Producing Performance Collectively in Austere Times

(UK 2008-2018)

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BA (Hons), MA

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December, 2022

Abstract

This thesis examines collective and artist-run performance producing practices in the UK in the period of austerity from 2008-2018. This thesis examines collective practices in opposition to the rhetoric, logic, and impacts of neoliberal austerity, while examining how they are, at one and the same time, caught up within them, and frequently complicit with them. I argue that collectives can temporarily reverse and rework the negative material and affective impacts of austerity through gathering artists and producers with similar practices and concerns together in the same space, producing social and affective spaces that feel and operate differently to the rest of the artistic infrastructure, and sharing material and immaterial resources. As I go on to establish, austerity works by making people feel precarious, uncared for, alone, indebted, hopeless, and disentitled. At their best, collectives work by making people feel the opposite. In gathering together in their own space, these artists and producers feel and imagine the possibility of a different way of doing things. These spaces exist to present the performance of others, to support the organisers' individual practices and administrative work, to run festivals and performance events, and to organise around particular issues. An analysis of these functions of collective practice structure the main body of this thesis, which begins by examining collective and artist-run models of performance venues, then studios, then festivals, and finally, networks.

In each chapter I examine a specific negative affect of austerity which these groups seek to resist. These are: insecurity or precarity, neglect or a lack of care, isolation or disconnectedness, and hopelessness or a lack of access to futurity. I show, using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, Henri Lefebvre's production of space, and Sara Ahmed's work on affect, how the practices of each structural model of collective and artist-run organisation responds to and reworks these conditions by producing affective spaces of security, care, communitas, and hope. These spaces, and the practices that create them, are embedded within the wider context of neoliberalism and austerity which they oppose, and are thus temporary and susceptible to reproducing exploitative and exclusive practices. The task of this thesis is to reveal the immediate positive affective and material impacts of these collectives in opposition to austerity, as well as the complexity of the problems that arise as these groups interact with a wider context over which they have no control. Despite the limitations of collective practice, this thesis argues that through providing relief from the negative affective impacts of austerity, it can provide vital support to artists, practices, and communities during difficult economic conditions, and allow them to survive, to organise, and to imagine and enact better and more liveable futures in the field of performance.

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Acknowledgment

Completing a PhD during a pandemic provided ample opportunity to reflect on the most isolating and toxic aspects of academia and the arts, as well as the ingenious collective caring structures and alliances that we build in response. Thanks must go first of all to those I interviewed for this project, the artists, producers, and collectives, without whose generous time and effort to do things differently this project would not exist. Thanks to all my PhD colleagues across the years, with whom I worked alone, together, and who made the experience infinitely more liveable and joyful. Thanks to the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities and the College of Arts Graduate School at the University of Glasgow for funding this project, providing me with desk space, and providing the material conditions, training, and opportunities for peer support that made it possible. Thanks to my supervisors, Dr Stephen Greer and Professor Deirdre Heddon, without whose generous support I would never have received any funding, and whose sage, insightful, and always direct and pragmatic advice kept me on the right track and developed and strengthened my often chaotic and unformed ideas. Thanks, more broadly, to the Theatre Studies department at the University of Glasgow, whose events and warm, collegiate atmosphere provided countless opportunities for connection, collaboration, and challenge. Thanks to Professor Maria Shevtsova and the Performance and Culture Masters Programme at Goldsmiths, whose intellectual rigour, singularity, and daring inspired much of the work of this thesis. Thanks to my friends, who have provided me with the joy and companionship that have kept me going over the years, many of whom directly contributed to this project as interviewees or informal advisors: Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, Andre Neely, Karl Taylor, Rosana Cade, and Saerlaith Robyn Uaid Ní Dhuibhir. Thanks to my family, for providing the formative experiences of affective and material security, care, communitas, and hope that have shaped my understanding of these terms, and for consistent and secure financial support that has made this project possible, and so much else besides. Thanks to Jack, for the loving and hopeful spaces we have imagined and produced together, and for near-infinite emotional care and support. Thanks, finally, to the venues, festivals, communities, and performances that have held and shaped me over the years. I hope I can repay the favour.

Thesis Introduction

This thesis examines collective and artist-run models of producing performance which emerged, or re-emerged, during the period of austerity in the UK in the second decade of the 21st century. I begin this introduction by providing a working definition of these practices and situating them culturally, geographically and historically, before locating this thesis in wider scholarship. I then introduce the economic and political context within which these practices take place – beginning with the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-8, and the austerity policies instituted by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government of 2010, and successive Conservative governments, as a response to this crisis. I then outline my tighter focus of austerity's impacts on the arts. I then outline my key theoretical frameworks: Lefebvre's production of space, Bourdieu's concept of field, and Ahmed's scholarship on affect, which I use to show how these groups produce spaces which feel and operate differently to the rest of the field of performance under neoliberal austerity. I also use these frameworks to examine the complications and tensions that arise when these spaces interact with the neoliberal practices of the wider field of cultural production. I then describe my methodologies for examining these practices, namely unstructured interviews with members of collectives and artist-run organisations, before outlining my thesis structure.

Locating Collective and Artist-Run Practice

This thesis examines producing collectives and artist-run organisations working in the field of live art and experimental performance. I examine these practices in the UK, because live art and experimental performance, collectivism, and austerity have distinct manifestations, histories, practices, and impacts in the UK. My research looks at the interrelation between these specific forms and the UK-specific context of austerity. Further, a key methodology of my research was in-person interviews and visits to collective spaces, and therefore a focus on the UK was necessary within the resources available. Collectivism in performance is a broad practice with multiple lineages and influences, and thus it is necessary to specify my focus. For the purposes of this thesis, I define collective and artist-run organisations as groups of artists and producers who identify as such; who work together under a collective name, with a collective identity, and with some degree of shared labour, principles and practices. These groups have a horizontal governance structure, with leadership and decision-making shared among the group. Though these groups are flexible and subject to change, I also understand collectives and artist-run organisations as having a sustained existence which is not contingent on one specific working relationship or artistic project. For this reason, I do not examine groups that work together on a single event or project, which might be defined more precisely as collaborations.

My scope is further narrowed by the fact that I focus on producing collectives, that is groups of people working together on something other than a performance or work of art; they *produce*

performance, in the institutional sense of the term to mean that they administrate it, present it, allow and support it to happen, as distinct from the activity of *making* performance. The product here is the organisational form itself, although as we shall see, this is distinctly processual, formed through organisational, social, economic and cultural practices which are constantly in flux. As I will expand on in my Theoretical Frameworks section, I further characterise my object of study as tactical collective practice. This phrase seeks to capture that contemporary collective practice in performance is distinctly pragmatic, finding and exploiting opportunities for funding, space and other resources in the face of deeply entrenched neoliberal practices. Rather than a commitment to a utopian political horizon, these practices are motivated by making space to make things happen, to support practices which would otherwise not be supported, and to provide immediate services and projects for specific communities. These practices exist within a political horizon, but they are first and foremost a response to need.

This thesis examines producing models at the intersection of collective and artist-run practices. These two concepts are inextricably connected: they both produce in an egalitarian and horizontal manner in unstructured groups, and they have similar motivations, as I will examine. Those artist-run organisations I examine all engage in collective producing *practices*, even if they do not all explicitly identify as collectives as a form. In the UK, collective and artist-run practices have been connected since at least the early 1970s. The clearest example of this is X6 collective: a collective of five dance artists, Emilyn Claid, Maedée Duprès, Fergus Early, Jacky Lansley and Mary Prestidge, and a dance space that they rented and worked from in London, which existed from when they moved in in March 1976, to when they moved out in September 1980.[1] This space may mark the beginning of artist-led performance spaces in the UK, certainly in dance. As Early and Lansley write, 'We shared a desire to have a working space where we could dance, choreograph, improvise, teach, learn and critically review the processes by which we became dance professionals.'[2] This marks an early example of collective practice which goes beyond creating performance: working together in the space, managing the space, using it to run classes, workshops and a conference, and to present performances both inside and outside of its walls. Later, Shunt also provide an example of a collective of artists both making performance work and doing other activities collectively. Together they ran *The Shunt Lounge* from 2006-2010 in London. This space featured a bar and performance spaces, with each performance and member of the collective taking turns to curate a week of entertainment.[3] This continued trends of collective practice in the UK encompassing other activities like curation, producing, and space

[1] Stephanie Jordan, *Striding Out: Aspects of Contemporary and New Dance in Britain* (London: Dance Books Ltd, 1992) p. 58-59.
[2] Jacky Lansley and Fergus Early, 'Radical connections: the Dartington Dance Festival/X6 Dance Space axis', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 9:3, 2018, pp. 380-388, p. 381.
[3] See Alex Mermikides, 'Clash and Consensus in Shunt's "Big Shows" and the Lounge', in Alex Mermikides & Jackie Smart, eds., *Devising in Process*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) p. 150.

management, and firmly links collective producing and artist-run practice. These examples also demonstrate the vital importance of space and spatial practice to collective and artist-run practice; as we shall see, the desire for something different to available conditions often manifests in a desire for a new space, and being present in a space together is what enables different practices, affects, and possibilities to arise.

This thesis seeks to map and critically analyse the field of producing collectives and artist-run organisations operating within live art and experimental performance in the UK during the period of austerity. I do so by categorising organisations by their function in the field, first examining venues, then examining studios, then festivals, and finally networks, all of which follow collective or artist-run practices. To contextualise and understand these practices properly, it is important to briefly situate these practices in relation to other organisations in the same and in different fields. The organisations I examine in this thesis exist within the wider live art infrastructure. They are connected to organisations that support and programme live art and experimental performance in the UK: venues like Cambridge Junction, Colchester Arts Centre and the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow; festivals like Take Me Somewhere, In Between Time and Fierce, and programming and producing organisations like the Live Art Development Agency (LADA hereafter), Home Live Art, and ArtsAdmin. Many of these organisations are members of the LADA-initiated Live Art UK network of organisations.[4]

Though this thesis seeks to provide as full an analysis of this field as possible, there are necessarily some omissions that are important to mention. London-based performance and club collective Duckie are influential in the field, having run a regular performance and club night since they began in 1995, and also taking part in a range of other activities including multiple community projects, as detailed in Ben Walters' thesis *Dr Duckie: Homemade Mutant Hope Machines*.[5] Duckie has been influential on collective practice and queer performance in the UK, with two case studies examined in this thesis, Marlborough Productions and Steakhouse Live, specifically naming them as an influence.[6] However, their beginning in the mid-90s precludes them from this study, which focuses on organisations that were set up during or just before the most recent period of austerity. Another omission is SPILL festival, an artist-led festival began in 2007 by Robert Pacitti. Though SPILL is an influential example of artist-led practice, the organisation is led by an individual artist rather than a collective, with Pacitti as artistic director and curator for the first ten festivals from 2007 to 2021.[7] This study focuses on artist-led practices that are recognisably collective; with an element of horizontality and flexibility rather than a fixed hierarchical structure. Other organisations were precluded for being

[4] Live Art UK website, 'Members' [http://liveartuk.org/members] [accessed 12/04/2023].
[5] Ben Walters, *Queer fun, family and futures in Duckie's performance projects 2010-2016*, unpublished thesis, Queen Mary University of London, 2018, p. 29.
[6] Aaron Wright and David Sheppeard, interview with the author in May and June 2019 respectively.
[7] SPILL website, 'About Spill: History' [https://www.spillfestival.com/about-spill] [accessed 12/04/2023].

short-lived. Artist-run and collective festivals like DICE, Rebel Man Standard and Low Stakes were important interventions in the field, providing opportunities and valuable ideas and practices, but their short-term nature, with only one or two public events, means that there is less to write about them in terms of the impacts austerity had on their practices, and on the long-term impacts they had on the field.[8] The same is true for short-term networks like Live Art Collective East, 'an artist-led organisation based in the East of England', which operated from 2011-2012, and was attached to producing organisation ArtsAdmin.[9] Finally, there are likely to be organisations I have omitted that have little to no public profile, particularly studios and shared workspace collectives, that support artists' practices in small, private ways that have not been captured by this thesis. This thesis has captured key examples of these practices, and used them to illustrate their possibilities and challenges. While I do not claim to have interviewed every organisation working in this field, I have interviewed those whose practices have been sustained the longest and that have had the most influence.

This thesis focuses on one specific field rather than a more expansive study of collective practice in wider fields because this thesis examines the forms, practices, challenges and opportunities of collective practice that are specific to performance. Nevertheless, it is necessary to sketch the wider landscape of collective and artist-run practice within which this study takes place. The most significant parallel for collective and artist-run practice in performance is visual art, where terms like artist-run initiatives or artist-run spaces are used. Across the UK, there are influential examples of collective and artist-run galleries. In Scotland there is a strong tradition of artist-run activity in the visual arts, with the *Creative Scotland Visual Art Sector Review* noting in October 2016 that 'Artist-run initiatives make a significant contribution to the distinctive culture of the visual arts in Scotland'.[10] Artist-run galleries and organisations like Glasgow's Transmission and Market Gallery or Edinburgh's Embassy Gallery and Rhubaba follow a similar model of being run by a voluntary programming committee, often with support from a board, and making decisions based on consensus.[11] The importance of artist-run initiatives, largely in visual art, is thought to be replicated across Britain and globally, with attempts being made to map them and examine their importance in visual and contemporary art.[12] As this thesis

[8] See DICE festival website [https://www.dicefestival.co.uk/], Rebel Man Standard Tumblr site, 'About', [https://therebelmanstandardinterviews.tumblr.com/about], and Low Stakes Festival Facebook page, [https://www.facebook.com/lowstakesfest] [all accessed 12/04/2023].
[9] ArtsAdmin Website, 'Project: Live Art Collective East' [https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/project/live-art-collective-east/] [accessed 12/04/2023].
[10] Creative Scotland, *Visual Arts Sector Review*, October 2016, p 13.
[11] See Transmission Gallery website [https://www.transmissiongallery.org/], Market Gallery website 'About' [https://www.marketgallery.org/about/], Embassy Gallery website, 'About' [https://www.embassygallery.org/about/], and Rhubaba Gallery website, 'Information' [https://www.rhubaba.org/information] [all accessed 12/04/2023].
[12] See Artist-Run Alliance, 'a non-profit artist-led global network of independent artist-run initiatives' [https://artistrunalliance.org/], and the British Art Network-funded research group 'Artist-run initiatives in

will show, collective and artist-run practices are likewise important in performance, though they have received less critical attention, and have less clearly established organisational forms, than visual art.

These organisations contribute to local and national collective and artist-run scenes which cross disciplinary boundaries to a certain extent. As I examine later, Bristol is a city with an active collective and artist-run scene. This results in connections and collaboration across disciplines, which is best illustrated by The Brunswick Club, 'a collective of artist-led collectives' working in film, performance, visual art, and club events, including 'Bristol Experimental Expanded Film (BEEF), Residence, CHAMP, Action Hero, and Thorny', who, from 2017-2019 shared a building of the same name.[13] This example attests to the possibility of support, shared space, and influence across collective and artist-run practices in wider fields. Nevertheless, different artistic forms exist in different conditions, with different funding environments and priorities, different networks of artists and organisations, and different established practices and conventions. Producing collectives and artist-run organisations working in live art and experimental performance face challenges and opportunities specific to performance as an embodied and ephemeral medium, the specific economies this calls to being, and the economic conditions within which they operate. As I will examine, these conditions are worsened by austerity, which disproportionately impacts both marginal and experimental forms of performance, and the smaller and less secure organisatonal forms these groups adopt. My aim is to examine and analyse the complex and plural forms that collective and artist-run practice takes in live art and experimental performance in the UK, examining their needs, challenges and opportunities, and how this relates to their chosen form. I seek to determine what specific ideas and practices evolve from their engagement with marginal and precarious performance practices in difficult economic conditions.

The practices of producing collectives and artist-run organisations are an important object of study because they are often overlooked in theatre and performance studies scholarship which focuses on artistic product or artistic process, which risks missing other impacts of performance, in the social relations and affects it calls to being while it is being made and produced, and the economic and administrative aspects of the surrounding non-artistic work. This thesis examines a gap in existing scholarship; there are no studies which examine collective producing practices in live art and experimental performance. My study draws on and extends a number of bodies of scholarship: on live art and experimental performance, on collectives and artist-run practices in visual art or art history, studies of collective creation, devising, or companies in theatre and performance studies, and a body of literature which examines organisational and producing practices across the creative and cultural

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Britain', initiated by Nikki Kane [https://britishartnetwork.org.uk/research/artist-run-initiatives-in-britain/] [both accessed 14/04/2023].

[13] The Brunswick Club Facebook page, 'About The Brunswick Club' [https://www.facebook.com/thebrunswickclub/about_details] [accessed 14/04/2023].

industries. This thesis extends live art scholarship by considering the importance of collective producing practices to the contemporary field. Dominic Johnson's edited collection *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK,* and its contributors 'explicitly address the historical and material conditions for the production and reception of Live Art in the UK'.[14] This thesis seeks to add to this by addressing the *affective* conditons for this production and reception, and considering what role the collectives discussed in this this thesis might have in producing their own material and affective conditions for their work.

In particular, this thesis draws on scholarship which examines the field of live art as supported by a network, or infrastructure, of individuals, organisations, funding structures, and relationships. Graham Saunders, in 'The Freaks' Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-1973', examines how the shifting funding categories and priorities of the Arts Council of Great Britain excluded or included experimental performance practices and groups.[15] These funding practices shaped both the emergence of live art and the continuation of collective practice, and the operation of funding bodies, their priorities and keywords continues to shape the practices of the collectives I examine in this thesis. Jennie Klein charts the history of live art through 'the support structures that have enabled an esoteric and poorly understood DiY art practice to become constituted as an identifiable, professionalized "field" in its own right.' This 'insitutional mapping' affirms that 'the institutional support of performance/live art is as important to what is made and the meaning/affect of that work.'[16] This thesis takes and extends this affirmation, to consider also what structures of informal and self-initiated support, in the form of collectives and artist-run groups, are likewise important in supporting performance, and in shifting and restructuring the field.

Similarly, Maria Chatzichristodoulou, in the introduction to her edited collection *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity,* examines how the field of live art in the UK is shaped by organisations, taking three 'creative catalysts' as case studies: LADA, SPILL Festival of Performance, and Compass Live Art.[17] Although she notes that SPILL is an artist-led initiative, these are established organisations. This thesis continues the work Chatzichristodoulou begins here by examining the work done by collectives and artist-run organisations in shaping the field. I also extend the use of precarity in the title by examining the ways in which austerity and its concomitant precarity influence the field of live art and experimental performance, particularly the ways in which austerity

[14] Dominic Johnson (ed.), *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.
[15] Graham Saunders, 'The Freaks' Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-73', in Ibid., pp. 46-59.
[16] Jennie Klein, 'Developing Live art', in Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein (eds.), *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 12-36, p. 13.
[17] Maria Chatzichristodoulou (ed.), *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity* (London: Methuen Drama, 2020), pp. 1-20, p. 2.

meant that established venues, festivals and organisations struggled to support the continued existence of these practices, necessitating support from DIY, collective, and artist-run practices. Drawing on interviews with these case studies, Chatzichristodoulou describes live art as a 'strategy for inclusion', taking the lead from Lois Keidan, the co-founder and former co-director of LADA. This cultural strategy, as well as being the practice of established institutions like LADA, has come to influence the way in which artists and producers in this field operate. This thesis emphasises that the field of live art is also shaped and changed by the more short-term, contingent, and tactical practices of artists, producers, and collectives. In examining how this strategy for inclusion translates to tactics for inclusion, I also have occasion to examine the limits of inclusion in these circumstances.

Work in performance studies or theatre studies which examines collectives tends to do so from the perspective of collective creation and devising.[18] In two edited collections, Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit examine *A History of Collective Creation,* and *Collective Creation in Contemporary Performance*.[19] These two volumes situate collective creation within a long and complex tradition in performance and theatre practices. Collective creation and collective producing share many features, such as the emergence from a yearning 'to hold, in their daily practices of work and collegial interactions, to a higher standard of interpersonal relations – to make of the artistic group a model for a better way of being together in the world'.[20] Though throughout these two volumes the editors and contributors are cognisant of the possibilities of change in working conditions and social relations offered by new institutional models of collective creation, the focus on the creation of performance limits the influence these groups can have on the institutional practices of the field. In this thesis I examine how new collective and artist-run models of organisation can change the way in which performance is not only created, but also produced, presented, and supported, through influencing other producing organisations.

When examining organisational form, theatre studies tends to examine groups as theatre companies. The 'British Theatre Companies: From Fringe to Mainstream' series edited by John Bull and Graham Saunders includes case studies that identified, or were identified, as collectives, in some cases as well as companies, such as People Show, Welfare State International, and Monstrous Regiment.[21] Doing so risks locating innovation in artistic process and product, and overlooking the organisational innovation that might be an integral part of this. It can also underemphasise the way

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[18] See Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, 2nd Edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[19] Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit (eds.), *A History of Collective Creation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) and Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit (eds.), *Collective Creation in Contemporary Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).
[20] *A History of Collective Creation,* Ibid., p. 1-2.
[21] John Bull and Graham Saunders (series editors), 'British Theatre Companies: From Fringe to Mainstream' (London: Bloomsbury, 2015-16).

work is produced, administrated, and the social and working relationships it produces. Theatre groups and companies might produce aesthetically and discursively radical work which is undermined by the reproduction of dominant forms of institutional hierarchy and exploitation in their organisational form and economic practices. Though 'theatre company' is a capacious term, and studies might draw attention to collective or collaborative practices in scholarship under this umbrella, using this term across a broad and diverse set of practices risks homogenising them as a fixed, legible institutional form. It is important therefore, to look at collectives not as a fixed form, but as a set of shifting practices, or a mode of critique of established organisational forms. In this study I assert the breadth, plurality and ambiguity of these practices; something also enabled by my dual but interconnected focus on both collective and artist-run practice.

Though there is a small body of literature on theatre and performance producing practices, there has yet to be sustained attention on DIY, artist-run and collective producing practice. Anna Loewendahl examines three 'regional, unpaid-led theatre producing companies', using Sara Ahmed's writing on emotion, to ask 'What do emotions do economically?' in the work of these companies. She uses the term 'economic aesthetic' to examine the 'interplay of economies (income strategies, unremunerated labour, capital, and fiscal aims) with artistic choices, shaped by and shaping emotions and associated labour.'[22] I too examine the influence of the economic and political conditions on the emotions and practices of groups, and how these emotions and practices can in turn resist these conditions. In my study however, it is important to keep affect, aesthetics, and economics separate, to allow me to show how an affect or aesthetic of resistance to neoliberalism might conceal the reproduction of neoliberal economic or organisational practices. Ravi Jain's article 'Collaborative Producing' examines the challenges faced by independent producers in Toronto, particularly the difficulties in equitably distributing resources and funding while simultaneously supporting established and new companies, producers and artists. He uses the case study of the RISER project which 'brings together a community of senior leadership and emerging artists to support the artistic risk that independent artists must take to create art and innovate. The model is designed to maximize existing infrastructures by sharing resources, risk, and energy to reduce the producing burden on artists.'[23] In doing so, it seeks to address several issues shared with this project, which also seeks to show how collective practices might allow for a more supportive and collaborative sector overall. These two articles, though examining quite different contexts, are useful in so far as they examine a similar desire, among artists, producers, and cultural workers, to analyse and address problems and iniquities in the theatre and performance sector, shifting producing and institutional practices in order to do so.

[22] Anna Loewendahl, 'The Economic Aesthetics of Three Regional, unpaid-led Theatre-Producing Companies', *Australasian Drama Studies*, 77, 2020, pp. 173-207, p. 173-174.
[23] Ravi Jain, 'Collaborative Producing', *Canadian Theatre Review*, 163, 2015, pp. 39-43, p. 40.

Work which situates creative work within the economics of the cultural industries is also relevant to my study, which adds to this work by examining the specific context of austerity in the producing of performance. Stephen Greer's 'Funding resilience: market rationalism and the UK's "mixed economy" for the arts' examines the notion of resilience in the UK arts sector, and how a strategy of pursuing multiple funding streams came to replace reliance on state funding.[24] This too builds on the work of Suman Gupta and Ayan-Yue Gupta in their examination of resilience as an arts council key word as a response to austerity.[25] These studies examine how economic and political conditions that arise from austerity and neoliberalism come to be naturalised through rhetorics of resilience and sustainability. This is key context for this study, and I also examine the impacts of the political and economic conditions of austerity and neoliberalism on the arts and performance sector, and more locally in the artistic infrastructures of cities, and the networks of artists, producers, organisations and spaces that comprise them. In doing so, I show how collective and artist-run practices that take place within, and take care of, this infrastructure, can resist and rework these impacts.

Austerity and Neoliberalism in the UK

This thesis draws on and extends research on the period of British austerity politics from 2008-2018, which forms the social, political and economic conditions within which the case studies operate. This thesis focuses on qualitative accounts of collectives and artist-run organisations and how they respond to their specific and local conditions of austerity. In order to do this I define and contextualise austerity here, drawing on the work of Gargi Bhattacharyya and Sarah Marie Hall, and broadly characterise the conditions it created. I begin by situating austerity within neoliberalism, an understanding of which is fundamental to an understanding of austerity. I then give an account of austerity and outline its negative social and affective impacts.

The key features of neoliberalism for the purposes of this thesis are a tendency to place market forces at the centre of not only economics, but also politics and social relations, an emphasis on the individual and entrepreneurialism at the expense of collective responsibility and identity, and a reduction in the size of the state in the favour of an ostensibly 'free' market, in fact monitored and assisted by the state.[26] Neoliberalism and post-Fordism have restructured the way society and

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[24] Stephen Greer, 'Funding resilience: market rationalism and the UK's "mixed economy" for the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 30:3, 2021, pp. 222-240, pp. 279-295.
[25] Suman Gupta and Ayan-Yue Gupta, '"Resilience" as a policy keyword: Arts Council England and austerity', *Policy Studies*, 43:2, 2022.
[26] See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, Michel Senellart (ed.), Graham Burchell (trans.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).

workplaces are organised, dismantling hierarchy in favour of flexible networks of autonomous but precarious and often freelance workers.[27] Neoliberalism emphasises change, flexibility and temporariness in a way that destabilises permanent, collective social structures, and stymies long-term collective efforts for alternative organisations of society, such as those on the political left that oppose neoliberalism.[28] As we shall see, the collectives examined in this thesis both resist, and are complicit with, these features of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a broad and nebulous term, but this thesis follows Wendy Brown's argument that 'neoliberal reason […] is converting the distinctly *political* character, meaning, and operation of democracy's constituent elements into *economic* ones [original emphasis]'.[29] Brown refers to this phenomenon as the 'undoing of the demos', and Gargi Bhattacharyya refers to a similar phenomenon as 'the primacy of the economic': where economic logics and practices reign supreme, and influence government policy, social relations, and other public spaces above all other logics.[30] This feature of neoliberalism is essential for the functioning of austerity – as I will establish, it was only because of neoliberalism's overvaluation of economic metrics that austerity's numerous deleterious impacts were conscionable and justifiable. This is also why I examine the affective impacts of both austerity and collectives throughout this thesis, and reject economic metrics as an inaccurate, not to mention morally and politically bankrupt, measure of policy success.

This thesis examines collective producing practices between 2008 and 2018. This decade-long scope begins with the Global Financial Crisis, most clearly felt with the collapse of Lehmann Brothers in September 2008. This choice of a starting point for this study locates the affective impacts of austerity in the anticipation of economic hardship which began with the economic crisis, which was instrumentalised by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition formed in 2010. My end point, 2018, does not mark the end of austerity politics, but marks the end of the political utility of this term, with then Prime Minister Theresa May declaring that 'a decade after the financial crash, people need to know that the austerity it led to is over'.[31] It also marks the end of my case study interviews, the period on which my interviewees were reflecting, and on which I can securely comment.

Austerity can be defined as a period of restricted public spending, and the difficult conditions which emerge as a result. As preparation for, and as part of, austerity, the Conservative party rhetorically defined themselves as economically responsible in contrast to previous Labour

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[27] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005). Post-fordism is a term that describes the move from large-scale, structured and segmented labour (as in the manufacturing processes of Henry Ford) to smaller-scale, flexible and networked labour.
[28] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2007).
[29] Brown, op. cit., p. 17.
[30] See Brown, op. cit., and Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life: Living in a Time of Diminishing Expectations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[31] Theresa May, cited in Benjamin Kentish, 'Theresa May declares "austerity is over" after eight years of cuts and tax increases', *The Independent,* 3/10/2018 [https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-austerity-end-over-speech-conservative-conference-tory-labour-a8566526.html] [accessed 02/09/2022].

governments. As David Cameron said in his speech to the Conservative Party Spring Conference in 2009, as a result of 'Labour's economic incompetence', 'The age of irresponsibility is giving way to the age of austerity'. Further, he said:

> The alternative to dealing with the debt crisis now is mounting debt, higher interest rates and a weaker economy. Unless we deal with this debt crisis, we risk becoming once again the sick man of Europe. Our recovery will be held back, and our children will be weighed down, by a millstone of debt.[32]

Mobilisation of accusations of irresponsibility and fears of ruination such as these are characteristic of austerity, which asks the public to accept cuts and suffering in the present in the expectation of future rewards, or at least avoidance of future punishment. We can see here why it is important to consider affect, because negative affect is a key mode in which austerity logics are asserted and propagated. The rhetorics with which austerity was introduced mobilised fears of debt and feelings of indebtedness itself, the latter of which is etymologically synonymous with, and affectively similar to, guilt and sin.[33] The term austerity so used capitalises upon already existing feelings of guilt, shame, and personal failure which coincide with having to rely on state support. It also collocates to post-war austerity Britain.[34] It intensifies divisive cultural stereotypes which position those who do rely on state support as lazy or dishonest, in what was known as 'strivers versus skivers' rhetoric.[35]

In June 2010, George Osborne announced an emergency budget, and portrayed cuts as a necessity justified by the extremity of the crisis. He said, 'This Budget is needed to deal with our country's debts. This Budget is needed to give confidence to our economy. This is the unavoidable Budget.' The budget announced aims that 'the structural current deficit should be in balance in the final year of the five-year forecast period (2015-2016)', and aimed 'to ensure that debt is falling as a share of GDP by 2015-16.' This was to be achieved through economic measures that would require sacrifices from everyone. In his speech, Osborne said that 'everyone will be asked to contribute', but in return he promised 'an economy where prosperity is shared among all sections of society and all parts of the country', and asserted that 'Everyone will share in the rewards when we succeed. When we say that we are all in this together, we mean it.' Further, he said that this budget 'protects the most

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[32] David Cameron, Speech to Conservative Party Spring Conference, 26/04/2009, [https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2009/04/27/tory-spring-conference-speeches-in-full/] [accessed 02/09/2022].
[33] See David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011).
[34] Matthew Evans and Brian Walker, 'The Beginning of "the Age of Austerity": A Critical Stylistic Analysis of David Cameron's 2009 Spring Conference Speech', *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 11:2, 2019, pp. 169–186.
[35] Gill Valentine and Catherine Harris, 'Strivers vs skivers: Class prejudice and the demonisation of dependency in everyday life', *Geoforum*, 53, 2014, pp. 84-92.

vulnerable in our society. Yes it is tough; but it is also fair.'[36] Though the government achieved some of the economic targets set by this budget, many of the other claims were demonstrably incorrect: neither the impacts nor the rewards were shared fairly among everyone, and this and successive budgets assuredly did not protect the most vulnerable.

Austerity measures deepened poverty and reproduced and worsened existing social and economic inqualities, disproportionately impacting the poorest and most marginalised. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that cuts to welfare spending combined with tax cuts meant that low-income households of working age lost the most from the 2010 Budget reforms, while those who lost the least were working-age households without children in the upper half of the income distribution.[37] A report by the Trades Union Congress in 2019 found that the 'number of children growing up in poverty in working households has risen by 800,000 since 2010'.[38] Sociologist Jay Ginn found that the cuts exacerbated 'the social division between the very wealthy and the rest of society', using data on public service users and benefit recipients to find that lone parents faced the greatest loss in living standards, of whom 90% were women. She found that cuts to public sector services disproportionately impacted women, as both users and employees, older people, and disabled people. Ginn establishes that 'it is vulnerable groups across the age range, from young to old, that bear the brunt of the cuts', because austerity cuts services and support used by those who are already vulnerable and marginalised.[39] The impacts of austerity on disabled people over and above poverty have been examined by Frances Ryan, impacting their ability to access independence, work, housing, and dignity.[40] As well as the removal of services used by marginalised groups, austerity also impacts available space for these groups to meet, socialise, and offer community support. A report by the Bureau for Investigative Journalism found that between 2014 and July 2018 'more than 12,000 public spaces [were] disposed of by councils', raising a total of '£9.1 billion' to plug gaps in budgets caused by austerity. This loss of space has potential consequences for the quality of life of those who use these spaces, social inclusion, and civic participation, with the closure of 'libraries, community centres, and playgrounds.'[41] This loss of space

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[36] George Osborne, in Tola Onanuga, 'Emergency budget: George Osborne's speech in full', *The Guardian,* 22/06/2010, [https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jun/22/emergency-budget-full-speech-text] [accessed 02/09/2022].
[37] James Browne and Peter Levell, 'The distributional effect of tax and benefit reforms to be introduced between 2010 and June 2014: a revised assessment', IFS, 2010 [http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn108.pdf] [accessed 09/08/2022].
[38] TUC, 'Child poverty in working households up by 800,000 since 2010, says TUC', [https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/child-poverty-working-households-800000-2010-says-tuc] [Accessed 14/06/2022].
[39] Jay Ginn, 'Austerity and Inequality. Exploring the Impact of Cuts in the UK by Gender and Age.' *Research on Ageing and Social Policy,* 1:1, 2013, pp. 28–53, p. 28 and 31.
[40] Frances Ryan, *Crippled: Austerity and the Demonization of Disabled People* (London: Verso, 2019).
[41] Gareth Davies, Charles Boutaud, Hazel Sheffield and Emma Youle, *Revealed: The thousands of public spaces lost to the council funding crisis,* The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2019 [https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2019-03-04/sold-from-under-you] [accessed 08/02/2021].

has also been demonstrated in the case of queer pub and bar spaces in London, which closed at a disproportionate rate when compared with mainstream venues, as I examine more fully in Chapter One.[42]

Austerity also impacts those multiply marginalised. Leah Bassell and Akwugo Emejulu argue that minority women are disproportionately impacted by the cuts, 'because of their already existing precarity'. They write that because of 'high poverty rates of minority women, this means that they are more likely to use public services, less likely to pay for private services and are disproportionately affected when public services are restructured.' Further they are also 'more likely to be living in the poorest areas, [and] their local councils are being hit hardest by austerity measures'. Finally, the impact on women due to their overrepresentation in public sector jobs impacts some minority groups more than others, with '45% of Black Caribbean women, 37% of Pakistani women, [and] 36% of Bangladeshi women' working in this sector, compared to 34% of white women.[43] A number of reports also examined the impacts of austerity measures on LGBT people and services, which were particularly vulnerable because they 'have historically needed to rely on a relatively high level of public/statutory funding', and because many 'LGBT specialist services' are situated 'in local authority spending and related services in the voluntary and community sector'.[44] Direct effects of the cuts to these services included difficulty planning, cuts to services, reduced staff and increased dependence on volunteers. Knock-on effects included 'loss of morale' and 'impacts on provision of premises, whether through reduction of time available for meetings or service user access, or loss of premises altogether.'[45] Overall, these statistics and findings evidence that austerity's impacts are differentially distributed depending on circumstance and class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, and race.

Austerity also had, and continues to have, affective impacts on people's lives and feelings. As well as reducing mental health provision and increasing inequality, it also produced and exacerbated anxiety, depression, and stress.[46] Sarah Marie Hall, a social Geographer, roots her analysis of austerity

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[42] Ben Campkin and Sarah Marshall, *LGBTQ+ Cultural Infrastructure in London: Night Venues, 2006–present,* (UCL Urban Lab, July 2017).
[43] Leah Bassel and Akwugo Emejulu, *Minority Women and Austerity: Survival and Resistance in France and Britain* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017).
[44] Fiona Colgan, Chrissy Hunter and Aidan McKearney, *'Staying Alive': The Impact of 'Austerity Cuts' on the LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England and Wales,* London Metropolitan University and TUC, 2014 [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/StayingAlive_0.pdf] [accessed 09/08/2022], and Martin Mitchell, Kelsey Beninger, Nilufer Rahim and Sue Arthur, *Implications of austerity for LGBT people and services,* Natcen and UNISON, 2013 [file:///M:/Implications-of-austerity-for-lgbt-people-and-services-executive-summary.pdf] [accessed 09/08/2022].
[45] Colgan, Hunter and McKearney, ibid.
[46] See Ian Cummins, "The Impact of Austerity on Mental Health Service Provision: A UK Perspective." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15:6, June 2018, Kate Mattheys, Jonathan Warren, and Clare Bambra, '"Treading in sand": A qualitative study of the impact of

in feminist theory and in a relational approach to everyday life. Drawing on two years of ethnographic research with six families in Manchester, she conceptualises 'how the personal and relational affects of austerity are inherently and deeply political'. These affects of austerity include 'uncertainty about the future and feelings of a very personal crisis.' She describes the impacts on the everyday lives of women, describing how they build 'intricate tapestries of care' or 'everyday social infrastructures', to get by.[47] The weaving of these tapestries have a similar motivation to the forming of collectives, and these affective impacts of austerity, and the efforts to collectively resist them, are central to the arguments of this thesis.

Austerity and the Arts

Austerity and its impacts on the arts can be understood as a continuation of the reduced funding and increased scrutiny as part of the Conservative cuts to government spending from 1979-1990. Though the intervening period of New Labour saw an increase in funding, it continued trends of funding being conditional on fulfilling certain criteria.[48] Austerity politics increased pressure to decrease reliance on state funding and operate in a more profitable and, business- and market-oriented way, as part of the 'mixed economies' model. As Stephen Greer argues, this model places rhetorical emphasis on sustainability and resilience, but may not be any more secure than relying on state funding and may introduce new kinds of risk and encourage inequality.[49] The shift to a mixed model of arts funding impacted smaller organisations disporportionately. Adrian Harvey, in an Arts Council England (hereafter ACE) report, writes that while National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) increased their resourcing as local government funding reduced between 2010 and 2015, 'smaller galleries and museums are less likely to have been able to raise additional donations and commercial revenues that the major institutions covered by these data: it is these smaller organisations that are at the sharp end of the cuts.'[50] Jen Harvie notes the same dynamic in her analysis of the Catalyst funding scheme, showing that the necessity of raising match funding makes this scheme inaccessible for small organisations, and that on the whole it risks 'that what funding is generated will tend to travel in conservative, predictable ways, favouring companies which are large, long-established and consistent in their outputs'.[51]

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austerity on inequalities in mental health', *Social Policy and Administration*, 52, 2018, pp. 1275–1289, and Kate Mattheys, 'The Coalition, austerity and mental health', *Disability & Society*, 30:3, 2015, pp. 475-478.

[47] Sarah Marie Hall, *Everyday Life in Austerity: Family, Friends and Intimate Relations* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan: 2019) p. 69.

[48] Stephen Greer, 'Funding resilience', op. cit.

[49] Ibid, and Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance, and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[50] Adrian Harvey, *Funding Arts and Culture in a Time of Austerity,* New Local Government Network and ACE, 2016 [https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/funding-arts-and-culture-in-a-time-of-austerity/].

[51] Jen Harvie, *Fair Play*, op. cit., p. 164.

The successive and various cuts to arts funding budgets across the UK, to both national funding bodies and local authorities, had material impacts for institutions, organisations and artists. ACE's state aid dropped by 30% from 2010-13 and Creative Scotland lost 16.5% from 2010/11 – 2016/17. Local authorities in England lost about 40% between 2010 and 2016, Scotland and Wales about half this much.[52] Though these cuts were felt across the UK and across art forms, they were not evenly distributed. In analysing the impact of austerity measures on local government funding for culture in England, Bethany Rex and Peter Campbell found 'significant geographical variability' which was 'indicative of increasing inequality between places in terms of their ability to mitigate the cuts and sustain cultural services.'[53] Though cultural spending increased in many deprived areas, austerity increased the necessity of councils to raise their own revenue through council tax and other commercial means, and therefore a poorer, more deprived area was less able to raise the necessary funds 'to compensate for the impact of central government cuts than its counterpart in an area with a stronger local economy.' Rex and Campbell also found that the 'majority of local authorities in England made drastic cuts to 'Arts Development and Support'', resulting in the 'removal of local authority support for artists, creative practitioners and small-scale voluntary organisations'. They suggest that this may be in part because these cuts are less visible, and easier, than closing museums of galleries.[54] Local authorities protected, at least to some extent, buildings and institutions whose loss would be most noticed, while reducing grants and support for artists and smaller organisations. This is key to my thesis because many artists I spoke to referenced a difficulty in receiving funding and other support for their artistic activities.

Surveys of artists, predominantly in the visual arts, an analogous sector to performance, support the picture that obtaining funding, getting proper pay for one's labour, and maintaining funding was difficult, and at times became more difficult, over the course of the austerity period. A number of reports carried out by 'a-n The Artists' Information Company' in 2011, 2013 and 2016 found difficult economic conditions for artists, finding a significant drop in the value of work advertised for artists in 2008 (60%), which did not significantly improve in subsequent years. They also found that work offered was often unpaid (only 36% paid in 2011), and that artists' incomes were an average of £16,500 in 2016, but that only a small proportion of this income actually came from the art.[55] These

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[52] Ingrid von Rosenberg, 'Culture Matters: Cuts and Resistance', in Marius Guderjan, Hugh Mackay and Gesa Stedman (eds.), *Contested Britain: Brexit, Austerity and Agency* (Bristol University Press, 2020) pp. 59-72, p. 60-61.
[53] Bethany Rex and Peter Campbell, 'The impact of austerity measures on local government funding for culture in England', *Cultural Trends*, 31:1, pp. 23-46, p. 24 and 37.
[54] Ibid., p. 37-39.
[55] a-n, 'Big Artists Survey 2011: The Results', [https://www.a-n.co.uk/research/big-artists-survey-2011/], Susan Jones, 'Artists' Work in 2013', a-n, [https://www.a-n.co.uk/research/artists-work-2013/] , Susan Jones, 'Artists' Work in 2016' a-n, [https://www.a-n.co.uk/research/artists-work-2016/], TBR Creative & Cultural Team,

figures show that there was significantly less money to go around in the arts, fewer opportunities, many low- or unpaid opportunities, and that artists had lower incomes, resulting in an increased need for income from other work. For individual artists and freelance producers this meant less security and support from institutions and more time, effort and unpaid labour spent on competing for resources.

Austerity and local authority cuts affected the availability of space for community and cultural activity. Rex and Campbell demonstrate that in the context of austerity 'local governments find themselves forced to play a diminished role in sustaining the social and physical infrastructure of place – its libraries, community spaces, museums, parks and theatres - [which] risks the slow erasure of a broad understanding of these spaces as part of a public sphere to which everyone is entitled.'[56] The loss in the democratic, public nature of these spaces also reproduces and deepens inequality, as those who need them the most are those with the least resources or space of their own. Libraries were particularly badly affected by austerity, as Rex and Campbell write: 'libraries, open spaces, tourism […] have experienced a much steeper decline when set against 'Culture and Heritage''.[57] This, combined with the fact that many councils sold off their buildings as I noted above, puts significant pressure on public and community space. These conditions mean that what space is available is under greater pressure. The lack or reduction in availability of community and cultural space also would have made it harder for artists to come together as a supportive community, decreasing the possibility of peer support and positive social relations. A lack, unavailability or unafforability of space to make or present performance was cited as a key difficulty which collectives responded to, and providing space, whether physical, social, or metaphorical, was a key objective for many of them.

It is likely that the unequal impacts of austerity also deepened inequality in the arts, but there is no direct evidence of this.[58] There is evidence, however, that the austerity period in the arts and culture sector was characterised by persistent structural inequality and exclusion. A report by the Warwick Commission showed a clear correlation between economic status and cultural activity, finding that 'the two most highly culturally engaged groups account for only 15% of the general population and tend to be of higher socio-economic status. The wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the population forms the most culturally active segment of all'. This group benefited from an 'estimated £85 per head' of ACE's theatre funding, compounding inequity and unequal access to this

'Livelihoods of Visual Artists – Summary Report', [https://www.a-n.co.uk/research/livelihoods-of-visual-artists-summary-report/] [accessed 13/03/2020].
[56] Rex and Campbell, op. cit., p. 31.
[57] Ibid., p. 42.
[58] Amber Massie-Blomfield, 'Austerity, inequality and the arts', *Open Democracy*, 12th November 2016 [https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/austerity-inequality-and-arts/] [accessed 10/08/2022].

art form.[59] Research carried out by ACE in 2018-19 showed that people from a Black and Minority Ethnic background were underrepresented in the workforce of National Portfoloio Organisations, though collating these groups together in this way conceals any differential exclusion specific groups may experience.[60] Research carried out by *The Stage* found that 92% of the artistic directors of ACE's highest-funded theatres were white, implying that the top jobs in subsidised theatre in England are still disproportionately held by white people.[61] The same ACE report found that LGBT people are likely to be over-represented in the portfolio's workforce, at 6%, and it actually rises when it comes to chief executives and artistic directors, at 13% and 11% respectively. Again, the umbrella term LGBT does not capture exclusion experienced by specific groups.

The statistics show that among ACE's NPOs women are underrepresented, making up 47% of the workforce overall and only 45% of Artistic Directors. However, despite being present at almost equal figures as men in the workplace, their experience is very different. A report by the Trade Unions Congress in partnership with the Everyday Sexism Project, polled 1500 women, and found that over half had experienced some form of sexual harassment, nearly one quarter had experienced unwanted touching, and one fifth had experienced unwanted sexual advances, often from male colleagues or managers.[62] In theatre, research carried out by *The Stage* found that more than a third of women in backstage roles had experienced sexual harassment.[63] Data also suggests a pay gap between male and female artists and a lack of career progression among women in the cultural sector, which is, by some measures, getting worse.[64] Women are underrepresented in some jobs, notably artistic directors, and in

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[59] The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value* [https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_final_report.pdf] [accessed 27/05/2021].

[60] Arts Council England, 'Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: 2018-19' [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_0.pdf], and gov.uk website, 'Ethnicity Facts and Figures: Population of England and Wales' [https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest] and Office for National Statistics, '2011 Census analysis: Ethnicity and the Labour Market, England and Wales' [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandthelabourmarket2011censusenglandandwales/2014-11-13] [both accessed 27/05/2021].

[61] Georgia Snow, 'Slow progress on diversity exposed as The Stage survey shows 92% of top theatre bosses are white', *The Stage*, 02/01/2020 [https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/slow-progress-on-diversity-exposed-as-the-stage-survey-shows-92-of-top-theatre-bosses-are-white] [accessed 27/05/2021].

[62] Trades Union Congress in association with Everyday Sexism Project, 'Still just a bit of banter? Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016' [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/SexualHarassmentreport2016.pdf] [accessed 27/05/2021].

[63] Giverny Masso, 'More than a third of women in backstage roles have experienced sexual harassment – report', 25/06/2018, *The Stage* [www.thestage.co.uk/news/more-than-a-third-of-women-in-backstage-roles-have-experienced-sexual-harassment—report] [accessed 27/05/2021].

[64] Arts Professional, 'EXCLUSIVE: Gender gap dominates latest arts pay figures', 7/12/2018 [https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exclusive-gender-gap-dominates-latest-arts-pay-figures] [accessed 27/05/2021], and Arts Professional, 'Female artists are probably earning less than minimum wage', 23/11/2018

many cases have worse pay, conditions, and experiences than men. Overall, there are formal exclusions and barriers to access which prevent black people and other people of colour, working-class people and women, from participating in the arts, theatre and performance, as audiences, artists, and cultural workers. It is in and against this institutional and infrastructural backdrop that the artist-run organisations and collectives discussed in this thesis operate.

As I will examine in the following chapters, the removal of resources from the arts results in competition for what little resources are left. Artists become increasingly competitive and isolated, with spaces for community gathering and collaboration lost or made more difficult to access. As funding is cut, institutions and those who work in them are put under pressure to provide the same service for less money, making exploitation more likely, and reducing the amount of time and support they have for artists. As organisations close, or scale back their activities, the loss of venues, festivals, and other platforms for performance create gaps in the artistic infrastructure. Though this results in the loss of support for artists, these gaps do provide the impetus for artist-run groups and collectives to fill the empty space with their own venues, festivals, and initiatives. In so doing however, they are caught within the conditions of the neoliberal field of cultural production, replacing institutional activities, with under-resourced and often inexperienced counterparts.

Herein precisely lies both the radical potential of collective and artist-run activity and its potential problems. In stepping into the gaps left by funded organisations, these groups can have success and influence in the field, taking hold of valuable opportunities to institute change: to make the field more collaborative, more secure, more caring, more connected, less oppressive or hierarchical. However, stepping into an infrastructure and being expected to fulfill the role of funded and experienced organisations, and doing so following unstructured, artist-run, collective and DIY principles, means that these groups do not have the resources or access to power in the field of cultural production to institute wider change, or to resist the wider practices of neoliberalism, and thus they are caught within and potentially reproduce the conditions they seek to oppose: exploitation, insecurity, neglect, isolation and competition. This thesis seeks to faithfully present the possibilities and problems of these practices. I argue that despite their potential problems, in tactically responding to specific local conditions, collective and artist-run producing practices can make shifts in the field of performance, and considered cumulatively, this iterative, plural and collective process can institute necessary long-term change.

[https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/female-artists-are-probably-earning-less-minimum-wage-0] [accessed 27/05/2021].

Theoretical frameworks

The central theoretical frame of this thesis is a synthesis of the work of three scholars: French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, specifically his concepts of field and multiple forms of capital; French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, particularly his work on the production of social space; and British-Australian queer, feminist and critical race theorist Sara Ahmed, particularly her work on feeling and affect and how they orient and shape individual and collective bodies. In addition to this, I utilise Michel De Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategy in my concept of tactical collective practice. I briefly introduce the key theoretical ideas used throughout this thesis, which I engage with and extend in the arguments that follow.

Field

This thesis analyses collectives, individuals, and organisations as operating within Bourdieu's concept of field. This is a model of social existence and action which imagines agents and institutions as existing in semi-autonomous and overlapping fields of relations, or 'relatively autonomous social microcosms'. As Bourdieu writes, 'a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions.'[65] The position of agents like artists and producers in the field is defined by their relations to other agents like institutions and individuals, and also by the various forms of capital that correspond to that position. Bourdieu proposes three main forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital is wealth and material resources like property. Social capital corresponds to the value or resources of 'relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit'. Finally, cultural capital, 'which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications'.[66] As in Bourdieu's example, cultural capital may be formal education which allows one to get a better paid job, but it can also be more informal, like an embodied and performed understanding of art which lends one's opinion weight, or adds cultural, and also economic, value to one's artistic outputs. As I shall examine, all three of these forms of capital may propagate conditions of exclusion in the arts.

Bourdieu offers as examples of positions in the artistic field, 'the position corresponding to a genre like the novel or to a subcategory like the society novel or, or from another point of view, the

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[65] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 97-98.
[66] Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in Richardson, J., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986) pp. 241–58, p. 7 & 16.

position locating a review, a salon, or a circle as the gathering place of a group of producers.'[67] Bourdieu uses the term producers here as opposed to consumers, those who produce literary or artistic works, rather than to refer to the job title. Through starting new collectives with particular functions, the groups discussed in this thesis take up particular positions in the field, such as those corresponding to artists' studios, or artist-run venues and festivals of live art and performance art. Agents in homologous or similar positions can form collectives to increase their influence in the field, to reduce their subordination, and to increase their collective capital; in doing so they transform the field. They are limited, however, by the space of possibles; the finite number of possible position-takings in any given field: 'an oriented space, pregnant with position-takings identifiable as objective potentialities, things "to be done", "movements" to launch, reviews to create, adversaries to combat, established position-takings to be "overtaken" and so forth.'[68] This will be useful throughout my thesis, as I examine how collectives and artist-run organisations set themselves up in response to the existing conditions of the field. In doing so, they change the field, but the possibilities of their actions are also limited by the field, its existing organisations, agents, histories, and conventions.

