APPLIED LIVE ART:
CO-AUTHORSHIP IN SOCIALLY ENGAGED AND
SITE-RESPONSIVE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Part I – Presentation of practice in video and still image format.

The following DVD includes the 3 case studies that constitute the core of this research. Each performance project is represented through a short slideshow of performance images, another of workshop images and an edited video. Each of these videos is different due to the varying nature of the work:

Case Study 1 is an edited video highlighting segments of the performance and runs a total of 16:48.

Case Study 2 is a short documentary film of the project that was shot as part of the process and has a running time of 45:58.

Case Study 3 is a video composed of three edited segments of performances that made up the larger project; each video is approximately 7 to 8 minutes with the combined running time of 22:58.

Part II – Presentation and discussion of research findings.

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Abstract

Applied Live Art: Co-Authorship in Socially Engaged and Site-Responsive Performance Practice looks at the ways in which performance can integrate participants and local context into the development of new devised work. This practice-led research is based on a methodology that grew out of three performance case studies completed in diverse international settings with a varied range of participants. The case studies are: *Napoli Scorticata* completed in 2007 in Naples, Italy; *Youth Visions,* completed in 2008 in Northeastern Ghana, West Africa; *Triangulated City*, completed in 2009 in Beirut, Lebanon. Within these diverse contexts the research questions the role of authorship when working in socially engaged practice, focusing on how practitioners can shift the focus from the artist to the body politic. Merging social engagement with a site-responsive approach, the research proposes that the artistic medium is the social system and as such argues that the modes of employment require a focus of appreciation on the generative process, context and product combined. The research is presented in two parts. Part I is an interactive DVD with images of the development process and final presentations as well as a video of each performance work. Part II is a written thesis that explores the modes of engagement, outlines the methods of development and structures a general working methodology that can be referenced by other performance practitioners. The thesis proposes Applied Live Art as a term to describe practices that include a hybrid of time-based media options, which include a social component as their primary focus. The research outcomes conclude with an analysis of place making and its importance when working with both site and society.

This practice-led research investigates ways in which the aesthetic can reflect the characteristics of a social system and where as a practitioner, I stand in relationship to its authorship. In the following thesis I examine the generative process of my site-responsive performance practice (as seen in Part I), through the various modes of social-engagement present in the work. The research asks how performance practice can be both socially engaged and site-responsive. Theorising the many strands involved in the production and development of my practice, the research also questions the role of the practitioner as facilitator and director of performance work within a specific community context. Through an examination of my authorial process and the way in which participants were integrated into it, the research looks specifically at how authorship can be shared when working in an applied context. In explaining my aesthetic choices and performance making approach, I propose that the social system is to be understood as the artistic medium of my practice, and that it is this proposition that allows me analyse and discuss the wider realm of socially engaged performance practice.

Central to this research is my practical methodology, which developed from project to project and enabled me to experiment with various methods of community collaboration and shared authorship. As Charles Garoian describes in his analyses of performing pedagogy 'community members are not isolated as art spectators or audience. Instead, they are directly engaged as cultural workers' (Garoian 1999, 27). How I worked with participants in my practice to develop the work presented in Part 1 is central to understanding the larger methodology of my practice. This methodology was based on developing a single international production a year over the course of the research, which would be contextual to its locale and engage the local populace from the area where it was taking place. With a deep interest in society and its cultural forms, I created these series of performance works by responding to the architecture of a site and the architecture of community, with the goal to develop a work that was both engaging as an art form and as a social narrative. I also present in this thesis the methods of facilitation utilised in my practical methodology in order to provide participants in the projects a shared voice in the development of the work.

Reflecting upon my practice as a mode of research provides this thesis with an approach to data collection that sees practice as a mode of knowledge generation. Research from this perspective includes an overlap of activities that inform this written dissertation. It includes basic contextual and dramaturgical research conducted before developing the performance projects, research undertaken during the generative process, research that assesses the process and research which helps understand the outcomes. As Hazel Smith and Roger Dean explain in their own theorising of practice as research it 'can best be interpreted in terms of a broader view of creative practice which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorisation and documentation' (Smith 2009, 5). Both Part 1 and Part 2 of this research offer my practice, its context, and the generative process as a new form of material knowledge that combined offer what Kershaw terms 'action-based investigations oriented toward practical engagement with the world' (Ibid, 107).

This practical engagement which is presented in Part 1 via three performance projects constitutes the core activity of this investigation and are analysed in this written thesis as case studies. The case studies were testing grounds for a mode of devising work in a collaborative environment where participants generated content along with myself as the practitioner. The performances were devised through a series of participant-centred workshops that engaged with site, locale, community and local customs. In these workshop models, participants were also the performers who presented the devised actions created in the workshops to an invited audience. This thesis will explore the collaborative methods I employed in developing these devising workshops and how this fostered a shared creative authorship with the participants who were involved in each project.

By experimenting with form in the diverse geographical locations where the three projects took place, I was able to test various collaborative methods. From an analyses of these different methods I aim to outline a generally applicable working methodology for site-specific/site-responsive socially engaged performance practice where that practice is inspired and informed by site and locale, as well as inhabitants and their stories. To do this the thesis examines the ways in which the specific narratives within the performance projects were influenced by their immediate social context. This will help demonstrate how the individual narratives, customs and myths that become embodied in a social system

can each be highlighted and revealed through their inclusion in a performance event. Finally the investigation concludes with the importance of place making in a participatory project, focusing on the power of narration to change a given space into a specific place through memory and actions.

The first project was *Napoli Scorticata* (Naples Flayed) in 2007, a live art performance event that was based on and took place in Naples, Italy. The second was *Youth Visions* in 2008, a combined arts and health initiative carried out in Northeastern Ghana, West Africa. The final project was *Triangulated City* in 2009, a multi-location live art performance event that took place in the city of Beirut, Lebanon. The documentation presented in Part 1 constitutes three sections, photos of the process, photos of the final presentation and a video edit of the work. There are two formats utilised as the video archive, one is format is an edited video documentation of the final presentation of *Napoli Scorticata* in Naples and *Triangulated City* in Beirut. The other format is a documentary of both process and final presentation of *Youth Visions* in Ghana. The creation of a documentary shot with project participants was part of the overall core activity in Ghana and as such left its own archive to present. This was also a more education-based project, which merited this narrative approach. *Napoli Scorticata* and *Triangulated City* were archived by video solely for the purpose to document the final performance piece as the culmination of my methodology resulting in the final practice. Tim Etchells best describes this kind of archive by stating that 'the work is a document of the processes leading to it – a body that bares traces of its past' (Etchells 1999, 75). Within the videos of *Napoli Scorticata* and *Triangulated City* can be read the facilitation, collaboration and shared authorship that created those actions as socially engaged and site-responsive. The viewer is invited to read this larger context in the content of the video and witness the result of my work, while enjoying the documentary style format of *Youth Visions* as its own archive specific to that project.

In all three case studies I assigned myself the role of director and facilitator, at times moving between the two. In directing actions, I took a more authorial lead, giving specific instructions in timing, movement and method. As a facilitator I focused on my role as an educator, bringing out the particular qualities of a performer, understanding their personal goals and limits and working with their interests and abilities (though there is a challenge in defining the boundaries of these two titles as I often may be performing both roles simultaneously). I

purposefully stood at the border of these two roles in order to fully immersive myself in the possibilities of co-authorship within cultural milieus which were not my own. I base this philosophical stance on Paulo Freire's notion of liberating actions, where 'solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is identifying; it is a radical posture' (Freire 1975, 26). This balance between facilitator and director allowed me to summon the creative potential of participants while letting their own voices be heard. To apply this on a practical level I integrated myself as a performer during devising workshops, however I stepped out of this role as the final presentation approached with the intention to shift the focus towards the actions of the participants. This decision enabled the participants to independently express their personal narratives, ultimately rooting the performance in the participants' own actions. The following thesis focuses on this process of shared authorship and how it arose from project to project, thus situating my role as practitioner within its context.

In developing the work presented in Part I and in reflecting on its research context in Part II, I merge my training and experience as an artist, educator and activist. My own creative aesthetic and approach has been instrumental in guiding the final product. Interested in elements such as memory, found objects, the interstice between fact and fiction, sites and social narratives the final works may appear to have a surreal dream-like quality. This is enhanced by my creative direction on lighting, costume and set, as well as interactivity between audience and performer. My intention was to create an accessible and entertaining performance structure that felt both nostalgic and current. Working with participants and their stories and weaving this into a constructed format allowed me to share the devising process while directing the framework. This brings together the elements of my artistic background and interests as well as social and political philosophies. Through this practice led research I have been able to take these various strands, both aesthetic and socio-political, and weave them into a singular format for devising and creating performance practice.

Practitioner Background and Training

My work in performance is a merging of earlier research and practice in interactive installation and community organising. Between 1999-2005, I co-founded and administered a community garden in New York that functioned as a site of performance interventions. The site was located in the Lower East Side, a mixed

neighbourhood, both economically and culturally. Born from an abandoned lot, the space became (and still is) an active place in the neighbourhood. During this period I witnessed how the arts and specifically performance could engage a wide spectrum of people within a multi-cultural arena. Influenced by the Fluxus movement, I began to devise methods in which the creation of an artistic project could be situated within a social context. In 2003, as Chair of the Garden Council, we participated in a class-action lawsuit against the City of New York to save the site from real estate speculation. This direct action eventually granted the garden jurisdiction under the NYC Parks Department and saved it from demolition for development. I viewed this space and the action around it as part of a larger performance that extended outside the boundaries of stage and set and into the social sphere.

This same concept extended out of the civic sector into the education sector whilst working as an artist–teacher in NYC Public Schools with the Innovative Arts & Literacy Program, part of a charity organisation dedicated to inner-city families. During this period I was influenced by the writings of Freire and Boal and recognised the importance of empowering the disempowered through an aesthetic encounter that promoted cultural expression and dialogue. Developing art and performance as a direct intervention in the social system informed my own methods of devising practice. This perspective of social engagement added a participant-centred approach as a new authorial element to my work. Freire touches upon this notion of co-authorship and inter-subjectivity when he states that it 'is not seen in terms of explaining to, but rather entering into a dialogue with, the people and their actions' (Freire 1975, 30). In my experience as a practitioner, teacher and community artist I have witnessed how a learner-centred approach opens a dialogue that can foster creativity. It is while working though this dialogical process that I find the question of authorship arises. These factors have influenced my ongoing interest to develop a practice that remains socially engaged by responding to the cultural context where it is situated, while maintaining my own aesthetic approach.

To create a balance between individual and group work during the development process, I created a method with which participants can hybridise their individual ideas into a larger singular structure. For each project this was completed through a workshop series and is delineated in the next three thesis chapters. This method of generative group work and collaborative production is

central to understanding how the performance presentations had each participants voice embedded in the final product. *The Practice (Workshop and Presentation)* sections of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will demonstrate how each of the case study performance projects was begun through a combination of on-site research and (specifically in Chapters 3 and 4) an open dialogue of sharing and exchanging stories.

My practice became situated in the UK after I completed an MA in Scenography (time-based media) where I sought to integrate my visual arts training, education work and political activism into a singular performance practice. I became drawn to live art as an all–inclusive term that could bridge visual arts and performance and which seemed to reflect my own diverse practice and research interests. I was also interested in theories around applied drama as a way to integrate performance and community, though its reliance on pedagogy and on target-participants (i.e. refugees, elderly, at–risk youth) seemed limited to my interest in a wider arena of social engagement. I use the term *applied live art* to describe my work as a practitioner devising socially engaged live performance, fusing this term as a semantic description of my practice. By defining my practice as applied live art, I am able to situate the work precisely at the boundaries of performance, community, time-based media and devising.

My use of the word applied borrows from Helen Nicholson's definition of the term as 'applied drama/theatre', a practice executed outside purpose-built institutions with the intention to benefit a target audience (Nicholson 2005, 2). Nicholson's definition of applied performance as a 'inter-disciplinary' and 'hybrid' practice, suggests a parallel to live art, as they both draw on a myriad of references to propel their outcomes (Ibid, 2). Nicholson agrees that the term is flexible yet relies heavily on the pedagogical nature of applied work to support its definition and outcomes, emphasising the role of the facilitator within the group encounter. She views performance practice in an applied setting as a dialogue between the practitioner and the participants, one where the creation of a work offers a platform for dialogue between the two (Ibid, 55). Nicholson expands on issues of pedagogical practice and theory (Ibid, 38-58), without theorising the practitioner's own aesthetic and thus the element of co-authorship. This thesis expands on the relationship between facilitator and participants by exploring the role of authorship within the three case studies. Each performance experiments with methods of

devising and collaboration, as will be evident in *Youth Visions* and *Triangulated City,* where I authored a framework within which participants authored the content.

Although influenced by applied drama and performance anthropology I aim to interrogate these terms and offer the artistic intent of my practice as a critical aesthetic, and as an individual contribution to the field of performance. My work incorporates elements of community by utilising the social sphere as an artistic medium, where elements of social amelioration are neither the sole intention nor the locus. James Thompson theorises this shift in attention away from the effect of performance towards 'performance affects' (Thompson 2009). Thompson describes performance affects as a response to social and artistic processes, one in which our focus on affects 'can position people in relation to their wider social and sensory context…'(Ibid, 8). My interest in devising this work is to touch upon this notion of affect in lieu of the focus on effect. The practice is born from and responds to a social context focusing on the generative collaborative process not the effectual outcomes. With this focus on the processual development of performance making, I aggregate live art to applied in order to define the work itself as a series of artistic actions created collaboratively between and artist and participants.

An extensive definition of live art is offered by The Live Art Development Agency, founded by Lois Keidan and Catherine Ugwu in 1999. A segment related to social practice states:

> 'Live Art is a research engine, driven by artists who are working across forms, contexts and spaces to open up new artistic models, new languages for the representation of ideas and new strategies for intervening in the public sphere.'[i]

This final aspect, the intervention in the public sphere, is an example of how live art can be expanded from the explicit body of the artist into the body politic. By proposing that the public/social sphere can function as an artistic medium for performance practitioners, the practice that is presented in this thesis serves as models that test how to utilise the medium. The theories of inter-subjectivity and dialogue that are explored in this approach are expanded upon in the theoretical framework section of this introduction and carry on throughout the review of the case studies. They help demonstrate how the work can have the potential to become a place-maker for relations between those who engage with it. Though this thesis focuses on the generative process and contextual data that informed the

practice, this notion of place making is identified as a central outcome in the conclusion. The case studies will demonstrate how the site of the performance itself can become altered through place making via the participants' personal narration. The practice can be viewed as a potential catalyst for relationship dynamics, as the work engraves the utilised space with new meaning through a collaborative and co-authored approach.

Though I conceived, facilitated and directed the three projects, the content of work had various levels of co-authorship. Understanding how a balance in collaboration is achieved was an important element in making the work, one that through trial and error began to recognise how the inter-subjectivity of a social system directly informed how the medium was used in performance. In essence different groups of people have different ways in which they communicate amongst themselves and create different forms of cultural expression. Understanding and respecting these forms and boundaries meant analysing my own tools of art making. These case studies provide an examination into the extent to which my authorial position is present and how this position combined with the participant's own to synthesise into a collaborative format.

As participation became central to the form, the boundaries between the development of a critical aesthetic and the existing context of the social system that surrounded it became blurred. As Kaprow states when explaining *The Legacy of Jackson Pollack*, 'the artist, the spectator, and the outer world are… interchangeably involved' (Kaprow 2003, 5). He is referring to the edge of the canvas, where the artistic performance gesture stops and 'reality' begins, a 'continuum going in all directions simultaneously, *beyond* the literal dimensions of any work' (Ibid, 11).[ii] Likewise the effects of dialogue on inter-subjectivity have a participatory ripple effect through the social drama that would be difficult to account for, as it remains entrenched in each individual's experience. As participants engage with each other in a devising process*,* that process of interaction and dialogue can continue outside of the aesthetic context, in the form of interpersonal relationships. This action expands the potential of the participatory form to reverberate within a variety of social processes. As my work is informed and inspired by the social system I situate my practice within a wider realm of socially engaged performance practice. In order to support all the case studies, other artists whose work blurs the aesthetic/social boundary by working with elements of site, society and performance are discussed in the following survey of socially engaged performance.

Survey of Socially Engaged Performance

As mentioned previously an influential performance movement to my work is the Fluxus movement. I was drawn to the simplicity of their engagement with everyday life, and ability to blur the boundaries between art making and quotidian living. I incorporate the Fluxus method of elevating actions and symbols of the development process to have equal importance to the product of art making. Kaprow, himself a member of Fluxus, designed and executed a variety of interactive performance activities that provide a starting point for claiming a lineage to site-responsive work. These were manifested in the form of an action or instruction that prompted the participants to examine everyday life (Kaprow 2003). Often the actions in a performance were distinguishable to those in the social sphere only in intent not execution. Furthermore the activity became charged with the presence of the spectator. Kaprow describes his exhibition at Hansa Gallery in New York in 1959 as a non-representational function of engaging the social through the aesthetic:

> 'In the present exhibition we do not come to look at things. We simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passively or actively according to our talents for 'engagement', in much the same way that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we have also played a part' (Hendricks 2003, 6).

Performance practice can similarly function as a reflection of socio-cultural processes, reinterpreting the social drama into the performance. In many ways the three practice pieces in this thesis attempted to do just this, by inviting the audience into an unfolding situation where they had the option for engagement to the extent of their interests and abilities. Many artists have taken on the challenge of this method of shared authorship and social engagement.

Some examples are the psychogeographical walks of Janet Cardiff and Francis Alÿs, the participant interventions of Santiago Sierra or FrenchMottershead, the social spaces of Joseph Beuys and Rirkrit Tiravanija, and the public performances of Lone Twin and Suzanne Lacy. These are all examples of artists whose artistic medium is the social sphere and whose works exist within the framework of inter-subjectivity. Though the work varies greatly in execution it maintains the premise that the form is created in conjunction with participants or as a response to the social system. Thus the actions of the participants develop the work through a collaborative process. My interest in these artists is how they

develop this collaborative model and execute its methods. In this section I will focus on FrenchMottershead, Francis Alÿs and Lone Twin in order to give a brief overview of the modes social of engagement in site responsive practice.

I begin with Rebecca French and Andrew Mottershead from the group FrenchMottershead, as a good example of artists utilising the social sphere as an artistic medium. Developing socially engaged work since 1999, they have a broad array of experiments that intervene in the social system. Their work often presents the simplicity of human interactions in a devised format. According to Rebecca and Andrew in an interview I held with them in April of 2010, they have termed this format a 'microperformance'. These microperformances take on the form of Boalian invisible theatre with a mix of participants and spectators that become blurred as they are given simple instructions for interaction. Unlike the Boal technique, all participants in a given event are aware that it is a combination of staged happening mixed with everyday socialising. One example is their *People Series,* where social interactions are intervened through a series of gestural commands.[iii] In the performance, instructions on a simple card are passed to participants and request such things as *lie to impress* or *insist others pass through a doorway first*. These instructions create small interceptions in time that can easily be mistaken for the quotidian.

The revelation that the microperformances create is that the spectator/participant cannot distinguish fact from fiction, reality from performance. A melding of the social and aesthetic drama that plays with intent by merging into the performance of everyday life. The simplicity of this project speaks of its success and ability to be recreated in a variety of social venues from a gallery to a workingmen's club. Joshua Sofaer describes his experience of attending the microperformance Friday Social Evening, developed in collaboration with West-Indian Ex-Services Association, as a 'live action version that put you in the thick of this faction quagmire and forced you to be partisan and participant. There was a continual oscillation between belief and suspicion, between enjoyment in your disbelief and irritation and your inability to accept something as either genuine or a lie.'[iv] This refers back to Kaprow and his acknowledgement that the work is an invitation to the audience to be as active or as passive as is in their interest and capability for engagement. The work is present; the reception is up to the viewer. From this perspective I have chosen to focus on the devising and developing of the

work instead of audience reception and perception both in this section and throughout the thesis.

FrenchMottershead are an interesting example in that they intervene in a social system without the intention to socially ameliorate. According to FrenchMottershead, they are interested in methods with which performance can be inserted into everyday life, as opposed to everyday life being a source for performance practice. This is an attempt to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, as the audience member cannot distinguish the actions of a performing individual executing a simple repetitive gesture with another audience member who may be attending the event. In the work *Shops* FrenchMottershead researched the inter-subjectivities between shopkeepers and their clientele (FrenchMottershead 2010). They travelled to various locations around the world collaborating with chosen shops in order to understand how the shop impacted the surrounding locale and the interactions with their customer base. Carol Maund, director of Site Gallery who sponsored the two-year expedition describes how 'FrenchMottershead worked together with different communities showing the possibilities of local difference amidst the dominant, highly commodified world of shops and shopping' (Ibid, 8). To create the work an invitation was extended to customers to attend a specific date and time for a photo shoot of them in front of the shop. Those who came ended up participating in an inter-subjective performance encounter that was captured and archived through photography. This 'photo event', as was described to me by FrenchMottershead, is not only an archive but also a celebration of the site and its participants. In essence the framing of the event, of the inter-subjective moment and the interrelationships existing in a small business, create the work of art. The work is created in response to how the surrounding community utilises the site, which situates the context as key to the content.

When I asked about participants' reaction to the work, Andrew stated that often 'they never thought of their lives in this way, of these various social formations, and when something is represented like that you can analyse it and begin to maybe make connections and understand the system you are part of a little better'. Writer and critic Emma Cocker terms the intricacies of a social system through an aesthetic lens as 'social assemblage' (Ibid, 152). According to Cocker, FrenchMottershead 'attend to the individual performances of identity and social ritual within different contexts in order to reveal their grammatical coding,

the behavioural etiquette operating therein. … these various social conventions … become used as raw material through which to create new forms of expression and exchange' (Ibid, 153). This notion of social conventions as material with which to create work is what locates the practice of FrenchMottershead, though varied in its execution, into this survey of socially engaged practice.

Another performance duo whose live actions are centred on community and society are Brighton-based Lone Twin. Through their public projects they claim to 'create community-based projects and performances for specific sites and locations' which they do through a variety of formats.[v] One of the most concise examples of utilizing the public sphere as an artistic medium and place of engagement is their project *Speeches*.[vi] In this work members of the public were asked to collaborate with the development of the work by offering their own biographies as a performative gesture. Participants worked with a professional speechwriter in order to retell their site-responsive stories at a chosen locale, through a speech. *Speeches* was first presented throughout the Barbican estate over a week in mid-September of 2008.[vii] The audience was guided to each location where an innocuous passer-by stood on a soapbox-like structure and delivered their prewritten speech. During my visit, some arrived by foot, some were already awaiting our arrival. One of the performers, a courier, arrived rushing on his bicycle two minutes late and gave his speech slightly out of breath. This was a break in their schedules to offer us a slice of life, a reality re-presented for a brief moment as performance. The success of the work lay in its ability to take the mundane and heighten it through its representation as a performance encounter.

The collaborative performance work of Francis Alÿs utilises a similar method of interaction with participants to create an inter-subjective artistic moment. According to Alÿs collaboration 'is about letting the original scenario go, letting it be translated by others and bounced back and forth. If the story is good enough, it will get back to you or achieve its shape by itself' (Medina, Ferguson and Fisher 2007, 16). Alÿs structures his work conceptually into three phases: preparatory, event, and re-presentation. The preparatory phase relates closely to this practice-led research as it begins with the initial impetus of the artist to develop an aesthetic that integrates itself as an action in the social sphere (Ibid, 108-110). This notion of agency and communion are closely affiliated with my practical research interests. In 2002 Alÿs created *Cuando La Fé Mueve Montañas* (When Faith Moves Mountains) completed in collaboration with Rafael Ortega

and Cuauhtémoc Medina (Ibid, 52). The performance action was an attempt to translate social tensions into narratives that in turn intervened in the landscape of an area. For the event 500 volunteers where given uniforms and a shovel and stood in a single line, methodically displacing a 500m sand dune by shovelling 10cm from one base over the top of the dune to the other base. The work was developed as a metaphorical response to the physical and social displacements that occur in the shantytowns on the outskirts of Peru's capital, Lima. The city is encircled by sand dunes upon which are erected *Pueblos Jóvenes*, or young villages. Falling outside the jurisdiction of the state, these shantytowns are constructed by migrant workers seeking better opportunities in the metropolis (Ibid, 100-108).

The performance action took place in the *pueblo jóven* (young town) of *Ventanilla* where, equipped with no facilities or services, the inhabitants struggle for survival. Alÿs' motto for the piece *Máximo Esfuerzo, Mínimo Resultado* (maximum effort, minimum result) referred to a social structure where minimal reforms are achieved via an enormous collective effort. Yet a progress could be witnessed as a result of the actions of *When Faith Moves Mountains*. Reviewing the work, Jean Fisher termed the action a 'poetic metaphor with collective agency' (Ibid, 116). The shared human activity performed in this 'inconsequential' act functioned as a social allegory of change. This kind of mediation is an active process that not only reflects upon objects or events but also interprets and comments upon the forces and movements underlying them. *When Faith Moves Mountains* functions as this kind of mediation by serving as a metacommentary on the fractioned systems that affect disadvantaged peoples. The work can be described as a metaphor from which minimal reforms are attained through massive collective efforts. This metaphor is tangible for Alÿs though, as he claims a progress can be witnessed. The importance, according to Alÿs is that 'the dune moved, this wasn't a literary fiction; it really happened. It doesn't matter how far it moved, and in truth only an infinitesimal displacement occurred--but it would have taken the wind years to move an equivalent amount of sand. So it's a tiny miracle. The story starts there' (Anton 2002).

Alÿs' work questions this very notion of progress and achievement, responding to the disharmonic elements within a social system through poetic performance actions. This viewpoint matches my research proposal that the social system can itself be seen an artistic medium to be explored in order to create performance actions. The artists presented in this section rely on this medium in

their practice and by doing so situate the work presented in this dissertation within a larger working field of socially engaged performance. The performance works presented in Part I and outlined in this thesis are introduced in the subsequent section. A chapter overview will outline each of the chapter structures as well as expand on the role of my performance company Lotos Collective, which was central to completing the projects. This will be followed by a brief introduction of each performance in order to contextualise the work before closing the chapter outlining the theoretical framework that guides the research findings.

Chapter Overview and Project Description

This first chapter introduces my practice and lays out the aims and objectives of this practice-led research. I gave an account of my background and training in order to demonstrate how this influenced the methods and theories I used to develop and understand the work. The prior survey of practitioners who work in socially engaged practice serves to contextualise this research into a wider field of performance practice today. This section includes the review of each case study in order to frame the three diverse projects under one research topic. The theoretical framework in the final section of this chapter helps propel the analyses of each case study. It is this framework that both explicates the research findings and helped clarify how the work functioned as testing engines for authorship and collaborative methods.

Subsequently chapters 2, 3 and 4 are dedicated to each one of the three international site-responsive projects, *Napoli Scorticata*, *Youth Visions* and *Triangulated City* respectively. They serve as exemplary samples of my research into participatory agency and collaborative creation. Due to the varied form and location of each project, the resulting performances demonstrate a range of co-authorship strategies in relation to devising. Though the content and outcome varied from project to project the devising method for all three case studies was based on my workshop model. As each project was unique they asked a series of independent questions and tested different working methods in collaborative authorship and site-specificity. Thus the workshop model was altered accordingly for each case study. The following three case study chapters will give an account of the different methods and outcomes as well as the context the work was responding to.

Each of these chapters is divided into four sections. The first is the introduction and theoretical framework in place for the specific project. This section describes how the project came to fruition and how the main questions were integrated into the development of the work. The next section is the social, historical and regional context of the performance site. This important background information gives an overview of the locations for each case study. The practice presentation section follows and includes a descriptive account of the workshop / devising process and the final public presentation. It is within this section that the question of collaboration and authorship is tested and analysed. Finally each of the three chapters ends with a conclusion and assessments section that looks at the outcomes and results of the case study. The queries that resulted from each work informed the creative methods employed with each subsequent process of creation. This highlights how new questions that may have arisen from one work became a catalyst for the next.

A strong focus on context as generative material in the next three chapters comes to a conclusion in Chapter 5 that highlights the importance of place making when working in a specific site. This final chapter gives an overview of the three case studies and proposes an assessment strategy with which to analyse the outcome of the practical findings. The research culminates in a theoretical account of narration and place making, investigating how the affective quality of agency continues after the work is complete. While writing the thesis and recalling the workshop process, the group dynamics with participants, and the locales where the case studies took place, it became clear to me that a narrative shift had occurred. How participants rewrote the site of performance through their actions became an important place maker to investigate. To do this the chapter focuses on the definitions of space and place as introduced by Ricoeur and then based on the writings of de Certeau. Chapter 5 also offers a summation of the methods that have been presented in the previous chapters and that create part of the larger methodology of my practice. The writing examines ways that this practice-led research has influenced my own solo performance work, demonstrating the potential to integrate my findings across performance fields, thus expanding the possibilities of socially engaged and site-responsive work. Examining a solo performance I completed and how it was influenced by my research into collaboration and co-authorship exemplifies this.

