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Accepted manuscript PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

Original citation:

'The Art of Survival: Social Circus, Youth Regeneration and Projected Community in the North East of Scotland', in *Performing (for) Survival: Theatre, Crisis, Extremity*, ed. by Patrick Duggan and Lisa Peschel, pub 2016 (ISBN 978-1-349-56857-4)

Publisher: Springer

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**The Art of Survival:
a critical exploration of celebratory community performance in the North East
of Scotland.**

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This chapter emerges out of the *Remaking Society* project which ran over one year from mid-2012 to mid-2013. The project involved an inter-disciplinary team of researchers collaborating with four established arts and media organisations to document and critically reflect upon intensive participatory arts and media practices with communities experiencing high levels of economic and social deprivation. The main aim of the study was to re-map and analyse connections between participatory cultural practices, 'community' and social wellbeing. Here we discuss our initial findings from one of the four case studies: the work of Theatre Modo, a self-described 'social circus', in Aberdeenshire. First, the discussion outlines the critical evaluation framework and methodology for the study. This is followed by an exploration of Theatre Modo's practice in Aberdeenshire leading to a street parade and fireworks display in Fraserburgh on the evening of November 02, 2012. From one perspective, we are exploring the thematic of 'survival' by analyzing how participation in cultural activity generates social relations and connections, which create the conditions for vital, flourishing communities (see Hawkes, 2001; Mulligan et. al., 2006; White, 2009; White in Devlin, *Restoring the Balance*). From another perspective, this is also a study of how community-based arts practices survive: usually by working in constantly evolving partnerships with community organisations and social agencies, and by bringing 'something different' to the table to enhance community development/regeneration contexts.

Critical Evaluation Framework: questions of culture, community, value and wellbeing.

In the arts (including theatre and performance) there has been a 'turn to the social' (Bishop, 2012) which has brought the need for a more nuanced historical and critical understanding of 'community arts' into sharp focus (see Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2004; Kwon, 2002). In 1984, Owen Kelly, one of the founding advocates for the community arts movement, argued that a lack of historical documentation, political contextualisation and critical analysis of community arts had led to the movement being marginalised and instrumentalised by a state increasingly driven by a global market economy. According to Kelly, the strategic refusal by community artists to articulate a critical programme, and their determination instead to pragmatically

pursue 'vague' definitions in order to secure government funding of their activities (1984: 22-23), had reduced the movement to "something with the status of ameliorative social work for what are pejoratively called disadvantaged groups" (Watt, 1991: 56). It might be argued that the spectre of 'community' and the attendant problem of definition that Kelly identified almost 30 years ago continues to haunt the field of community arts and, in fact, any social(ly-engaged) art practice, in the UK and elsewhere (see Kwon, 2002; Crehan, 2011).

Interrogating the notion of 'community' in community arts practice, Australian theatre academic David Watt acknowledges that problems of definition are not specific to community artists (and their associations). He cites the assertion by sociologists Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1984), that community is 'one of the most elusive and vague' terms in the discipline and is, moreover, as a result of being so often used and so broadly applied, 'now largely without specific meaning' (1991: 59). Similarly, Watt notes that extensive appropriations of 'community' from the late 1950s to the late 1970s led cultural theorist Raymond Williams to consider the formerly 'essential' term 'unusable' and even 'dangerous' (1991: 62). The problem of definition is even more complicated today given the sheer volume of cultural and theoretical critiques of 'community' since the 1980s (see Delanty, 2003 for an excellent summary of different critical perspectives on 'community'; Kershaw, 1999; Nicholson, 2005) and the ongoing (mis-)appropriation of the term in public/political discourse (see, for instance, David Cameron's rhetoric of the Big Society, or Wenger's communities of practice theory in business/professional learning).

In this study we draw on a 'dynamic' notion of community, articulated by Watt after the programme for community arts that Kelly went on to define via the British Socialist critical tradition, and Shelton Trust's manifesto on cultural democracy (1986). According to Watt:

Static notions of community are seen as impositions, usually categorisations, by a dominant culture concerned to maintain itself as monolithic by exercising its power to define and subsume subgroups. Dynamic notions of community ... allow the creation of purposive communities of interest which, by the process of self-definition, resist being thus subsumed and can retain an oppositional integrity. This autonomy introduces the possibility of internal negotiation as a basic mode of social interaction, and they are consequently potentially democratic and alterable. The commitment to democracy as a principle is then seen as leading to the possibility of broad alliances between autonomous groups working to undermine the dominant culture through an insistence on common access to the process of creating meaning and value within the culture (1991: 64).

