assume that it all doesn't mater.

H: That was a strategy in making the audience a part of it.

E: You cannot be sure that you are free from responsibility.

We had too much material, ideally there should be more space for it. .. I wanted that as an option, or you could also leave. Or have distance. But I wanted more for them to connect to it. It's also kind of weird. There are lucky ones but some things you do recognise (1.18)

F: People feel that the society, there's this idea that certain stories have to be treated by professional. Compartmentalisation. Documentary theatre is one thing, for therapy you go to a psychologist. People feel insecure whether it is real or not. Are these people in

need? Breaking the barrier about where you're supposed to be. It's more than breaking a taboo but breaking this fear of life.

E: Breaking a mode of communication because actually it's quite normal to talk about stuff, it's actually just normal to talk about most of the stuff.

H: But how a lot of people it's not normal

E: I don't believe in therapy so much, I don't believe you can solve things. These are experiences that are happening and you can't solve it and make it go away. Acknowledgement is useful. And acknowledging them together is useful, not just as individual.

A: How do you think you find this audience? I noticed myself that this audience is this theatre going right middle class audience

E: I really tried! I tried and tried and tried. I even had to fight so much because I said bring down the ticket prices but it was still expensive. It was impossible. Please at least put some down that people can come in for free if they cannot pay for a ticket. That was impossible. For this ticket price I cannot invite.

H: Was choosing Frascati (no idea if this is the name of the theatre...) a choice?

E: They co-produced. It was all fine until we discussed it and then it was not fine anymore.

H: White middle-class people can experience the same things.

E: White middle-class is the least equipped to let the experience come. These places need to open up. This is not a genius audience, and I was very clear. I don't want to leave Frascati for the boring white-middle class jerking off. It has to be open. These places need to open up because it's not OK anymore. There is such a gap in society, about feeling powerless. It's not to do with intelligence it's to do with confidence. It's about this segregation. About this white-middle class having so much confidence and mono-culture. Theatre must stop being this mono-culture because it's not right. This division line is not right, it's a stupid thing. It's not honest to keep it such a part of privilege. It's perverse that only white-middle class people go

A: It's a very strange dynamic when suddenly you have these theatres opening their doors to productions like yours and We Are Here academy.

E: That's our scenery the audience. And it did not work here. In Berlin I'm gonna make sure it's much more...We will try other things

A: Do you think, to an extent, if you were to take this performance to an unconventional setting. If you were to do this do you think it would be abandoning the theatre scene? Leaving them to remain in their isolated bubble

E: I'm not here to save theatre from itself. But it feels like the risks you can take in theatre are not matched. It's just too good a place to have as a meeting place. So I'm not here to change it,

but certainly I'm here to change it. I certainly do not think for a second that the white middle class audience understands theatre more than anyone else. I would like to see that theatre is not reinforcing this. It's still done from this perspective that we are gonna do We Are Here. It's very patronising. None of my visual artist friends, theatre is kind of the dinosaur. Nobody goes to see theatre, and it's a pity because it's a great form because everyone is there at the same time – performers and audience. Theatre has a bad name, theatre is 'irrelevant', and that's a pity. I feel strongly that it should be open to others because it can give something. It's a reflection space, a meditation space.

H: Shift from this image it has nowadays. You also were telling us that most of your performances are questioning the art of theatre. You also said yourself that there a lot of things in theatre (not theatricality). Considering this, what is the thing that is still there in theatre that is specific to theatre and that drives you to keep working?