Currently my performance work has two strands, a solo practice where I present myself as a performer, and a collaborative practice where I work as a director via my company Lotos Collective. All three case studies were produced in my capacity as artistic director of Lotos, producing and directing the three works. The collective was first formed in 2006 as a result of a series of site-specific and interactive performance projects. The Lotos mission statement states:

> 'Lotos Collective devises and produces events that integrate sites, symbols, and actions into new creative forms. We focus on interactive performances that fuse installation, costume, objects, sound and light for an expanded sensory experience. Committed to social inclusion, we seek a dialogue amongst locale, history, and popular consciousness. Involving participants to work alongside Lotos members, our work is integrated into diverse communities as a collaborative and accessible art form. We situate the audience as witness, offering spectators the opportunity to explore, activate, and assess the performance worlds we create. Our commitment to research, pedagogy, and the development of new works is inter-disciplinary by nature and open to the collaboration of diverse practitioners and scholars'.[viii]

Through my collaboration in Lotos, production design is integrated with my interests in social engagement and cultural phenomena. Though I have directed these performance projects, the design and development of the projects are completed through a collaborative process with company and associate members. I develop the devising workshops from my own experience as an artist-teacher and facilitate the process from a directorial role. The final design and presentation of the performance is completed with the input and participation of Lotos members, project partners and workshop participants. Through Lotos both *Napoli Scorticata* and *Triangulated City* were funded in part by the British Council Italy and British Council Middle East, respectively.

The first case-study *Napoli Scorticata*, was developed over a period of four months during an artist residency hosted by the cultural centre O'Theatrone: La Fabbrica delle Arti (The Arts Factory) in 2007. Ettore Massarese, a renowned Neapolitan director, scenographer and chair of the Drama Department at the Universitá Federico II founded O'Theatrone together with Massimo Velo, a photographer from Accademia di Belle Arti, Giovanna Massarese, a stage actor, Rosario Barone, a set designer from Accademia di Belle Arti, and Giuseppe Perrella, the chief lighting designer of the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. According to Ettore Massarese, in an interview I conducted with him in March of 2007, O'Theatrone was a pathway with which to return to community engagement through performance that had interested the group in the politicised environment

of Italy in the 1970's. The municipality granted O'Theatrone stewardship of the abandoned early 19th century church of Santa Maria Maddalena (Saint Mary Magdalene) in the impoverished *quartieri* (neighbourhood) of Sanità. The site was subsequently deconsecrated and all religious items removed with the exception of the marble tomb and interred remains of Gennaro de Rosa, a revered local priest and beloved community leader, who will figure into the practice analysis in the Naples chapter. The project we devised was a site-responsive performance that investigated and integrated local customs of the area. Due to the natural boundaries and insular ethos of the *quartieri* a distinctive culture has formed, one in which the local young people often do not leave. A preliminary aim of the project was to question the relevance of global culture to young people who seemed to not engage past the socioeconomic and physical boundaries of the *quartieri*, many of them never having ventured into other areas of the city. Exploring this site as a source of history and culture, the work investigated local traditions, cults and belief systems still prevalent in the *quartieri* and related them the larger social fabric.

The following year in 2008 *Youth Visions: Transforming our Futures Together* took place in the Northeastern region of Ghana, West Africa. I was invited to create an arts and health initiative by Sebastian Fuller, a social scientist working as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and co-directing the charity Youth Development Alliance (YDA). YDA is local to the region, providing education and training throughout the tri-border area of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo. The main objectives of YDA include gender equality and women's empowerment, youth poverty reduction, and behaviour change regarding communication about sexual relations to reduce HIV infection. This latter part is done through Youth Vs. HIV/AIDS, a satellite programme that focuses on empowerment and education of young people, in order to engender self-driven development. Working with YDA's Youth Vs. HIV/AIDS programme, I developed two workshops for two different groups of young people that culminated with one in a performance presentation and with the other in a mural painting. Via the U.S. Peace Corps, *Youth Visions* was partially supported by a PEPFAR grant (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). Working with a team of volunteers and health professionals, I developed a format where the participants' recounted their personal stories around the topic of HIV/AIDS and brought their experiences into the creation of a large mural and an interactive performance. The whole project was archived in a documentary that was filmed in collaboration with the participants.[ix]

This case study is the most applied of the three projects, and has a strong education strand to the practice. This posits it as a counter-balance to the other two projects as it is a direct aesthetic intervention within a social system as opposed to an aesthetic response to a social system. The work has a target group of participants (young people) with an intended outcome (HIV/AIDS prevention training). Though this was my brief in the collaboration with YDA, I sought to integrate my methods of devising and co-authorship by combining the findings from *Napoli Scorticata* with a pedagogically based learner-centred approach. As in all three case studies methods of authorship were tested within the devising process and the outcomes of those tests were then applied to the next project.

This final project was *Triangulated City* presented in 2009 in Beirut, Lebanon. I sought to merge many of the methods and concepts tested in the previous works as well as test new theories. The project merged the site-responsive methods of *Napoli Scorticata* with the facilitator-driven work of *Youth Visions*. I sought out Beirut as a location for this final case study in an effort to create a more politicised work. Having visited the city with a local friend the year before, I became keenly aware of the energy of post-war reconstruction and youth culture. I wanted the final case study to test how politicised a performance work could become merely by situating it in a politicised environment. I proposed the project to Zoukak Theatre Company and Cultural Association who agreed to host Lotos and assist in producing the event. The performance was a multi-location live art event inspired by the memories, myths, rumours and stories circulating in the city of Beirut. The devising process was completed through a series of participatory workshops with twenty-five participants from a variety of artistic fields who were invited to explore the boundaries of their practice with performance.

The performance event took place over three days, in three locations, with each of the three events unfolding simultaneously each evening. The audience was given the choice to begin at any of the three locations, as well as how long to stay and which sites to visit next. The sites where the performances unfolded informed the work: an empty flat, an ageing seaside amusement park, and the bottom level of an underground parking garage. After developing a directed performance in Naples followed by the participatory arts project in Ghana, I became interested in fusing the methods experimented with each of these projects. Keeping the aesthetic quality of *Napoli Scoticata*, with the participatory approach of

Youth Visions, *Triangulated City* was to be a testing ground in combining shared authorship with site-responsive politics.

After the first two projects I observed that the research needed a more explicit testing ground to understand and define the political in socially engaged and site-responsive work. If the context of the work relies on the *polis*, or body politic, then the work needed to investigate the political not from a governmental viewpoint but as a tactic utilised by citizens to respond to their context. Utilising memory and rumours as a starting point for shared devising, the performance revealed a new perspective on the importance of place making in this working methodology. Chapter 4 on Beirut explores this importance of place affecting space and by doing so links the previous two case studies in preparation for the conclusion. This connection between personal narrative, place making and site blurred the boundary between performance and society becoming a central point of exploration in this chapter on *Triangulated City*.

Through the aesthetic form I have developed and present here, I do not intend to claim a utopic vision or assume that the work functions as an ameliorative intervention in the disharmonic processes of a social system. I view my role less as an agent of change and more as a creator of agency and possibility. I am interested in devising work that instigates dialogue, participation and interaction based on existing social narratives rather than attempting to find solutions to assumed discordance. My background in teaching, political activism, visual arts and performance practice merged to define my role as director and facilitator in these projects. Taking into account elements of culture, customs, pedagogy, site and participation the study also explores the role of dialogue and inter-subjectivity within the devising process. This thesis will also give an account of the devising methods utilised with participants and how these methods have informed the larger methodology of my practice. Informing the research directly has been the theoretical framework that has driven this investigation. The next section will present the theories, terms and authors whose works have influenced the direction of the practice-led research.

Theoretical Framework for Practice-led Research

Two strands of research, one stemming from theories of aesthetics in visual and performing arts and another from anthropology and sociology focusing on culture

and community, contribute to the theoretical framework. Underlying this framework is Victor Turner's binary view of the dynamic relationship between the social and aesthetic drama, a concept that very much influenced and informed the development of my practice (Schechner 1990, 17). In his concept the aesthetic drama is created in response to a crisis in the social system that affects the development of this system, which then in turn re-informs the aesthetic drama. This creates a cyclical pattern that Turner uses to explain the theatrics of ritualised performances in everyday life. This model is useful for the research as it supports the claim for an aesthetic that is informed by and in turn re-informs the social. The research begins from the premise that our social systems are in themselves a performance, one that can be drawn upon for creative material.

Turner's anthropological studies of a social community as a dramatic unfolding are useful as a foundation to this research. The social system is according to Turner a 'proto-aesthetic form' which he sees as 'a community's movement through time taking a shape which is obviously "dramatic." (Ibid, 8)'. By viewing the way we organise ourselves as a type of performance encounter with a myriad of narrative possibilities, the medium becomes endless in its potential. I turn to the variety meta-narratives found in the social system to inform and inspire my practice. This is why Turner's theory of an interdependent dynamic between two sets of performance, one aesthetic and one social is a guiding theory in the analyses of the generative process of the practice. This view of the social system as a drama is referred to by Victor Turner as 'a process of converting particular values and ends, distributed over a range of actors, into a system (which may be temporary or provisional) of shared or consensual meaning' (Turner 1986, 97). How participants in the project workshops interpret, address and re-present this system is an important element for analyses in the next three chapters.

To further clarify what aspect of the social system I am utilising as an artistic medium I refer to anthropologist W.H. Goodenough's theory on culture and cultural artefacts in Chapter 2. Goodenough theorises how challenges that arise in the social drama instigate the body politic to develop a variety of cultural manifestations or customs as a coping mechanism. It is these customs developed in the social system that inform the performance work created for this research. How this phenomenon is manifested is also further expanded in Chapter 2. Goodenough's research coincides with Turner's proposition that elements in the social drama can be identified as types of conflict-resolution coping mechanisms

that respond to the 'disharmonic or aharmonic' challenges that manifest themselves when a group of people operate within a common structure (Ibid, 74). By analysing the aesthetic product as a 'metacommentary on the major social dramas of its social context' I developed my case studies as examples that attempt demonstrate how the aesthetic is infused with the social (Schechner 1990, 15). I did not necessarily seek out narratives of disharmonic processes to respond to in the work. But often the challenges in the social fabric that confronted the individual participants were the narratives that they shared in the creative process and thus were integrated into performance actions. This combination of participation through social narratives was present in all three case studies and demonstrates three models of devising performance that responds to its social context.

Goodenough and Turner's theories on culture and society are merged in the research with theories on aesthetics and participation. Influential in developing and assessing the methods used to create my participatory practice models I integrate two theories on aesthetics as proposed in Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002) and Grant Kester's Dialogical Aesthetics (Kester 2004). Both these theories propose that inter-subjectivity is both a catalyst for production as well as a focal point of appreciation, regardless of its obvious presence in the final product. Bourriaud terms the artistic application of human relations as a theory of form. His definition of form is closer to formation, what he defines as 'a coherent unit, a structure (*independent entity of inner dependencies)* which shows the typical features of a world' (Bourriaud 2002, 19).[x] The form exists within the encounter, with each particular instance of a work, a formulation engendered with a series of relations to the world. These in turn provoke and develop further relations.

This concept of relational art has human interactions at its core, creating moments of assembly to be experienced rather than observed, and as Bourriaud explains, tightening the space of relations. He suggests that relational art is a continuation of the neo avant-garde, replacing the reactionary dogma of manifestos, destruction of the past and illusory utopias with more proactive approach of negotiations, bonds and co-existences (Ibid, 45). Rather than being victimised by modernity, relational works deal with the here and now and attempt to construct concrete spaces for a state of encounter. This theory can expand the possibilities of practitioners who are influenced by applied performance practices,

by de-focusing on a utopia in lieu of the ever-evolving present. Bourriaud proposes to forgo the emphasis on the emancipation of the individual in order to concentrate on the freeing up of inter-human communications (Ibid, 60). He is referring to the notion of the avant-garde as a utopian concept that relies on the destruction of convention to create a new ideal. Instead of an ideal future, the focus of works engaging with inter-subjectivity deal with present forms of communication. This frees the work from effects and outcomes and allows it to respond to the current state of things rather than an expected future. As a curator of visual art Bourriaud situates participatory work in purpose-built institutions invested in the market currency of production. Though his application of the theory suggests a different execution and potential participant in the aesthetic, his notion of inter-subjectivity as an artistic medium is an important strand of this research.

Art critic Claire Bishop expands the critique of relational works in her essay *The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents* (Bishop 2006b). Here she suggests that the aesthetic and the socio-political are thought of as one by the practitioner, without either being subsumed within the ethical. This becomes central by Chapter 4 where the case study took place in the politicised environment of Lebanon. The aesthetic for Bishop follows Ranciere's definition of being intrinsically tied to the socio-political, not encompassed by it but already containing a socially ameliorative process (Ibid, 185). Instead of focusing the criticism on ethical judgements of working procedure and intentionality, she suggests recognising the achievement of this type of work in making dialogue a medium and dematerialising a project into the social process. Bishop furthers her argument for dialogue and inter-subjectivity in the introduction to her edited anthology *Participation,* where she defines this collective agency as an aesthetic of participation. According to Bishop this aesthetic of participation 'derives legitimacy from a (desired) casual relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency' (Bishop 2006a, 12).

Even in its most participatory forms there exists an author in the form of a devisor, director, or facilitator that brokers this relationship through their creative practice. In defining the boundaries of authorship in applied live art, the research recognises that socially based work shifts the spotlight from the artist as sole creator and primary subject to the participants. Bishop defines this shift of authorial direction as 'a de-authored lineage that aims to embrace collective

creativity…(both) constructive and ameliorative' (Ibid, 11). The shared collaborative and participatory model I propose is emphasised by the removal of the practitioner as the primary subject of the work. As I was determined to fulfil a certain criteria of socially engaged work that was also site-responsive it seemed essential to test how I may share authorship. Perhaps as Bishops writes: 'the gesture of ceding some or all authorial control is conventionally regarding as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability' (Ibid, 12). This risk and unpredictability became heightened as the case studies progressed and I pushed my own authorial boundaries to explore various modes of distancing myself from the generative process. My own subjective stance will be evident in the case study chapters as I review the work process of the participants and the development of the workshops while focusing less on my role as the practitioner and more on the impact of the methods I chose.

Art historian and critic Grant Kester discusses this relationship between participants and practitioner as an inter-subjective vulnerability. In this collaborative approach, the artist must forgo the traditionally held assumptions of creative vision, in lieu of dialogical interaction and active listening (Kester 2004, 63). The integration of the aesthetic with the socio-political can be viewed as a cumulative process of exchange, where the practitioner relinquishes the notion of a determined final product for a created state of solidarity and counterhegemony. Kester's dialogical aesthetics is an umbrella term for practices that facilitate exchange between participants and presents dialogue as central to the final product. This parallels Bourriaud's theory on relations as medium, though Kester chooses to narrow down the relational experience to the performative gesture of dialogical exchange. His view on dialogical aesthetics as a participatory, dialogue driven practice is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's argument that a work of art is a conversation with myriad meanings, interpretations and points of view (Ibid, 10). Kester presents communication itself as the 'active generative process' where questions of identity, stereotypes, and conflicting views can be resolved (Ibid, 8). Thus the end result may involve the product of a structured dialogical experience, or it may be the conversation itself. As Kester states 'what is at stake in these projects is not dialogue per se but the extent to which the artist is able to catalyse emancipatory insights *through* dialogue' (Ibid, 69).[xi] The aesthetic approach in this research emphasises a collaborative approach to participation rather than

spectacular, redefining the aesthetic experience as durational instead of immediate. It is situated both within Kester's more radical approach to an activist aesthetic and Bishop's emphasis on a historical lineage with the avant-garde.

In the next three chapters I adopt this lens of inter-subjectivity and dialogue in order to analyse and assess the participatory format of the case studies. This furthers the examination of how interaction in the devising process integrated the broader context of the site into the performance work. How participants work together to collaborate as well as their connections to a space and a locale are central to this research. All the case studies have been devised in-situ, often building a dramaturgy directly from the location it is unfolding in. Though my practice unfolds through a non-text based format, essential to the outcomes of the research are the narratives that participants develop, formulate and share during the devising process. As the work is always site-specific, these narratives link the context with the site. It brings the performance of everyday life into the arena of the aesthetic drama. The stories also create moments of encounter in the work as performers share the narrative actions they have created with an audience. This importance on narrative and storytelling becomes an experiment in place making, as these stories affect the performance, the site, and the participants.

This can also be problematic, as is seen in the Beirut case study, when the use of memory as a way to explain an environment began to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. What the participant wants to remember, how they share the information and what may be the consequences can change significantly. In order to understand the nuances of working with memory and narrative in *Triangulated City*, I turn to sociologist Avery Gordon's theories on 'complex personhood' to help define the contradictions that can be found in participatory dialogue. Her theories on haunting also help look at place making from another perspective, that of loss instead of creation. Along side Gordon is Ricoeur's analyses of how we engage with memory, and its particular effect on place making. Combined, their theories are specifically applied to an analysis of the work in Beirut and link the case studies with the outcome of place making and narration as proposed in the conclusion. De Certeau's definition of place in the final chapter helps unite the projects into a practical outcome and direction for further research. Though the initial research questions did not anticipate such a result, throughout the period of writing this thesis place making has become a clear outcome of the work created.

The combination of theory presented here offers the research a critical grounding in order to explicate the form of the work. The practice merged the generative process with the immediate context, developing content in response to a series of situations and narratives within a social system. To clarify the power of context as a generative impetus I turn to writer and philosopher David Davies, who examines contextualism in the development of a work of art and has proposed a theory of art making as a performative act. Davies theories support the research findings that claim that a social system is an artistic medium as well as recognising the generative process to be as equal in value to the final output. In *Art as Performance* Davies theorises two kinds of performance work, the 'work-performance' as opposed to the 'performed work' (Davies 2004, 220). The work-performance is the generative act as original product created through devising. The performed work is the recreation of a pre-existing work be it music, script, or song etc. According to Davies:

> '*Appreciating* such a performance-event, like appreciating the work of which it is a performance, is a matter of locating a *focus of appreciation* – the performance-event and the artistic statement it articulates – in the context of a broader performance through which that focus is specified' (Ibid, 221). [xii]

To expand on Davies theory, it is important to recognise the process of creation as well as the final product in order to articulate a full aesthetic appreciation of the work. His very definition of aesthetics is encompassed in this theory of a *focus of appreciation*. This focus is born from a combination of process and product. For example, the action of Jackson Pollack swinging a brush becomes equally as important to our critical appreciation of his work as is the product or action archive. In Pollack's case the performance of painting is essential in understanding and appreciating the work–performance. Davis specifies this as the broader performance that specifies this focus. Stemming from my proposal that the artistic medium is the social system, I would then theorise that the workshop process could be the link between the broader performance of culture and the re-presentation of that material into the three case studies. The workshops are the equivalent to Pollack's action of painting, a performance that led to a final work.

The three case studies that comprise this research can be considered work-performances, as they were projects devised with an original participatory model (the workshops) and not based on re-enactment or re-staging of a pre-existing work or text. The workshop process as a devising method claims its own focus of appreciation 'rather than the focus as specified through that performance', for

according to Davies 'that is the proper locus of our critical and appreciative interest in something as an artwork in the performing arts' (Ibid, 223). Thus I propose that the generative process of creating the three projects carries equal weight to the final presentation, for an understanding of that process combined with the immediate context gives a complete overview of my practical case studies. I refer to Davies' performance-action theory, not in order to explain the work, but in order to arrive at a clearer appreciation of the work. For according to Davies the outcome of the performance act, serves to provide the viewer with a focus from which to begin the discourse of critical evaluation (Ibid, 149). In this dissertation I present the process and the work as a single praxis working in tandem with its context across three locations. In the following chapters the practice can be understood via the context, the process and the product as they merge into the focus of appreciation.

Endnotes Chapter 1

[i] 'What is Live Art?' Live Art Development Agency, last accessed on 8 June 2011, http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html

[ii] Author's emphasis

[iii] 'The People Series' FrenchMottershead's Archive page, last accessed on 8 June 2011, http://www.frenchmottershead.com/?m=4&sm=8&p=archive/peopleseries/peopleseries.html

[iv] 'Sofaer, Joshua Friday Social Evening [pdf], Live Art Magazine, Apr 2001' FrenchMottershead's Press page, last accessed on 8 June 2011, http://www.frenchmottershead.com/press/pdfs/fse.pdf

[v] 'Public Projects' Lone Twin's Public Projects page, last accessed 8 June 2011, http://www.lonetwin.com/public-projects.htm

[vi] 'Speeches' Subsection of Lone Twin's Public Projects page, last accessed 8 June 2011, http://www.lonetwin.com/public-projects.htm

[vii] 'Theatre & Dance Event Details' Barbican web archive, last accessed on 8 June 2011, http://www.barbican.org.uk/theatre/event-detail.asp?ID=7636

[viii] 'Mission' Lotos Collective's Mission page, last accessed on 8 June 2011, www.lotoscollective.org/mission.html

[ix] As presented in Part I: *Youth Visions: Transforming Our Futures Together.*

[x] Authors emphasis

[xi] Author's emphasis

[xii] Author's emphases

'La vita è amara, il caffè è dolce.'
(Life is bitter; coffee is sweet.)
~Seamstress for *Napoli Scorticata*

Introduction to Practice and Theoretical Framework

Napoli Scorticata was the first experimental model in site-responsive devising developed in this research. In 2007 I was invited to participate in the performance festival *Primavera Teatro de O'Theatrone: La Fabbrica delle Arti* (Spring Theatre of O'Theatrone: The Factory of the Arts). In collaboration with filmmaker Alberto Massarese and supported by Lotos Collective, we developed the production *Napoli Scorticata*. The project sought to respond to site from the micro to the macro, beginning with the ex-church building where the performance took place, to the street it was situated on, the *quartieri* of Sanità and the larger region of Naples. The architecture of the community including its rich history, customs and myths as well as the architecture of the church informed the content of the performance. Combining metaphors of the current economic challenges of Sanità with its legendary narratives, the project was an experimental response to the site, hybridising local myth with contemporary life. The practice sought to develop an aesthetic encounter devised and inspired from the surrounding social system. The concepts, narratives, actions and characters that were brought into the production were all interwoven into an action-based script as the devising process progressed. The final written score was based on a series of movements, actions and spoken word that intertwined the movements of the twenty performers and three musicians. The performers were a mix of trained actors, dancers, and musicians who worked alongside community members, volunteers, and local young people aged 8 through 18. The experiment integrated local participants with trained performers in order to better reflect the broader social spectrum.

This mix of skills and types of people was important in order to garner community support for the project and integrate those from outside the area, as non-residents of the *quartieri* seldom visit Sanità. The acceptance of the project by the community bordering O'Theatrone was crucial in order to build support for the event, for it was this community who would make access to the performance possible for the general public once the workshops ended and the performance was presented. So close-knit is the community that the police would seldom venture into the tightly wound streets, but rather cordon off the exits if they were

attempting to find someone from inside. This was witnessed on a variety of occasions as police investigated the ongoing revenge killings between two *Camorra* families that unfolded during our residency. Sanità is renowned in Naples as one of the impoverished breeding ground for the *Camorra* (local mafia). Throughout the residency the power struggles between the *Camorra* and the municipality made international headlines that focused on the rubbish protests littering the streets with refuse.[i] Within walking distance of O'Theatrone, revenge killings occurred as internal fighting escalated. The *Camorra* is popular amongst unemployed young people who are offered an alternative to work and a semblance of power. It was these young people that many older Neapolitans including Alberto, the co-director, felt had forgotten the rich history and folklore of the region. We sought through *Napoli Scorticata* to reinvigorate some of these lost narratives by making them more current and accessible.

An initial narrative reference was the study of an early European collection of fairy tales, the *Pentamerone*, or *Lo Cunto de Li Cunti* (The Tale of Tales), written by Giambattista Basile in the early Seventeenth Century (Basile 2003). In its pages are found the first written accounts of oral stories that are the basis for such classics as *Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel*; originally published in Neapolitan. The book served as an inspiration to develop a performance that would be both magical and historical. In order to transform the ex-church into a potential site of inter-subjectivity and dialogue I proposed that a plague of memory loss was affecting the city. The inhabitants were then invited to seek refuge at O'Theatrone and, depending on their level of engagement in the performance, receive a remedy from the plague in a potion of storytelling. This remedy was to assist the spectators in not forgetting their past, building awareness of the present and opening possibilities for the future. The audience was free to roam, chat, and participate by exploring the space, following performer's actions or sitting on a bench and watching from afar. In essence the site became an active space for a place of encounter where the spectator was free to interact and engage at his or her own leisure. Here, Bourriaud's notion of creating moments of assembly to be experienced rather than observed was merged with a performance format. The importance of dialogue as a generative tool was not utilised until the next case study, as in this experiment the content was authored for the most part in advance, through extensive fieldwork.

The fieldwork included visiting museums, churches, crypts and other architectural sites as well as studying a selection of texts in the Neapolitan history archives of the impressive Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III (National Library). The information found was combined with oral histories shared by local residents, helping us choose which of the narratives in the social system to integrate into the work. Participants were invited to attend a workshop series, where an existing performance structure was already in place and would be developed according to their abilities. Participants were chosen to fit the criteria of the existing characters in the performance event. Though the content of the performance was devised through primary research, the authorship of the work lay with the creative team and my role within that team was of writer and director. The script itself was based heavily on directions and description, with small sections of spoken word. *Napoli Scorticata* was an experiment in deciphering the cultural output of a specific social system in order to include that in a site-responsive performance. In order to understand how as a researcher and practitioner I can identify the elements available in a cultural framework I turned to anthropologist Ward H. Goodenough's theories of culture and custom.

Goodenough creates an extensive practical and theoretical outline for working within a specific social setting (Goodenough 1966). His definitions of culture and facilitator are relevant and useful to an analysis of shared authorial roles, as well as methods of approaching social engagement in this case study. According to Goodenough the facilitator or 'agent' works within a specific cultural milieu that is not there own (Ibid, 22). Though he is referring to development agents and not necessarily arts practitioners, his proposed methodology for working outside of one's own cultural context is useful. Goodenough states that the agent must be able to be other-oriented, as it is easier for an individual to identify with a group than a group with an individual. Goodenough defines other-oriented as the ability to recognise others wants and needs, ultimately leading to help 'remove the conflict of interests from the arena of social interaction…' (Ibid, 39-40). As the practice emphasised social engagement as part of the aesthetic encounter, an other-oriented perspective was central to the collaborative process. When choosing the characters and devising the actions, we continually took into account reception and relevance for the local audience. The written script was also developed and changed continuously over the workshop series depending on how the work progressed with each participant. This was a first step in sharing authorship of the

devising process and merging my own vision as a practitioner with that of the participants performing in the event. I discovered through this process that this method of devising generated an engagement from the participants that extended beyond the aesthetic encounter. Though the practice did not aim to generate a specific change in the social fabric, the affective quality will be reviewed in the Conclusion and Assessment section at the end of this chapter and demonstrates the impact the work had on the participants.

In order to develop the project a two-month preparatory period was spent, as said, investigating the history, myths, folklore, geography and socio-political situation in the area. These elements were examined with a focus on customs and rituals. Goodenough views customs as a product of a culture or their artefacts. Cultural artefacts are the things that people make, say or do as a response to recurring situations within the social fabric (Ibid, 265). This becomes a method in which communities may deal with disharmonic processes that arise in complex inter-subjective systems. As they are repeated through time they become the routines that Goodenough further defines as customs. According to Goodenough customs are the standards for action and social organisation. There can be a variety of customs within any given social drama that function as instruments for meeting needs and gratifying wants of the community members (Ibid, 266-269). According to Goodenough, 'they are derived from those of a culture's past artifacts that have come to serve as model for the production of future artifacts, being the recipes by which people habitually make things, go about doing things, and organize their dealings with one another' (Ibid, 267). It is exactly these cultural artefacts from Naples and specifically Sanità that were researched, constructed into the performance and re-presented to the public, not as a replacement of local culture but as an observation of it.

Through these definitions an important distinction is created where culture varies from its product, cultural artefacts. Goodenough views culture as a system that reflects a community's condition (Ibid, 257-260). This is supported by Turner's view of culture as an organising system and recognises that within any collaborative constructed system there will be instances of interruptions to the flow of patterns. This interruption becomes an important factor in the research, as in all three case studies, the work responds to what Turner notes are 'disharmonic' processes in the social fabric (Turner 1986, 74). For it is the result of engaging

with the disharmonic process that the customs are born and become part of a collection of cultural artefacts over time. As a society progresses these artefacts merge, change, and can be lost as the needs and wants of a community change.

Napoli Scorticata was not intended as a direct intervention in a disharmonic process but as a response to a perceived loss of awareness of these cultural artefacts by the core team of O'Theatrone and our collaborating artists. We chose to respond to this as a performance company and create an interactive performance that would focus on these cultural artefacts in a new format. One of the factors that could have influenced this cultural shift was the legacy of institutional poverty that had not been remedied by the incorporation of this area into the larger socio-political spectrum of the European Union. The following section on Context (including social, historical, and regional) will expand on the historical socio-political decline in the region and how this influenced local customs and thus the practice itself. The research will demonstrate that through an investigation of the social system combined with a collaborative working method, *Napoli Scorticata* was able to test a preliminary model of socially engaged devising and initiate the exploration of collaborative authorship. In order to build a complete image of the social factors that influenced and informed the research the following section gives an account of the larger socio-political context.