Of particular relevance to this project is Bourdieu's scholarship on the field of cultural production, and all the subfields contained within it. He describes the literary and artistic field as 'contained within the field of power […] while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it'.[69] Each field has varying levels of autonomy or heteronomy and has positions of relative domination and subordination. Heteronomy is used here as the opposite of autonomy, as in subject to outside power. As was made clear in his later work which was critical of neoliberalism, the autonomy of the field of art and the field of power, as well as the academy, is threatened by the colonising powers of the neoliberal market, in arguments which echo the work of Brown and Bhattacharyya.[70] Bourdieu later conceptualised the state as the bureaucratic field, which, in the words of Wacquant, 'proposes that we construe the state not as a monolithic and coordinated ensemble, but as a splintered space of forces vying over the definition and distribution of public goods'.[71] The groups discussed in this thesis often make an appeal to the definition and distribution of public goods. The field of cultural production is caught between its own internal logics, and those of wider fields to which it is subordinate and

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[67] Pierre Bourdieu, The *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field,* Susan Emanuel (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 231.
[68] Ibid., p. 235.
[69] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature,* Randall Johnson (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 37-38.
[70] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of resistance: against the tyranny of the market,* Richard Nice (trans.) (New York: New Press, 1998), and *Firing back: against the tyranny of the market 2*, Loïc Wacquant (trans.) (New York: New Press, 2003).
[71] Loïc Wacquant, 'Crafting the Neoliberal State: Workfare, Prisonfare, and Social Insecurity', *Sociological Forum,* 25:2, 2010, pp. 197-220, p. 200.

heteronomous. This will become important throughout this thesis, as I examine how collectives form in opposition to their conditions but are also caught within them, and thus operate within multiple tensions. Bourdieu often used an analogy of a game for field – or that each field 'follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit or codified.'[72] From this follows the distinctly exclusionary nature of fields to newcomers, who have not yet developed an understanding for how the game is played. This is an effect that is intensified in DIY, artist-run and collective practices, a subfield of the field of cultural production which is particularly resistant to the formalised, institutional practices of the rest of the field – and it is thus particularly difficult to grasp the rules. As a subfield it attempts to do away with or change the rules, but at one and the same time rules remain stubbornly but invisibly present.

From the rules follow the '*stakes* […] which are for the most part the product of the competition between players [original emphasis]'.[73] Bourdieu's emphasis on competition has been critiqued by Alex Laziridis Ferguson as being 'social Darwinist' and for ignoring 'cooperation and mutual beneficence'.[74] Bourdieu's theory can however be used to affirm collaboration in limited ways, and I will extend and add to this theory to account for the collaborative practices of the groups I examine. Though agents in the field compete for capital, the relational nature of the field means that they are simultaneously collaborating in creating and maintaining the field itself. Following the game analogy, Bourdieu writes that 'Players agree, by the mere fact of playing […] that the game is worth playing […] and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition [original emphasis].'[75] Though artists might compete for capital within the field, they also support the existence of other artists and their reception of capital through their engagement in the field. When the field is threatened by an outside force, such as the reduced funding of austerity, each agent or artist in the field become collaborators in supporting and protecting the field which supports them. They are also collaborators in what Bourdieu calls the production of belief.[76] That is, artists, producers, and those who work in arts institutions collaborate to produce the value of art through discourse, and this is part of a wider process in which institutions and individuals consecrate, or confer symbolic capital on each other, as well as competing with each other for capital. An established artist presenting work at a prestigious arts institution confer cultural and symbolic capital on each other, legimitating each other's powerful position in the field. In the same way, two artists and producers who collaborate or are in a collective

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[72] Wacquant and Bourdieu, op. cit., p. 98.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Alex Lazaridis Ferguson, 'Symbolic capital and relationships of flow: Canada, Europe, and the International Performing Arts Festival circuit', *Theatre Research in Canada*, 34:1, 2013, pp. 97-124.
[75] Wacquant and Bourdieu, op. cit., p. 98.
[76] See 'The Production of Belief', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Susan Emanuel (trans.) (Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 166-173.

together can work to confer value on each others' work, thus improving both of their positions in the field.

The field, its rules and boundaries, is a site of struggle, and Bourdieu describes fields in their specificity under capitalism and later neoliberalism. The field of cultural production is therefore inherently competitive under these circumstances because no matter its relative autonomy, it remains subordinate to the fields of power and the 'scarcity of the products', which engender competition.[77] Though he does not broach the possibility of doing away with competition altogether, competition is a rule of the game like any other. Players can 'get in it [the game] to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game.'[78] These attempts to transform the rules of the game are exactly what the collectives and artist-run organisations discussed in this thesis engage in: some try to reduce competition by banding together, some try to reduce insecurity, exploitation, isolation or hopelessness. In so doing, they are engaged in a struggle to shift the way in which the field of cultural production and the field of performance operate. As these fields are interconnected and relational, these attempts to shift the rules are both limited and far-reaching. Limited because not only the rest of the field and its unwritten rules are against them, but so is the current state of the bureaucratic field and the field of power. Far-reaching, because the relational nature of the immediate field means that positions taken up by collectives influence the entire field, in small but significant ways. As Bourdieu writes, 'When a new literary or artistic group imposes itself on the field, the whole space of positions and the space of corresponding possibilities […] find themselves transformed because of it'.[79] A new performance venue, group of artists, festival, or network, particularly those who seek to make a radical change in practices to existing organisations in the field, changes the whole field in relation to it. This allows the potential for new practices to take hold.

The Production of Space

Space arose as a central theme from my interviews: as both a key difficulty in the conditions of austerity and a central part of the practices of the groups I examine. Two of my chapters focus on organisations which exist as physical spaces, and the other two must build relationships with venues for their events to take place. As I noted above, collective and artist-run practices evolved hand in hand with performing, organizing, and occupying new and alternative spaces. This is a consequence of the fact that, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, 'new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa.'[80] This is because '*(social) space is a (social) product',* or space, in all of its complexity, as it is

[77] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language & Symbolic Power*, John B. Thompson (ed.), Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 55.
[78] Wacquant and Bourdieu, op. cit., p. 98-99.
[79] Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art,* op. cit., p. 231 and 234.
[80] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 1991), p. 59.

imagined, administered, apportioned, built, and lived, is expressive of the ideologies and practices of the society that produces it. Neoliberal austerity has a particularly way of producing space, inscribed with its own rules and operations. As Lefebvre writes, 'every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants […] produces a space, its own space.' More than this, Lefebvre argues that space, as it exists under neoliberal capitalism, is a product which is produced, bought and sold in a similar manner to other commodities and capital. Further, 'space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power'.[81] The way in which space is thought of and experienced, both the material and affective qualities of space, is a key way in which neoliberalism and austerity communicate and reproduce themselves. We saw this earlier in how public and community space is sold off under austerity, becoming private, expensive, and unavailable.

Collectives intervene in this context by occupying and seeking to produce spaces for themselves and the communities and artists with whom they engage. If space is a vehicle of domination, then it might also be its undoing, in the form of what Lefebvre calls 'counter-space'. Neoliberalism and austerity express their ideologies and practices in space, and those organisations that wish to counter or provide refuge from these practices can do so by producing space. The problem is that these spaces are produced as a part of the wider spatial practice of society, which subjects them to certain difficulties and pressures, as I will examine throughout this thesis. If, in Lefebvre's words, 'space embodies social relationships', and is expressive of the means of production under neoliberal capitalism and the ideology, practices, and chains of commerce which support them, then, in theory, producing spaces which embody different social relations, different ideologies, and different modes of production may act as resistance to neoliberal capitalism, may produce new ideas for new ways of working, being, and relating to each other which are more liveable, involving less exploitation, domination, hierarchy, or suffering.[82]

There are, however, several limitations to this possibility. The majority of the spatial relationships discussed in this thesis are precarious: most of the groups discussed herein do not own their spaces or have secure rental agreements, let alone produce their own space. Moreover, in order to access space, and the resources needed to maintain it, groups must participate in the commodification and marketisation of space. The practice of squatting, not discussed or undertaken by any of the groups discussed in this thesis, but influential on DIY and collectivist practices, avoids this to some extent, but in doing so becomes, in isolation, more vulnerable to state and police intervention, and thus even more precarious and temporary then rental agreements. Lefebvre writes of what he calls 'diversion', that is, the practice of occupying a space that 'may outlive its original purpose' and thus becomes 'susceptible

[81] Ibid., p. 26.
[82] Ibid., p. 27.

of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one.' Lefebvre writes that 'one upshot of such tactics is that groups take up residence in spaces whose preexisting form, having been designed for some other purpose, is inappropriate to the needs of their would-be communal life.' Diversion can therefore 'call but a temporary halt to domination.'[83] The groups discussed in this thesis cannot call an end to neoliberal austerity, but they can create spaces which provide temporary relief, are inscribed with different rules, and encourage different social relations and working practices. Through their interactions with the spatial practice of society or other agents in the field, they can shift practices in small but significant ways on a larger scale. They can also, as we shall see in my final chapters, imagine alternatives to neoliberal and austere capitalism which not only bring us one step closer to enacting these alternatives, but also allow these groups the hope necessary to continue their practices into the future.

Affect

Affect is a mode through which austerity impacts and communicates itself, and it is a key aspect of collective practice. The primary impacts of collectives that I found during my interviews were affective: collectives *feel* different, and at their best they make the artists in them and the people they engage with feel better, more secure, supported, cared for, connected, joyful and hopeful. In offering this analysis, I follow James Thompson's proposal of a shift in focus from effects to affects in applied performance; or rather I consider affect as an important effect of collective and artist-run practice, and argue that attendance to affect in their practices is also what allows these groups to have positive wider impacts in the field of performance.[84] I also use Ahmed's work on affect here, in examining how affects orient bodies away from what feels wrong toward what feels right, and in doing so enable shifts in practices to occur. I invoke Ahmed's scholarship throughout this thesis, but pay particular attention to her idea of affective economies in which 'emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments […] emotions work by sticking figures together (adherence), a sticking that creates the very effect of a collective (coherence)'.[85] I use this idea to examine how the collectives and artist-run organisations are constituted, formed, and maintained through affect and emotion; affects which oppose the negative affects of austerity.

Further, her idea that these emotions emerge collectively in between people, that these emotions stick to bodies and to objects, allows me to examine, with the help of Lefebvre and Bourdieu, how positive affects generated by collectives adhere to collective and artist-run spaces. To synthesise

[83] Ibid., p. 167-8.
[84] James Thompson, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).
[85] Sara Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', *Social Text*, 22:2, 2004, pp. 117-139, p. 119.

these three frameworks, I argue that these groups respond to and take up a position in the field, often through perceiving problems or opposing existing practices, occupy and divert spaces to their uses, and in doing so temporarily produce spaces which operate and feel differently to the rest of the field of cultural production, in what I call affective counter-spaces. Due to the relational nature of field, spatial practice, and affect, as well as the stickiness of emotion, these practices, spaces, and the affects they generate impact, in small ways, the people and organisations with whom they come into contact. I use Ahmed's scholarship here to show how these spaces and groups are constituted and maintained by affective investment, and how they call different affective economies to being. The phrase affective economies is also particularly useful for this project as it can be read two ways, to mean both economies of affect as well as the affects *of* economies, or the affective dimension of economic practices and models. Throughout this thesis I examine how on the one hand the affects and emotions of austerity work to form individuals and collectives in particular constellations and orientations, particularly negatively or individualistically; and how, on the other hand, emotions work to form collectives in contrasting secure, caring, connected and hopeful orientations, and how these positive affects sustain collectives and collective action in trying economic, social, and political conditions.

Strategies and Tactics

The limitations of collective action can be further understood by De Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics. For De Certeau strategy is performed by those with power: 'a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution'. Strategy 'seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment."'[86] Strategies are institutional, stable, and protective; they also have a distinct spatial practice – taking ownership of a place and using it to withdraw, to make long-term, official plans. A tactic, by contrast, is 'an art of the weak', without the 'proper locus' or resources that provide strategy with its power, and tactics must make use of the space and resources of those more powerful.[87] As I will elaborate in the following chapters, this describes artist-run and collective practice under austerity, which struggles to gain temporary access to resources, to space, and to funding, to support their present existence and activity in the short-term future. Spatially they are often nomadic, or operate in precarious or temporary spaces, meaning they lack the proper locus necessary for strategy. As we shall see in Chapter One and throughout, austerity intensifies this precarious tactical position, through reducing funding applications to the bare minimum, removing the possibility for organisational growth and support, while precarious spatial and funding arrangements make long-term planning impossible. Collective and artist-run practice responds to these difficult conditions with pragmatism and flexibility, taking advantage of opportunities offered, seeking to find temporary environments of security, of care, of connection and of hope. For this reason,

[86] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), p. 35-36.
[87] Ibid., p. 37.

I qualify the collective practice examined in this thesis as tactical collective practice, to show how collectives embrace these conditions, but how these conditions in turn limit the potential of their practices. This framing also allows me to show that many of these organisations struggle for the security and institutional legitimacy of strategy.

Methodologies

This thesis aims to describe how the field of live art and experimental performance in the UK was impacted by austerity, and how in response, many of these artists and producers turned to collectivism and artist-run organisations to support themselves, their practices, friends, colleagues and communities. It was therefore important to include a significant number of case studies, in order to get a sense of the plurality and breadth of the field. My own experience of austerity guided me in how I wanted to approach this project. Austerity changed the course of my life, not merely through material impacts on the job market or the economy, but also through how it made me feel, think, dream, and act. It was this personal experience of the affective impacts of austerity that drew me toward a focus on the affective impacts of austerity on the arts, a field that is dominated by descriptions of cuts and other quantitative facts and figures, and in which less attention is paid to the affective impacts on the behavior of artists, audiences, cultural workers and organisations, which went along with, and propagated or exacerbated, the material impacts.

In order to capture this affect among organisers, producers, and artists, interviews were necessary, and to facilitate this I completed oral history training at the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde. Through this training I engaged with others completing oral history interviews, and it emerged that the key challenges of my project were my prexisiting relationships with many of my interviewees, and my group interview subject. My specific interviewing methods had to be responsive to these complexities, and attentive to affect and the intersubjectivity of these relationships. Having been a producer in theatre, live art and dance for five years prior to the start of this research, as well as being socially entangled with the live art community, regularly attending performances, festivals, working with artists, and organizing events, I could not have conducted this research from anything but the position of an insider. Frequently those I interviewed for this project were my friends, acquaintances, ex-colleagues or collaborators, and, in one instance, an ex-partner. It was therefore particularly important that my methods were attentive to these relationships, and the potential pitfalls of this position, rather than seeking to impose an artificial separation or pretended objectivity to my research that would be disingenuous. Though this approach has limitations, considered below, it is well-suited to my object of study. Collectives are by their very nature exclusive: they form a clear boundary between inside and outside and seek to confer benefits, predominantly affective, on members. My examination of affect required me to be an embodied, thinking and feeling researcher

who sought to capture, and was attentive and responsive to, the affects and emotions of those I interviewed. This research follows Donna Haraway in conceptualizing knowledge as 'situated and embodied', and this goes for both my knowledge and that of my interviewees.[88] Attending to the local, situated and embodied nature of knowledge and practices is also suitable because collectives are distinctly local and spatially situated. Following Bourdieu's concept of field, the complex local context of collectives is crucial to understanding their practices, and this involves getting up close and personal to them, while, at one and the same time, situating them in a wider context.

As such, the methodologies of this thesis are informed by reflection and research on this insider position. Jodie Taylor examines both 'benefits and dilemmas' of an 'intimate insider' approach in ethnographic research. The significant advantages that Taylor finds in her survey of the literature include: 'deeper levels of understanding', 'closer and more regular contact with the field', being 'easier and better informed', easier 'access to, and selection of, research participants', and 'quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants'.[89] Taylor finds there has been less attention paid to the potential problems and drawbacks of such a position: warning that one should not 'presume that as an insider, one necessarily offers an absolute or correct way of seeing and/or reading the culture under investigation.' She notes the dangers of 'privileging knowledge that is constructed within dichotomous rubrics such as insider/outsider', that 'as an insider one does not automatically escape the problem of knowledge distortion, as insider views will be always be multiple and contestable, generating their own epistemological problems due to subject/object relationality'. Finally, Taylor writes of 'the grossly undertheorized impact that friendships may have upon the processes of perception and interpretation within and of the field under examination.'[90] I therefore wanted to pay attention to friendship, both as a theme and a method of this research.

Heeding these warnings, I go through the potential problems of this position for my research here. The first is the potential for locally-held, socially proximate beliefs of myself and my interviewees being held to be universal objective truths, or beliefs held by the whole of the field. I have mitigated such problems by seeking to attend to local, situated and specific registers of knowledge, such as the practices of the collectives in their spaces, the relationships they have, and their impacts on their local geographic and artistic communities. I also avoid the problem of insider views becoming monolithic by interviewing a wide range of people, both within collectives and across the field, paying attention to plurality and difference in views, and to different positions within the collective and the sector, for example length of time in the collective, career stage, and connections to institutions, which

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[88] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14:3, 1988, pp. 575-599, p. 583.
[89] Jodie Taylor, 'The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research', *Qualitative Research*, 11:1, 2011, pp. 3-22 [doi:10.1177/1468794110384447].
[90] Ibid.

impact their available capital. The second potential problem is the difficulty of critique when one's object of study is a friend. This did indeed cause difficulty when it came to analysis of my interview material, as I was initially reluctant to write critically about my friends and associates. My affective investment in the groups, their relationships and mine with them, and the venues, festivals, and events they ran, which intertwine with my personal history, made critique difficult. There is no easy way out of this dilemma or tension; the only way out is through, in acknowledging and working with these difficulties as one of the ways in which this research might produce knowledge. In time I came to see academic critique as a key part of what I was offering these collectives; to write only positive accounts of these collectives, particularly when members of collectives themselves are all too aware of the problems in their practices, would be a disservice. The assumption of a dichotomy between inside and outside is also mitigated by the complexity of my position. I am not an absolute insider: while I have a certain amount of interiority to the field, I am an outsider to these collectives. I also study multiple but related fields, some of which I have more experience in than others. This research therefore comes from an 'insider/outsider' perspective, and is reflective on, and attentive to, the benefits and potential drawbacks of both these positions. These problems are also mitigated by my theoretical approach, particularly the work of Bourdieu, which necessitates reflection on one's own position, as well as the stakes of the game: who is set to gain or lose capital by my actions. I have attended to how my research might impact the people I study in these terms as I engage in the research, aiming to keep the possibility of active dialogue open as far as possible, consulting interviewees with full transcripts of interviews as well as the material I cite directly.

My interview methods followed iteratively from my reflection on affect and the position from which I researched. I conducted a preliminary survey in July 2018 of a fixed set of questions sent out to collectives, some of whom responded by filling them in and returning them by email, and some of whom preferred to engage in a face-to-face interview. When engaging in the latter however, it quickly emerged that having a structured set of formal questions did not work to capture the data I wanted, nor, in my attendance to affect, did it feel right. In my preliminary interview with Katy Baird, a friend of mine through my previous relationship with her close friend and colleague Aaron Wright, conducted in the informal environment of Rutherglen Wetherspoons as she was visiting her Mum for Christmas, my personal relationship with Baird made a formal, structured interview impossible. In answering questions, Baird would naturally diverge into her own rich experiences of the collective, before realizing that she had digressed and attempting to return to the question. I realized that the digressions, however, were the data I wanted to capture: the interior experiences, narratives and affective responses that interviewees had of both austerity and their collectives. I therefore adopted an unstructured, thematic and narrative interview format: I would begin by talking about my research, its key interests, particularly the themes of austerity and collectives, before asking them about their collectives, and

following up with questions as they emerged. This unstructured interview format does have its drawbacks. Avoiding planned questions and being responsive to what is important to interviewees meant that I gathered a lot of material and had very long interviews, and a lot of the material was not, in the final writing of the thesis, directly relevant. Performing unstructured interviews can also lead one to the mistaken belief that one is capturing unmediated or more authentic material than a structured interview; it was however clear that my framing of the interview, and the interests and research focuses of the project, influenced the interview, as interviewees sought to relate their experience to my interests as a researcher. Throughout my analysis I have attempted to account for such problems by drawing attention to where my own views and those of my interviewees diverged, and where they did not explicitly identify with my key terms. Ultimately, it must be understood that though a collective and collaborative endeavor, this thesis is my work, shaped by my interests and decisions.

Case Study Selection Criteria and Interview Analysis

Case studies were selected by the following criteria:

1) Organisations or groups which were set up or predominantly operated during the period 2008-2018 in the UK,
2) Organisations or groups which produce or support the production of live art and experimental performance,
3) Organisations or groups which self-identify, or at some stage self-identified, as following artist-run or collective principles.

They were selected predominantly from an insider position, that is, with existing and sometimes intimate knowlegde of their work, though this perspective was bolstered with other methods. Having been a member of the community I knew many organisations that worked following collective or artist-run principles. Having compiled a list of these organisations, I then conducted internet searches to find any that I might have missed. Conducting a preliminary survey also helped me to get a sense of the field. Finally, I also asked collectives and artist-run organisations to recommend any other groups working within their local geographical area or field. I also attended events such and conferences which focused on this area, such as The 16th International Symposium of Theatre Critics and Theatre Scholars in Novi Sad, Serbia, in June 2018, which explored the theme ‘Collective Works: Questioning Collectivity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance’, and ‘Managing the Radical: Experiments in Organisation’, a discussion event as part of LADA’s ‘Managing the Radical’ series of events, as well as attending a LADA DIY on ‘The Cult’, which was informed by ‘Managing the Radical’ research.[91]

[91] See LADA website, ‘Restock, Rethink, Reflect Five: on Managing The Radical’, [https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/projects/restock-rethink-reflect-five-on-managing-the-radical/] [accessed 06/09/2022].

As this selection relies on my prior, embodied knowledge, it cannot claim to be exhaustive, or necessarily representative. It reflects my interests, my history, and to some extent my social entanglements. However, the smallness and interconnected, relational nature of the field of live art and experimental performance, as well as my time working and researching in the field, allowed me to be aware of, and speak to, the majority of groups that fulfilled my criteria.

Having gathered a large body of interviews, I first categorised these interviews by type of collective: their primary role or function. This is partly because it seemed a natural way of organising a large number of case studies, but also because collectives of the same type seemed to share many similarities and experience similar issues. After transcribing the interviews, I analysed them using inductive thematic analysis, roughly following the stages as articulated by Victoria Braun and Victoria Clark. These stages are: familiarisation, coding, generating intitial themes, and then developing, reviewing and refining themes, before writing up.[92] I read through the material and coded it with key words and topics, which I then grouped into larger themes. Though I use the interview material extensively, the themes that emerge from this analysis were both key themes for that set as well as themes which allowed me to productively pursue a line of argument. It is not necessarily the case that each collective interviewed identified with this theme as the central concern of their practice. Conversely, to some extent all of the themes are applicable to all case studies: security is an issue to all types of collective, not just venues; care is something that many of the groups seek to embed in their practices; all of the organisations provide spaces of connection and could be said to produce communitas at various points; and finally, all of the collectives might identify with ideas of hope and futurity. The focus of each chapter is reached through a dialectical process of identifying which themes emerged as most important from each set of interviews, and also identifying which case studies were most appropriate for exploring the key themes of the thesis as a whole. I have sought throughout to strike a balance between being faithful to my primary research and those I interviewed, as well as being faithful to my own critical line of argument. This thesis is the result of such delicate negotiations.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into four chapters which examine the work of contemporary collectives of different forms across the UK. Each chapter focuses on a specific structural model of collective: venues, studios, festivals, and networks. As I intimated earlier, each chapter also focuses on particular negative affective conditions of austerity. I show how these types of collective can resist and rework these conditions, but how, in doing so, they are caught in specific tensions and difficulties. Chapter One focuses on collective or artist-run venues and examines how they seek to provide security

[92] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark, ‘Doing Reflexive TA’, [https://www.thematicanalysis.net/doing-reflexive-ta/] [accessed 17/06/2022].

for themselves, and the artists and communities with whom they engage, through working in fixed physical spaces and seeking to produce permanent supportive infrastructure for performance. This chapter uses three case studies: Performance Space in Folkestone, The Marlborough Pub and Theatre in Brighton, and Live Art Bistro in Leeds. I examine these venues in the wider context of the insecurity and precarity of neoliberal austerity, and the intense pressures it places on resources like arts funding and space, drawing on the work of Isabell Lorey on the three dimensions of the precarious: precariousness, precarity and governmental precarization. This allows me to conceptualise these venues as existing in a complex environment of many forms of precariousness: precarious spaces, economies, and communities, as conditions into which they can intervene but which also limit the possibilities of their activities. I examine how venue-based practices enable forms of security in insecure circumstances, but also give rise to insecure conditions which complicate and compromise the security they are able to offer. This begins my argument that collectives, when they interact with their wider context, can end up reproducing the very conditions they seek to oppose.

In Chapter Two I consider the work of Bristol collectives Residence and Interval, and Glasgow collective Single End, to examine studio collectives: groups of artists or producers who share office space to work on the administrative parts of their practice, as well as sharing access to rehearsal space. This chapter focuses on the theme of care; contextualising these practices in the restriction of resources under neoliberal austerity, and the resulting lack of care and support within the established arts and performance infrastructure. Drawing on care ethics and the work of performance scholars James Thompson, Amanda Stuart Fisher, and Maurice Hamington on care, I argue that these groups produce affects and practices of care. Using Ahmed's writing on the stickiness of emotions, I show how caring practices emerge relationally between the group, stick to its members, and to the space – thus potentially spreading and sticking to those who the space and the group come into contact with. This extends the argument of the previous chapter, which focuses more on how venues can provide material and affective security to artists. This chapter shows how artists can provide affective support and care for each other, alleviating some of the need for artists to seek it from external organisations. Like the venues I examined in the previous chapter, these groups have problems, not least that they also exist in temporary and precarious spaces. Further, I examine how, though they produce an affect of care for those within the group, these groups can reproduce the exclusions of the rest of the field of performance.

The second half of my contemporary research moves away from groups whose practices are situated in fixed physical spaces, to look at more nomadic and dispersed groups with more widely distributed impacts than the collectives discussed in Chapters One and Two. To that end, Chapter Three examines collective and artist-run performance festivals: Forest Fringe, a festival which took place in Edinburgh, Buzzcut festival in Glasgow, and Steakhouse Live in London. I examine how in

the context of isolating, disconnecting, and depressing conditions of austerity and neoliberalism, these groups seek to create communitas: intense but short-lived times and spaces of collective joy and connection which temporarily diverge from, and counteract, the everyday experience of austerity. In analysing such practices, I use anthropological theories of ritual togetherness, Émile Durkheim's collective effervescence and Victor Turner's communitas, to show how these festivals attempt to create these experiences. In creating these mass gatherings however, these groups also encounter problems, conflicts, and tensions. The intense, exceptional, and temporary nature of communitas can produce friction when it rubs up against the rules and practices of the everyday world and the rest of the artistic infrastructure. Their inclusive practices can cause conflict between different audience groups and produce an environment that is socially overwhelming for some people. Their economic exceptionalism is also susceptible to accusations of exploitation, which can occur when their artist-run, collectivist practices interact with the wider artistic economy. In assessing the nature of these double-binds in the experience of the festival, I engage with Clare Bishop's account of relational antagonism to show how these conflicts and tensions are actually constitutive of inclusive, cultural spaces of contestation, and that they should be accounted for as part of tactical collective practice.

My fourth and final chapter examines the most diffuse form yet, that of network collectives, who organise around particular identities, or issues and practices in the performance and arts sector, in order to produce broader change in the field. They are: Raze Collective, a charity set up to protect and support queer performance and queer performance spaces; The Cocoa Butter Club, an organisation set up to represent, support, and present the work of queer cabaret performers of colour; and CUNTemporary, an organisation set up to publicise, support, and present performance and research following queer-feminist ideas and methods. In this final chapter, I examine how, in the context of the hopelessness and foreclosure of future possibilities under neoliberal austerity, particularly for marginalised people, these groups seek to involve large groups of performers, audiences, or organisers to imagine and enact hopeful futures for marginal identities and communities. They do this through mobilising queer, feminist, and afro-futurist ideas, and in gathering large groups of people together in hopeful assemblies. They also seek to prefiguratively enact these futures in their practices. I synthesise these conceptions of the future with the ideas of José Esteban Muñoz to show how these futurities can help people survive the difficult conditions of neoliberal austerity intact, and how their hopeful practices can shape the future. In line with tactical collective practice, I examine how this futurity is enacted in concrete tactics, which engage with economic, political, social, and institutional conditions as they really are, rather than how they are hoped to be. However, these networks' organisation around particular identities is susceptible to a neoliberal commodification of identity; their desire for mass involvement is susceptible to neoliberal logics of growth; and their work with institutions risks recuperation, their radical aims neutralized by the disingenuity, lack of resources, or incapability of

change of these larger organisations. Nevertheless, I argue that hopeful, futurist thinking drives groups to do things differently, sustains tactical practices in the long-term, and allows groups to institute small but cumulatively significant changes in the wider field.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that collective producing practices in live art and experimental performance continue to be hugely influential in the difficult and tumultuous conditions of neoliberal austerity. Their tactical capacity to identify and respond to opportunities and gaps in the infrastructure allow them make changes in the field, and their spatially-situated, affective practices allow them to temporarily reverse and rework the most pernicious impacts of austerity. Due to their position, often opposed to but firmly within a neoliberal field of cultural production, their practices are often compromised and complicit. However, in shifting and difficult conditions, tactical collective practice is well-placed to reflect on and respond to these conditions in order to continue to make space for change.

Chapter One

Venues: Producing Spaces of Security

Introduction

This chapter argues that collective and artist-run venues can intervene in the field of performance to provide material conditions of safety and security for artists, amid the insecure conditions of austerity: the removal of support, the increasing precarization of people, incomes, and spaces. I examine how, in response to how space has been sold off, put under pressure, or become inaccessibly expensive, venue collectives resist these dynamics by occupying space and putting it to community and artistic use. This argument is constructed using the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu, Lefebvre, Ahmed and De Certeau as outlined in the Introduction. I examine these venues as taking up a position in the semi-autonomous field of performance, in relation to, and sometimes in opposition to, the practices of the rest of the field. In doing so, they are at once resistant to and caught within the precarious and insecure conditions of neoliberalism. They work in groups to resist these wider conditions by producing temporary affective counter-spaces of security, in what Lefebvre calls 'diversions' - modifying spaces designed for another purpose - to house precarious communities and practices. However, their position within, and heteronomous to, the neoliberal fields of cultural production, power and the economy, means they remain caught in the conditions they seek to oppose. The high cost of renting and maintaining space makes these collectives economically precarious themselves, rendering their efforts to provide secure support for artists and audiences complex and contingent. In interrogating this tension, I engage with Isabell Lorey's tripartite distinction between precariousness, precarity and government precarization. This chapter continues the notion of tactical collectivity I outlined in the Introduction, namely that contemporary collective practice in the field of performance is characterised by the tactical and pragmatic exploitation of opportunities and gaps left by the difficult, shifting conditions of neoliberal austerity. The security and safety found here is provisional and temporary, but it can nonetheless provide the means for the continued survival of artists, practices, and communities.

Current scholarship on performance and precarity tends to use precarity as a context in which theatre and performance practices operate and respond to discursively, aesthetically and performatively.[93] The title of Maria Chatzichristodoulou's edited collection, *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity*, suggests that live artists are performing precarity itself, perhaps through presenting the vulnerability and limitations of the performing human body. In her

[93] See Marissia Fragkou, *Ecologies of Precarity in Twenty-First Century Theatre: Politics, Affect, Responsibility* (London: Methuen Drama, 2019) and Maria Chatzichristodoulou (ed.), *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity* (London: Methuen Drama, 2020).

introduction to this collection, an examination of the field of live art through interviews with three case study organisations, there is a sense of the field's ontological precarity. As she writes, 'Live Art in itself is a contested category', due to its cultural strategy of supporting marginal and ephemeral practices which do not fit in to existing structures, as I noted in the Introduction.[94] Through this ontological precarity, we also get a sense of the economic precarity of such practices; by virtue of not fitting within existing structures these practices are often in need of material support and inclusion within a wider body of practices. Taking the lead from this work, this chapter asks how precarity as a wider context manifests in the specific material and affective conditions in which performance is made, administrated, and presented, and how these conditions can be materially and affectively resisted by collective- and artist-run venues.

I examine these material-affective conditions through three manifestations of precarity, in economies, spaces, and communities; and as refracted through three corresponding pairs of related, opposing figures: economic security and precarity, permanence and fluidity, and safety and risk. Despite existing in economic and spatial precarity, I examine how these venues produce spaces of material and affective security for the communities and artists with whom they work. In the first section, I argue that the practices of these venues develop in response to precarity, attempt to achieve some security in their economic practices, but remain caught within neoliberal and austere conditions, running the risk of reproducing the precarity they seek to resist. In the following section I examine how the case studies turn to the permanence of physical space amid fluid conditions, and the various ways in which they seek to provide material security for artists. In the final part of this chapter I examine how these venues seek to provide a safe space for those most marginalised, in mitigation or reversal of the unevenly distributed risks of austerity and precarity, while also providing a space for aesthetic, political, and performative risk. These tensions and contradictions speak to the resistant nature of collective and artist-run practice, live art, performance art, experimental performance, and marginal(ised) communities, and the difficulty of existing within neoliberal austerity and only partially or locally being able to resist its impacts.

Case studies

This chapter focuses on collective or artist-run performance venues; groups of artists or producers who open a space to develop and present performance, and for the gathering of specific communities. In this chapter I examine three case studies: Marlborough Productions at the Marlborough Pub and Theatre in Brighton, which I visited in June 2019, interviewing founding member and co-director David Sheppeard; Performance Space (]ps[hereafter) in Folkestone, which I visited in July 2019 and interviewed the two co-directors, Benjamin Sebastian and Bean, (preceded by

[94] Chatzichristodoulou, op. cit., p. 7.

an earlier skype interview with Bean in September 2018); and Live Art Bistro in Leeds, which I visited in July 2019, where I spoke with then co-directors Matt Allen and Jessica Sweet.[95]

Marlborough Productions at the Marlborough Pub & Theatre, Brighton

The Marlborough Pub and Theatre is a historic venue in which a group of producers called Marlborough Productions ran a programme of activities and events which focused on live art and experimental performance by queer artists, disabled artists, and artists of colour.[96] This group managed the venue from 2008-2020, beginning with Tarik Elmoutawakil, later joined by David Sheppeard, and subsequently joined by Abby Butcher. From 2013-2018, this group of three referred to themselves as a producing collective. After the departure of Butcher, the two remaining producers Elmoutawakil and Sheppeard now describe themselves as Creative and Executive Director respectively, and the organisation as the 'leading UK producer of queer-led, intersectional performance, parties and radical community gatherings'. One of their key projects, *New Queers on the Block*, seeks to build a supportive touring network for 'LGBTQIA+ artists within live art and experimental practices in regions of the country where that offer wasn't available'. Another key project, *Radical Rhizomes*, provides 'social gatherings by and for queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPoC) in Brighton & Hove', as a 'social and support network for QTIPoC'. [97] These two projects show Marlborough Productions' efforts to build and maintain secure supportive infrastructure for queer performance in the UK, and to provide spaces of safety and security for marginalised communities. In June 2020, the company ceased management of the venue, instead deciding to 'present their internationally recognised performances, parties and community gatherings at venues and spaces in Brighton & Hove and beyond.'[98] This chapter focuses on the Marlborough Pub & Theatre as it was managed by this group of people during the time frame of 2008-2018, and does not take into account their decision to leave the space as it is outside of my timeframe, and took place after my interview with Sheppeard. However, I speculate that this was at least a partial consequence of the financial and organisational difficulties they were experiencing with the venue at time of interview.

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[95] All quotations from these producers in this chapter come from interviews with the author on these respective dates, unless otherwise stated.

[96] In a Wikipedia page developed by the Marlborough Productions team, the building is said to date from 1787 as an inn called The Golden Cross. According to this page, it has been associated with the LGBTQ community since the 1970s, when a Gay Liberation Front group from Sussex university would meet there. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlborough_Pub_and_Theatre#cite_note-Rose_Collis1-2] [accessed 04/08/2022].

[97] Marlborough Productions website, 'About Us' [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/about-us/], and 'Radical Rhizomes' [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/our-projects/radical-rhizomes/] and New Queers on the Block website, 'About' [https://newqueersontheblock.com/about/] [all accessed 05/02/2021].

[98] Marlborough Productions website, 'A new chapter for Brighton's queer cultural innovators' [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/a-new-chapter-for-brightons-queer-cultural-innovators/] [accessed 16/09/2020].

]ps[, London then Folkestone

]PS[is an 'artist-led non-profit organisation' which focuses on performance art as a 'studio, residency and event organisation'. Their mission is 'to facilitate the prime conditions for the production of performance art in the UK (and beyond), while expanding an understanding of the medium through practice led education/research.'[99] The organisation was run by co-directors Bean and Benjamin Sebastian, who were associated with it from 2011.]ps[']s first space was in a rented warehouse in Hackney Wick, North East London, used as artists' studios and to present a variety of performance events. After losing this space, it became increasingly difficult to find a suitable space in London, and the pair began looking to move during a period of research and development in 2015/16, before moving to Folkestone, on England's southeast coast. They secured a mortgage on a house in the centre of Folkestone and in the Creative Quarter, which serves as a gallery, event, workshop and performance space. Upper floors with kitchens, living areas and bedrooms serve as office space and accommodation for visiting artists or speakers at events, as well as for guests who have booked on Airbnb.[100] Initially both organisers also lived in the building, before Sebastian moved back to London, shortly before our interview. In February 2022, the organisation announced that they would be leaving their Folkestone space, which was to become a new workshop and community space, run by now former co-director Bean.]ps[is now a mobile organisation run by Benjamin Sebastian and Joseph Morgan Schofield.[101]

Live Art Bistro, Leeds (Now the Centre for Live Art Yorkshire)

The beginning of Live Art Bistro (LAB hereafter) was told to me second-hand by then co-directors Jessica Sweet and Matt Allen, as all founding members had left the group by the time of interview (2019). LAB began in 2012, formed by performance companies Indivisible (Becki Griffiths and Adam Young) and Testing the Razor (Paul Wilkinson and Dani Ferreira).[102] According to Matt Allen, they were 'reacting to a lack of space and provision for people working in live art in the region.' They first acquired a space through a temporary space programme of artist-led arts charity East Street Arts, before being offered a temporary lease on one of the buildings they had occupied, an old carpet shop, on a rent-free, month-by-month basis. Matt Allen joined in 2014, Jessica Sweet in 2015. They run programmes of work, provide a touring venue for live artists, run events at other venues and festivals, house artist studios, and provide a venue for the events of local groups. At time of interview,

[99]]ps[website, 'About' [https://www.performancespace.org/aboutps1] [accessed 6/1/2020].
[100] I stayed in the building myself as part of a LADA DIY called 'Men From Behind' in August 2017.
[101]]ps[website, 'Tidings: February 2022' [https://performancespace.org/tidings-statement-2022] [accessed 12/09/2022].
[102] Live Art Bistro website, archived here: [https://clayleeds.wixsite.com/liveartbistro] and (in)Xclusion Festival Programme, p. 21, [https://issuu.com/indivisibleuk/docs/_in_xclusion_festival_programme] [accessed 6/1/2020].

after the departure of Adam Young, co-directors Jessica Sweet and Matt Allen were running the space. After a period of reorganisation which took place after the interview, the group rebranded as CLAY: Centre for Live Art in Yorkshire in 2019, and Matt Allen left the team in 2020.[103] The venue is now a not-for-profit company, led by Jessica Sweet as Artistic Director. CLAY states specifically that their mission is 'to provide stability for the artists who fall between the cracks by creating the first Art Centre for live art practice.'[104]

Precarious Economies: Economic Security & Precarity

This section argues that in conditions of economic insecurity, these groups attempt to achieve some security through their economic models and practices, while also reproducing these conditions. The conditions of austerity most relevant to this chapter are: reduced funding leading to precarity for those working in performance; an expectation of job insecurity and the necessity of flexibility and mobility; and the coupling of the receipt of government subsidy with bureaucratic processes designed to gauge entitlement, resulting in increased administrative burden and unpaid labour. The latter results in pressure, from arts funding bodies, to adopt particular institutional forms or practices, or to become more like businesses, and develop more funding streams as part of the mixed-economies funding model. This pressure forms part of what Bourdieu calls the bureaucratic field, or the space in which 'the definition and distribution of public goods' is contested, as I outlined in the Introduction.[105] As the field of cultural production is heteronomous to this field, cultural organisations must replicate the practices and priorities of the state in order to be successful. However, this also means reproducing the contradictions and conflicts of the state, such as that embodied in the mixed-economies model, between rhetorics of sustainability and resilience and market principles of instability, private profit, competition, and economic growth, as I will show.

Through outlining the economic models and practices of these case studies, I show how this model of arts funding is only successful under very specific conditions, and that it can increase risk, (self-)exploitation, and overwork. These insecure conditions are part of Isabel Lorey's third dimension of the precarious, governmental precarization, that is, 'modes of governing since the formulation of industrial capitalist conditions', which instrumentalize the precariousness of life and labour.[106] Austerity is part of how economic insecurity is built into neoliberal modes of governing, and how it spreads to other areas of society, including space, working practices, and communities. In extending

[103] CLAY website, 'Live Art Bistro archive' [https://clayleeds.wixsite.com/liveartbistro] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[104] CLAY website, 'About' [https://www.clayleeds.co.uk/about] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[105] Wacquant, op. cit., p. 200.
[106] Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious,* Aileen Derieg (trans.) (London: Verso, 2015), p. 11-13. See also Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

Ahmed's work on affective economies, 'where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation', I examine the circulations of fear and insecurity that these venues experience through operating in austere conditions.[107] The affect of fear which comes with the economic insecurity of austerity is what pushes these groups to try and achieve some material and affective security in legible institutional forms and in physical spaces. As I will show, in some cases the search for security in this way actually increases insecurity, risk, or unpaid labour, and in some cases security is achieved, but only at the expense of abandoning collective or artist-run practices which comprised a significant part of their identity or their relationships with their artists and audiences.

Stephen Greer examines the pressure on arts companies to become more like businesses: outlining Thatcherite cuts to government support for the arts, combined with investment in organisations in order to transform their economic model and encourage them to seek commercial sponsors.[108] This was followed by New Labour, who, though they increased arts funding, continued an enterprise, free-market model of the arts, as well as subjecting arts organisations to increased scrutiny and the necessity to evidence the positive social impact of their activities. As Greer argues, these two successive tendencies influenced the funding practices of the Conservative-led coalition of 2010, who continued an 'emphasis on the economic potential of the arts and culture sector', coupled with austerity politics which reduced state expenditure on the arts.[109] Combined, this has the impact of disincentivising reliance on state support (positioned as unsustainable), while incentivising business models which sought private investment and commercial profit. Greer also argues that the mixed economies model, though it places rhetorical emphasis on sustainability and resilience, may not be any more secure than relying on state funding, and in fact it may introduce new kinds of risk and encourage inequality. Though all of the artists and groups in this study exist in and are impacted by this context, its dynamics are particularly impactful for venue-based groups, as their higher costs (rent or mortgage on the space, maintenance of the space for public use, venue and technical staff, and artists' fees, often for longer periods of activity) necessitate heavy reliance on state and private funding, both of which are oversubscribed and highly competitive. Arts organisations are also considered a risky investment by private funders, and only the biggest and well-known venues, clustered in the south-east of England and London, have a proven track record of attracting significant investment or sponsorship.[110] Thus, venue-based organisations turn to physical space for a sense of stability and security, and yet it is

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[107] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 8.
[108] Greer, 'Funding Resilience', op. cit.
[109] Ibid., p. 224.
[110] See 'Public/Private Capital' in Harvie, *Fair Play*, op. cit., and Burrows, H, & Ussher, K., *Risky Business*, (Demos, 2011).

precisely this that makes them precarious: in need of significant investment that is increasingly difficult to come by.

All three case studies adhere, to some degree, to the mixed economy arts funding model; they support themselves through a combination of public funding, private funding, and earned income. They all reported financial difficulties in relation to their funding models. Marlborough Productions have never received regular funding but have received grants from Brighton and Hove City Council and ACE for specific projects and seasons of work. Their largest investment from ACE was £125,000 as part of the Elevate fund, designed 'to strengthen the resilience of diverse arts organisations, museums and libraries not in receipt of National Portfolio funding', with a particular focus on diverse leadership.[111]]ps[have similarly never received regular funding, and did 'everything unfunded' for the first three years. They now work, as Sebastian says, on a 'project to project, dependent on funding' basis, applying for project funding from ACE for each new season of work. After their move to Folkestone, they have also been able to access arts funding from Kent County Council. LAB worked unfunded for their first few years or received small amounts of funding for one-off events, such as those programmed to coincide with the Tour de France beginning in Leeds in 2014. Since then, they have had one project funded by ACE, and, as Sweet says, 'everything else we pretty much bring in independently.' Allen describes them as having 'slowly legitimised' by stages: 'formalized our company structure, […] set up as a [Private Limited] company', began paying themselves fixed wages, and employed an office administrator and a freelance technical manager. In some cases this formalisation took place in order to access funding. For instance, they had to be a registered company to receive a small amount of regular funding from Leeds City Council of £4000 a year for four years. They also secured £10,000 a year through their partnership with East Street Arts, who included them in their ACE National Portfolio Organisation (regularly funded) application. This regular funding provides them with some measure of security and allows them to make long-term plans for the first time.

LAB, despite existing in a position of considerable uncertainty, have continued their activities for a number of years, achieving some security when it was necessary, whilst remaining adaptable as an organisation. In this way they have learned to exist in a balance between permanence and fluidity. Part of their success may be in their ability to adapt, in a manner compatible with the quality of 'adaptive resilience', advanced by Mark Robinson in a number of publications both as part of and separate from ACE.[112] Adaptive resilience incorporates a number of features of neoliberalism: flexibility, diffuse responsibilty in terms of power, while responsibility is placed on individuals and individual organisations to adapt to wider conditions. As Greer notes, adaptive resilience requires

[111] Arts Council England website, [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding-finder/elevate] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[112] Mark Robinson, 'Making Adaptive Resilience Real', Arts Council England, July 2010.

workers to adapt and be resilient to the 'instability of the market', meaning that 'culture workers must always be preparing for the next unavoidable crash'. It 'involves a highly normative narrative of boom and bust', which presents 'dominant political and economic logics as if they were natural phenomena', when they are conditions created and maintained by the economic and political system of which funding bodies form a part, and the conditions of insecurity created by an insecure funding environment. Rather than trying to insulate the arts and culture from the instability of the market and its logics by providing secure funding, it exposes them to it, seeing the loss of unprofitable or less resilient or adaptive organisations as part of 'an adaptive cycle of growth'.[113] This is part of the primacy of the economic of neoliberalism; where in previous periods funding bodies like ACE awarded funds on the basis of artistic merit or social good, in the model advocated by the use of terms like adaptive resilience, the ability to weather economic shocks and be self-sufficiently profitable is the most important metric. These venues are caught within this context, using necessary skills of adaptive resilience to find space for survival and resistance to the prevailing economic and political systems of which adaptive resilience is a part.

The limited availability of funding means that each venue must secure income from other sources and activities. Marlborough Productions found it necessary to manage the pub, though with a separate company, in order to have access to the whole building in which to run their artistic programme. They receive a small proportion of the bar revenue in order to pay bar staff and do not have money left over to fund artistic activities. This is very different from the common model of theatres with attached bars, pubs, or clubs, in which these activities subsidise the artistic programme.[114] Marlborough Production's situation highlights the difficulty of venues that do not own or have a secure relationship with their space, and whose tenancy serves the financial interests of their host. They have had similar difficulty seeking private funding from trusts and foundations, which are, like public funding sources, very competitive.]ps[similarly rely on a mix of grants and earned income, though Bean admits that in their current form and space in Folkestone, 'in terms of programming, we're really dependent on Arts Council money', due to the expense of working with international artists. However, in the past they have raised money through commercial uses of their space, their 'main cost and our main way of generating income'.[115] In their first building in Hackney Wick, London, they set up an organisation to deal with venue hires, photoshoots, and parties. The revenue from these activities covered their programming costs and rent, and they did not get public funding until their third year.

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[113] Greer, 'Funding resilience', op. cit., p. 230.
[114] This was the financial model of The Arches in Glasgow before it closed, as well as the model of the Birmingham Hippodrome. See The Newsroom, 'Glasgow's The Arches goes into administration' *The Scotsman*, 10/6/2015 [https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/glasgows-arches-goes-administration-1502804], and Stephen Hetherington, *The Interdependence of Public and Private Finance in British Theatre* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2015) [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/IPPF_report_final.pdf].
[115] Bean, Skype interview, op. cit.

Their model has slightly changed with the move to Folkestone, with less demand for the space for parties or photoshoots, but they still hire the space out for rehearsals, residency space, and as accommodation on Airbnb. As well as earning some income from these activities,]ps[have also sought to improve their private fundraising activities. LAB have developed income from their commercial activities in line with the mixed-economy model, but their ability to do so is dependent on having low costs due to paying little or no rent. Income is earned from the space through event hires and bar revenue. LAB also have some income from private funding, through small donations from their community. They have a membership scheme and a studio subscribers' scheme, through which artists or producers are able to hire a workspace. Spread across income from multiple sources, LAB's model is somewhat stable, but is dependent on their continued access to the space in which they work at below-market rent, a situation which is by no means guaranteed in the longer term. These case studies demonstrate that the mixed economies model can have some success, but that it is precarious and contingent on specific circumstances.

Austerity arts cuts exacerbated an already precarious arts funding structure, impacting small, grassroots organisations and compounding the forms of economic insecurity they already experienced. As I outlined in the Introduction, the uneven impact of these measures betrays a bias towards large organisations and traditional art forms. This results in precarious organisations who struggle to make long term plans that would allow them to support their communities more effectively. Matt Allen of LAB notes that they had only recently, at time of interview, been able to begin long-term planning: 'we've only very recently started thinking about where we're gonna be in five years'. Even when organisations are successful in securing funding, it comes with challenges. Marlborough Productions successful application for Elevate funding was described by Sheppeard as a 'ski jump into being an NPO organisation, but then we didn't get NPO. And all of a sudden, we'd had this kind of expanded staff team, and then all the money ran out.' Though this grant was designed to build organisational resilience, it is a one-off injection of funds rather than sustainable support.

This inconsistent support exists in a wider funding culture where organisations are expected to continue the same rate of activity on less money. Sheppeard reports funding bids for the Marlborough being repeatedly turned down and being told to reduce the amount of money requested, removing 'the core support […] for us as an organisation - for our organisational development that would run parallel with delivering that project'. Funding bids are cut down to the 'bare essentials', which leaves venues overstretched, with the money to deliver projects but not to reflect on them, make long-term plans, or develop as an organisation. This lack of core support impacts such groups' ability to care for themselves, increasing the likelihood of overwork, self-exploitation and burnout. It also makes it more difficult for them to support and care for artists, with less time and money to extend their practice beyond their own immediate needs – a concern which will be key for the next chapter. This inability to

make long-term plans is what roots these collective practices in what De Certeau describes as tactical rather than strategic action, and limits their ability to take up secure positions in the field.