E: This life presence of audience and whatever is presented. The possibility of interactions, to interfere. This cliché of anyone can die and anyone can also do anything there. The good will is the focus. It's one of the only places where you turn your phone off. It's a kind of intimacy being, and the kind of encounter with strangers that is focussed and is also a kind of experience even if it's not in anyway interactive. That you don't kind of switch away. You are present and that thing or those other people are also present and you are confronted with that. That is, even in the last few years, that we have these phones that is changing a lot already. It becomes a more and more exceptional situation. It's all cliché what I'm saying but it's truly exceptional. This kind of attention span, this commitment. Making a commitment to a thing, to stay there. And talking about things, what I learnt from this project for instance is that the pressures of generations are very different. Your generation there is much more pressure to, not only perform well, but also to be seen as performing well. Which, from my generation, Facebook and to be at the coolest party and to have a picture on Facebook that you are at the coolest party, and that you are reading interesting things. It's at every level. But me, I don't share anything about my kid on Facebook. For me it's totally weird to be at the playground with my kid and share a photo on Facebook. So it's much more private, without pressure. I don't have to perform a good mother, I just have to be a good mother. In that sense, this presence and this faux presence is just another mode of being. More concentrated.

A: A lot of the time you go to the theatre and there is this unspoken social code. As an audience member you can't do anything, don't interrupt.

E: I always have a limit how far the last audience member can sit. Nobody understands why I'm not moving onto the big theatre spaces. I have no desire at all for big theatre spaces. If I cannot see very well it's not theatrical anymore. I build it into what I like.

A: How do you deal with...I can trace your own life stories in a lot of your performances...but you also use other people's stories. How do you deal with telling a story in Woe (?)

E: I'm not so interested in telling stories. Stories are exchangeable. I find it in many ways important for him, for the presence, the presence created but I'm not interested in trying to articulate experiences that are impossible to articulate. And making mechanisms with the

audience to experience that. Connection between people is also quite impossible somehow, quite illusionary. In face each piece is about trying to articulate and feeling also in this case coming. Can you come to somebodys experience? It's impossible. Here it's much more about how close can you come to society and what kind of responsibility will you take. Why are we so passive, why do we accept? Is it that it's happening to other people? That it's too many too much. Why are we so passive in the face of injustice? For myself also. On the one hand articulation, but on the other creating this mechanism for the audience to somehow experience. Making them feel powerless with the Chinese, it's really this thing about not understanding and then grabbing one word and what this means to you. It's this kind of being, like, trying to articulate and re-articulate and being stuck in your own mind. In one hour, what is it like to really feel like time passing? It's really about what is achievable and what is not. In a way that is what I try to do, make a set up between audience and thing. Where it doesn't overwhelm you but you navigate it as an individual audience member.

A: Things get lost in translation. Everybody experiences it differently

H: Your use of technology you say is organic. For me it seems a way to communicate with the audience, a way to bring them into that experience.

E: It's also shared surface. And I just like it, it's amazing to me how we are using technology and I just try to make it more and more like as if it's normal.

A: Why do you work with dramaturge?

E: I worked with two this time, also because it's the first thing I ever did in Dutch. For this one I decided, and I don't know if it's a good decision, I decided not to work with the theatre dramaturge but someone from activism and philosophical writer, and the other one is a writer. I need someone to see also from outside.

H: Do you speak German & Polish?

E: No

H: So you will have a translator?

E: They have to do it on their own, they can't translate everything.

(Talking about specific people in Berlin – boring and seems irrelevant 1:41)

D: You find out on the way what people need?

E: Yeah, I mean I think here we could have used one more person.

H: What kind of person?

Someone more conceptual like me, a theatre maker. It could have focussed much more on interaction with audience. We will do that in Berlin

H: During the process, there is a relationship between content and form, how do you build that in order to make content arise that is not necessarily belonging to you, but a collective content that is built.