Context: Social, Historical and Regional

While conducting the preliminary field work in Naples it became apparent that the observed socio-economic difficulties had accrued over years of political and economic neglect. Naples is situated at the Southern end of the EU and has the economic disadvantage of a much slower pace of development than Northern Italy and Northern Europe. The regional divide between the northern and southern areas of Italy is termed *Il problema del mezzogiorno* by Italians. Translated as the problem of midday, this colloquialism implies a rise in the north and a decline in the south. The effect of the *mezzogiorno*, reaches it fullest manifestation in the capital of the Campagna region. In the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Naples was one of the greatest ports in Europe, the remains of which can be seen in the many decaying *palazzi* (palaces) and abandoned churches. Because of the city's strategic location as a port in the Mediterranean, the city was often under foreign control. By the time industrialisation came in the middle of the Nineteenth Century the Bourbons had seized power and the wealthy began

moving north to build factories and shift away from agri-economy (Santore 2001, 159-162). In order to stand off against Garibaldi and unification, the Bourbons used the *Camorra* to run the civic system, institutionalising the black market that remains a strong parallel economy until today (Ibid, 173, 188). The unification of Italy (1861-1865) saw Naples move further into decline, as Neapolitans were staunch royalists the area was left out of industrial development and relegated to second city status (Ibid, 187-192). The little industry there was collapsed by the middle of the 1930s as a result of sanctions against Italy imposed by the League of Nations following the Ethiopian War (Ibid, 231). Continuing this cycle of decline was World War II, during which the single most massive air raid fell on Naples in 1943 as British and U.S. bombers dropped twenty thousand tonnes of explosives over the harbour city (Ibid, 242).

This decline is a key factor in the existing socio-cultural processes that informs both the social drama and in turn the development of the aesthetic form. The socioeconomic divide between Naples and the comparatively affluent north of both Italy and Europe, is paralleled within the city itself, with the affluent population situated at the highest topographical area of the city and the economically disadvantaged in the valleys below. Amato Lamberti of the Greens Environmental Group explains 'to understand this city you always have to remember that there are two cities, there is a modern Naples with schools, universities and research centres. Then there is a second Naples two degrees hotter and two centuries behind' (Ibid, 264). The epitome of this impoverished urban decay is the *quartieri* of Sanità. Yet the culture of struggle and perseverance gave birth to the many legends, myths, and folklores that served as coping mechanism in the face of adversity and which were incorporated into the performance. Connecting Sanità and Naples through its history and myths into the performance was a central devising component in order to respond to the social system.

Sanità is rich in myth beginning with its name, derived from the Madonna Della Sanità (Our Lady of Health), whose effigy is housed in the Chiesa Santa Maria della Sanità located on the main piazza. Alleged to cure ailments the Madonna della Sanità began attracting devotees in the Eighteenth Century arriving from the *centro storico* (historical centre) through Porta San Genarro (one of the gates in the original city walls) and up the main road Via Vergini. Sanità was located outside the old city walls and was originally the necropolis of the Greeks,

later housing the crypts for the paleochristians. It helped the city is built upon *tufo*, a local stone that is easy to excavate. Off Via Vergini branches Via Cristallini, and at the end is Santa Maria Maddalena home to O'Theatrone. A pedestrian road continues past the church up a series of stairs curving to the top of Capodimonte, a hill behind Sanità. Via Cristallini, meaning small crystals, was named for the rain flow that stream down this road escalating to a speeding torrent by its base (Sarcone 1987, 47–48). Via Cristallini and Via Vergini were the two main pagan routes around the necropolis, a historical precedent to the Neapolitan tradition of *capuzzelle* (skulls) worship. The veneration of saints, ancestors, spirits and the deceased bears a cultural symbolism of defiance in the face of adversity, a coping mechanism of life when faced with death. The fascination with death rites, the occult and burial ritual continues to this day and influenced the elements presented in the performance.

The characters and stories that were integrated into *Napoli Scorticata* were chosen for their aesthetic quality, cultural relevance and social impact (these will be explored in the Practice section). All the characters were reinterpreted, alluding to their original roles as well as to their current perceived significance. By using a method of hybridisation the myth with contemporary life, a variety of performed scenarios were developed, focused primarily on movement and imagery. Though there were instances of dialogue and monologue, the emphasis was on a total performance experience recounted through sensory language. The aim was to build a dramaturgy that was informed by the specific site and architectural structure; responding to the neighbourhood history and local characters of myth and folklore. Who were the heroes, why were they born and were they still present in another form? By hybridising these cultural artefacts with contemporary life, the practice sought to reinvigorate them with a new perspective. This method sought to reveal how the social system had embodied the attributes and characteristics of past archetypes into new social narratives.

Practice: Workshop and Presentation

Main Characters and the Social System

One of the performance actions in *Napoli Scorticata* was based on the idolisation of the *capuzzelle* (skulls), a ritual whereby families adopt a skull from a crypt and become its caretakers. The *capuzzelle* represents a connection between life and

death as the souls of those found bones are believed to be in purgatory, a liminal phase between the land of the living and the dead. As they are not yet gone but also not alive, these souls in purgatory are seen to have the ability to intervene in the dynamics of the living through prayer and adoration (Niola 2003, 15). Though each family may have their own *capuzzelle* there are also many famous *capuzzelle* legends. The integration of these characters into the performance allowed a resonance between a belief system within the social drama and the experience of the performance. Albeit dwindling in contemporary practice by younger generations, belief in paranormal intervention is still widely held. The souls believed to be in purgatory often died a violent death through murder, martyrdom, suicide or accidents. This violence reflects the violence of the environment and their intercession in the social drama a means of penance; there is heroism in their violent death as there is in the suffering of purgatory (Ibid, 20).

For the most part the skulls are anonymous, found in mass crypts in the area and endowed by the adopters with the history of a lost relative at war, the body of which had never been discovered or returned. Other *capuzzelle* became legendary, as in the case of Principessa Lucia (Princess Lucy) whose adorned skull and shrine are found in the crypt of Santa Maria delle Anime del Purgatorio Ad Arco (Our Lady of Souls in Purgatory). Principessa Lucia appeared as one of four main characters in *Napoli Scorticata* joined by Michela the heroine prostitute, Cola Pesce the half-fish half-boy and Partenope the drowned siren. This section of the chapter will identify each of these characters and how they were integrated into the show as well as contextualise their significance as borrowed cultural artefacts.

Information given to visitors about Principessa Lucia at Santa Maria del Purgatorio Ad Arco narrates the story of a noble girl who fell in love with a poor boy and was forbidden to marry him. Her distraught state brought about her untimely death through suicide, a death that negates entrance into heaven according to the Catholic faith, still the dominant religion in Naples. Her form of penance in purgatory is assistance to young woman who seek to be engaged, or who have marriage woes. During a site-visit to her crypt I witnessed an elderly woman and a young girl bringing flower offerings to the shrine and praying. The young girl stared at the skulls whilst the elderly woman prayed out loud and sobbed. In a series of interviews about purgatory belief systems Marino Niola attempts to decipher this phenomena. Franca A. an elderly woman who lives in

Sanità describes her experience as a child: 'every Monday she (her mother's friend) would take me with her to the Trivio Poggioreale (crypt). She would take me because she wanted an innocent soul to accompany her to witness any movements in the catacombs where the deceased were sepulchred' (Ibid, 33). The bringing of young children to the crypts both passes on tradition and ensures a direct communication with souls in purgatory. The witnessing of the devotees and the evidence of the fresh offerings at the crypt showed that the practice of venerating the *capuzzelle* is still very much active. This confirmed that the incorporation of this character would have strong resonances with the public attending, an important factor in choosing the narratives to include.

In order to link the character of the Principessa with the current situation in Sanità she was divided into two mirroring characters, Principessa Lucia the historic character in purgatory and Lucia Moderna, a contemporary young woman of the *quartieri* (fig. 1). As the production was developed in a basilica style church, the various niches around the central nave were utilised as specific spaces designed for each character. An altar was decorated for Principessa Lucia who was portrayed as a performing corpse clad in an antique wedding dress with a white veil. Lucia Moderna appeared as both a modern day devotee of Lucia and a victim of recurring violence. Only days prior to beginning the production a young girl in the area had been killed by a stray bullet, making national headlines. This was the result of in fighting between *Camorra* families in an endless warring cycle of retaliation. The storyline of Principessa Lucia was developed to address these issues of violence and the influence of the *Camorra*. It served to both honour the recent victim and to make a parallel to the continuing victimisation of innocent bystanders.

To make the story culturally relevant the framework of the typical Neapolitan gangster love story *Isso, Essa e O'Malamente* (Him, Her and the Gangster) was used. In this narrative there is a triangle between a young man, his fiancée and a gangster. The gangster pulls the young man into a life of crime and when his fiancée tries to intervene she ends up a victim of violence. This scenario has been presented in different forms in numerous popular films and books but the storyline remains the same. In *Napoli Scorticata* an *Isso, Essa e O'Malamente* style silent film that was created and projected during the performance featuring Lucia Moderna in the role of the fiancée. Simultaneously a live choreographed dance of

Figure 1

death took place in which Lucia Moderna, visiting the crypt of Principessa Lucia, exchanged places with the soul in purgatory. The young woman ultimately became the new Lucia effigy in a representation of the perpetual cycle of untimely death through violence.

Arriving to the site of *Napoli Scorticata* for a citizen of Naples meant venturing into a territory that already has a strong association of socio-economic neglect combined with *Camorra* influence. Due to the expectations of the context, the performance can be seen to have begun with the spectators arrival up Via Vergini and turning off to Via Cristallini. Integrating elements of the architectural character of the *quartieri* into the performance site inspired the inclusion of one of the prevalent Neapolitan dwelling types the *basso* (low), a ground floor flat. Along the route to the performance the spectator encountered a series of *bassi* along the way. The scenic creation of a *basso* within the church brought a direct element of the social drama into the aesthetic drama, emphasising the reflexive approach of the performance. The division of the old palaces into living quarters for multiple families is a physical representation of the socioeconomic divide of the city. As the wealthy residents of Naples emigrated from the city over the years their palaces fell into disrepair. Eventually the owners began carving the buildings into smaller rentable dwellings, a process that still continues. The division of the *palazzi* is a physical representation of the economic situation of the resident family. The wealthier the individual is, the more likely to be located on the upper floors. The most destitute live in the *bassi,* with usually an extended family cramped into an all-in-one living quarter. As the spaces are small and the families large, *basso* life is lived on the street as an extension of the home. The *basso* usually has large doors and windows that are generally kept open exposing the domestic contents and

context to the public. This public display of domestic experience creates a culture of shared involvement in each other's lives, thus merging the family groups into a larger community. As this occurs more in impoverished districts, with the *basso* housing the most economically challenged families, the need to rely on each other becomes greater. The *Camorra* in this situation functions as a shadow government, controlling most public and economic transactions within their geographical sphere of influence (Santore 2001, 266).

The main character in the *bassi* in both the social system and the performance was the *casalinga*, or housewife. In the case of *Napoli Scorticata,* the *casalinga* was hybridised with Partenope, the mythical siren founder of Naples. This created a parallel between the mythic symbol of the city and the pedestrian symbol of the city. The Greek poet Licofrone first wrote of the triad of sirens: Leucosia, Ligea and Partenope (Höbel 2004, 4). They were half woman half bird and sang an enchanting song from the rocky shores of the volcanic islands that dot the shorelines of Naples. Their song would cause mariners to shipwreck into the rocks and drown. Ulysses, however, escapes certain death by tying himself to the mast of his ship, resisting the urge to follow the song. Partenope in her disillusion throws herself into the sea and drowns, her body washing up on the shores of the continent. The locals buried her and from that point forward continued a tradition of cult worship to the siren. It is on that spot that mythology claims the Greeks decided to build Neapolis, or new city, which then became Naples (Ibid, 4-10). Partenope is also another link between the land of the living and the land of the dead, influencing the aesthetic of *Napoli Scorticata.* The action of the *casalinga* Partenope was to prepare the *Pastiera Napolitana*, an Easter cake with roots in the pagan celebration of spring (fig. 2). Developed from seven basic elements of the first harvests, the *pastiera* is a pagan tradition in the Naples region preceding the arrival of the Greeks. As she prepared the *pastiera* the performer also poetically recited the recipe as in a modern cooking show, but imbued with nostalgia. This remembering of the recipe also transformed the *casalinga*, through a series of actions, into Partenope the siren. This transformation was presented as a fusion of the traditional role of women in society imbued with the power of mythos showing women to be keepers of cultural heritage and visionaries for future generations. The character of Partenope was presented as free and unrestricted, ending her scene standing on her cooking table in a yogic pose of flight.

Figure 2

In order to counter the image of the female as victim that Principessa Lucia or Partenope may have represented, a heroine over death was included in the show. This character was a combination of two legendary female leaders in Neapolitan history. The first was Regina Giovanna, a Seventeenth Century Queen who dealt with affairs of diplomacy between city-states by taking ambassadors and city-state representatives as lovers and murdering them. She became so well known that stories and songs were written about her in Spain, France and Switzerland (Croce 1990, 307-310). A lyrical poem of the time, describing the various politics around the Italian peninsula, by Fazio degli Uberti described Naples with the following verse: '*Non v'è re, ma regina, giovane e bella, e guida la contrada: molto è gentile, ma non sa della spada*' (There is no King, but a Queen, young and beautiful, and she guides the country: to many she is gentle, but they know not of the sword) (Ibid, 310). The second character was Michela, famous in Naples for the 17th Century song Michelemma' still widely known today and incorporated into the performance:

Michelemma'	**Michela o' mine**
E' nata 'mmiez'ô mare,	She's born in the middle of the sea,
Michelemmá, Michelemmá…	Michela o' mine, Michela o' mine…
oje na scarola…	from the island of Ischia…

Li turche se nce vanno, a reposare.	The Turks go rest in her bed
Chi pe' la cimma e chi,	they arrive from everywhere, from the top
pe' lo streppone.	and from the bottom.
Biato a chi la vence, a 'sta figliola	Lucky whoever wins, this girls heart
E 'mpietto porta na,	For she carries on her breast,
stella diana.	the star of Diana.
Pe' fá morí ll'amante,	In order to kill her lovers
a duje a duje.	two at a time, two at a time.

The star of Diana can be interpreted as a symbol for the weapon she uses to kill her lovers. Diana was the Roman hunting goddess, often depicted carrying a bow and arrow. Though no known records exists of Michela as a historical figure the legend of her exploits are widely known through this popular song and the retelling of her story. One audience member shared with me her recollections of hearing the stories of Michela as a child. The story retells how Michela defended the Kingdom of Naples from the invasion of the Ottomans by luring the Turkish generals to her bed with amorous advances, whereupon she would murder them. There is an obvious similarity to Regina Giovanna's tactics, with the exception that Michela was a prostitute working to defend her country whilst Giovanna was the Queen. It should be clarified that in neither case are the characters looked down upon in their roles, they are seen as heroic and valiant. The character of Michela was included in *Napoli Scorticata* to represent the warrior spirit of Naples, a symbol of the valiant survivor against all odds. This reflected an ethos of survival in the face of adversity that is shared by Neapolitans and which stems from the long history of invasion and economic disparity. A dancer performed the role of Michela and moved throughout the space interacting with the chorus of *Pescatori* (Fishermen). She took the *Pescatori* to her boudoir and tamed them by transforming them into horses via a sexually charged choreographic sequence, inspired by the local lore that Regina Giovanna was both a figurative and literal lover of horses.

As Michela's story was the main choreographed dance piece, another local cultural artefact was incorporated into the performance, the Tarantella. This dance tradition originated in Southern Italy as a rural magic-religious ritual to cure women working the fields of a tarantula bite. The fast repetitive dancing would cause the victim to sweat out the impurities and during the trance strip themselves of their garments in a physical hysteria (De Martino 2002, 62-68). The ritual over time evolved to become a courting dance between men and women still practiced in the countryside of Campagna. Young people in Naples carry on the tradition as

an interest in the tarantella music and dance as well as its offshoot Pizzicato, has grown in recent years. The sexual nature of the dance and the curative properties were appropriate to the Michela character and resonated culturally with an audience familiar with the steps. Michela's final action in the performance was to slay all the tamed male chorus members at the altar, who in turn slowly resurrected. Sitting up back to back behind her as she stripped away her garments in a mock-tarantella, the men's legs simulated spider's legs with Michela as the spider's body. The power of the figure of Michela situated as an explicit body represented the historic challenge to the dominant hegemony. In a symbolic gesture she stood and dressed in the clothes of the slain men, adopting the appearance of her victims, a metaphor for how the people of Naples over time have been influenced by the various cultures that have ruled over the city. The Pescatori stood and hoisted Michela up in the air victorious, carrying her through the audience to a large glass and marble vitrine situated in one of the niches. Michela stood on the marble altar and opened the vitrine, releasing the character of Cola Pesce who had been trapped inside the glass case.

The Cola Pesce legend, as told by Benedetto Croce, recounts the tale of a boy who enjoyed swimming in the sea so much his mother inadvertently cursed him by telling him that one day he may turn into a fish (Croce 1990, 298-304). Cola Pesce could hold his breath for extended periods enjoying adventures exploring the seabed and travelling inside giant fish that would swallow him whole and take him even further. The King sent him on various expeditions and finally set on him a task to retrieve a canon ball shot far into the waters from the Castel dell'Ovo on the coast of Naples. Cola Pesce agreed though he feared he might not make the return journey. Following the structure of Campbell's monomyth, Cola Pesce entered into the liminal world of the deep sea, swimming after the cannon ball into the unknown. Often in the monomyth the hero wanders into the liminal otherworld never to return (Campbell 1993, 193). Thus with the ball in his hands Cola Pesce attempted to return and realised he was trapped under a ceiling of marble, remaining there encapsulated under the sea.

The *Pescatori* introduced the character of Cola Pesce early on in the performance. Singing an Eighteenth Century Neapolitan song *Il Canto del Pescatore* (The Fisherman's Song), they brought out the captured Cola Pesce and tying him up placed him into the vitrine. He remained there for the most of the performance

until liberated by Michela (fig. 3). Gianluca D' Agostino, an aspiring actor from Naples, performed the role. He was the only repertoire-trained actor in the cast, with an interest in pursuing a career in stage and film. His role had an emphasis on physicality, spending most of the performance time tied up in the vitrine, where he went through phases of struggle for freedom, desperation, and resignation. Through his efforts his breath steamed the glass door of the vitrine, his resulting pain in being captured externalised to the audience. As Gianluca stated in the post-show interview:

> 'I noticed many people who suffered with me the situation of being trapped inside there. From one point of view, for me as an actor, a person, a human being, it helped the fact that it is in reality very difficult inside there. I tried to base myself on that reality. As I am not doing well in there, I tried to exaggerate my mood to project that. There was a participation in that (suffering)'.

This parallel between suffering and redemption is another link between the aesthetic drama and the social drama. Cola Pesce represents the limbo status, the neglected *quartieri*, the soul in purgatory, the seen but not heard, in essence the struggle for survival against all odds. By the time he was liberated by Michela he had reached the point of exhaustion and was assisted out of the vitrine by one of the same *Pescatore* who captured him. A relationship between oppressor and

Figure 3

oppressed was presented, depicting a bond between the two characters. The trauma bondingdeveloped in the suppression was another metaphor for the local culture that developed as a result of forced foreign occupation of Naples. Cola Pesce was slowly removed from the vitrine by the *Pescatore* and laid dead in his captor's arms upon the altar in a pietà pose. He then slowly revived and climbed onto a pall-bearing platform held by the *Pescatori*. During Cola Pesce's resurrection he repeated in a crescendo: '*Come ai pesci del mare in mezzo a voi voglio sguizzare'*, translated as 'like a fish in the sea amongst you I will swim.' This caused a strong reaction and vocal feedback from local children in the audience who shouted in response '*sguizza*!
sguizza!' (swim! swim!). During every performance, as Cola Pesce was carried by the *Pescatori* into the centre of the church, the children circled around him. The spectator children had spontaneously integrated themselves into the aesthetic drama to develop the piece so flawlessly that some members of the public thought the children had been staged, though their participation was a purely emotional response.

The most insightful assessment of the children's reaction to this moment came from Carmella, a *casalinga* who lived in a basso across the street. Upon asking her why she thought the children reacted so strongly to Cola Pesce she stated: 'Because for them, that young man, in that totally closed off environment, is the way they see themselves here in this neighbourhood, closed in'. Gianluca spoke of his personal fulfilment, when he would stop on his scooter in front of the site and the children would crowd around him to hug and greet him. It was not only the children who reacted to this moment as evidenced by Miluccia, a middle-aged woman who functions as *capa* (head) to this *vicolo* (small street). She was born and raised on Via Cristallini, and married at the site when it was functioning as a church. She described to me how the performance reflected an important aspect of her faith:

> 'I have a lot of faith, I believe strongly in God… in Christianity… we are a group of women of the Addolorata that was in here (gesturing to the Cola Pesce vitrine), the Madonna Addolorata (Our Lady of Sorrows) and we take her upon our backs…'

Miluccia was referring to the feast of San Vincenzo when the Madonna Addolorata is processed through the *quartieri*, along with other effigies. The Madonna was moved from S.M. Maddalena when the space was deconsecrated, yet the tradition continues and is described by Miluccia: 'We carry it with the lights, from the

church, it is very emotional…' San Vincenzo was the original name of the Church of Sanità the namesake of the neighbourhood. This festival is called the Feast of the Monacone (Large Monk) and follows a pre-Christian pagan procession route to the top of Capodimonte. The link between the living Cola Pesce as a figure of pain and redemption closely matched that of the Madonna Addolorata. This mimesis created a blurring of the boundaries between the aesthetic and social formats, typified by Carmella's statement '…you can see both the love and the suffering.'

The integration of local children in the performance was essential in order to fully represent the community and thereby maintain support for the project. The production team's first visit to the site brought Carmella out to her veranda to vigorously lobby for the inclusion of local children in the production. During an interview with her about the area she stated 'the children here feel angry because they are not involved; they are put aside even though they have talent. They can't make theatre (due to a lack of opportunity)'.   This represented a general sentiment in the area that there were not enough services provided for young people, to give them an alternative to street culture and involvement with the *Camorra*. *Napoli Scorticata* sought to engage these local young people and integrate them into a working environment with artists and performers. This mode of integration was one of the methods with which the production manifested its 'other-oriented' purpose. This was in addition to the integration of a local cast with our company, the mixing of local residents with an invited audience from outside the neighbourhood and the exchange between performers and this mixed public.

Supporting Characters and the Social System

Naples is a condensed city, with few parks and playgrounds and even less pedestrian pavements. As living conditions tend to be overcrowded, with extended families all living in close quarters, the local children utilise the streets as a playground. These groups of children form their own social networks outside the home. Street life becomes a dynamic and integral part of the community. The roaming young people act as the eyes and ears of the *quartieri*, vigilantly keeping watch on all occurrences. Thus the street sets a unique stage for the social drama that informed the practice. Historically these young people have been both reviled and revered through the legendary image of the *scugnizzo* (urchin) in Naples. Stemming from the most disadvantaged social groups the archetypal *scugnizzi*

image is a boy from the 1930's depression era, vagabond, shoeless and dirty. Though the term is still used today in Naples the image of the *scugnizzi* has changed. It was the *scugnizzi* who, during World War II in German-occupied Naples, led the famed uprising known as *Le Quattro Giornate* (The Four Days). This was the first anti-fascist uprising in Italy that ultimately assisted in the expulsion of Germans forces, even before Allied bombing swept across the *mezzogiorno* and wreaked havoc in Naples. Incorporating the image of the heroic *scugnizzi* into the production invited local young people to become involved in the aesthetic experience and offered them a character to identify with. Hybridising this image of the heroic child with another local legend, the trickster spirit of the *Munaciello*, a group of supporting characters was developed and performed by local youth ages 8 -18 years old (fig. 4). They performed as assistants to the main characters, in some cases helping develop actions and narratives in the workshops.

Each of these characters had a specific location and function with each performer and acted as a bridge between performers and spectators. Often they would chat with neighbours, explain the actions unfolding to their friends, and sometimes get lost in playing in the church during the performance, in itself mimicking the trickster *Munaciello* character. Two of the *Munacielli-Scugnizzi* lived with Partenope and played in the Basso, another was an angel to the dying Lucia. The two eldest visited Cola Pesce and delivered his story in a typical Neapolitan comedic dialogue. The last *Munacielli-Scugnizzi* assisted in the sacristy, this particular child–actor has the surname de Rosa and is related to the parish leader Gennaro de Rosa entombed in the church, a fact that was made apparent after he was given that role. Another serendipitous connection between the social and the aesthetic drama was that this boy's character in the performance was named Gennarino, little Gennaro.

The *Munaciello* is the most popular of the spirits, believed to be small in stature and cloaked like a monk (thus the translation of the name 'little monk'). This spirit is often associated with a particular room, where there may be two manifestations, one benevolent and one mischievous. The *Munaciello* is rumoured to move and hide objects, throw them on the floor or though the air, and sometimes injure the inhabitants of a house (Höbel 2004, 63-66). The guided tour of the Naples aqueduct system explains that the *Munacielli* legend developed from the labour of the ancient Greek well cleaners. Naples was built over a complex

Figure 4

aqueduct system stretching up to 200 Km. Originally built by the Greeks and further developed by the Romans this system required routine maintenance. A well cleaner was a civic employee, who would wear a brown tunic, resembling a monk, and tied a rope around his waist to lower himself into the many wells around the city. Once inside he would rid the wells of any rubbish that may have accumulated. The task required someone quite small and thin, who would be able to fit down the wells. They would also offer their services on a freelance basis to wealthy estates that had their own water systems and it became rumoured that they often stole from these houses. The legend then developed that the *Munacielli* could come into your house at night and cause mischief, or in the case of a benevolent *Munaciello* leave money. Even today an empty chair is often kept in the home for the Munaciello to repose in, less havoc were to ensue. An example of the trajectory of legend hybridised into present day.

Alongside these supporting characters were the chorus members, comprised of the previously mentioned *Pescatori* and the *Lavandaie* (Washerwomen). Reflecting traditional labour roles the chorus was one more method if incorporating the social sphere into an aesthetic format. The *Pescatori* was a group of four singers who moved about the space, dividing the area with nets, interacting with Michela, and carrying Cola Pesce, whilst singing traditional Neapolitan songs. As a maritime city, the fisherman represented a traditional form of labour. Some fishermen still directly sell their catch in the *quartieri*. The four *Lavandaie* prepared the areas before the characters arrived to them. They also set out the massive laundry lines that divided the space, and sang and danced traditional Neapolitan

songs. The *Lavandaie* also provided an important function of opening and closing the performance through a choreographed cleaning sequence. In opening the show it signalled the cleansing of the space and preparation for the ritual performance. At the end of the event it was to wash, or push the public out into the street. The reverse dance caused the spectator to be guided towards the exit and returned to the social drama. The *Lavandaie* sang and danced the Fourteenth Century *Canto delle Lavandaie de Vomero* (Song of the Washerwomen of Vomero):

Tu m'aje prommiso quatto moccatora	You have promised me four handkerchiefs
oje moccatora, oje moccatora!	oh handkerchiefs, oh handkerchiefs!
io so' benuto se, io so' benuto	I have come to you for them,
se me lo vuo' dare, me lo vuo' dare!	if you will to give them to me,
E si no quatto embe', dammenne doje	and if not four, then at least give me two
oje moccatora, oje moccatora	oh handkerchiefs, oh handkerchiefs!
chillo ch'è 'ncuollo a tte nn'e' rroba toja	What you wear does not belong to you
me lo vuo' dare	give it to me
me lo vuo' dare.	give it to me.

This song has been identified as a song of protest against the domination of the Aragonese at the time. The *moccatora* (handkerchief) serves as a reference to the land. The *Lavandaia* as an archetype also refers to the soul in purgatory, who washes away her sins by wiping the sweat continually away until her handkerchief is clean (Niola 2003, 54-57). The image of the *casalinga* and the *lavandaia* is closely related, as witnessed by the urban landscape draped with laundry from balcony to balcony. The ubiquitous laundry lines are another manifestation of the private made public; the home life led on display to the street.

One of the chorus members whose presence most strongly typified the connection between the social and aesthetic drama was the lead tenor of the *Pescatori*, Pasquale Casertano. He worked in the local *salumeria* (delicatessen) owned by his father, next to O'Theatrone. A popular Sanità native, he was recognised locally as a singer at church events and functions. A neighbour convinced him to come to the audition call and he astonished the production team with his natural operatic singing voice. His participation in the performance affected the local spectators who knew him well, often cheering him on and calling out his name. This example demonstrates how the production blurred the boundaries between the social and aesthetic worlds, as the local audience viewed him simultaneously in his performance and social role.

In developing a work that explored the layers of cultural identity in Naples it was vital to include the Vesuvius volcano. A ubiquitous symbol in the topography and quotidian life of Naples, it is the only active volcano in Europe. Infamous for its destruction of Pompeii in 79 A.D., this eruption is richly recorded in painting and text. Pliny the Younger's letters from the time serve as an eyewitness testament of the phenomenon:

> 'You could hear the shrieks of women, the wailing of infants, and the shouting of men; some were calling their parents, others their children or their wives, trying to recognize them by their voices. People bewailed their own fate or that of their relatives, and there were some who prayed for death in their terror of dying. Many besought the aid of the gods, but still more imagined there were no gods left, and that the universe was plunged into eternal darkness for evermore' (Dobran 2006, 117).