The reduction in core support for these venues matters because organisations like these perform an essential role in the performance infrastructure: innovating new ideas and models and supporting unsupported and marginalised communities. These organisations emerge out of the communities they seek to support, remain in contact with these communities, and have personal experience which, at least by their reckoning, allows them to support these communities more effectively than established institutions and venues. All three of the case studies are queer- and artist-led, meaning they have a greater understanding of, and social proximity to, these communities. Sweet of LAB affirms the merit in artists leading organisations and initiatives, in saying that 'their experience of being an artist means that the kind of organisations they run are a lot more fit for purpose', because they know how to listen to artists and know what they need from personal experience. Larger institutions are rarely run by practicing artists. The administration required by larger organisations, the solidified structures and practices, means they can be less responsive to the changing needs of their communities. Sheppeard is concerned that there seems to be no route to regular funding for building-based organisations now, 'which means we're stuck with the ones we've got'. For Sheppeard, the 'political moment that we're in around identity and about intersectionality is not reflected in building based organisations around this country', and 'that's where these DIY spaces do something really important and vital'. Sheppeard here links DIY spaces, which are often artist-led, with emergence from, or responsiveness to, marginalised communities. Artist-run, collective, and grassroots organisations may be better at supporting these communities and their practices, being in closer contact with them. Inadequate and inconsistent support for these smaller organisations means less engagement with, and from, marginalised communities, and less innovation in organisational and artistic form.

The insecurity of the mixed model is reflected in this chapter's case studies, who have struggled to secure funding from other sources. Bean notes that they did some fundraising training and hired a fundraiser 'to try and expand beyond the arts council for funding […] but we just don't have the experience or the contacts to get very far with it.' At the time of my first interview with Bean she admitted that 'it still hasn't gone us very far', their only successful funding thus far being the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme. Bean says that despite spending a lot of time on these activities 'it's just not worth it if we don't get any actual cash out at the end of it', making their efforts unpaid, loss-making activities. The pressure to fundraise has resulted in increased financial risk for this organisation, with many hours of unpaid labour and no guaranteed results. This illustrates a broader sectoral issue. In their 'ArtsPay: Annual Survey 2018', arts professional found that unpaid work was very common, and that 'Senior staff in smaller organisations are particularly badly affected', with 'applying for funding' being one of the reasons cited for overwork. One respondent also noted that they found themselves working

double or quadruple their contracted hours on Creative Scotland funded projects. Another said that the funding application procedures encourage them to underestimate the time and money needed, saying that 'Submitting a realistic budget would inevitably mean the proposal would be rejected', in an echo of the dynamic noted by Sheppeard above. Though the report includes commitments from all UK national funding bodies to fair pay and minimum rates, the structures and practices of arts funding make this impossible, including, as the summary of the report notes, the attachment of 'unrealistic reporting and monitoring conditions to their grant funding, adding to the time pressures facing smaller organisations.'[116] These requirements disproportionately affect smaller and less-established organisations, who not only tend to have more short-term funding arrangements, necessitating more frequent applications, are also less likely to have the staff to complete this administrative labour paid and within their contracted hours.

This funding environment results in significant pressure on artist- and collectively-run venues to change their organisational form or practices. Of the three case studies discussed in this chapter, two, Marlborough Productions and LAB, have moved away from artist-run and collective forms. Sheppeard notes that the commercial side of their activities, and the complex financial context of the building, has 'made it more difficult for us to function as an artist-led collective'. This is because collective practices often require the consultation and agreement of the whole group, something which might improve the quality of the work but which makes it slower. Further, funding requires individuals to name themselves as being responsible for funds or for particular roles, imposing an institutional model. Sheppeard notes that as they have grown as an organisation, received more funding and more responsibility, it has been harder to 'maintain that gang mentality' and sense of queer kinship and tribalism which was an initial influence in their practices. He says 'to literally manage that money, there has to be somebody that's responsible and somebody that's more responsible than everybody else. [..] when you're managing 200 grand […] the level of accountability is really different. And I think that's something that's hard to maintain as a collective.' This has resulted in the loss of what Sheppeard calls their 'loosey-goosey, hippy-dippy, come to the Marlborough we've got no expectations of you' attitude, which 'is part of the strength of what we've done artistically in the way that we've supported artists'. As organisations grow in formality, investment and responsibility, though they may find it easier to attract funding, collectivity can be lost, and with it a central part of their practices, which may reduce their ability to enact the egalitarian politics with which these forms are associated, and may impact the way they work with artists and welcome audiences. In this way the spatial and economic logics of neoliberalism and austerity run counter to the spatial and organisational practices of collectives. I will expand on the qualities and affects of the space produced by the organisers later, but

[116] Liz Hill, 'Exploitation rife as unpaid work subsidises the arts', *Arts Professional,* 8/2/2018 [https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exploitation-rife-unpaid-work-subsidises-arts] [accessed 14/12/2021].

in Sheppeard's example we can see how economic pressures may jeopardise the welcoming and supportive nature of the space.

The pressure to formalize or adopt more business-like models was felt by all the venues, and it is important to emphasise the felt aspect to this: it is communicated through affects of competition, pressure, and fear. I will expand on affect using Sara Ahmed's work in the next chapter, but these affects orient groups away from collective and artist-run forms, which are felt or perceived as 'frivolous' in Sheppeard's account, towards forms which are felt or perceived to be more secure, whether this is true materially or not.]ps[experienced pressure to be more like a business and to fundraise, with mixed results; and LAB found it necessary to legitimize and formalize their company structure in order to receive regular funding. Rather than making organisations more resilient, secure, and sustainable, in these cases it increases risk, precarity and competition. This competition, rather than stimulating innovative new business models and practices, is profoundly conservative. Sheppeard describes a 'competitive state that we are forced into with other organisations who in another time would have been our obvious collaborators' which 'comes out of the austerity agenda'. Richard Sennett examined the tendency of neoliberal competition to result in hoarding information which stifled progress among technology firms.[117] In a similar way, the competition among arts organisations results in a lack of communication and collaboration which may stifle their ability to support themselves, each other, and the sector as a whole.

Shifting practices in response to neoliberal pressures may have wider, political consequences. Victoria D. Alexander, following the model of Bourdieu, argues that the supported arts sector in the UK has moved from the relatively autonomous sector of the field of cultural production to become 'more heteronomous, due to the penetration by the state.' She argues that this threatens the arts sector's ability to function 'relatively autonomously from the market *and* from political influence, to produce art for both public good and private distinction.' The adoption of different structures may be a mere formality to these groups, but Alexander argues that 'the superficial changes needed to fit an art gallery or an opera company to the neoliberal state have profound consequences' such as reducing 'resistance at the same time as it legitimates the neoliberal philosophy through the diffusion of its practices.'[118] Though these organisations are often profoundly aware of the deleterious impacts of austerity, the influence of the state or the bureaucratic field on the field of cultural production, neoliberal austerity, and the precarious practices that come with it, result in individuals and organisations who have little time, money, or energy to question government policies. It also produces the conditions antithetical to both collective and collaborative organisations and a sustainable arts sector: competition, isolationism,

[117] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008) p. 33.
[118] Victoria D. Alexander, 'Heteronomy in the arts field: state funding and British arts organisations', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 69, 2018, pp. 23-43 [https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12283].

and exploitation. These conditions are actively discouraging of resilience in favour of short-term savings. In order to support organisational models which are more responsive and engaging to underserved communities, and to enact structural change, funding bodies need to provide secure, consistent funding to new organisational models and grassroots, collective and artist-run organisations.

Precarious Spaces: Permanence & Fluidity

As a result of the economic precarity described in the previous section, space too becomes precarious. In this section I argue that in response to multiple levels of precarity, these groups attempt to produce material and affective spaces of security. These spaces are for specific, precarious communities, as I examine in the final section, and they seek to oppose and reverse the logics and practices of neoliberal austerity and can be described as what Lefebvre calls 'counter-spaces'. In order to examine how these groups produce spaces of security in conditions of precarity, I outline the material impacts of austerity on space and look at the complex relationship between permanence and fluidity in the practices of these groups. I show how a turn to physical space can be an attempt to find a sense of permanence in fluid conditions, and yet in doing so these groups are still beset by insecurity and fluidity, some of which is at least partially desired. Space is the central focus of the case studies' activities, at once their biggest cost and resource. Space to develop or present work is their offer to artists, and space to gather and see performance around others is their offer to audiences. Venues seek to be solid and reliable to the artists, art forms, and communities with whom they work; existing in a space over a long period of time, developing lasting relationships and projects which offer a point of continuity in changeable times. These practices exist in the context of multiple layers of fluid, impermanent or mobile conditions and practices: the ephemerality of performance as an artistic form, the necessity of movement and mobility as an artist or cultural worker, particularly in performance, and, more broadly, the precarious austere neoliberal production of space.

Following Lefebvre's argument that each mode of production produces its own space, and space thus produced is expressive of ideology, space becomes insecure in economic and political conditions of insecurity, susceptible to being bought and sold, changing function or occupier rapidly, as a consequence of the neoliberal property market. Space is impacted from two directions. On the one hand, rising rents and property prices make renting and owning a space harder. On the other hand, reductions in wages, salaries, and government spending, reduce the resources available to own, rent and maintain space. [119] As I covered in the introduction, austerity prompted councils to sell off

[119] For rising rents see Office for National Statistics, 'Index of Private Housing Rental Prices, UK: May 2021' [https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/may2021#uk-private-rental-prices], Fig. 2. Data also shows stagnating or real-terms reductions in average earnings, see Full Fact, 'How have wages changed over the past decade?', 1/11/2018 [https://fullfact.org/economy/how-have-wages-changed/], both accessed [16/11/2021].

thousands of public spaces to plug budget shortfalls. The result of this is that there is less publicly-owned space to be used by communities, and private space is increasingly scarce and expensive. Non-profitable space, and non-profitable activities, are severely reduced. Space, like the neoliberal subject, becomes something fluid and flexible, which must adapt to the forces of capital, and maximise efficiency.[120] In this context of a weakening or pressurizing of space, the venues directly intervene in the lacks produced by neoliberal austerity while remaining susceptible to its conditions.

Collective and artist-run venues turn to physical space to provide supportive infrastructure for marginal performance practices that would otherwise be unsupported. I use the term infrastructure here as informed by Bourdieu's notion of field, to refer to the subsection of the field of cultural production that supports these practices: permanent physical venues, organisations, funding categories, opportunities, and networks.[121] In referring to these supportive relations that exist within the marginal and marginalised practices of live art and experimental performance, I make the argument that agents are not solely in competition with each other in the field, that they also support each other and work together for the continued existence of the field to which these practices correspond. These venues provide a point of continuity in the field, a place where artists working within that form might expect to find support and opportunities to develop and present their work. This practice of supporting marginal or marginalised practices is significantly influenced by the strategic infrastructural practices of live art, and is influenced by LADA's definition of live art as a 'a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts.'[122] Making space for these practices involves diverse activities: advocating for funding, creating and supporting opportunities to perform, network, collaborate and train, and providing material support and informal advice to other live art organisations and venues. Marlborough Productions,]ps[, and LAB are a part of live art's infrastructure, and are all members of the LADA-initiated, Live Art UK network of organisations, and of the 'Independents' sub-group of non-regularly funded organisations. Live Art UK is a 'national network, supporting and developing the Live Art infrastructure for the benefit of artists, presenters and audiences.'[123] Part of each case study's practice is to provide and support this professional sectoral infrastructure, and these networks are one of the ways in which their efforts to provide support and security for experimental practices have wider impacts.

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[120] For the flexible, entrepreneurial neoliberal subject, see Foucault, op. cit., and Lorey, op. cit.
[121] This concern with supportive network and infrastructures draws on the work of Jennie Klein, op. cit., and Graham Saunders, 'The Freak's Roll Call', op. cit.
[122] LADA website, 'What is Live Art?', [https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about-lada/what-is-live-art/] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[123] Live art UK website, [liveartuk.org] [accessed 08/02/2021].

In the context of the reduction in, and inequality of, arts subsidy as part of austerity, these artist-run or collective venues seek to provide something missing in the existing artistic infrastructure, whether this is dedicated venues, opportunities, support, or funding for specific practices. Marlborough Productions intervenes in the context of there being little specific infrastructure for LGBT and queer people in the UK, that which exists being in commercial spaces, and the closure of a disproportionately large share of LGBT and queer community venues. A report found that 'Since 2006, the number of LGBTQ+ venues in London has fallen from 121 to 51, a net loss of 58% of venues', compared to 'drops of 44% in UK nightclubs (2005–2015), 35% in London grassroots venues (2007–2016) and 25% in UK pubs (2001–2016).' Their data also suggested 'a lack of provision of LGBTQ+ venues or spaces serving women, trans, non-binary and Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) communities.' More qualitatively, it also reported that 'Anxiety and other negative emotional consequences of venue closures were consistently expressed in strong terms', and that the 'most valued LGBTQ+ spaces were experienced as non-judgemental places in which diverse gender identities and sexualities are affirmed, accepted and respected […] sometimes described as 'safe spaces''.[124] These spaces are important for their value to queer people, and also for their role in supporting queer culture and performance. Research carried out by Stonewall found that 'One in six LGBT people (17 per cent) who visited a café, restaurant, bar or nightclub in the last 12 months have been discriminated against based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity'. This study also found that 'One in five LGBT people (21 per cent) have experienced a hate crime or incident due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the last 12 months', a figure which rises to two in five when just trans people are considered, and a third (34%), for Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.[125] LGBT-only spaces are still needed and valued by those who use them, as spaces to be free from these experiences.

Marlborough Productions are committed to ameliorating this precarity and disappearance of queer space, by building queer performance infrastructure, through running the venue, but also through *New Queers on the Block*, a project that attempts to build a national touring network for queer work.]ps[are motivated first and foremost to platform performance art; they described themselves when they formed 'as the UK's only performance art specific studio and exhibition space.'[126] This, again, takes place in a context where, in part due to the difficult economic conditions, venues and contexts which support experimental practice are threatened and disappearing, and existing programming became more conservative and risk averse.[127] It is also an arts infrastructure where there are few venues

[124] Campkin and Marshall, op. cit.
[125] Stonewall, *LGBT in Britain – Hate Crime and Discrimination,* 'Key Findings', September 2017 [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-britain-hate-crime-and-discrimination] [accessed 02/09/2022].
[126]]ps[website, [https://www.performancespace.org/aboutps] [accessed 17/09/20].
[127] See, for example, the closure of The Arches in Glasgow, greenroom in Manchester, the closure of New Moves International, later the shift of festivals Buzzcut and Forest Fringe away from their regular festival format, the

dedicated to live art, performance art, and other experimental performance practices in the first place. LAB say that they began in response to 'the lack of space and provision for people working in live art in the region [Leeds and the North of England]'.[128] Though there is an abundance of empty physical space in disused buildings in Leeds, 'the capacity to support it and the financial backing' is not there, and 'the support for independent artists and more experimental stuff doesn't really exist that much in the north in general'.[129] LAB provide support and provision for live art in Leeds and in the wider-region, and advocate for it nationally.

As well as these roles in the infrastructure, physical buildings are felt by my research participants to provide a sense of permanence and security in insecure and precarious conditions. Bean of]ps[relates the group's initial motivations to a desire for 'permanent space within a very fluid life', describing transient and mobile conditions such as living in a van on her part, or in squats in the case of other artists involved.[130] Sebastian explicitly links the formation of]ps[to the Occupy Movement and 'this energy that people wanted to take to reclaim space [...] that space was theirs but was being taken away from them and eroded.' This locates their practices of running a venue as a response to the removal and pressurization of space as part of austerity, and broader processes of the erosion of public space through private ownership, something particularly prevalent in London, but happening all over the UK.[131] In this context, turning to renting or owning physical space and opening a venue for specific communities seeks to address this immediate problem, and support underserved practices and marginalised communities. While these spaces remain privately owned and therefore remain complicit with the pressures of the neoliberal property market, they provide support and space for critique of dominant political and economic practices. For David Sheppeard of Marlborough Productions, his turn to physical space is both personal and political. He says, in response to a question about his attachment to the building: 'I think it's a feeling of my own queer identity and wanting to feel security and safety around the physical space.' These organisations turn to physical space for various reasons: the insecure conditions of neoliberalism, economic insecurity, fluidity as a lifestyle choice, or insecurity as a result of marginalised identity. I return to the latter factor in the final part of this chapter.

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move of SPILL festival to a biennial festival, and the shift of venues such as Battersea Arts Centre away from supporting experimental practices towards more family-friendly programming with wider popular appeal, all of which happened within the timeframe of this thesis.

[128] Allen, op. cit.

[129] Sweet, op. cit.

[130] Bean, interview with the author, 05/07/2019.

[131] Jack Shenker, 'Revealed: the insidious creep of pseudo-public space in London', *The Guardian*, 24/7/2017 [https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jul/24/revealed-pseudo-public-space-pops-london-investigation-map] [accessed 05/12/20022] and Els Leclercq & Dorina Pojani (2021) 'Public space privatisation: are users concerned?', *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* [DOI: 10.1080/17549175.2021.1933572].

While these groups turn to physical space for security, the spaces themselves, and their relationships with them, are precarious. This is evidenced to some degree by the fact that two out of three organisations have left their physical spaces to become mobile organisations. As I go on to discuss, these are choices, but they are choices influenced by the difficulty and precarity of managing physical space in the specific conditions of neoliberal austerity in the UK. The Marlborough as a building under Marlborough Productions was complex in terms of ownership and management. The building was owned by a private landlord who was the freeholder, and the leaseholder was a commercial pub company, who have a 15-year lease on the building. Marlborough Productions had a management agreement with the company, so they were 'like a franchisee of the pub company'. However, as Sheppeard notes: 'our management agreement gives us no security of tenure, they could literally kick us out tomorrow.' Further, 'that management agreement only works because we make money for the pub. And if we didn't make money for the pub, it starts to get shaky' – showing a clear link between financial and spatial precarity. LAB likewise exist in precarious spaces, accessing them through temporary space programmes. These programmes seek out empty business premises and persuade owners to allow artists and artist groups to use them as studios, workplaces, or venues. [132] In exchange, owners apply for up to 80% reduction in business rates, which have to be paid as normal if the property is empty longer than three months.[133] At time of interview, the organisation would have to move out with three months' notice, if anyone wanted to rent the building, though Sweet is 'pretty confident in the space because it's not really fit for purpose - no one really wants to rent it.' This is, of course, a mixed blessing, as the pair are all too aware. Their access to their space remains insecure, particularly in the context of gentrification and development happening all around the building in Leeds, and their rent and costs are increasing. This necessitates an increased income to match these increased costs.]ps[have achieved some stability with their move to Folkestone, but their early years in London took place in precarious spaces. Their first space, in Hackney Wick, was lost in part due to the rapid regeneration and gentrification which followed the area being named the site of the London 2012 Olympic games.[134] This follows a familiar pattern of gentrification, in which artists move to a cheaper area for affordable rents and studio spaces, the area becomes more desirable, in part due to their presence, and they are forced out by rising rents, along with those on low-incomes, or from marginalised identities. Gentrification is one of the ways in which space is made precarious under

[132] East Street Arts website, 'Home' [https://www.eaststreetarts.org.uk/] [accessed 6/1/2020].
[133] See gov.uk, 'Business Rate Relief' [https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/charitable-rate-relief] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[134] See Juliet Davis, 'The making and remaking of Hackney Wick, 1870–2014: from urban edgeland to Olympic fringe', *Planning Perspectives*, 31:3, 2016, pp. 425-457.

neoliberal practices, and collective and artist-run venues are caught within, and to some extent complicit with, this process, particularly under the guise of arts- or culture-led regeneration.[135]

The precariousness of these spaces can be expanded upon by returning to Lefebvre and the nature of the spatial practices of these groups. The practices of these venues are oppositional – they identify problems within the existing field and existing institutions, and seek to do something different. In these cases, they respond to a lack of respresentation or inclusion of radical or maginal practices, and marginalised communities, as I examine in the final section. In response to this exclusion, and in response to the ways in which these institutional spaces are inscribed with the principles of neoliberalism, these venues produce what Lefebvre calls 'counter-spaces', which are in some way expressive of a counter-culture or an alternative society. He writes that 'a counter-space can insert itself into spatial reality: […] against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power, against the endless expansion of the "private" and of industrial profitability'.[136] We can see in this description the resistance to the primacy of the economic, and the imperative for space to be profitable; in response, these venues are spaces of community relation and enjoyment. To assert the importance of space for community use is to subvert the spatial practice of neoliberal austerity in the UK.

The DIY nature of these venues, and their lack of access to resources, means they must operate on the level of tactics and in spaces which are not designed to be art and performance spaces. These are what Lefebvre calls 'diversions', or occupying spaces which have outlived their original use.]ps[began by occupying warehouses, now a shopfront, LAB an old flooring shop, Marlborough Productions an inn – though this is admittedly a long-term diversion of the building into a pub and theatre. These diversions are commonplace; many of these buildings have passed through multiple functions before being used as performance spaces, as part of the precarious nature of space under neoliberalism, where space changes hands quickly, and must be converted by the demands of capital. Despite their temporary nature, Lefebvre writes that these diversions are 'of great significance, for they can teach us much about the production of new spaces.'[137] In the cases of these venues, they teach us about the needs of artists and communities which are unmet by existing institutions, and provide alternative organisation models of venues. These venues offer affects of security while remaining flexible and responsive to new opportunities and the needs of the communities with whom they work. Tactical action, as described by De Certeau, is 'a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. […] The space of the tactic is the space of the other.'[138] By seeking to support practices

[135] See, for example, Stuart Cameron & Jon Coaffee, 'Art, Gentrification and Regeneration - From Artist as Pioneer to Public Arts', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 5:1, 2005, pp. 39–58.
[136] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 382.
[137] Ibid., p. 167.
[138] De Certeau, op. cit., p. 37.

and communities of otherness and alterity, as we shall see in the next section, it is an 'art of the weak', but these tactics are necessary to create space, no matter how temporary, for that which is excluded from mainstream institutions. Extending Lefebvre's work on counter-spaces and diversions, and De Certeau's on tactics, we can see here how the spatial precarity of neoliberal austerity can be tactically used to rework and resist its spatial practice. Buildings are frequently left empty under neoliberal austerity, creating unprecedented opportunity to divert them to uses which call into question the principles of profitability and exchange on which space is produced. In doing so, these venues create small shifts and changes in the wider arts infrastructure and spatial practice of the UK.

Collective and artist-run venues are caught in a tension between the desire to provide permanence amid the insecurity and fluidity of neoliberalism, and their valorisation of the fluid and ephemeral as an aesthetic, political practice, or a necessity of their organisational practice. Fluidity is at once chosen and forced upon these venues. These groups produce and occupy spaces as refuges from austere neoliberal conditions, as part of wider cultural traditions of alternative uses of space. Artists participate in alternative living arrangements like squatting or living in a van as both a choice and an economic necessity, speaking to conflicting desires for freedom and autonomy on the one hand, and permanence and security on the other. When I asked the two co-directors of]ps[if the fluidity and mobility they describe was chosen or forced upon them, positive or negative, Sebastian and Bean answered 'both' and 'both and everything and all of it', respectively. Scholars Bernadette Loacker and Martyna Śliwa, in an analysis of academics and theatrical artists, 'occupations that for a long time have been characterised by mobility', a mobility which exists '"in between" choice and necessity, and privilege and disadvantage with regard to movement.' They show that both professions 'engage in mobility to secure, maintain or improve their professional and economic position'. This mobility is at once a structural necessity and a choice for theatrical artists: they declare 'a strong commitment to mobility as their chosen ethical ideal while acknowledging that they submit to it as a demand that stems from the conditions underpinning their work and life.'[139] De Certeau writes that tactics have mobility, 'but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers.'[140] Mobility then is a tactical choice on the part of artists and venues in the field of live art and experimental performance: it means they can adapt to new conditions and take advantage of new opportunities.]ps[for instance, moved to Folkestone and made use of new funding opportunities from Kent County Council, as we saw above. As De Certeau's account suggests however, this mobility is compromised and

[139] Bernadette Loacker and Martyna Śliwa, '"Moving to stay in the same place?" Academics and theatrical artists as exemplars of the "mobile middle."', *Organisation*, 23:5, 2016, pp. 657-679 [doi:10.1177/1350508415598247].
[140] De Certeau, op. cit., p. 35-36.

compromising; they must make use of the possibilities of austere neoliberalism, and in doing so, are defined by it.

This tension between necessity and choice can be further understood by elaborating on Bourdieu's concept of the space of possibles, or the finite set of possibilities for action in any given field. This conditions the possibilities of artists making a performance, as well as producers and venues. In both cases 'absolute freedom' as a result of 'creative spontaneity' is not possible. Rather, entering into a field of cultural production 'consists essentially of the acquisition of a *specific* code of conduct and expression, […] to discover the finite universe of *freedom under constraints* and *objective potentialities* which it offers: problems to resolve, stylistic or thematic possibilities to exploit, contradictions to overcome, even revolutionary ruptures to effect [original emphasis].'[141] In this case, the necessity of mobility for artists, the tension between permanence and fluidity, and the ephemerality of performance as a medium, are all objective potentialities to which these venues respond. We can use this to understand mobility, whether of an artist or an organisation, as a free choice within the constraints of the field. Further, though they might seek to provide permanence in response to mobility, this permanence is limited by their own desire for mobility or change, as well as the constraints of the field, and the difficulty of retaining a permanent physical space.

This tension is exemplified by]ps[']s practices. Choosing mobility and choosing permanence are at one and the same time choices made with agency, out of desire for the autonomy and flexibility these living conditions afford, as well as choices made within constrained circumstances due to the conditions of cities like London, wider economic conditions, and the institutional practices of performance art. For Bean, though she 'moved to London in a van' as it was 'the easiest way I could move to that city and stay in that city', she remarks that now she has a permanent space, she is 'just desperate to have a van. […] it's a balance between the two things because there's also a definite desire for that kind of movement.'[142] Sebastian further connects this desire for movement to the ephemerality, politics and practices of performance art. They say that 'the ephemeral nature of performance art lends itself to models that are more mobile and more fluid.' Ephemerality is a common aesthetic and formal feature of the medium of performance art, and Sebastian says that 'there was a desire for a lot of people to inscribe that into their way of living'. This ephemerality is also practical and sectoral, as performance artists tend to perform many times at festivals or short term events in multiple places, which creates 'that mobility within the nature of the work'.[143] Here, both elective and involuntary mobility mutually influence each other: artists may be drawn to performance art due to a desire to work with ideas of ephemerality and mobility and may seek to inscribe this mobility further in their way of

[141] Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, op. cit., p. 235.
[142] Bean, interview with author, 05/07/2019.
[143] Sebastian, op. cit.

living, whilst at the same time some kinds of mobility are economically necessary for artists – who often get their highest fees or can only find work through travelling to other places. The economic precarity and insecurity of the sector necessitates this movement. In their announcent that they were leaving the space,]ps[write that 'For now it makes sense to be mobile, both moving with and making the waves, but the creation of (im)permanent physical space remains at the heart of the]performance s p a c e[project.'[144] This announcement confirms the tension between permanence and impermanence in which this venues exists, and the opening of this sentence suggests that this decision is a tactical one, contingent on the conditions that make managing physical space difficult. These difficulties are caused by the spatial practices of neoliberal austerity that I have outlined.

The desire for, and necessity of, both permanence and mobility reveal the economic conditions within which they exist: insecure and precarious living and working conditions for artists, and rising house prices and rents which make home ownership more difficult. The practices of occupying permanent space reveal and tacitly critique these conditions, as part of a tradition of occupying and collectively owning permanent space that comes from squatting and DIY practice, and using it to gather, make and present performance, and politically organise. By providing physical spaces to make and present work, these venues are also seeking to remedy insecure sectoral conditions. This sits in tension with the desire for movement and the facilitation of the movement of others. Sebastian of]ps[say they act as a 'node within a network' of international, itinerant performance artists, as well as providing reliable and regular events for local artists and audiences. Within the nexus of these ideas, political, cultural, and aesthetic influences, local, national and sectoral conditions,]ps[seek to create a space that acts as a hub for performance art. Sebastian sums up their twin desires of 'giving permanence to people here, but also, […] bringing people to us.' As such,]ps[strikes a balance between permanence and fluidity which is sustainable and successful for their aims and politics. All three venues seek to provide permanence amid fluid conditions, and security to those who are most precarious within their sector: freelance artists who are marginalised by practice, race, sexuality, gender, or economic status. In doing so, they provide permanent physical space for communities as community space is dissolved by the processes of austerity and neoliberalism. At the same time, queer communities, communities of colour or alternative subcultures, are often in flux, or in continual process of becoming. These communities require flexible and fluid modes of community engagement and may benefit from the flexibility and immediacy of the medium of performance, and the responsive nature of artist-run, collective venues, as I examine in the next section.

[144]]ps[website, 'Tidings: February 2022' [https://performancespace.org/tidings-statement-2022] [accessed 05/12/2022].

Precarious Communities: Safety and Risk

In the preceding two sections, I have shown how these venues create economic models and spaces of affective and material security in precarious conditions. These spaces and practices are geared towards the creation of safe and secure spaces for marginal practices and marginalised communities. In doing so, they must navigate the multiple forms of risk that adhere to these communities in precarious economic times. This section examines these various forms of risk, and the forms of safety they offer in response. This section mobilizes two of Lorey's dimensions of the precarious. Marginal live art and experimental performance practices relate to Lorey's notion, following Butler, of precariousness as the 'socio-ontological dimension of lives and bodies […] an endangerment of bodies that is ineluctable and hence not to be secured, not only because they are mortal, but specifically because they are social.'[145] This dimension of the precarious refers to generalized risk due to mortality and interdependence – in order to survive we must rely on others. The transience of performance relates to the transience of life, and performance which specifically draws attention to the vulnerability of the body foregrounds precariousness.[146] Though, as Lorey notes, this precariousness cannot be resisted, performance practices can also draw attention to our social interdependence and how our relative safety is collectively assured. The second dimension, precarity, which she relates to inequality, is 'the hierarchization of being-with that accompanies the processes of *othering.* This dimension of the precarious covers naturalized relations of domination, through which belonging to a group is attributed or denied to individuals.'[147] In this sense, one's security or precarity is related to ideas of belonging in which the case studies are directly implicated. In running venues for specific marginalised artists, art forms, and communities, they seek to redress austere and neoliberal structures of marginalisation and exclusion which impact access to, or ones need for, security or material support. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre and Ahmed I show in this section how these venues produce affective counter-spaces of safety and security for those that experience disproportionate risk. I use Ahmed's work particularly in interrogating the affects produced in these spaces, for and by these communities. Through examing this in the context of various different types of risk, I seek not only to show how these venues seek to provide safety from risk, but also how they seek to provide safety *and* risk and safety *in* risk – safe spaces in which to engage in the aesthetically and performatively risky practices which emerge from the social and ontological insecurity of marginalised existence.

[145] Isabell Lorey, op. cit., p. 12.
[146] See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance,* (London: Routledge, 1993), and studies in live art and performance which frequently link to precariousness and precarity: Chatzichristodoulou, op. cit., and Maddy Costa and Andy Field, *Performance in an Age of Precarity: 40 Reflections,* (London: Methuen Drama, 2021).
[147] Lorey, op. cit., p. 12.

In providing spaces focused on specific identities, the venues provide spaces of relative safety and insulation from risk. The link between identity, community and space has been well established. In his examination of the 'new social movements' beginning in the 1960s and spanning across subsequent decades, Kevin Hetherington explored the relationship between identity, space, performance, and politics. He establishes that 'Identity formation as a process of identification is a spatially situated process […] about creating symbolic spaces rather than always adopting established ones.'[148] Hetherington's study, taking into account elective collective identifications, identity politics of immutable social categories, and what has been called 'fictive kinship', has implications for the community-building and hosting strategies of the groups discussed in this chapter. All three organisations display an intense awareness of this relationship between space, identity and community. All three venues describe themselves as a home: The Marlborough calls itself 'Brighton's home for queer art and culture',]ps[says it 'has always strived to act as a hub or home to national and international artists in transit', and LAB called itself a 'home for Live Art in Leeds'.[149] Despite the precariousness of these spaces I outlined above, they seek to provide affective security and comfort for those usually denied it in public spaces.

All the spaces, to a greater or lesser extent, seek to provide space for LGBT or queer identities. Though Marlborough Productions is the only one to explicitly identify as queer, both]PS[and LAB are queer-led, programme queer artists, and are influenced by queer practices and ideas. Venues are important for LGBT and queer communities. Social Geographer Gill Valentine writes that 'sexual and spatial identities are mutually constituted. Sexual identities depend to some extent on particular spaces for their production […] In turn, space is also produced through the performance of identities.'[150] The idea of a venue being a 'home' is one that echoes ideas of queer kinship, in which queers form their own familial groups out of queer friends, and homes out of queer venues. These familial groups are porous and multiple and may be said to form the totality of what is referred to as a community, and these groups and spaces are formed in opposition to, or as refuges from, heteronormative society, and its institutions and spaces which may exclude queers. This is a view complicated by Kath Weston who writes, 'Gay community can best be understood not as a unified subculture, but rather as a category implicated in the ways lesbians and gay men have developed collective identities, organised urban space, and conceptualized their significant relationships.' Weston is keen to disavow the assumption of an 'uncomplicated relationship between claiming an identity and feeling a sense of belonging or

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[148] Kevin Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1998) p. 17.
[149] These are all from the groups' respective websites: Marlborough Productions [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/],]ps[, 'About' [https://www.performancespace.org/aboutps1], LAB Archive, CLAY website, [https://clayleeds.wixsite.com/liveartbistro] [accessed 08/02/2021].
[150] Gill Valentine, *Social Geographies: Space and Society* (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 222.

community.'[151] It is important to note, that though I argue for the potential of these spaces to provide belonging and community, that these are not inevitable or universal effects. Nevertheless, there remain significant subcultures of queers and intersecting identities who experience exclusion from mainstream society and who use queer venues for the formation and maintenance of queer kinship bonds, and for the performance, recognition, and reproduction of queer identities and communities.

Marlborough Productions see part of their role as providing these alternative spaces in which queers can perform their identities, relate to each other, and maintain and reproduce their communities. Sheppeard says that they feel a 'social responsibility […] running the Marlborough as one of the only queer spaces in the city, and one of the trans inclusive spaces'. This commitment to queer culture and people has been with Marlborough Productions for many years. Sheppeard describes visiting Brighton Pride with Elmoutawakil as a 'coalescing moment in terms of our vision', because they thought 'it was really shit', and that 'there was no interesting queer culture happening in the city.' Pride events, particularly those that are well-established or in large cities, are frequently criticized for being commercial, expensive, dominated by specific sectors of the community, and for their enforced, uncritical positivity.[152] This is part of a wider issue in which the resources, visibility, rights and liberation won as part of the LGBTQ movement are disproportionately given to those least marginalised in this diverse community, namely white, middle-class, cis, able-bodied, gay men who have assimilated into wider heterosexual society. Such unequal processes have long been a part of the lesbian, gay and queer movements. In reference to activist organisation Queer Nation in 1990s US, Sue-Ellen Case argues that the word queer 'reinstates the dominant social structures, lending its power to those who are already vested in the system'.[153] Michael Warner attributes this to the fact that in 'the lesbian and gay movement the available institutions of culture-building have been market-mediated', which 'has meant that the institutions of queer culture have been dominated by those with capital: typically, middle-class white men.'[154] This has ramifications for the groups discussed in this chapter: they seek to provide a safe refuge from oppression and exclusion, which is exacerbated by the market-principles of neoliberalism and austerity, while still existing within these market structures, and remaining at least in part commercial spaces and entities. This is why these artist-run and collective venues exist in tension between the ideals of inclusion and equality they promote, and the structures they rely on for their existence. This is, at one and the same time, a tension between the local principles

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[151] Kath Weston, *Families We Choose, Gays, Lesbians, and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) p. 401.
[152] See for example, Catherine Silverstone, 'Duckie's Gay Shame: Critiquing Pride and Selling Shame in Club Performance', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22:1, 2012 [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10486801.2011.645234].
[153] Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminist and Queer Performance* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 62-3.
[154] Michael Warner, 'Introduction', *Fear of a Queer Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. *vii-xxxi*, p. *xxii.*

of the field of live art and experimental performance, and those of the wider neoliberal field of power to which it is heteronomous.

In response to the issue of inequalities within LGBTQ communities, Marlborough Productions seeks to provide support, space, resources, and performance for those most marginalised within these communities: queers, trans people, people of colour, working-class and disabled people. The desire to provide this queer space is linked to a perceived lack of such space in the local area and in the country, as he says, 'there is so little infrastructure in this country that is earmarked for queer people'. Sheppeard asserts the need for 'a space for people to coalesce around'. This desire to provide a space for queers to gather and relate is made clear in the discourse of Marlborough Production's projects, which often include the word queer in the title, such as *Young, Queer and Skint,* in 2017, or *Queer Migrant Takeover* in 2018.[155] As is also suggested by these titles, their community or artistic projects focus on how queerness intersects with other marginalised identities, often working with 'queer artists of color and prioritizing supporting those projects and those practices'.[156] Their project *Radical Rhizomes,* social gatherings for QTIPOC, makes it clear that they do not only seek to support queer artists of colour, but also seek to build these communities in their audiences and those who live in their local area. Anonymous testimonials on the project listed on Marlborough Production's website frequently reference community, that these events enabled users to 'connect with other PoC', to 'feel part of a community', and one attendee notes that they 'always felt welcome. It's like home.' Further, one notes that the gatherings 'have helped me to challenge my inner shame and embrace my queer identity'.[157] These comments speak to the success of Marlborough Productions' projects in providing space and support for communities to form. As in the last testimonial, we can see that these groups can help address trauma, provide a deep sense of belonging, and allow for self-actualization, helping to mitigate the emotional, ontological and social risks of marginalisation. Through these practices, they mitigate the risks associated with unequally distributed precarity through 'processes of *othering*' in Lorey's description, through providing what Muñoz calls 'access to this network of queer belongings', or providing marginalised artists and audiences with spaces of affective safety and security.[158] Muñoz writes in the context of queer futurity, which I expand on in the final chapter.

Both LAB and]ps[also seek to support queer practices and communities.]ps[does so through its residencies and programming of work by and for queer artists and artists of colour.]ps[does not

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[155] Marlborough Productions website 'Our Projects' [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/our-projects/] [accessed 05/12/2022].
[156] Sheppeard, op. cit.
[157] Marlborough Productions website, 'Our Projects: Radical Rhizomes' [https://marlboroughproductions.org.uk/our-projects/radical-rhizomes/] [accessed 09/02/2021].
[158] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2009) p. 109.

explicitly describe itself as queer, though they do act as 'Folkestone's local ambassadors' for Marlborough Productions' *New Queers on the Block* project, which seeks to create a national touring network for queer work. Bean says that it's 'important to us that we're always platforming minority voices, so those that are generally less heard or given less space in life. So we support a lot of lgbtqia+ artists, a lot of BAME artists, a lot of women artists', claims which are reflected in their programme and evident in their website archive. Further, it might be said that the practices and ideas of]ps[are influenced by queer theories and practices. In both our interview and in their online manifesto, they emphasise performances which question or 'interrupt accepted value systems', 'that critically & physically pushes the boundaries of time, body & space' and affirms]ps[as a space for process, change and flux.[159] This manifesto also states that it is 'an open community'and that it is 'of no descript ability, race, age, gender, class, sexuality or faith', implying that, in line with their commitment to questioning and flux, they do not wish to explicitly limit themselves to any fixed identarian community. LAB places an emphasis on LGBTQ and QTIPOC communities in their programming, who they seek to support, individually or together, through performances and club nights for and by them, while seeking to provide a flexible space which supports multiple communities at once.[160] Sweet notes that 'we're quite interested in supporting things that are like very grassroots community-led that would struggle to otherwise find a home' and refers to 'all the different communities that come together to make LAB'. Sweet does however disavow the idea that they are a dedicated or permanent queer safe space. Instead, they exist to create risk, and as Sweet asks, 'how can you create a safe space in a space that then also creates risk?' This tension between safety and risk is crucial; though there may be times when they conflict, I argue that these groups seek to provide both safety and risk, in various forms and configurations.

The idea of safe or safer space emerged from the women's movement in the US in the late twentieth century but has since been adopted in a wide variety of contexts, including universities and workplaces, and particularly, LGBT, arts, and performance venues.[161] These policies seek to affirm, and if necessary, enforce, an environment in which marginalised people can be free from physical and emotional harm, unwanted attention, verbal abuse, or offence: to be free from racism, transphobia, homophobia, sexism, or harassment. These spaces have various other possible positive impacts, such as greater intimacy, communication, support, joy, and the production of discourse among the group

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[159] Sebastian op. cit., and]ps[website, 'Manifesto' [https://www.performancespace.org/manifesto] [accessed 09/02/2021]. This manifesto is capitalized in the original.
[160] See for example, the event, 'Just Doing It - Making Queer Space Happen (Tonight We Fly)', which stated it had a 'special emphasis on LGBTQ and QTIPOC [queer trans and intersex people pf colour] communities', or the 'Queer Migrant Takeover', which programmed 'QTPoC collective Pxssy Palace and performances by [artists of colour] Krishna Istha, Toni Lewis and […] Toni D [Toni Dee Paul]'. See LAB 'Programme Archive, 2018 – Present' [https://clayleeds.wixsite.com/liveartbistro/past-events].
[161] The Roestone Collective, 'Safe Space: Towards a Reconceptualization', *Antipode,* 46:5, 2014, pp. 1346–1365.

present. The adoption of these policies by universities has been criticized, predominantly by Conservatives, as interfering with freedom of speech. In 2016, Conservative MP Victoria Atkins and then Prime Minister Theresa May criticized safe space policies for hindering 'lively' or 'open debate', and threatening 'innovation of thought' and even the UK's economic development. [162] This is revealing of Conservative, neoliberal and austere ideology, in which the UK's economic development is paramount. Neoliberal economies are not committed to safety and security for all citizens; rather they rely on exposing them to inequality, risk and, in some cases, hostility.

Despite these critiques, these policies have been influential in the practices of the three case studies discussed in this chapter. For Sebastian of]ps[, safety, both physical and emotional, is instinctive, and is dependent on 'conversations with people - there was always care for people and there was always respect and responsibility, taken at a personal level'. For them, creating a space that holds both risk and safety is more important than creating specific rules. They do list a manifesto on their website, one which is changeable and in flux, but which notes that]ps[is 'sensitive not censored', does 'not ask permission' but 'negotiate[s] consent'.[163]]ps['s nomadic and flexible nature, as well as their political and aesthetic commitment to questioning received knowledge and boundaries, mean they are reluctant to create fixed and explicit rules. Safe space is more of an explicit concern for LAB, who have a detailed code of conduct, inspired by Marlborough Productions, designed to ensure safety for all those who use the space. This code of conduct outlines the rules of the space, including rules against touching, and for active consent, using people's correct pronouns, and generally respecting others. These rules are designed to allow for the inclusion, safety and comfort of everyone, within limits. They write: 'Everyone is welcome in our space. The only thing we do not tolerate is intolerance of any kind.'[164] This invokes Karl Popper's paradox of tolerance, which advocates 'Tolerance towards all who are not intolerant and who do not propagate intolerance.'[165] This paradox affirms that though it seems to conflict with principles of tolerance, the exclusion of intolerance and intolerant people is necessary to maintain a space or society that is tolerant. This does however provide a word of warning for the potentially exclusive nature of safety and security, and how these two principles may be instrumentalised to justify violence against those perceived as threatening them. The need or desire for security and safety is a response to what Ahmed calls 'global economies of fear': where 'the language of fear involves the intensification of "threats", which works to create a distinction between those who are "under threat" and those who threaten. […] Through the generation of "the threat", fear works to

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[162] Cited in Rowena Mason, 'Theresa May criticises university "safe spaces" for shutting down debate', *The Guardian,* 14/9/2016 [https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/sep/14/theresa-may-criticises-university-safe-spaces-for-shutting-down-debate] [accessed 09/02/2021].
[163]]ps[manifesto, op. cit.
[164] CLAY website, 'Code of Conduct' [https://www.clayleeds.co.uk/code-of-conduct] [accessed 09/02/2021].
[165] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1945), p. 205.

align bodies with and against others.'[166] Through insecurity, and fear of danger or risk, individuals turn to groups and spaces to offer collective safety and security – but this is achieved through the identification and exclusion of those people or practices who might threaten this safety. This theme of exclusion is one which I develop throughout this thesis, where I argue that this is what requires these collective practices to be tactical, reflective and contingent. In the practices of these venues, safety and security for some must be balanced with ever-changing levels of risk and exclusion for others.

Sheppeard explicitly defines The Marlborough as a safer space for queer and trans people. Further, *Radical Rhizomes*, as social gatherings exclusively for queer, trans, and intersex people of colour, attempt to create a safe space for people marginalised by intersecting oppressions. Young queer people of colour, for instance, may experience homophobia or queerphobia in their family home or in public, and experience racism in queer spaces. This means they lack a space they can feel fully safe or included, necessitating these exclusive spaces. Sheppeard speaks about providing a space where people can be 'comfortable […] not feeling policed, or like an outsider. And I think that queer communities and queer audiences really crave and want those spaces […] where they don't have to feel like they're having to explain themselves or their existence'. Sheppeard relates a story of a friend attending a more traditional performance at another venue in Brighton in gender non-conforming clothes and being looked at during the whole experience. He says, 'that would never have happened in a million years at the Marlborough. […] You're there to see the work and you can just be.'

Referring to Ahmed can deepen understanding of these affects of comfort and discomfort. She writes that 'To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits', and that, 'in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies.' This effect is often denied to queer subjects such as the one who appeared in Sheppeard's anecdote, and is what they seek to create through producing spaces for them. As Ahmed continues, 'Heteronormativity functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape. Those spaces are lived as comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies'.[167] The term 'safe space' implies that there is more at stake than just comfort or discomfort. To be uncomfortable in the example used by Sheppeard above is not to fit in, to be hypervisible, to be policed. As I outlined in the Introduction, this often translates to a risk of verbal and physical abuse in public for women, or queer, trans, and racialised people: to be uncomfortable, or not to fit in, is to feel, and be, at risk. Marlborough Productions seek to support and care for people of

[166] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, op. cit., p. 72.
[167] Ibid., p. 148.

colour, queer, trans, disabled artists and audiences, and creating a safe space in which these identities can exist is an integral part of this.

In order to do so, they produce spaces for these groups which reduce the risks they experience in public. These spaces are produced by the desire to make and name them as such, but also through the bodies of the organisers and the bodies of others, who collectively produce the social space, impressing it with the shape of their bodies and allowing these bodies to extend into the spaces and the spaces to extend into the bodies, as Ahmed described above. It is this that makes it so important that the organisers share an embodied sense of marginalisation with the artists with whom they work and they audiences they seek to welcome. Organisers who do not share some sense of embodied risk may not understand the risks experienced by these groups, and cannot impress the social and affective space in the same way. This affective space of security is created through the enforcement of specific rules which distinguish such a space from public or other spaces, and through the gathering together, and repeated presence, of people who share an experience of not fitting in in public space. These practices construct a safe and secure affective space which overlies, and sits in tension with, surrounding space, and the financial insecurity of the physical space due to the economic practices of neoliberalism and austerity which threaten its existence.

At the same time as seeking to create a space of security distinct from risk, these spaces also seek to support different kinds of risk. Sweet describes LAB as a space to support risk, but risk here refers to aesthetic risk. Ruth Marie Holdsworth specifies this as 'risk as form', using it to examine case studies which use risk as a curatorial strategy, such as In Between Time Festival and the National Review of Live Art. This is something that Holdsworth argues has become part of live art's cultural strategy as it evolved from Performance Art, emphasising novelty, new practices, and formal experimentation.[168] This is the form of risk valorised by LAB. Allen says that this has been important for LAB since its formation: 'artists that make work in the space often would not be supported by more traditional arts venues because of the type of work they make, and the risk that may be implicit in that work.' This includes formal experimentation valued by live art, which risks aesthetic or commercial failure, as well as physical risks associated with certain forms of performance, such as 'blood work or body-based practice', Sweet adds. Further, Sweet includes work that may say 'something that is politically risky'. This may encompass the articulation of radical political opinion or critique of dominant culture from the margins.

This collocation of marginal practices with certain kinds of risk is in line with bell hooks' writing on the use of the margin as a 'space of radical openness', primarily in the context of feminism, race and class. She writes of the margins as a 'site of resistance', and writes that 'Our life depends on

[168] Ruth Marie Holdsworth, *Curating Risk*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Bristol, February 2011.

our ability to conceptualise alternatives'. The margin, for hooks, 'is not a safe place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance.'[169] The safer spaces created by these groups are spaces of relative safety, which seek to mitigate the risks of the margins, while enabling the resistance and the conceptualisation of alternatives which adhere to the gathering and performance practices of marginalised communities. Marginalised people are at risk in the margins, but this is also a site of political resistance. In line with the unequal distribution of precarity, the capacity to take these risks is also unequally distributed; those who are most ontologically or financially secure are more able to take risks, or more able to endure consequences, financial or otherwise. Making political comment provokes differential reaction and treatment depending on the identity of the speaker – marginalised or oppressed identities are less tolerated in expressing political opinion, particularly opinions that are radical or transgressive.[170] In providing a restricted space for both safety and risk, these groups enable those who are marginalised to safely speak and take the political risks more available to the majority in public spaces.

An awareness of the tension between safety and risk, even an explicit engagement with it, is consistent with live art's cultural strategy. Lois Keidan, co-founder and former director of LADA, describes live art as 'a really safe space to be dangerous'.[171] Providing a safe space for experimentation, as well as a safe space for marginalised communities, sits alongside, and forms a crucial part of, the creation of spaces for risk, danger and experimentation. In this case, relative safety is what enables the possibility of risk. Being in a space in which the value of one's marginalised identity is not questioned is what allows artists to create risky work which either discursively or bodily resists the values and boundaries of dominant, able-bodied, cis-sexist, white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchy – to borrow and adapt a term from bell hooks.[172]

This is at once a production of affective and material safety, as well as safety from financial risk. Aesthetic and formal risk, though distinct from what Holdsworth might call risk-as-content, or work which is 'a response to a situation of risk', is not as far removed as it might seem.[173] These venues' choices to support experimental or risky practices, or their use of unconventional collective or

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[169] bell hooks, 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media,* 36, 1989, pp. 15-23, p. 19.
[170] See, for example, an analysis of online abuse toward British MPs during the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlights differential treatment of tweets by women of colour: Tracie Farrell, Genevieve Gorrell & Kalina Bontcheva, 'Vindication, virtue, and vitriol: A study of online engagement and abuse toward British MPs during the COVID-19 pandemic', *Journal of Computational Social Science*, Volume 3, pages 401–443 (2020), or discussion of the 'gamergate' controversy: Jessica O'Donnell, 'Militant meninism: the militaristic discourse of Gamergate and Men's Rights Activism', *Media, Culture & Society*, 42:5, 2020, pp. 654–674.
[171] Lois Keidan, cited in Chatzichristodoulou, op. cit., p. 11.
[172] hooks original phrase is 'system of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy'. See *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009) p. 8.
[173] Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 2.

artist-run forms, are both associated with the significant financial risks they face. Despite this, they seek to mitigate the financial risks of others, seeking to provide insulation from economic risk through committing to supporting artists' practices and paying them for their labour. Sweet of LAB states that 'we pay artists' was their 'main mantra' when they formed, even if it's not an 'ideal rate' or if it is part of a wider exploitative system. This is similar to lines in]ps[' s manifesto: 'I do not believe in free labour / I pay artists'.[174] These groups all also try to mitigate financial risk and inequality among their audiences by often operating tickets on a free or pay-what-you-can basis, seeking to mitigate economic and political risks that increasingly pervade society. With the removal of social support typical of austerity, a loss of livelihood and a loss of life draws perilously closer, particularly for those already precarious. Neoliberal austerity removes previously available financial protections which are one and the same time protections to live safe from harm, or to be able to sustain life with the loss of income. In this sense, marginalised artists taking aesthetic risks encounter financial and ontological risk. While for secure or privileged artists risk as an aesthetic can be bracketed from other forms of risk, this is less the case for those artists who are already at risk. Further, if venues and community spaces are essential for the performance, articulation and reproduction of marginalised identities and communities, then the disappearance of these spaces, or the withdrawal of support for them, poses to these identities and communities a very real existential risk. Those who exist in these conditions may experience a need to escape these risks, even if only temporarily, but they may also desire a space in which to respond to, or rework those risks, in a formal or aesthetic way, in an environment that is as materially, affectively, and financially safe and secure as possible, within the restricted conditions of neoliberal austerity.