There are clear connections between this 'dynamic' notion of community as evolving cultural democracy in action and critical (post-modern) re-conceptualisations of 'community' as projected (Kwon, 2002; Mulligan et. al., 2006) or as enacted/performed (Rose, 1997), which we will explore later in the chapter.

It has been important to undertake this extended discussion of 'dynamic' community for two reasons. First, it introduces the primary task of the study, which is to ascertain the value of 'dynamic' and reflexive community arts practices. This 'value' cannot be reduced to 'social impact' or purely economic value since the practices themselves resist being subsumed by governmental and market logics. How they resist while working in partnership with social agencies and corporate entities is of great interest, and also serves to bring the value of community arts practices into sharp relief. Second, an unsettled, 'dynamic' notion of community underpins much practice in community arts and its related fields, key here being 'community cultural development' (CCD)¹, from which we draw more of the critical framework for the study.

A seminal figure in the field of CCD in Australia, Jon Hawkes, noted a shift in governance away from the dominance of a purely economic model of development, "revealed to be an insufficient basis on which to maintain or develop a healthy society", and towards a three-dimensional model of "sustainable development" in which economy is augmented by social and environmental factors. In *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability. Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning* (2001), Hawkes argues for culture to be part of a four-part framework for public planning. What was so interesting about this at the time – and now – is that it was part of a critique of public cultural policy defined primarily through the lens of 'creative and cultural industries' and an attendant emphasis on the economic dimensions of culture: this approach has led to 'Culture' (arts and heritage) being seen as "an instrument in the toolkit of economic development and social policy" (Hawkes, 2001: 8) and as leading to particular social effects (regeneration, social inclusion, etc.), characterized in the UK by the New Labour approach to valuing culture (see Belfiore, 2002; 2012). Rather than a public cultural policy, which separates culture as a distinct sphere and

¹ Community Cultural Development (CCD) is how the field of community arts became known in Australia for close to two decades (1987-2006) via the official recognition and support of the Australia Council for the Arts.

sphere of distinction, Hawkes argues that developing 'cultural vitality' should be an integral part of public planning. That is, rather than have public cultural policy (policy 'for' the arts, heritage, creative industries, etc.), make *cultural vitality* (culture understood as a system of social meaning, values and aspirations) part of a four-dimensional approach to public planning. This is envisaged as part of a more democratic methodology of public planning and has a relationship to more holistic models of 'cultural planning' which emerged from the community arts movement's engagement with public policy from the 1970s (Adams and Goldbard, 2000; 2002; Baeker, 2002; Goldbard, 2006).

Hawkes' framework informed the Art and Wellbeing strategy of the CCD board of the Australia Council for the Arts (Mills and Brown, 2004) and The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Vic Health), a public health body well known for supporting cultural activities to address the 'social determinants' of health (see Marmot and Wilkinson, 2003; 2006). Vic Health went on to commission a key study into the relationship between cultural activity and community wellbeing (Mulligan et. al., 2006) from which this study takes its definition of wellbeing as "related to our sense of social connectedness, inclusion and participation, existential security and safety, political citizenship, self-development and actualization, and opportunities for education, recreation and creative expression" (p22).

There are also strong links between community arts and health/wellbeing in the UK after community arts moved into health and social care settings in the 1960s, and after the "new public health movement" of the 1980s promoted "a wider recognition of a phenomenological connection between engagement in cultural activity and well-being" (White, 2009: 2). These developments led to the founding of an interdisciplinary field called Arts in Health. Art in Health practitioners have attempted to shift the terms of the debate from a focus on demonstrating the impact of the arts in society to an understanding of the forms of social value and connection created in and through participatory arts practices. A major proponent of Arts in Health theory and practice, Mike White, states that "participatory arts practices do not focus directly on a health outcome; they aim to produce work of artistic quality through a mode of engagement that may also have beneficial social outcomes that can indirectly impact on health" (2009: 202). Thus, for White, the new public health framing of a sociocultural rather than biomedical model of health opens the way for exploration of "how value structures are formed from participatory arts activities and how these values can impact on a social model of health and wellbeing" (2009: 202).

Clearly, all community arts organisations have to operate within multi-layered policy and funding frameworks (local, regional national), and the ways in which projects get financed and brokered is crucial to their design and delivery. There is some evidence from the *Remaking Society* study that these policy frameworks produced 'discursive effects' for the organisations we worked with: in that the stated goals and objectives of funders frame and construct the public rationales for undertaking the activity. As Rose (1997) and Crehan (2012) note, community arts organisations tend to be adaptive, pragmatic and tactical: reaching an accommodation with funding and policy rhetorics in order to keep on producing the work because, as Rose notes, it is in processes of making that dominant social discourses can be un-made allowing new possibilities to be imagined and enacted (1997: 190).