These kinds of vivid descriptions position the dormant volcano as a symbol of the balance between life and death, creation and destruction. Though enormously devastating at the time, the current geographical area is extremely fertile as a result of the minerals deposited and absorbed over the centuries following the eruption. Vegetable produce specific to the region grows on the enriched soil and the residual volcanic trachyte tuff is a staple building block of the city. All of the streets are paved in slabs of this volcanic stone, since the foundation of the city by the Greeks; in essence it pervades the inhabitants entire lives. Vesuvius comprises two different geographical areas. At the highest peak is Vesuvius, the cone of the volcano. Surrounding Vesuvius is Monte Somma, the volcanic summit caldera or cauldron. The current shape of Vesuvius owes itself to the mega-eruption of 79 A.D. giving the impression of two separate mountains from afar.

The binary relationship between creation and destruction is a recurring element in the Neapolitan social drama, much like the desire and fear for both purgatory and the *Camorra*. This duality is reflected in the populist archetype of Vesuvius as the male, father figure of Naples whilst Naples itself is the female, mother figure (Piedimonte 2001, 76-80). The feminine aspect in the monomyth represents the goddess whilst the masculine represent the beast. Considering this binary myth in the social system and paralleling it with the archetypes of monomyth, I developed a character called the Threshold Guide, consisting of the beast-father-Vesuvius as the destroyer and the goddess-mother-Naples as the

Figure 5

creator. A female and a male actor cloaked in a huge mantel stood at the altar front and performed this twin character (fig. 5). The Threshold Guides represented a direct mimesis of Vesuvius, Monte Somma and the personification of Naples. Throughout the performance they enacted a series of ritual actions on a lectern, the movements seeming to manipulate and cause the events to unfold around the church. Standing at the front altar also referenced the clergy rituals of the site.

The impact of Vesuvius as a socio-political force was also referenced in developing a structure and rhythm to the performance. *Napoli Scorticata* was divided into six parts, each with its own set of actions and structure. This format was developed from the existing civic emergency plan of evacuation in case of eruption of the volcano (Ibid, 42-45). The plan is divided into six phases, each representing a stage of emergency response to volcanic eruption from beginning to end of the phenomenon. These phases served as rhythmic tempo for the performance. The audience experienced a similar timed journey whilst visiting this parallel reality created in the former church, awaiting the inevitable eruption of the volcano. This was an attempt to respond to the effects of living next to an active volcano for the citizens of the city. The phases each have their specific descriptive developmental structure. This structure was reinforced using the archetypes and actions of the monomyth and combined with references to the social sphere.

Phase 1 is *Attenzione* or warning is the first sign that there may be seismic vibrations that could trigger an eruption. In the social system this would be the activation of emergency response teams and informing the population of possible threat. In the monomyth structure of the performance the audience arrived to the foyer and transitioned into the parallel world created by the site. The Lavandaie danced and sang the Canto delle Lavandaia de Vomero and brought the audience gradually into the space.

Phase 2 is *Preallarme* or pre-alarm, where as a precautionary measure all the surrounding inhabitants from the foothills of Vesuvius would be evacuated and there is awareness that eruption could very well be possible. In the social system all recovery operations would be put into full effect and temporary shelters installed. This was referenced in the performance by the introduction of the Threshold Guides, who in turn introduced the characters through their ritualistic movements. Each character entered into the main space of the church from the sacristy and inhabited a different niche around the space: Michela to her boudoir, Cola Pesce placed in his tank/vitrine, Partenope to her *basso*. At this moment a small group of spectators were divided from the rest of the larger audience by the *Lavandaie* and moved into the sacristy. In the sacristy were the characters of the *Levatrice* (Midwife) and the *Infermiere* (Nurses) whose main function was to prepare an alchemical ritual leading to a rebirth of Naples. This references the cloistered function of the sacristy, something the majority of Neapolitans would be familiar with.

Phase 3 is *Allarme* or alarm, when the threat of eruption is inevitable and the evacuation of all 18 districts in the Neapolitan metropolitan area begins. According to the evacuation plan this is mobilised via boats, trains, buses, and heads of households in their own vehicles. In the performance this was represented as the main body of the event. As the narrative unfolded the public was physically divided throughout the space by enormous laundry lines and fishing nets, pulled out by the *Lavandaie* and *Pescatori*. The music reached a heightened crescendo, and the characters' simultaneous actions and narratives unfolded. By the end of *Attesa* Partenope had been transformed from her *casalinga* self into Partenope, Lucia Moderna was dead upon the altar replacing the Principessa and Cola Pesce was liberated by Michela. As this chaotic scene ended the barriers previously dividing

the public were removed as performers exited the space and the lights dimmed for Cola Pesce's monologue of redemption.

Phase 4 is *Attesa* or standby, where the evacuation is complete and the impending eruption is expected. In the social system there is a redeployment of the rescue operatives, moving the control centres and assessing the evacuated territory. The performance reflected the quiet and intense nature of this timing with the scene of Cola Pesce. During this phase the public was reunited as one group to witness Cola Pesce and there was heavy silence and pervasive anticipation. Cola Pesce reached up to the high ceiling of the church, upon which was projected a white ribcage on a blue wash, suggesting that the audience and Cola Pesce are both in the belly of a whale. This illustrated the Cola Pesce myth as well as the concept of rebirth in the monomyth. Campbell describes the journey as 'the passing of a worshiper into a… temple interior, the belly of the whale… the confines of the world are one and the same' (Ibid, 91-92). This union references the social importance of purgatory as an analogous existence; two worlds, the rational and the mythic functioning side by side and simultaneously. In essence this moment of Cola Pesce's self-realisation fuses the archetype and the audience together and makes them one on the journey. The audience's position is shifted from witness to participant in his search. The two parallel worlds of cultural artefact and present reality merged into one.

Phase 5 is the final eruption, *Durante l'evento* or during the event. In the social system this would involve the collecting and processing of data regarding the evolution of the phenomena. In the performance the Threshold Guide revealed itself and divided in a mock eruption, with the female figure separating from the male figure. As she walked forwards into the audience the male figure continued his performed eruption by opening a second large cloak, an effigy of Vesuvius. Attached to him via red ribbons were all the protagonists of the show, who came forward in a slow unfurling (fig. 6). This was followed immediately by the eruption of goddess-mother-Naples standing within the audience and the revelation that under her secondary cloak she held the city of Naples, the birth of the people. A loud *tammorra*, a type of Neapolitan drum, played the sound effects while from the balconies above, the *Lavandaie* and *Pescatori* threw rose petals over the heads of the spectators, mimicking the burning embers of eruption as well as

Figure 6

the boons of knowledge. The rose was another binary manifestation, a symbol associated with the Virgin Mary who is seen as the queen of both heaven and earth. The rose also refers to *Rosalia,* the Roman festival honouring the dead. This spring festival was celebrated about the same time *Napoli Scorticata* took place. The rose functioned as a symbol of a short but beautiful life, an analogy to human existence.

The imagery of the birth of Naples presented the hybrid mythology of the performance as an origin fable; a framework that encompassed all the characters and narratives presented throughout the performance. The hybridisations of cultural artefacts that were animated in the performance space became intertwined into a single narrative thread. Thus the rebirth of Naples was in essence a revelation of the audience member as the central character, travelling across the threshold. This rebirth metaphor was presented as an affirmation of their journey. The binary process of creation and destruction, death and rebirth was an analogy for the continual cycle of life through degeneration and regeneration. In order to complete the performance while respecting the structure of the monomyth and the evacuation plan, it was important to return the audience to their point of entry in the quotidian world.

The return to reality was completed in Phase 6 *Dopo l'evento* or after the event. In the social system the emergency plan delineates how to deal with the

remains after the destruction including checks on the territory, decisions on re-entry, and lifting the state of emergency. In the aesthetic format all characters disappeared into the sacristy at the final black out. The *Lavandaie* returned and began a choreographed dance ritual that guided the audience towards the exit. The narrative was completed as the doors of the church were opened and the audience transitioned away from the reflexive to the actual, returning to the pedestrian.

Conclusion and Assessments

The research here documents how the social system directly inspired and informed the devising process, thus creating an event that reflected a variety of cultural artefacts. The final performance presentation can be viewed as meta-commentary on the immediate locale as well as the larger area of Naples, as the very actions and narratives born of the region directly informed it. This case study was the first major attempt to include elements of the social system within the performance itself, in an attempt to create a site-responsive piece that respected the cultural output of the inhabitants. As the director I involved the core Lotos team in devising the form and content of the production in a collaborative format. This gave the process a structure that enabled the various components informing the work to speak in a single voice. The workshops functioned less as a devising period and more as a rehearsal space in which to alter the action-based script to fit successfully with individual performer's abilities and their varying roles. Through post-show interviews it became clear to me that this period of rehearsal and development was very important for the participants as well as the artists involved. It was in this time spent working within the community, visiting sites, shopping in local shops and meeting with neighbours that the show engaged its social context.

An example of the affective quality of this first case study was epitomised by three participants in *Napoli Scorticata*: Lilia Mowery, who performed in the event with her son and daughter, Thomas and Andria Mowery (both in their early twenties). Lilia was not originally from Sanità, having moved into the *quartieri* from a different area of Naples. According to Lilia, the families engagement with neighbours was often abrasive. They were considered outsiders as the siblings were half American and they spoke in Italian not Neapolitan. Performing in *Napoli Scorticata* offered a channel for dialogue between Lilia and the residents in the area. She offered to explain the various myths and stories, and according to Lilia in her

post-show interview, this interested people and the conversation would shift to history and memory. Equipped with a new tool of communication, she was placed in an empowered position as an impromptu communicator and educator. For Lilia, participating in the show was like 'a break in living always in something so mean, so little. It was like a [sighing] shake off the dust of all these heavy feelings that everyday we face in the Sanità.' The aesthetic appears to have facilitated the possibility of self-reflection in order to assess a given social system.

I refer here to Freire's definition of praxis as a dialogue, composed of the two elements of action and reflection. If the practice can invite participants' and spectators' awareness (or naming) of any given social system they may find themselves in, then based on Freire's theory 'the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection' (Freire 1975, 61). This action-reflection can be achieved when the aesthetic has a direct correlation to the social. The event itself became a catalyst for dialogue and an opportunity to engage in the action-reflection dynamic. When the spoken word is equated with work or action it demonstrates how dialogue can function as a generative tool in the devising process. Through the various artistic and educational projects I have directed and facilitated, I have often found the impact of working collaboratively to echo Freire's own pedagogical approach, where the self is re-presented as a mode of social empowerment.

The results of this approach are exemplified in the responses from Thomas and Andria. As Thomas stated in his follow-up interview: 'we've been living here a lot of years. And then one year, one show, and everything explodes you know, changed'. Though not as acute, this sense of agency was also present in Andria's feedback. From her perspective the recognition in the street that the role provided changed the way they were treated, 'it make me feel more involved in this place'. Their character roles in the performance represented common archetypes within the community that all the spectators could relate to, empowering them to continue this archetypal representation within the social system. It is not important that Thomas was not a fisherman or Andria a washerwoman in the performance of everyday life, but that they represented these roles during a moment of community cohesion in the aesthetic context.

Another performer was Pamela Carrano who was the lead dancer of the *Lavandaie* and works as an outreach educator with at-risk young people in the area. Her arts intervention programme takes children off the streets and into a theatre to develop work collaboratively. She spoke about the challenges young people face when confronted with everyday life. According to Pamela young people of the area had a tendency to follow a wayward direction rather than a productive one. Pamela's assessment of young people's tendency to act out for attention was based on her perception that the pressures faced by families within the *quartieri* often caused them to neglect the children. Participating as performer and active audience members gave them a much-needed outlet for expression. Pamela noted that *Napoli Scorticata* as a form of cultural intervention, integrated the local young people by building awareness of new forms: 'I have seen that they are interested, even though they are children they are interested, they have become part of the show, they do the movements with us.'

As a result of its site-responsive methodology *Napoli Scorticata* affected not only local audience members but was also important for those unfamiliar with the territory. Attracting audience to enter into the *quartieri* to see a performance had its own challenges as Sanità evoked an immediate negative association for those unfamiliar with the area. To enable a sense of safety for this public, show times began earlier so that it remained daylight when the show ended. A parking garage nearby was arranged with stewards so guests could drive directly to the site. Though from my perspective these steps seemed extraneous, the negative myth of the *quartieri* overshadowed the reality. Bringing public from outside the *quartieri* to the performance site was a step in transforming the cultural legacy of the area, presenting the arts instead of *Camorra* as local culture. As Pamela described: 'They (the public) arrive a little hesitant, but then they see how the situation is… they arrive and say it is something totally different, it's a beautiful world, as if their (prior) experience limited Sanità.'

Napoli Scorticata began the process of merging concepts of live art performance with social-engagement within a site-specific venue. It was a first attempt at testing methods of social engagement while utilising the medium of the social sphere in performance practice. The event itself generated an intense and positive community ethos around its production, but at its core was predetermined by an artistic authorship. From this, I questioned how the practice could integrate

the learner-centred model that I used as a teacher and facilitator in my own performance practice. The piece revealed new questions of authorship and authenticity when undertaking combined work with both community and site. I was interested in exploring how to create a performance that had the aesthetic and social elements of *Napoli Scorticata* but was co-devised with participants. This new period of research would enable me to explore what could occur when I took my model of performance making and integrated it within an educational context.

Shortly after *Napoli Scorticata* I was invited to Northeastern Ghana to develop the project with Youth Development Alliance (YDA) which integrated my performance practice with their existing HIV/AIDS prevention training. My role was to develop the final project by devising and implementing a participatory workshop series. This seemed like an excellent venue in which to test a new method of performance making in a completely different cultural milieu. The case study would afford the research the space to experiment with new forms, experience non-western cultural artefacts and add an important new case study to the practice. I was also interested in not only addressing the narratives found in the social system but in the possibility of a more direct intervention. As an education-based project, it would have an effect on the kind of learning the participants would encounter. One of the main goals of YDA is to create youth leaders in the community, an important sustainability factor, as they continue the messages learned in trainings throughout their social network. If the experiment was to educate through the arts, it would entail allowing the participants to author the work within the framework of an interactive site-specific performance. The *Youth Visions* project added a new model of devising performance to my practical research, one inspired by local performance traditions. Though the outcome of the work itself would remain a more education-based project, the methods of devising used in the project would lead on to inform *Triangulated City* in Lebanon.

Endnotes Chapter 2

[i] Guardian article, *Naples Burns as residents protest at garbage crisis,* by Tom Kington, 27 May 2007, last accessed on 14 June 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/may/27/italy.waste
New York Times article, *In Mire of Politics and the Mafia, Garbage Reigns,* by Ian Fisher, 29 May 2007, last accessed on 14 June 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/31/world/europe/31naples.html

A la n gube n de kpe'engo.
(If we come together to hold something, that is strength.)
~Fra Fra Tribe Proverb

Introduction to Practice and Theoretical Framework

The following chapter examines the case study *Youth Visions,* completed one year after *Napoli Scorticata.* During the residency at O'Theatrone I developed a method of site-responsive devising by investigating local customs and cultural artefacts, which helped me theorise how the social system could be seen as an artistic medium. I continued this exploration in Ghana by integrating participatory dialogue and shared authorship as a new experiment in generating content. In *Napoli Scorticata* the devising of the project followed a collaborative approach developed with fellow members of Lotos Collective. We authored the characters and basic actions and presented the participants with a basic score from which to develop the performance. Conversely, in *Youth Visions* I devised and facilitated the participatory workshops, but opened the authoring of the content within the framework to the participants. Though there was a degree of this in the *Napoli Scorticata* workshops, the performance narrative was for the most part pre-established. In *Youth Visions* the young people participating drove the performance actions through their own narratives, while receiving a combination of arts and health education. The project was run across two sites with 75 participants, 4 Peace Corps volunteer group leaders, and a project manager. The experiment was to create a model of arts and health education by utilising a combination of site-responsive social engagement techniques. *Youth Visions* approached social-engagement from a pedagogical perspective while retaining the elements of devising utilised in *Napoli Scorticata.*

There are similarities in the authorial structure of all three case studies, yet there is a key difference in form in the *Youth Visions* experiment. Here, the aesthetic had an education objective and an expected set of outcomes while in *Napoli Scorticata* and *Triangulated City* the aesthetic was devised in response to the immediate social context, without assuming or intending a change within that context. This difference in intended outcomes situates *Youth Visions* as a counter-balance to the other two; one that offers applied live art practice as an intervention technique within a social system. This highlights two approaches of socially

engaged performance explored in my practice, one developed as an aesthetic response to a social system and another developed as a target intervention within that same system. A target intervention project aims to intervene in a social system by addressing a specific issue or disharmonic process. The expected outcomes may be achieved via community arts initiative. On the other hand, a socially engaged performance project that is site-responsive can function as an aesthetic response to that system and become a commentary on the topics it refers to without intending to manifest an actual change. In this case, *Youth Visions* can be considered a community intervention project as it contained a participatory education-based format in conjunction with a specific guided outcome in order to address and affect a social concern.

Youth Visions was a multi-layered project that took place across two sites with two separate groups of young people. One group worked on a performance project and the other developed a large outdoor mural. Both groups also participated in filming the development of the project, which was edited into the documentary presented in Part I. The performance segment of the project was developed with Bolgatanga Secondary School (Bolgatanga SS) in collaboration with their existing Drama Club in the village of Winkogo, near Bolgatanga. Bolgatanga is the capital of the Northeastern region of Ghana. The mural painting was implemented at Kongo Senior Secondary School (Kongo SSS) in the village of Kongo towards the border of Togo and Burkina Faso. The project also incorporated radio interviews with some of the students at the studios of URA Radio, the local station heard along the tri-border area. Through this multi-layered approach the young participants received specific arts training in performance or visual arts (depending on the site), as well as an opportunity to work with contemporary forms of media. For the schools this extra-curricular activity promoted the institution's standing within the district and enriched their students' education. For Youth Development Alliance (YDA) the project gave them a unique format in which to integrate their existing training programme as well as develop new contacts. For myself as artistic director of Lotos, the project brought a transnational initiative of devising work in a new cultural framework that added to my repertoire of performance making techniques.

Though there may seem to be a variety of media at work in *Youth Visions*, the case study will demonstrate how the practice's main artistic medium was the social fabric that inspired and informed the aesthetic. As mentioned in the

introduction, this proposition is based on David Davies' theory on art making as a performance encounter. From this I base my proposal of the social system as a core medium in my creative devising process. Davies suggests that the definition of artistic media be understood more as modes of 'artistic mediation' in order to appreciate multiple forms of art making (Davies 2004, 59). His structure for understanding performance work theorises that the artistic medium is in a symbiotic relationship with the artistic statement and what he terms the physical or vehicular medium. The artistic medium in this case is not relegated to an object or structure; it can also be according to Davies 'a particular action in a given cultural-historical context' (Ibid, 59).   In order to articulate an artistic statement an artist will utilise an artistic medium. The work is generated via the vehicular medium, which is how the practitioner chooses to utilise the medium she or he is working in. For example an artistic medium may be the body's physicality, while the vehicular medium may be the use of contraction in a dance work. He defines the artistic statement as the 'representational, expressive, and formal properties of the object or structure generated by the artist' (Ibid, 53). This is what Davies views as the focus of appreciation, which is geared towards the artistic statement. In applying this theory to my practice, the vehicular medium may be considered the element of live performance actions, while I choose to use the cultural artefacts of the social system as my artistic medium. The social system mediates my intent to create site-responsive socially engaged work with the live actions of a performance work. This thesis serves as a written archive that describes the artistic statement of my practice through analyses of the methods utilised in transforming the artistic medium of the social sphere into the vehicular medium of performance.

Based on this transformation method I view the generative act of developing the work as intrinsic to the artistic statement. As the devising process in *Youth Visions* was participant-centred and relied on the shared stories of the young people in order to create the content of the work, inter-subjectivity was both a catalyst for production as well as a focal point of appreciation. I return again to Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics as a mode to open communication lines that maintain human relations at its core. This chapter investigates how this inter-subjective format was both able to produce a transformational art form whilst delivering the instrumental benefits of health education. In the case of *Youth Visions* dialogue was the engine that propelled the devising process forward, eventually re-presenting the narratives developed from that interaction into a series of performed

scenarios. It was via the creating of a safe space for the students to share anecdotes that the piece began coalescing, the final product a result of those inter-subjective moments. As Kester states 'what is at stake in these projects is not dialogue per se but the extent to which the artist is able to catalyse emancipatory insights *through* dialogue' (Kester 2004, 69). *Youth Visions* integrated the insights developed from the dialogue process into an aesthetic format that functioned as an applied social intervention. The pedagogical objective was based on the assimilation, synthesis and re-presentation of both the taught creative process and specific health training. From a social education perspective, the live performance component of *Youth Visions* served as on-site training to audience members regarding HIV/AIDS health and safety issues whilst the mural project and documentary continue to serve as a long-lasting public service announcement.

As the project had many diverse collaborative partners, each seeking their own sets of outcomes, I found it important to identify the differences in expected outcomes from participating schools, supporting institutions, funding bodies and my own interests. YDA as a charity was engaged in health training, the schools were interested in curriculum and activity development, the students were eager to participate in a new project, the funders were expecting behavioural change outcomes and I was seeking new models of performance-making within a site-responsive community context. Goodenough's identification of the specific *wants* of a community as working in tandem with their *needs* assisted me in finding a balance with all the interests involved (Goodenough 1966, 49). Goodenough proposes a model of collaborative partnership where the 'agent' or facilitator takes the entire community into account as active partners (Ibid, 22). Wants are theorised as the solution to the community's problems as identified by its members, or the aspect of learning or change those members seek to achieve. Needs are defined as the actions that the community members see as vital to achieve those wants, or the conditions that need to be met in order to create the change (Ibid, 51–55). Goodenough identifies the differences in needs through a threefold assessment model. First he refers to a community's felt needs, or what they see as the necessary actions to achieve the wants. This differs from observed needs, either be it from a facilitator or any other outside organisation or individual to the community (Ibid, 54–57). Observed needs are the noted differences between the existing conditions and the conditions the community wants, as Goodenough states 'practically speaking, what a community *needs* for its development is not so much a

matter of fact as a matter to be negotiated' (Ibid, 58). Finally the objective of development work, what Goodenough terms the identification of the 'real needs', or the most efficient means to achieve the wants as weighed by all the participants in the process of development (Ibid, 64-66).

Goodenough's view on development work is useful to apply to an intervention project such as *Youth Visions*, where my role as a practitioner worked in tandem with that of an educator and development worker. I parallel wants and needs with process and product, merging the notion of wants with product and needs with process. In seeing process as needs we identify the tools of development that will assist the project in achieving the wants or product. In the case of *Youth Visions* this was the performance presentation of their shared stories and the final presentation of the mural also developed through personal storytelling. This need/process and want/product theoretical merging enabled me to better assess the instrumental and/or transformational benefits to participants in an applied arts context. As the facilitator I sought a commonality in needs by utilising this strategy; in order to put differing people to work together towards successful achievement of the identified and presumably common wants of the final work (fig. 7). The needs in this case were negotiated and devised through collaboration and dialogue by using this strategy of understanding the various dynamics at stake in the project. The next section on Context examines the artistic medium, followed by the section on Practice that examines the vehicular medium. Together they demonstrate how *Youth Visions* successfully incorporated the social system in order to both produce a transformational art form whilst delivering the instrumental benefits of health education.

Figure 7

Context (Social, Historical and Regional)

The projects at Bolgatanga SS and Kongo SSS were developed with a youth–centred approach, devising with the participants a series of narratives that brought to light the issues affecting local young people when faced with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The stories originated from the participants themselves and were reconstructed into an aesthetic form. Though the final products varied (performance and a mural) the dialogue-driven process was similar at both schools. A single workshop method was utilised only altering its use of the vehicular medium in order to carry through the artistic medium. The participants were encouraged to share their personal stories and experiences as a means to inform the narrative structure. Through image making or performance making their stories were reconstructed into culturally relevant means of communicating, with an emphasis on the use of language and music. Via the deconstruction of local myths regarding infection and transmission, the narratives were reconstructed into a presentation of positive behavioural practices.

Following the guidelines of the International Millennium goals and in line with the Ghana National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS for 2006 – 2010, the project incorporated the ABC message (Abstinence, Be faithful, Condom use) adding YDA's D message (Do not share sharp objects) (Seidu Sanda 2006). This both fulfilled funding requirements and empowered the students with a knowledge-based asset. Past health trainings led by YDA always included the ABCD message, but what was unique to this project was the method of information dissemination. The youth participants had the opportunity to learn the prevention message and express themselves creatively. As they did not have opportunities to engage in candid discussions around sexual health, it was a challenging topic to open. The workshops became a place where questions and concerns could be addressed in an informal setting, i.e. outside of the schools' hierarchical structure. Though not as virulent an epidemic as afflicts Southern Africa, HIV/AIDS remains an issue that often is widely neglected in educational settings, due to cultural taboos regarding discussions on sexuality.

The 2005 Ghana Sentinel Survey, which paved the way for the implementation of the National Strategic Framework, placed the local HIV prevalence rate for the district where *Youth Visions* took place at double the national average (Ibid, 2). The surrounding countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and

Burkina Faso have an HIV prevalence rate of approximately triple that of the Northeastern district where we were situated. There are many factors that YDA has determined produces such discrepancies. The regional report provided by YDA describes The Upper East Region of Ghana as the second poorest region in the country, after the Upper West Region (Seidu Sanda 2006). Geographically it is considered the sub-Saharan, receiving much less rainfall and thus vegetation than the relatively affluent southern regions of the country. As part of West Africa, the effects of the European slave trade that devastated the region mark Ghana's history. The famous Ashante tribe, traditionally known as the merchants and traders, dominate the south of Ghana, where most production and raw materials are located. During the European slave trade the Ashante became economically powerful in the region by selling captured members of northern tribes. I visited examples of specialised dwellings in Paga, near the border of Burkina Faso, where homes were constructed with a variety of safety mechanisms against raiding and capture. Due to this geo-political divide the South has had a higher rate of growth and development since Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957, while the northern regions continue to struggle against its second-status in the country.

Farming is the primary occupation in the countryside, a difficult endeavour with the rainy season lasting an average of two months a year and no irrigation systems. Most dwellings lack running water, and many lack electricity. Village households are composed of compounds and do not have the means to send all of their children to school past Junior Secondary School (JSS). Thus the two groups of young people that participated in *Youth Visions* had made great strides to arrive at Senior Secondary School. According to YDA as there is often a lack of finances in order to enable all children of a household to complete their education. Girls routinely interrupt their studies by age 14, the top age range of 49% of the regions' population (Ibid: 3-6). This leads to many issues, especially given that according to YDA the sexual debut of girls averages at 12 years old. Due to the strategic border location between Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana, a growing local economy of sex workers lures young women faced with poverty and a lack of education. Ignorance of the actual risk of HIV/AIDS impedes self-protective behaviours by many youth. YDA assembled all these factors as the impetus for direct intervention in the social system.

Richard Wright chronicles the birth of the state of Ghana in 1954, recording his travels from the coast to the northern region. His memoirs resonate

today as they describe a burgeoning culture victimised by years of European colonisation. This was still very present during my residency in the region. The northern region has not developed an infrastructure of industry, thus local inhabitants rely on subsistent farming which proves quite challenging given the regions geographical topography. Though independent for 50 years, the country's infrastructure is still expanding and developing. The production team was able to access electricity to power equipment but there was no running water in any facilities. This lack of industry can be traced directly back to British models of colonial control, where a region became economically dependent on English industry by exporting raw materials and then buying them back in a processed form that was taxed. This unbalance of import and export meant that local industry could not develop and kept colonised nations such as Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, perpetually in sub-development and reliant on a British mandate (Wright 1954, 11).

One of the most culturally relevant observations that Wright offers the research is his assessment of the different methods of 'knowing' for an inhabitant of the region. According to Wright for an African of the region knowing meant 'possessing a knowledge of his tribe, of his family, of the formation of his habits, of the friends surrounding him, of being privy to the most inmost secrets of his culture' (Ibid, 101). This kind of knowledge is based less on a singular rationale, profession, or concept, rather it is collective and shared. The research sought to engage this knowledge base through a dialogical process that would help both facilitate the learning of HIV prevention and the creation of an artwork. This was also influenced by Freire's learner-centred approach where 'the requirement is seen not in terms of explaining to, but rather entering into a dialogue with, the people about their actions' (Freire 1975, 30). As a Western foreigner with little knowledge of the social system in place, I viewed my duty as facilitator to enabled dialogue as a creative generative act that also fostered an element of learning. Goodenough's proposition to be other-oriented influenced the development of my authorial role in this case study. The question of otherness, privilege and the role of the artist could be further problematised by exploring the element of difference. But for the purpose of this research, it became clear that it was exactly this difference that allowed me to garner the trust of the participants. Kester offers an approach that outlines the difference between logical understanding and procedural knowledge where the

participant learns from the social differences presented. According to Kester:

> 'this understanding is facilitated by the empathetic insight made available through a process of active listening. Our existing identities do not simply dissolve upon contact with difference. Rather, they maintain a provisional coherence, leaving us open to the transformative experience of others, yet retaining a sufficiently material sense of self for this experience to leave a lasting impression. (Kester 2004, 158)'

Though the HIV/AIDS training that had been developed by YDA was successful in disseminating information, *Youth Visions* expanded upon this method of education by integrating a participatory approach and a resulting art form the participants could be proud of. Via this method, participants in the project could learn the objectives creatively as well as become better situated to share their new knowledge within their social circles and the wider community.