Conclusion

In examining three pairs of figures - economic security and precarity, permanence and fluidity, and safety and risk - I have shown the complexities and tensions which collectives and artist-run groups must navigate when they seek to run a venue in the shifting conditions of neoliberal austerity. The financial insecurity and instability of neoliberal austerity influences the possibilities and practices of these groups; but they nevertheless seek to oppose these conditions of the field through finding some economic security and using it to support the artists and communities with whom they work. Here I have drawn on and extended Bourdieu's field and the space of possibles in order to show how these conditions limit the possibilities of these venues, but also how the field and its restrictions provide the possibility of agency and change within that structure. I have applied the work of De Certeau by showing the complex conditions of neoliberal austerity that necessitate tactical economic and spatial practice, and examined the consequences and challenges of such practices, in seeking to remain fluid and flexible, and in adapting to the economic and funding environment by tactically adopting more

[174]]ps[manifesto, op. cit.

business-oriented or institutional forms. As part of this I have also examined concrete examples of what Lefebvre calls diversions, examining how these can be used to provide a contingent form of security in insecure conditions, and can enact a critique of the wider spatial, political, and economic practices in which they operate, by affirming the importance of community space. In synthesising Lefebvre's work on the social production of space and counter-spaces with Ahmed's on affect, I have shown how these groups can produce affective counter-spaces of security and safety for specific communities, in mitigation of various risks they experience in public, due to the unequal distribution of precarity. Through their practices in the space, the presence of artists and communities, safety, though compromised and contingent, is created. At one and the same time these venues enable performative and aesthetic risk, allowing these artists and communities to experiment with the bodily and social boundaries of the majority, from a position of marginality. Doing so at public performance events allows resistant communities to form and maintain themselves. Though limited by the structural possibilities of the field and the spatial practice of austere neoliberalism, these venues provide the material and affective conditions, as part of a wider infrastructure, for the continued practicing of live art and experimental performance, and the continued social reproduction of their collective identities. In the creation of these spaces, these venues navigate, mitigate and balance multiple forms of safety and risk, in ways which tactically exploit difficulties and opportunities, and respond to the needs of the communities they serve. The temporary and compromised forms of security offered by this tactical collectivity allow these practices to continue, and help to create lasting structures of security in the field of experimental performance.

Chapter Two
Studios: Producing Spaces of Care
Introduction

This chapter builds on the issues raised in the previous chapter, which established the immediate economic and spatial impacts of austerity on the conditions of independent performance production in the UK. This chapter extends that analysis by focusing on the uncaring affective impacts of austerity, arguing that studio collectives can resist and mitigate these uncaring conditions by producing spaces which encourage informal care and affective support between freelance artists and producers working in performance. Through the primary aim of supporting each member's individual practice, these groups create spaces of affective care and support which provide a refuge from the negative affects of austerity. I begin this chapter by establishing a working definition of collective care in 'Producing Practices of Care'. In 'Collective Care as Meeting Mutual Needs', I examine how these shared studio collectives come together in caring attentiveness and responsiveness to mutual need, and how they imbue their groups with caring principles and structures. Finally, 'Collective Care as Affective Place-Making' shows how they invest their spaces with an affect of care through repeated caring labours and actions. Throughout, I examine the limitations of care in the collective: how they can be said to reproduce conditions of exclusion and how collective practice also enables neglect and informal hierarchies. Through examining the reflective and tactical practices of these groups, I show what forms of collective care might best avoid these problems.

In this chapter I deepen my engagement with Bourdieu, Lefebvre, and Ahmed's work to show how these groups take up positions in the field, in opposition to uncaring practices and institutions, and produce affective counter-spaces of care. Lefebvre and Ahmed allow me to show how these spaces are produced through their social relations and affective investments, and how these affects and caring relations stick to the space and those within it. Ahmed, along with Bourdieu, also allows me to show how these practices of mutual support can be exclusive. I draw on James Thompson and Amanda Stuart Fisher's edited collection *Performing Care: new perspectives on socially engaged performance*, but instead examine *producing* care; how it is instituted in a lasting way in our social and professional relationships, in the groups we form and the spaces we inhabit, in the rules and conventions we lay down in them, and in the performance infrastructure at large. I contribute to discourses on the performance and ethics of care by considering the role that producing and organisational practices have in this process, and examining the importance of space and proximity to these discussions.

Case Studies

This chapter looks at studio collectives: groups of individual artists who come together to rent a space, and share costs and resources. In examining such activity, I consider the work of three groups:

Residence and Interval in Bristol, and Single End in Glasgow. I spoke to two of the original members of Residence, James Stenhouse and Jo Bannon, at Stenhouse's studio in Bristol in June 2019, and later spoke to their fellow founding member Ed Rapley, via Skype, in December 2019. I spent some days with Interval in their space, and interviewed a mix of relatively old and new members between in June 2019 (Rachael Clerke, Viki Browne, Bryn Thomas, Jack Drewry, Ryan O'Shea, and Ania Varez), and also attended one of their monthly meetings on 10th June 2019. I visited Glasgow collective Single End in July 2019 at their shared studio as part of Southside Studios, and conducted a single group interview with members Kim Donohoe, Geraldine Heaney and Thom Scullion.[175]

Residence

Of the three collectives discussed in this chapter, Residence was the first to form, pre-austerity, in 2006. They formed at an Open Space event organised by Theatre Bristol, an organisation which exists 'to support and improve the live performance sector'.[176] The meeting at which Residence formed was focused on the questions 'What's possible and who cares [sic]'.[177] A session was convened by Rapley called, according to Stenhouse, 'Independent artist led space in Bristol anyone?' Only one person came, but later Rapley and Stenhouse had a conversation by the refreshments table and were joined by artists and performers Lucy Cassidy and Birgit Binder, and Katie Keeler from Theatre Bristol. They had never met before, but in that conversation, they decided it was a good idea to set up a space together and they arranged to meet a week later to discuss it. They eventually rented a space from Artspace Lifespace, an organisation committed to using empty buildings in Bristol for cultural activity, with whom Rapley was involved.[178] At their largest they rented a central Bristol multi-floored building with a shop front on St Nicholas Street called the Milk Bar and had over 40 members. After the loss of this space and several others, they reduced in size to their original core group of members, and meet regularly in each other's houses and flats to give each other professional and personal support.

Interval

The origin story of Interval was told to me second-hand, as none of the original founding members were involved in the group at time of interview. Clerke, one of the longest-standing

[175] All quotations from these artists and producers in this chapter come from these interviews with the author, unless otherwise stated.
[176] Theatre Bristol website [theatrebristol.net] [accessed 16/11/2022]. Open Space technology is an event format which organises around a specific theme and allows attendees to form their own panels and discussion groups.
[177] Theatre Bristol website, 'Open Space Events' [https://theatrebristol.net/openspaceevents/] [accessed 06/03/2020].
[178] See Artspace Lifespace website, 'About: Our Vision' [https://artspacelifespace.com/about/our-vision/] [accessed 18/03/2020].

members, says that it began in 2010 or 2011 out of a desire for more peer support, and was established with the help, and following the model, of Residence, who refer to Interval as their 'younger, cooler sister.'[179] Interval likewise traces its beginnings to a regular Open Space event organised by Theatre Bristol, this one called 'To You To Me', which began in 2009. At the 2010 event a topic called 'Residence. Who we are. What we do. How you can do it too' was hosted by Rapley.[180] According to Rapley, Residence had reached its capacity and was no longer accepting new members, but 'there were artists who needed space', so he set up a workshop for anyone interested. Those that attended the workshop became Interval. Their first space was The Old Mayor's Parlour on College Green, and their access to this space was granted through Capacity, a 'meanwhile-use' scheme of Bristol City Council, which sought to make use of vacant business premises for artistic activity, as part of culture-led regeneration. As we saw in the previous chapter with LAB, such schemes can be vital in allowing collective and artist-run activity to take place. Immersive theatre company Stand + Stare were granted initial use of the building to create an immersive theatre space, and after that were allowed to remain resident with three other organisations: MAYK, who run Mayfest festival, producing company Ausform, and Interval. Interval now have a space in council-owned building The Exchange on Corn Street, in the centre of Bristol.

Single End

Single End, formed in Glasgow in 2012, is connected to both Residence and Interval, having begun through another of Rapley's workshops, and having a member, Thom Scullion, who was previously a member of Interval. The initiating workshop was arranged by artist Ellie Dubois, who invited Rapley to do a workshop and circulated a call-out for anyone interested.[181] One of the founding members, Donohoe reports that they were interested in Residence's model of having a shared space and accessible, affordable studio space. The majority of the group were recent university graduates who had a desire for 'a peer group that was there and also space to work in'. These desires felt difficult to meet, especially for an individual graduate artist low on resources, in the context of high rents and limited available space. The group left Rapley's workshop with a to-do list, the first item on which was to find a space. They found this space in the Barras, an area of street and indoor markets in Glasgow's East End. Following this area's rapid gentrification, they have since moved to a space as part of Southside Studios, a multi-disciplinary studio space in the south of Glasgow.

[179] Bannon and Stenhouse, op. cit. Characteristically, the phrase is a collaboration between the two.
[180] Theatre Bristol To You To Me website [https://theatrebristoltytm.net/Residence-Who-are-we-What-we-do-How-you-can-do-it-too] [accessed 10/03/2020].
[181] Donohoe, op. cit.

Producing Practices of Care

This section introduces the framework and definition of collective care I use in this chapter, drawing on care ethics to show how collective care is produced among independent artists and producers of experimental performance. Collective care contrasts with institutional models of care, in which there is a strict separation and hierarchy between caregiver and receiver, the one who can give care and the one who needs to receive it. In the models of care examined in this chapter, everyone contains the potential to become both caregiver and care receiver. Collective care is also often contrasted with self-care, the latter seen as a practice of neoliberal individualism.[182] Collective care instead seeks to provide care through collaboration and by building collective structures which ensure the care of everyone, not just those able to provide care for themselves. In her introduction to *Performing Care: New Perspectives on Socially Engaged Performance,* Amanda Stuart Fisher contrasts caring performance practices with uncaring political and economic conditions, noting 'how performance of care can enact a mode of resistance to "care-less" state processes that are structured around the concept of care as a quantifiable economy, and are designed to be measured and distributed only according to tightly predetermined formulas.'[183] This links to features of austerity outlined by Bhattacharyya, in which state benefits, including arts funding, become tied to 'bureaucratic regimes […] to assess ongoing entitlement or disentitlement'.[184] In contrast, these collectives seek to keep bureaucracy to a minimum; once one is a member of the collective, care and support is freely given, even, in one case, in the form of financial support.

Feminist philosopher and care ethicist Virginia Held describes an ethic of care as one that 'focuses on attentiveness, trust, responsiveness to need, narrative nuance, and cultivating caring relations.'[185] This description is a key touchstone for my understanding of care, which takes attentiveness and responsiveness to need, and the creation of caring relations as key features of the studio collective practices discussed in this chapter. Referencing Held and other feminist care ethicists, Fisher writes that they 'were not concerned with the development of an abstract moral principle of care but rather with concrete questions about how we relate to one another and how we think about particular situations, settings and relationships.'[186] This chapter pays particular attention to the concrete situations and setting that support caring relationships to take place, and examines how artists and

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[182] See for example, Lisa Chamberlain, 'From Self-Care to Collective Care', *SUR: International Journal on Human Rights*, 17:30, 2020, pp. 215-225.
[183] Amanda Stuart Fisher, 'Introduction: caring performance, performing care', in Amanda Stuart Fisher and James Thompson (eds.), *Performing Care: New Perspectives on Socially Engaged Performance* (Manchester University Press, 2020) pp. 1-18, p. 3.
[184] See Stephen Greer, 'Funding resilience', op. cit., and Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life,* op. cit., p. 3.
[185] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 15.
[186] Amanda Stuart Fisher, op. cit., p. 4.

producers can together create caring conditions for their working lives and relationships. As explored below, the work of these producing collectives suggests that these attentive structures can be built through gathering together in shared, co-owned space, with caring structures and practices, through spatial, social, and emotional proximity, and through repeated everyday caring actions.

Where theorists like Maurice Hamington have rightly emphasized the embodied nature of care, few in performance and theatre studies have examined in detail the consequences this has for performance spaces and organisations. [187] In analysing the importance of physical, emotional, and social proximity to the possibility of care in these collectives, I apply the work of scholars Christine Milligan and Janine Wiles on 'landscapes of care' in Human Geography to an arts and performance context, particularly 'the relation between "proximity" and "distance"' in caring for and about others.[188] This chapter extends such work by examining the impacts of all three forms of proximity: spatial, social and emotional, on the possibilities of an emergence and continuance of an affective disposition to collective care. Though spatial proximity is not essential to care, the case studies I examine suggest it increases the ease and possibility for care to be exercised and sustained. The sharing of space, in the following examples, is what allows the principles, practices and affective disposition toward care to be invested and instituted in the space and the organisation, and to continue long-term among the collective, beyond the presence of any one specific person, relationship, or act of care. This space, both physical and as constituted by their social relations and repeated actions, goes on to enable future caring relations in the space. This chapter argues that practices and ethics of care can have longer and wider impacts when they are embedded within the core working practices of a group of people, an organisation, or affectively and performatively invested in a space, and that collective care between artists can more readily take place through their co-presence in self-managed, extra-institutional spaces.

Collective Care as Meeting Mutual Needs

This section establishes the neglect, lack of care, and alienation that frequently arises when artists and producers work from home, and when they work in or with institutions, and how studio collectives can care for each other by mutually meeting needs for space and support. Many of those I interviewed referenced a lack of appropriate space in which to create or administrate performance. Interval's Clerke says, 'I think if you work in performance, you don't have an excuse to have the studio where you go and make physical things. So it feels like there's not really an excuse to not work from home.' They add, however, that working from home is 'bleak'. O'Shea, also of Interval, expresses

[187] Maurice Hamington, *Embodied Care: Jane Addams, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Feminist Ethics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
[188] Christine Milligan and Janine Wiles, 'Landscapes of Care', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34:6, 2010, pp. 736–754.

similar sentiments, saying that with ‘an office I'll be able to do work. Whereas in my flat, I'd wake up and I'd still be at my flat, so I wouldn't be motivated to do that work.’ Residence’s Rapley references the frustration of trying to access space and resources from busy programmers in institutions, involving a long process of getting in touch with the venue, arranging a meeting with programmers, who might ask to be invited to a scratch (a work-in-progress performance), before progressing the relationship. Rapley says, ‘Where am I supposed to make the scratch - in my room?’ This complex institutional process bears some of the features of austerity as it seeks to gauge entitlement to resources, for which artists must compete. Clerke and Stenhouse refer to conditions of artistic production feeling ‘competitive’ or ‘jealous’ respectively, and these feelings are exacerbated by the restrictions placed on resources by austerity. Multiple artists (Bannon, Clerke, O’Shea) referenced feeling lonely or isolated, a need for community or a space to work in which they could be around other people (Varez, Thomas), or cite being around others as a significant benefit of the collective (Heaney, Browne). Browne says that Interval formed ‘because of a need for space’, and as we see shall see this is not the need or desire for space itself, but a caring space, with the material and affective conditions conducive to making and producing performance.

As we shall see, a need for space in which artists can work autonomously on their practices, be around other artists, and receive and provide professional and personal support, is consistent across all three case studies. Appropriate spaces are necessary for rehearsal and live performance. Space is also needed to administrate the artwork; to promote it, to find collaborators, to find venues and supporters, and to apply for funding. This aspect of the work has increased with neoliberal impacts on art, typified by the figure of the ‘artrepreneur’, or ‘artists as creative entrepreneurs’.[189]As we saw in the Introduction and above, austerity makes the work of artists harder and more precarious, with fewer opportunities and less resources, including space. This is reflected in a need for work, a need for space to work, and the need for the legitimation provided by work and a workspace among my interviewees. Through collectively meeting these needs, these collectives are producing care and the conditions through which it will be sustained.

These collectives are able to form in caring attentiveness to these mutual needs because of a specific set of conditions in the field, including the existence and support of other collective organisations. Collectives form and operate in relation to other collectives, or, in Bourdieu’s terms, they take up a position in the local field of cultural production: where what currently exists in the field, and what has come before, conditions what is possible. As I will argue in more detail later, these groups show how homologous groups and organisations can form supportive relations that depart from the competitive conditions of the field as Bourdieu describes it. The possibility of collective practice is

[189] Harvie, *Fair Play,* op. cit., p. 62.

conditioned by the state or culture of the local field, in the case of Residence and Interval, in Bristol. Clerke says, 'I think there is a culture of collectives in Bristol, […] physical collectives in buildings, groups of artists working together, and not just in spaces supported by institutions'. The city has many collectives for its size. As well as Residence and Interval there is visual art collective Champ, film and sound collective Bristol Experimental and Expanded Film (BEEF), who formed a community of collectives along with Residence, and theatre company Action Hero, called The Brunswick Club. There are two major universities in Bristol ensuring a regular influx of students, an active music scene in Bristol and multiple spaces like Hamilton House and the Surrey Vaults which act as meeting spaces for artists in the city. I spoke to collective Champ who echoed Clerke's thoughts, saying that Bristol has an active collective scene due to its small and manageable size. Jordan Martin of the collective says, 'I think in Bristol it's so small we kind of make the content and the things that we want to - we make what we want to see and encourage others to do so.' All in all, they describe it as a collaborative, collective place. Bristol's specific location, the institutions, artistic and educational organisations nearby and within it, are a material and affective infrastructure which texture the possibilities, working practices and social relations of artists in the city. The local environment, and the presence of other collectives, either still operating or in the past, influence and encourage new collectives to form, and support each other once they have formed.

Collectives are formed through meeting needs and through interpersonal relationships: they form out of care and perform care by encouraging more collectives to form. Collective practice then, not only depends on certain material conditions, but also on the fact that 'we are interconnected beings situated in webs of relationships', in Hamington's terms.[190] Each collective forms through recognising need in webs of personal relationships. Residence found their first space through Artspace Lifespace, something which was possible because Rapley was involved in the organisation and had personal relationships with the group. Rapley then goes on to help form both Interval and Single End, both of which were possible because they were all interconnected as part of the performance sector. As Rapley's workshops were instrumental in setting up these two collectives, I outline them here to show how they enabled people to come together with shared needs and desires and create the conditions and principles they desired – notably those of care and support. Rapley's workshops begin with:

> congratulations, you've started an artist led space now. If you in this room want to start an artist-led space - you have already done it. […] Now that you've started an artist-led space, what do you do next?

[190] Maurice Hamington, 'Care ethics and improvisation: can performance care?', in Fisher & Thompson, op. cit, pp. 21-35, p. 22.

This beginning is a performative speech act for the group. Instead of being a loose group of people who want to start a space, they instead become a defined group of people, an artist-led space without a physical space. The next step in the workshop is to imagine and articulate their dream spaces, coming up with a collective idea of the space they want, then to think about how to exploit any connections they have to access these spaces and resources. As Rapley says, 'who can you start having those conversations with? From now on everyone you meet, you're gonna say, we've started an artist collective, we're looking for space.' This approach recognises and instrumentalises the interconnected, interdependent nature of both human experience and artistic practice. The collective form a social and affective space, that is a space as constituted by the social relations and by the affective and imagined investments of the members of the collective, before finding a material space to house it. This is an important political reversal; rather than allowing the material conditions of available space to determine the affective possibilities and social relations between artists working in a similar field, this approach asks artists to imagine their ideal affective and social conditions, and then to find material possibilities that might fulfil them.

This approach can be understood by drawing on the work of Ahmed and Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, the possibility of social change is intrinsically linked to the production of social space. Lefebvre writes: '"Change life!" "Change society!" These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space. […] new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa.'[191] These groups seek to change their daily working lives, those of the artists around them, and the conditions in which live art and experimental performance is produced. Rapley's workshop anticipates that in order to do so, they must shift their social relationships by identifying as a group rather than as competing individuals, and they must produce a social space. These groups do not have the resources to produce an entirely new space, and must make use of and divert already existing spaces. However, the call to imagine a 'dream space' is to articulate a concretely-utopian political imaginary – to imagine what kind of space might be ideal to support their practices, but also to support the ideal social relations between artists. This imagined, utopian space so conceived interacts with the physical spaces they occupy. We can augment this with Ahmed's writing on emotions forming surfaces. Ahmed writes that 'emotions work to shape the "surfaces" of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others.'[192] In this case, they take the shape of the spaces in which they exist – the affects and social relations of individuals and collectives take specific forms in art institutions for instance, whose space is inscribed with specific forms of hierarchical domination and interpenetrated by neoliberalism. In asking participants to imagine their dream space, to articulate their desires for a space and what they desire in space,

[191] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 59.
[192] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, op. cit., p.1.

Rapley is mobilizing the affective investment which forms the very boundary of the collective, one which is strengthened through repeated acts of care, as we shall see. What Rapley's example tells us is that it is possible to take advantage of, and intervene in, this process, by declaring that a group is already an artist-led space, thus forming a social space, and asking the group to affectively invest in that space, thus forming an affective space, before the physical space exists. This is key to how these collectives reimagine their working conditions and restructure the relationships between artists, from isolation, alienation and competition, to care, support, and collaboration.

Institutions have a large role to play in the formation of these collectives, in providing the forum where groups can recognise mutual need, and plan how to fulfil it. In this case the broad term 'institutions' is used to mean large, established art and performance organisations that are usually in receipt of significant state subsidy. These institutions condition the practices and social relations of the field. Collectives and artist-led groups often meet in or through these institutions and seek to define themselves in relation to them, as position-takings in the field. A key difference here between collective and institutional practice, as we saw in the previous chapter, is that institutions are capable of strategic action, whereas collectives tend to be limited to tactics: they do not have access to fixed, secure spaces or resources. As we saw above, both Residence and Interval were formed in Open Space sessions led by Theatre Bristol, an organisation which Clerke describes as 'really good at supporting artists in the city in a quite non-institutional feeling way.' Theatre Bristol's events do certainly seem to be successful in engaging artists over a long period of time, as their online archive attests.[193] Giving artists a regular space and support, as well as agency in what they want to talk about, is conducive to allowing new connections and groups to form. Donohoe of Single End relates the desire to form a collective to their recent graduation from university and wanting to have similar structures and spaces of peer support. Though it is certainly not the only way collectives are formed, and it is not only young people or graduates who form or have a need for collectives, it does seem that these environments often provide the impetus for collective formation. Higher education can be an intense social experience of belonging, or not belonging, to a group. Further, many art, theatre and performance courses contain a group work component, and team-work and collaboration is often a learning objective.[194] Collaboration and groupwork were key parts of arts and performance training in the UK at specialist arts colleges such as Dartington and Leeds, and these focuses remain on contemporary courses, as well as course content which may cover collaborative and collective activities, particularly

[193] See Theatre Bristol website, [https://theatrebristol.net/] and To You To me website, [https://theatrebristoltytm.net/] [both accessed 3/10/22].
[194] Theatre Studies MA at the University of Glasgow for instance, involves significant group-work components in the first two years and group projects and devising as later choices.

of the 60s and 70s.[195] A desire for, and knowledge of, collective practice, combined with the history and conditions of the field, is what allows collective practice to be a possible position in the field for these artists.

Collectives are often formed in opposition to institutions, their perceived negative influences on the field or their perceived inadequacies – their lack of care, their alienating relationships with artists, or their stimulation of competition between artists. At least part of the impetus for setting up Residence was a desire for more independence from institutions. Stenhouse and Bannon describe the artistic scene in Bristol at the time of their formation as an active time, with a well-supported arts infrastructure used by 'lots of young artists coming through the city partly from Dartington [College of Arts] […] and University of Bristol and the Arnolfini programme. So that was all quite bound in organisations, universities and art centres.' Bannon specifically relates competition to spaces, opportunities and achievements being tied to institutions. She says,

> some of that [competition] is because of that support being attached to those organisations. As a young artist at that time, to become an Arnolfini Associate Artist was like a Holy Grail. But that was entirely out of your control, that would be bestowed on you. […] I wonder how much of that bestowing allowed that competition to flourish.

This certainly chimes with what Clerke thinks, who says, 'I think institutions are like the big capitalist bit of art really and I think artists, when they don't have to engage with those institutions on a daily basis, are less actually inclined to be in competition with each other.' External institutions, who are perceived as embodying capitalist ideals, having control over how much support or capital an artist receives, stimulates competition among artists.

In Lefebvre's terms, institutions, at least in their archetypal form, are dominated space: sterile, closed spaces which are expressive of the power that built them. The brutalist façade of the National Theatre in London dominates the landscape and is reminiscent of the 'slab of concrete' that Lefebvre uses as an example of dominated space. Lefebvre writes that 'The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces – but spaces that they can then organise according to their specific requirements'. Further, insititutional space 'acts continually to maintain and reproduce its own conditions of existence, namely the state'.[196] Spaces, including the spaces of art centres and galleries, are produced as vehicles of the state and the market; under neoliberalism they are inscribed with principles of hierarchy and competition. Relating to them as artists, or spending time in their spaces,

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[195] See Noyale Colin, 'The potentiality of collaboration at Dartington College of Arts and the future of performance training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training,* 9:3, 2018, pp. 445-456, and Gavin Butt, 'Without walls: performance art and pedagogy at the "Bauhaus of the North"', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training,* 11:2, 2020, pp. 126-144.
[196] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 94.

encourages these principles and practices among artists and the relations between them. Bourdieu refers to 'institutions of consecration and legitimation', that is, that large institutions who hold a large amount of capital, both cultural and financial, and can confer that capital on artists and other organisations, and in so doing, legitimate them as artists and confer cultural value to their artistic outputs.[197] These institutions condition what artists produce and how they are produced, stimulating competition between artists and cultural workers, particularly in times of austerity when resources are restricted.

These institutions, as financed by and accountable to the state, are a point of contact between the field of cultural production and the state, or the bureaucratic field. The priorities of funding bodies like ACE, which come from the priorities of government, are communicated through these organisations, and come to influence the practices of artists. We can see this in the way, as Gupta and Gupta describe, principles of resilience and sustainability, instituted under austerity, were communicated through ACE keywords, influencing arts organisations and artists. They write,

> given that policy bears most immediately upon functioning institutions and the lives of populations, a repeated policy focus on any specific term is apt to make that term a keyword […] Such policy keywords then disperse and accrue further significance within ordinary language circuits. They are reiterated constantly through the media, through various institutional and professional forums, through everyday conversations.

Gupta and Gupta show how this process happened with the word resilience, which 'appeared principally in its received sense, as a desirable (individual) character trait.'[198] This word is used, primarily, to encourage individual financial self-sufficiency and endurance in the face of the volatile economic conditions of austerity and neoliberalism, which run counter to principles of care and interdependence.

However, in the same article, Gupta and Gupta trace the use of the word ecology and the phrase 'arts ecology' by ACE. Stenhouse, Bannon, and Browne use the word ecology to mean the network of relationships, organisations, and individuals that support art and performance in their local area, placing emphasis on the arts and artists as interconnected and interdependent. Bannon says, in reference to Residence's practices, that 'we were trying to take *care* of an ecology in the city, we were trying to take *care* of each other's practices [my emphasis]'. Using ecology in this sense, encourages an understanding of mutual needs and interdependency that allows artists to come together in mutual need to form collectives, and becomes a way in which care and support is widely dispersed throughout the

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[197] Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art,* op. cit., p. 152.
[198] Suman Gupta and Ayan-Yue Gupta, '"Resilience" as a policy keyword: Arts Council England and austerity', *Policy Studies*, 43:2, 2022, pp. 279-295, p. 281 and 285.

local field of cultural production. This illustrates how the practices and rhetoric of neoliberal austerity, which encourage competition and individual self-sufficiency, can be reworked. Artists working together in their own spaces, relatively independent of institutions, can resist principles of competition, allowing for greater collaboration; artists joining together in groups to try and share resources and risk, to provide structures of care and support for themselves and each other. This results in less competition and more collaboration not just within the collective but between collectives, artists and organisations – in the ecology as a whole. This begins to shift the dominant organizing principle of the field from one of hierarchy and competition to one of horizontal collaboration and care.

Collective Care as Affective Place-Making

Having looked at how these collectives are formed through mutual, caring attentiveness to mutual need, I now look at how care is produced and invested in the spaces themselves, and how needs are attended to and responded to in their everyday activities. I look at what the spaces do and how they feel; how the space is socially and affectively produced, how the artists' copresence, and their practices and principles work together to produce an affect of care. This builds on but departs from care ethicists like Maurice Hamington, who emphasise that care is 'always specific', that it is 'embodied and thus *embedded* in our improvised performances of interaction [original emphasis]', and that it 'unfolds in each interaction.'[199] I take a slightly different approach – arguing that an ethic, practice, or dispostion toward care endures beyond specific embodied interactions; a caring relation is not renegotiated or unfolded anew in every interaction, it emerges collectively through repeated actions, is invested and maintained through and in spaces, organisations, and groups with particular social relations and conventions. In this section I examine how care is embedded in the collectives' structures, practices, and spaces, and how a social and affective counter-space of care is constructed through their social relations, affective investment, and caring actions.

Caring Structures

The structures of the group are embedded with care. The collectives share an economic model and have similar leadership models: they all pay a monthly fee to a shared account to cover rent and utilities and any other costs, and in return have access to the space for rehearsal and administrative work. Care, collaboration, support and other activities emerge formally and informally from proximity. In each case, labour and responsibility is shared as equally as possible, including leadership. Residence have a rotating leader, Interval three rotating roles of leader, finance, and new members, and Single End have a steering group. In each case the leader does not run the collective, rather they are responsible for communicational tasks such as replying to emails, organising the meetings, or

[199] Maurice Hamington, 'Care ethics and improvisation: can performance care?', op. cit., p. 32 and 26.

circulating news and opportunities. Rather than an executive function, leadership is repositioned as administrative, functional and performative. Sharing these administrative and leadership roles performs two functions with respect to care. Firstly, it enables the needs and inputs of multiple people to be involved in the running of the collective, allowing practices and decisions to be responsive to the needs of the collective. Secondly, the labour involved in taking on these leadership and administrative positions is part of the emotional and physical labour which is necessary to affectively and materially maintain the collective – and this labour is expressive of care, as I examine later.

Each collective has frequent, usually monthly, meetings, for which attendance is encouraged but not compulsory. Each collective has models of communication which allow concerns to be shared outside the meetings. Residence have a WhatsApp group, Interval share meeting minutes over email, and Single End use communication app and website Slack. Decisions are discussed and made at meetings, and the collectives have practices of making sure all members can contribute to large decisions. Though generally Interval require at least three members to make a decision, As Jack Drewry explains: 'if it's a big decision sometimes those people will say it doesn't feel like there's enough of us to really make this choice, and we need to do another meeting […] So it's always going for the gut feeling of fairness.' Here, we can see how structures are flexible, as Drewry says – 'we have rules, but they're all up for grabs', depending on the feeling of the group – in other words rules emerge and change *affectively*. Despite sharing a common lineage, the practices, principles and model of each collective evolved flexibly and responsively from each group member's needs, desires and circumstances. This is part of an ethic of care as responsiveness and attentiveness to need, in which, as Hamington writes, 'the right thing to do emerges from engagement with others', rather than from a fixed structure or protocol.

Meetings, though a ubiquitous social and professional practice, are vulnerable to critique. In examinations of meetings, scholar Simon Bayly argues that the meeting is not a neutral form, rather it is an institution in which 'there are ritualized procedures and protocols that govern the process, and to participate in the process entails a tacit but necessary commitment to sharing the beliefs and norms underpinning those procedures and protocols'.[200] This can be reinforced by Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space not as a neutral container, but as expressive of ideology. Lefebvre argues that there is no 'space that is apparently "neutral", "objective", fixed, transparent, innocent or indifferent'.[201] In other words, the space and form through which these collectives meet is already inscribed with certain values. For instance, an Interval meeting will serve to reinforce Interval's existing principles as the norm. Likewise, an affect or a 'gut feeling of fairness' is not a neutral,

[200] Simon Bayly, 'We Can't Go on Meeting Like This: Notes on affect and post-democratic organisation', *Performance Research*, 20:4, 2015, pp. 39-48, p. 47.
[201] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 94.

universal or objective standard, but rather something which is culturally specific, and which is likely to operate on the terms of pre-existing ideasl and power imbalances in the group.

Ahmed helps us to understand this. In her writing on the 'sociality of emotions', which critiques both the inside-out model of emotion: 'that I have feelings, which then move outwards towards objects and others, and which might even return to me', and the outside-in model, in which social feelings become impressed on the individual.[202] Rather, Ahmed argues, 'emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place.'[203] Pairing this model with the work of Lefebvre and Bayly above shows that this gut feeling of fairness is neither an objective standard exterior to the group which can be referred to, nor is it something which necessarily emerges equally in between all members of the group. Rather it is part of what forms the surface of the group. Ahmed also understands emotions, following the work of David Theo Goldberg and AnnJanette Rosga on hate and hate crimes, 'not as psychological dispositions, but as investments in social norms.'[204] In this case, the gut feeling of fairness conceals the social norms and culturally-specific understandings of fairness that produce it, and risks relying on false assumption of cultural homogeneity or equal participation. Though it is likely that these groups come together with shared norms, as new members join, or as their practices evolve to suit the majority of members, areas of difference may arise. However, the flexibility of these collectives' practices, and their emphasis on communication, provides the possibility that these exclusionary and normative processes can be named and accounted for.

Apart from these leadership and decision-making practices, the central activity of each collective is the completion of artistic and administrative work in a shared space. The core aim of each collective is to support each other's individual artistic practices, and they resist any activities that obstruct this. For Residence, it is about making it 'the softest thing it can be', in response to members feeling like 'what we're doing here is like actually having a negative impact on the work I'm making, so, how can we change it?'[205] Interval speak of a similar principle, terming it 'radical dullness'. In Clerke's words, this is 'about protecting Interval as something which exists to support our arts practices, at its core, whatever that means, […] and that means that as a project it is boring', but 'it makes us really resilient.' In practical terms, both practices involve keeping the groups' organisation, administrative, and outward-facing activities minimal so as not to conflict with each members' individual practice. Both collectives spend little time promoting the organisation or organising public events, which might raise the profile of the group, but would interfere with their central purpose.

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[202] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 9.
[203] Ibid., p. 10.
[204] Ibid., p. 56.
[205] Stenhouse, op. cit.

Stenhouse notes this tension: ‘whenever we were trying to get people to back us, it was like: “look at all this stuff we're doing”, but actually what we're really doing was like, we're not doing anything, we're just making the work’. The individual artistic outputs and activities of all the members are the work of the collectives, as they play a crucial role in allowing that work to happen. For Stenhouse, ‘Residence's legacy is more than those events we were doing [as a collective] which were really valuable, but it's actually the [performance] work that came out of it.’ However, all of the activities of up to 40 artists is difficult to quantify, and Stenhouse says that he ‘would every now and then email everyone and say “please tell me the work you're doing and where it is”, and no one would’; ‘because they were busy doing it’, Bannon cuts in.

This tension between individual practice and more visible, public-facing activities exists in the context of neoliberal austerity, which internsifies the imperative to self-promote and increases competition between artists and organisations. Christina Scharff examines the necessity, and inequality, of self-promotion among classically trained musicians, a tendency which she links to other artistic professions, writing that ‘As in other sectors in the cultural industries, the ability to self-promote is considered key to finding employment.’[206] This is part of wider neoliberal tendencies that impact workers in all industries, though particularly freelance arts and media workers, in the figure of the artrepreneur referenced earlier, indicative of ‘artists’ implicit requirement to model entrepre-neurialism’, that ‘prioritizes self-interest and individualism’, and ‘obliges art relentlessly to pursue productivity, permanent growth and profit.’[207] Part of this is the necessity to promote oneself, one’s project and organisations, and increase one’s public profile. John Storey, Graeme Salaman and Kerry Platman, studied how freelance workers must become ‘in effect a microcosmic business; developing a strategy, marketing herself, developing “products”, establishing herself as a brand’.[208] In this context, ‘dullness’ or ‘softness’ registers as radical in resisting these dominant and normative pressures, and is a part of how an affective counter-space is produced in opposition to the practices of the rest of the field. In explicitly resisting the growth and noise of organisational practice under neoliberalism, they find their own kind of success and value in localised practices of care and support.

The necessity to care for and communicate with a group of people does however have its difficulties. Clerke says, ‘doing things collectively is really slow, […] it can take months for anything to happen. And it can be really frustrating.’ An expectation to care for the space and other members also puts pressure on members, potentially leading to overwork and burnout, but practices and expectations are kept minimal and flexible to mitigate this risk. Any frustration with the level of work

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[206] Christina Scharff, ‘Blowing your own Trumpet: Exploring the Gendered Dynamics of Self-Promotion in the Classical Music Profession’, *Feminism & Psychology*, 63:1, 2015, pp. 453–474, p. 97.
[207] Harvie, *Fair Play,* op. cit., p. 63
[208] John Storey, Graeme Salaman, and Kerry Platman, ‘Living with enterprise in an enterprise economy: Freelance and contract workers in the media’, *Human Relations*, 58:8, 2005, pp. 1033–1054, p. 1036.

needed to maintain the collective and its space is exacerbated by a sense of varying levels of investment, time, and effort. In response, both Interval and Single End impress on new and existing members the importance of the shared labour of the collective. Donohoe of Single End says that early on, they had 'a couple of not-so-great experiences of people joining and leaving quite quickly or joining and just not engaging with the collective at all.' Donohoe says that 'we want people to stay members for quite a long time, because that's how we build the collective'. Though the space is cheap, the collective requires that 'you put a bit of love into it and you come to the meetings or you have to be involved in it.' This 'love' or 'unpaid labour' in Donohoe's words, is part of how 'you pay for it in different ways', in the words of member Heaney. This economy of exchange is in line with alternative, gift economies, which I will also draw on in the next chapter. Rather than exchange being based on specific transactions, gifts are freely given in the expectation of eventual reciprocation, building an open-ended network of giving and receiving. In the case of these collectives, members who join the collective receive its benefits – access to the space, cheap rehearsal space, peer support - but are expected to reciprocate, over time, by contributing to maintaining those conditions. This is flexible and reciprocation is given freely according to the ability and circumstances of each member. A total lack or inadequacy of reciprocation is felt by the other members, rather than specified.

Though Donohoe and Healey phrase it in transactional terms, it is significant that the unpaid labour that they feel is crucial to build and maintain the collective is referred to as love. Collective labour and affective investment come together to produce and maintain the collective. Ahmed writes that 'investment involves the time and labour that is "spent" on something, which allows that thing to acquire an affective quality (in this case, the 'loveable object')'.[209] Time and labour spent maintaining the collective and its space invests it with affect and value, and the status of being 'loveable', or worthy of that time and labour. However this affective investment, described as love, runs the risk of being idealistic and normative. Ahmed writes:

> love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal, which takes shape as an effect of such bonding. Love is crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an ideal, an alignment that relies on the existence of others who have failed that ideal.[210]

That is, the love for the collective, as felt by members and expressed through participation in meetings and other labour, bonds the group but does so in exclusion of those who fail the ideal of participation. Ahmed critiques 'how acting in the name of love can work to enforce a particular ideal onto others by

[209] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* op. cit., p. 127.
[210] Ibid., p. 124.

requiring that they live up to an ideal to enter the community.'[211] Though Ahmed's critique is rooted in the specific context of nationalism and multi-culturalism, these dynamics are perceptible on a smaller scale. That the ideal of labour as love, or idealistic community, risks exclusion invites these collectives to reflect on how to continue to create space for difference through their flexible and responsive practices and structures.

For Single End, it is important that each member values and contributes to the collective, if not strictly equally, then as much as they can. This was also an issue for Interval, of which several members I interviewed mentioned certain people taking on all of the work, or at least a disproportionate share. Clerke, being a relatively experienced member, was very aware of the differences in experience that can lead to problematic labour and power imbalances. Clerke mentions that they do not 'know a way out of the hierarchy', by which more experienced members become 'elders', imbued with more authority and responsibility, and often doing a higher share of the labour. Clerke says that while having more responsibility is not a problem for them personally, it is 'a problem for the collective […] because it makes it harder for other people to be as involved.' As work put into the collective increases one's experience and responsibility, it is an issue if these tasks fall to the same people, who end up with a disproportionate level of power and influence in the collective, creating a hierarchy. Unequal distribution of labour can also cause resentment and tension, particularly when labour is expected or performed differentially depending on one's social identity. Sarah Marie Hall examines the unequal distribution of care, writing that 'Much domestic care work, whether paid or unpaid, is disproportionately carried out by women', and that care work 'is gendered, classed, and racialised'.[212] Women complete a disproportionate amount of unpaid work and emotional labour, both of which are necessary in these collectives.[213] Though the disposition toward collective care requires emotional labour, which has the potential to be unevenly distributed, this labour is reciprocal and voluntary. Though this emotional labour risks being so burdensome that it interferes with members' individual practices, none of those I interviewed referenced this as an issue, and, as I will show, both the provision and reception of emotional support is described as positive.

Hierarchy, and the existence of relations of domination and authority, produce tension which interferes with the affective and social qualities of the space as one of care, support, equality and

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[211] Ibid., p. 139-140.
[212] Sarah Marie Hall, 'The personal is political: Feminist geographies of/in austerity', *Geoforum*, 110, 2020, pp. 242-251, p. 245.
[213] See Office for National Statistics, 'Women shoulder the responsibility of "unpaid work"' [https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/womenshouldertheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10] and Liz Dean, Brendan Churchill & Leah Ruppanner, 'The mental load: building a deeper theoretical understanding of how cognitive and emotional labor overload women and mothers', *Community, Work and Family*, 25:1, 2022, pp. 13-29.

horizontal relation. However, this tension, the frustrations I mentioned above, and these differences between members in the form of hierarchy, also constitute the space. As Ahmed writes, 'shared feelings are not about feeling the same feeling, or feeling-in-common, […] it is the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as such. […] Such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension.'[214] These spaces, as objects of emotion, become saturated with affects, both positive and negative, as it circulates between the members, and as the members circulate through the space, with their different relationships and presence in the space, and different understandings of what is expected of them. As the group express or engage with these tensions, the space and the practices of the collectives are reconfigured and shaped by their different needs and desires, continuing to saturate the space with affect, which constitutes the shifting surface or boundary of the collective. In this way, tensions and difficulties allow the space to be renewed and changed, socially and affectively.

Collective Care as Generous Company and Support

In the everyday existence of these collectives, care is produced through sharing the space and completing their individual work as artists and producers, and through this offering company, legitimation, motivation, and support. As I noted above, many of those I interviewed expressed a desire for a workplace in which they could be around other people or cited the presence of other people as a benefit of the collective. This desire to be around other people exists in relation to a feeling of loneliness or isolation prior to joining a collective, particularly when having to work from home. Though this is not a new problem, it is exacerbated by austerity and neoliberalism, as well as the specific conditions of live art and performance work. Bannon, of Residence, relates loneliness to the collective members' chosen form of practice. She says, 'everyone was working in live performance/theatre of some kind. And then I guess most people were independent artists […] and therefore, were probably incredibly lonely.' The artists in their group were lonely by virtue of being independent, that is, not attached to an institution or looking for structured jobs. Clerke says that 'it's lonely, being an artist, if you work from home', and 'I wanted to be around other people and I wanted to get up and go to work.' Scullion, of Single End, says that as a freelancer, 'even if you go to a café or something you're still quite isolated.' O'Shea, similarly, says, 'I come here, and there's an office space and there's other people working and I feel, oh, there's other people working, making their art happen. And I'm just working and making my art happen.' More than simply the desire to be around other people then, O'Shea desires the company of those doing the same thing as him. There is therefore a need for not just company but the supportive company of one's peers, and the validation of their shared interests in, and commitment to, performance.

[214] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* op. cit., p. 10-11.

Sharing a space enables an ethic and practice of care to emerge as part of an affective counter-space; freed from the difficulties of working from home or relying on institutions for opportunities and space to work, members of the collectives reported that they were able to be more generous with their time and made a conscious choice to embed generosity as a principle in their spaces and groups. This principle runs counter to dominant institutional conditions of competition and alienation between artists that discourage caring relations. In contrast, these spaces feel imbued with possibility and generosity – two affects which enable care to take place. Stenhouse describes the first few months in the space as 'quite revolutionary […] being in the same place and realizing the power of being together. […] suddenly we're a group of people and we were supporting each other, rather than being competitors.' Bannon refers to the space as a 'generous space', a generosity that was made possible by proximity to each other. Rapley describes the first week as 'just super exciting', one that 'opened up a lot of possibilities for everyone's practice', that 'replaced this sense of isolation that I'd had with a sense of connection and possibility.' Clerke likewise has positive recollections on Interval's first space describing it as 'great because no one bothered us, we could do whatever we wanted.' This sense of relative autonomy is key for allowing caring practices to emerge, as it allows them to organise the space according to their own desired principles. Members no longer have to compete for time, space, or other resources – rather they experience an abundance to be shared according to need. These feelings of generosity, excitement, and power emerge from the space and their copresence within it, and they are invested in, and stick to the space, as I will examine.

The sense of possibility is not purely affective; it involves practical help and access to material resources. The clearest example of this is Interval's benevolence fund: a built-up surplus to be used to support members through sudden loss of income. Clerke describes this as 'practical solidarity', and it is part of a wider desire to mitigate precarity engendered through austerity.[215] These practical or material methods of support emerge from the ethic and affect of care which arises from the space. Many artists interviewed for this project reported shared resources, skills and experience, and having shared access to rehearsal space as benefits that increased their possibilities as an artist. Rapley says that 'it really enabled people to make more work', as one could access free rehearsal space without having to ask for space from institutions, a long process. There was by no means consensus that collectives necessarily enabled artists to make more work. Clerke, for instance, says that 'probably in terms of actual time I could have made three more shows in the amount of time I've put into this thing', though they continue: 'I don't know if I'd have made any work if I hadn't put it into this thing'. Through working in the same space they can quickly and easily access advice and support of both an administrative and creative nature. Bannon says that getting in a fellow member as a dramaturg, 'for 10 minutes or chat to

[215] Clerke confirmed that this 'emergency fund to financially support members in need in a very quick and easy way with £200-300 pots of cash', did in fact take place. Email between Rachael Clerke and author, 01/10/2021.

me about this thing is hugely accelerating of a process. […] at times it felt like a squad of expertise.' This ad hoc sharing of resources operates as collective education and training for each member. Sharing these skills freely, generously, and collectively, resists neoliberal and capitalist notions of intellectual property, expertise and competition. The sharing of dramaturgical and aesthetic advice also short-circuits the role of the curator or institutional programmer from this process as the sole arbiter of artistic value. These repeated actions of support and sharing of expertise also serve to bond the group and enact an ethic and practice of care.

The social and affective environment of these collectives allow them to suspend the competition of the rest of the field. Rapley, though he admits that he is sometimes technically in competition with other members for the same funding, this is competition 'imposed upon us by an external organisation': 'we don't have to buy into that as the way we approach our work together […] It's better that some of us are getting funded than that nobody's getting funded'. Clerke, of Interval, makes similar comments. They say, 'I feel like we're in a gang, like we're trying to do something, and it feels a bit against the odds. So, if we all apply for the same thing, and one person gets it, we're like, we're winning!' Through identifying as a group, the collectives can mitigate competition by identifying the successes of others with their own. This is a significant addition to Bourdieu's theory of field, which imagines artists and other agents in constant competition for capital, writing 'of the competition which pits them against each other, of the alliances they form'.[216] Though he does indeed write about groups and alliances, these are short-lived in his formulation. He writes that though groups of artists might initially experience 'intense affective solidarity', he writes that their 'interests, momentarily coming together, will later start to diverge', particularly 'when they achieve recognition - the symbolic profits of that recognition frequently going only to a few – or even only one of them'.[217] The case studies I examine in this thesis depart from this formulation. Forming a studio collective seems a relatively simple, and long-term, way of suspending competition and sharing symbolic capital, one that allows them to rework the external operation of the field and its fundamental principle of competition. One member's gain is not another's loss – it is a gain for the collective symbolic capital of the group.

However, this suspension only acts within a limited boundary: among those recognised as being part of the collective. Though members may attempt to reject this externally imposed competition more widely, the sharing of capital which enables such a suspension does not function in the same way with those who are not identified with the collective. This provides a key point of critique. Collectives form from similar positions in the field, and through social and professional networks. As I will examine later, this has the potential to propagate conditions of exclusion along lines of socio-economic background, race, or other social identity. This is presumably why Bourdieu

[216] Bourdieu, *Rules of art*, op. cit., p. 204.
[217] Ibid., p. 267.

uses words such as collusion or connivance to describe collaboration, as I noted in in the Introduction to this thesis: activity that constitutes collaborative support for those in the collective is exclusionary collusion for those outside it. While one collective members' gain might not be a loss for someone within the collective, the same cannot be said for someone outside of it. This is a consequence of these collectives' limited influence and power in restructuring the field – they are only able to suspend competition locally. However, in doing so, and as I will examine in the final part of this chapter, they also attempt to draw others into the collective, to share resources, and to spread principles of collaboration throughout the local field of performance.

These studio collectives also suspend competition by producing social and affective spaces that allow generosity and care to flourish, that encourage supportive relationships and discourage competition. These feelings emerge in between the members, from the space and conditions they create by being together. As generosity and care emerges and becomes established as a principle of the space, perhaps not explicitly spoken or written down but rather felt affectively, new members who wish to join replicate this affect in order to fit in with the group. This is what Ahmed refers to as the stickiness of affect and emotion: affects of generosity stick to the group and the space, and stick the group together. In order to bond with or stick to the group, new and existing members must replicate these generous and caring affects and practices. We can expand this further through Ahmed's writing on identification, and in turn add to Ahmed's account examples of how positive affects are generated and sustained through collective identification and co-presence in space. In an extension to the bonding power of love – and we can conceptualise care and generosity as affects similar or adjacent to love – Ahmed writes that:

> identification is a form of love […] which moves or pulls the subject towards another. Identification involves the desire to get closer to others by becoming like them. […] identification expands the space of the subject: it is a form of love that tells the subject what it could become in the intensity of its direction towards another (love as 'towardness').[218]

We can think of this towardness in the sense of the collective identification and proximity of collectives, both physical and social proximity and the deepening emotional proximity over time – through sharing space together, through identifying with each other and the space, through investing time, labour, and love in the space and each other, they create and maintain loving affects of generosity and care, which stick to the space and each other.