I always start with the form. I need to know the form. But it changes. My original idea was that there are so many people and they stay on stage and they are really present and it becomes this crowd against crowd thing. Then I thought it's very hard to make people sustain this presence so then I decided let's relax. And it's impossible to have 60 people. I always know the form, that's the first thing. For me that's the content. The secondary content is the details. The form dictates a lot. I'm always casting also. There is one guy I picked up, he was still 15 working at the ice cream store. I said come for an audition, and now he's already 20 or something. People learn this respect for form and I think that gives a lot. It's a kind of structure that performers really get a lot out of learning this alternative structure that a performance is and that you have to work within this form. You cannot just, whatever. You cannot just solve it. You have to always solve it within the economy you work in – each piece has an economy and you have to work with that. You cannot bring in alien elements. That's how it relates. Content also changes. This is because this project was also a research. I wanted to just open up and check and work with a lot of people. I wanted to see if I would work with these people again. I'm working on a new project, this was checking out that this content is out there and now this project is what we do about this content. Here it was impossible to draw a conclusion without drawing away the dignity of the people.

A: Is that why you chose to work with some semi-professional actors?

No, never. I cannot work with actors. I have, but I cannot. The idea of having 5 white Dutch actors on stage for me was really difficult. So then I just went out and find black, old, young. So, it seems very to not do this. The world is not this, the school my kids go to is not like this, it's not white.

...

H: However much you want to not perform, you are trained and it's difficult to get off it.

E: That's my world

H: It's a natural thing also

E: It made it more organic because there were students there. I said come and perform that feedback in a piece.

H: They wrote the text themselves?

E: We had a step-by-step process. I decided at one moment what works best for whom. For some people it worked best to really know that text, it was really different for everybody. It was important that they didn't get alienated to their stories. For everybody it was different,

just always reminding them. It was very important that they didn't tell too many times their stories. Often we just rehearsed with some other things.

H: How was it one-on-one?

E: Very different. It really depends on the person. For some people, like the woman who watched her husband beat her kids, it was a huge thing. She was crying all the time. I keep asking: you think it is a good idea to keep telling this? And then she asked can we really fix it? We did a lot of recordings and editing and writings and improvisation. For some people it was totally not fixed, for others it was really fixed.

A: At what point is it successful?

E: I saw Saturday's performance actually successful. It had the right energy, the right combination. There were a lot of people from the audience, the performers taking a step forward. And very amazing, for instance, the girl typing, she decided on Saturday to tell her story of her mother's suicide. I've been working with her and she didn't even tell the people she worked with. I asked her when did she decide and she said when I stood up I decided. And for me, she did it perfect. For me that is really something very satisfactory. She is a very smart girl, but that she had the tools to do it right – that is success for me. It's weird to say to do it right, but within the form and within the language and what she understands about this detachment from language to let others access it. For me, that was very successful. I perform my plays, I get critique. I travel so far, either people can access it or not.

H: Is it ever just about the energy? How people feel afterwards? If it feels good?

E: Yes, Saturday felt very good.

H: Through the nature of the beast, as it were, is that it is still so much a process when it is happening.

E: Normally I am a total control freak but here I had to let go of the control. I tried as much as I could. Five performances, people are tired. People went to work or school during the day and then performed at night.

A: One of your crew told us you didn't get any funding at all?

E: We got some funding, but not from the theatre.

A: He said it was because it wasn't 'theatre'?

E: They said there is no guarantee that it is an exciting theatre performance but of course there is no guarantee for that.

A: Do you apply project by project?

E: From the city I get some funding, and from co-producers.

H: Is it important for to work internationally? And, why?

E: Because Holland and Amsterdam is really isolated. Everybody who, or several of my artist friends, who have moved to Berlin or Brussels say you are insane to stay in Amsterdam – go away, it's not for you. Brussels is very important and Berlin, there's a lot of circulation and awareness. It just means there is a discourse around this type of work beyond, do you think this is theatre? Which doesn't give much feedback for me. And that's your job actually. To create a discourse, make the right discourse. There is a lot more discourse in contemporary dance, a lot more discourse that is relevant for this in visual arts and participatory or useful art. That's a better context for this.

A: So why did you chose here?

E: Because I like the city. I will say, I just like it here. I live close by, it's just a fantastic city. A really comfortable city.

H: To define how you see yourself different from participatory art? What is it about your theatre that is different?

E: Maybe there is nothing different from participatory art. There is not much difference, there are many similarities.