The participants are the central project partners, selected by the schools to join the workshop as an awarded extra-curricular activity. The young people in the drama club at Bolgatanga SS as well as their drama teacher informed me that they had previously performed written texts on stage, often from European playwrights such as Shakespeare. I sought to explore a larger definition of performance, one that included the choices they made as young people in front of peers to their own familiarisation and/or participation in local festivals. Bringing the differing aesthetic needs closer meant renegotiating the terms of performance practice by running a workshop where we defined performance and its contexts. During this workshop we identified how the Northeast region had performance already integrated into the rituals of village festivals. I recommended that for *Youth Visions* we decode and discuss the myth of viral transmission via the village festival format. Facilitating a performance that functioned as a collaborative, multi-functional and interactive activity meant devising an event that satisfied the wants of all the different groups involved by offering the participants a central performing role and YDA a venue in which to educate and train. As a case study the project would explore integrating a model of social gathering that was about site and society while discussing an important topical subject. The proposed outcome was that through increased awareness and creative problem solving, participants would have the opportunity to proactively change their behaviours in relation to HIV/AIDS transmission, as well as gain new approaches to creative and critical thinking.

Practice (Workshop and Presentation)

Devising Structure

To begin the process of devising *Youth Visions* an informal workshop took place involving, storytelling, health training and trust games. This last segment served to break the ice between facilitators who were largely Caucasian Anglo-American volunteers and the Ghanaian participants. For some of the young people in the village of Kongo, this was their first kind of cross-cultural interaction. The fact that a health training involving candid talk of sexuality was taking place was yet another element in a new experience. The first health training was a condom demonstration completed with wooden phalluses, where the participants divided into small groups to practice application techniques (fig. 8). Young men and women took turns inspecting a condom wrapper for damage, examining the seal, checking the expiration date and finally opening the condom and correctly unrolling it on a wooden phallus. It was stressed that it was okay to laugh, as this was an obvious sign of tension release. Sebastian, the health facilitator, encouraged humour and yet made a poignant statement by unrolling a condom across his fist to his wrist and demonstrating that 'one size fits all'. Though comical, this is an educational tactic for a common complaint of discomfort in utilising a condom. Speaking candidly about the traditionally taboo subject of sex and sexuality fostered the sense that the workshop was a safe space in which to share thoughts, concerns and personal anecdotes. The candid workshops allowed them to feel more comfortable discussing situations and raising questions that perhaps otherwise would be considered inappropriate. Perhaps our own status as foreigners combined with a facilitation approach of being other-oriented fostered a genial and trusting atmosphere for the open dialogue to develop.

Figure 8

The majority of youth in both groups had known of, or knew personally, an HIV infected person at some point in their life. The facilitated discussions gave them a platform to share stories and anecdotes that continued throughout the development and implementation phase of the workshop. The dialogue that arose both gave form to the artistic project and served to advance the health training. The twenty Kongo SSS young people designing the mural began the activity by using watercolours and markers and working independently to illustrate one of the narratives they had related regarding HIV/AIDS. Kongo SSS is a day school in an economically disadvantaged rural village, situated on a main route to the tri-border of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo. For most of the young people in workshop this was their first experience with arts education, many had never met a non-African and none had used paint sets or held anything to paper other than a pen. Because of this they had very little preconceived notions of a pre-determined aesthetic quality and did not feel intimidated or incapable, approaching the drawing with enthusiasm and dedication. This brought a new perspective to methods of collaborative authorship, where as a practitioner I shared in the new experience of art making and valued the work critically from this perspective. Each individual work was honoured as an achievement and exhibited for all to view the final illustrations of their peers. In order to begin negotiating the various needs of the project partners to achieve the final aesthetic want, the participants separated into groups and collaborated in combining their individual works into a single hybridised narrative image. This would integrate a pedagogical tactic for group collaboration into my existing devising method for performance making as tested in *Napoli Scorticata*.

To produce a genuinely collaborative product this discursive model required that the final product reflect the inclusion of all the participants' voices. Once each smaller group had developed the new single hybridised work, they were presented to the bigger group again and analysed by all the participants in order to interpret which aspects of each artwork functioned best to reveal the proposed narratives. Given that the mural would be painted on the side of one of the school buildings, seen easily from the main road to the border, and that most of the villagers are illiterate, it was important that the design was both visually clear and contained within it the prevention message. During one of the workshops, I responded to the direction of the participants and incorporated elements of each group hybrid design by combining them into a meta-hybrid that spoke the visual language of all the works (fig. 9). This method was repeated through performance actions at

Bolgatanga SS. In this manner, each participant's felt aesthetic could be satisfied, as the final product was the direct result of the original work they had completed individually. Interviews with the students upon completion of the project demonstrated that they both saw their own individual contribution and the group contribution in the final work. The collaborative product was a result of combined labour, creating one work that resonated with the efforts of all participants. This became an important element that developed from integrating a participatory approach after *Napoli Scorticata* and will become again evident in my analyses of *Triangulated City*. The final collaborative artwork was then gridded and the mural wall prepared with a whitewash and gridded as well. Each student assisted in developing a section of the grid on the wall, to a constant circle of bemused villagers and local young people. Though the materialisation of the dialogue was becoming manifest, this new generative aspect of the work was not a replacement of the group dynamic but a method of archiving the conversation via the visual product.

The performance segment at Bolgatanga SS followed the same generative method and developed a different aesthetic product. *Youth Visions* was an opportunity to test a model of participatory art making that utilised the same

artistic medium through two varying vehicular mediums. The participating group at Bolgatanga SS was made up of fifty young people, most of whom were part of the Drama Club. Though they had re-enacted pre-existing texts in the past, this was their first opportunity to author and devise their own work. In order to manage the high number of participants I created five different discussion groups where members shared their own anecdotes and stories regarding HIV/AIDS infection, each one run by a Peace Corps volunteer.

Figure 9

Bolgatanga SS is a large boarding school with approximately one thousand students, many of them middle class young people from this regional capital. The stories they shared revealed concerns often faced by youth in any context, such as peer pressure, homosexuality, materialism, and gender relations. As with the Kongo group, the creation of a safe-space in which to share anecdotes with peers and ask earnest questions allowed for a lessening of restrictions regarding the taboos around topic such as sex and sexually transmitted infections. This sharing of the devising process situated the participant in a position of active collaboration and engaged them in active listening as well as offering their own narratives, which could be merged and restructured with another's to form something new.

As with the Kongo format, each group worked together to hybridise their individual stories into a single narrative, but this group portrayed their narratives via short skits. In the workshops we presented rehearsals of their individual scenes, allowing them to see the similarities and differences between each narrative they had developed. Throughout the process the group had the opportunity to see the stories transition from dialogue to performance. This also allowed them to be spectators for each other as they witnessed each group's progression. In order to highlight the decision-making issues that came up for the characters in the different scenes (i.e. pressure to have sex without a condom, pressure into sexual encounters), I utilised Boal's Forum Theatre during the devising and rehearsal process (Boal 2002). Students would step in and out of each other's scene influencing the plot and the development. The stories they developed ranged from female and male peer pressure to engage in sexual relationships, HIV infection from unprotected sex, and discrimination of People Living with HIV/AIDS, to condom use or non-use. Familiar with the drama club's past work, almost all the participants chose dialogue driven scenarios that mimicked real-life situations. I introduced the notion that since these narratives took place in the school we would move out of the auditorium and on to the extensive grounds of the campus. This would also allow the work to be interactive and dynamic flowing in and out of a variety of areas. A major source of inspiration for proposing an outdoor promenade piece in the style of a local festival was attending a village festival that made use of public space as a place for ritual, dance and song. This will be discussed further in the next subsection that examines the format of the village festival.

Youth Visions began by the school's snack kiosk, which was set up to resemble a restaurant and a clinic. From here it moved to a tree-lined path,

followed by a series of covered gazebos and ended by a large tree, a far distance from the beginning. Each group chose a specific location, which formed the route for audience members. A running order was created to ensure that each location was on a clear trajectory managing the flow of the audience. Once all agreed the running order and locations, the groups revisited their performances so that a singular narrative continued through each of them. One group responded to the devising process metaphorically, developing binary archetype characters of good vs. bad conscience. By weaving in and out of each scenario, these characters became two of the most important threads of the performance. One character was the good conscience that represented the immune system and the other the bad conscience or the HIV virus. Stepping in and out of each performance, they attempted to influence the protagonists to make either positive or negative health choices when confronted with the situations they had devised. The participants had incorporated their own stories into the scenes that had developed, allowing sensitive topics to be discussed openly and collectively. As a result pockets of group discussions lingered long after the rehearsals or final performance was over. How each of the participants engaged with the group discussions with friends and classmates varied. They became young leaders, as other students on campus would ask them questions about facts regarding HIV/AIDS and condom use. The result of participating in *Youth Visions* produced a significant addition to the resources available to the individual participant with which to operate within social structures, another example of how this case study became an intervention in the social system.

Village Festival as Format

Performance through storytelling and song by using call and response is prevalent in Ghanaian culture and are found primarily in the festival format. These are popular methods of transmitting local history and myth in the region and were an important element to integrate into the work. They create a narrative inter-exchange that functions as a place-making tactic. Village festivals bring surrounding communities together and signify important moments of inter-relationship dynamics, imprinting place upon the utilised space of society. By encouraging the development of the *Youth Visions* to take on the format of a village festival, the project both tested the potential of satisfying a variety of needs in order to formulate the aesthetic want while honouring local cultural traditions (fig. 10). After each performing youth group chose a site on the grounds of the extensive

compound of the boarding school to use as a performing arena, they utilised drumming and dancing to transition between scenes and moved from location to location like a village festival. The performance wove around a variety of outdoor areas of the school, pausing at each site to allow for each group to enact their scenarios. Continuing the use of forum theatre from rehearsal to performance, the audience was invited into the skits to change sequences, administer advice, argue points, and role-play new scenarios. The combination of issue-based dialogue with carnival, music, dance, and interaction engaged the spectators as active participants and was reminiscent of social ritual gatherings.

To begin understanding the nuances of these rites, I attended the Golob Festival celebrated in the village of Tengzug located in the Tongo Hills. A Peace Corps volunteer was stationed in the region and invited to participate in the festivities. During the visit I learned that the event occurs during the peak of the dry season and is a request from the villagers for plentiful rain and peace within the region. Beginning with the new moon, the festival lasts for the duration of the lunar cycle. The Golob is also the name of the ancient sacred drum that possesses the spirit of the festival. Fifteen days after the beginning of the new moon the festivities began. During the singing and dancing community members were encouraged to voice their opinions and air grievances openly, creating a public forum from which to settle disputes. This element of participatory dialogue seemed fitting to the development process I utilised in *Youth Visions*. Morning prayers and dancing began at pre-dawn, building momentum as representatives arrived from surrounding villages. Members of many different villages congregated to carry out the dance, which is mainly led by the men of the community.

Each of these villages is composed of a series of compounds within which co-exists an extended family. A typical compound is an adobe built structure, containing a variety of interspersed huts utilised for sleeping, storing grain, animals, and for cooking. Adobe walls connect all these huts creating a hermetic safe space within the compound to which the family retreats in the evening. Groups of compounds make up villages and groups of villages mark the large number of regional tribes across the rural landscape. Each extended family within a compound sends a male representative to the dance, so that an assembly of dancers begins in each village and works its way to the celebration. Villagers sing and

Figure 10

dance from the sidelines and surround the dancers encouraging them on their route. The dancers are considered warriors on the warpath and thus wear boots, pelt, carry weapons and are shirtless except for a printed fabric around their necks. We borrowed this warrior costume design to dress the White Blood Cell character in *Youth Visions* in a traditional type outfit (Figure 10). The men dance in a circle, or a series of concentric circles, like a spiral constantly moving in unison; at times forward and then backwards. The eldest men dance in the inner circle flanked by the young warriors and then the youngest boys are on the outside. They move together, at times in a single line, and then coil again into concentric circles. The dance is specific to the stomping of the feet that keep the rhythm, with different people at times breaking into improvised beats and movements. Around the village there are thousands of spectators as well as a large variety of dance troupes moving throughout the landscape. The festival culminates in what is termed Moor, where all the communities gather together for a dancing frenzy that may last up to fourteen hours, whilst village Elders pray to the spirits of the festival. Following such a method of community discourse and shared celebration, *Youth Visions* sought to empower the participants by encouraging them to be representatives that would share their new public health knowledge.

Figure 11

This gesture of coming together to battle an invisible enemy and air grievances in the Golob Festival resonated with the methods employed in the project regarding HIV/AIDS prevention and storytelling. By weaving the festival's mythic structure withthe performance project, the event itself could signify a defiant dance against the invisible agent of death that is the HIV virus as well as allow participants to have an forum of discussion. The Bolgatanga SS performance festival was accessbile to anyone on the campus and attracted an audience of approximately two hundred young people and adults. As with a village festival, the coming together in a participatory event automatically included audience as well as participants (fig. 11). Within the large crowds of students that gathered to watch the performance were also many of the local village *small boys* and *small girls*. This Ghanaian term is often used to describe most children, but in this case I refer to children from most challenged socio-economic backgrounds that spent their days roaming the grounds of the boarding school. Though the event was devised with a structure, the actual performance took on a life of its own. Veering from the rehearsed format, the piece delved into audience discussions and group trainings that were led by the performers. This included an impromptu condom demonstration, where one group repeated the condom use demonstration they had learned for the entire audience. In a similar format the Kongo SSS presentation ceremony of the final mural culminated in a series of discussions with local young people and villagers on the meaning of the mural, its importance for the community and the decoding of the message. The presentation of their work gave the project participants a sense of completion as well as an opportunity to field questions regarding the process, the content and their roles in devising the product.

In both cases participants engaged with various groups of young people who curiously asked questions about HIV/AIDS and listened intently whilst the

participants engaged them with their knowledge of the topic. This transformed the participants in *Youth Visions* into youth leaders who could inspire and educate those around them. The presentation of the work served as a place-maker for relations between those that engaged with it. The mural may function as a public service announcement to the community, but to the workshop participants it was a part of their collaborative creative development archived for all to witness. As the young participants found themselves describing aspects of the mural to local villagers, the artwork functioned as a potential catalyst for expanding interrelationship dynamics. Empowered to speak openly of condom use, risk factors and gender issues, the youth's status in the community shifted. The project successfully served each aesthetic want, by producing a fruitful cultural event, educating responsibly, and creating a moment of transnational communication as a creative act. As a performance practitioner invited to create an artwork with youth on a specific topic, I would view the focus of appreciation as the collective process of hybridising group ideas into a singular format.

Conclusion and Assessments

Kester notes that the building of community via dialogue is not formed from existing social relations but is an 'appeal to a collective praxis' (Kester 2004, 158). The final product of *Youth Vision* can be considered a collective praxis that stemmed from the individual through to the collective, with the final product embodying the generative process. The project was both a model for health training as well as a platform for voicing concerns regarding the dominant roles played out by both young people and the institutions they are governed by. The participants dialogued about their concerns and issues and achieved the final product by working within the artistic framework I presented them with. The effort began with the individual, was shared with the group and then made manifest in the final product. The participants were able to view their collective effort realised in the final presentation as well as their collective voices heard. Forming this singular voice were the different scenarios performed by each group. The group members were invested in the final outcome of the whole event as well as the scenes they performed in, for embodied within these scenes were their individual voices.

The final presentation of *Youth Visions* was a single moment in an existing trajectory of the participants' life and served as a marker on that journey. When

visiting Ghana again two years later in 2010 to screen the edited documentary, only a small amount of participants could be found. Most of the audience that came to the screenings of the documentary had not been part of the original work. Many of the participants had either moved to other cities, gone to university, or married and settled down in other areas. I realised during the various screenings that the documentary was much more than an archive of the project but became an independent work with a new audience. The local Red Cross requested copies to play in village clinics, and the Peace Corps requested a copy to use as training for future volunteers to demonstrate the possibilities of projects that could be developed in the region. What changed was the vehicular medium to film/video while the artistic medium remained the same. In Kongo the documentary was projected on to a building close to the mural, an interesting juxtaposition of pre-recorded live action with actual result situated next to the audience. The local children who attended the screening, laughed and cheered when people they recognised entered the scenes. The documentary itself became a new community event to experience, an addition to the overall project. Three Peace Corps volunteers returned to Ghana to be a part of the screenings and revisit their host sites. In Bolgatanga, we screened the documentary in a main square as the school was closed. Participants mingled with small boys and small girls, local neighbours as well as school and government officials who came to see the film. The event itself generated so much interest that we decided to show the film a second time for all the people who arrived throughout the first showing.

Youth Visions was able to add new forms of performance making and audience interaction to my creative methodology, primarily a participant-centred approach that fostered individual creativity in the devising process. This case study succeeded in providing a multi-faceted arts initiative, but stands alone amongst my practice-led research models as a pedagogical community arts project. As applied practice informs my own critical arts practice, this model brought new methods and questions to the research. By integrating the participants as authors the research further questioned the role of co-authorship as a generative process. Finding a balance between the aesthetic development of a devised work like *Napoli Scorticata* and a participatory work like *Youth Visions,* I planned a final case study that would employ methods executed in both models in order to integrate them into a socioaesthetic synthesis.

One of the main questions that resulted from the experiment in Ghana was how, as a practitioner, I acknowledged the socio-political when working site responsively yet avoided an explicit agenda. Stemming from this proposition I began the development of a project proposal that would function as a commentary on a social system solely by being site-responsive and co-authored but without the application of direct intervention and educational outcomes. The intention was to remove the didactic approach of *Youth Visions* and integrate a dialectic approach to devising where the practice would be firmly situated within my critical arts practice. After *Youth Visions* the next and final project was to develop a new practice-led research model that contained elements of the two previous case studies but also addressed the socio-political implications that resulted from working in socially engaged practice.

I sought a location that would challenge the practice to be deeply political and socially relevant, yet avoided content that referred directly to political affairs. I planned to develop a work that would be co-authored by the polis or citizens of a city in order to test how politicised the content could become without addressing governmental policies. I was drawn to Lebanon, having visited the region previously and was interested in exploring the result of devising in situ. A friend who was born and raised there first introduced me to the region when I assisted her in installing her exhibition in Beirut. The city seemed to offer a unique landscape in which to test a new model of performance making. This was combined with the possibility to tap into a vibrant culture of renewal in a contentious political landscape. Beirut offered itself as a window into the complexities of the Middle East, specifically the Mediterranean region. This final project would be a way to test the outcome of my creative methodology within a politicised locale. From *Napoli Scorticata* I integrated the methods of site-responsive devising and community participation. This was combined with the shared authorial voice in *Youth Visions*. The final result was *Triangulated City,* which will be reviewed in the next chapter as both a palimpsest of methods and a new model.

'When opposing camps are in two polar positions,
they can decide to move toward a third position
--like the apex of the triangle--
what came to be called "triangulation".'
(Rodham 2003, 290)
~ H.R. Clinton

Introduction to Practice and Theoretical Framework

Triangulated City (مثلته مدينة) was my third and final practical experiment with collaborative methods of authorship. I had begun in *Napoli Scorticata* to author the form and co-author the content, with the devising workshops fitting into a preconceived structure. After this experiment I sought to open the devising process up to participants and created a new model for my residency in Ghana. *Youth Visions* followed a more applied model of socially engaged performance where the content was authored through devising workshops in conjunction with an educational agenda. As a result of these two projects, I sought to integrate the methods developed in each of them into a final work. In conceptualising *Triangulated City,* I positioned myself as the devisor of form with the content authored by the participants via my directed workshops. This approach combined aspects of the *Youth Visions* authorship methods with the site-responsive approach of *Napoli Scorticata. Triangulated City* offers the research an experiment in collaborative authorship within a site-specific and site-responsive framework.

In theorising the communication network when engaging in collaborative authorship techniques, I recognised that exchange was central to the devising process. Looking at exchange as a concept to develop into a performance format, I originally conceived of *Triangulated City* as a method with which to explore the city of Beirut as a site. Within this site the exchange would happen between specific spaces of encounter. To open up these spaces of encounter, more than one performance location would be necessary in order to instigate public movement from one destination to another, and in doing so transform the urban landscape into what may be called a living stage. While two locations is a dialogue, three locations create more possibilities of exchange and is the minimum number needed to form a geometrical shape upon a geographical location. From this concept of the triangle I researched notions of geometry and form as well as communication. I recognised that the most important element of exchange within this model was between a group of individuals. This led me to triangulation as an inter-subjective

semantic of dialogue that could open up new possibilities of exchange as a generative process. To triangulate is to investigate, assess, and measure, all processes central to this project. But a triangulation can also be a web from which communication can cross and discrepancies can occur.

Triangulated in Lebanese Arabic translates as *metalteh* (مثلتة), a term commonly used when your computer processes freeze and systems stop responding. This became a poetic metaphor for a country that has witnessed a brutal civil war and a repeatedly collapsed government due to endemic system failures. But *Triangulated City* was never intended as a direct commentary or solution, it was conceived as a project of exchange, with memory as its generative source of narrative. The project was co-produced by Zoukak Theatre Company and Cultural Organization, one of Beirut's few burgeoning theatre companies. Financing was made possible by arts grants from the Central Research Fund, Theatre Communications Group, Lotos Collective and British Council Middle East. Zoukak is composed of six members of mixed confessional backgrounds, another unique characteristic of post-war Lebanon. Eager to explore site-specific work and to host international artists in order to expand the knowledge base around performance in Beirut, Zoukak hosted the workshops as well as one of the performance sites. They are registered as a cultural organisation, since an important element of their practice involves education initiatives, primarily based in Palestinian refugee camps. Alongside this they host a variety of workshops for local artists, always eager to expand their repertoire. The project was presented as a workshop series run by Lotos and hosted by Zoukak, open to anyone interested in exploring the term live art, and blurring the boundaries of their practice with performance. Alongside members of Zoukak, approximately 22 participants joined the workshops. With Zoukak we expanded my proposal of memories of the city into concepts of rumours. In a city where word of mouth was the most powerful force of communication, and where years of civic crisis led to suspicion amongst the citizens, rumours seemed to be an endless source of information, narrative and exchange. We asked ourselves, if a rumour could be tracked on its dissemination through the city, how much would it propagate?

Exploring this contradiction between fact and fiction, rumour and myth became central to the devising process. I structured the exercises in the workshops as memory games in order to stimulate activity and play amongst the groups. But working with memory and rumour also set up a series of complexities in the

devising process. According to sociologist Avery F. Gordon, as people engage with memory they are beleaguered with contradictions, both within how they see themselves and how they see others. Her definition of 'complex personhood' is a valuable description that helps explain how the participants in *Triangulated City* wove their own narratives into the performance. For Gordon complex personhood 'means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward' (Gordon 1977, 4). This balance between reality and fiction can be said to be the precise threshold that *Triangulated City* was crossing via the workshops and subsequent performances. As the narratives developed from memory or rumour, what was missing became more important than what was actually there.

What became evident from my residency in Beirut, the workshop, the performance and my primary research was the underlying sense of unease that pervaded the social system. It is a kind of agitation that would not be obvious in a typical tourist visit to the fashionable quarters, where discos, restaurants and well–off patrons frequent. Yet it was apparent in the day-to-day existence of living, shopping, making acquaintances and especially devising of a performance. The multi-confessional democracy that makes Lebanon unique and interesting is also cause for conflict. The memories and stories that the participants were asked to share in order to develop and devise the project were both playful and mournful. They most of all recited a common narrative of an environment afflicted by violence and haunted by its past. The investigation into memory, rumour and stories revealed new insights into how important place making is when working site-responsively in a site-specific encounter. The Beirut experience also demonstrated the power with which place can haunt and affect space. This begins to tie together the other two case studies by revealing in all three projects the importance that place making had been at each of the sites. When combining performance with community and shared authorship within a site-specific arena, a new narrative of place is inscribed on the site itself.

The power of place in Beirut was made acute by the use of memory as a generative tool, which was rooted in war and its destructive force. Somewhere between experience and description the narrative actions seemed to strive to understand 'the condition under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory' (Ibid, 22). Perhaps the actions themselves were less

about recollecting than about making the distant more real. Paul Ricoeur expands on this difference between evoking the past and searching for it. According to Ricoeur 'evocation is an affection, therefore, in contrast to the search' (Ricoeur 2004, 26). My intention with the workshops was to search into past memories and hybridise them into the present performance space. This created a combination of the past and the present where new actions formulated new encounters based on past experiences. But perhaps the process functioned more as a form of evocation; giving the performances a haunting aspect in relation to how the past was presented. Since to recall an event is what Gordon describes as conjuring, a form of 'calling up and calling out the forces that make things what they are', to enable them to be understood and transformed from a troubling situation (Ibid, 22). For *Triangulated City,* it was impossible to divide the reality of Beirut, the legacy of its past, and the immediacy of the performance unfolding.

From Ricoeur's perspective this evoking is much like Gordon's notion of conjuring, where the past is brought forward into the present, a distinctly different action than remembering; it is the presence now of what had been earlier perceived. Memory then serves as that which re-presents the past, and by evoking it and sharing past events with others, the memories of one serve as a reminder for another. Ricoeur also points out that forgetting is as active an agent as is remembering (Ibid, 449). There is a dichotomy in that the content being offered by the participants in the workshops is subject to the disintegration and imagination of memory. Though *Triangulated City* was informed and inspired by the participants intertwined political fates, the research recognises that 'the power structures that are embedded in the social order are not as clear as the terms used to describe them' (Gordon 1977, 1). The performance itself alluded to aspects of the social fabric, and elements of politics deeply influenced every aspect of the project. Perhaps the performance itself attempted to re-title the terms by which we refer to the power structure of society (through its investigation into each participant's personal engagement with the city). The portrayal of that confrontation is what ultimately became the basis for the aesthetic encounter.

Context (Social, Historical and Regional)

Lebanon is emerging from a legacy of conflict left behind from the civil war that ended in 1990. No longer synonymous with war and terrorism a new presence of Beirut has developed. The year of our residency in Beirut, The New York Times

chose the capital city as the number one holiday destination for 2009 and Lonely Planet travel guide chose it as one of its top ten destinations[i]. Despite all this the effects of war persisted as an integral part of the cultural dynamic. The legacy of war and its impact on the civilian population is an important part of the research explored in this section. This informs the analysis of how memory was utilised in devising the performance, and what those past encounters may mean to the inhabitants of Beirut today. Interviews with participants also yielded some interesting information regarding perceptions of citizenship and collaboration. Finally, informing this section is a brief history of the elements that converged to produce the crisis of the civil war period including the destruction of the social system in the nation's financial, cultural and political capital. This is followed-up with the physical and psychological effects of post-war reconstruction and an assessment of the situation from primary research conducted during the residency. Beirut is a city of multiple complexities, of socio-political extremes and of vibrant energy and defiance. The city is considered one of the most liberal in the Middle East and despite its political fractures, is the only multi-confessional democracy in the entire region. *Triangulated City* both explored this territory through the physical domain of site and structure, as well as the social domain of dialogue and interaction.

Richard Sennett describes Beirut as a 'vast and intricate tapestry, its human threads tightly woven together in the conduct of daily life' (Khalaf 1993, 2). He saw this tapestry come to life in the expression of quotidian tasks that united the densely packed populace, such as shopping at the market or standing at the same queues. Sennett describes these simple actions as 'perhaps the most socially significant way human bonds form' (Ibid, 2). Yet the Beirut the participants experienced was very different to the city their parents would have known. The civil war years encompassed the first half of the lives of all the participants, whose ages ranged from 22-35. Their connection to Beirut was not the *Paris of the East* their parents and grandparents may have experienced in the fifties and sixties. They were also not old enough to be considered the 'war generation', youth who came of age during the war and whose adolescence was marked by the experience. Most of the participants came of age during the period of urban renewal following the end of the war, when the lifting of barriers saw the reintegration of the city into a single metropolis. Many of the participants noted that the end of the war from their

perspective as children was a bad thing; it meant schools reopened and life went back to a scheduled normality that contradicted what they had experienced.

Throughout the war schools could be closed for extended periods of time and power outages could last straight through the year, meaning no television or radio. During the workshops the participants recalled the nostalgia of this time as children; the memories brought forth recollections of feeling free and seemed characterised by a personal use of creativity and play. For these participants the end of the war meant a return to the hierarchy and rules of education, as if an extended summer holiday had ended. This feeling was shared across the confessional lines represented in the groups, another aspect of war that united the diverse populace of the city. The participants reflected a broad spectrum of the religious sects in Beirut, though the vast majority saw themselves as secular. Though the demographics of the city are changing, residents still referred to neighbourhoods by their confessional make-up. Lebanon is mostly composed of Muslim Druze, Sunnis and Shiites, as well as Christian Maronites, Orthodox, and Catholics. The civil war was not one war between two factions, but rather a series of battles over a 15-year period between a variety of militias, characterised by either their religious denominations, or political affiliations.

According to Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, the main causes of the precarious situation in Beirut is a combination of a political system based on sectarianism, a liberal economic system based on the service industry and a problematic geographical location (Traboulsi 2007, vii). His research provided valuable insight into the shifting population, geography, and politics of the region based on a historical material perspective. Traboulsi defines sectarianism as the institutionalisation of religious sects; a governing principle that to this day affects the balances of power (Ibid, vii). The first inter-confessional conflicts in Lebanon can be traced to an 1838 Druze revolt against Egyptian rule under the Ottoman Empire. As Egyptians proclaimed a state of equality between Christians and Muslims, they armed the Christians in order to have them quell the Druze rebellion (Ibid, 12). Ottoman control over the region last almost 500 years, during this time the Christian population of what was then known as Mount Lebanon grew from a scattered minority to a central majority (Ibid, 48). After a history of socioeconomic disparity as the low-income agrarian workers, links to the West and urbanisation saw Christian groups develop more control over politics and the

economy. The Maronite Church grew to be one of the largest landowners in Mount Lebanon further shifting the balance of power (Ibid, 33).