Methodology

Remaking Society, through its position as a 'pilot demonstrator' within the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities programme², was able to make a financial contribution to each of the four research project case studies (£6000 each). In most instances this funding did not support entire projects but went towards processes already underway. Financial support of this kind gave the researchers unprecedented access to participatory cultural processes. We were able to shadow the practitioners and, subject to the ethical procedures and protocols of the project, engage practitioners, various project partners and participants in a process of reflection on the practice. In terms of Theatre Modo's Maelstrom Shell Fireworks Parade in Fraserburgh 2-3 researchers were on the ground before, during and after the parade (November 2) for 2-3 days at a time. The researchers became part of the Theatre Modo team as participant observers. We also formally interviewed the creative team, and a range of community partners and participants. With three researchers working on the case study it was also possible to cross-reference our notes and clarify points of agreement and difference.

The appropriateness of this methodology is supported by the work of Community Arts Lab (CAL) Utrecht. CAL set out to investigate whether empirical

² <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx>

(sociological) research could prove the psycho-social effects of community arts (see van Erven, 2013) and, thus, make a stronger case for the validity of arts-based approaches in social settings (van Erven, 2013: 10). According to van Erven, despite working closely with the Netherlands Institute for Social Research to develop sound empirical research methods, it was not possible, for a number of reasons, to “demonstrate irrefutably that a positive personal or social effect was a direct consequence of exposure to community arts or other forms of cultural participation” (2013: 12). CAL therefore changed the focus of research to a study of community arts processes: “what those processes are and how they came about” (van Erven, 2013: 13). After Kester, Kwon and Cohen-Cruz, van Erven asserts that studies of community arts should document, analyse and reflect (researchers and artists together) on the dialogue, relationships, including power relations, and interactions, that arts processes bring into being. While we agree that documentation and critical analysis, which extends beyond artist and researcher to project partners and participants, of participatory arts processes is crucial, we would argue that it is of less significance to provide “evidence of impact” of participation in cultural activity and of more importance to add to a growing body of research based on broad understanding of phenomenological connections between participation in arts and cultural activity and wellbeing. This follows Mike White’s existing challenges to the propensity to measure in order to evidence the ‘impact’ of arts on health and wellbeing. Whereas van Erven attributes the problem of empirical research of community arts to the fact that “many studies are simply too methodologically vulnerable or lacking in numbers of respondents or frequency of assessment” (van Erven, 2013: 12-13), White problematizes the (instrumental) view that community arts can be seen as a (sole) solution to social problems. For White this is a very narrow perspective on the arts and one that over-assumes what arts can achieve, especially on their own: “[The arts need] to be placed alongside and integrated with a range of other interventions. Don’t just look to art alone to somehow have a magic solution as it would be foolish to think it had. It would be even more foolish to try and prove it” (n.d.: 21)

Having said that it is difficult to escape the ‘prove it’ mentality, especially in a culture of public funding dominated by notions of ‘value for money’, accountability and audit. MODO, as discussed in more detail below, works within a community partnership framework led by the Reaching Out Project (ROP) funded by the ‘Fairer Scotland Fund’ (£180,000 per year) which is awarded locally through the ‘Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group’ within Aberdeenshire Community Planning

Partnership (*Reaching Out Project Audited Social Accounts*, 2011: 2). Within that partnership, while it was recognized that “the Theatre Modo model addresses core elements of the ROP objectives in creating volunteering opportunities which increase skills and confidence and which bring people together in community events which build social cohesion and celebrate community identity” (ibid: 21), the ROP team was questioned on the level of ROP staff time “put into finding funding for and supporting and co-ordinating the delivery of a small scale event in Mintlaw (near Peterhead) and a large scale community performance in Fraserburgh” (ibid: 22). Thus, in 2011 the ROP produced audited social accounts to prove impact, sustain funding, and plan future (social) engagement. Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology was used to determine ‘hard’ financial outcomes/impacts (e.g. number of hard to teach young people who moved into further education) and ‘soft’ ones (e.g. number of young people reporting increased confidence levels) (ibid: 34). Even after reduction in economic impact due to deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off the SROI ratio was 1: 1.5 and 1: 4.1 respectively (ibid: 36-7). Based on this SROI ratio range of 1: 1.5-4.1 the ROP concluded that, “Large scale arts based projects like Theatre MODO required extensive amounts of staff time to lever in funding and to support the delivery. However, there is clear evidence that these inputs led to successful outcomes for many young people and contribute to wider community regeneration. The ROP will continue to work with MODO to deliver projects and develop a sustainable model for the future” (ibid: 41).