This 'towardness' is enabled by the practical and material circumstances of completing artistic and administrative labour together. Each collective space contains an office or space with desks, in

[218] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, op. cit., p. 126.

which members complete individual work pertaining to their individual practice. Doing so in the same space allows collaboration, advice and generosity to emerge. Bannon, of Residence, says, 'we were working on our individual practices, but a lot of that collaboration happened because we were near […] a lot of that generosity came from proximity [to each other].' Donohoe of Single End refers to the possibility of honest conversation brought about by completing administrative work in the same space. She says,

> We're not working together necessarily, but we are doing the day-to-day, being a freelancer, the stuff that can be hard, together. […] it feels like you don't have to pretend and only talk about your successes. You can talk about what you're actually struggling with and what you're actually doing.

This insight into each other's daily working reality, rather than the curated positive image of their artistic work, allows emotional closeness and allows the artists to avoid competitiveness and provide care. Coming into work regularly and completing difficult and time-consuming administrative work together, bonds the group in a shared purpose and a shared struggle, and one that provides the opportunity for collaboration, professional and emotional support.

This idea of not having to pretend is related to the possibility of vulnerability. If, as Held argues, an ethic of care focuses on, among other things, attentiveness and responsiveness to need, then a key prerequisite for care is the ability to express a need for it through being vulnerable. This vulnerability may be particularly possible, and necessary, in spaces shared by performers. The necessity of artists and producers to be vulnerable in their work, and the increasing need to follow an ethic of care through their performance and collaboration, allows them to create these spaces of co-vulnerability and care beyond their performances. Performers and performance artists frequently express their emotions in front of an audience and display real emotional vulnerability. This is common in the work of live artists and performers who make autobiographical and solo work which leaves them particularly exposed. We can see this in the work of Viki Browne of Interval, whose solo performance *The Gran Show* explores her grief after the loss of her grandmother. Jo Bannon of Residence's work is frequently autobiographical and often informed by her relationship to her albinism.[219] Socially engaged work also requires emotional labour, such as Clerke's *Working Model*, in which they and other artists work with a group of children to build a 'real but temporary present-day city' in a warehouse space.[220]

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[219] See these two artists' websites: [https://vikibrowne.com/] and [https://www.jobannon.co.uk/] [accessed 26/07/2022].

[220] Rachael Clerke's website, 'Working Model', [https://rachaelclerke.com/Working-Model] [accessed 18/11/2022. For an example of the emotional labour of applied arts and theatre, see Sheila Preston, 'Managed hearts? Emotional labour and the applied theatre facilitator in urban settings', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 18:3, 2013, pp. 230-245.

Other artists and producers must also perform emotional labour, and put their selves and sociality to work, through the importance of networking.[221] Spaces shared by these artists and producers then are particularly predisposed to emotional vulnerability, and enabling and supporting this vulnerability through care is particularly necessary.

Emotion, and the possibility of vulnerability, is important to both Residence and Interval, who both reference collective members crying. Viki Browne says that 'it feels like such a vulnerable and emotional space sometimes'. Clerke references the importance of feeling that 'it's okay to be vulnerable'. Vulnerability and care in this case is not felt to be burdensome – rather it is felt to be positive. Janine Wiles writes that 'not all caregivers experience care as a burden', and that the 'caregiving role may have some positive effects'. [222] In line with this, being asked for, giving and receiving collective care is expressed in positive terms by members of collectives. Referring to the benevolence fund, Clerke states that providing this support 'Feels good', and these affective benefits to providing care are felt throughout the collective, in their positive feelings about being part of a community that requires them to care for others.[223] Not only is receiving care positive, but being asked for care, and providing it, acts to bond members, bring them closer, and create better and stronger supportive relationships. As Hilary Graham argues, caring exists within, and is inseparable from, caring relationships; caring forms and maintains relationships and affective ties.[224] As Held writes, 'an ethic of care sees the interests of carers and cared-for as importantly intertwined rather than as simply competing […] care fosters social bonds and cooperation.'[225] Collective identification is important for this. Held writes that 'Persons in caring relations are acting for self-and-other together […] the well-being of a caring relation involves the cooperative well-being of those in the relation and the well-being of the relation itself.'[226] In the case of these collectives, once members have joined and identified with the collective, and particularly once they have received the benefits of the supportive community - it is within their interest to care for and maintain this space and the caring relations it supports. This is clear to see in the accounts of members of these collectives, for whom care is reciprocal. O'Shea relates that being asked for advice within his first week was 'really lovely', because he was being asked as 'an equal creative'. He also notes that being asked for advice helps him 'say to other people - Does anyone have five minutes to just take a look at this thing I'm doing?' Though O'Shea is referring

[221] See, for example, Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism,* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2015) and Daniel Ashton, 'Cultural organisations and the emotional labour of becoming entrepreneurial', *Poetics*, 86, 2021, Article 101534.
[222] See Janine Wiles, 'Reflections on being a recipient of care: vexing the concept of vulnerability', *Social & cultural geography*, 12:6, pp. 573- 588.
[223] Clerke, email with the author, op. cit.
[224] Hilary Graham, 'Caring: A Labour of Love', in *A Labour of Love: Women, Work, and Caring*, J. Finch and D. Groves (eds.), (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1983), pp. 13-30.
[225] Held, op. cit., p. 15
[226] Held, op. cit., p. 13

to professional advice here, it is instructive of how being asked for help is a positive experience, one which enables a free, reciprocal giving and receiving of care, support, or advice, in response to need. This sharing and asking for advice includes other members on an equal footing, helping to counter hierarchies of experience, and functions as an affective transmission of respect and mutual legitimation. The collective and its space therefore provides, in multiple ways, the material and affective conditions for generous and caring behaviour.

Vulnerability and the responsibility for collective care also allows collectives to endure. Residence's Stenhouse and Bannon relate a meeting, after they had lost their space, in which they had both arrived planning to leave the collective, which would have effectively ended it. Soon after Stenhouse began to say this, another member started to cry, and, as Stenhouse says, 'in that moment, I just really realized, oh, it can't end. Because of what it means to *us* [my emphasis].' What is crucial here is that Stenhouse does not recall this display of vulnerability and need as a one-sided, burdensome obligation; rather, it serves as a reminder of his own, and a collective, emotional investment, which necessitates a continued, shared responsibility to care for and be cared for. However, not only does the emotional and vulnerable nature of these groups necessitate emotional labour on the part of their members, in this case it interferes with, and reverses, two of the members remembered intentions prior to the meeting. This, like the tension between chosen and forced mobility in the previous chapter, shows how individual choice is limited by the conditions of both the immediate and wider field. In this case, Stenhouse and Bannon are free to choose to leave the collective, but in the context of the social and affective relations they have built, this would result in negative emotional consequences for others in the collective, and also, potentially, themselves. In being reminded of these conditions, Stenhouse chooses not to leave the collective. Stenhouse's agency, and the possibility of moving on, is limited by his freely chosen collective affective entanglements.

Everyday actions also contribute to constructing a generous and caring space. This was clear in the case of Interval, in whose space I was able to spend some time. This offering of small, everyday kindnesses was a constant feature of the space, from offering tea and coffee to offering help carrying things, to offering emotional support and a shoulder to cry on, sometimes literally, about work or personal problems. Varez, of Interval, calls this 'daily care': and gives the examples of 'having a dance break in the middle of the working day or offering a cup of tea, or having a laugh or sitting by the couch with someone who's crying'. Both deeply personal emotional support and technical professional support is enabled by weak or absent professional boundaries; members are encouraged to bring their entire selves into the space, not just their professional selves. When I asked Clerke what the balance of the collective was between professional and social relationships, they replied, 'I think it's 100% professional and 100% social.' The flexibility of the collective structure allows for this complexity and allows a multiplicity of different relationships to coexist with minimal tension – no interviewees

mentioned any difficulties with this overlapping relationship. Though many artists look on them as a home, with the emotional ties and support which inhere to an idealized version of home, they are also semi-public spaces – spaces in which you might meet a stranger or colleague. Through this, the ethic and practices of care which adhere to the space and the group exceed these specific confines and go on to influence each artist's practices and interactions outside of the collective: they might invite colleagues in, and the relations between artists and producers sustained in the collective influence interactions outside of it. The habitual repetition of these actions references and performatively constructs a social and affective space predisposed to care and support.

This affective counter-space of care is constructed in part through spatial, social, and emotional proximity, as well as a desire to care and support each other, and the formalisation of this desire into caring structures and practices. These artists are proximate in the social space of the field of cultural production: they all exist within the same arts infrastructure, with similar occupations, interests, and political positions. Many of them collaborate on projects or have similar practices. This collaboration is both the informal collaboration that takes places through asking for support that I mentioned earlier, as well as more formal collaborations such as the group curation and organisation of Interval takeovers or Residence residencies, or through projects outside of the collective, such as the collaboration of Interval members Jack Drewry and Viki Browne on performance *I've Been Waiting…* in 2021.[227] Further, their collective identification with the collective and the space lends social proximity. This social and professional proximity, combined with the possibility of honesty and co-vulnerability, are also what enable emotional proximity. This trialectic of proximity is what allows an affect and a disposition toward care to emerge among and beyond the group. Through the stickiness of affect and emotion to members, to the organisation, and to the space itself, and through the formalization of this care in the practices and repeated actions of the group, this care becomes invested in the organisation and its space and comes to constitute its boundary. In this way, care is given a more long-term existence, beyond the presence of any one member, relationship, or act of care.

The Limits of Collective Care

However, several features of these collectives can reproduce dynamics of exclusion. As we saw above, collective care is produced through social proximity. We can map social proximity onto Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks in two ways. Firstly, as I argued earlier, we can say that these groups form out of individuals who occupy homologous positions in the field of cultural production: they are freelance artists and producers working in performance. This proximity will tend to reproduce sectoral exclusions, as those able to occupy the positions of freelance artists and producers working in

[227] Many Minds website, 'Productions: I've been waiting… - 2021 [https://many-minds.org/2021/10/01/ive-been-waiting%EF%BF%BC/] [accessed 05/10/22].

performance will still need a certain amount of symbolic, cultural, and financial capital. In a related profession, analysis by Sam Friedman, Dave O'Brien, and Daniel Laurison found that 'actors from working-class origins are significantly underrepresented within the profession', and 'that even when those from working-class origins do enter the profession they do not have access to the same economic, cultural and social capital as those from privileged backgrounds.'[228] Taking up a position as a performer or an artist usually requires an arts education, financial security, and access to the arts; access which is differentially distributed. This leads to the second possible corollary of social proximity in Bourdieu's models; agents who occupy similar positions in social space – a phrase which is used quite differently to Lefebvre, to mean a structure of social positions or class relations. In *Distinction,* he argues, through surveys of the French public in the 1960s, that 'all cultural practices […] and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level […] and secondarily to social origin.'[229] In this model, cultural activities and tastes enforce class distinctions. As these groups form through an interest and practice in particular art forms, this will likely include specific class positions, namely middle-class people, more than others. In these two senses, social proximity is likely to reproduce sectoral exclusions on the basis of class and race I outlined in the Introduction to this thesis. Though these groups are inclusive of different artforms and performance practices they are still likely to be somewhat socially exclusive.

The nature of these groups intensify such effects. These groups' relative lack of public-facing activities, and their reliance on friendship networks in the immediate performance community to sustain themselves and recruit new members, means that racial and class exclusion in these friendship networks, and in the performance community, is reproduced. People join these collectives through being an artist and knowing someone in them, meaning that those from marginalised identities must not only overcome various sectoral exclusions in education and the arts, but must also overcome social exclusion to become familiar with someone who is already a member of a collective. In other words, members need a certain amount of social capital to join, and social capital is unevenly distributed according to various metrics. Ania Varez reflects that Interval:

> is still very white. Me and Howl [Yuan] are the only people of colour, people not from West England, Europe. So just two of us. I still find it a bit too white, which we've talked about and I think that that has to do with the public reach of interval […] I wouldn't have found this space if somebody didn't tell me.[230]

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[228] Sam Friedman, Dave O'Brien, and Daniel Laurison, '"Like Skydiving without a Parachute": How Class Origin Shapes Occupational Trajectories in British Acting', *Sociology,* 51:5, 2017, pp. 992-1010, p. 992.
[229] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Richard Nice (trans.) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010 [1987]) p. xxiv.
[230] In an email exchange some time after the interview, Varez reports that the diversity of Interval has improved, with '4 other members who are POC'. Ania Varez, email to the author, 28/03/2023.

I expand more fully on race in the final chapter of this thesis, but in this example, this is a difficult problem to solve because it goes to the heart of the identity and operation of these collectives and the conditions of the sector in which they are embedded, as dominated by white, middle-class artists and audiences, as I evidenced in the Introduction to this thesis. Any public outreach could interfere with the purpose of these collectives as a low-commitment space to support each members' individual practice. Nevertheless it is something that Interval are aware of. Clerke says that 'we need to make sure that more people know about the collective so that we can move towards being more diverse and being more accessible for people who might not find out about it'. However, as collective practice is slow, they have low public-profile, and limited influence, this is likely to take some time. It must be noted that these exclusions are reproduced not by intent but as a reflection of the wider fields of which they form a part. Small, private, and low-resourced groups like this can play their part in shifting the practices of the wider field, but it is not possible for them to transform the field as a whole.

As I have intimated, the affective nature of these spaces likewise has the potential to be, or is by its very nature, exclusionary. The possibility of vulnerability forms the very boundary of Interval, reinforcing Ahmed's argument that emotions form the surfaces of bodies and worlds. In Clerke's words, 'the only reason we would reject someone from Interval would be if we didn't feel safe being vulnerable around them'. Drawing on Ahmed here, we can extend the references to safety and comfort I made in the previous chapter, as well as the writing on the ideal of love above. In this case, we have not only the affect of safety forming a boundary, but the conjunction of safety and vulnerability. As we saw in the previous chapter, this feeling of safety requires the exclusion of those who threaten it. In this case, the ideal of vulnerability operates as an exclusive boundary like the ideal of love, one which relies on the exclusion of one who does not meet the ideal. As Ahmed writes, 'an ''ideal'' is what sticks subjects together (coherence) […] Through love, an ideal self is produced as a self that belongs to a community; the ideal is a proximate "we"'.[231] We can see how the ideal of vulnerability as a central feature of these collectives' practices might function in the same way – being vulnerable around others, and accepting the vulnerability of others, is a way in which we express love and care. This ideal, like love, relies of the existence of those who fail it. This is not a specific problem of Interval's – this is how, Ahmed argues, all collectives, in the broader sense, form. It is however important to examine how these felt, affective practices might function to reproduce emotional normativity and exclusion.

The potential problem of such affective boundaries is that they are highly subjective and unspoken, and therefore run the risk of assuming consensus and excluding difference as I examined above in my discussion of meetings and a 'gut feeling'. Single End have similar principles – Heaney

[231] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* op. cit., p. 106.

refers to their rules as ‘be respectful, ask if you're not sure if what you're doing is appropriate, ask for help if you need it’, and she and Donohoe agree that the main rule is ‘don’t take the piss’, a specifically British phrase meaning roughly – do not be unreasonable, do not make unreasonable demands, or, perhaps – do not take more than you are entitled to. As such, it relates to a gut feeling of fairness, and again we have the use of a shared, culturally-specific, and amorphous affective boundary. These terms assume consensus and shared norms that may actually enforce a normativity on the group, or be alienating to new members who do not share the same cultural background. However, such structurelessness is frequently a part of collective practice – as I examine in the next chapter. It is important to these collectives that these rules are relational, reflexive, and contestable; they arise from communication between all the members and change as the members change. These principles, theoretically, allow for the shifting of practices to be inclusive of cultural difference. Similarly, the need for co-vulnerability, the ability to express need for care, and to receive it from others in the collective, assumes a certain degree of similarity in need. Co-vulnerability in these spaces functions on the assumption of a limited set of normative ways of expressing and responding to emotion. Those who find it difficult to express emotion, vulnerability, and a need for care, or who find it difficult to read the needs and emotions of others, are likely to be excluded, at least partially, from collective care. Finally, the difficulty of finding affordable space, particularly in expensive cities like Bristol, means that collectives often cannot afford to be selective with their spaces. Interval’s space ‘doesn't have disabled access, which is shit and is a reason that we should move.’[232] However, these spaces are so hard-won, this is difficult to countenance.

However, these groups, being tactical responses to specific conditions, cannot be held entirely responsible for these societal and sectoral exclusions: their possibilities are limited by the field as they find it, and by their lack of secure resources, space, or influence as part of their tactical position. For all its problems, the collective care offered by these collectives is a marked improvement from that experienced by artists before they join, that offered by many institutions, and the conditions of the field of performance at large. We can see this in the examples of Interval members Varez and Clerke. Varez speaks of having immigrated to London from Venezuela to train at London Contemporary Dance School. Varez reports that they had ‘some of the toughest times’ of their life in London. They speak of being ‘very disappointed of the way the arts were working’, and their surprise at being at the ‘most well-known dance school in England and I didn't find at all care. And I didn't find structures of being together when there was any different need.’ This is what they found in Interval, saying that ‘if the unthinkable and the worst things that could ever happen to me happened, I know that at least as it is now Interval would be there. And they would quite likely catch what they could catch of me.’ Though there is an acknowlegdement of the potential limitations of the care offered by the collective,

[232] Clerke, op. cit.

this shows it offers a sense of security and hope for Varez. For Clerke too, joining a collective was a tactical response to uncaring, difficult conditions. Clerke moved to London after graduating from Dartington College of Arts, and had 'a very bad time […] partly because London's really hard'. Clerke describes London as 'really competitive', feeling 'like everyone saw each other as a threat' which was 'really depressing.' Moving to Bristol and joining Interval allowed a reversal of these conditions. They say, 'I think I thought I had to have a really horrible time to be an artist. And then I was like, "oh, maybe I would make more art if I was having a nice time!"' This speaks to one of the more subtle effects of neoliberalism and austerity; that it inculcates a belief in its subjects that they do not deserve any better, and minimizes their capacity to hope.[233] As we shall see in the final chapter, austerity, neoliberal capitalism, and their accompanying conditions and rhetoric, including the climate crisis, fundamentally alter artists' orientation to the future, even their capacity to imagine a future. Having a secure home and a caring community in the collective provides the possibility to hope and to imagine a future. Despite uncaring and difficult conditions, it also provides the possibility to care for others, not just within the collective, but beyond, to which I now turn.

Care beyond the collective

Though the primary focus of each collective is care and support for their members, their practices extend beyond this, allowing the ethic and practice of care to have wider impacts on the field. The collectives all organise performance and training events. These are done to fulfil a function for their members' practices, for enjoyment, or to make a political point, rather than to become a replacement for performance venues. Residence did not have a regular programme, but Bannon and Stenhouse relate one key event that also had political and economic implications. Artist Daniel Bye put his show, *The Price of Everything*, 'a performance lecture about value', on eBay for venues to bid for.[234] Residence bid on it as an intervention, deciding to pay whatever it cost. In doing so, they outbid the Tobacco Factory Theatre, a large publicly funded arts centre. In being able to outbid a regularly funded organisation, they show how little resources are usually allocated for art, and how unable, or unwilling, venues are to pay for the true cost of artistic labour for the artist. This is an act of solidarity from artists to artist; whilst also acting as a provocation to venues to value artistic labour in the same way. These practices put an emphasis on providing care and support to artists even on such low resource and ask why better resourced venues cannot do the same. Residence also cared and supported other artists by remaining open to new members, and through providing weekend artist residencies called Hideaways, where they would, as Bannon descibes it, 'invite artists to come and sleep over and cook and hang out and maybe make work - but not in that kind of "empty studio, here's a week-long residency" model.' This was enabled by the fact that the Milk Bar space was a shop-building with

[233] See Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life*, op. cit.
[234] Daniel Bye's website, [http://www.danielbye.co.uk/the-price-of-everything.html] [accessed 14/05/2020].

multiple floors and ‘living room-sized’ rooms, meaning it ‘felt like a house’. This gave the space a sense of homeliness, and enabled them to invite other artists in, not on a purely professional level, but with ‘a kind of humanness’: genuine friendly hospitality, rather than as a professional, financial transaction.[235] This is freely given hospitality which emerges from excess capacity to care and support others, rather than a contractual, institutional, transactional exchange in which specific outcomes are expected in return.

Interval likewise do not commit to providing a public performance programme, but they do support projects suggested by members and curate semi-regular performance events called Interval Takeovers, usually at the Wardrobe theatre. This consists of members performing old or new pieces as part of a festival structure. At time of interview two of these takeovers had taken place, and as Browne says, ‘often they happen when there’s need for them.’ Browne reports this being in response in part to a frustration with not being programmed in the city – so the artists programme themselves. They do this on very low resource – with no one getting paid, the emphasis on small, solo performances, which can take place throughout the building. There is a danger, as we shall see in the next chapter, of these practices of performing for free becoming normalized in the wider performance sector, but the purpose of these events seems as much for the enjoyment rather than any specific professional outcome. Browne reports it being ‘really fun’, with artists reprising old shows that they have stopped performing, in a low-pressure environment. Interval do not have the resource to market these events, and Browne reports them feeling ‘a bit insular’, but this does however provide some public profile and engagement for the collective. New member O’Shea for example reports this being one of the ways he came to know about the collective.

Single End have a similar approach. As part of their agreement with their studios, they host two events a year. They use these events for fun, for an opportunity to play, in contrast to their professional work, to engage with other artists and audiences outside of the collective, and to build communities and relationships, inside their collective, the other studios, and beyond. They put on an event in May 2019, called *Many Artists Yass*, which included artists from their base at Southside Studios, which meant that ‘the collective also became this wider Southside Studios collective.’ These events become an opportunity to open the collective and involve others in their immediate environment. This was likewise the case with their Christmas event in 2018: *Die Hard: The Panto.* Heaney and Donohoe describe it as ‘such a collective activity’, one which was initiated by Single End member Geraldine Heaney with rehearsals taking place in Single End, but which was open to anyone from outside the collective, often from the Glasgow theatre and performance community. Heaney describes it as ‘a community open out to the wider arts community’, an invitation to ‘come and play’.

[235] Bannon, op. cit.

She says that among her work with distinct social or professional purposes, it felt important to her to do something that was 'for the sake of itself', a collective effort towards a common, low-stakes performance purpose, one in which people commit their time and skills for which they would usually be paid, just for the joy of it. These performance activities across all three studio collectives do not seek to replace professional venues, rather they provide what they often fail to: equal communitarian support, care, and hospitality for artists as people. These examples show how studio collectives can produce an excess of care and resources which can then be shared with others, multiplying and expanding their impacts. This is how collectives reproduce their impacts and replicate themselves; shifting the immediate field, however slightly, to more caring and supportive practices.

Conclusion

Through examining the practices and reflections of these collectives in dialogue with the theoretical frameworks of this thesis, and with scholarship on care, I have established how care emerges, and is enacted, through multiple stages of these collectives. In their formation, care is enacted through recognizing and attending to a mutual need for space and support. They make use of the social and affective production of space, through creating desired, supportive social relations, collective identification, and affective investment, which in some cases precede their existence in a physical space. Their flexible and responsive practices enact care on the level of organisational structure, being attentive to the shifting needs of their members. In their everyday operation they produce and maintain an affective counter-space of care, in which the space and organisation are constituted and maintained through copresence and co-vulnerability. Care is affectively invested in the space and group, which allows it to endure and extend beyond any one member or interaction in the collective. Care, love, support, and generosity are produced and circulate through the group and its space, as sticky emotions and affects, which bond the group together, and stick to the space and to new members. This stickiness is what allows these affects to endure; and these sticky emotions are intensified through the investment of emotional and physical labour. Throughout, I have drawn attention to the limits or problems of such collective care; its potential to reproduce sectoral exclusions, emotional normativity, or unspoken hierarchies through its affective practices. Nevertheless, through renting, occupying, and working on their practices in spaces together, and through assuming oppositional position-takings in the field, these groups use affective counter-spaces of care and collective identification to successfully suspend and rework the competition and isolation of the field of cultural production, which is exacerbated by neoliberal austerity. Through an awareness of their far-reaching interdependence and their relations with other organisations and individuals, and through members' specific projects and interactions with others beyond the collective, these collectives can influence the practices, affects, and social relations of the field of live art and experimental performance for the better, making it more caring and collaborative.

Chapter Three

Festivals: Producing Spaces of Communitas

Introduction

This chapter argues that collective and artist-run festivals can intervene in the affective environment of everyday austerity to create affective counter-spaces of communitas: intense collective joy and connection between large groups of people. In doing so, they temporarily resist and rework negative emotional impacts of austerity: isolation, social division, and despair, for the artists, producers and audiences who attend them. They also create the conditions for longer-term community support by building networks of friendships which last beyond the festival timeframe itself. However, as intense experiences of socialization, these festivals can also be exclusionary, and their economic practices are susceptible to complicity with market forces and exploitation. To make this argument I develop Emile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence and Victor Turner's concept of communitas to conceptualize the impact of these festivals. Claire Bishop's scholarship on relational antagonism allows me to examine where these attempts at communitas falter: or rather how failure, conflict and friction might be an intrinsic part of the process of collectively running DIY festivals under neoliberal capitalism.

This chapter is structured into two parts. The first, 'Creating a space for communitas', examines how the ideals and practices of these festivals align with features of communitas, and how they seek to create these spaces in response to need or gaps in the field. Here I extend my use of Bourdieu in examining these gaps or 'structural lacunae'. I begin the second part, 'Producing Communitas and Antagonism', with some brief examples of performance which illustrate the tension between communitas and antagonism that exists in the broader social space of the festivals. I then examine how communitas is enacted between embodied audiences and how, through the superposition of communitas and social structure, frictions and tensions arise at multiple levels of the social and affective spaces of these festivals. I use Lefebvre and Bourdieu to analyse the tensions which arise when these counter-spaces of communitas interact with the principles, practices, and social structure of the rest of the field of cultural production, and use Ahmed to figure the exclusions that are enacted as a consequence. Through these stages, I argue that these festivals produce both communitas and antagonism, and I seek to reconcile both of these as necessary components of community gatherings which act as cultural spaces of contestation. I build on my concept of tactical collective practice to show how communitas and antagonism are employed tactically by these festivals to achieve certain ends: to bring audiences and communities together, to attract artists, and to enact change in the immediate field.

Case Studies

In this chapter I examine three further case studies, all collective- or artist-run festivals of live art and experimental performance: Forest Fringe, Buzzcut and Steakhouse Live. I interviewed Andy Field of Forest Fringe in July 2019, who also answered a preliminary survey of questions for me in in July 2018. I spoke to Rosana Cade and Karl Taylor of Buzzcut in two separate interviews in July 2019. Finally, I spoke to Katy Baird of Steakhouse Live in a preliminary interview in August 2018 and spoke to co-organisers Aaron Wright and Mary Osborn in May and July 2019 respectively.[236] I have also attended these festivals multiple times since 2013 and worked with them on various occasions as a volunteer or co-curator of discussion events. I am also socially entangled with these festivals: many of those I interviewed are close friends of mine, professional acquaintances, one an ex-partner. The 'intimate insider' methodology I discussed in the introduction is particularly pertinent here: this position provides me with insider knowledge, but I attend to the limitations of this local, situated knowledge and seek to bolster it with other perspectives and critical scholarship.

Forest Fringe

Forest Fringe is an organisation whose initial focus was running a festival of experimental performance that took place in Edinburgh, usually for two-weeks, during the Festival Fringe in August, from 2007-2016. Forest Fringe sought to create 'space for risk and adventure', to support experimental work which would otherwise not find a home at the festival. Forest Fringe were hugely influential in supporting and advocating for these practices in the UK and, later, around the world, through a series of micro-festivals and in collaboration with the British Council's own showcase activities. Artist and curator Deborah Pearson founded and ran the first year of Forest Fringe in 2007, at Forest Café, a 'volunteer-run, collectively-owned free arts and events space masquerading as a vegetarian café'.[237] Artist and producer Andy Field, one of the programmed artists in the first year, joined her in organizing the second year's programme. They were later joined by artist Ira Brand, who was invited to become the third co-director of Forest Fringe. Pearson, Field, and Brand are all practicing artists, and ran the festival along artist-led and collective principles, with Field noting that they describe themselves as an artist-led collective or artist-led project.[238] In 2013, after the landlords of Forest Café went into administration, they moved to Out of the Blue Drill Hall in Leith, a large arts centre in the north of Edinburgh, at a distance from the main festival hubs of the Fringe. They built several performance spaces in this building and put on a programme on a larger scale. The festival took place

[236] All quotations from these artists and producers in this chapter come from interviews with the author on these respective dates, unless otherwise specified.
[237] The Forest Blog, 'About', [https://blog.theforest.org.uk/about] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[238] Andy Field, text questionnaire between Field and the author, received 30/07/2018.

here every year until its tenth, and last, year in 2016, a festival which revived old works from previous festivals as well as presenting new performances.

Buzzcut

Buzzcut, based in Glasgow, began as an artist-run, annual festival of live art and performance art which ran from 2012-2017. They also ran other performance events which continue, though in an altered organisational form. The festival grew over the years, with the organisers focusing on supporting as many artists as possible in the local and national (UK, particularly Scotland) performance community, with a focus on experimental, work-in-progress work, and being radically inclusive and welcoming to audiences. The first Buzzcut in 2012 was organised by Rosana Cade and Nick Anderson, artists, friends and recent graduates of the Contemporary Performance Practice course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Their first two festivals took place in various bars and venues around Glasgow before moving to the Pearce Institute, a large community centre in Govan, a district in the Southwest of Glasgow that is among the most socially and economically deprived in Scotland.[239] Buzzcut took place in the Pearce Institute from 2014-2017, expanding from the café and a single space to a large festival hub in the central McLeod Hall, with performances happening all around the building. Karl Taylor joined the team in 2016, Rosana Cade stepped back from the organisation, and the group recruited producer Daisy Douglas to help them run the 2017 festival. After this festival the group took a break from running the annual festival to reflect on the organisation. Nick Anderson stepped back, and Taylor and Douglas took over the running of regular performance nights 'Double Thrills' at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Art. Buzzcut is now led by Karl Taylor as Administrative Director, with Claricia Parinussa as Creative Producer, Nat Walpole as Communications Manager, Louise Gregory as Festival Production Manager, and Kim Simpson as Organisational Advisor.[240]

Steakhouse Live

Steakhouse Live describe themselves as a 'DIY platform for radical performance practices' and 'an independent artist/producer collective'.[241] Their focus is on supporting live art, nurturing new artists in the form who would otherwise not be supported, and creating new performance opportunities. Steakhouse Live was begun by artists and producers Katy Baird and Louise Orwin and opened in 2013 with a one-day festival at Rich Mix, a large, multi-storey and multi-arts centre in Shoreditch in East London. Since then, they have run annual festivals and other events in various venues and contexts

[239] See 'Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020' [https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/] [accessed 23/03/2022].
[240] Buzzcut website, 'About: Buzzcut Team', [https://www.glasgowbuzzcut.co.uk/about] [accessed 21/09/2022].
[241] Steakhouse Live website, 'About' [steakhouselive.co.uk] [accessed 21/11/2022].

across London, both regular and one-off, and the organisers have been joined by other artists and producers, many of whom worked at live art organisations, such as Aaron Wright (previously of LADA, now Fierce festival in Birmingham), and Mary Osborn (Artsadmin). Their festival often takes place in Rich Mix and/or in spaces at Artsadmin's Toynbee Studios in Tower Hamlets in East London, while their Christmas party, *Tits and Tinsel*, took place in a different venue each year, usually in East London. They have run programmes and events at festivals Latitude, Beacons, Hackney Wicked, and Submerge. In 2017 and 2019 they worked with National Trust property Sutton House in Hackney, to run a programme of queer performance with *NSA: A Queer Salon*.

Creating Space for Communitas

In order to show how these festivals seek to produce affective counter-spaces of communitas and collective effervescence, I must briefly establish these two theories. Put forward by anthropologists Émile Durkheim and Victor Turner respectively, they describe spaces and times which are different to the everyday - heightened collective experience and awareness during gatherings and ritual practices in tribal societies, Durkheim among indigenous Australian tribes and Turner among the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia. In describing collective effervescence, Durkheim writes that 'The very fact of assembling is an exceptionally powerful stimulant […] their proximity generates a kind of electricity' which is amplified as it passes between those assembled.[242] This echoes the 'sticky' emotions of the previous chapter. Collective effervescence works through the same process, but on a larger scale and intensity. Turner elucidates on the separation of these spaces and times from the everyday, describing them as liminal, following Arnold van Gennep's description of rites of passage. These rites reveal communitas: 'a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties.'[243] These gatherings offer the potential for togetherness and connection which goes beyond cultural distinctions and differences between individuals. Turner differentiates between three types of communitas: existential or spontaneous communitas, a transient experience of intense togetherness and unstructured group relation; normative communitas where 'the need to mobilize and organise resources, and the necessity for social control' organises existential communitas into a 'perduring social system'; and ideological communitas, 'a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential communitas.'[244] These times and spaces, in both Durkheim's and Turner's conception, have the potential to be unpredictable and depart from the

[242] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* Carol Cosman (trans.) (Oxford University Press, 2001 [1912]) p. 162-163.
[243] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Strucutre and Anti-Structure* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969) p. 96.
[244] Ibid., p. 132.

rules of the everyday, providing them with transgressive potential, as we shall see in my analysis of collective and artist-run festivals.

Several key features of these festivals align with the features of communitas, namely: liminality, separation, unstructuredness, transgressiveness, and egalitarianism. Festivals are at once separate from and part of the everyday, or 'moments in and out of time' in Turner's terms.[245] This is reflected in scholarship on festivals, which tends to view festivals as events which break from the everyday, but which are nevertheless a part of the social, economic, and political context in which they take place.[246] Festival scholarship also tends to frame them as a part of the public sphere, or as public spaces which have a democratic potential, something which is important to my later arguments that tension and conflict are necessary features of these festival spaces.[247] Festivals are elevated times and spaces, and as Keren Zaointz writes, scholarship has 'tried to capture why life feels so different' when we are at festivals.[248] This dual position of festivals as both a part of, and separate from, the everyday and its social structures, is what lends them their aesthetic and affective power and their limitations. Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, in their thesis on the London Internation Festival of Theatre, argues that neoliberal 'principles interpenetrate the field of cultural production to the extent that limits the possibilities of festivals achieving their full social purpose.'[249]

I will argue that in the case of these particular festivals, that rather than limiting their possibilities, engaging with and contesting neoliberal principles, and the social structures and tensions that they produce, actually constitutes the social purpose of these festivals. The liminal position in which they exist, between their radical ideas (or ideological communitas) and their context, is illustrative of their tactical position, which produces the tensions, between anti-structure and structure, communitas and antagonism, which are the focus of this chapter. Following wider scholarship on festivals, which also stresses the tension between their radical or democratic potentials and their imbrication within neoliberal capitalism, as well as the work of Clare Bishop and Rosalyn Deutsche, I show how, in the words of Stanley Waterman, festivals 'provide examples of how culture is

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[245] Ibid.
[246] See, for instance, Katherine White, 'East Germany's Red Woodstock: The 1973 Festival between the "Carnivalesque" and the Everyday', *Central European History*, 51:4, 2018, pp. 585-610, or Stuart Richards and Lauren Carroll Harris, 'From the event to the everyday: distributor-driven film festivals', *Media International Australia*, 180:1, 2021, pp. 91-100.
[247] See Jen Harvie, 'The Edinburgh festivals: globalisation and democracy', in *Staging the UK* (Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 74-111, and Gerard Delanty, Liana Giorgi, and Monica Sassatelli (eds.), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2011).
[248] Keren Zaiontz, *Theatre & Festivals*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 15-16.
[249] Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, *The London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) in Context, 1947-2016*, Unpublished Thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2019.

contested'.[250] This chapter builds on this festival scholarship by specifically considering artist-run and collective festivals, and the particular potentials and tensions they face. I argue that they are particularly well-suited to being what Zaiontz calls counter-festivals, to creating spaces of communitas, and to producing spaces of contestation, due to their DIY, artist-run, and collective nature. At the same time, they are particularly in tension, and particularly susceptible to problems, as I will examine.

In line with the separation of festivals and communitas from the everyday, these festivals are often described in elevated terms. Steakhouse Live festival in 2018 was described as 'one weekend of rowdy, fleshy, intoxicating live art and performance.'[251] Buzzcut described themselves as being 'dedicated to creating exciting environments' with 'cutting edge live performance.'[252] Forest Fringe, in their 2009 programme, refer to 'strange and beautiful experiments'.[253] These terms distinguish these festivals from everyday experience. For Buzzcut this is also clear in their key influence, the National Review of Live Art (NRLA), which Cade recalls as 'an immersive, five-day experience', with 'a shit-tonne' of performances, with 'all these different spaces with things going on.' Though Cade says that it was not necessarily a conscious decision to replicate the NRLA, they note that this was one of the only performance festivals they and Anderson had been to, so they thought 'that's how it should be. It should be this like big gathering with lots and lots on and everyone sort of coming together.' This gathering of a large group of people together in an intense, immersive and elevated environment is what produces communitas.

All three festivals emerge out of liminal, informal and unstructured relationships which exist somewhere between friend and colleague. Buzzcut was formed out of a friendship between Rosana Cade and Nick Anderson. Forest Fringe was likewise formed out of informal circumstances, friendships and ambiguous personal-professional relationships, between Deborah Pearson, and poet, performance artist, and long-term volunteer organiser at Forest Café, Ryan Van Winkle, who originally approached Pearson and asked if she wanted to run the space. Field is emphatic that Forest Fringe was 'forged from' acts of generosity within 'pseudo personal relationships […] that existed in the grey area between personal and professional'. Steakhouse Live likewise had an informal beginning, as told to me second-hand by member Mary Osborn, when artists, producers, and friends Katy Baird and Louise Orwin went to Buzzcut and 'they were both struggling to get their work seen. […] And they were like, fuck it. Let's just put our work on in a program that we put together and invite some other artists that

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[250] Stanley Waterman, 'Carnivals for Elites? The Cultural Politics of Arts Festivals', *Progress in Human Geography*, 22:1, 1998, pp. 54-74. See also Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK*, op. cit. and Ric Knowles, 'The Edinburgh Festival and Fringe: Lessons for Canada', *Canadian Theatre Review*, 102, 2000, pp. 88-96.
[251] Artsadmin website, [https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/events/4105/] [accessed 03/05/2022].
[252] Buzzcut previous website, 'Volunteer Call Out 2013', [https://glasgowbuzzcut.wordpress.com/2012/07/] [accessed 3/5/22].
[253] Forest Fringe website, [https://forestfringe.co.uk/project/edinburgh-2009/] [accessed 03/05/2022].

we like.' This 'fuck it' or 'let's just do it ourselves' is a typically DIY impulse. New members joined who were both friends and colleagues, such as Aaron Wright, close friend and then colleague of Baird at LADA. Wright says: 'you got to work with your friends, […] it was a social thing - we liked doing it, […] It was exciting.' Friendship is important to Steakhouse, and its early years were particularly driven by the friendship between Baird and Wright, who both worked at LADA at the time. Though Turner stressed that communitas 'is not the pleasurable and effortless comradeship that can arise between friends, coworkers, or professional colleagues any day', the unstructured and liminal nature of these relationships contains a predisposition toward communitas.[254]

These festivals emerge from gaps in the field - liminal states between what existed before and what will emerge to replace it. Buzzcut emerged out of the loss: Cade had been the recipient of the Athena Award from New Moves International, an organisation that produced festivals New Territories and the NRLA.[255] After this company ceased trading at the end of 2011 following the discovery of financial 'irregularities', Cade lost this opportunity, and the funding and mentoring that came with it.[256] Unrelated to these irregularities, the NRLA had its thirtieth and final year in 2010. The loss of these two festivals, and the loss of a personal opportunity, left Cade at a loss as what to do with their artistic practice and left a hole in the artistic infrastructure of Glasgow (and the UK), particularly for live art. The loss of an organisation like this impacts the whole local field of experimental performance, through impacting all agents who exist in relation to it. The loss of organisations and resulting gaps in the field, though often intensely negative experiences for the communities of artists and audiences that use and relate to them, manifest as new positions in the space of possibles, providing the potential of something new taking their place. This directly influenced the formation of Buzzcut: by filling a gap left by a valued organisation in the field, and fulfilling a need experienced by a community, they form with an already existing network of supporting artists, audiences, and other organisations. This is tactically advantageous, though, as we shall see, it also comes with high expectations from this community.

This chimes with what Baird thinks, who refers to the practice of both Buzzcut and Steakhouse as 'filling a void' – or providing something which is needed by the field, either through provision being lost or never being met. Steakhouse Live emerged in response to the loss of festivals and venues

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[254] Turner, op. cit., p. 138.
[255] The NRLA was a large annual performance art festival that took place from 1979-2010, which began in Nottingham and on several occasions took place in London, but which mostly took place in Glasgow at The Arches from 1994-2005, and at Tramway from 2006-2010. See the NRLA Archive at Bristol University, [http://www.bristol.ac.uk/nrla/] and the NRLA30 website [https://nrla30.com/].
[256] Phil Miller, 'Police called after Scots arts company wound up', *Herald Scotland*, 13/12/2011 [https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13042507.police-called-after-scots-arts-company-wound-up/] [accessed 27/07/2022].

programming early-career live artists in or around London: SPILL and Tempting Failure festivals, and the loss of the live art programme at Chelsea theatre, as Baird explained in our interview. We can augment this practice of 'filling a void' with Bourdieu's concept of 'structural lacunae': 'a potential state at the heart of the system of already realized possibles […] which appear to wait for and call for fulfilment, like potential directions of development'.[257] The gap left by the loss of organisation is one such lacuna, but so is the identification of a need or new organisational practices, such as those of the festivals discussed in this chapter. The organisers of these festivals identify gaps and opportunities in the field through being embedded within it, and through their habitus (their histories, capabilities, dispositions, and norms of behaviour). Bourdieu writes that:

> The summons contained in these gaps is only understood by those who, as a result of their position in the field and their habitus, and of the (often discordant) relationship between the two, are free enough from the constraints inscribed in the structure to be able to recognize as applying to them a virtuality which, in a sense, only exists for them.[258]

The organisers of these festivals must be at once in the field, with all the necessary knowledge and skills to operate within it successfully – and they must also *feel* able and entitled to do so – as I will expand on in the next chapter. As Cade notes – 'it took a lot of confidence to do what we did.' They must also however be free enough from its constraints enough to try and do things differently. This position, as within the field but somehow separate or oppositional, is typical of the tactical practices of the collective and artist-run groups I examine in this thesis. For Baird of Steakhouse, the discordant relationship between her habitus and her position in the field may well have been due to her identity as a queer working-class woman, with a background in squats and the radical DIY politics that come with it, contrasting with her position of relative influence and responsibility in the field of live art through her work at LADA. The transgressive potential of communitas, marginalised identity, or artist-run and collective practice, provides freedom from the constraints of the field which can depart from established working practices and seek to institute new ones, as I shall examine later.

In line with the exploitation of voids or empty spaces of potential, each collective also speaks in terms of making or creating space. Forest Fringe's tagline was 'Creating space for risk and adventure at the Edinburgh Festival and beyond'. Cade says that Buzzcut used to have as their email signature 'two artists making space for more art'. On their website, Steakhouse Live describe themselves as a 'DIY collective of artists and producers creating space for live art and performance'.[259] These ideas of making space imply that there are not currently enough spaces, organisations, or contexts which

[257] Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art,* p. 235.
[258] Ibid., p. 239.
[259] Steakhouse Live website, [https://steakhouselive.co.uk/] [accessed 7/7/2021].

support these practices, an issue addressed in Chapter Two. They also imply that, following Lefebvre's production of space, that these groups seek to produce social space imbued with ideas, practices, affects, and possibilities which, through their oppositional position-takings, are radically different to the rest of the field. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the use and popularity of this idiom of making or creating space, confirms an understanding of the social production of space, and the potential for making new space as a transformational act in the field.

As we saw above, the separation from the everyday and the heightened nature of these experiences creates an environment in which transgression is possible. This is part of what W. S. F. Pickering describes as 'creative effervescence', a form of collective effervescence which can discover new ideas, rules, and ways of being, by departing from the old.[260] D. A. Nielsen writes that collective effervescences involves the 'breakdown of established social barriers and structures.'[261] He writes that effervescence is 'seen in a compulsion to dissolve limits, differentiation and particularity' and that effervescent assemblies are 'ambiguously dangerous arenas' which present 'a transgressive possibility'.[262] In the case of these festivals, this takes the form of departing from the conditions and established practices of the performance infrastructure, such as Buzzcut and Steakhouse Live's resistance to professionalism, and in Forest Fringe's desire to differentiate itself from the rest of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, as I go on to explore.

Buzzcut's approach was ambitious and informal with a certain professional inexperience that resulted in unconventional practices. Cade reflects that 'we were sort of anti-professional […] We were like let's use funny words in our emails and let's just try and cut out as much bureaucracy as possible'. For Robert Daniels, 'One of the most significant aspects of a DiY ethos lies in the stripping away of excess', and this is shown in Buzzcut's desire to do away with bureaucracy and other professional practices and structures, such as formal language and specific divisions of labour which are not only seen as unnecessary, but as embodying an establishment attitude and hierarchical nature which is antithetical to DIY's roots in punk, and its frequent anarchist, left-wing, or radically democratic politics.[263] Julie Bawin positions the 'Artist-Curator', or DIY practices, as a 'model of autonomy which originated in view of liberating creativity and denouncing the alienation of creators within the dominant system'.[264] Artists becoming curators reject, at least in part, the professional systems of

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[260] W. S. F Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 385.
[261] D. A. Nielsen, *Three Faces of God: Society, Religion, and the Categories of Totality in the Philosophy of Emile Durkheim* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 208.
[262] Ibid., p. 144 and 146.
[263] Robert Daniels, in *D.I.Y.* (University of Chichester, 2014), p. 9. See also Sarah Lowndes, *The DIY Movement in Art, Music and Publishing: Subjugated Knowledges,* (New York: Routledge, 2016), for DIY's punk roots.
[264] Julie Bawin, 'The Artist-Curator, or the Philosophy of "Do-It-Yourself"', in Dena Davida, Jane Gabriels, Véronique Hudon, and Marc Pronovost (eds.), *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2019), pp. 141-147.

cultural capital and experience that allow curators to become curators. DIY values amateurism, and resists professional standards as applied to artwork and its curation and presentation, attempting to establish more intuitive, accessible structures.

However, the rejection of the hierarchy and unnecessary bureaucracy of professionalism risks abandoning practices that perform a useful function for organisers, artists, or audiences. Cade admits that the 'way we worked was a mess, pretty unorganised and sort of made up.' Taylor notes that this anti-bureacracy and anti-professionalism was part of their artist-run process, saying 'I was really inspired by that idea [that] practical, logistical, dull problems could be met with an artistic solution.' This resulted in many beneficial practices to his mind, such as regular check-ins, going on walks 'to talk through problems', but Taylor stresses that 'there's positives and negatives to the informal structure.' Taylor notes that one year, 'instead of forms, we would have a call with everyone. So we would call every single artist in the program, have a long discussion and make notes'. This follows Buzzcut's anti-bureaucratic and personable approach, but it meant that the organisers made promises to artists, particularly around technical requirements, which could not be met in practice, resulting in stress and difficulty for the artists. Taylor notes that they learned from these experiences, and that their practices 'just needed a bit of ironing out'. The following year, they continued to have conversations with all of the artists, but deferred any technical decisions to the production manager. This anti-professional approach allows new practices to be innovated that can be more hospitable and egalitarian for artists, but they are not without collateral damage and difficulty, in this case for both the organisers and programmed artists. These innovations are produced through the intensity and transgression of spontaneous communitas, through the oppositional ethos of DIY, collective and artist-run practice, and the concomitant desire to break with existing practices and ideas.

This transgression also goes with the position-takings of new agents in the field, seeking to supplant old positions through opposition, and in doing so, transforming the field. As Bourdieu writes, 'the initiative for change can be traced back to new (meaning younger) entrants […] who (in a universe where to exist is to be different, meaning to occupy a distinct and distinctive position) only exist in so far as […] they manage to assert their identity'.[265] In this way, resistance to professionalism can be both part of a desire to make performance more accessible or democratic, and a way of making the festival distinctive. Steakhouse Live illustrate this well. They talk explicitly about 'embracing unprofessionalism', a concept that every member of the collective I spoke to were keen to qualify, but nevertheless one that is both a part of Steakhouse Live's identity, and one that aims to make the festival more accessible, with a more relaxed social and affective space. Osborn says that 'we embrace

[265] Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art,* op. cit., p. 239.

a space that doesn't play by the rules of other arts organisations, that have to appear really shiny and capable. And then we also make space for us to make mistakes.' As Baird notes:

> we are professional and we do have rigour […] but we want the places to feel […] relaxed. As someone that never went to a gallery when I was younger and still feel a bit funny sometimes in these spaces […] how can we not have it formal, where there's a certain way to behave and a certain thing to do.

The lived spaces of institutions like art galleries and theatres can be exclusionary, in some cases despite their best efforts, because the space and those within it come with a set of expected behavioural norms, like appreciating art and performance in silence apart from clearly defined moments. Kirsty Sedgman refers to this as behaviour policing in theatrical environments, and the anti-professional spaces of live art and informal, collective and artist-run festivals are not immune to it.[266] Baird recounts a moment where she made a shushing gesture to a new audience member who was laughing loud during a performance and disturbing the performer and other spectators. Baird regretted doing this and felt 'so annoyed at myself', because she feels, in a way that she relates to performance artist Adrian Howells' maxim 'It's all allowed', that 'all responses are valid'. For Wright, 'professionalism goes hand in hand with being corporate, toeing a party line. […] And it's often about opaqueness.' Embracing unprofessionalism then, becomes a tool for deconstructing opaque, overly serious performance institutions, which have a normative, and exclusive code of behaviour for the appreciation of art. As Bourdieu established in *Distinction,* the appreciation of art, and the correct behaviour in doing so, is inextricably tied into class domination, and the social structure from which communitas seeks to depart.[267] Both Wright and Baird are working class and queer and have experiences of feeling excluded by an art world that is 'still middle class'.[268] Their resistance to professionalism opposes the class domination inscribed in normative working practices and spectatorship.

Communitas is egalitarian, and the egalitarian ideals of these festivals are enacted through their economic practices, which resemble gift economy principles. This is an anthropological idea in research into 'archaic' societies by Marcel Mauss, which describes an economy of freely giving gifts, in the expectation of eventual reciprocity, rather than a transactional economy in which goods and services are exchanged for pre-agreed financial sums.[269] The gift of the physical space of Forest Café was integral to Forest Fringe's beginning and early practices. Field says that the free space 'really powered it in the first years'. The values of Forest Café, of collectivism, leftist politics, volunteering

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[266] See Kirsty Sedgman, *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).
[267] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction,* op. cit.
[268] Wright, op. cit.
[269] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 2002).

and the DIY nature of the space, informed the values of Forest Fringe, its politics and aesthetics. In her masters dissertation, Pearson outlines the specific model and conditions which enabled the festival to operate. These were: that the organisation 'pay nothing for Bristo Hall', Forest Café gives Forest Fringe a budget of £700 and a staff member of the former adminstrates for them for free throughout the year, 'performers staff the venue collectively', 'Audiences give donations at the door', decorating the space and building the rig is performed by outside volunteers, and BAC pays Forest Fringe £1000 for an office, which they 'use to rent a flat to house visiting companies and artists.'[270] This is certainly generosity, but of a very specific type – the existence of Forest Fringe relies on a specific set of circumstances, relationships and exchanges of various forms of capital – social, symbolic, and financial, with the majority of these acts of generosity involving a clear exchange of one form of capital for another. Artists lend their labour and forgo financial remuneration, but receive the symbolic and cultural capital, as well as potential future opportunities, that are associated with performing at Forest Fringe and as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Though generosity and the gift economy are rooted in radical collectivist and left-wing politics, we can see here how, from the beginning, it does not exist in an economic or political vacuum, rather it is rooted quite clearly in the network of informal and formal relationships, and exchanges of capital and experience, which make up the performance subfield of the field of cultural production.