The end of World War I saw the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, and the Arab region divided between British and French mandates according to their economic interests (Ibid, 75-80). During this time two major political parties developed, whose importance has continued to this day. The first was the Syrian Nationalist Social Party composed of Muslim and pro-Arab supporters. The pro-Arab movement envisioned an autonomous Arab state outside of colonial boundaries that created Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. The second political party was the Phalange (Kaa'ib) Party, composed of Christian Lebanese nationalists (Ibid, 90-102). World War II brought the collapse of European colonial governance, and Lebanon became independent with the ratification of the 1943 constitution. This constitution divided the country's power balance via representative numbers in the parliamentary system, with 60% Christians and 40% Muslims (Ibid, 106). This period was soon followed by a new and powerful dispute in the balance of the region, the creation of the state of Israel.

The successive regional wars that led to the expansion of Israeli territory displaced Palestinians into neighbouring countries. By 1967 Palestinians in Lebanon were organised and armed and came into conflict with the ruling Christian hegemony, set in place since the French mandate. Generations of Palestinian refugees have been refused citizenship in Lebanon as they shift the population count amongst Muslims and Christians, and thus the power balance. To this day Lebanon remains the only neighbouring country in the region to do so. Only the Christian refugees were granted residency and thus given a right to vote, as a method to maintain the dwindling numbers of the Christian population. The last formal census on record for Lebanon was completed in 1932 and has never been updated. A series of restrictive laws forces Palestinians to live inside the boundaries of their camps obtaining only menial work, a system that continues uninterrupted. These disparities were present in the economy of the country as well. By the early 1970's the corporate structure set in place from colonialism placed 80% of all currency deposits in the country into foreign banks (Ibid, 152-156). This caused severe inflation in the country, as costs skyrocketed. For example, the prices of agricultural products exported from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia were 40% cheaper to purchase abroad (Ibid, 160). The economic rise of the Gulf countries fuelled a disparity in the region that was still apparent during the residency. Large SUV's

driving recklessly with tinted windows often overtook the roads and were described to me as the typical young wealthy men of the Gulf who came to frequent the nightlife of Beirut.

On the eve of the civil war 79% of the population received less than the minimum living income in what had become a condensed urban environment, with 40% of that income going to rent. And despite a housing shortage some estimated forty to fifty thousand luxury flats stood empty at the eve of the civil war (Ibid, 160). The social unrest of this period was marked by a series of crippling strikes by workers and student protests informed and inspired by May 1968. Yet the dominant socio-political hegemony refused to acquiesce. The army was used to suppress strikes as well as the newly formed Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Tensions escalated in 1975 when a drive-by shooting of Phalange partisans congregated in front of a church led to a revenge killing of a 21 Palestinian refugees travelling in a bus (Ibid, 180-183). This escalated into a 15-year saga with over 150,000 casualties and twice as many wounded. Beirut suffered the most casualties of the war, a condensed city of four square miles with a population of four million people. Of that population over 65% were uprooted from their homes, with one third of the population being permanently displaced. Emigration further drained human resources with approximately 38% of Lebanese currently living abroad (Khalaf 1993, 29-40).

As socio-urbanist Maha Yahya notes, the state was marginalised losing the physical, institutional, and territorial control over the entire country (Yahya 2007, 239). As the city became divided between East and West, the historical city centre was reduced to ruins from artillery shelling. The military Green Line dividing the city eventually became a reference to the vegetation that grew amidst the rubble. Residents described it as the only place in Beirut where foliage grew during the

Figure 12

war years. Beirut has been referred to as the 'forest of stone' with little horticultural design (Traboulsi 2007, 180) (fig. 12). During the civil war, foreign forces occupied Lebanon and specifically Beirut, the geopolitical centre of the country, on proclaimed missions to halt the conflict.

The United States, Syria and Israel all occupied militarily, while the African Union peacekeeping mission was present at various times throughout the conflict. Coincidentally while working on *Youth Visions* in the village of Kongo in Ghana, the village chief told me in an interview that he had been stationed in Lebanon on various occasions while serving in the African Union army in the 1980's. His memory of Lebanon was of friendly people living in a fractured society. The civil war era also saw the Israeli invasion of 1982, under the auspices of the Phalange militias. The intent was to dismantle the PLO who was supported by the newly formed *Hizb Allah* later known as Hezbollah. Warring factions divided by confessional sects meant Christian and Muslim groups fighting each other and themselves. The Ta'if Agreement signed in 1989 began the process of ending these cycles of violence, though it was not until 1991 that militias put down their arms and were reincorporated into the social structure (Ibid, 240). This era coincided with shifting demographics in the region, including the end of the Gulf War.

For all the energy directed into reconstruction and redevelopment, the end of the war also signified a loss of momentum. Participants in the workshops noted that the cultural movement revolving around politics of resistance seemed deflated after the fighting had ceased. War correspondent Chris Hedges analyses the personal drive that war brings to both civilian populations and military personnel in his book *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. Hedges claims that the fatal attraction of war and destruction is that it provides individuals with a purpose and a resolve (Hedges 2002, 3). When the fighting is over and the dust has settled a general amnesia seems to set it, where memories hark back to a time before the social crisis. The cultural themes that are explored both socially and artistically often are based on issues and ideas that predated the war (Ibid, 80-1). The haunting legacy of the war seemed to remain the most present aspect of Lebanese cultural life. It was this haunting that was present in the devised actions and narratives of *Triangulated City*. The memories of the war that the participants carried with them were an integral part of their creative voice. They inspired the narratives and actions that were born in the workshops and that became part of the performance.

A common psychic and social disorder from war is Post-traumatic stress disorder. PTSD is a response to an overwhelming event that is demonstrated through thoughts, actions, and behaviours (Caruth 1995, 4). The psychic fragment that remains entrenched in the individual is not only an archived memory but also an ongoing presence or spectre. A traumatic experience ruptures the general understanding of the social fabric, rendering a loss of the individual narrative and personal myth that exists within that fabric (Paulson 2007, 4). Stressors are then reignited with sensory stimulation; a notable example is the use of fireworks in Beirut. During the two-month residency fireworks were a nightly occurrence. They were also utilised at one of the sites during the performance. One company member claimed that it was reassuring to those who ignited them, as it was the sounds that accompanied their childhoods. During a production meeting one evening the sounds of fireworks were so intense and prolonged that it caused a visible general agitation amongst the group. PTSD has been found to be more prevalent in civilian populations than in military personnel. This is reinforced by the fact that of the one hundred and thirty wars waged since World War II until 2007, all but two have unfolded in low-income countries, incurring over forty million mostly civilian casualties (Ibid, 66). The nightly ringing of explosions functioned as a conjuring of the past, never allowing it to fully disintegrate into the future. Perhaps this constant awareness of the precarious socio-political situation served to remind the population of the delicate balance that existed in the social matrix.

The participants and the product of the workshops demonstrated this dichotomy between the violent past and the urgency for the future, to move away from this tension. The memories and images brought to the devising process showed a fixation on love and death that was readily apparent in all the work produced for *Triangulated City*. As Hedges theorises, after war our signifiers 'present the struggle between eros and death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species' (Hedges 2002, 158). These signifiers seemed to haunt every encounter in the city, and nowhere was it more present that in the architecture. Joining the destroyed buildings, the frenzy of new construction left unfinished buildings visible everywhere in the city. Though vacant, all of these constructions are guarded by plain-clothes security.

Figure 13

From observation it seemed that approximately 75% of the architectural structures that make up the hard shell of the metropolis were inhabited. The remaining 25% could be divided evenly into the structures in a state of war-torn decay or unfinished new construction (fig. 13). The legacy of war left the marks of violence across a majority of facades on the main routes, as well as on many side streets. Bullets holes mark the concrete exteriors in patterns of haphazard machine gun fire, while major fissures in roofs and walls mark the landing points of various sized rockets.

Buildings are renovated depending on the socio-economic standing of the area. It can be rationalised that bullet holes in concrete do not affect the physical structure of the building and thus may not have a high priority for repair. But what they do affect is the psychological structure of the community, conjuring the images of the past that can never be quite buried. The new construction is generally multi-levelled residential blocks built of concrete with reinforcement bars sticking out in the various directions of expanding growth. One member of Zoukak complained that the renovations were horrible and erased their beautiful city, the *real* Beirut was the bullet-ridden facades; the new layer of concrete and paint left her feeling without a heritage.

Capturing this tension between past and present, eros and thanatos, peace and war was one of the main challenges in creating the devised structure of

Triangulated City. The format was both site-specific and site-responsive, informed by the actual structure that housed the performance as well as the context that influenced the creation of the content. The participants own memories and stories both were informed from the space itself as well as superimposed on it. *Triangulated City* sought to create a contemporary dialogue on site and a responsive dialogue to memory. Richard Sennett examines the remains of Beirut and notes 'most durable if not necessarily great buildings possess exactly this power of expressing differences of time in a dialogue, the departures of the present reflecting upon what existed before' (Khalaf 1993, 9). This dialogue between past and present was also struggling against a post-war amnesia. The need to erase and forget the past was evident in the reconstruction process of the city itself, but particularly in the total overhaul of the city centre. There seemed to be a concerted effort to disconnect and eradicate traces of the past in the way the city centre was reconfigured after the war.

After the years of warfare, efforts of dismantling and destroying a society were put into reconstruction and redevelopment. In the decade after the war the government set out plans for Lebanon to recapture its status as *The Switzerland of the East*, with Beirut as its capital centre. A private real estate company was founded called Solidere (*Société libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction de Beyrouth)*, organised and managed by the Prime Minister at the time Rafik Hariri (Yahya 2007, 240-245). The city centre had become a no mans land and was essentially razed and recreated. All property boundaries were eradicated and the entire area restructured into a mega corporation in which owners were given shares. The four thousand displaced people squatting in the vacant shells in the centre were given compensation and moved on (Ibid, 245-247). As Yahya states, 'by eliminating all distinctions between property rights and claims, the project succeeded in physically erasing and radically altering a critical component of social memory' (Ibid, 247). This is an important factor in the development and presentation of *Triangulated City*, demonstrating how the effect of erased memory was present in the workshops and in the performance. Property in the city centre became an abstract space devoid of personal memory or meaning, but rebuilt to house the economic necessities of a developing global world.

The centre now is a clean and organised area, with high-end shopping and administrative buildings. It has its own corporate law enforcement and specific laws and policies that do not apply to the rest of Beirut. By comparison the rest of

the city remains in a state of disarray and haphazard development, with a fractured organisational system that relies on a militia structure that has been incorporated into policy making. This redistribution combined with the urban psychogeography created by war, leaves as Yahya points out the past and the present unanchored or 'deterritorialized' (Ibid, 247). The shifting physical landscape proved very important during the workshops, where it became evident that no matter how much the country was redeveloping and rebuilding, the forward thinking impulse was fundamentally based on a recollection of the past. The Beirut of the 1960's remained the idealised *Paris of the East* in the minds of most participants. The great singers and actors of what they termed the *Golden Age* all harked to the time when their parents were young. There was a layering of history in the recollecting the brutal recent past of the war overlapped with the nostalgic time before the war. Each of these periods and the people, stories and memories that populated them haunted the next. The present time was transformed into a palimpsest of the various different stages the city had been through. How this layering was translated into actions will be analysed in the next section of research that looks at the practice. Analysing the final performance actions it became evident that the games of rumour, myth and memory were weighted with the haunted recollections of each individual.

Practice (Workshop and Presentation)

Workshop Stories

Though the project was specific to Beirut, the format of *Triangulated City* could be replicated in any urban environment as a method with which to deconstruct and identify the components of a locale. The use of multiple locations invited the audience to move across the urban landscape, taking traces of the performance with them both physically and mentally into the next site of encounter. The three sites that created the geometric figure of a triangle superimposed on the map of the city was a slice of the urban context from which to analyse the rest of the environs. Building the performance actions and narratives with the inhabitants of the city was central to the proposed concept. I developed a series of devising workshops where invited participants could work together with Lotos and Zoukak members to build the material for the performance. Over eight sessions stories, memories and rumours were shared and improvised into performance actions. The workshop participants, including members of Lotos and Zoukak, were divided into three

groups and assigned to each site. Each site had a group coordinator and I worked as an overall director and facilitator along with another member of Zoukak. In order to transform their personal narratives of being raised in the complexities of Beirut into a performance, I devised a series of exercises. These were designed to turn stories into actions, unearthing local history and heritage. The first session together the participants were requested to share a rumour about a place in the city. Tarek Bacha, a trained actor, developed a rumour about the reconstruction of the old wall of Beirut with the original seven doors. Within the walls the municipality would bring back the old *souq* (marketplace) and turn current landmarks back into their old uses. Parliament Square would return to an olive press, the Virgin Megastore into a horse stable, Martyrs Square into a field of grass and there would be the replanting of the *Gemmayze* trees, a tree once native to the region (now known mostly as a fashionable district).

This link between the historical city and the contemporary one was a dominant theme for the participants, as the city has undergone intense destruction and reconstruction. Beirut is said to have seven cities consecutively buried under each other, a layering of its past. The play on rumours became even more complex as some participants defended their rumours as true stories. One participant stated 'this is a rumour but its true' then proceeded to speak of the courtesan on the first floor of the building that housed the Zoukak studio where we were situated, detailing how Charles de Gaulle would come to visit her. Khalil Hasan, an outreach worker in the Palestinian camps, had a keen interest in conspiracy theories. He claimed his rumour about a revolutionary group was true as well. According to Khalil, four of the five members of the group were informers, each for a different organisation. A sense of paranoia and mistrust was commonplace in the working environment, and even as collaborative artists Lotos members would be offered to scrutiny. There was a sense of normalcy towards being slightly paranoid, as it extended to various places. For example, of the favourite pubs frequented by the participants, one was considered to be a communist enclave, complete with a large poster of Arafat and other revolutionary figures. The owner was rumoured to be an informer for the military, keeping a watch on those that frequented the place. This tension between fact and fiction was evident in the development of the piece. It remained a conceptual thread that was reflected in the distrust of politics and the hidden conversations circulating in the city. The Atlas Group, whose work is inspired by this dialectic in Lebanese society, has utilised this concept to develop

dialogues through false documentaries. Founded in 1999 by Walid Raad, this fictional organization blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction through a series of documentary style works investigating the socio-political complexity of Lebanon.[ii] The work presented references the historical background of Beirut, with characters and situations that are often fictional. This is not readily apparent though, and the work can make powerful statements on methods of violence inflicted on a population. Perhaps Raad prefers borderline fictions to a difficult reality as a way to uncover and reveal the truth.

This approach to fiction and rumours was utilised in preparatory exercises with the participants prior to investigating the sites for their own narratives. To build a group dynamic and begin the collaborative process the participants were encouraged to walk around a studio room and greet each other as a warm-up. I then asked the participants to stop and chat casually, sharing an invented rumour with one another. The recipient of the rumour would take the narrative and continue walking around until encountering someone else and then embellish and change the rumour they had just heard, effectively passing it on. The concept was to be able to map a rumours movement through a group of people, share narratives and build stories. It was acknowledged by all the participants that word of mouth was a powerful means of communication in the city. Having lived for almost two generations in a civil crisis that curtailed freedom of speech, this was often the best form of communication. It was interesting to note that the rumour exercise was played separately with the three groups and yet strong similarities were found.

Rumours of surveillance and paranoia of informers and spies pervaded the groups. In one it was a theory that the roof antennas of buildings were monitoring mobile communication, in another it was that hidden cameras where spying on the group, in the last it was that members of Lotos were a collation of British and American foreign intelligence specialists enlisted to gather information from the participants. Most strikingly, there was one specific rumour that was born from each group and was exactly the same. This was the imminent bombardment of Beirut by Israel before the end of the summer. This seemed based on the recent trauma of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war, which saw heavy air raids over the city. Yet, the fact that the performance was scheduled for late August put a level of anxiety that would remain one of the many haunting factors of the production. After all it was the prior summer of 2008 when Hezbollah, in a forceful show of defiance to the Lebanese Government, took to the streets armed and effectively

paralysed the city for two weeks. Taking over government offices, media networks and closing the airport they successfully demonstrated the power of a shadow government within the civic body. This was yet another spectre in the socio-political atmosphere.

Sites and Context

The three sites that were chosen fit ease of accessibility and availability as well as being interesting locations for a performance encounter that investigated the city. The first location was the studios of Zoukak, located on a small dead-end street (also known as a *zoukak* or alleyway) in the neighbourhood of Adliyeh. Located in a residential building the studio was a converted flat. As they had recently moved in it was mostly bare and allowed for scenography to encompass the space. An important element of utilising this site was to incorporate the surrounding neighbours who lived in the *zoukak* into the performance so they too could participate in the event. Adliyeh is a Christian quarter located just past the main latitude Green Line that divides the city between East and West Beirut. The area also lies just outside the final longitude Green Line that marks the City of Beirut from its urban-suburbs. The Green Line or demarcation line is military jargon for a defensive line that separates two areas. The separation of East and West Beirut did not exist until the civil war. Though the dividing line is no longer present as a geographic marker, it remains a strong psychogeographical divide in the city. Along its route army tanks are stationed at major intersections next to sandbag fortresses where military personnel are continually on guard. A *service* (shared taxi) from the centre charged double to cross the Green Line, even if it meant continuing the journey a few more streets to the performance site. Though the borders had opened and the civilian population had begun mixing, these markers held within them the friction of the past and the systems of urban living created by 15 years of militia rule.

The second site was located in the central district of Hamra, directly across from the main entrance to the American University of Beirut campus, one of the largest universities in the city. A large unfinished multi-story building complex held beneath it a seven floor underground parking garage. The building itself remained a construction site, but the underground car park was fully built and independently operated by a company called Central Parking. We negotiated the use of the lowest floor, which was vacant for the summer months. The floor was

labelled B7 for basement level seven, the lowest level of the garage. B7 is also the slang term for a portable shoulder rocket launcher, developed by the Soviet Union and commonly used during the civil war in Lebanon. The unfinished complex above the garage had many floors and extensions, all in raw concrete with exposed reinforcement bars extending in all directions from unfinished walls and floors. In the upper floors of the site lived various families of squatters and transient workers sharing communal toilets, laundry, and partitioned sleeping quarters. In order to arrive to the garage, the audience would walk through the ground level, which was littered with construction debris and large dugout vents leading to open water and floating rubbish. In the middle of the edifice was a central atrium opening to the sky. This gave a view of all the floors and hints of habitation, an old sofa on one landing, an infant's playpen on another and a laundry line on another. Near the centre of the ground floor were the two chrome doors of a functioning lift that led to the floors below. Each floor of the car park was identical except for the colour of the stripes running across the walls. You entered a distinctly Beirut scene above, to then exit into a non-space seven floors below. As the other floors of the car park remained operational, the performance was integrated into the use of the space, sharing the lifts and the entrance with a variety of people picking up and dropping off their vehicles.

The third site was Luna Park, an amusement park built in the late sixties that continued to function throughout the war, surviving the many bombardments in its vicinity. Located in the district of Manara, Luna Park borders the Mediterranean Sea and Hamam al Askari, a military zone that divides the coastal area in two sections. Visiting the park during the day gave the impression of decay and abandonment, the rides in various states of disrepair. Discarded shells of bumper cars, pieces of rusted machinery, and spare animal rides covered by thick canvas bags dotted the scene. When families would wander in with their children, the operators would turn on the rides from electrical boxes with exposed wires. The rides would spring into action, creaking and moaning as they moved. Most of the families were composed of woman wearing *hijab* surrounded by children. The owner of the site was a practicing Shiite Muslim, who granted the production use of the space as long as nothing affected the functioning of the park. From his point of view if the site was running uninterrupted and the performance brought public to grounds, it was good business. The rides continued with Arabic pop music

sporadically blaring out of overhead speakers, keeping a chaotic rhythm and tune to the event.

As with all the sites, the fact that the performance was integrated into a daily routine of the larger surroundings enabled the pieces to exist as a type of microperformance within an existing environment. The city itself seeped into the performances as passers-by, who had no idea that there was an event taking place, became witnesses to the production. The narratives the participants created became part of this large structure through interaction with the urban elements in their vicinity. One example was the integration of street children, who were incorporated into the workshops. They watched cautiously from a distance in the beginning and gradually incorporated themselves. Though none of them specifically performed in the piece, they were present in the work and were often mistaken for performers by the public. At Zoukak they were the children playing in the streets, who lived in the area. At Central Parking, they were the children living in the squatted construction site above, who wandered down to observe the strangers playing in their space. At Luna Park there was a variety of street kids, who would be chased away by the ride operators and attach themselves to the group for fun and safety.

Structure and Meaning

In order to begin hybridising the memories, stories, rumours and myths that the participants shared with the group to devise performance, I asked them to interact with their given sites through a series of exercises. During one core devising exercise I asked them to take a memory about Beirut and superimpose it on the location. This was done by observing the details and flow of the space and then leading the rest of the group on an interactive guided tour of the memory as it would have unfolded had it actually occurred there. This began fusing memory, myth, and rumours into a narrative structure represented by action and location. Many of the guided tours themselves were unique and intense performance actions, taking the group to an entirely new location. The intensity of a shared imaginative journey allowed structural elements such as industrial ventilation to be mountain winds, B7 signs to be potential bombs, and metal floor plates to be enormous obstacles to be leapt over. As each group integrated the stories and actions that were developed from their memories, elements of fact and fiction became blurred. Each individual participant was then requested to build their own relationship to

the site, finding an area that they would claim for a series of solo performance actions. This was followed by devising a series of kinetic and physical group actions, giving the performance moments of ritualistic solitary stillness, which then transformed into high-energy group activity. This formula was utilised at all three sites, and allowed the participants to investigate and tell their own stories, whilst also developing a larger structure that interlinked the whole programme. The final result was a collage of interlinking actions, ideas and metaphors that overlapped from location to location.

There was a leaning towards developing pieces that dealt with death or union, reflecting the dynamics of Beirut and participants' experiences being raised during the war. This similarity across the three devising groups could be characterised as a dialogue between *thanatos* and *eros*. This was exemplified in certain characters and actions, for example at two sites a narrative of marriage was developed with a bride becoming a central character. At Luna Park the bride began the performance as an abandoned corpse by the side of the road. At Zoukak a lost bride led the audience to a participatory street celebration where she married a wooden marionette. Images of death were portrayed at Central Parking, where

Figure 14

the elements of fear and unease became central to the piece. Integrating humorous dialogue during violent interrogation scenes were meant to display irony but in the attempt for comedy became even darker. The performance at Zoukak ended with the participants observing a fireworks display off a balcony that overlooked the city. Far from being celebratory their sombre appearance situated them as witnesses to one of the many bombing campaigns that washed over the city in sequential waves of violence.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the content devised for the performance lent itself to a work that had difficulties finding a balance between harsh realities and playful fictions. Even light-hearted uses of poetry and text were delivered with a starkness that contributed to an underlying tension. As the pieces were happening simultaneously, they were generally non-linear, repeating segments and actions in a series of loops. In order to facilitate the flow of the audience to and through the three sites as well as build the rumour of the show it was important to set some obstacles. *Triangulated City* was promoted as a multi-location performance occurring at three secret locations. When asked by friends what the locations were, participants were encouraged to invent sites as an answer. The audience was invited to meet at a predetermined time at a choice of three different meeting points in the city. Thus they had an option to begin their exploratory journey at one of the three sites. Each meeting-point was located walking distance to the performance site, but situated in such a place as to not reveal its exact location. From this meeting point, they were guided to the performance location as part of the performance. Once the participants arrived at the site, a series of texts, images, and spoken and visual clues revealed the location of the next two sites. The intrigue heightened interaction with the performers, with audience speaking directly to performers to reveal information, or speaking amongst themselves about what clues they had figured out. I witnessed one young lady run out of the lift at Central Parking to show her friends that she had received the address of the next location on her mobile and they all ran back into the lift. The element of playing in the city and of gaming was evident and successful. The intention was to instigate people to traverse the urban landscape taking the memory of the performance they had just seen with them to the next site and make connections between the images unfolding before them.

I encouraged moments of group performance that linked the segments of solo performance. Each workshop participant was encouraged to build their own

relationship to the site by claiming an area for a series of solo actions. I also directed them as an ensemble, creating collaborative group sequences of kinetic and physical actions. This format was utilised at all three sites in order to give the participants space to devise their own narratives whilst also developing a larger structure. This group structure had to combine with the site and then expand to fit the whole programme of three simultaneous locations. The final result was a collage of interlinking concepts made up of actions, ideas and metaphors. Audience members reacted strongly; demonstrating that attending a site-specific piece in Beirut inevitably resonates with their own sets of personal narratives. For example, any audience member who was raised in the city had a special relationship to Luna Park. It was a place of fantasy that had become run-down. Going to Central Parking meant entering into a construction zone in Hamra, one of the hardest hit areas during the war with its own memory provocations. Added to this was the action of going down into the basement, the area of a building commonly used to hide in during the waves of militia fighting that passed through a neighbourhood. Entering a flat in the Christian quarters on the other side of the Green Line conjured yet another set of images, assumptions and memories.

The sites themselves affected audience reception through the haunting of place that lingered around the spaces. As Marvin Carlson theorises, all audience reception is affected by cultural and social memory as it 'supplies the codes and strategies that shape reception' (Carlson 2001, 5). An aesthetic encounter is informed by the spectres of past experiences allowing an understanding and organisation of present conventions and systems. *Triangulated City* remained a series of performances balancing between a need to devise a new type of performance encounter in Beirut while struggling with the weight of its context. How this encounter unfolded at each site varied in structure, yet remained informed by the same gesture of haunted memory. The next subsection will focus on some of the key performers at each site as well as the actions that brought the audience towards active engagement.

Performers and Actions

At Zoukak, the audience was instructed to meet at a large busy intersection in Adliyeh near Furn el Chebbak. As the audience gathered, a young woman dressed as a bride approached them and asked them if they had seen a wedding. She claimed to have lost her wedding party and requested the audience to join her,

having some of them carry her train behind her. The fact that she was a practicing Muslim woman wearing a *hijab* and performing as a lost character in the Christian quarter took on a new poignancy that was not lost on any of the attending audience as well as passers-by. Upon arriving to the *zoukak* she was greeted by the neighbours who participated from their windows and balconies throwing rice and cheering. A wedding ceremony ensued where she was married to a wooden marionette, followed by folkloric dancing and singing. Performers, neighbours and audience members surrounded a large banquet set along the street sharing food and conversation. The celebration then shifted to the interior of the flat where the core actions of the performance took place. Replacing the celebratory gathering outside the performance then shifted into a sombre mood. The performers went from being active participants in the social drama of the street to becoming reclusive characters that seemed lost in a space from which all the narrative of place had been eradicated. The flat was designed to look as if it were completely overgrown and abandoned, one of the many destroyed homes in the city. Yet it was also in a newly renovated building, as if the space itself had been forgotten in the reconstruction of the area.

One of the performers at Zoukak was Chrystèle Khodr, a young dancer interested in physical theatre. Her contributions to the devising process were influenced and inspired by the rituals of her Christian upbringing. During one of the workshops she shared a memory of sitting with friends on a swinging bench on her grandmother's veranda. She reminisced about how as children they would sit rocking back and forth every evening while the sun went down. This had been during one of the periods of intense militia fighting when schools had been shut and there was no electricity for over half a year. One evening as it became dark, the electricity flowed into the area and a Virgin Mary sculpture that was directly across from the veranda suddenly became brightly illuminated. For the small children this was an awe-inspiring moment, associating the return of power and normality to an almost supernatural apparition. Translating this reliance on religion as an emotional survival tool and combining it with the domestic work of woman during the war she developed an action based around kneading dough and making bread (fig. 15, left). Over the period of three days Chrystèle worked and reworked the same large piece of dough over and over. She also recreated part of a wedding ritual where coins are inserted into a piece of dough and stuck above the doorway of a newlywed's home. By the end of three days the main dough was enormous, growing to about a metre in

Figure 15

diameter. Pieces of dough were stuck above every doorway as well as along the balcony and stairs. In the intense heat of the Lebanese summer the small pieces of dough baked dry, each containing a secret object within.

Another performer in the group, Hanan Dirani, was interested in portraying elements of loss. She sat in a broken chair with a series of old photographs that covered the wall behind her. Hanan imagined herself as a middle-aged woman who had lost everyone she knew. She arranged and rearranged the discarded and broken items that constructed the world around her, attempting to make order out of the chaos. Her main points of interest though were the old photographs on the wall. She would observe them carefully and then scan the audience who were walking around the flat. When she found a person or selection of people who seemed to fit her memory she walked up to them and spoke to them quietly, engaging them in her story and in her memory (fig. 15, right). She then posed the audience members into a position that would resemble the photo, recreating a living tableau with them. Finally she gave them a warm hug and thanked them for the visit and walked away casually, like a family member entering a lost world and then abruptly forgotten again.

Zoukak as a site held an atmosphere of a locale where the actions that were happening like memories haunting a place remained disconnected from its present

reality. Beginning the performances at dawn meant that the audience encountered a shift in the light and a transition in the ambience of the piece. The performers at Zoukak wove in and out of doorways, rooms, hallways and stairwells creating actions across the flat itself and the common areas. As the performance began with an outdoor wedding celebration and then moved indoor to a home in a residential area, the ensemble of participants were often thought of as a family unit. Audience members attempted to understand the work through the relationship the participants had to each other. One of the biggest obstacles in developing the Zoukak performance was that as a group they remained the most disconnected in their engagement with one another. The participants did not develop any strong group scenes so that after the initial public celebration, they went into both a physical and mental interior space. This made the atmosphere inside more disconnected, intense and darker as the piece continued. This was also due to the structure of shared authorship and roles that including having different coordinators at each site with their own style and vision.

Very few members of the public remained for the entire series of actions at any one location. From observing each performance in its entirety I was able to discern a system in audience engagement. The performances all ran almost three hours and included loops and repeats throughout. Though there was movement of public in and out of the space throughout the performance, the larger groups came in two waves, one at the beginning and another approximately ninety minutes later. This was evident at all three sites and demonstrated that for the most part, the audience arrived at the location, spent a little over an hour watching the performance, and then moved to the next site. By this time a series of clues and images had informed them where the next performance was located. This meant that each member of the audience would have witnessed an entirely different series of actions depending on the choices they made including which site they began at, what or who they chose to engage with, how long they stayed and at what point they arrived at the next location.

At Central Parking the audience was led to the performance location by the young girls who lived in the squatted homes in the construction site above the car park. As they had been participating throughout the process by watching and

Figure 17

playing with us, they were asked to bring the audience to see the show. The public
met on the stairs of a well-known pub near the car park and awaited the
performance. The girls arrived and handed out small triangles printed with a
section of a map. Confusion developed, as the people attending the show were not
certain what these young girls were doing or what the triangles meant. The
audience followed them towards the construction site and into the chrome lifts that
led them down to B7. The sense of uncanny was heightened as the audience was
moved from a familiar zone into one that was inhabited in a new way. As the
doors of the lift opened they exited into total darkness, punctuated by spots of
lights were performers were engaged in a series of actions. The ensemble at Central
Parking had the most logistical challenges with scheduling, use of the site, and
generating material. Yet they were also the group that worked the most
successfully together, collaborating and engaging with each other's ideas as well as
working independently. The performers were represented as a team, with
costumes that evoked the design of the space (fig. 17). It was as if they were both
employees of the garage as well as lost characters that had made this empty space
their temporary abode. The work produced was both visually stunning and
conceptually rigorous. The space itself was punctuated with a scenography that
encompassed all the senses. Yet there still remained an emotional darkness that was
described by some audience members to me as 'intimidating' and 'disconcerting'.

This sense of the uncanny was punctuated by the actions of Dima Tannir, one of the performers. Dima had just completed university that summer with a degree in graphic design. She enjoyed performing and wanted to portray a lost little girl whose parents had abandoned her in the garage. When the workshops first began, Dima had almost dropped out of the project all together. She told me that she was not allowed out as her parents had discovered that she had a boyfriend even though she was in an arranged marriage. Dima did not wear a *hijab* and considered herself secular, as did her parents, but the tradition of arranged marriages continues amongst many Lebanese Muslims. The character of this lost child took on an added relevance, as she created a world for herself in a corner of the garage that resembled a prison cell (fig 18). Various markings on the wall in chalk both counted the time and depicted the naïve cartoons of a child. Small plastic soldiers fought an imaginary battle in a large section of still water that had grown from cracks in the floor. She playfully tossed marbles at them drowning them in the puddle. When the audience engaged with her she played with them, incorporating them into her world and back out again. Dima also performed with a small caged bird we had bought in the market. She took the bird home after rehearsals and developed a friendship with it, dialoguing back and for through shared whistles. During one of the workshops she reminisced about a beautiful blackbird she had owned in her room as a child. Upon returning from a family outing they discovered a sniper had shot the bird, the bullet travelling directly through her bedroom window into the birds body. When questioned why the
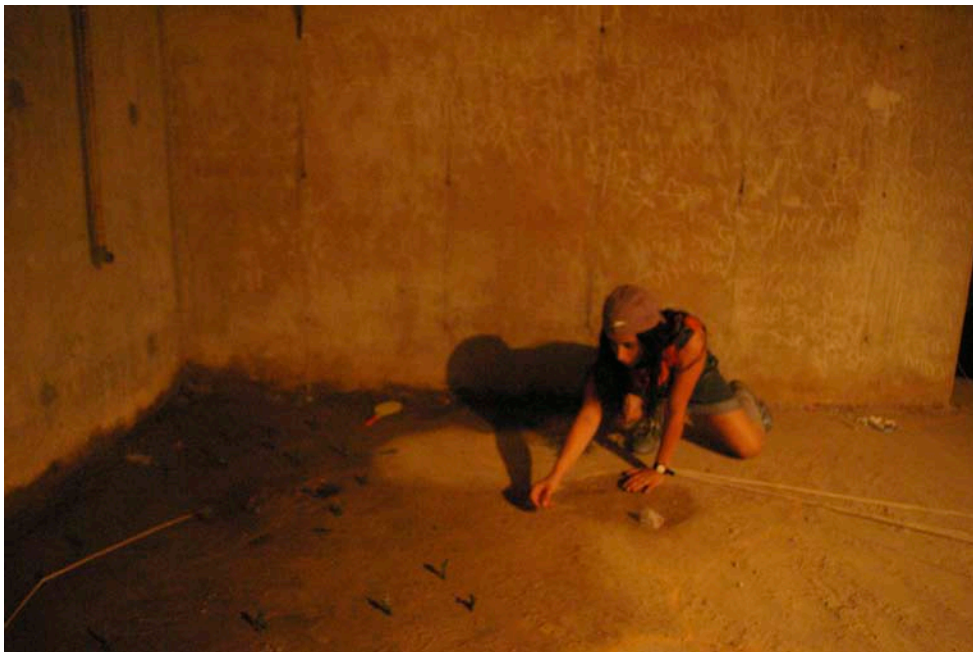

Figure 18

bird may have been killed, she nonchalantly stated that it was probably because the sniper was bored and it was target practice. Though her reasoning was true it also revealed the vulnerability of the population during the war. Sniper fire was one of the main methods of controlling movement through the city by the militias. This memory haunted the space and was brought alive by this action, as if the encounter was both a memory relived and exorcised.

Junaid Sarieddeen, one of the members of Zoukak, explored another use of memory as narrative. He was interested in developing a piece that responded to an old audio recording he owned on a cassette tape. His mother recorded the track when they lived in Saudi Arabia, having escaped the war in Beirut. It was a recording of his brother when he was a small child, reminiscing about the city and in particular mentions Luna Park. The irony of the conversation is that while he narrates his child perspective on Beirut he is sporadically shooting off a toy gun. Thus the sound of the popping gun mixes with the narration of his memory. Junaid's automobile was the only vehicle in the car park for the performance and became an important element for some of the group scenes. For his performance he collected old cassettes that littered the interior of the vehicle as the audio piece played loudly inside. Using large clear packaging tape he ran a strand of tape from the cassette to the large support pillars of the garage. This performance installation extended the audio of these cassettes to resonate with the surrounding architecture. During the workshops I expanded this idea and created entire walls out of the tape

Figure 19

alternating them with the same width of empty space between each strip (fig 19). Thus a huge clear labyrinth was created between pillars, connecting all the performance sections together. The transparent walls appeared as spider webbing, sticking to audience members who ventured too close to them.

Luna Park also retained this element of dark desperation and humour but in a kinetic and expansive environment. The participants all reacted to the amusement park by seeking out the reverse elements of its obvious use as a place of recreation. An example of this was a claw crane game, emblazoned with the words "good luck", which offered only a few sad items littered amongst the empty spaces. The game echoed with the repetitive sound of a Chinese digital pop tune. Another example was the haunted house ride, which brought the spectator into a series of dark turns where nothing happened because most the hydraulic systems of the spooky items had by then broken. Instead a single light would go on to illuminate a dusty mask whilst sound effects played from overhead speakers. Other rides functioned better but had the same sense of despair. The large boat ride that swung back and forth, groaned as it moved in one direction and squeaked as it shot back in the other. The rusted machinery of the various rides, combined with the blaring Arabic pop streaming from crackling speakers gave the impression of an entertainment centre desperately trying to keep the party going.

The audience was invited to a gather by a car park behind the site and in front of various beach clubs that border the sea. Almost the entire Lebanese coastline is privatised and access to the sea is mostly available through paid entry to one of these clubs. As the public arrived they encountered one of the performers, a dancer wearing a wedding veil strewn in a death pose across the pavement. To local Beiruties this locale and image would make an immediate connection to the violence that has never fully left the politics of the country. In 2007 a powerful car bomb killed parliament member Walid Eido and nine other associates on this same street[iii]. Though the road had been repaired the site had taken on a new meaning. These kinds of stories litter the urban landscape of Beirut and inform any site-specific work produced there. The other performers, who all wore a series of black and white striped clothing that gave them an air of both carnival and funeral, gradually met the bride. One of them carried her into Luna Park as the audience followed and placed her in one of the rides. As the ride spun her into the air, the performers dispersed into the park to create their actions. Like the other sites, the

space invited audience to engage with each performer's scene as well as their moments of dynamic group play.

The state of decay throughout the site, with its thwarted attempts at renovation, seemed to mimic the city itself. The futility of reconstruction followed by destruction and then again reconstruction inspired Carole Ammoun, a dancer, to respond with a performance action. She moved a large chunk of concrete cinderblock across the park, into the central rollercoaster, and up one of the access ramps to the top [fig 10]. Like Sisyphus, she only reached the top to again come down, returning to the bottom and across the park. Her use of material reflected one of the main building blocks of the city. Witnessing her act, the audience could share the physical exertion she underwent to complete her task. Though trained in contemporary dance, she opted to perform a physical endurance piece that would be read as a poetic statement. Another participant, Roger Ghanem, was a performer and producer who worked in children's television. He devised a palpable response to the violence of the city by investigating the park and choosing to interact with the games of violence. These were exemplified by a shooting video game where points were scored by hunting militias on a screen, or a tank ride for kids that sat next to the same mechanism but shaped as a duck. Though the group felt it was not fitting with the space he was adamant about walking around the park with an animal heart, bought fresh from a butcher. As he slowly walked he squeezed a pulse into the heart and smelled it, sometimes using a small blade to repeatedly puncture it with tiny stabs. It was acts such as these that
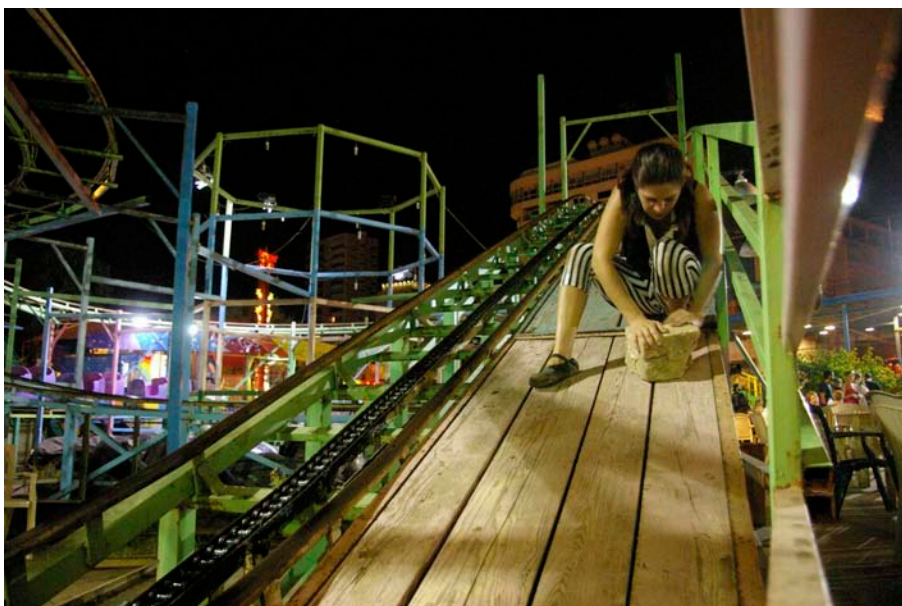

Figure 20

made me reconsider Fisher's description of actions being interpreted as a 'poetic metaphor with collective agency' (Medina 2007, 116). Roger's obsession with the macabre caused controversy amongst the group as they felt it had little to do with the major themes running through their actions, but it was interesting to note how it reflected the larger dynamics at play in both the group and in their own view of the environment.

During the final date of the performance, the owner of Luna Park decided that the show would be cancelled about an hour before it was scheduled to begin. This was due to the fact that Ramadan had been scheduled a day earlier than expected by the Shiite religious leaders. From my interviews with locals in Lebanon it seems this discrepancy happens every year as the holiday is meant to begin after the waxing crescent moon first comes into view, which varies depending on geographical location. According to Islamic tradition, after the viewing of the crescent moon the ninth month of the calendar begins. The differences arise because Sunni leaders allow the use of a telescope and Shiite leaders base it on astronomical calculations. This means that Ramadan often begins on separate days for the two sects without any way to be certain of the exact date it begins. Thus the last day of *Triangulated City* was scheduled to end the day before Ramadan began but instead fell on the first day. This meant that the performance would begin during the *Iftar* (إفطار) prayer, which marks the moment Muslims break their daylong fast.

The owner complained of the visibility of women's legs and arms in the performance and the macabre tone of the show and insisted it be cancelled for the holiday. He would not speak directly to any of the women in the production and observed the performance from his desk by the concessions. As an outsider to the local politics of the region, I had an amicable relationship with him. Though participants were furious about his behavior, I found he was within his rights to make demands upon the use of his site. After a candid and earnest conversation he allowed me to continue the performance, as long as certain parts were censored. In the end the participants performed, as they would have anyway, but at a later time in the evening. They also chose not to censor any actions but rather hid the elements of the performance that could be controversial from where his desk was located. This use of subterfuge and compromise seemed to parallel how most of Beirut social politics functioned.

Conclusion and Assessments

Triangulated City was a window into how participants in a collaborative workshop devised work that they felt represented their city. The performance itself was both a series of surreal moments housed within a site and an anachronistic grouping of disjointed actions. I found certain performance moments so disconnected that it was disconcerting. Yet each site also had powerful elements of interaction with the quotidian around it. There were times at all three sites where passersby became involved in the performance without having any idea what it was or why it was taking place. These accidental spectators were interesting to observe, as they were not part of the demographic that had intentionally arrived to see the work. The work itself was often challenging and stark. For example, the majority of the performers devised actions that spoke volumes of loss. The individual actions that were created could be considered the phantoms of the spaces the performance inhabited. This ghostly response to the site was directly informed by the chequered history of the locale and the city at large. The tension in the work could not have better represented the tension in the city itself. It would not have been possible to go to Beirut to create a socially engaged and site-responsive live art even without it being infused with this tension. This was an element that was born from the city and the participants' experience of living in the city, and merged into the workshops to be finally presented in the performances.

The workshops had been designed to divulge narratives about memory and rumours in the city, and to turn these into performance actions. They were as much about drama style warm-ups as they were about methods of communication, ways of approaching performance actions, and notions of site, costume and narrative. As stated earlier, the goal was not to work with performers interested in actor training and methods of recitation but with artists who were interested in exploring the boundaries of their practice. The context of the work was essential as the piece spoke less about acting virtuosity than about how a group of individuals choose to portray their own locale. The personal nature of the work meant that some participants took on an ownership of their pieces that spoke of a very intimate encounter, but it also meant that others resisted working collaboratively and rarely divulged any personal information that might have informed the larger piece. By the time of the presentation, many of the actions that each participant decided to take on as part of their performance role, had never been seen before. Other actions that had been rehearsed and developed for the performance did not appear. This

was partly due to communication between each group coordinator and myself as director, and partly a direct reflection of the city itself. Perhaps this technique of constant improvisation is also a technique for living in the city.

Discussions with the participants on their views on Beirut almost all mentioned its chaos factor as central, with binaries of creation and destruction as the most relevant description. *Triangulated City* left its own imprint on the spaces where the pieces took place, for a new narrative is now shared about those sites, an addition to the many-layered history that each locale already had. As Roger stated in an interview 'this performance doesn't finish with this performance, it is how we experience the city and we relate, it will continue after the performance'. Directing and facilitating such a project, in collaboration with a team whom I had never worked with before, proved very challenging. Though members of Lotos Collective were present to ensure the production and design was to a high technical standard, there was a directorial tension. I realised that there was a difference in sharing the authorship of content and sharing direction. As I was at multiple locations I left it to the coordinators to implement the final performance work after I ran the devising workshops, leaving the process disjointed and unfinished.

Albeit each site in Beirut had all the elements of site-responsive socially engaged work that I was seeking in my practice, only Central Parking met my expectations of the collaboration. It was at this location that a cohesive group of participants was led by Junaid, the President of Zoukak and supported by Johnmichael Rossi, an associate member of Lotos and a theatre-maker. This extra support as well as a collaborative approach from the coordinator assisted the participants to work well from workshop to performance. They delivered their devised content into the proposed framework with (what I perceived from a directorial standpoint) ease and clarity. At Luna Park the structure and format that I applied was not utilised by the site coordinator, instead he chose to develop a narrative-based approach from his training in text-based drama works. The approach came from a different method of performance-making, one that relies on a pre-exiting text to structure the actions in a given space of time, and caused a disjointed series of actions to unfold. At Zoukak the coordinator and her partner developed a very separate performance from the group, choosing to utilise the space as a locale to test new ideas unrelated to the workshop process. This created a performance space where the characters were not interlinked well in theory or in practice. As I was unable to fully dedicate my time to each site, I relied heavily on

the coordinators to direct in my place. This caused structural issues of timing and rhythm where the communication between what I had delivered as a workshop method and what was implemented did not match. In writing this thesis I am aware that had I been able to dedicate the time necessary to be at each site throughout the final devising moments, I could have brought all the elements into play that had been developed throughout the workshops and melded them together into a symphony of actions.

In retrospect I realise the importance of my own authorial voice within the dialogue of performance making in order to create a work that is sustainable in interest and conclusive in structure and timing. The resulting authorial tension is something I explored in my own solo work by responding to my experiences during the three residencies abroad. Perhaps my solo practice is a way to regain a sense of the performing-self with isolated influence and only self-direction. This will be explored further in the *Artist as Performer* section of the Conclusion. Though there were structural issues of implementation and delivery at Zoukak and Luna Park, at Central Parking the coordinator successfully integrated my proposed structure with the content devised in the workshops into a final piece. Central Parking portrayed quite a dark representation of the city through its narratives. Combined with being underground in what seemed like a bunker, the site was dimly lit, adding a sense of unease to the performance. The show often included full blackouts with zero visibility and audience members remarked to me after that it felt aggressive and tense. Yet for Diala Dajani, one of the performers at this site, it was a celebration of the city. For her, it was a coming together of many different creative people to tell their own stories in their own ways. Her feedback was valuable as she was clearly able to ascertain that their own personal feedback and input generated the performance narratives and actions. As Diala stated to me, it was 'mainly through talking (that) we devised, through conversation'. This reaffirms Kester's proposal that dialogue is integral to devising socially engaged practice as 'it is reframed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict' (Kester 2004, 8).

Triangulated City added to this body of research by discovering that the work itself created a new narration within a space, effectively place-making in its wake. The three locations had so many stories, rumours and myths associated with them. In the end *Triangulated City* will be one more of the narratives associated

with those sites. The fieldwork completed during the residency has demonstrated how place can also haunt a locale long after its attempted eradication. I realised the power of place when it became clear that there had been numerous attempts to eradicate it from many spaces in Beirut. The analyses of *Triangulated City* in this chapter has demonstrated how place making can both inform and help narrate a space, ultimately giving a site a function and a history. I return also to Ricoeur's theorising of memory, specifically with the power of memory to create space. According to Ricoeur memory itself provides an intimate internal space of its own (Ricoeur 2004, 98). He sees place as a third space after body and architecture, one that gets superimposed 'on the grid of localities' by its users (Ibid, 150). *Triangulated City* functioned as a method of superimposition and thus of place making. The body of work I present here originally sought out to test collaborative authorship and the social system as an artistic medium, in addition to this it has become evident in the development of this written thesis that the outcome was three varied experiments in place making. This has become an important component of the theoretical framework that supports my creative methodology. This concept will be expanded in the final chapter, looking at the importance of place-making, my own role as artist and performer and assess and analyse how the research may continue on past these three case studies.

Figure 21

Endnotes Chapter 4

ⁱ The 44 Places To Go in 2009, NY Times Travel section, last accessed on 19 June
2011,http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/01/11/travel/20090111
_DESTINATIONS.html
   Lonely Planet Travel secret #3: Beirut, last accessed on 19 June 2011,
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/lebanon/beirut/travel-tips-and-
articles/1580

ⁱⁱ The Atlast Group homepage, last accessed on 19 June 2011,
http://www.theatlasgroup.org,

ⁱⁱⁱ NOW Lebanon, 'MP Walid Eido assassinated in Manara car bombing',
last accessed on 20 June 2011,
http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=3710

'…every event is a particular application of the formal framework.'
(De Certeau 1984, 23)
~De Certeau

Case Study and Chapter Review

Chapter Review

The practice-led research presented here has demonstrated how three models of socially engaged practice can include methods of shared authorship in a site-responsive working environment. Each of the varied projects made use of the shared authorial voice as a generative tool. I have proposed the social system as the core artistic medium and attempted to identify the operational methods used in the practice that have enabled proactive community engagement whilst generating the aesthetic form. The definition of artistic medium is broad, encompassing all the actions and narratives within a social milieu. My aim as facilitator and author was to direct the various elements that were borrowed from the social system and channel them into a single time-based representation. The three practice chapters were an attempt to analyse and map the tactics that were present in this creative process as well as investigate their outcomes.

Chapter One laid out the foundation for the work presented. Within this chapter the influence of live art and applied drama were discussed, presenting the term *applied live art* as a way to define the practice. Contextualising the work within the field of performance is the survey of practitioners, offering historical precedents and influences to the practice. The theoretical framework that encompasses the research is introduced through Turner's binary view of the aesthetic and social drama and Friere's learner-centred approach to facilitating, combining this with theories of inter-subjectivity and dialogue. How this interaction is theorised is framed by Bourriaud and Kester's theories on aesthetics. Finally Davies view of the generative act of art making as a performance, gives the research a focus on process as form, analysing the workshop period as well as the product. Combined this framework binds the practice-led research as an investigation into collaborative authorship in site-responsive performance.

Chapter 2 discussed *Napoli Scorticata* and offered a definition of customs, culture and cultural artefacts in order to view community and society from an analytical perspective. In defining how these elements play into the preliminary

generative period of the practice, this chapter outlined how primary contextual research was formative to the work. This specified the objects of engagement within the social milieu that could be reintegrated into the aesthetic form. In responding to a site by incorporating the cultural artefacts of the surrounding community, the practice engaged that same community by re-presenting recognisable social elements into a performance format. *Napoli Scorticata* was the first experiment in the society-as-medium approach by re-interpreting elements of cultural artefacts into a performance. As a result of the work, I decided to expand the authorial voice in order to produce the content collaboratively. The work in Ghana offered me the opportunity to experiment with this notion.

Chapter 3 analyses *Youth Visions* and gives an account of how I merged the method of identification and assessment of cultural artefacts with a participant-centred working process. This melding of the practical experiments was put in place in order to test the boundaries of shared authorship. The chapter points to the differences in creating a work that is a response to social dynamic as opposed to creating a work that intervenes in the social system. Situated within an applied context with an educational approach, *Youth Visions* serves to demonstrate why the other two case studies are not considered community arts initiatives. The chapter also assesses the working strategy of the workshop model as a generative form and how, via that model, participants' personal narratives were integrated into the performance. This begins to clarify my creative methodology, adding methods of devising and models of development to the practice-led research as a whole. As a result of working in Ghana, I became aware of the socio-political responsibility of working in a site-responsive socially engaged approach. Seeking to re-politicise my work I sought out Beirut as a final locale for this investigation, in order to integrate the political into the research from a social not governmental perspective.

Chapter 4 examines this perspective through *Triangulated City* and brings together aspects of the previous two case studies by addressing the integration of site-responsive practice with content generated in a participatory workshop series that reflects its socio-political environment. Working in Beirut allowed me to merge the use of cultural artefacts as narrative inspiration with user-generated content. The city as source of inspiration returned to the forefront and along with it all the complexities and challenges of being situated in Beirut. *Triangulated City* also demonstrated the risk of overextending a participatory approach without direct facilitation, leading to issues with structure and organisation. The challenges in the

collaborative format revealed to me the importance of my own position as author, creator and instigator of dialogue and communication. Finally, analysing the project and theorising sustainability of the practice revealed the importance of place making when working in a site-responsive context. How place making was present not only in Beirut but also in all three case studies will be examined further in this chapter.

The beginning impetus for my work is site and this is immediately followed by context. This thesis offers this construct as the *place of performance:* a central point around which constellate the elements of architecture, history, people, customs, and narratives. An assessment strategy for the outcomes of this working method and a proposal for future development in the field are addressed in the following section of this chapter. In terms of collaborative authorship, I have sought to delineate the methods in which the devising process unfolded and determine how and where in the process the participants' voices were incorporated. Instead of extracting information from a locale and reinterpreting the data into a new format, the work sought to borrow and share. By this I mean that the work borrows its narrative structures from the existing social drama and then shares with the participants a mode of reinterpretation. I utilise the term borrow as the work is created always in situ, and re-presented back to the public from where it came. None of the three case studies was created with the intention to tour or to expand into something other than what they were: site-responsive performances that engaged the local community.

The focus of my practice as presented in this thesis did not arise from a need to meet pre-existing targets of community development or to propose a method of arts integration into areas that may be considered socially and economically challenged. The affective quality of this type of cultural engagement may be viewed as outcome strands of the practice-led research. Though the research borrows terms and methods from applied drama it did not only seek participants who may have been considered in-need or at-risk. Though community development, outreach and arts integration may be elements present in the outcomes of the work, the research centres on the fact that the practice exists *within* specific social and cultural contexts and not because of or in spite of them.

To generate the performance material I identify the workshop method as a central component in my creative methodology. For all three case studies I demonstrated how the workshop series I devised and implemented culminated in a final presentation. These workshops are equally an important element of the research as the final product. Within the workshops lie the generative dialogical components that make the practice socially sustainable. This use of inter-subjectivity and dialogue has been central to my process of delivering a series of co-authored works. The inclusion of a participant-centred approach to devising was tested in *Youth Visions*. It was in *Youth Visions* that the facilitation of conversation between groups of youths created the narratives within the framework that I proposed. Learning from this method, I integrated this participant-centred approach into *Triangulated City* along with the methods for responding to site that I had developed in *Napoli Scorticata*. *Triangulated City* was an opportunity to merge the methods tested in *Napoli Scorticata* and *Youth Visions* into a single format. This was an experiment in creating an aesthetic form that was site-responsive and site-specific, as well as collaborative and participant-centred. The result of theorising this palimpsest of methods was the realisation that place making was a central outcome of all three projects. It was while analysing *Triangulated City* that this factor became apparent as I attempted to understand the difficult demographics of the political landscape and the sustainability of the work.

The devising of a performance as a workshop series was originally introduced in Naples as a *laboratorio* (laboratory). This was to differentiate the work from paid stage work involving multiple rehearsals of a pre-existing text. The *laboratorio* was to be a space for experimentation, learning and exchange. *Laboratorio* as a term was recommended to me as the most successful way to invite participation into a collaborative artistic process. This proved evident as I had an interest in engaging a wide group of people potentially interested in performance work, but not solely based on virtuosity. For each case study, participants were invited to join a multi-session workshop that incorporated performance training, devising exercises, narrative building and a role in a final production presentation. The workshops were developed by incorporating my knowledge of performance making and directing with my experience of teaching and facilitating. Basing my pedagogical philosophy on Freire, the workshops were always participant-centred,

seeking to share my aesthetic vision of performance with the participants. This meant reformulating the rehearsal process so that it was less about repetition and memorisation of pre-existing information, rather about discovery and devising of new material. In order to see the progress through stages, by the third or fourth workshop there was always a performance presentation, which functioned as a kind of preview. This was a time when the participants would present the work we had developed up to that point. This allowed for the important element of improvisation and risk to keep the energy active and avoid a notion that work needed to be polished and clean. In each case study the workshop format was devised in advance like a lesson plan or curriculum, each session devised in a cumulative manner so that every session built off the last. The final presentation was then the natural conclusion to a planned series of events, the practical framework of my practice.

The format of the workshops may have been similar throughout all the case studies but how the content was generated changed from project to project. During *Napoli Scorticata* the performance actions and narratives were developed in advance and then moulded and arranged to fit each participant. The workshops were treated more as a devising rehearsal, where the action-based script would be rewritten and revised. The characters in the narrative were seen as archetypes and their roles presented by performers who could claim that archetype and make it their own. The work sought to bring to life myths, legends and customs by hybridising them with contemporary characters in the social drama, such as the *casalinga,* or the *pescatori*. By basing the narrative actions on local culture and customs, this case study resulted in a piece of work with a strong aesthetic approach and that also reflected its context. In outlining a method with which to investigate the cultural surroundings of a site, and create work informed by that investigation, this experiment in site-responsive devising became the starting point for the next two projects.