Buzzcut worked according to similar principles: the festival was 'about sharing; sharing food, sharing ideas and support, opening up doors and sharing homes.'[271] This emphasis on sharing was reflected in concrete practices: providing free meals to artists performing at the festival and hosting visiting artists in local artists' homes. The festival also provided professional advantages to performing artists such as a 'platform to showcase work to invited producers and programmers from across Britain', and 'Full documentation of your work through film and photographs'. These are at once freely-given gifts in the spirit of sharing and calculated professional rewards. Nevertheless, the gift acts as part of a network of reciprocity, a creator or intensifier of solidarity and community. As Mary Douglas puts it in her foreword to Mauss' work: 'A gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction.'[272] Gifts cement and create relationships through a sense of obligation or gratitude. By being generous, one is exceeding the expectations or obligations of a purely professional or financial relationship and creating a relationship that goes beyond these realms – one that exists, as Field says,

[270] Deborah Pearson, ''Build It' The Beginnings of Forest Fringe', MA dissertation, available at [https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/catalogue/build-it-the-beginnings-of-forest-fringe/] p. 21.
[271] Previous Buzzcut website, '//BUZZCUT// Volunteer Call Out 2013' [https://glasgowbuzzcut.wordpress.com/2012/07/] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[272] Mary Douglas, 'No Free Gifts', in Mauss, op. cit., p. x.

between the personal and professional. These relationships maintain and reward those within them through mutual acts of generosity, but they are not without their problems in practice, as Pearson notes:

> A Gift Economy … [is a] possibly problematic justification for a 31 year old working for free for their organisation for the eighth year in a row, but you'll have to excuse me, it's after midnight and I'm sitting in a badly lit temporary office after having worked 14 hours today.[273]

This reflection highlights the tension between the gift economy's theoretical potentials and its actual consequences in the neoliberal field of cultural production, and how the informality of gift economies can lead to exploitation or self-exploitation, as I examine in more detail later.

The gift economy is also reflected in the wider practices of Buzzcut and Forest Fringe. Events at both festivals were free, and, in the case of Buzzcut, unticketed, with money raised through donations. At Buzzcut voluntary donations were encouraged in line with the income of the attendee. This provided a level of financial accessibility for audiences, as people could attend the festival and see as many performances as they liked, without low-income being a barrier. This also created a certain degree of equality among audiences: being able to pay more did not allow one to access more performances, get better seats, or get a better experience, in contrast to other festivals such as Fierce or IBT, which employed tiered festival passes.[274] The organisers also sought to create greater equality among the programmed artists. Cade reflects on the unfairness of flat fees for artists, remarking that another live art festival 'gives each artist 300 quid, regardless of where you're coming from in the country', meaning that those with high travel costs received a overall lower fee. As Cade says, 'that is not equality.' In response to this unfairness, they and Anderson initially decided to 'cover everyone's costs, but there wouldn't be a fee.' In later years, they began to 'give every single person who performs 100 pounds', as well as covering travel costs and providing free accommodation with local artists. This means, of course, that programming a show is cheaper the fewer people are in it, but Cade says that 'we had to really try and not let those questions come into our programming decisions. And that's really hard, because ultimately, the budget is a big part of the programming considerations.' Nevertheless, this model seeks to provide a fairer payment model than other industry practices.

These practices are geared towards both economic equity and community building, aiming to resist the inequality that was exacerbated by the restriction of resources and marketisation of the performance sector under austere neoliberalism. Forest Fringe and Buzzcut's perspective as working artists allowed them to perceive structures and practices which seemed equal but in practice were not,

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[273] Deborah Pearson, quoted in Zaiontz, op. cit.

[274] In 2019, Fierce festival offered a Mini Pass and a Festival Pass for £85 and £125, including 9 and 12 performances respectively. In 2015, IBT had festival passes and membership on three levels: Firebrand, Alchemist, and Pioneer. Email received by the author from Abi Cush, then Assistant Development Producer for In Between Time.

such as fees which do not take unavoidable costs into account. Though Cade admits that their system was not perfect, they continually sought to ask questions and interrogate their own practices: 'how do we create a structure that is equal? […] That is an impossible question […] but it was always an attempt, like a striving towards something that might be a slightly different system to what we are used to.' Part of this is a desire to create a space that 'existed outside of monetary exchange', similar to Forest Fringe's desire to 'imagine new ways of working and living outside of capitalism' through their practices.[275] I will expand upon this anti-capitalist imagining in the next chapter, but these practices of communitas, generosity and sharing are rooted in a transgressive resistance to the current capitalist, neoliberal and austere order, mobilizing ideological communitas which sought to supplant it. This striving towards equality and change is achieved through, and because of, experiences of the unstructured and egalitarian human bond of communitas. Through opposing existing practices and attempting to institute new ones, and through creating affective counter-spaces of communitas, these groups reveal and engage with the tensions and inequalities of the field, and in doing so, produce the potential for contestation and change.

Producing Communitas and Antagonism

I begin this section by drawing on brief examples of performances which create senses of both communitas and antagonism at the same time, before examining this phenomenon in the social and affective spaces of the festivals. One-on-one performances were often programmed by all three of the festivals, although perhaps most prominently by Buzzcut. One-on-one performance can function as a gift of vulnerability and trust which calls to being the generosity and gift economy which reinforces solidarity. This is consistent with writing on one-on-one performance and particularly on the work of Adrian Howells. Known for his frequently intimate, one-on-one performances, Howells' work was theorized by Fintan Walsh as 'generous performance', a term 'deployed to account for performers who give audiences more than they needed to, or more than we expected.'[276] This excess, or gift, establishes an obligation which promotes a response from audience members, which establishes the reciprocal relation of actions and feeling which establishes communitas.

However, these experiences of generosity and communitas are not the only possible outcomes of one-to-one performance. Dominic Johnson reflects that one-to-one performances can be 'partly boring, partly threatening, possibly embarrassing or uncomfortable, and then the difficulties resolve

[275] Andy Field, questionnaire, op. cit.
[276] Fintan Walsh, 'On Generous Performance', in Deirdre Heddon and Dominic Johnson (eds.), *It's All Allowed: The Performances of Adrian Howells* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016).

themselves into an experience of beauty of wonder, however slight.'[277] He says that this 'is a neat description of intimacy itself, as a situation that aims (to varying extents) at pleasure, but necessarily involves less pleasurable eventualities.'[278] As Daniel Oliver argues, as he seeks to foreground 'those discomforts and "less pleasurable eventualities"' to which Johnson refers, these too might have their own value as performance (and festival) outcomes, as he outlines seven reasons why awkwardness is great, including 'when it is a contingent outcome of a spontaneously awkward situation involving awkward people that is embraced rather than overcome. […] By dismissing or overlooking the awkwardness that may arise in any participatory performance or art project, we risk excluding those who might trigger such awkwardness.'[279] This links directly to Clare Bishop's writing on relational antagonism. In contradistinction to work which encourages a sense of social harmony, Clare Bishop examines art which displays or encourages 'relational antagonism', work which foregrounds tensions, frictions, exclusions, differences or inequalities implicit in the conditions in which the art is presented, though generally ignored. This work 'would be predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony.'[280] These festivals and the performances programmed in them might too have value in so far as they embrace, as Oliver says, rather than overcome or exclude, the awkwardness or tensions that arise from full inclusion of difference.

The coexistence of communitas and antagonism exists in performances which reveal tensions, social structure, and difference, alongside intimacy. Rosana Cade's *Walking: Holding,* which has been performed at Forest Fringe, as well as being the creation of one of the co-founders of Buzzcut, involves this dynamic.[281] For each performance, Cade designs a walk through the city in which the performance takes place. Usually engaging five volunteer performers, audience members are led, one at a time, on the route, holding hands with one volunteer performer in turn, who are of different ages, genders, and races. Though born from the experience of visible queerness when holding hands with a same-sex partner in public, this performance draws attention to differing experiences of visibility and hyper-visibility depending on the social-structural differences between audience member and performer-

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[277] Dominic Johnson, interview with Rachel Zerihan, *One-to-one Performance: A Study Room Guide on works devised for an 'audience of one',* LADA, [https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/OnetoOne_Final-copy.pdf] [accessed 19/05/2022], pp. 38-40, p. 39.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Daniel Oliver in Daniel Oliver (ed.), *Awkwoods: Daniel Oliver's Dyspraxic Adventures in Participatory Performance* (London: LADA, 2019), p. 19 & 22.
[280] Clare Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October,* 110, 2004, pp. 51-79, p. 79.
[281] My reading of this performance is based on having attended the performance twice, once at Battersea Arts Centre in June 2013, once at Forest Fringe in August 2016, and being a volunteer performer for its edition at the Yard Theatre in Hackney Wick in October 2013.

partner.[282] Being perceived as variously being in homosexual, heterosexual, interracial, or intergenerational relationships, whether romantic or platonic, draws attention to the visible differences between us, while the held hand, as well as providing a visible sign of intimacy to onlookers, also presents both performer and audience member with an embodied form of temporary support, solidarity and intimacy – which is indicative of a quasi-anonymous, transient social bond with a stranger. As Greer points out, reflecting on his own experience observing himself and his partner in a reflection, some of these couplings do not resolve into a perceptible relationship: 'The gap between our ages meant we did not immediately resemble lovers nor parent and adult child, and the gesture of our intimacy, like the reflection, seemed unclear.'[283] In all its possible outcomes, this performance draws attention to both observably normative, legibly non-normative, and ambiguous, unstructured bonds, producing multiple possible effects: in Greer's terms 'anxiety', 'threat', and 'claustrophobia', but also in experiencing such negative affects, the possibility or potential for 'mutual recognition and care'. For Greer this 'involves a challenge to the terms of community and togetherness as they are already known to us if it is to do more than merely confirm our expectations of how we might relate to each other.'[284] In exploring mutual accountability, otherness, and co-vulnerability, this performance creates a human connection of communitas while also drawing attention to the social structure of observable difference with which it conflicts, and does not preclude the possibility of discomfort or tension which might arise as a result. In fact, the impact of the performance arises from the coexistence of this generalized human connection with tension and antagonism. Similarly, the co-existence of both communitas and antagonism is a crucial part of the practices of these festivals, as I go onto examine.

In examining this coexistence, I am departing from the work of Durkheim and Turner, who conceive of society in two distinct phases. Durkheim describes one phase in which people are dispersed and 'economic activity is predominant', and one in which 'the population is concentrated and condensed in particular places' and collective effervescence arises.[285] Turner described social life as a 'dialectrical [sic] process that involves successive experience of high and low, communitas and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and equality'.[286] I argue that both structure and communitas, collective effervescence and the frictions of the everyday, are simultaneously present and superimposed in these festivals, extending my use of Bishop's arguments and her key referents Rosalyn Deutsche, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Deutsche, Laclau, and Mouffe argue for the

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[282] See Rosana Cade, 'The radical art of holding hands with strangers', *The Guardian*, 18/8/2016 [https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/aug/18/radical-art-of-holding-hands-with-strangers-rosana-cade-walking-holding] [accessed 20/05/2022].
[283] Stephen Greer, *Queer exceptions: Solo performance in neoliberal times*, (Manchester University Press, 2019) p. 208.
[284] Ibid., p. 207.
[285] Durkheim, op. cit., p. 162-163.
[286] Turner, op. cit., p. 97.

importance of conflict, antagonism (or agonism), to democracy. As Deutsche writes: 'conflict, far from the ruin of democratic public space, is the condition of its existence.'[287] I use these ideas to argue that these festivals are spaces in which the inclusion of multiple groups that are in tension can come together and contest performance and festival practices. In seeking to reflect on, critique and change the exclusions and exploitation of the performance world, in producing new practices which often fail and are themselves open to critique, and in seeking to radically include large groups of different, potentially conflictual, communities, these festivals create spaces of contestation and change. These tensions and antagonisms are potentially harmful, but I will argue that they are an essential and constitutive part of the communitas, collective effervescence, and affective counter-spaces offered by these festivals, through their practices of inclusion and exception to the unliveable conditions and economic practices of neoliberal austerity.

Before outlining the tensions and antagonisms which these festivals reveal and engage in, I outline the positive affects experienced by many – to show how communitas and antagonism coexist in the social and affective spaces of these festivals. Many attendees, and the organisers themselves, experienced intensely positive affects in the festival space. On Buzzcut, Cade reflects on the first festival as 'really exciting […] there was so much positive energy that first year.' They describe running the festival and greeting performing artists and attendees as 'like welcoming people to a party'. Taylor reflects on the atmosphere of the festival as he experienced it before joining the Buzzcut team: 'there was this really amazing energy between Nick and Rosana and the community they'd built around them and it was so magnetic […] they were part of this community that felt really vibrant'. His reflections on first attending the festival in 2014 are effusive: 'I just had a really, really, really great time […] there was a spirit of the generosity and the friendliness of it all and the complete, chaotic fun.' Key to this atmosphere was the presence of parts of the Glasgow performance community.

Forest Fringe is also characterized as having a positive affective atmosphere due to the copresence and labour of a group of people. Action Hero, Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse, reflect on the space as it first existed in Forest Café, as they observed other artists' performances and their audiences. They note 'The warmth of the audience, the generosity of the atmosphere in that room', and remember 'feeling like this was magic'. They explore how 'every year it feels like a miracle', which belies the fact that 'It's the result of people working hard, working together, and really understanding what this thing is about.'[288] This description of the atmosphere as 'warm', 'magic', or a 'miracle' is a description of collective effervescence. These quasi-religious, transcendent or ineffable experiences

[287] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996) p. xiii.
[288] Gemma Paintin & James Stenhouse, 'Action Hero', in Forest Fringe, *Forest Fringe: The First Ten Years* (London: Oberon Books, 2016) p. 31, pp. 30-33.

which actually emerge from the collective presence and labour of the group, mirrors Durkheim's description of how 'a society is quite capable of arousing the sensation of the divine, simply by its influence over the minds of its members.'[289] However, these harmonious and trancendant feelings are not shared by everyone, as I examine later.

Buzzcut's desires for the festival space to be welcoming and accessible are borne out by critical responses. In 2015, theatre critic Lyn Gardner described the festival as 'one of the most relaxed around, not least because Glasgow has such a strong and welcoming artistic community'.[290] In the same year, Gardner wrote: 'For diversity and generosity of spirit, there is no festival so encompassing and welcoming as Buzzcut'.[291] Journalist and critic Joyce McMillan, also in 2015, cites Anderson and Cade's opening speech in saying that 'Buzzcut represents "a space where we can still come together collectively, to work out new ways of being together collectively"; and I guess you have to be there […] to understand just how good that can sometimes feel.'[292] Consistent references to the atmosphere or environment of the festival affirms the importance of the creation of a social and affective space of the festival, one which sits beside, informs and transcends its ostensible activity – the presentation and viewing of performance. These reflections establish the positive social and affective space Buzzcut and its attendees managed to create, through their co-presence, social relations, and affective investments in the festival.

Forest Fringe, as experienced by those present, was likewise often described in positive terms, often defined by its separation and difference to the rest of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Natasha Tripney writes *in The Stage that* the 'the energy it generates is very different from the rest of the Fringe, soothing by day, exciting by night.[293] In her theatre blog, Gardner describes her visit to Forest Fringe: 'my annual pilgrimage offers the perfect antidote to the sense of the Edinburgh fringe as one big sales pitch.'[294] Ric Knowles writes that festivals like the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 'increasingly function as National showplaces', 'constructed as an international market for cultural and other 'industries'', with support from national and international bodies.[295] Forest Fringe define themselves

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[289] Durkheim, op. cit, p. 154.
[290] Lyn Gardner, 'Buzzcut reaches into people's lives – and lets them open their hearts', *The Guardian,* 23/3/2015 [https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/mar/23/buzzcut-festival-govan-glasgow-theatre-art] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[291] Lyn Gardner, Buzzcut Festival Review, *The Guardian,* 22/3/2015 [https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/mar/22/buzzcut-festival-sparks-flybetter] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[292] Joyce McMillan, Buzzcut Theatre Review, *The Scotsman,* 21/3/2015 [https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/theatre-and-stage/theatre-review-buzzcut-2015-glasgow-1509692] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[293] Natasha Tripney, 'Forest Fringe: Week 1', *The Stage,* 20/8/2015 [https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/forest-fringe-week-1] [accessed 14/04/2022].
[294] Lyn Gardner, 'Forest Fringe: 10 years of risk-taking theatre that reinvented Edinburgh', *The Guardian,* 16/8/2016 [https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2016/aug/16/forest-fringe-edinburgh-festival-theatre] [accessed 7/12/2022].
[295] Ric Knowles, op. cit., p. 89.

sharply in opposition to this, and seek to create an affective environment, as well as economic practices, which oppose and reverse the practices of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Keren Zaiontz uses Forest Fringe as an example of what she calls '*counter-festivals',* 'that emerge in response to the prevailing, rigidifying conditions of artistic production'. Zaiontz argues that Forest Fringe 'provided a space for performances that do not fit within the free enterprise model of the Fringe', and that it positions itself 'outside of the rent economy of the larger festival', in which property is rented for the month of August for extortionate prices.[296]

However, the oppositional nature of Forest Fringe, and other festivals like it, belies the fact that at one and the same time they are a part of the wider structure they oppose, and it is this that produces tension and antagonism in their practices. They seek to oppose or reverse the interpenetration of neoliberal practices in the field of cultural production, and specifically the marketisation of the Fringe festival, while also remaiming dependent upon it, and complicit with it. For all of the descriptions of Forest Fringe as being oppositional to the Fringe, at one and the same time, as Field acknowledges, Forest Fringe's relationship to the Fringe festival was 'very symbiotic, because a lot of the ways in which we were able to serve that community of artists were absolutely necessitated on being there - being part of that circus.' Their offer to artists was to be a part of, and yet at the same time separate to, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as marketplace, with all of the benefits of industry and press exposure for their career as artists. Their practices likewise relied on building relationships and mobilising funds from national bodies such as the British Council, and on selling both Forest Fringe and its constituent artists to international programmers. This position, as both part of and determinedly separate from the Fringe Festival, is also indicative of a wider liminal position these festivals have as low-resourced and tactical organisations, attempting to enact alternative spaces and economies while remaining a part of the wider economy, as I shall examine later. Such inbetween-ness is common of festivals, and indeed Jen Harvie characterises the Fringe Festival as caught between various tensions, including democratic accessibility and 'neo-liberal market values.'[297] So, although Forest Fringe characterises itself as oppositional to the Fringe, the Fringe too contains an opposition between its role as a marketplace and its more radical potentials. Such an opposition can be at least partially characterised as a tension between the ideological communitas of equality and egalitarianism, and the social, economic, and political reality of neoliberalism within which these festivals exist.

The positive reflections on these festivals confirm how they functioned as large community meeting points, fulfilling the purpose of collective effervescence 'to bring individuals together, to increase contacts between them, and to make those contacts more intimate.'[298] The informal, intense

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[296] Keren Zaiontz, *Theatre & Festivals* (London: Palgrave, 2018), p. 73-74.
[297] Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK*, op. cit., p. 82.
[298] Durkheim, op. cit., p. 258.

and unstructured nature of the festivals allowed people to make friends, to feel closer to those they already had, and to feel a stronger connection with strangers, who become part of the same temporary festival community. The generalized social bond of communitas is affirmed here to some extent, in that intimacy is accelerated and social structure reduced, though still present. Though this is difficult to objectively quantify without conducting audience surveys, this is certainly the impact festivals had on me: I met many friends and acquaintances through these festivals and attending these festivals every year renewed and deepened the intimacy of our relationships. This also fulfills a function for the live art professional community and field, in renewing the solidarity, and collusion, in Bourdieu's terms, which allows for its continued existence: producing and reaffriming belief in the importance of live art practices, and practically building contacts and conceiving new projects which allow for its continued existence.

The designation of these spaces as welcoming and inclusive for all can be critiqued using Bishop's relational antagonism, in that the social harmony they create may be 'predicated on exclusion of that which hinders or threatens the harmonious order.'[299] Like the works she critiques, these festivals are welcoming and produce a sense of community because audiences were similar, or already knew each other, being largely artists, producers, or other cultural workers in the field of live art and experimental performance. As Bishop writes, they produce 'a community whose members identify with each other, because they have something in common.'[300] This commonality and insularity does have a function; to some extent these gatherings operate as fields of restricted production, 'in which producers [makers of performance] produce for other producers' or they provide a space for live art specialists to meet, produce work for each other, and to discuss issues pertinent to their specific field.[301] However, in so far as these festivals seek to be public spaces which appeal to, and include, non-specialist audiences, and indeed often seek to increase the accessibility of live art to general audiences, this homogeneity of audiences is a problem.

Conversely, the success of inclusion can also cause problems. The environment of Buzzcut in particular, as the festival grew larger and more intense, became alienating for some people. In 2014 Buzzcut took place in the Pearce institute, with a huge number of artists taking part: a total of 53 artists, many performing more than once. The opening day of the festival, Wednesday 23rd April, begins at 2.30pm and lists 11 events.[302] These performances happened in six spaces throughout the building, four outdoor locations, and in the pub across the road, Brechin's, often with multiple performances happening simultaneously. The effect of this was overwhelming, as was the presence of

[299] Bishop, op. cit., footnote to p. 69.
[300] Ibid., p. 67.
[301] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* p. 39.
[302] Buzzcut programme 2014, [https://issuu.com/glasgowbuzzcut/docs/buzzcut_programme_2014_issuu_2] [accessed 14/04/2014].

so many spectators and artists in one space. Cade reflects, 'it was a bit like a party in lots of ways. […] I think that that environment that we enjoy isn't good for everyone.' As Harry Josephine Giles reflects on her experience at Buzzcut:

> The crowds at Buzzcut are huge, loud and intense. They fill the performances, the intermission spaces, and the corridors. When I go to Buzzcut, I know I have to save up energy and plan recuperation time, because I know I will find these crowds immensely difficult and draining. […] I have several friends who have been to Buzzcut once and will not go back because they find these crowds so unpleasant.

This is a result of Buzzcut's approach to audiences, which 'enables the largest number of people to attend the festival, but at the cost of limiting access for people with mental and physical disabilities, and for people who just find entering a room which is wall-to-wall in-crowd artists quite intimidating.'[303] The desire to create an intense celebratory, welcoming, friendly experience, became so successful that it was overwhelming and reduced access for some. We might call Buzzcut's tactic radical inclusion, as it seeks to include as many people as possible, and to hold space for multiple metrics of difference, in contrast to neoliberal and austere practices of exclusion and differentiation, and the exclusiveness of social harmony discussed by Bishop. But in Giles' account, this radical inclusion becomes paradoxically exclusive. This stands alongside Buzzcut's, particularly Taylor's, focus on access; the festival brought in a number of changes to increase accessibility, including programming disabled artists, supporting disabled audience members to attend performances, a key in the programme to guide those with sensory or language impairments, and introducing a 'quiet room', 'a space of silence, rest and recuperation', for which Giles was 'absurdly glad'.[304] This was the first key concession the festival made to a plurality of ways of engaging with the festival socially, and it mitigates the problem of exclusion somewhat. Despite these practices however, the social and affective relations which produce these spaces remain stubbornly exclusive, through dynamics I will examine.

The tensions produced by radical inclusion are present in Buzzcut's principles. They sought to create spaces for experimentation and 'cutting edge live performance' whilst also being accessible, welcoming, and bringing 'new audiences to Live Art'.[305] They focus on multiple forms of accessibility and inclusivity, whilst also seeking to include multiple communities which may not usually mix or may even conflict. The performance work itself can be exclusive and can assume a level of experience and education in art which is unusual in the general population and in the local community that used the space. The work programmed and the community of artists and audiences included many queer and

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[303] Giles, op. cit.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Previous Buzzcut website, 'Volunteer Call Out 2013', op. cit.

trans people, while also taking place in a community centre and in an area of Glasgow where such identities are less often visible. As I noted above, this festival took place in the Pearce Institute in Govan, an area of Glasgow which traditionally working-class and an area that is socially deprived. This provided a potential source of conflict, as I examine later.

However, it is only through engaging with these tensions that change is produced. In aiming to be accessible to as many different audience groups as possible, Buzzcut brings new audiences to live art and brings groups together who might never meet in this context. Though this produces problems, it also innovates new methods of audience engagement and inclusion. Collective, artist-run practices like these are iterative; in trying to do things differently, failing, and reflecting on that failure, important lessons are learned, and shifts occur in the field of cultural production. These practices of radical inclusion are important in their production of an ideological communitas of equality and connection which counters the radical exclusion of austerity, which creates a 'precarious class' and intensifies already existing inequalities.[306] For John Schostak, writing in the context of education, 'Choosing a policy and practice of radical inclusion runs counter to the contemporary mainstream politics since it involves articulating a logic of equality with freedom (égaliberté) to create a counterforce to the embedded inequalities and hierarchies of elites.'[307] Doing so overcomes the supposed oppositon between equality and freedom. In a similar manner, Buzzcut's desire to include everyone, even groups hitherto understood to be in conflict, dissolves, at least in part, perceived limitations on what is possible for arts organisations to achieve, and goes some way to building a more inclusive and equal performance infrastructure. Their insistence on their festival being accessible to all, even though it necessarily fails to some extent, questions previously held oppositions between experimental work, mass audiences, and the inclusion of diverse audience groups. In including these groups and holding them in tension, they open up a space for possibility and contestation, in which change in the field can be produced. Through instituting practices like a quiet room, or the radical inclusion of both local and often unitiated audiences and national 'in-groups' of live artist and producers, they shift the space of possibles of the field of live art; these organisational practices must be responded to by other homologous agents in the field, many of whom may in fact have been present at the festival. Practices instituted by Buzzcut and Forest Fringe, like pay what you can tickets, the quiet room, and practices designed to allow for greater accessibility and inclusion, though not necessarily originated by these festivals, normalised and further propagated these practices in the field.[308]

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[306] See Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
[307] John Schostak, '"Towards a society of equals": democracy, education, cooperation and the practice of radical inclusion', *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 23:11, 2019, pp. 1103-1115, p. 1111.
[308] Pay what you can has been an established practice since before 2011 in subsidised theatres, but as far as I can establish was an unusual practice for theatre and live art festivals. Since then, pay-what-you-can has been adopted

The examples of exclusion examined above illustrate a key limitation to the concepts of communitas and collective effervescence, in that they tend to assume a singular or dominant method of accessing these feelings, and equal capacity or proclivity to access them. Descriptions of collective effervescence, and to a lesser extent communitas, abound in sound, noise and activity, and the intensity of assembled crowds. As Giles' account attests, for many this is a barrier to the experience of communitas, which may be experienced in different ways not accounted for by the theorists. Giles relates an interaction between her and a friend, both of whom find the crowds very difficult, and have adopted different strategies for dealing with them. Giles' friend is 'blowing on [his] thumb to relieve social stress', and Giles is 'pinching very hard the skin on my forearm, because the focus of that pain is what will prevent me from having a panic attack'. This connection in exclusion speaks of a generalized social bond, structured only by opposition to the environment. In a similar way, communitas too could emerge in the quiet room. Sitting quietly amid strangers or friends, in peaceful, companionable silence that stands in stark contrast to the rest of the festival, can produce a profound connection that may not be felt amid the noise of the crowds, one that emerges in a similar way to the co-presence and co-vulnerability of the previous chapter. This is something that could be felt also at Forest Fringe, which acted as a quiet oasis in comparison to the frenzy and noise of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Communitas can be found in the quiet, liminal spaces of absence as much as in the presence of large groups of people. Here we see there is not a simple duality between collective effervescence or communitas and everyday life, in which the former is a universal and uniform experience of connectedness to others in large gatherings and collective rituals, and the latter is a time of low-intensity, social structure, and economic activity. Rather, just in these few examples, we can see that there exist multiple different ways of accessing communitas, some of which are successful for some but alienating for others. The unstructuredness of communitas, or the collective effervescent phase of society, does not exist in separation from, but rather coexists with a multitude of other forms of social relations, such as professional relationships and specific friendships. This coexistence of different and often competing relations is what causes the tensions I examine in this chapter.

The exclusive nature of these festivals can be further explained by the passage from spontaneous to normative communitas. Spontaneous communitas is an unpredictable, transient state; Turner describes it as 'a phase, a moment, not a permanent condition', one which passes into normative communitas 'under the influence of time'.[309] Normative communitas marks the imposition of social structure, and thus, difference and the potential for exclusion. This enacts certain kinds of exclusion because the festival begins to serve a specific community of previous attendees; in doing so

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by large organisations like Battersea Arts Centre and the Barbican in London, and festivals such as Bristol's MAYK. See Jo Caird, 'Pay what you can: how low and how far can theatres go?', *The Guardian,* 17/8/2017 [https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2011/aug/17/pay-what-you-can-theatre] [accessed 23/11/2022].

[309] Turner, op. cit., p. 132.

their practices and the space produced become tailored to that group. This is likewise a passage from creative to re-creative effervescence, or from one which produces new ideas to one which renews pre-existing ones. For Durkheim, collective effervescence serves to produce or renew 'collective representations which express collective realities'.[310] Collective representations are concepts and ideas which are shared within, and emblematic of, a group, which serve to bind the group together. Assembling again serves to renew these representations. A passage from creative to recreative effervescence denotes a passage from producing new collective representations emblematic of new groups, and renewing those collective representations already held by the group. These collective representations might take the form of 'in-jokes' of the 'in-crowd'. These might be references to specific people known in the community, specific relationships, or informal knowledge and gossip. For Steakhouse Live, the title of their Christmas event, *Tits and Tinsel*, is an irreverent in-joke which refers to live art's proclivity for nudity. Further, Steakhouse Live's events often involve a known conflictual but close relationship between the organisers, who have an informal hosting style. Such conflict is an in-joke in that initiated audiences know not to take this conflict seriously. As Osborn says of her and Baird: 'if we were in an organisation together, we'd probably both be fired for shouting at each other.' These in-jokes serve as emblems which bind a specific group together. They rely on knowledge of the group's shared history and relations, or 'the rules of the game' in Bourdieu's terms, and they are inherently exclusive, and serve as a boundary between in-groups and out-groups. As festivals grow, unspoken hierarchies form between those who have previously attended and newcomers. This is particularly present in artist-run festivals like these that seek to depart from accepted institutional practices, and thus rely on unwritten rules, previous experience, confidence and social capital for audiences to know how to behave.

We can see this passage from existential to normative communitas in the life of these festivals, and indeed other organisations discussed in this thesis, as they progress from their unstructured beginnings to more formal, structured, institutional forms. This is particularly clear in the case of Buzzcut. In Cade's account, as the festival grew, and as the team of organisers grew, so did the necessity for structure, and this is when 'things start to become a bit more organised'. Cade reflects that over the years, as the festival grew in size, responsibility and reputation, the work progressed from being 'fun', 'what we wanted to do' and not 'like an office job at all' to becoming 'a fucking slog.' This was a large part of Cade's motivation for stepping back from their work on the festival. Forest Fringe came to a similar conclusion. Field says that 'Forest Fringe had been an adventure for us. It had been something that we'd all collectively […] learned how to do. But by this point, it really felt like we'd done that.' There was, from audiences, 'an expectation that Forest Fringe was going to be the same thing and be there forever. And we were like, that's boring. it's boring for us. It's boring for you.'

[310] Durkheim, op. cit., p. 11.

These audience expectations are part of how existential communitas becomes normative, and with it a loss of the joy or excitement of their unpredictable beginnings.

This resistance to normativity is also part of a chosen tactical position, and a chosen position as a 'counter-festival', in resistance to what Zaiontz called the 'rigidifying conditions of artistic production', as I noted above. Steakhouse Live have resisted this process somewhat through being tactical, nomadic and flexible. As I argued in Chapter One, this is likely to be a result of both choice and necessity, as the organisers had to fit Steakhouse Live's activiti es around their other professional commitments. Rather than trying to find and provide a fixed home for their festival and other events, Steakhouse's spatial practice is fluid and responsive, exploiting connections and possibilities across multiple institutions. Steakhouse Live have run events in various venues and contexts, both regular and one off. As well as not having a fixed venue, they do not have a fixed format or regularity for their events. As Baird says, 'we're very […] fluid, so we can adapt easily. […] we do what we want when we want. […] The festival's changed dates every year […] every year it's been different – 2 days 1 day 3 days half a day […] there's not set things.' Working irregularly across multiple spaces is a consequence of Steakhouse Live's personalities, professions and organisational practices, and this lack of structure, as well as being tactically advantageous, also enables them to maintain the marginal and unpredictable practices which lend themselves to communitas. This irregularity also works to resist the normativity of normative communitas, and the pressure of audience expectation.

These festivals' emphasis on informality and friendship can also be exclusive. Though friendships and intimacies might be accelerated for many, particularly those who already have some connections to the group, for those who have no connections, who are new to the performance world, not cultural workers, or distinguished by an identity factor – older people, those from a different racial or cultural background – this was more difficult. Entering a space in which one knows no one and everyone seems to know each other is intimidating and alienating, as we saw in Giles' description of Buzzcut as 'wall-to-wall in-crowd artists.' Similarly, the core group of artists with whom Forest Fringe worked, structured by personal and professional relationships, formed a quasi-collective, quasi-community group, which, though porous and flexible, was relatively closed and exclusive for those not part of these relationships. Steakhouse Live too was structured by friendship – the organisers were friends and were often friends with the artists programmed. Their live art Christmas party *Tits and Tinsel*, is open to the most criticism in this regard, and Wright recounts receiving feedback from an audience member that 'it felt incredibly alienating because it felt like one big in-joke […] that they weren't welcome to be a part of.' This feedback also stated that this exclusion was 'perpetuating a culture of whiteness'. This criticism is one frequently levelled at live art, and I expand specifically on

race in the next chapter.[311] It is a problem, not just for festivals but all of the collectives discussed in this thesis, that the live art community, and particularly artist-run collective organisations, is structured through informal relationships and friendships which reproduce the exclusions of wider society through tending to include those who are already included: most often, white, middle-class people. This problem also gets to the heart of issues with a simplistic assumption of ideological communitas. Belief that it is possible to assert or performatively construct a space of equality, inclusion or unstructured relation conceals the existence of exclusion on the basis of social structure like race. These exclusions and tensions can only be addressed through revealing them, attending to them, and contesting them, as I argue in this chapter.

These festivals act as spaces of intense socialisation in which social capital is developed, and this reproduces exclusions of the wider field: the more people one knows or connections one has in a space increases this capital, and those who are relatively unknown have very little. As Charles Arcodia and Michelle Whitford argue, this is a central purpose of festivals: 'festival attendance develops social capital by providing the community with specific opportunities for accessing and developing community resources, improving social cohesiveness, and providing a focus for celebration.'[312] Access to festivals, the social capital necessary to work with them or attend them, and the access to the social capital they help many to develop, is unequally distributed. Those who have little social capital in these festivals might be conceived of as strangers. In Ahmed's conception, a stranger is not 'the one we simply fail to recognise, […] simply any-body whom we do not know', but rather 'those who are, in their very proximity, already recognised as not belonging, as being out of place.' In this formulation, those who are not a member of what Giles described as the 'in-crowd' of artists above, are not simply not known by the other artists and attendees of the festival, they are recognised as strangers, as not belonging, and this profoundly impacts their affective and social experience of the festival. Further, as Ahmed continues, 'Such a recognition of those who are out of place allows both the demarcation and enforcement of the boundaries of "this place", as where "we" dwell.'[313] That is, the creation of this space for a particular group relies on the presence and exclusion of such a stranger. Though festivals do try to undercut these dynamics of exclusion, this is a fundamental way in which these social and affective spaces are constructed. This suggests that exclusion is something which must be continually reflected upon and disrupted, further necessitating a tactical and reflexive approach.

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[311] See Jamal Gerald, 'I hope', *Live Art Sector Research Report*, 2021 [https://www.liveartresearch.uk/commissions/i-hope/] [accessed 26/05/2022].
[312] Charles Arcodia & Michelle Whitford, 'Festival Attendance and the Development of Social Capital', *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 8:2, 2007, pp. 1-18.
[313] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 21-22.

Those denied access to participation in these festivals are also denied the social capital which coheres to them, and which provides professional benefits. In arts management, social capital has been found to be 'essential for both objective and subjective career success and thus for career sustainability'.[314] This reliance on friendships and personal connections is part of an increasing importance placed upon networks and networking as part of the wider creative industries. As David Lee argues, 'the reliance upon networks as a means of recruitment and finding work appears to offer a relatively frictionless and non-hierarchical method of facilitating labour market processes in this area', but in reality 'they actually act as mechanisms of exclusion, favouring individuals with high levels of cultural and social capital.'[315] The assumption of frictionlessness goes hand in hand with the naïve and optimistic ideological communitas of friendship and artistic communities. Though these festivals are unstructured and inclusive to some degree, this becomes more complex when they relate, and are heteronomous to, the wider, neoliberal field of cultural production; as I have argued throughout, these affective counter-spaces constructed, in part, through their unconventional practices, are both oppositional to and enclosed within this wider field.

In these festivals the dimension of the professional is concealed and somewhat undermined by the unstructured nature of communitas but remains stubbornly present, producing friction and causing unspoken hierarchies and exclusion. The superposition of the professional and personal is part of the way in which live art and experimental performance, particularly collective and artist-run organisations, is structured through informal friendships and networks. Taylor reflects on his relationship with Anderson and Cade, saying he was '100%' friends with them, as well as colleagues. He says that 'the process that they were going on necessitated a relationship beyond a professional one, because it was very personal, very emotional.' Cade also reflects critically on the position of friendship as central to the festival. They refer to positive feedback they received from artists that: 'everything feels it's like a friendship rather than a professional interaction'. However, this feeling of friendship might conceal when interactions really are professional, should be professional, or have professional consequences. Likewise, with Steakhouse Live, though the organisers are friends, they are also colleagues. Though they work on the festival for fun, outside of their day jobs, their ability to programme artists, and to provide worthwhile opportunities for artists, relies on their professional positions at various performance organisations, and has professional consequences for artists. In this way, the unstructured and friendly nature of these festivals can be misleading for artists.

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[314] Julia Richardson, Uma Jogulu, Ruth Rentschler, 'Passion or people? Social capital and career sustainability in arts management', *Personnel Review*, 46:8, 2017, pp. 1835-1851, p. 1835.
[315] David Lee, 'Creative Networks and Social Capital', in Daniel Ashton and Caitriona Noonan, *Cultural Work and Higher Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp. 195–213, p. 195.

Relying on 'social trust' and informal relationships can also allow misunderstanding, conflict and exploitation in the practices of these festivals.[316] The problem of operating through diffuse, informal relationships and a universalizing notion of trust means that a lot is potentially ambiguous or left unsaid, and a departure from formal hierarchies tends to instead rely on informal hierarchies of social capital. Where artists or organisers work for free or low fees in order to perform or work with these festivals, and therefore trade financial stability for social or cultural capital, those who already have some financial security or these forms of capital are best able to progress, and therefore have the most influence in the sector. This leads to them becoming informal leaders who are often unaccountable to professional scrutiny. This lack of structure can cause misunderstandings. Osborn references the expectation of an equal collaboration which turned out not to be the case. After disagreeing with one of Baird's programming choices and being overruled, Osborn questioned the arrangement, saying: 'if this is a collective but ultimately, the final say lands with you, that's cool [but] I don't want to be a part of a collective that says it's equal and it's not basically.' After discussing this, 'it became way more equal', suggesting, once again, that revealing, naming, and addressing differences, tension, and hierarchy is more conducive to their diminishment than pretending they do not exist. The problem, in this case, was that up until that point, in the assumption of unstructured, equal collective practice, such a power structure went unspoken. As Cade states: 'equal collaboration without set roles is something that is actually way more complicated than it sounds.' Cade reflects on the difficulties that arose when a new producer, Daisy Douglas, joined the team on the assumption that she was to be an equal member of the collective, causing a disconnect between the rhetoric or ethos of Buzzcut and the reality of its existence within a wider professional field:

> they [Anderson and Taylor] were like 'we're just like a free organisation and we're all equal'. But she couldn't be, she'd literally just started. […] she probably would have been happy with just being told 'you are coming in as the assistant on the festival, here are your tasks' but […] that felt against the ethos.

Though equality is important to these organisations, and they seek to enact it in their practices, this remains a horizon: not something that can immediately be achieved in present conditions amid wider power imbalances in the neoliberal field of cultural production. An assumption of equality conflicts with the social and affective reality which members of these groups experience, and can negate different levels of expertise, investment, and needs for support.

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[316] On the importance of social trust in the cultural industries, see Mark Banks, Andy Lovatt, Justin O'Connor, Carlo Raffo, 'Risk and trust in the cultural industries', *Geoforum*, 31:4, 2000, pp. 453-464.

The problem with structurelessness was one learned long ago by the women's liberation movements and collectives of the 60s and 70s, as Jo Freeman argues. Freeman affirms that 'there is no such thing as a structureless group', and 'the idea of "structurelessness" does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones.'[317] In this way, the ideological opposition to inequality and domination manifests in an attempt to do without hierarchy and structure in collective organising. As social structure can never be avoided, this results in the emergence of informal, unaccountable structures and hierarchies, which are further encouraged by the way in which the sector is structured through friendships and relations of trust. In the case of Buzzcut, this resulted in tensions between Anderson, Taylor, and Douglas, who were ostensibly equal members of the collective, but had differing levels of experience and investment in the festival: in 2017 Anderson was a founder of the festival who had worked on it since 2012, Taylor was working on his second festival having worked with Buzzcut since the previous year, and Douglas was a new producer who was brought in, Cade admits, 'quite last minute', to work on the 2017 festival. This is a tension between ideological communitas and real social structure which emerges from pressures of the field of cultural production. This lack of structure and ambiguity between friendship and professional relationships, can also lead to other problems, such as overwork and self-exploitation. Despite their anti-professionalism and desire to do away with bureaucracy, Cade describes the festival, particularly later festivals, as extremely hard work, saying that there were 'a couple of years where I was just working all the time and just really stressed all the time. And it just felt really unsustainable.' The pressure to sustain or even exceed expectations, to meet the needs of a large community of artists in an austere neoliberal environment that has simultaneously restricted resources and fetishized growth, results in irresolvable tensions that are exacerbated by the lack of formal structure of collective and artist-run organisations.

This structurelessness influences the way these organisations work with artists. Buzzcut wanted to be hospitable and welcoming, and Cade 'wanted to be on a level with my other friends who are artists'. Forest Fringe's personal relationships with artists, and the fact that, as Field says, they 'kept the idea of who the collective is deliberately vague', sometimes referring to the co-directors, sometimes including the group of core artists they supported, implies a desire for equality with the artists. In both cases however, this desire for equality belies real power the organisers had over the careers of artists in their communities, a power that grew and became more apparent as the organisations grew. As Cade reflects:

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[317] Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Women's Studies Quarterly,* 41:3/4, 2013 [1970], pp. 231-246, p. 232.

> as we got more and more applications, and it felt much more like we were having to select I suppose that puts us in more of a position of power. I really didn't like being in that position at all because I really did identify as an artist.

The imbalance of power between programmers and artists in the field of performance, in which programmers have the power to grant opportunities to artists which come with financial support, but also potentially result in further opportunities, is here embodied in the one conflicted figure of the artist-programmer. Debbie Pearson further reflects on this dynamic with Forest Fringe: 'in our composition, pay structure, and work-model, we work as artists. And yet in a Forest Fringe project we are not in the same position as the artists whose work we support.'[318] It is crucial to recognise that while these practices seek to approach curation and festival organisation as an artistic practice, as well as democratizing the field somewhat, there remains a power imbalance between artist-curators and the artists with whom they work, that requires responsibility, reflection, and care.

This is a symptom of a wider tension between the egalitarian ideals of the festivals and the ideals of neoliberal capitalism, or between the alternative economies they create and the practices of the wider field of cultural production, itself heteronomous to the field of power. Both Buzzcut and Forest Fringe operated as economic exceptions, and this exceptionalism is rooted in communitas and their resistance to the structure and professionalism of the wider field. Both began by paying no or low fees to artists and operated the same system for themselves. For Field this was enabled by the fact that 'the Edinburgh Fringe existed within this bizarro financial universe, in which all of us working for free and not paying the artists still somehow was economically a much more humane system than what was currently there.' The extreme cost of putting on a show during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and the rarity of making a profit or breaking even, meant that the offer of putting on a show for free was an attractive proposition. This situation is caused by the radical inclusion of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe: it is not curated, and anyone who 'finds a space and pays their entry/programme fee of £328', can perform. This overdemand for space in Edinburgh means that 'local properties become venues during August, renting out performance space at extremely high prices', and 'Companies often bring shows to the festival with loss built into their contracts with a venue.'[319] In an echo of Buzzcut, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe's extraordinary success and inclusion, when interacting with the wider geography and economic practices, enables exclusion and exploitation, in this case in the form of venue costs.

Buzzcut's exceptionalism arose out of the role they played in the infrastructure, as well as their aims for transforming it. Buzzcut's organisers felt increasingly pressured to perform a role for the

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[318] Deborah Pearson, 'Curation as a Form of Artistic Practice', in Davida et al., op. cit., p. 137.
[319] Deborah Pearson, MA Dissertation, op. cit., p. 3.

Scottish live art and performance community, particularly after the closure of the Arches in 2015. Cade says, 'we had such a big hole to fill in Scotland each year […] we just stretched ourselves too thin.' Trying to programme too many artists in response to this need resulted in sub-optimal conditions for the presentation of performance. Exceptionalism also arose from their DIY nature. Cade says that what they 'value about the DIY and artist-led spaces is this space for art that is outside of the industry and the financial structures.' The problem here is that these festivals *do* exist within the economic structures of the field of cultural production. Both Buzzcut and Forest Fringe represented themselves as spaces of risk and to try things out, but as both festivals grew and attracted more programmers, this risk was not just the risk of aesthetic failure, but failure that might influence artists' reputations and likelihood of being programmed in the future. The conditions of Buzzcut, in which many artists were programmed in a short space of time, meant that artists, Cade admits, were 'not getting very good technical conditions to show their show in.' These practices, of not paying artists, overprogramming festivals resulting in suboptimal performance conditions, and the use of volunteers, as I will examine, are not inherently negative or exploitative; these practices only become exploitative when the local practices of the collectives interact with the wider fields in which they are enclosed – the field of cultural production and the practices of austere neoliberal capitalism.

The suspicion that this financial exceptionalism might lead to exploitation was present for these festivals. Field cites 'the spectre of exploitation' as one of the reasons they stopped running the Edinburgh festival. Field was concerned that 'a lot of the old artists were coming to Forest Fringe out of loyalty more than because we were any more serving them better than other venues.' While when they began their offer to artists was beneficial within its original context, as the Festival Fringe changed, and more mainstream venues programmed experimental work, this was no longer necessarily the case. Field also reflects on the ethics of relying on unpaid volunteers to run the festival, 'because the people that could come and volunteer, were by and large people who could afford to self-fund, […] largely white, […] largely middle class.' This is therefore another way in which exclusion on the basis of class, race, or income is reproduced. Voluntary or unpaid opportunities have come under scrutiny.[320] Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor link unpaid labour to precariousness and to social exclusion and establish that particularly for young workers entering the job market, working for free is viewed as an inevitability rather than a choice.[321] Sabina Siebert and Fiona Wilson studied the views

[320] A-N, 'Paying Artists: A manifesto for artist-led work', 2016 [http://www.payingartists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Paying-Artists-Artist-Led-Manifesto.pdf], Equity, 'Professionally made, professionally paid campaign', 2016 [http://www.equity.org.uk/campaigns/professionally-made-professionally-paid/], Arts Council England, 'Internships in the arts', 2011 [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance-library/internships-arts] [all accessed 14/04/2022].

[321] Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, '"There's No Way That You Get Paid to Do the Arts": Unpaid Labour Across the Cultural and Creative Life Course', *Sociological Research Online,* 25:4, 2020, pp. 571-588.

and available research on unpaid work in the creative industries in 2013, finding that 'work experience led to a situation where those who could not afford to work for free were excluded from work experience, and consequently, excluded from acquiring the social capital needed to succeed in the sector.' Further, 'an oversupply of candidates competing for a limited number of openings in this sector led to a situation where available positions went to 'those with the right connections.'[322] In the views of those interviewed, simply paying for work experience would not address the issue; those who would obtain the now paid opportunities would still likely be those with the most economic and social capital. Though certain targeted internships and training programmes for those on low incomes or from low-income backgrounds do exist, the scarcity of opportunities and the continuing reliance on informal opportunities and social capital in the arts means this inequitable situation will continue, and the relative lack of performance opportunities under austere neoliberalism increases the possibility of exploitation or self-exploitation of artists. Field notes that they 'did try and do some work to counter' the problem of their volunteers being largely those with the most capital, including building 'a relationship with the University of Chichester, where they would subsidize two students to come up. And the Chichester students definitely had a slightly different background.' Small changes like this are important and can have wider impacts, but they are tactical actions undertaken by small organisations with little access to structural influence.

Many of these problems were caused by the attempt to create an unstructured, egalitarian space in sustained reality which only exists in ideology or in fleeting moments. This was a key point of discussion in my interview with Taylor, and I end with a discussion of his points. At time of interview, Taylor was feeling very negative about Buzzcut, and ruminated on some of the tensions or frictions that occurred in the later festivals. This included a trans audience member being verbally abused and having a rock thrown at them not far from the festival building by young people in the local area, a performance artist doing a durational performance using (and wasting) 350 loaves of bread and 120 litres of milk, in a building which also contained a food bank, and a performing artist being rude to the local café workers who were providing food and drink. These problems are caused by insufficient attention to Buzzcut's geographical position in a community building in Govan, and their low-resource nature, and their radically inclusive practices. As Taylor says, Buzzcut at the Pearce Institute was 'by its very nature […] unsafe. […] Because it's bringing different people together who maybe don't mix together. There might be conflict, there might be miscommunication. […] So you need to be on your guard.' Artist-run festivals like Buzzcut require the contribution of the community to creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, because they do not have the resources to do so alone.

[322] Sabina Siebert and Fiona Wilson, 'All work and no pay: consequences of unpaid work in the creative industries', *Work, employment and society*, 27:4, 2013, pp. 711-721, p. 714 & 715-716.

These tensions are a consequence of inclusion and difference. Through seeking to radically include multiple different groups, including the live art community, the local community, queer and trans communities of artists, disabled artists and audiences, a racially diverse programme and audience (certainly not always fully achieved), they bring groups into tension. This simultaneously reveals and seeks to transcend social structures of class, gender, sexuality, race, disability, background and local cultural identity. While more can be done to reduce exclusion and increase inclusion, tensions and difficulties will remain. These differences cannot be removed with a simple affirmation of communitas; but in revealing them, the exclusions and inequalities of performance in the UK, are made available to contestation, discussion, and action. As Taylor says, 'one of the cores of that festival was this celebration of radical performance in amongst this community and trying to negotiate some kind of new thing. That's tense and that's full of friction, and that's going to have its problems.'

These tensions and conflicts arise simultaneously from the presence of difference, but also an assumption that difference would *not* be present, that the rules and exclusions of neoliberal art and performance festivals that ensure social harmony apply in what is attempting to be a radically different context. The problem lies not in a failure to exclude the possibility of these tensions and frictions: they are, to some extent, inevitable. Rather it lies in the failure to account and equip audiences for them. Paraphrasing my use of Johnson and Oliver's arguments earlier, while the festivals discussed in this chapter might aim for the pleasurable outcome of intimacy, human connection, or communitas, less pleasurable eventualities that arise, such as the inevitable discomfort, awkwardness, tension, or antagonism, may also be constitutive of communitas and inclusive festivals. Truly inclusive festivals necessitate some form of conflict, just as for Bishop, social harmony indicates exclusion of those who might threaten that harmony. In providing important meeting points for a specialist community, as well as attempting to open these spaces up to wider communities and groups, these festivals function as a public sphere for the field of live art and experimental performance, a space in which the practices of these communities, and the practices of live art and performance festivals, can be contested and changed. They act as a space in which the boundaries of this cultural public sphere, and who has access to it, can be renegotiated, by bringing groups to the festival who would normally be excluded, and by revealing tensions and differences that would be concealed in more professional or institutional contexts. Placing these ideas in the context of the reflections of Taylor, we can see how the tensions that arise from trying to do things differently, or trying to be radically inclusive of different groups, are not an unfortunate by-product, but might in fact be how problems are identified and addressed, and how change is propagated in the wider field.

In advancing such arguments I am not advocating that festivals should abandon their audiences to inevitable unpleasant experiences of antagonism and conflict, nor that they should deliberately seek to create such experiences. Rather, instead of trying to ignore or avoid these antagonisms, or to create

an unstructured and harmonious community which is exclusionary, these approaches suggest accepting conflicts between groups as a part of the experience of attending festivals as sites of contestation, for which audiences should be prepared, and which are constitutive of genuine human connection and communitas. These conflicts however need to be attended to with collective care, not just by the festival organisers, whose roles and lack of resource leave them overstretched, but also by audience members. Conflict in these festivals is part of an iterative process of trying, and failing, to resolve irresolvable differences. Radically inclusive, under-resourced, economically exceptional, collective and artist-run festivals like these involve navigating impossible questions, which might nonetheless provide progress.

Conclusion

Through their liminal and marginal position, these festivals are able to intervene in the field and institute change, by exploiting gaps and voids of potential, between the state of the field as it was and how it could, or should, be. In this chapter I have drawn on and departed from Durkheim and Turner's conceptions to show how these festivals attempt to create, and are suffused with at every level of their organisation, the unstructured and unpredictable conditions of communitas. These festivals produce intense social connection which partially reworks the negative affects of austerity. As a part of creative effervescence and communitas, these festivals seek to deconstruct the ideas of dominant austere neoliberalism and produce new ideas through large gatherings. Due to the conditions within which this happens, this communitas is not universal and is temporary – but as a tactical response to the conditions of hopelessness and disconnection of austerity, these festivals have had significant impacts on the field of performance in the UK, in providing opportunities for performance, and for creating and holding communities. These festivals, in providing intense experiences of communitas, serve to refresh and rework the field of live art and experimental performance, and through providing space for conflict also allow space for critique of alienating and exploitative practices, including, in many cases, those of the festivals themselves. These festivals' multiple levels of liminality expose them to multiple tensions: they are counter-festivals but a part of that which they oppose, exclusive but inclusive, structured but unstructured. Using the work of Clare Bishop on relational antagonism, I have argued that tactically attending to and responding to these tensions constitutes the social purpose of these festivals, in producing spaces of conflictual communitas and contestation. The tensions created by the friction between the anti-structure and unstructured nature of collective practice, and the structure and norms of the performance industry, mean that these festivals must always be contingent and tactical. For both Forest Fringe and Buzzcut, these tensions and difficulties ultimately resulted in a shift away from their original festival format. Though temporary, these tactical instrumentalisations of both communitas and antagonism, and their conflictual engagements with the conditions in which they find themselves, produce the potential for change in the field of live art and experimental performance.

Chapter Four

Networks: Producing Spaces of Hope and Futurity

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that collectives can intervene in the austere neoliberal affective environment of hopelessness and foreclosing possibilities for the future, particularly for marginalised subjects, by organising around these marginalised identities and producing spaces of hope which imagine and enact alternative presents and futures. These marginalised subjects are denied access to liveable and flourishing futures by the exclusive dynamics of social capital and networks I outlined in the previous chapter, and by the unequally distributed impacts of austerity and unequal access to the arts, as I outlined in the Introduction. In examining networks, I use Bourdieu's field, a network model, to show how these groups use alternative networks to increase the capital and possibilities of those denied it. I also show how they produce affective counter-spaces of hope that change what *feels* possible. For those that engage with them, these activities grant material and affective relief in the present, grant a more hopeful orientation to the future, and shift the practices of the field, opening up the space of possibles for those that come after them. This final chapter marks the culmination of my argument that collective and artist-run practice can not only help practices and communities survive the immediate unliveable conditions of austerity, but through providing security, care, connection, and hope, they can also sustain them into the future, and work to shape that future.

I begin this chapter by examining conceptions of the future under austere neoliberalism, characterising this as a period of absent or limited futures and diminishing expectations, following the work of Franco Berardi and Bhattacharyya. I examine how these low expectations manifest in the case studies, and then examine how the hope of queer, feminist, and afro-futurity manifests in their practices, using the ideas of Jose Esteban Muñoz. Where Muñoz often finds hope or futurity in the realm of the aesthetic, as throughout this thesis I am seeking it in the organisational practices of these groups, where it is often buried or concealed in the practicality of their jobs or delegated to artists. Where Muñoz finds hope in queer and punk spaces of minoritarian belonging, I seek to examine, as I have done throughout these thesis, how these spaces are practically and affectively constructed. Where Muñoz writes about utopia, I prefer to use the phrase hopeful futures, which captures the prefigurative, plural, and tactical nature of these groups' activities, engaging with the present to shift it in more hopeful and liveable directions. In line with tactical collective practice, I examine how these groups seek to prefigure and agitate for their desired futures, breaking this down into a series of tactics. Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* helps me to critique when this hope or optimism for the future might be a trap, one that may be an obstacle to the futures they imagine.

Case Studies

The case studies examined in this chapter are all networks that identify as collectives or as following collective principles: CUNTemporary, the Cocoa Butter Club (TCBC), and Raze Collective (hereafter Raze). I interviewed CUNTemporary's two co-directors Giulia Casalini and Diana Georgiou in a joint interview in June 2019. I spoke to TCBC's producer Cassie Leon in July 2019. I interviewed Raze's initiator Tim Other in June 2019. Finally, my thinking and writing in this chapter was influenced by a generative interview I had with Saerlaith Robyn Uaid Ní Dhuibhir on the 19th June 2019, who set up and co-ran the Trans Live Art Salon in Dublin, a collective formed during a festival residency designed to increase authentic representation of trans people in Irish theatre, by increasing their access to performance spaces and institutions.[323] Though the location of this collective outside of the UK precludes it from being a full case study, it is used to inflect the activities of the other case studies.

CUNTemporary

CUNTemporary is 'a non-profit organisation that works with individuals and groups that explore feminist, queer and decolonial art practices and theories', and curates a wide variety of performance and art events and talks, as well as running an online newsletter and website.[324] CUNTemporary was set up in 2012 by Diana Georgiou, later joined by Giulia Casalini. Research is a key part of their activities. Casalini says that they use 'queer feminism' as a term to 'feed the organisation […] in terms of practice and theory.' The group continued to run the newsletter at time of interview, with a team of 'about 15 people working on a volunteer basis' on this side of their activities. They ran a regular event, exhibition, performance showcase and club night 'Deep Trash', which curated performances and artwork around a theme, and usually took place throughout the building of Bethnal Green Working Men's club in East London. They are concerned with creating a networking space for queer-feminist artists and researchers, as well as inviting large, diverse audiences who do not necessarily identify as queer or feminist to engage with this work. They are also building an archive of this work and the ideas that surround it.

TCBC

TCBC is a cabaret collective formed by Sadie Sinner the Songbird. They describe their work as 'showcasing and celebrating performers of colour' in response to a lack of representation and

[323] All quotations from these producers in this chapter come from respective interviews with the author unless otherwise stated.
[324] CUNTemporary website, 'About', [https://cuntemporary.org/about/] [accessed 30/05/2021].

inclusion in cabaret.[325] The showcase began as a monthly event at Camden queer venue 'Her Upstairs', which closed down suddenly in 2018, due to undisclosed 'legal reasons'.[326] By then, however, the group had begun to receive interest from institutions, and, as Laurie Mompelat narrates, they 'started receiving requests to perform several times a year in larger spaces like the Arcola Theatre, Camden People's Theatre, the Roundhouse and Underbelly Festival', and later, the Southbank centre.[327] They use their network form to gather together a group of predominantly queer people of colour, or QTBPOC (Queer Trans Black People of Colour) cabaret performers, providing them with multiple performance contexts, aiming to give them agency and autonomy over the way in which they are represented. This representation seeks to change the future conditions of cabaret performers of colour by normalising their existence in white dominated spaces, through influencing those with power and influence in the industry, and through utilising their own power and influence in providing opportunities.

Raze

Raze is 'a charity established to support, develop and nurture queer performance in the UK', with a particular focus on protecting the queer spaces where queer performance is made and presented. Raze Collective was formed in 2015 by Tim Other, 'in response to queer spaces being "razed"', through the closure or threatened closure of many queer performance spaces, predominantly in London, such as the Royal Vauxhall Tavern or the Black Cap in Camden.[328] Other sought to unite individual campaigns to protect these spaces into one organisation. Raze was set up as a charity, and they now have a board containing a group of people from across the industry (including Sadie Sinner of TCBC), and a small team of operations and management staff, including Cassie Leon of TCBC as producer. Their activities include the queer performers network: 'an informal gathering of performers to discuss issues and offer advice and support across the scene', and the queer spaces network, which ran between 2015 and 2018, 'which brought together promoters, producers, programmers, directors, venue owners and others with an interest in supporting and maintaining spaces for queer performance to take place.'[329] Raze's work protects the spaces and performances which allow queer existence and culture to be celebrated and reproduced.

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[325] TCBC website, [https://www.thecocoabutterclub.com/] [accessed 15/06/2022].
[326] Her Upstairs, 'Announcement 8th August 2018', Her Upstairs website, [https://herupstairs.co.uk/about-us/] [accessed 26/05/2021].
[327] Laurie Mompelat, 'Queer of colour hauntings in London's arts scene: performing disidentification and decolonising the gaze. A case study of the Cocoa Butter Club', *Feminist Theory*, 20:4, 2019, pp. 445–463, p. 447.
[328] Raze Collective website, [https://www.razecollective.com/] [accessed 30/05/2021].
[329] Ibid., 'About'.

Producing practices in a time of diminishing expectations

This section introduces the conceptual framework in which the case studies will be examined: that of hopelessness, diminishing expectations, and precarious or cruelly optimistic futurity, before examining how these conditions manifest in the practices of the network collectives discussed in this chapter. Hope and expectations of the future have been degraded by the interconnected issues of neoliberalism, austerity, climate change, stalling social change, and geopolitical conflict. This loss or foreclosure of the future is rooted in what Mark Fisher calls capitalist realism, and the Thatcherite 'there is no alternative', to capitalism and neoliberalism.[330] Bhattacharyya examines how austerity has institutionalized despair and diminished expectations. She writes that:

> the combined impact of a degradation of the space of politics as a result of an unquestioning subservience to economic imperatives and the institutionalisation of despair through a range of adaptations and adjustments in the regulation and administration of everyday life are designed to actively diminish our expectations, both individually and collectively.[331]

This reduces the possibility of political, social and cultural participation, and of imagining alternative politico-economic systems, particularly among marginalised subjects who have the least access to the capital, space, and resources which enable such practices. Capitalism, neoliberalism, and austerity affectively rob subjects of access to a secure, liveable, and imaginable future.

Franco Berardi argued in *After the Future* that capitalism has instituted a 'slow cancellation of the future', or the loss of political and cultural imaginations of the future which sustained resistance in the twentieth century. In the words of the editors of this volume: 'what happens to political thought, practice, and imagination when it loses hold on "the future"? It goes into crisis.'[332] Esther Hitchen writes about the particular strange temporality of austerity, writing that it 'is not a temporally bounded event; it is ongoing with no clear end of resolution', producing 'uncertain futures' and 'paranoid practices', which 'means that attempts to escape austerity's reality are never quite achieved.'[333] The perpetual crisis of neoliberalism and austerity creates a precarious future which produces anxiety and reduces the possibility for collective action in the present. The futurity available under austerity is a form of what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism, that is, 'when something you desire is actually an

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[330] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?,* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2009).
[331] Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life*, op. cit., p. 75.
[332] Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn (eds.), and Franco "Bifo" Berardi, in *After The Future,* Arianna Bove, Melinda Cooper, Eric Empson, Enrico, Giuseppina Mecchia, Tiziana Terranova (trans.,), (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), p. 13 and 3.
[333] Esther Hitchen, 'The affective life of austerity: uncanny atmospheres and paranoid temporalities', *Social & cultural geography*, 22:3, 2021, pp. 295-318, p. 313-315.

obstacle to your flourishing.'[334] Austerity functions by instrumentalising neoliberal insecurities and fears of ruination (such as those I examined in Chapter One) and hopeful attachments to future prosperity. In ideas that prefigure Berlant's, Sara Ahmed engages with Anna Potamianou's critique of hope, or investment in hope, as potentially an attachment that '*gets in the way of a process of moving on* [original emphasis].' As an example, 'The nation could be installed as an object of hope: the nation may promise that it will return one's investment, as a return that has to be endlessly deferred into the future if the investment is to be sustained.'[335] In the case of neoliberal austerity, one is asked to invest in future prosperity or security, and to sacrifice security, entitlements or expectations in the present, or, as Stephen Greer puts it: 'investing in neoliberalism's promise of a "better future" as grounds for privation and sacrifice in the present.'[336] This is cruel optimism because this future prosperity, as Ahemd puts it, is endlessly deferred, as austerity makes permanent changes to how the state functions economically, rendering all but the rich permanently insecure.

As I noted above, access to hope and futurity is unequally distributed. In Bourdieu's terms, one's access to a liveable future is determined by ones relative capital, which allows access to many position-takings in the space of possibles, both of which enable the expectation of, and agency in, future activity in the field for artists and producers. However, new positions in the field must be seen, conceived of, and *felt* to be possible. I examine how these networks change what feels possible, and what actually is possible, through producing affective counter-spaces and through shifting practices in the field. As I will examine, identity characteristics like class, race, gender, and sexuality have the potential to limit one's access to these forms of capital, limiting the space of possibles for these subjects, or limiting the positions they can take in the field. For a performer this might take the form of the performances they can make and receive funding for, the jobs they can apply for, the spaces they can comfortably inhabit, and the groups in which they can find belonging. These conditions are all implicated to some degree in the arguments of the previous three chapters, and they form the foundation for this one: one needs security, care for one's needs, and connection to others (discussed in the form of communitas in the previous chapter), in order to be able to imagine a future. In this context, the groups discussed in this chapter use forms of gathering and networked identity to create access to hopeful futures and promote political and social engagement, drawing on conceptions of queer, feminist, and black futurity. The prefigurative nature of these practices mean that they do not articulate a singular vision, but rather present plural, responsive and tactical visions of futurity; ones that are variously instrumentalisations of past histories and discourses, protection or critique of the present, and the imagination and enactment of future worlds and practices. However, neoliberalism has colonised

[334] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism,* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 1.
[335] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* op. cit., p. 185-6.
[336] Greer, *Queer Exception*, op. cit., p. 193.

and recuperated these movements, producing particular iterations of neoliberal futures, such as Catherine Rottenberg's examination of neoliberal feminist futures, which offers white middle-class women, 'the promise of future individual fulfilment [through] smart (self-)investments in the present to ensure enhanced returns in the future.'[337]

Neoliberalism has had a similar influence on queer communities and communities of colour, who are likewise increasingly sold corporate neoliberal liberation through individual advancement and capitalist success rather than structural change.[338] This is achieved through a neoliberal conception of freedom and self-actualisation. Greer examines queer solo performance in neoliberal times which are 'rooted in a conceptualisation of freedom as the right to participate in market exchange but extending far beyond it to involve an array of practices concerning biographical self-fashioning and "responsible" life management.'[339] Greer uses and diverges from the work on futurity and utopianism by Muñoz and Jill Dolan, arguing that their positioning of utopia as a horizon or potentiality 'may serve to constrain recognition of what might be accomplished – and sustained – in the present'.[340] I seek to build on this repositioning of futurist thinking into the here and now by examining how it can go beyond the realm of the potential, the performative, the speculative, discursive or aesthetic. Through collective action on the level of producing, which seeks to change the performance infrastructure, the groups discussed in this chapter can not only imagine or describe alternatives but begin to tactically enact them in the here and now, in ways that can have lasting consequences in the performance field.

This context of hopelessness, despair, or anxiety is evident in the case studies discussed in this chapter. Raze explicitly link their beginning to the financial crash and the austerity that followed, and the pressures this placed on community space I outlined in the Introduction. This resulted, to Other's recollection, in the London queer club scene going from a 'real peak of queer clubbing and going out and extravagant nightlife', to the closure of multiple venues because 'people stopped going out and money was tight.' He says that people did not want 'to see queer people dressed up in ridiculous outfits going to have a good time, when people are suffering economically'. Here, austerity not only produces material impacts in the loss of revenue and closure of venues; there is also a rhetorical and affective devaluation of the performance of queer subjectivity, identity, and joy. Activities like dressing up and going out, which might be essential to the life and reproduction of queer communities (as I examined in Chapter One) become seen as insensitive extravagances. We can situate this within Sarah Marie

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[337] Catherine Rottenberg, 'Neoliberal Feminism and the Future of Human Capital', *Signs,* Winter 2017, 42:2. pp. 329-348, p. 331-332

[338] In 'There's No Such Thing as a Gay Bar: Co-Sexuality and the Neoliberal Branding of Queer Spaces' Scott E. Branton, and Cristin A. Compton examine how gay bars have been increasingly taken over by neoliberal branding and logic. *Management Communication Quarterly,* 35:1, 2021, pp. 69-95.

[339] Greer, *Queer Exceptions,* op. cit., p. 9-10.

[340] Ibid., p. 193.

Hall's scholarship on everyday life and austerity, and her notion of 'austere intimacies': 'that austerity policies and a personal condition of austerity can have significant impacts on intimate relationships', and that 'intimacies may change, bend or retreat in times of austerity.'[341] The devaluation in importance of queer relations and gathering in public, queer space, and the retreat of queer intimacy in queer bar and club spaces shows how the logics of scarcity and diminishing expectations come to be internalized by queers; who come to expect bare heteronormative life, with a set of priorities determined by the state, rather than expectations of communal flourishing or joy.

This subtle influence of austerity on the behaviour of, and spaces for, marginalised people and communities is one of the key contexts to which these case studies respond. Further, Other reflects that as 'places that had been open for decades' closed, there was 'a real sense of panic, because if you lose those places […] getting back that kind of culture is very, very difficult.' This panic is related to the anxiety and fear about the future produced by austerity and neoliberalism. Queer spaces rely on a historical cultural value which is increasingly anachronistic in contemporary neoliberalism, in which non-profitable community space is under threat, as I covered in the Introduction. After queer spaces close, there is no expectation that they will reopen or that others will take their place, nor is there any expectation that austerity will be followed by a prosperous future which might be able to support new spaces; rather, it is thought that these spaces must be protected, and survive through what might be indefinite periods of economic hardship, or be irretrievably lost.

We can see these low expectations in TCBC, through Leon's personal account of coming to work for the organisation. She was 'really exhausted of having to find all the commissions and opportunities myself' as a performer and theatre maker. She was likewise 'really sick of the conversations that were happening in performance […] about working-class people in performance and how you make a difference or […] about diversity in performance. And you can talk about it in loads of different rooms. But nothing actually happens from it.' This again speaks to low-expectations and a lack of hope, and we might also relate this to Ahmed's concept of 'non-performatives', which she opposes to Judith Butler's writing on performativity and John Austin's on speech acts. The term 'describes the ''reiterative and citational practice by which discourse'' *does not produce* ''the effects that it names'' [original emphasis].'[342] Both Ahmed and Leon are referring to the nonperformativity of commitments to diversity, which works alongside and as part of the operations of austerity to reduce hope of change for marginalised people. As Bhattacharyya writes: 'When the processes regulating

[341] Sarah Marie Hall, *Everyday Life in Austerity*, op. cit., p. 135.
[342] Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 117. Here Ahmed is referencing Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993) p. 2.

public life are redesigned to imply that things cannot get better and may well become worse, this disappointment chimes with the other events of people's lives.'[343]

For Leon there is no expectation of a sustainable performance career, and no hope for social progress to emerge out of the good intentions of the industry. Leon also recounts that when she put in TCBC's first ACE funding application for £15,000, she thought that amount was 'for a year, because […] I just didn't realize that could just be for a day. Because to me, that was outrageous […] […] I felt bad about using all of that money, in a really short space of time'. This is related to Leon's working-class background, and her inexperience as a producer at the time, but also to a lowered sense of entitlement to public funds, communicated through affect and feeling as part of the affective environment of austerity. It is not enough to have theoretical access to these funds; one must feel entitled to them. Austerity operates to disallow entitlement, particularly along gendered and racialised lines. As Bhattacharyya writes: 'austerity is an attack on the very idea of entitlement', and her examination of austere processes of welfare to disallow entitlement can also be applied to arts funding.[344] Bassel and Emejulu's work examines the unequal and disproportionate impacts of austerity on women of colour: 'Limited resources, the unequal ongoing strain of context-specific austerity, and intersecting forms of violence are daily realities for women of colour'.[345] Though they are describing the exhaustion experienced by women of colour activists, this same context causes exhaustion in Leon's case; exhaustion which goes hand in hand with the lowered expectations and possibilities of the arts sector.

We can also see this context in the beginnings and practices of CUNTemporary. Their work on 'Ecofutures', as we shall see later, specifically exists in the context of anxiety about the future due to climate change.[346] This interacts with neoliberalism, with widely-held beliefs that climate change will not be avoided because of neoliberal capitalism, in which 'It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'.[347] This is worsened by the exhaustion and restricted possibilities of austerity. CUNTemporary disavow austerity having any direct impact on their organisation and practices, noting that their funding increased during austerity. They relate this to the fact that they 'persisted', through 'responding to emails every day of your life, of sending out a newsletter every month since March 2012 […] all this constant love and labour and passion that has legitimised us.' However, this is in a context where working for free and using unpaid labour is the norm, where

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[343] Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life*, op. cit., p.77.
[344] Bhattacharyya, 'Austerity and disallowing claims', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41:13, 2018, pp. 2293-2300, p. 2295.
[345] Akwugo Emejulu and Leah Bassel, 'The Politics of Exhaustion', *City*, 24:1-2, 2020, pp. 400-406, p. 404.
[346] Susan Clayton, 'Climate anxiety: Psychological responses to climate change', *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 74, 2020, Article 102263.
[347] Mark Fisher, op. cit., p. 1.

resources for queers and feminists must be struggled and fought for, and where the expectation is of minimal support. Though they speak of this predominantly unpaid labour in positive terms and with pride, this narrative shows how much difficulty, struggle and persistence have been normalised as an inevitable feature of working in the arts. The positioning of unpaid labour as love has a long history in feminist scholarship on domestic labour and housework. As Silvia Fedirici writes: 'They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.'[348] Though a distinctly different context and nature of work, this unpaid, predominantly administrative labour of cultural workers is significant in the context of research that suggests that women are overrepresented in more administrative roles like marketing, public relations, and production co-ordination, and are asked to do, and complete, more administrative work, or 'office housework' than men in the same roles.[349] This places the conditions of CUNTemporary firmly within the low-expectations and degradations of arts professions as part of neoliberal austerity.

CUNTemporary also refer to the instrumentalisation of diversity and the visibility of queer, feminist or other identities as part of neoliberalism, as a potential pitfall of their practice. Georgiou says that 'we have to be a bit careful about how we want to take up that visibility. And especially for such little reward'. Rosalind Gill reflects on the potential problems of what she calls 'new feminist visibilities', which may be unequal, trivialising, or 'complicit with rather than critical of capitalism'.[350] In a link to Leon's comments about discussions of class and diversity, the expectation here of neoliberalism is that the embrace of diversity and visibility will not come with actual resources or effort to change the structures of the art world in order to better accommodate those who are made more visible. This is perhaps an accurate but profoundly pessimistic attitude toward arts funding and institutional practice in times of austerity.

Hope and Futurity in Network Collectives

Having traced how diminished expectations manifest in the context of these collectives, I now examine how hope and futurity manifest in their aims and principles. This allows me to establish the hopeful horizon in which their specific tactics take place. As queer is a common denominator for all three collectives I draw most heavily on the work of Muñoz on queer futurity, though his work also focuses on the intersection of queer and racial otherness. I also draw on the ideas of feminist futurity of Sara Ahmed. In particular, among all of these ideas I focus on turns toward futurity and hope as allied

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[348] Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Bristol: Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975), p. 1.
[349] See David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, 'Sex, gender and work segregation in the cultural industries', *The Sociological Review,* 63:1, 2015, and Seulki Rachel Jang, Tammy D Allen, Joseph Regina 'Office Housework, Burnout, and Promotion: Does Gender Matter?', *Journal of Business and Psychology,* 36, 2021, pp. 793-805.
[350] Rosalind Gill, 'Post-postfeminism?: new feminist visibilities in postfeminist times', *Feminist Media Studies,* 16:4, 2016, pp. 610-630, p. 617.

with critical, concrete possibilities or actions in the present, rather than pure, abstract, imaginings. I seek to build on this in this chapter by considering the diverse tactics, or tactical futurity, which strive toward hopeful futures or put hopeful imaginings to work.

Imagining hopeful futures is key to queer futurity. Muñoz writes that 'Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.'[351] In the context of this chapter, queerness is what makes it possible to see the foreclosed possibilities of the austere neoliberal present as inadequate, thus providing the motivation to do things differently. As Muñoz writes, 'Queerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future'. For him, queerness is about 'an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.'[352] His view of queer futurity then, is one that is not just imagination, but an imagination which fuels action and concrete possibilities. This becomes clear in his discussion of a key influence in this work, Ernst Bloch, and his distinction between abstract and concrete utopias, of which the latter are 'relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential'.[353] This too links to Lefebvre's notion of utopianism which consists of a transformation of everyday life, writing that this is 'the same dawn glimpsed by the great utopians […] Fourier, Marx, and Engels', whose utopianism is rooted in the fact that they 'demonstrated real possibilities'.[354] Producing spaces which demonstrate and enact real possibilities is the concern of the case studies in this chapter.

The concepts of tactical futurity and hopeful tactics are an extension of these ideas of concrete utopias and the demonstration of real possibilities. I examine what happens when hope and futurity meet the pragmatism of producing practices under neoliberalism and austerity, where they are instrumentalised to specific social and organisational ends; to gather people together, to resist marginalisation and oppression, to protect spaces of hopeful community relation, and to produce discourse which affirms and validates collective identities. If 'the idea of hope' for Muñoz is 'both a critical affect and a methodology' I here seek to find this affect and methodology in the producing and organisational practices of these networked collectives. In this I am reading Muñoz against the grain, in pulling queer futurity back to 'the rigid conceptualization that is a straight present.'[355] As throughout this thesis, I am seeking to place these two things in productive tension to see what possibilities it offers. This chapter seeks to describe the tactics used to approach these hopeful futures, by shifting the

[351] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, op. cit., p. 1.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid. p. 3.
[354] Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 422-3.
[355] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, op. cit., p. 185.

present in local and specific ways, and creating more space and possibility in the field of performance for the specific practices and identities they work with, in both the present and the future.

Cuntemporary's hope and futurity is expressed most clearly in the discourse they produce, and their influences, which they name as queer-feminist and Marxist. These influences are concretely utopian in seeking to create an open, somewhat horizontal collective which follows the principle that 'people need to get paid', in opposition to exploitative practices of paying little to no fees. In their explicit naming of themselves as queer, feminist and decolonial, they align themselves with these movements' visions for liberated futures. They write that they 'aim to reclaim space not only for a plurality of genders and sexualities, but also for those bodies and discourses that are non-white, non-western, non-able or otherwise excluded from mainstream culture, politics and economic systems.'[356] They aim, through their work, to present to wider, general, or coalitional audiences marginal artistic practices that are 'closeted' or excluded by the cultural industries due to their reference to 'queerness, feminism, gender and sexual politics, labour injustices and non-white discourses.' In increasing the visibility of these practices they seek to help articulate these movements' challenges to power, to encourage 'alternative modes of production', and to promote the ideas and practices which agitate for change, in the present and in the future.[357] The articulation or imagination of multiple hopeful and hopeless futures are a part of their curatorial practices, research, and the work they programme, such as through their 'Ecofutures festival'.

For TCBC, hope is in the descriptions of the spaces they create as sacred spaces, or, in Leon's words: 'this is a very special space, because we don't have spaces that centre performers of colour. And it's amazing that we can all share this space.' As I will examine later, these special or sacred spaces produce hopeful affects and call to being decolonised futures through centring and celebrating people of colour. While these practices might be small in scale, their affective potential is significant, and their impacts become more widespread as TCBC begin to work with institutions and influence insitutional practice, as I will show. In contradistinction to non-performative institutional commitments to diversity or opposing racism, this group critiques the erasure of performers of colour and at the same time effectively and affectively enacts the reversal of this erasure.

This too has hopeful impacts for the organisers. When asked about the future, Leon replied that she feels 'quite positive' about the future, locating this positivity in the fact that as their practices continue their visibility will increase: 'within this type of art, nobody's going to be unaware that we exist'. Leon looks forward to future performances at Underbelly as well as many other performances internationally. Leon also finds hope in the nature of their work:

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[356] CUNTemporary website, 'About', op. cit.
[357] Ibid.

> because of how political our cabaret is, that it's not just a general cabaret it's run by queer performers, queer women of color, and it's queer performers of color. Mostly, I think the political statement is being listened to. Because those people don't exist on a stage anywhere else, as a company or a collective without somebody else controlling what's going on, where it's just us. And so I think that we're growing into something that is going to be incredible.

Finally, Leon also finds hope and positivity in their work with other organisations such as Raze, which will further increase the possibilities of their work. Leon's work with TCBC, the diverse activities they run, and the people they do it with, enables a sense of hope and possibility for the future that was distinctly absent from her work as a performer. This gets to the heart of the possibility of these network collectives for producing a hopeful orientation toward the future, as well as producing concrete possibilities which improve the present.

Raze use the word collective as a hopeful performative of open democracy, as in Butler's concept of performativity outlined above, in bringing to being that which it names. Though begun by Other alone, his process involved speaking to lots of different people who had a stake in the issue of queer performance spaces, and his use of the word collective marks his hope for this mass involvement. As Other says, 'a collective is quite a democratic idea' and 'stamping it as a collective means that people see it like that.' Collective marks a desire for how he wishes Raze to be. When asked about the future, Other says that he feels 'just enormously positive, like the amount of energy and excitement and time and love that people are willing to give has been totally dumbfounding.' The organisation is looking forward to the next step of becoming an autonomous organisation, with funding and practices and fixed structures of the board, to continue supporting queer performance and the spaces in which it takes place.

Raze also have a tactical futurity of a different sort, one which instrumentalises the past and the present. It is found most clearly in Other's descriptions of queer nightlife pre-financial crash, of a 'rich and extravagant queer culture'. Though these recollections have a certain nostalgia to them, in referring to the past these ideas point toward the future, in which these spaces which produce aesthetic and performative ideas of queer futurity and relationality are protected for future generations of queers. Further, the achievement of such an aim, if taken to its logical conclusion, requires a transformation of neoliberal austere spatial practice. If queer performance practices and spaces are valuable to communities and on those terms should be protected, this contradicts spatial practices which only judge the validity of space on the basis of profitability. This imagines a world in which marginalised communities and collective identities have a right to spaces in which to relate and reproduce. Queer futurity often utilises a mythic or nostalgic past as well as a future, as in Muñoz's formulation that queerness is 'distilled from the past'. Muñoz writes about the utopian possibility of queer spaces, and

the stages on which queer performance takes place, discussing 'the transformative powers of nightlife that queers and people of color have always clung to'. He writes that performance permits him 'access to this network of queer belongings.' These spaces articulate a hopeful future, and enable a hopeful present, through asserting that queer enjoyment and extravagance is a valid reason for spaces to be protected by the state. Other's account aligns with Muñoz's descriptions of one performance space, The Parlour, as photographed by Kevin McCarty, which he summarises as 'a use of past decadence to critique the banality of our presentness for the purpose of imaging and enacting an enabling of queer futurity.'[358] The extravagance of queer nightlife, as it is remembered or imagined before the financial crash or before austerity, is utilised by Other to grant access to present and future possibilities of an extravagance of queer spaces and performance.

Hopeful Tactics

What is important about all of the positive feelings about the future discussed above is that they are located in a concrete present and concrete possibilities that may not be within the sole power of the speaker, but are in the power of the collective. This affective orientation of hope allows them to do things differently and to make spaces that feel or operate differently to those around them. This in turn reflexively reaffirms the affective orientation of hope. I now turn to how this hope and futurity is expressed tactically; or how these futurities are instrumentalised to influence and shift present conditions.

Collective Identification

Each organisation tactically gathers large groups of people together, in both temporary physical spaces and more diffuse and dispersed network forms, around particular concerns. As I explored in earlier chapters, and will extend later, these collective are produced in space, through affective investment, and these groups produce social and affective spaces. Those interviewed for this chapter and throughout this thesis referenced feeling more empowered, or having greater influence in the field, when in a group. For networks this effect is particularly impactful, as they are large groups which call for mass participation. In response to the exclusion of specific groups, issues faced by these groups, or restrictions on these groups, these networks use collective identification and networking to share and increase their capital, and to increase their influence in the field of performance.

Raze formed in order to provide this 'power in numbers' effect, and to unite multiple campaigns to save specific queer venues such as the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, Madame Jojos, and the Joiners Arms. He says that 'one of the problems that I could see, as an outsider, was that there wasn't any one organisation or one group where lots of different people could come together and act in a way

[358] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, op. cit., p. 3, 108, 109, and 111.

that exerted a larger amount of power over the situation'. Similarly, TCBC responds to the lack of representation of queers of colour in Cabaret by bringing this group of people together, with the expectation that more can be achieved by working together than as individuals. Their remit of QTBPOC performers is already coalitional, and seeks to bring together diverse groups of people, and to target and construct a specific community of artists, with similar identities, practices and concerns. CUNTemporary also formed to tactically group diverse practices and artists together. They say that their initial motivations were to 'bring together artists whose work was feminist and speak about that in a safe space' and to create 'networking opportunities for feminists', noting a lack of self-identifying feminist artists or public events at that time. Contemporary feminism, like queer, is a broad category, with which artists can identify themselves; making a coalition between queer and feminist casts a wide net while providing common ground. As well as being broad concerns, what precisely constitutes queer-feminist work is ambiguous and has multiple interpretative possibilities. As Georgiou says: 'What is queer-feminist work? Is it the identity of the artists? Or is it the product that they produce […] or is it the process rather?' As such, these terms are inclusive while implying shared political or artistic concerns, shared identities and practices, providing the grounds for the success of the mass-involvement network form. Through doing this, Casalini adds, 'we helped a growing community of queer-feminist artists in London, but also in the UK, to find their platform to express themselves.' They do not see themselves as addressing one group or identity, rather they include all those working with a queer-feminist modality – though this modality will tend to informally include particular identities more than others.

The terms LGBT, queer, people of colour, and feminist are broad, elective categories designed to incorporate difference, acknowledging that they will contain differing levels of experience, privilege, and visible appearance. As Lola Olufemi writes: '"Woman" is a strategic coalition, an umbrella under which we gather in order to make political demands.'[359] LGBTQ is an umbrella term, one which provides a united political orientation against shared oppressions to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans people. This grouping is contested and has been caught in the crossfire of the culture war over the inclusion of trans people, with some seeking to form a competing 'LGB Alliance' to exclude trans people.[360] People of colour is likewise coalitional, as are related terms QTIPOC and QTBPOC. These terms have begun to receive criticism, with a preference toward naming people with racial specificity, in the acknowledgement of different experiences among Black, Asian, and other people of colour.[361] Nevertheless, the term carries with it an expansive identification such as that belonging to a historical sense of 'political blackness', defined as including 'African, African-

[359] Lola Olufemi, *Feminism Interrupted: Disrupting Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p. 65.
[360] See LGB Alliance website [http://lgballiance.org.uk/] [accessed 16/06/2022].
[361] See statement from Belgrade Theatre Coventry, cited in the Thesis Introduction.

Caribbean, Asian and other visible minority ethnic communities who are oppressed by racism.'[362] Despite the potential risks of homogenising diverse groups, and reinforcing whiteness as the norm to which all other racial identities are defined in opposition, these terms encapsulate the intersectional and broad political coalition-building practices of these networks, as they seek to bring together different groups in resistance to diverse forms of oppression.

These groups illustrate a change in how identity is understood. As Greer argues in relation to gay and queer identities, explorations of how identity is performatively realised

> has involved a shift away from primary identity claims grounded in sameness towards identities described by identification across various kinds of difference […] Such thinking about performance also challenges a dominant gay identity discourse which assumes that individuals who share the same sexual preference must share common experiences, outlooks and values or interests.[363]

This shift locates collective identification less in shared, fixed characteristics and more in coalitions across difference. This has emerged particularly through the use of intersectional thinking from black feminism, which critiqued the way in which first and second wave feminism located collective identification in sameness, predominantly including and assuming white middle-class women as the subject of feminism.[364] The acknowledgement of anti-essentialist performativity, and the interlocking oppressions of intersectionality, locate oppression in the formation of essentialising narratives and find space for resistance in broad collective identifications, and spaces for the performance, reproduction, and contestation of these identifications.

This is part of what Muñoz calls disidentifications, or '*identities-in-difference* [original emphasis]*'*. He writes that disidentification is 'about expanding and problematizing identity and identification', in ways that produce certain forms of inclusion through tactically identifying with, and transforming, the exclusionary conditions of the public sphere.[365] This involves a tactical and contingent embrace of terms, such as queer and poc, which simultaneously enable their solidarity but risk preserving their marginal status, as I will show. Such coalitional identification can also be homogenising and risk concealing specific oppression or inequalities across these coalitions. This is the reason why such terms as BAME have been critiqued as I noted in the Introduction. These groups

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[362] Uvanney Maylor, 'What Is the Meaning of "Black"? Researching "Black" Respondents.', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32:2, 2009, pp. 369–387, p. 373.
[363] Stephen Greer, *Contemporary British Queer Performance: Brief Encounters,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 196.
[364] See Olufemi, op. cit.
[365] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 6, 7, and 29.

tactically mediate between coalitional and more specific terms, as we see in the case of TCBC, who use both 'performers of colour' and 'Black, Asian, and racially othered performers', to describe the groups with whom they work.[366] Through their practices these networks engage with the tension between the advantages and disadvantages of these collective identifications and seek to affectively, materially, and discursively shift the conditions in which these marginalised identities find themselves. These practices are tactical and contingent; they do not articulate a finalised or idealised position for these identities, rather they engage with the state of things as they are to produce the next step toward a better future, as I will show.

Despite their potential problems, these expansive, open, coalition-building practices emerge from, and contribute to, hopeful orientations toward others and the future. These collective and individual bodies are shaped and constituted by hope, as well as producing hope. Ahmed argues that:

> emotions involve readings of the openness of bodies to being affected. Fear reads that openness as the possibility of danger or pain; hope reads that openness as a possibility of desire or joy. These readings reshape bodies […] hope may expand the contours of bodies, as they reach towards what is possible.

She goes on to quote Ernst Bloch, in saying that 'hope makes people broad instead of confining them'.[367] In making people broad or open in hopeful anticipation of positive affects like desire or joy, these groups become more inclusive of others, in contrast to the confining and isolating impacts of an affective environment of fear and anxiety.

Representation

Representation is key to how these collective identities form and are mobilised, a key condition to which they respond, and a key hopeful tactic for these collectives, as they seek to counteract negative, limited, or absent representations of collective identities. Representation allows these groups to gain some control over the production of discourse in culture and tell their own stories with agency, which allows them to conceive of hopeful futures. Statistics explored within the Introduction of differential access to the arts, as well as analyses that examine the impact of race and social background on educational experience and attainment, establish that race can and does place limits on access to cultural and symbolic capital.[368] As I explored in the previous chapter, race and

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[366] TCBC website, 'About', op. cit.
[367] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* op. cit., p. 185.
[368] See Gill Crozier, '"There's a war against our children": black educational underachievement revisited', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 26:5, 2005, pp. 585-598, and Nicola Rollock, 'Legitimizing Black academic failure: Deconstructing staff discourses on academic success, appearance and behaviour', *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* 17:3, 2007, pp. 275–287.

other forms of otherness can limit one's access to social capital, and it can also limit access to cultural capital. Derron Wallace incorporates race within Bourdieu's work, and extends his 'notion of cultural capital in relation to "race" and ethnicity', and argues that '"Race" can (and often does) influence experiences and expressions of cultural capital.' Wallace also writes that rather than race, Bourdieu 'invested in an understanding of caste – a typology of "race" or ethnicity – which highlighted the social construction of racialisation and power inequality'.[369] Race is socially constructed and contingent on cultural context, but it is important to consider race and other identity characteristics such as gender and sexuality, alongside class, as potential limits on one's ability to move in social space, to attain cultural capital, and to take up positions in the field, in ways that restrict the space of possibles, as I will examine in relation to TCBC and other commentators below.

In response to what Sadie Sinner calls a 'whitewashed industry', as Leon reports, TCBC seek to create a space which 'is for any person of colour, any queer creative of colour, that is doing something, and it doesn't have to be a professional standard.'[370] In doing so, TCBC resist the way in which professional standards are instrumentalised against people of colour, through excluding those without resources, training, or inclination to produce work which is recognizable as professional, or reading black people and their cultural forms as unprofessional.[371] Crucially, the work TCBC present is not necessarily about race. Leon draws on her theatre company with Reena Kalsi, Cape Theatre, and the frustration of 'having to explain why it wasn't about us being performers of colour […] it was about us and our general stories of interest.' In centring people of colour but refusing to thematically limit what they produce, Leon and TCBC affirm their events as equal to other cabaret events, though they might take different forms. Leon remembers being surprised at her first encounter with TCBC, as it differed from her expectations of the cultural form of cabaret, which she associated with being 'cheesy' and containing 'jazz hands'. Instead she found diverse performance practices such as 'a girl hula hooping on roller-skates', a drag band, 'steel pan players, and carnival dancers, and sound loopers […] people doing loads of creative things that aren't necessarily what you would consider to be cabaret.' The result is a redefinition of what constitutes cabaret, as Leon says: 'this is what people of colour make, this is going to be our cabaret.' This is disidentification: 'a partial disavowal of that cultural form to restructure it from within.'[372] Further, as Muñoz writes, 'To disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to "connect" with

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[369] Derron Wallace, 'Reading "Race" in Bourdieu? Examining Black Cultural Capital Among Black Caribbean Youth in South London', *Sociology*, 51:5, 2017, pp. 907-923, p. 907-909.
[370] Leon, op. cit.
[371] See, for example, Marcus W. Ferguson and Debbie S. Dougherty, 'The Paradox of the Black Professional: Whitewashing Blackness through Professionalism', *Management Communication Quarterly*, 36:1, 2021, pp. 3-29, and Saran Donahoo, 'Working with style: Black women, black hair, and professionalism', *Gender, Work, and Organisation*, 2022 [https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12838].
[372] Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, op. cit., p. 28.

the disidentifying subject.'[373] TCBC's disidentification with a white-dominated cabaret, and the wider field of cultural production of which it is a part, allows them to recode it with their own diverse cultural practices.

Exclusion operates through what Bourdieu calls collusion, which works to produce the rules of the game of the art world, and its stakes, primarily that art has value, and that some is more valuable than others.[374] The collusion of a white dominated field of performance may work to might be exclude, ignore, or restrict the possibilities of artists of colour. We can see this at work through Jamal Gerald's contribution to the *Live Art Sector Research Report*, entitled, significantly for this chapter, 'I hope'. It details experiences of social exclusion he experienced in the live art community, typified by a 'you can't sit with us' attitude, as well as microaggressions such as being mistaken for another black artist. Two of Gerald's statements typify the necessity of marginalised artists both to make work only in terms of their marginalisation, and also to acquire capital through white-dominated, professional standards and structures. He writes, 'I hope in the future I don't have to use buzz words such as "Black" and "Queer" to attract an audience and to get funding. I hope in the future my work doesn't only get programmed because a white creative director's name is attached to it.'[375] These are the hopeful conditions that TCBC seek to provide, through producing spaces in which black and queer artists can represent themselves on their own terms.

These conditions of the field of performance reduce the social and cultural capital of black artists and their work, fixes the meaning of their work, and thus reduces their space of possibles. This is what CUNTemporary referred to as work that was 'closeted' above, or work which was only interpreted in terms of its marginalisation. In creating these networks of artists from specific groups, and presenting work to more general audiences, they are seeking to increase their social capital by increasing the number of individuals they have supportive relations with in the field, and increase their cultural capital and that of their performances through imbuing their performances and artworks with the value denied to them by majoritarian structures of artistic consecration in the field. TCBC and CUNTemporary try to open up a wider variety of possibilities for these performers. As I will examine, both seek to increase cultural capital by working in and with institutions. This changes the field, which impacts not just the artists with whom they work, but those that come after them, in making it easier for Black, queer, and feminist artists to make work, for that work to be valued, and for that work to be valued outside of a specifically marginalised framework of value. In creating more possibilities in the

[373] Munoz, *Disidentifications,* p. 12.
[374] See Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art,* op. cit., and Wacquant and Bourdieu, op. cit.
[375] Jamal Gerald, op. cit.

present, they shift the state of the field of performance with which artists that come after them will engage, producing hope, possibility, and access to futurity.

Representation also serves the purpose within marginalised groups of providing reflection and relation among themselves. Representation is important to these groups because it allows them to conceive of themselves as having agency and being part of a wider group that can continue and be reproduced into the future. Representation makes both individual and collective identification possible; in order to identify with, or as something, it must first be made available to them through representation. Though TCBC began out of a desire to showcase queer performers of colour to cabaret talent scouts to increase their representation and booking in the industry, but it then 'became clear that, actually, people who shared our identities wanted to see us perform too.'[376] In Sadie Sinner's terms, as she paraphrases the words of artist Travis Alabanza about performing at TCBC: 'there are so many aspects of yourself looking back at you. […] You are speaking to versions of yourself.'[377] Being around others like you allows for affects of hope to arise, and allows for greater possibilities of communication and representation.

This attachment to collective identities and representational visibility is complex; it provides hope and futurity, but it could also stand in the way of that future. A politics of representational visibility has been critiqued for various problems, such as confusing visibility with power, or disregarding invisible or less visible oppressed identities.[378] Attachments to increases of representation may fail to see that representation does not necessarily equate to political power. As Phelan argues, 'If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture. The ubiquity of their image, however, has hardly brought them political or economic power.'[379] Further, more representation can be negative when one has limited control over what form that representation takes, such as through the propagation of harmful stereotypes.[380] The tactical and

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[376] Sadie Sinner, '"I would describe it as a sacred space": Sadie Sinner on establishing The Cocoa Butter Club cabaret', interview with Paula Akpan, *Time Out,* 30th October 2020 [https://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/i-would-describe-it-as-a-sacred-space-sadie-sinner-on-establishing-the-cocoa-butter-club-cabaret] [accessed 8/12/2022].

[377] Sadie Sinner, cited in Mompelat, op. cit.

[378] See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), Lisa M. Walker, 'How to Recognise a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are', *Signs,* 18:4, 1993, pp. 866-890, and also the first chapter of Stephen Greer's *Contemporary British Queer Performance: Brief Encounters,* 'Theorising Queer Performance' (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 3-33.

[379] Phelan, ibid., p. 10.

[380] See Riva Tukachinsky, Dana Mastro and Moran Yarchi, 'Documenting Portrayals of Race/Ethnicity on Primetime Television over a 20-Year Span and Their Association with National-Level Racial/Ethnic Attitudes', *Journal of Social Issues*, 71:1, 2015, pp. 17-38, or Mari Castañedai, 'The Power of (Mis)Representation: Why Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in the Media Matter', *Challenging Inequalities: Readings in Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration*, 60, 2018, [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/communication_faculty_pubs/60].

qualified nature of representation instrumentalized by these groups may go some way to avoid such issues. The form of representation they call for are in the frame of hope and futurity: representing future hopeful worlds, playfully critiquing negative representations, or modelling their ideal for their own representation.

In the case of TCBC, they do not call for representation in itself, rather they call for positive representation in response to negative or limited representations. Where queer performers of colour are under-represented in cabaret, they call for more participation for these groups so they can represent themselves, with agency and autonomy. TCBC create a space for queer performers of colour to represent themselves in a variety of performance forms. Their inaugural show included, according to their website, 'burlesque, beatboxing, performance art, drag, dance and much more'. Their performer directory lists a similarly wide range of performance mediums, including 'Aerial / Circus', 'Sideshow', 'Hosts', 'Pole', 'Fire', 'Vocalists' and 'DJ'S'. [381] The effect of this directory and their cabaret nights is black and poc performers primarily represented by their skills and talent, rather than their ability to represent their race and bear testimony to their experiences of racism to majority-white audiences. That Black performers are expected to represent or bear testimony for their race is confirmed by Jamal Gerald, who writes 'I hope in the future I don't have to say I'm only speaking for myself and not other Black artists', and 'I hope in the future I don't have to make work about trauma to get commissioned.'[382]

The restricted representation which occurs in mainstream spaces, or the pressure to speak or make performance about difficult and traumatic experiences, is undone in TCBC's performance events. The presentation of performances entirely from people of colour frees them, to some extent, from the pressure and interpretative restrictions to make work only about race, to explain the experiences of racialised people to majority-white audiences, or to be one of the few racialised people in a programme. Rather than bearing the sole responsibility for representation of their racial otherness, at TCBC they are the norm. Their cabaret events frequently feature perfomers engaging in virtuosic circus acts or dances which are, due to this context, free to represent something beyond and outside the race of the performers. Though one of their aims is to educate white members of the audience, and performers do represent and discuss race and racism, this is done on the basis of shared understanding and some shared experience. In one of the cabaret nights, documented in a BBC3 documentary, Sinner, in her welcome, says 'I wanted to start the show with everyone just having a good old laugh […] cos life is tough, trust me. I'm Black, I'm a woman, and I'm queer, I really know.'[383] This is met, from the

[381] TCBC website, 'Projects' and 'Performer Directory', op. cit.
[382] Jamal Gerald, op. cit.
[383] Sinner in 'Preference of Prejudice', *Queer Britain*, produced and directed by Daniela Carson, Series 1 Episode 4, BBC Three, 2017.

audience, with the cheers and laughter of shared experience. This is followed by a drag performance of a typical 'African auntie' figure, called 'My auntie', an act which relies upon shared cultural knowledge and understanding of this figure to be humourous. Where such representation might be considered stereotypical in mainstream media, its presentation in this specific context allows the performer to playfully engage with this stereotype, without the burden of representation attached to being one of the few representations of racialised people in this space. Sinner explains that TCBC events will contain 'unapologetic black performances' and 'unapologetic Asian performances'. One audience member commented on the performances, that: 'people were unapologetic about their performances and just super uninhibited, and just really owning their identities fully and completely, [it] just gave me so much courage'.[384] The space and the representation it presents, offers a wider variety of possibilities for playful, powerful, and joyful representation for these performers. This public, visual and powerful representation, inclusion and access seeks to address not just a lack of visual representation, but exclusion from the mechanisms of cultural production, and disempowerment in the public spheres of cultural spaces.