Youth Visions built upon this framework of site-responsive devising and integrated an applied approach by adding a participant-centred method to the process. With the young people participating in the writing of the work, the content was opened up to a new form of co-authorship. This provided an added method of deriving the narratives from the social system, directly via the participants. In emphasising the pedagogical component in *Youth Visions*, the work was able to both integrate the elements of site and society used in *Napoli Scorticata*

while sharing the authorial voice. *Youth Visions* was structured as a platform where local youth could discuss sexual health topics with each other openly and subsequently with a public audience. It also developed my creative methodology by having participants author the content of the work within my pre-developed framework.

Influential to this development was witnessing a traditional West African village festival, which helped me to understand how local tribes blurred the lines between their social systems and performance encounters in a live event. My decision to present *Youth Visions* in the format of a village festival was to create a direct cultural parallel between the aesthetic and the social. As the workshops were an integration of arts and health training, finding a balance between the two was often challenging as each group working in the project had various needs. The varying degrees of wants and needs present when working in socially engaged practice became a focal point. Understanding how to navigate a new cultural backdrop, I had to develop a piece that expanded the boundaries of my investigation while addressing the needs of all the different parties involved. As artistic director of these projects, the managerial responsibilities of equal access to a devising platform became central to my role as a practitioner.

Triangulated City involved all the elements of social-engagement and site-responsive work included in the first two projects and addressed the question of socio-political awareness. The case study itself was a way to move back into creating a work without a pedagogical perspective but retaining the learner-centred approach. The workshops created for *Triangulated City* were all participant-centred, and lead to a collection of actions, discussions and manoeuvres in collaboration. As mentioned previously I decided what seemed essential after *Napoli Scorticata* and *Youth Visions* was to address the political implications of this developing methodology. I chose to focus on the socio-political as in each of the locations where I resided during the projects there was a real force of confrontation in the political arena. This is to be found anywhere groups of people work together, for nothing is more political than the polis, the body politic that makes up the social system. It was this body politic that the research sought to address through the affective quality of interaction, itself a modality of shared authorship. *Triangulated City* served as a useful experiment, resulting in a politicised work based solely on memory and rumour. The methods of generative storytelling to devise the work were very subjective, as memories themselves are narratives that vary from

individual to individual. *Triangulated City* embraced the discrepancy in how fact is presented, and gave me an understanding and appreciation of the subjective nature between fact and fiction.

The process of collaborating with participants to author these works has highlighted the importance of dialogue as one of the main generative and performative actions. Bourriaud's theory of inter-subjectivity as a creative force was present throughout all three case studies, indicating that socially engaged work has an element of relational aesthetics at its core. But it was important to move beyond the possibility and towards the dynamics of encounter. Relational aesthetics sets up a situation and allows the possibility of inter-relationships to form within that space independently of an action or facilitator. Dialogical aesthetics sets up a situation through a guided conversation within that created space that allows the inter-subjective to unfold. From my understanding of these theories, it seemed that to further that encounter I would need to set up a situation and a conversation and carry the content of that inter-subjective moment through to a final aesthetic presentation. This method would then utilise the moments of arranged inter-subjectivity as a medium to re-work and re-present.

This method also allowed the practice to expand outside the boundaries of the practice itself. How participants related to one another in the workshops, how audience members related to the performed event, and how each of these groups took these experiences outside of the performance space rippled into the dynamics of the social fabric. When looking at dialogue and inter-subjectivity as a medium, the affective quality of this engagement lingers on beyond the artistic encounter. For example in *Youth Visions* there were various youth-led discussions that occurred after their final presentations, moving the performance out of the aesthetic and into the social. This continuing dialogue outside of the performance space attests to what Kaprow emphasised was the blurring of art and life. The use of dialogue as a technique in this working methodology, allowed the practice to extend past the borders of its own genre. This prompted a question of post-production sustainability; how does utilising the format of production through dialogue and narrative to create a site-responsive work, imprint the working space with its own new narrative?

Place-Making as Sustainable Outcome

In all three case studies narratives were culled from individuals who were both part of the production and residents of the locales where the projects took place. Memory and memories became central components in bringing forth the stories that were to be incorporated into the final product. Ricoeur links memory and place making by theorising that memory provides a spatial quality in its interiority, within which exists an intimate space (Ricoeur 2004, 98). Memory in this framework is a storehouse from which we begin to place make. For Ricoeur place making occurs through our interaction with localities as we tap into this storehouse of memory and superimpose it upon our spaces. It is a 'third space', after the body and after the architectural environment, one where we superimpose place on the grid of localities (Ibid, 150). This idea of place making as a creative act of the individual is what I consider the key outcome of these three case studies. Place making is what is left when the event is over, the production team has departed and the participants return to the social system. It helps define sustainability in socially engaged practice as a social function of spatial narration. De Certeau delineates place making as a social function and his theories help further define this phenomena as an outcome.

The exchanges and relationships that were formed during the workshops and performances created the possibility of new places. Place does not necessarily designate a single location, rather it is a locus for meaning and metaphor. De Certeau defines place as 'an instantaneous configuration of positions', a semantic and logistic relationship between various elements (de Certeau 1984, 117). The configuration itself journeys through space leaving the meanings and memories ascribed to locales in its residual path. This viewpoint of spatial analyses empowers the individual as the focal point in the trajectory of place making. The terrain navigated then becomes an 'intersection of mobile elements' or in other words what de Certeau would define as space (Ibid, 117). The residual myths, memories, and narratives that remain from place making constitute the framework of a space. The impetus of to explore this phenomena is the integration of the participant with the aesthetic encounter of the workshop and performance. The individual is invited to use narrative to place-make, leaving behind a traversed space and enabling the working space to become a practiced place.

In his writings on how we navigate and define space de Certeau theorises that the actions that unfold within a site itself are 'space produced by the practice of a particular place' (Ibid, 117). His theory proposes that the use of a site or space defines its boundaries and meanings. As site and context are central components to the work developed in this practice-led research, how the sites themselves became defined by the actions of the participants begins to clarify the sustainable outcome of my devising strategy. Utilising de Certeau's theory of place making, it can be argued that the pieces continued to have a life after the workshops and performance presentations were over. By adding a new narrative to the space, it is as if the site itself has been transformed and changed in the long-term. The set elements and actions may be temporal but the memories gained through the performance encounters at each site remain the most vivid archive of each case study. The spaces themselves were transformed into places of performance, a site of workshop development, and a memory for the participants and spectators alike. This combination of theory and practice as a method to re-write a space can be considered a theory of praxis through place making and storytelling, a complete place of performance.

The re-writing of space is theorised by de Certeau as the affective quality of narration on participants, who then impart this onto a given locale. The time spent together in these workshops and presenting a public form of performance is the narrative travelling from artistic medium to participant and finally inscribed upon site. De Certeau sees places as fragmented personal journeys that accumulate over time (Ibid, 108). In each of the works presented it is apparent that a collection of narratives from the social sphere has served to retell a singular story in a given site. There is a mixing of smaller stories into one larger work. De Certeau terms this a 'polyvalent', the mixing together of a variety of 'micro-stories' whose function change depending on the social circumstances where they are shared (Ibid, 125). Each of the case studies can be read as a collection of micro-narratives that become a singular performance structure when presented as a whole. They are a form of place making that inscribe a locale with a new narrative. According to De Certeau 'a spatial story… is a spoken language, that is, a linguistic system that distributes places through articulation… by an act of practicing it' (Ibid, 130). Thus the performance of *Napoli Scorticata, Youth Visions,* and *Triangulated City* were semantic forms of communication that rewrote existing spaces into new places through the articulation of performance.

The generative dialogical process executed during the development of these projects was in itself a procedure for rewriting site. As de Certeau states 'if the art of speaking is in itself an art of operating and an art of thinking, practice and theory can be present in it' (Ibid, 77). Thus the dialogue-driven workshops fostered an internalisation of the creative process and fostered new operational tactics within the given sites. Narration from this perspective is a self-powered element within our operating system that leaves in its path the effect of affect rather than the archive of objects. Perhaps it is through the narrative tool that we engage with the hegemonic structure and devise our own tactics of identity representation within it. For narration, from de Certeau's viewpoint, is not a description but an active producer of operations and tactics. The key element here is not what is being said but the kinetic action of speech and how this dynamic can be traced to the working methodology.

To begin tracing this pathway the research focuses on the individual participant, who in any one of the three workshop models began by engaging in the dialogical process through their own individual contribution. This contribution developed through an exchange with the larger group of participants. My facilitation and direction honed this via a collaborative working structure in order to arrive towards a final aesthetic product. But it did not end there. In each city where the performances took place there was a discussion after the final presentation. This was an opportunity for the individual to respond to the final product and brought the larger focus back towards the individual contributor as devisor. It was through these interviews and group sessions that I often witnessed a newly formed perspective on narration and its generative possibilities. This perspective could serve the participant as a practical tool with which to create their own new narratives within the experiences they may encounter in the future. It can become a new tactic for their repertoire when confronted with the strategies of hegemonic structures.

This writing of spatial stories is individual and collective, a palimpsest of experiences and journeys. Thus the specific actions and words devised in the workshops and performed publicly may be forgotten with time, but the writing of the participants own stories and imprinting them upon their surroundings and sharing that with others becomes the new narration. It is this narration that has transformed a series of sites in three diverse locations into places of aesthetic encounter via the memory inscribed on them. In essence the practice has enabled

the participants, including myself, to have actively rewritten their experience of each site and each situation by imprinting upon it new personal narrative as a place of performance.

Methods and Methodology

This thesis has presented a working methodology for socially engaged site-responsive performance practice through the three practical experiments. The methods used in all three case studies were diverse but also overlapped. Combined they offer a model from which to base future practice and with which to address the work of other practitioners interested in aspects of social engagement, live art, and applied drama. This type of praxis is always built from and remains in reference to a specific site or locale and its context. In the case of *Napoli Scorticata* I was offered a deconsecrated church as a performance space in a unique neighbourhood. During *Youth Visions* I worked with two schools in one of the more remote areas of the country, and in *Triangulated City* I sought out the city itself as a location, with three different sites of encounter. Once the site or locale was identified as a location for performance then the investigatory process of responding to that site and its context began. This included information on the partner organisations involved in the event, history and uses of the site, the surrounding community and finally the larger context (including customs and culture) that influenced the particular site or locale. As an artist in residence in an international setting, I had to identify host institutions, supporting institutions, and funding bodies. Combined stakeholders in the performance included many more than just company members and participants. Volunteer staff, funders and other support personnel all played a role in bringing the proposal to fruition. In each location meeting with community organisations, local council members and neighbours was essential to garner support and attract local audience. This was completed through face-to-face meetings and encounters presenting the work as a collaborative model that sought participation of the community. Each of the three projects took approximately one year to plan, submit and receive funding, with multiple funding sources making each work possible. The on-site work lasted between 6-10 weeks with 6-10 months of fundraising and project planning. All these elements constitute the practical methodology of the practice and the core framework within which I could build an aesthetic vision of participation.

Once the larger operating schema of the site had been developed, I combined all the preliminary fieldwork with my own creative input in order to begin to author the introductory concepts for the performance work. An initial concept was transformed and clarified into a project proposal that was utilised for funding applications as well as identifying partner organisations. This project proposal could include existing organisations hosting the work, sites or locations for performance, potential participants and their roles, workshop schedule and concept as well as narrative influences and inspiration. Once the projects were funded and dates were set, the host organisation was always central in helping identify participants interested in the workshops. The performance presentation was the natural outcome that resulted from taking an initial concept and developing it into a larger format with the participants. Identifying and working with participants is a key element, as the model I have developed through these case studies calls for the inclusion of professional, amateur and volunteers to work together to create a piece that will resonate with a particular site. As many of the people invested in this work are those who already have a connection with the locale, this does not necessarily mean that they have any training to complete a work of interactive performance. Due to the nature of the sites where the work unfolded, the areas themselves often already have a strong resonance for the residents. Naples, Beirut and Bolgatanga are all cities that have an important cultural capital that is not necessarily linked to an industrial capital output. This is due to their position as urban areas that face socio-political, economic and environmental challenges and as a result produce intense and engaging cultural artefacts that respond to those challenges.

The level of challenge in the areas where the work took place is an important factor in the research. As a result of these challenges the locations have very specific information to contribute to the devising process. It is in arenas of social disharmonic processes that the body politic creates cultural artefacts, in order to readjust the social discord. As discussed in Chapter 2 through the theories of Goodenough, it is from the atypical in the social dynamic that customs and habits form to create new cultural outputs. It is within these cultural contexts and in responding to these kinds of elements in the social drama that this model produces the socially engaged and site-responsive work presented in this thesis. The work is not about intervening in a site or a culture, and it is not about bringing the arts to areas that are somehow determined to be in need of arts intervention by external institutions. This model utilises performance practice to *respond* to the cultural

dynamics present in a specific social system. The model responds by generating a practice that shares authorship of the aesthetic content with the residents of the same social sphere it is responding to. This model is presented here in three unique cases, though the potential to expand this theory into other fields of performance practice is possible.

Authorship and Aesthetic

Audience and the Body Politic

The working methodology as outlined can be utilised in a variety of performance languages. Through a collaborative performance practice I have been able to explore authorial roles in varied geopolitical contexts. It has helped me formulate an approach to a creative practice that is socially engaged while remaining ethically responsible. The work takes into consideration those who help create the piece, sharing responsibility for its content. Instead of inserting work into the social sphere or taking elements of the social sphere into the work, the practice looks at the elements in the social dynamic with members of that same system and works with those members to hybridise their narratives into a singular performance structure. While working in a collaborative format it was essential that the participants whose information was being collected and collated into a performance also took on the role of devisors. In utilising a social system as an artistic medium it was important to share the authorial role so as not to co-opt the cultural artefacts of others or create an art form that was inaccessible to the community.

In all three cases the performances presented were outside the normative of cultural consumption for the area. In Naples there is a long tradition of stage work, with Teatro Bellini being one of the great theatres of Italy. Naples also gave birth to the character of Pulcinella in Commedia dell'arte, very much a Neapolitan archetype. Yet, the majority of the public who arrived at Santa Maria Maddalena to witness *Napoli Scorticata* were from the local *quartieri* and unfamiliar with most performance practice. During one of the showings two *casalinga's* (housewives) came to the door curious to see what was happening inside, I told them it was a performance and that they were invited. Clad in their housework frocks they were embarrassed and argued they were not dressed correctly for the theatre. I insisted that this was not 'that' kind of performance and escorted them into the space. These accidental spectators were the most important for me, for they represented

the social sphere truly blurring into the performance. There were no working theatres in Sanità during my residency, though on a return visit in 2010 I found that another local church had been converted into a performance space for young people.

In Bolgatanga, there were no dedicated theatre spaces, with local performances normally taking place in the form of village festivals outside the city. Village festivals are ceremonies that are specific to each tribe and create moments of inter-subjective assembly that restate bonds of unity and camaraderie. This was evident in the Golob Festival celebrated in the village of Tengzug, where groups of people came together to battle the spirits. In the urban areas such as Bolgatanga, the tribal network becomes less important, as various clans intermingle and mix. Their main purpose for moving from the rural areas where tribal ties are very present and close-knit to the city is economic. Thus the village festival format is replaced with other forms of congregation such as discotheques or the many large churches and mosques. At Winkogo SS, the school where the performance took place, a designated auditorium for events was where the Drama Club occasionally put on text-based theatre works directed by a teacher. Most of the audience that attended *Youth Visions* were students from the boarding school, including the small boys and small girls from the nearby village as well as the students from Kongo, who were brought in for the event. *Youth Visions* provided a hybrid experience of theatrical entertainment with interactive movement and dance outdoors.

In Beirut there were a series of small black box theatres that had opened up across the city in the 15 years since the end of the civil war. Prior to the war there was the golden era of theatre in Beirut (1960-1975), with large theatres in the Hamra area attracting international audiences and artists to watch mostly translations of Western scripts (Salloukh 2005, 39-42). All these theatres were destroyed during the war; their crumbling remains still visible during my residency in Beirut. During and after the war the small black box theatres became associated with their geographic location which determined audiences and content based along confessional lines (Ibid, 48-51). While producing *Triangulated City* the participants informed us that though they were familiar with forms of experimental performance there had only been one site-specific performance work that they could recall and at a small level. Even Zoukak (who was heavily invested in their next production after our show) was still translating and producing a Western

work. The method of devising and presenting a new work at a site-specific location was new to both the participants and many audience members.

To create a successful site-responsive work the performance had to engage the community from which it was deriving its information regardless of their awareness of performance formats. This was attempted in the case studies by creating an even exchange between myself as practitioner and the workshop participants as co-authors; both relying on the social context as the artistic medium. The defining of the medium in this aesthetic encounter is an important contribution to practitioners who are interested in the broader context of site. Socially engaged practice is a diverse field in performance from Cardboard Citizen's Brigade work with homeless people to Jeremy Deller's recreation of the Battle of Orgreave by incorporating the miners and policemen from the original confrontation. In all cases the works use as their medium the social system and the narratives that are built within it. This definition of medium provides a practical and theoretical method with which to engage with society, and further respond to that engagement by transforming the resulting encounters into a performative experience.

Artist as Performer

In each of the three locations I was inspired to respond to the experience of my residencies by creating and performing in a new piece upon my return to London. After returning from Naples part of the collaborative team that produced *Napoli Scorticata* developed a new work entitled *Pintosmalto*.[i] The performance responded to the impressions of ritual and traditions of death, the supernatural, religion and folklore. Upon returning from Ghana I created a solo performance that responded to my experience of the harsh terrain and climate entitled *Harmattan*.[ii] This work reflected my concerns with child labour practices and the environment, two issues that affected me strongly during my stay. In Beirut I created an untitled intimate solo work for the host company Zoukak that portrayed some of the ideas of memory and translocation that I was thinking about. The piece was a one-to-one encounter with each company member that was meant as both a gift to them for hosting the project as well as a way for me share my own performance philosophy.

Though I did not perform in any of the three case studies I found that the methodology that I developed in the course of this research could be put to use in

my own solo performance work. This is another strand of my practice, yet the work remains socially engaged and site-responsive even at a smaller scale (with only myself as the active agent). The future of this practice-led research continues with new questions regarding my own presence within the artwork. I find that the presence of the solo artist in the work also has implications for co-authorship and participant-centred dialogue without necessarily negating them. This is also an artistic concern formulated as a response to the final case study in Beirut where I perceived an authorial tension in the collaborative process. I designed the creative process to be cumulative, with actions developed in the workshops to be present in the final performance, yet even for myself *Triangulated City* remained a series of events which had become dislocated from their origins in the workshops. This was an important element in the production and one that makes sense given the anachronism of memory as a devising strategy in a city where history is violently challenged. Yet in resolving this for myself as a practitioner meant focusing on self-directed work, where I placed myself as the active agent within the performed scenario. Perhaps as a result of spending these last few years working on large-scale productions I have become interested in exploring more intimate moments of performance encounter that can retain all the theoretical structure developed in this body of research.

This developing concept for future research was given an opportunity to manifest itself into a performance work in the summer of 2010 when I was invited to a festival of contemporary performance in Italy called *Rifrazioni: Festivale Internazioni di Arti Contemporanee*. *Rifrazioni* focuses on site-specific performance and interventions based around the territories of Anzio and Nettuno. These two twin cities are located on the Mediterranean, South-west of Rome and North of Naples. I was keen to see if the working models developed over the past few years completing this research were transferrable to other aspects of performance practice, specifically my own solo work. I chose to create a one-to-one performance piece based on a blindfolded walk through a specific site. The piece was called *Topografie Invisibili* (Invisible Topographies) and took place at three different locations where the festival was unfolding. I was able to complete research on the locales by interviewing local residents with the assistance of an anthropologist who was collecting oral histories for a municipal archive project. From this I created the series of blindfolded walks where a single participant was taken for twenty minutes on a narrated journey. The work brought together many of the methods and

techniques that I had devised for the larger participant-centred projects and incorporated them into the one-to-one format. This included assessing the site, its context and uses as well as the cultural artefacts that I became aware of through my dialogue with local residents.

Applying the creative methodology developed during the three case studies to other forms of performance in my artistic repertoire has been key in demonstrating that the research outcomes are transferrable to other forms of devising. Transferring this learning demonstrated that my solo performance work could be developed with similar strands of theory and practice as my company work directing Lotos Collective. This outward looking view offers the practice up to other arenas in which to continuously expand the research. The study has been part of an experiment in co-authorship, but the possibilities of transferrable knowledge into other areas of practice demonstrates the potential of the research to continuously expand through a variety of performance fields.

Final Remarks

During this period of practice-led research I have been able to merge many of the skills in performance making, teaching and community development that are the principle concepts which motivate me to produce work as an artist. But it has also helped define their differences. At the outset of the research it seemed to me that my training and experience as an artist was disparate, thus I sought to develop a creative methodology that would unite these diverse interests into a singular format. By the end of this research period I realise the importance of each individual strand as an independent aspect of my working tools as a practitioner. Together they weave into the methodology presented in these three case studies.

Having the opportunity to work in such culturally stimulating as well as challenging environments has enabled me to look at my own complex cultural dynamic with more rigour. I am interested in my position as an immigrant in a city, raised by immigrants in a different city, and one who calls various places across the world home. This has changed my own relationship to living in London and working as an educator here. By testing methods of co-authorship, responding to a site and remaining committed to social engagement the practice has made me recognise these elements within myself as an individual and a practitioner. Perhaps the embodied voices that I sought to portray in these works have become my own,

the artist as a locale for site-responsive and socially engaged work. This has developed my own creative aesthetic through an understanding of how, as a practitioner, I utilise the theories I integrate into my creative methodology in constructing my own personal identity. I acknowledge the work presented is a direct result of my own personal landscape.

Sites and stories became the found objects I used to build the performances as I once used to build installations. I constructed and organised actions that became the final performances and based them on a series of narratives from the *real world* and used them to develop and present an *alternative world* of performance. The careful design and execution of the productions are the result of a collaboration of artists through Lotos Collective. Working in such locations as Naples, Ghana and Beirut have fulfilled my political and social desires to expand my artistic practice into socially engaging arenas. I can argue that my creative aesthetic approach to current issues combined with a nostalgic design has worked across cultural lines. This technique is more present in Naples and Beirut but less so in Ghana where the focus on education situates it as a counter-balance. Yet elements of memory, narrative, and the surreal remain as typified by the HIV virus and White Blood Cell characters. I continue to work in a collaborative manner in both my solo and Lotos performance work, always investigating new approaches towards participant integration and social discourse.

The research revealed complex questions regarding my own position as a performer and practitioner in combination with my role as a director and facilitator. Though I am also a performance artist it was clear that by removing myself from the actions I shifted the focus to a larger community. This is present in other performance works that present elements of the social sphere as the focus. For example, when discussing Suzanne Lacy's work Charles Garoian states 'unlike the performance artists who use their bodies… she locates her projects in the collective body of a community. Rather than calling attention to herself, to the politics of her own body, she directs attention to the body politic' (Garoian 1999, 129). The body politic, which I have used throughout this dissertation, is a key term to what I refer to as the polis, a collection of individuals, a group of citizens. It is this body politic that informs and inspires the work presented here.

In concluding this research, I have been able to examine the various modes of social-engagement present in my practice through a sharing of creative

authorship with the various participants who have been part of this process. This sharing of the authorial role has been both challenging and rewarding and has provided me with an effective methodology with which to approach devising in the future. The affective quality of this practice-led research has been demonstrated by its impact on both participants and myself as an artist. Art critic Jeff Kelley, when discussing the notion of the body politic in Suzanne Lacy's work, exemplifies this affective quality by claiming:

> 'Participation is [not] simply a matter of agreeing with the artist at the outset of a project or of her agreeing with her participants. Rather, participation is a dialogical process that changes both the participant and the artist. Like the art, it is fixed, but unfolds over time and in relation to the interests brought to bear upon it. For the artist, those interests represent perspectives and values previously unconsidered or overlooked. They add to her and she adds them to her art. (Kelley 1995, 232-233)'

This last sentence is a key statement, delineating the impact of the practice upon myself as an artist and how this transfers back into the development and creation of the work. The architecture of community becomes designed and enhanced by this dialogical process, as well as my understanding of how to create performance work through interpersonal exchange. Central to the notion of co-authorship I have proposed in the practice, is the singular voice of the artist. I recognise this voice in closing and designate the focus of appreciation of this practice-led research lies in the ways in which this voice was shared.

Endnotes Chapter 5

i Lotos Collective's portfolio page, last accessed on 12 June 2011,
http://www.lotoscollective.org/html/portfolio%20pages/pinto.html

ii Camus Live Art's gallery page, last accessed on 12 June 2011,
http://www.camusliveart.net/harmattan.html

Appendix – Project Participants

Case Study 1 *Napoli Scorticata*

Directed by: Roberto Sánchez-Camus and Alberto Massarese

Musical Direction: Romeo Barbaro

Lotos Associate Members: Jenna Rossi-Camus, Alexa Reid, Katharine Fry, Sarah-Jane Blake

Production Assistants: Maria Grazia Di'Lillo, Giuliano Morano, Luigi Gatto, Vittorio Cafiero, Elena De Prete

Lighting: Pepe Perelli

Stage Manager: Rosanna Grammatico

Musicians: Gabrielle, Luca, Esposito, Mariano, Vittoria

Performers: Debora De Simone, Stefano Esposito, Ersilia Mowery-Annunziata
Antonella Corso, Sarah-Jane Blake, Gianluca d'Agostino, Marina Settesoldi
Pasquale Morano, Valentina Noviello, Pasquale Casetano, Thomas Mowery Jr.
Rosario Andrea Luca Di Grande, Antonio Onorato, Andria Theresa Mowery
Rosalba Esposito, Pamela Carrano, Jessica Staiano, Antonio de Rosa
Devid de Rosa, Monica de Prete, Emanuele Quagliariello, Giuseppe Garofalo
Alessia Pinto, Jenna Rossi-Camus, Alexa Reid, Marco Montesanto, Luca Esposito

Supported by: British Council Italy, Lotos Collective, O'Theatrone: La Fabbrica delle Arti

Case Study 2 *Youth Visions*

Artistic Direction: Roberto Sánchez-Camus

Producer & AIDS/HIV Facilitator: Sebastian Fuller

Project Manager & Facilitator : Kimberly Rawls

Facilitators: Brad Brown, Travis Pittman, Jessica Rampone, Alicia Sully

Teachers: Zamanah Winfred, Kpemdaal Basilide, Peter Anongdare, Fasasi Rasheed

Kongo Participating Students:

Abigail Amenyedor, Abigail Azika, Adrian Tahim, Cynthia Yakubu,
Elizabeth Abeto, Faustina Asogre, Faustina Azywane, Felicia Nrombila
Lucinda Davorledzi, Lucy Awelinga, Lucy Yen, Lydia Alenye,
Martha Mamaliku Peter Atandor, Rebecca Adombila, Ridwan Halidu,
Rita Anaba, Rose Soung, Victor Awuni

Bolgatanga Participating Students:

Group 1: Francis Anaba, Rachel Sanpana, Gloria Abarike, Dominic Asunsu
David Awojei,Charles Anafo, Jonathan Abaane, Richard Kpelembey,
Doris Mensah

Group 2: Gertrude Alagnah, Daniel Nanogo, Sharifa Icrisu, Jeremiah Badweh
Olivier Azoya, Victoria Adjule, Suzzy Asugre, Godwin Faruk

Group 3: Nathan Nyaaba, Pious Apandago, Ubaidatu Issahaku, Nimatu Yakubu
Owusu Boateng, Thomas Atanribo, Cosmos Apuma, Veronica Akayaba

Group 4: Isaac Ayerebi, Vitus Ayine, Jennifer Yalmon, Rita Akuune,
Ibraihm Yakubu, Bernard Anyaa, Ayuma Mohammed, Samuel Siedu, Patrick

Group 5: Moses Tobig, Mustapha Adams, Daniel Atompoya, Razak Abu
Rudolph Ayanba, Bartholomew Amondiwl, Akatuti Anbrusi

Documentary Production:

Story and Editing: Malina De Carlo

Cinematography: Participants from Kongo SSS and Bolgatanga SS with Alicia
Sully and Roberto Sánchez-Camus

Supported by: President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Lotos
Collective, Youth Development Alliance, United States Peace Corps, URA Bolga
Radio 89.7FM, Kongo SSS, Bolgatanga SSS

Case Study 3 *Triangulated City*

Directed by: Roberto Sánchez-Camus

Producer and Facilitator: Maya Zbib

Lotos Associate Members: Jenna Rossi-Camus, Johnmichael Rossi, BD White

Music: Johnmichael Rossi, Ali Dirani

Zoukak Theatre Company Members: Junaid Sarieddeen, Lamia Abi Azar,
Roy Dib, Danya Hammoud, Omar Abi Azar, Maya Zbib

Performers:

Luna Park: Omar Abi Azar, Rami Nihawi, Cynthia Traboulsi, Joan Chaiser, Carole Ammoun, Roger Ghanem, Jihane El Meddeb

Central Parking: Junaid Sarieddeen, Diala Kashmar, Corinne Skaff, Laure Deselys, Diala Al-Dajani, Khalil Hasan, Dima Tannir, Yara Abou Haidar

Zoukak: Lamia Abi Azar, Rami El Sabbagh, Ramy Asmar, Tarek Bacha, Arwa Jardaly, Hanan Dirani, Chrystele Khodr

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