Exclusion and Inclusion

TCBC engages in principles of radical exclusion and radical inclusion along the same lines of Marlborough Productions' touring performance *Brownton Abbey*, which I expand on later. This event seeks to have an auditorium that is radically inclusive, while the stage is radically exclusive – with 'only queer black and brown people'.[385] In both cases, this is radical because it is seeking to counteract conditions of exclusion, and bring about, or call for, structural change. This builds on gay, lesbian, black or feminist movements to increase representation in theatre and performance of the 1970s and 80s.[386] The dual strategy of TCBC hopes to provide the benefits of both exclusion and inclusion, balancing affective benefits with concrete possibility and public influence. They specifically seek to include white people in their audience. Their aims in this regard are pedagogical; Leon speaks of the necessity of a balance between white people and people of colour in the audience. She says: 'it's a mixture of the people that we need and the people that it's for'. In relation to Sadie Sinner's introduction, explaining the organisation's aims and reasons for existing, Leon says, 'a lot of time queer people of colour already know the message. […] Whereas white straight people in the audience 100% need to listen to that introduction […] So the more straight white people there, probably the better because they're the people who need to understand the message'. This is a delicate balance; without the presence of white people they risk preaching to the converted, with white people

[384] Unnamed audience member in interview with presenter Riyadh Khalaf, *Queer Britain*, op. cit.
[385] Tarik Elmoutawakil, 'Live Art Lunch: Separatist Performance, with Tarik Elmoutawakil, Zinzi Minott, and Janine Francois, Zoom Event as part of Take Me Somewhere Festival, Saturday 22nd May 2021.
[386] See, for example, the scholarship on the work of Gay Sweatshop, Women's Theatre Group, and Talawa, in Graham Saunders (ed.), *British Theatre Companies 1980-1994* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

dominating the audience they risk perpetuating a voyeuristic white gaze and exoticising the performers of colour.

The creation of exclusive or even closed, separatist spaces are often hopeful and futural; they imagine and create spaces which are free of oppressors, but these separatist strategies have their problems, which using a combination of exclusion and inclusion may avoid. As Muñoz writes 'People of color, queers of color, white queers, and other minorities occasionally and understandably long for separatist enclaves outside of the dominant culture', but writes that these enclaves are 'often politically disadvantageous' because 'the social script depends on minority factionalism and isolationism to maintain the status of the dominant order'.[387] In other words, the formation of closed communities around collective, marginalised identities has a tendency to preserve the status quo; these closed groups by their very nature do not engage in public address to the dominant order and preserve these identities as marginal. Attachments then to fixed marginal identities can be cruelly optimistic. In this case, the attachment to identities such as queer, black, or feminist, as fixed, marginal identities, is potentially an obstacle to the transformation of these identities, or the transformation of society which would cause the subordinate or marginal nature of these identities to disappear.

These strategies of exclusion are at once responses to exclusion and exclusive themselves: they conflict with liberal notions of inclusion, and at once respond to and uncomfortably mirror what Mark Bailey calls the neoliberal 'utopia of exclusion', which 'sets up a series of interlinked and interdependent exclusions – economic, epistemological, moral, ontological, political – that serve to increasingly disenfranchise, disempower, and marginalize all but a tiny fraction of the world's population.'[388] Selective and tactical strategies of exclusion are targeted against specific conditions. They are also coupled with expansive coalitional and inclusive practices among their audiences. Raze and CUNTemporary have expansive and inclusive aims, with any exclusion largely being through self-selection. Though CUNTemporary's practices and interests will tend to include people of specific identities, they explicitly state that 'we don't have a target group', and 'we're not specifically just aiming for an LGBT public, we always want other publics to come and experience our works.' TCBC's exclusion is a response to the extremes of racism and white supremacy, or the extreme lack of representation of people of colour in the arts. These practices are tactical and respond to specific conditions and seek to bring about change, as opposed to nonperformative institutional practices of inclusion.

[387] Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* op. cit., p. 14.
[388] Mark Bailey, 'The neoliberal city as utopia of exclusion', *Globalizations,* 2020, 17:1, pp. 31-44, p. 31-32.

Hopeful Centred Spaces

All the collectives in this chapter are concerned with creating spaces which are not subject to normative conditions, and are inscribed with different rules or practices to other spaces; these are affective counter-spaces. The creation of these spaces responds to, and seeks to reverse, the conditions of exclusion I covered above, by centring marginalised identities. Centred spaces are spaces which explicitly welcome or value those of particular identities; they invite others to enjoy those spaces in the knowledge of this condition. This is done through designating a space as such, through attracting a majority of people belonging to a particular identity, and through programming performances by specific groups. Uaid Ní Dhuibhir, of Trans Live Art Salon, provides a useful example of both seeking to create centred spaces and the experience of being decentred in one. Set up to counter the lack of authentic trans representation in Irish theatre, Trans Live Art Salon created a quiet space for the Dublin Fringe Festival as one of their projects. Though a public and inclusive space, it became a trans-majority and trans-centred space through their activities. They called this space *Fully Automated Gender Oasis*, and it had performances, workshops, visual art, and video games from trans artists, as well as being a chill space for a trans-majority group of people to spend time and do a wide variety of activities: hang out, read, dance, talk, and do crafts. She relates this centred space to an experience of seeing a show with Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, which:

> shifted the main language of Project Arts Centre [...] you were a hearing person in this space that was yours, but suddenly, actually, you were decentred in it […] there were all these conversations happening that you didn't understand with people who were laughing and joking and having fun and having drinks and flirting with each other […] your position was flipped.

The experience of one's majoritarian, comfortable and proprietary position in a space being inverted to one of a minority, experiencing exclusion from desirable experiences, and, further, experiencing a minority being a visible, powerful, joyful, majority – this is what Uaid Ní Dhuibhir sought to replicate with the spaces Trans Live Art Salon created. It sought to have 'trans people exist in a space, but in a way where they're not vulnerable. Having trans people exist in a space and be powerful.'[389] This affect, of being or feeling powerful, is generated, as I have explored in previous chapters, by their coexistence in the space as a majority, and this is what enables hopeful affects.

This is reflected in the practices of TCBC. They create sacred spaces through centring people of colour. This is similar to Marlborough Productions' *Brownton Abbey*, which seeks to centre that which is marginal through presenting an event in which 'Queer People of Colour, disabled People of Colour, trans disabled people, and others whose identity is formed from intersections of multiple

[389] Saerlaith Robyn Uaid Ní Dhuibhir, interview with the author 19th June 2019.

marginalised minority groups, exist as Alien Gods, spiritual deities, centred, exalted and leading the narrative'.[390] The centring of people of colour in this way produces a radically different space to that which is outside it, temporarily reversing racial and other power dynamics. These practices of centred spaces emerge from experiences of exclusion in mainstream performance or queer spaces. Sadie Sinner says that spaces like this 'allow us to see each other and because we're so few and far between in the gay community, when we have these spaces they feel very safe, they feel like home.' Further, Sinner describes TCBC as 'a movement, a church, a religion, because we're celebrating ourselves'.[391] The designation of TCBC as a church or a religion places these spaces in line with the quasi-religious experiences of collective efferevescence I discussed in the previous chapter, in which the group is both the object and source of this religious feeling. Laurie Mompelat discusses TCBC, describing it as a 'counterpublic space […] where minoritarian subjects get to identify with each other by collectively and simultaneously disidentifying from a white hetero-patriarchal world.'[392] Mompelat describes how this space allows the organisers, performers and audiences to subvert the white gaze, and gain control of their own discourse and narratives. This is what allows the identity-affirming affects experienced by Alabanza, noted earlier. This gathering of marginalised identities in a space is affirming for both performers and audiences, who reflexively see their identities celebrated, centred, and valued, which allows for the continued existence and reproduction of these identities.

Gathering in a space where people of colour are shown to be powerful, as performers, organisers, or as audience members in a majority-poc audience, produces affects of joy, hope, and power which are amplified by reflection among the group, in an echo of the dynamics of communitas in the previous chapter. This space 'doesn't demand you assimilate, but instead encourages you to be yourself', in what is at once anti-assimilationist rhetoric and a recourse to neoliberal commodification of individual identity as I shall examine later.[393] These spaces and practices call to being and prefigure liberation from interlocking power structures, through presenting performance of black and queer joy and virtuosity. Mompelat writes of the dual functions of TCBC, as both a space which disrupts and critiques the white gaze and the 'erasure of performers of colour', and one which produces positive impacts and affects for people of colour. Mompelat writes that TCBC make room 'for a multitude of queer of colour becomings', and are 'a source of strong affects of excitement and joy'. These two functions are inseparable in TCBC's practices and both of them enable hope and futurity; Mompelat writes what TCBC is doing is part of 'building an entitlement to this joy and wholeness [that] lessens one's likelihood of accepting oppression, resignation and self-effacement elsewhere.'[394] This affrims

[390] Unlimited Website, 'Commisions: Brownton Abbey; Tarik Elmoutawakil' [https://weareunlimited.org.uk/commission/tarik-elmoutawakil-brownton-abbey/] [accessed 09/02/2021].
[391] Sinner in *Queer Britain,* op. cit.
[392] Mompelat, op. cit.
[393] TCBC website, 'Engagements', [https://www.thecocoabutterclub.com/engagements] [accessed 13/06/2022].
[394] Mompelat, op. cit.

the importance of affects, in line with Thompson's 'affects not effects' noted in the Introduction. Mompelat's account suggests that affects like joy experienced in these spaces, though temporary, can impact how people behave outside of these spaces, and counter the negative affective impacts of austerity, particularly its disentitlement and diminishment of expectations.

Raze create and protect these centred spaces for queer people and queer performance, and in doing so, affirm the importance of these practices in the field for both the present and the future. This links to Marlborough's practices, dicussed in Chapter One, of building lasting infrastructure and providing security. Security, with its suggestion of longevity and reliability, is a necessary component of hope and futurity. For Other 'queer spaces are important because they provide a space for queer people where they are not subjected to the kind of othering and the hostility and the enforcement of arbitrary social norms by everybody else'. CUNTemporary likewise state they want to create 'a safe space' for multiple publics. Extending my arguments on safety in Chapter One, safe space is also hopeful and futural. Through prefiguratively creating safer, more liveable, and queerer spaces they avoid and rework the hopeless and disentitling impacts of the harassment or violence which make the everyday lives of marginalised subjects less hopeful. In doing so, they also provide a space in which to discuss the discrimination they face. As Other says: 'the community needs spaces to be able to come together, share that kind of thing, [discrimination] and to some degree, decide what to do about it, and how to take action together.' Safe spaces then, create temporary hopeful social and affective conditions, as well as the conditions which might bring about collective action and permanent change.

These spaces therefore also perform the function of producing and enacting critique. Raze make space for critiquing queer-, trans-, and homophobic logics through the spaces and performance that they protect and promote. As Other says, 'queer spaces, generate their own internal culture, where queer people come together and lampoon and satire the existence of the rest of society, and what they do and how they make the queer community feel.' For Other this culture is 'life affirming, and joyous' and 'builds a sense of community.' These spaces provide the possibility to produce resistant discourse which engages with and seeks to change the rest of society, resisting and speaking out against queerphobia and transphobia. CUNTemporary's events, and the discourse surrounding them, firmly place CUNTemporary's activities and research in the realm of critical, agonistic artistic practices as Chantal Mouffe describes them: 'a strategy of "disarticulating" the existing "common sense" and fostering a variety of agonistic public spaces that contribute to the development of a "counter-hegemony".'[395] CUNTemporary's work might be said to be interrogating and disarticulating heteronormative, sexist and cisheteropatriarchal logics, as well as engaging later in disarticulating colonial logic, and neoliberal capitalist logic from an ecological perspective. Their events include: 'Not

[395] Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, (London: Verso, 2013), p. 94-95.

For Sale' which curated performance and art work around 'our current capitalist failures and alternative futures', 'Power, Subcultures and Queer Stages', which sought to redress 'the hierarchy between what counts as 'high' art', looked 'at the contemporary history of queer visibility and invisibility in public space', and explored 'the political power of performing sexuality within queer communities'. They ran an event called 'Eco Trash', which delved 'into our present day ecological dystopia to explore alternative futures for our planet and all the diverse creatures within it.' Finally, an event entitled 'Art + Activism: Queer and Feminist Visibilities', explored 'Feminist and queer art practices aimed at reclaiming public space for bodies and discourses otherwise excluded from mainstream politics and culture [that] have played a crucial role in defining art as a mode of activism.'[396] CUNTemporary's work is a process of critique and interrogation; one which values the critical methods of queer, feminist and decolonial performance, curation and research to critique the practices, logics, and conditions of the fields in which they operate.

TCBC's mission to 'decolonise and moisturise', or 'Decolonising & Moisturising dry and dusty performance spaces' articulates their twin approach. [397] While decolonising stands for resisting and unpicking colonial logic of institutional practice, moisturising stands in for self-care and collective joy for those people most impacted by colonialism, and vibrancy and excitement for cultural spaces made stagnant, or dry, by exclusion and a lack of diversity. Moisturising also refers back to the cocoa butter in their title, a product often used by black people or other people of colour, as evidenced by their use of it as a metonym. Through their events, which seek to create sacred and special spaces which centre queer people of colour, they celebrate joy whilst also fulfilling the serious political purpose of resisting the underrepresentation of people of colour in cabaret and performance more widely. The critique and political disarticulations of common sense that all three case studies produce in their spaces are part of an agitation toward more hopeful and liveable futures.

Reproduction, Replication and Recuperation

Each collective's attempts to create more liveable futures are partly enacted through tactics of organisational expansion and replication, an extension of their initial tactic of gathering large groups of people together. CUNTemporary have a branch of their website and activities in Italy, called Archivio Queer Italia. Since their formation, their activities and their network have grown exponentially, from a small newsletter and group of feminist artists meeting in a living room, to having a large network of volunteers, producing discourse and large, popular events. They also have plans to become a 'worldwide platform', a website listing queer-feminist events, which would 'map queer-feminist artists

[396] CUNTemporary website, 'Events', op. cit.
[397] These two phrases are the taglines on their Instagram and twitter accounts respectively. [https://www.instagram.com/thecocoabutterclub] [https://twitter.com/cocoabuttershow] [accessed 28/05/2021].

and collectives and groups worldwide'.[398] TCBC have performed internationally, and though they are based in London, they have performers all over the UK, and are 'starting a Berlin Cocoa Butter Club' as one of the performers moved to Berlin, and 'a Cocoa Butter Club Melbourne […] because one of our performers was deported back to Australia.'[399] This international expansion is possible through the mass involvement and openness of the networked collective form, but also through a lack of concern with intellectual property. The core organisers stipulate that other versions of TCBC must follow certain rules, but otherwise they are happy for their model to be replicated, because, in Leon's words, 'the more performers of colour and organisers of colour doing things, the better.' Raze continue to collaborate and share resources with other organisations, notably with TCBC, with whom they are a member of the Queer Arts Consortium (QUAC): 'a collaboration between Raze Collective, Fringe! Queer Arts & Film Fest, The Cocoa Butter Club, Queer Youth Art Collective and PRIM.Black. QUAC has been awarded funding through ACE's Elevate programme, to establish a partnership model of collaboration and shared services', and 'participating in the continuing establishment of a thriving Queer Arts sector in the UK, that builds essential community, careers and culture.'[400] This collective of collectives or network of networks speaks to the coalitional and collaborative nature of these groups, as they seek not only to encourage collaboration among their network but to spread it throughout the field at large. As I examined in Chapter Two, competition is a feature of Bourdieu's model of field, but these practices seek to 'change the rules of the game', to shift the relationships in the field, between organisations, from competition to collaboration and support.

This expansion is hopeful and optimistic; a part of how 'hope makes people broad' as Ahmed writes. To expand is to believe that there will be continued success, desire, and capacity for one's organisation and its activities. It is also potentially cruelly optimistic, being an attachment to growth which may take them away from their initial aims as an organisation, or one which might lead to overwork or exploitation, as we saw in the previous chapter. These trajectories of growth uncomfortably replicate a neoliberal logic of growth and success; and the diffuse nature of the networks mean they have less control over this growth than if they were a more closed collective form. As Georgiou notes, 'the network just seems to grow', and the pressure to keep on running events and projects comes from the public, the audiences with whom they work: but with this success comes risks and problems, including the danger of exploitation and self-exploitation as they work with an increasing number of volunteers. Casalini narrates this tension: 'the increase of projects of our organisation and the expansion […] probably brought us to that point in which we cannot sustain this anymore, because it's become so big and demanding that it's not fair that we keep on asking people to

[398] Casalini, op. cit.
[399] Leon, op. cit.
[400] Queer Arts Consortium website, [https://www.queerartsconsortium.com/] [accessed 13/06/2022].

work for us for free.' These conditions are a consequence of neoliberal austerity's interpenetration of the arts, as organisations must evidence growth as a sign of success, but are not awarded the resources to ethically or liveably sustain that growth.

This growth is also part of the way in which marginalised identities have taken on a certain cultural capital. As Georgiou says, there has been a 'massive diversity push where these bodies come in to represent something for the institution, but they rarely benefit from the institutional programming.' This push goes back to New Labour cultural policies which have, in the words of Clare Bishop, 'instrumentalised art to fulfil policies of social inclusion – a cost-effective way of justifying public spending on the arts while diverting attention away from the structural causes of decreased social participation', and forced recipients of funding to evidence their impacts in ameliorating social problems such as inequality or exclusion.[401] As I outlined in the introduction, the subsequent Conservative governments and austerity policies tended to continue the need to evidence impact, but with less support to do so. This creates an environment in which institutions must be seen to be pursuing diversity agendas but without the funding or other support to look after the marginalised artists or vulnerable communities with whom they work.

This results in tokenism. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter writes about women working for US organisations in the 1970s and 80s: 'women tended to be concentrated in the jobs with lower opportunity for advancement, to have less access to power, and-when they did enter upper levels - to be represented in such small numbers that they had the special status of "tokens"'.[402] In this case, minoritarian performers or artists become tokens for the institutions in which they appear: they provide a boost in diversity statistics, but do not have access to power within the institution. As Leon says, 'it's almost like a trend at the moment […] people have sat around for 10 years so far talking about diversity in performance. […] [Venues and institutions] know that they can just like stop that conversation really quickly by hiring you one time.' Further, Leon complains that venues inadequately promote their work to their existing audiences or to new, more diverse audiences, instead 'relying a lot at the time on us bringing people of colour to their space.' This means that the activities that TCBC run in these spaces are separated somewhat from their usual audiences and programmes, reducing the impact they can have on these insitutions. Such non-performativity on the part of institutions does not engender lasting hope or access to liveable futures for these groups.

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[401] Jennifer Roche, 'Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop', 2006 [https://www.jenniferrocheus.com/single-post/2020/06/15/socially-engaged-art-critics-and-discontents-an-interview-with-claire-bishop] [accessed 13/06/2022].
[402] Rosabeth Moss Kanter in 'Men and Women of the Corporation Revisited: Interview with Rosabeth Moss Kanter', *Human Resource Management*, 26:2, 1987, pp. 257-263, p. 258.

This is a part of the way in which marginal practices and communities are recuperated and commodified. As marginalised people continue to have cultural capital through their performance, they provide a PR boost to institutions through representational visibility without any need to commit to structural change. Sara Ahmed writes about diversity '*as* a form of public relations [original emphasis]', examining how institutions perform a commitment to anti-racism, which 'can be exercised to keep problems ''out of the way.'''[403] Ahmed argues that commitments such as these are both performative, in the sense of empty performances, and non-performative, in the sense that they do not bring about what they describe, as I noted above.[404] In the same way, hiring TCBC can allow arts and performance institutions to keep the problem of a lack of racial diversity among audiences and regular programming out of the way, but it is a temporary fix to a long-term structural problem. As Ahmed argues: '*Diversity can be a method of protecting whiteness* [original emphasis].'[405] That is, diverse programmes can protect white-dominated institutions from accusations of racism: but they come without long-term commitments or access to power for the organisers and performers of colour they are supposed to benefit.

Despite these problems, these groups use their presence in, and work with, institutions as a way of leveraging more long-term, structural change in the fields of performance and cultural production. This can be seen as a struggle between the hopeful performativity and prefiguration of these networks, in creating the conditions of inclusion they want to see, and the nonperformativity of institutions. This is a struggle that takes place on a tactical and practical level through engaging with institutions' actual practices, rather than their stated aims or procedures.[406] For both CUNTemporary and TCBC, working with institutions entails educating them and trying to shift their practices to more hospitable practices for those of marginalised identities. Casalini of CUNTemporary says that their safe spaces are created through working closely with security staff at their venue for their regular Deep Trash club night: the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club. They have identifiable volunteers, an information desk, and a process of feedback and discussion to reflect on any negative incidents. As Georgiou says, they also 'created posters, basically "don't be a jerk" posters like you know, this is not 1992, and you cannot behave in these specific ways', and people who break these rules, such as touching someone inappropriately, can be removed. At these nights they also have a quiet space, like

[403] Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 143.
[404] Ahmed teases out the multiple uses of nonperformative and performative in *Complaint!,* 'Notes to Chapter One', (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 317-318.
[405] Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included,* op. cit., p. 147.
[406] See Ahmed in *Complaint,* op. cit., for discussion on the 'gap' between policies and stated procedures and what actually happens in response to complaints.

Buzzcut in the previous chapter. These activities, as well as creating a temporary safe space, may influence these host organisations' everyday practices.

CUNTemporary also work tactically by bringing different institutions or organisations together. One of their aims is 'to bridge the fields of academia, activism, and art, by moving through venues, by bringing the exhibition into the club night, the club night into the institution.'[407] In seeking to transcend the separations between these fields, they are seeking to reverse, or reduce, the imbalances of power and hierarchies of predominantly cultural, but also financial and symbolic, capital that exist between these different contexts. As I noted in the previous chapter, Bourdieu's *Distinction* argues that cultural activities and consumption are used to distinguish between different social statuses and classes, and uphold these differences.[408] Academia, activism, art and club nights are associated with differing levels of these various forms of capital. By bridging them, as well as bringing different publics and discourse together in a way that produces new ideas, they are resisting the separations between these fields which work to reinforce and maintain class difference. As Georgiou says, 'in the eyes of […] the art sphere, the one that's legitimised by institutions and galleries, it was quite unorthodox at the time to say we're having an exhibition in the second floor of Bethnal Green Working Men's club.' Bringing the institutional logics and legitimated practices of art and research into clubs, particularly one which is housed in an old working men's club in a traditionally working-class area of East London, performs a socio-spatial dislocation of these practices and the cultural capital which adheres to particular spaces and practices – and calls into question the hierarchies created thereby.

CUNTemporary's work with art galleries, universities, and other consecrated institutions performs the reverse dislocation, bringing queer-feminist and politically critical work into institutions which enforce and sustain distinction through cultural capital. Their symposium at Queen Mary, University of London, 'Power, Subcultures and Queer Stages', which I attended, provided, according to one commentator, 'a platform where a plurality of genders, bodies, sexualities and discourses that are non-white, non-western, non-able and therefore excluded from mainstream culture, can find common ground.'[409] Despite seeking some common ground, CUNTemporary's practices also seek conflict, tension and difference between different publics in order to catalyse change. The speakers may have provided some cross-fertilisation of ideas between different spheres and publics, but the event did not really break out of a recognizable conference or symposium form until the contribution of contemporary dancer and choreographer Malik Nashad Sharpe, or *Marikiscrycrycry,* whose performance intervention included, among other things, a critique of the nationalism, colonialism and

[407] Casalini, op. cit.
[408] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction,* op. cit.
[409] Celine Angbeletchy, 'Power, Subcultures & Queer Stages | In Conversation With Malik Nashad Sharpe', *Griot,* 3rd May 2017 [https://griotmag.com/en/went-power-subcultures-queer-stages-interviewed-malik-nashad-sharpe/] [accessed 29/05/2021].

anti-immigration protectionism of the European Union, resulting in the death of migrants. This discourse was profoundly counter-hegemonic at a time when the predominantly liberal audience were still mourning the eventual departure of the UK from the European Union, after the Brexit vote a year earlier. These practices, bringing radical queer-feminist and decolonial performance and ideas into spaces and publics which may conflict with them, produce a counter-hegemonic challenge to common sense. At the same time, working with institutions risks their radical ideas being recuperated and subsumed within the neoliberal capitalist and commodifying practices of the institution, as just aesthetic or performative events to be consumed without a wider challenge to power or call to change outside the frame of the event. This is why it is essential for these collectives to intervene and critique on an institutional and organisational level, rather than purely through aesthetic or curatorial practices.

TCBC are explicit about how they seek to occupy institutions to change them. Leon says that 'one of our massive things is to get more general audiences of colour into spaces that they don't feel like is for them.' Their activities involve bringing ideas, people and communities into places or events that are perceived as, or are, dominated by white audiences. They often work with Southbank Centre, and Leon says that 'we're going to Wilderness festival which is the whitest festival you could imagine'.[410] For Leon, they work with institutions in this way in order 'to encourage people of colour to come into spaces and actually make yourself known and present, but also for white audiences to also understand that we exist and that what we're doing is valid.' This is a tactical practice of getting performers and audiences of colour into white dominated spaces, and instrumentalising the reputation of these spaces to boost the cultural capital of the work they present. In Bourdieusian terms, there is an exchange in capital here; TCBC receive financial capital and the cultural capital of large, well-established insitutions, and in return the insitutions receive the cultural and social capital of being seen to have diverse programmes and audiences. Further, Black and POC audiences get access to spaces in which they would not usually feel welcome. As these insitutions are highly consecrated spaces, with high concentrations of cultural capital, having access to these spaces may allow these audiences to feel more entitled to attend mainstream cultural spaces beyond TCBC's events, and thus have access to greater cultural capital in the future. This does, however, depend on these spaces remaining hospitable to these audiences outside of these events.

TCBC's presence in the space and work with institutions does have positive impacts. Leon says that one of their rules when working with other venues is that 'everybody's briefed about the Cocoa Butter Club, by me and Sadie […] about who we are and why we're there'. They also have a buddy system so that everyone knows the organisers. At time of interview, TCBC were planning a

[410] I have been unable to find ethnicity statistics for this festival, though I was able to find commentary on the whiteness of festivals: Edward Adoo, 'Diversity Should Be Embraced At All Festivals', *Huffington Post,* 11/8/2017 [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/edward-adoo/diversity-should-be-embra_b_17718986.html].

'terrace takeover' with the Southbank Centre, who had sent over details of all the diversity training that all members of staff had to attend. Though Leon notes that this is possible because the Southbank Centre is a large wealthy organisation, and that it is not something they specifically demand from institutions, their presence and work with institutions increase the necessity of institutional change and training. TCBC have certain ground rules that they put in place when they work in institutions, to make sure all their performers are comfortable and cared for. They make sure that mirrors, water and heat are available in the dressing rooms, and that everyone has an acceptable amount of space and privacy. They can ask this because they have more influence as a group than a performer working on their own. Through this, it is possible that TCBC improve conditions for other performers at the venues at which they work, and not just those in their collective.

Working with institutions in this way is part of the hopeful advocacy these groups perform, in seeking to spread hopeful safe spaces and their visions of hopeful futures to other spaces and other audiences, and it is also one of the ways in which they enact the changes they wish to see. However, working with institutions in this way also reduces their possibilities: the spaces they create are always temporary and to some degree defined by the qualities and conventions of the spaces they occupy. This is central to the tactical use of hopeful and futurist practices. They create hopeful affective counter-spaces and put hopeful futures to work by agitating for change in institutions with more power to effect the change they need. This is a risky, delicate balance, but it is one of the ways in which these network collectives seek to bring about more hopeful presents and futures.

Conclusion

In an austere neoliberal context of hopelessness and precarious or inaccessible futures, particularly for those most marginalised, these networks produce hope and futurity. I have drawn on and extended work on the hopelessness of austerity, and work on hope and futurity, to show how these groups practically achieve this, through deploying tactical, contingent, and multiple visions for the futures they want to see, prefiguratively enacting them by producing affective counter-spaces of hope, and through shifting practices in the here and now in order to create more space and possibility for the groups with whom they work. For this to work, the networked-collective form is essential; promoting the mass involvement of large groups of people. Through conceptualising these practices in Bourdieu's model of field, I have shown how they rework the exclusive dynamics of social capital in the field of performance, that are worsened by austerity and neoliberalism. Through collectively identifying they exert a larger influence over the field than they would do alone, and through specific and targeted forms of representation, they counteract issues of misrepresentation, a lack of representation, or a lack of spaces in which to gather and relate to each other as marginalised groups. Through employing a tactical combination of both inclusion and exclusion, they mediate between the affective benefits of

community spaces and the political potential of addressing more diverse publics. Through reproducing themselves and through working with institutions the impact of this address can be multiplied, potentially influencing institutional practice across the field. However, this causes tensions; between their performativity and the non-performativity of some institutions; between the allure of growth and the potential for overwork, exploitation, and recuperation; between the hope for, and possibility of, flourishing and liveable futures, and the cruelly optimistic attachments that might stand in the way of those futures. As I have argued throughout this thesis, navigating these tensions requires tactical and reflexive practices. The groups in the chapter have the largest presence and influence of any of the collectives discussed in this thesis, and they are the most specifically geared towards change. Through mobilising dynamics of belonging, hope, and futurity, they provide the potential to sustain themselves through the difficult conditions of the present, but also to reach, and shape, the futures they desire.

Thesis Conclusion

Summary

Austerity produces various negative material and affective impacts on the field of live art and experimental performance, which act upon the artists, producers, and organisations within it. It does so through making them more insecure and precarious, removing spaces and structures of security, in reducing the capacity for them to care for each other, and increasing uncaring relations of competition, exploitation, and neglect. Artists, producers, and organisations work in an increasingly isolated and disconnected manner, and experience reduced access to conceivable, liveable, hopeful futures. Austerity has also restructured the field of live art and experimental performance, and the wider field of cultural production of which it forms a part. The loss and closure of organisations prompted by austerity produced opportunities and gaps which stimulated DIY, artist-run, and collective practices. In intervening in these gaps, performance producing collectives and artist-run organisations have sought to refuse and reverse the impacts of austerity, producing material and affective structures and spaces which operate differently to the surrounding conditions: providing long-term, secure support for marginalised practices and communities; enabling more caring and collaborative relations between artists; providing intense experiences of joy and communitas which connect the live art community, and bringing new groups together; and finally, allowing a more hopeful affective orientation to the future, as well as collectively agitating for more liveable futures. In the relational model of the field of performance, as these affects and structures rub up against other artists, producers, and organisations, these impacts influence the rest of the field in small but significant ways: in supporting practices that would otherwise be unsupported, innovating new models of organisation, propagating more caring and ethical practices, providing more egalitarian and inclusive models of performance festivals and other events, and in advocating for marginalised communities and modalities, and shifting institutional practices into being more hospitable for them – impacts I will summarise more fully below.

However, in intervening in the field and trying to produce these changes these collectives and artist-run groups find themselves caught in often irresolvable tensions: between security and precarity, care and neglect, communitas and antagonism, hope and cruel optimism, exclusion and inclusion, equality and hierarchy, and engagement and exploitation. The interpenetration of neoliberalism and market logics into the fields of politics, culture, social relations and everyday life mean they are increasingly difficult to escape. Even groups who explicitly seek to resist the practices of neoliberal capitalism and austerity are susceptible to reproducing them. This has been seen throughout this thesis: as venues find themselves in conditions of increasing insecurity, unable to always offer security to the artists and audiences with whom they work; as studios seeking to create spaces of support and horizontal relation find themselves reproducing hierarchies and exclusion; as festivals seeking to

produce joy and connection, also produce conflict and tension; and as networks seeking to produce change in the industry, to produce more liveable, hopeful futures, also reproduce neoliberal attachments to individual identity, growth, and non-performative inclusion. These potential negative impacts are a consequence of local practices interacting with a wider context rather than of the practices themselves; this is what necessitates tactical, reflective practices, which embrace change and are aware of their wider context, and which shift and grow in response to the mutations and recuperations of capital, taking advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in the field.

Findings

The findings of this thesis emerge from its novel focus on collective performance producing practices in relation to the conditions of neoliberal austerity. I have done so through an extended series of in-depth interviews with members of collectives and artist-run organisations which have focused on the affective qualities and impacts of both neoliberal austerity and collective practice. The relations between these two phenomena are complex and multiple. I have demonstrated the influence neoliberal austerity has had on freelance practice, making it more difficult, isolating, insecure, or hopeless to make and produce performance work. I have shown how these dynamics drive many toward the affective and material benefits of working in collectives or artist-run organisations. In doing so, I have demonstrated the positive impacts of working in collectives, as well as their difficulties, the latter of which I have discovered are a consequence of tensions between collectivist and austere neoliberal ideologies and practices. In examining a different structural model of collective or artist-run organisation in each chapter, I have shown how they each perform different functions in the field, and work to ameliorate different problems caused or exacerbated by austerity and neoliberalism, and in doing so are caught up in different tensions. In each case I have demonstrated the unique potentials for each form and its unique pitfalls or challenges.

Chapter One examined three collective and artist-run performance venues, Live Art Bistro in Leeds, Marlborough Productions in Brighton, and Performance Space in Folkestone, and the tensions that arise from working within multiple levels of security and precarity as manifested through economies, spaces, and communities. This precarity is experienced, as I show, on both a material and affective level. This chapter demonstrates the significant financial difficulties experienced by these venues and by the artists with whom they work, both of whom struggle to obtain secure and sustainable funding for their practices. This difficulty is part of the ‘mixed economies’ arts funding model, which, though it rhetorically calls for sustainability and resilience, can actually increase the insecurity and precarity of these venues, forcing them to rely on a combination of commercial income and funding from increasingly competitive trusts and foundations. I also showed that this model can increase the amount of unpaid labour these venues must undertake. This financial precarity is produced and

exacerbated by the conditions of austerity, and it is unevenly distributed; it disproportionately impacts marginal, experimental practices, the small venues and organisations (many of which are collective- or artist-run) which support them, and the marginalised communities with whom they work. I also showed how these venues are spatially precarious, relying on short-term or insecure rental contracts or temporary space agreements. This is part of how non- or less profitable community space is threatened by neoliberal austerity, which monetises and privatises space resulting in it becoming prohibitively expensive or unavailable. In examining this context, I also showed how these groups are simultaneously attracted to the flexibility and mobility which accompany this insecurity of space. Their navigation between desired and forced flexibility, necessary security and endemic precarity is illustrative of their tactical nature, finding security, funding and space wherever possible to support the practices, communities, and ideas they want to support. This financial and spatial insecurity can make it difficult for these groups to make long-term plans, impacting the security they can offer to artists and to the field of live art and experimental performance as a whole. A further result of this is that the marginalised communities that make up a significant segment of these spaces' artists and audiences become more precarious, with less access to funding or spaces within which to make work, to feel safe and secure, and to relate and reproduce as communities. I showed how, despite the challenges of such practices, these groups tactically use physical venues and lasting infrastructure to support these precarious practices and communities through the turbulent and hostile times of neoliberal austerity.

Chapter Two examined studio collectives Interval and Residence in Bristol and Single End in Glasgow and expands on the previous chapter by examining more deeply the affective impacts that austerity has on freelance artists and producers. The members of these three collectives reported difficulty in securing funding and appropriate spaces in which to work. Dominant funding and institutional practices made their work isolating, uncaring, and competitive, particularly when they had to work from home, or when they had to engage with arts institutions. I show that in this uncaring context, studio collectives can provide both a space in which to work that is materially suited to their needs, and the affective support necessary to sustain themselves, each other, and their practices. Through drawing on care ethics scholarship, and scholarship in performance studies on performing care, I show how care can be *produced* by these groups through investing it in their organisations, their structures, practices, and spaces. Drawing on Lefebvre and Ahmed and my concept of an affective counter-space, I found that these groups produce and maintain caring spaces through their social relations and affective investments. These affective investments allow care to have a longer life than a single performance of a caring action taking place within a specific relationship, as it produces a collective disposition toward care in the space, its members, and those they come into contact with, through Ahmed's stickiness of affect and emotion. In one case, this caring investment even outlasts the space, sustaining Residence collective through many organisational changes and challenges. These

collectives are however not without their problems. Their reliance on being guided by affect and gut feelings, and the necessity to affectively invest in the space, run the risk of emotional normativity that could be exclusive. Though essential to protecting their primary focus of supporting each other's practices, the lack of public activities, profile, or outreach in recruiting new members also means that they are susceptible to reproducing the social exclusions of the rest of the field. They predominantly recruit through professional and friendship networks, and these can be exclusive on the basis of class and race. Further, though they seek to be relatively egalitarian and non-hierarchical organisations, their porous and flexible nature – the way in which new members join, and the elective nature of the administrative and maintenance labour of the collective – can cause tensions and hierarchies of experience to form, which risk threatening the supportive nature of the space. Nevertheless, through regular communication, adaptable and tactical practices, they can mitigate or overcome these problems. They provide an example of caring practice in the field of performance for other organisations, and through their caring principles being carried through each individual member's practices, and through the individuals and organisations they relate to, or through new collectives being supported to set up, they can make small shifts in the field toward making it more caring and collaborative.

Chapter Three examines three collective or artist-run festivals, Buzzcut in Glasgow, Forest Fringe which took place in Edinburgh, and Steakhouse Live in London, in the context of a key tension they navigate between communitas and antagonism. I show that in the affective environment of austerity of isolation and disconnection, these festivals can provide experiences of communitas, or intense collective joy and connection between large groups of people, which temporarily reworks and reverses this affective environment, and provides the conditions for community renewal. On a more material level, they respond to the losses of organisations valued by the live art community, and gaps in provision for experimental performance in the field, and provide many opportunities for artists to perform their work, and for audiences to see it. I examine these festivals' ideals and practices through the lens of communitas and collective effervescence, showing how they are geared towards these intense experiences of togetherness and unstructured relation, and also examine other features of liminality, transgressiveness, and egalitarianism which these festivals share with communitas. Their informal practices, which accentuate the already liminal nature of festivals, seek to depart from old practices and bring in new ones, through the transgressive and creative nature of communitas, collective effervescence, and artist-run, collective, and DIY practices. In doing so, they innovate and propagate new models and practices for festivals which are often more equal, inclusive, or hospitable to artists and audiences than previously existing practices. However, both in departing from commonly held professional, institutional, or economic practices, and in trying to bring large, diverse, and new groups to their festivals, they produce tensions, frictions, and antagonism. Their economic

exceptionalism or informal practices are frequently susceptible to accusations of exploitation, and the practices of radical inclusion (particularly those of Buzzcut) risk bringing different groups of audiences into conflict, or excluding those unable or less able to participate in such an intense social environment. Through drawing on Claire Bishop's scholarship on relational antagonism and the reflections of the organisers and attendees, I argue that some degree of conflict and tension is necessary for these festivals to exist as spaces in which the rules and boundaries of the field of performance, and the live art community, are contested. In accounting for, revealing, and reflecting on some degree of tension at every level of these practices, these festivals can provide valuable change and innovation in the field of live art and experimental performance.

Chapter Four examines network collectives Raze Collective, The Cocoa Butter Club, and CUNTemporary, and shows how in an environment of hopelessness with a lack of access to futurity, they provide both affective experiences of hope and futurity and greater possibilities and opportunities in the present. They do so through gathering large groups of people together around marginalised identities and modalities, and encouraging mass engagement and participation around their activities. In particular they seek to reverse constrained, restricted, or unliveable possibilities for queers, people of colour, and women in the field of performance, as a result of historical oppression and exclusion and exacerbated by neoliberal austerity. They seek to broaden the possibilities of these groups to perform, make work, present it, and to gather in hopeful assemblies. Drawing on theorist of austerity Gargi Bhattacharryya, I show how the diminishing expectations of austerity and neoliberalism manifest in these groups' practices and those of their organisers, in disentitling them to public funds, community space, and engagement in the field of cultural production, and in normalising exploitative and self-exploitative working practices. I show that despite this, these networks' practices are oriented towards hope and possibility, and examine their work as a series of hopeful tactics. They provide expansive collective identification and representation which allows for a sense a belonging, the reversal of constricted or negative representation, and a greater influence in the field that comes with acting in a large group. They tactically instrumentalise practices of inclusion and exclusion to balance affective benefits to marginalised groups with the political possibility of addressing diverse publics. Through their practices they create hopeful spaces which centre on and celebrate particular marginalised identities, allowing affects of joy and hope which may impact the way people with these identities behave when outside of these spaces. These groups tactically engage with institutions to try and shift their practices, make more space for marginalised identities, and to enact change. In and through these hopeful and future-oriented practices these groups do run some risks. Their hopeful organisational expansion and replication runs the risk of being unsustainable and enabling exploitation and self-exploitation, as well as capitulating to a neoliberal imperative of growth. In working with institutions, they risk the performative and prefigurative nature of their activities, in creating spaces of hope and

possibility, being diluted or recuperated by the non-performativity of these institutions' commitments to diversity, inclusion, or social change. This tactical engagement with institutions risks reproducing the institutional logics that they seek to challenge, thus reinforcing the marginalised, exceptional, and tokenistic nature of the participation in cultural production that is available to them. Nevertheless, these hopeful practices enable greater space and possibility for the groups they work with, through using networks of social inclusion, in dynamics that usually work to exclude or diminish them. This final chapter also marks the culmination of my argument. In producing spaces of security, care, communitas, and hope, these collectives and artist-run organisations can not only provide immediate material and affective relief from the difficulties and lacks produced by austerity, they can also sustain groups, communities, and practices into the future, and help to shape and shift that future along more secure, caring, connected, and hopeful lines.

Discussion

Each of these chapters has made a discrete contribution as well as comprising a part of my broader argument. Chapter One applies and extends research on the insecurity and precarity of austerity and neoliberalism by considering the specific tensions and difficulties this context causes for artist-run or collective performance venues. It extends research on how space and performance are impacted by this precarity and shows how specific individuals and collectives are aware of and respond to this context. Chapter Two contributes to scholarship on care ethics, and discussion of how care can be enacted in and through performance, by providing further concrete examples of how an ethic and practice of care is created by these groups in shared spaces through caring structures, communication, co-presence and co-vulnerability – drawing on these discourses and showing how they manifest in organisational practice. Chapter Three applies and diverges from theories of communitas and collective effervescence, showing how these ideas manifest in collective and artist-run contemporary performance festival practice. I show how festivals produce spaces of both communitas and conflict, inclusion and exclusion, utilizing Clare Bishop's research on relational antagonism in visual and participatory art. In doing so, I contribute to scholarship on festivals and art spaces as spaces of potential productive contestation and conflict. In my final chapter, I extend discourses I have drawn on throughout about the potential exclusion of social and cultural capital in the creative industries by showing how network collectives in performance can organise against these dynamics. I also contribute to discourses on hope and futurity in performance by further connecting ideals and aesthetic experiences of these affects to concrete practices, in examining how they can be enacted in the tactical and organisational producing practices of collectives and artist-run organisations.

This thesis has contributed to a number of bodies of scholarship and addressed a number of gaps in this existing scholarship. This thesis has extended scholarship on collective creation in

performance studies by considering collective producing, and the unique opportunities, challenges, and possibilities that this form of collective practice presents.[411] This thesis has drawn on scholarship on austerity and provided in-depth accounts of how austerity manifests, and how it might be resisted, in the context of the producing of experimental performance. I have drawn together work on the affective impacts of austerity, and on the impacts of austerity on the arts, predominantly focused on economic impacts, to present a detailed picture of austerity's affective impacts on experimental performance and live art practices and practitioners.[412] In offering an in-depth account and analysis of a range of different collective and artist-run organisations, both individually and in synthesis, I have revealed the number of these groups operating, the conditions in which they do so, the contributions they make to the field of cultural production, and the challenges they face. This extends analysis in live art and theatre scholarship of the network or infrastructure of venues, festivals, funding bodies, and other organisations and individuals which support and develop these practices.[413] Focusing only on funded organisations and institutions only tells half the story, and risks losing the organisational and curatorial innovations of alternative organisational models. In focusing specifically on collective and artist-run organisations, which often have a lower public profile, less or no public funding, or are often more short-lived than institutions or organisations with a more traditional structure, I have made visible organisations and practices which might otherwise go unnoticed, but which nevertheless can have a significant impact on the field.

In doing so, I contribute to studies of this infrastructure by showing it is under threat from austerity and neoliberalism – though studies in the impacts of the cuts have accounted for the material dimensions of this threat there has been less attention paid to the affective threats I examine in this thesis. I have contributed to scholarship that examines the impact that austerity, precarity and neoliberalism has on performance by considering, in detail, the vital intermediary of producing and organisational practice in this process.[414] Austerity and precarity do affect live artists and performers directly, but they also impact and shape live art and experimental performance's supportive infrastructure, changing how work is made, the conditions in which it is made, the spaces in which it is made, and the social relations and affective ties of the artists and producers that make it. This study contributes to a growing body of literature which examines the conditions and modes in which experimental performance is produced, supported, and presented. This literature is primarily written by

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[411] See Syssoyeva and Proudfit (eds.), op. cit.
[412] For the affective impacts of austerity see Bhattacharyya, *Crisis, Austerity, and Everyday Life*, op. cit., and Hall, *Everyday Life in Austerity*, op. cit. For the impact of austerity on the arts see my review in the Introduction to this thesis, and Rex and Campbell, op. cit., Rosenberg, op. cit., and Adrian Harvey, op. cit.
[413] See Graham Saunders, 'The Freaks' Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-73', op. cit., Jennie Klein, 'Developing Live art', op. cit., and Maria Chatzichristodoulou, 'Live Art in the UK: Shaping a Field', op. cit.
[414] See Maria Chatzichristodoulou, op. cit., and Marissia Fragkou, op. cit.

organisations themselves as individual case studies; this study contributes to this by providing an overview and synthesis of multiple organisations, with the lens of sociological and cultural theorists, and placing it in the wider context of scholarship from across the creative and cultural industries.[415]

In-depth studies of austerity continue to be important, because austerity continues, in policy, in impact, and in fact. Though the coronavirus pandemic necessitated an exceptional period of public spending which caused a 3% rise in the median incomes of the poorest households, this was a temporary effect.[416] Continued economic difficulties necessitated, as Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt announced on the 17th November 2022, a five-year programme of spending cuts and tax increases worth £55 billion.[417] Though analysis by the House of Lords Library asserts that total departmental spending 'will grow in real terms at 3.7% a year on average', high inflation means that wages are likely to fall in real terms, and living standards are to dramatically decline.[418] Living standards are also highly unequal: through analysis of the living standards of the very rich and those on lower incomes in the US and the UK, journalist John Burn-Murdoch argued that the US and the UK should be designated 'poor societies with some very rich people'.[419] The cost of living and energy crises of 2021 and 2022, in which inflation topped 10% due to energy prices more than doubling over the course of a year, has made it more difficult for people to afford to feed themselves and keep themselves warm.[420] Where food banks were the sign of the desperation and privation of the initial phase of austerity, 'warm banks' - spaces in which people can go to stay warm when they cannot afford to heat their homes - may be emblematic of this particular troubled period. It is notable that the spaces in which these warm banks are being set up include libraries, art galleries, and community centres – that is, the very same cultural and community spaces which have been threatened and closed by austerity, and which many of the case studies I have examined step in to provide. Cultural spaces remain a last bastion of community for people to come together and support, protect and help each

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[415] See LADA case study collections written by members of Live Art UK: *It's Time: how Live Art is taking on the world from the front line to the bottom line,* Published by LADA and Wunderbar on behalf of Live Art UK, 2019, and *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies,* LADA in collaboration with Live Art UK (eds.), 2010.
[416] Jonathan Cribb, Tom Waters, Thomas Wernham, and Xiaowei Xu, *Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2022,* The Institute for Fiscal Studies, July 2022.
[417] The Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, *Autumn Statement 2022,* HM Treasury, November 2022.
[418] Thomas Weston, 'Autumn statement 2022: Key announcements and analysis', House of Lords Library website, [https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/autumn-statement-2022-key-announcements-and-analysis/] [accessed 02/12/2022].
[419] John Burn-Murdoch, 'Britain and the US are poor societies with some very rich people', *Financial Times,* 16/9/2022 [https://www.ft.com/content/ef265420-45e8-497b-b308-c951baa68945].
[420] Scottish Government, *The Cost of Living Crisis in Scotland: analytical report,* 'Executive Summary', November 2022 [https://www.gov.scot/publications/cost-living-crisis-scotland-analytical-report/], and ONS, 'Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: November 2021 to March 2022', 30th March 2022 [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/articles/impactofincreasedcostoflivingonadultsacrossgreatbritain/november2021tomarch2022].

other when the state fails to do so, no matter how ill equipped or under-resourced they are to perform this service.

These arts and cultural spaces are also coming under threat from the energy and cost of living crisis, with many faced with closure or further economic difficulty as a consequence.[421] This austere environment will continue to reduce access to performance in times when they might provide vital services, support, and critique. As I have examined in this thesis, performance can provide spaces of togetherness and community connection. As funding for institutions and individuals in the arts continues to be reduced and restricted, even those previously well-protected and resourced, it is important to understand the significant role that low-resourced, collective and artist-run organisations play, and will play, in the survival and development of performance practices in this country, so that they might be best supported.[422] As continued restrictions in funding necessarily exacerbate unequal, isolating, competitive, and hostile conditions for performance and performers, the ways in which these artist-run and collective organisations can support artists and rework these conditions become increasingly important. As the principles of neoliberalism and austerity interpenetrate all sectors of society, it is likewise important to be critical about how these practices are in tension with, or risk reproducing, exploitative, exclusive or unethical practices, so that these problems can be worked through and avoided by future artists and producers.

If we are to have any hope of reversing the deleterious impacts of austerity and neoliberalism on the arts it is important to have a holistic understanding of all its impacts, not only its restrictions in resources but also the accompanying rhetoric, logic, practices, and affects; how austerity impacts workplaces and professions in the arts, how we relate to each other in those workplaces, and how those workplaces feel. As I have argued, collective and artist-run practices can provide affective and material relief from austerity, allow for the continued existence of threatened practices and communities, and provide the possibility of organising against, and imagining alternatives to, the austere neoliberal political, social, and economic order. Through viewing neoliberal austerity on this small local scale, we

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[421] See, for example, Esther Addley and Harriet Sherwood, '"It's really desperate": cost of living crisis spells bleak times for British arts venues', *The Guardian,* 22/10/2022 [https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/oct/22/its-really-desperate-cost-of-living-crisis-spells-bleak-times-for-british-arts-venues] [accessed 07/12/2022].

[422] See the ACE portfolio for 2023-2026, in which many organisations had their funding cut significantly or entirely, and the English National Opera was threatened with having their funding cut entirely unless they relocated to Manchester: ACE website, '2023-26 Investment Programme' [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/investment23], and Harriet Sherwood, 'English National Opera's funding to be cut to zero unless it moves from London', *The Guardian,* 9/11/2022 [https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/nov/09/english-national-operas-funding-to-be-cut-to-zero-unless-it-moves-from-london], and Arifa Akbar, Imogen Tilden and Chris Wiegand, 'Arts Council funding: organisations head into the unknown amid cuts', *The Guardian,* 10/11/2022 [https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/nov/10/arts-council-funding-organisations-head-into-the-unknown-amid-cuts] [all accessed 11/11/2022].

not only understand it better, but we also comprehend it on a scale at which we have the possibility of influence. Through repeated crises and continued austerity, it is vital to build and maintain supportive structures which counteract austerity's worst material and affective impacts, while also holding spaces for critique and the disarticulation of its logic and justifications. One of the ways in which this can be done, I suggest with this thesis, is through focus on collective and artist-run producing models of working together in art and performance and protecting the spaces of contestation that these models create. These practices are not a magic solution; they can reverse the practices and impacts of neoliberal austerity, but they can just as easily reproduce them. Their power lies in their interactions with their immediate, shifting context, in tactically using the gaps, voids, and opportunities available to them, widening the gaps that appear in neoliberal austerity to make just a little bit more space: to exist, to imagine, and to organise.

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