What this SROI methodology attempts to ‘prove’ is that the project was ‘cost effective’ – that funders got more back in social benefit than they put in in money terms. But wasn’t this already established in partner and participant feedback? In a sense it only confirmed what was already known, by reducing outcomes to (‘hard’ or ‘soft’) economic value, or translating the values of the project into supposedly ‘harder’ economic data. The SROI did add weight to the ROP’s case to secure the funding stream to keep the work going and to maintain levels of staff commitment to the project, and provided a rather a definitive response to annoying questions based on, we presume, assumptions that art should be a cheap (bandage) solution. Perhaps the acknowledgement of the time intensive – and expensive - nature of partnerships with arts organisations is the most illuminating point in the report. Arts interventions are labour intensive and, therefore, may appear expensive. In fact, there are many other additional costs that SROI reports don’t catch. As Jeffery noted in *The Creative College* (2005), which examined case studies of partnerships between education, regeneration and arts practices, there is considerable ‘invisible labour’ in

partnerships. There are 'transaction costs' in partnership working that often go unnoticed and un-documented. But there remains an underlying question about motivation and value: is not one of most interesting aspects of the Modo project that it seems to inspire commitment and people putting in extra, or 'going the extra mile', perhaps because it generates OTHER – non-monetary forms of value? What the SROI methodology does not catch is that deeper sense of commitment, buy-in, even magic, that is very motivating. In contrast the economic arguments are rather boring, and don't capture the vitality or excitement generated by the practice.

Community Arts are situated, contextualised, lived practices often activated through partnerships *across* existing community divides, agencies and categories. This fundamental interdependence suggests that the work is rarely methodologically 'pure' – it tends to be somewhat fuzzy, messy, blurred and contingent. Developing a more sophisticated account of these practices would acknowledge these ambiguities, and the theoretical and methodological problems that they generate, whilst trying to tease out the value systems and frameworks of meaning-making that are characteristic of these practices.

Theatre Modo's 'slow and gentle journey'

In an anthropological study of Free Form Arts Trust from the late 60s to the organisation's financial dissolution in 2010, Kate Crehan explores how the move beyond the art gallery and 'into the community' led, over time, to "the 'community' shaping the artists' aesthetic practice and language" (2011: 192). While "who or what the 'community' is" is rather 'vague' - in this instance it refers to 'deprived' inner city, London neighbourhoods - Crehan suggests that artists moving beyond the gallery space soon come to realize that "'communities' are not simple, already existing entities sitting there waiting to be engaged by those seeking 'community participation'" (2011: pxvii). Here, Crehan alludes to the fact that community is often a term applied rather loosely. She holds off defining the term, preferring to explore the evolving artist/community relationships and practices *in situ*. Following Crehan, we aim in this section to outline Theatre Modo's journey into the Aberdeenshire context in order to explicate the grounded practice that emerges in that place, in the context of community development and regeneration partnerships and in relation to various/varied communities.

Theatre Modo is “a social enterprise that uses high quality engagement in circus, street theatre and carnival arts as a catalyst for individual and community change” (Theatre Modo website). The company was founded by Artistic Director, Martin Danziger, in 1994. Danziger studied Drama and English at Edinburgh University. After graduating he was involved in the Beltane fire festival³, which he credits with providing “an insight into what can happen outside the standard theatrical context” (2012). Danziger drew on this experience when, “by mistake”, he became a drama worker in the Scottish highlands (Caithness and North Sutherland) in the late 1990s:

I had no office, no building, no budget, my boss was in Inverness. It was just me and my travel expenses. My job was to go forth and do drama with the young people of Caithness and North Sutherland. I went there all theatre darling then realized that I was the only arts professional living in the county. I realised quickly that most people weren't into joining youth theatres and started to work gradually on the more circus-y side of things... [At the end of the year] I was asked to do a community play and was about to say no and remembered the story ended with the burning of a castle so I said I'll do it if I can set fire to Thurso castle and they went alright then. And so I got all the groups together that I'd worked with over the year and we did a big parade and Lady Thurso actually let us put a fire structure insides her castle (2012)

In several ways this project created something of a blueprint for Modo's work in the North/North East of Scotland. First, Danziger realised that there wasn't sufficient interest from young people to form a youth theatre. Instead, he introduced circus and physical performance techniques to existing youth and community groups. Second, as an outsider, in so far as he was from outside the area, but also in terms of his interest in theatre/performance, Danziger got to know what local people did together. He thus became aware of the breadth of active participation and the variety of forms it took. Third, this influenced his idea to use the parade form to demonstrate and celebrate the breadth and variety of community participation:

Part of that idea of doing big parades was that I was working with lots of tiny little groups who were lovely in their own ways. Everybody said there was nothing going on but I was aware going from all these tiny groups – drama, dance, cheerleaders - that there was a lot going on it was just that none of these tiny groups knew about the other groups or went to see the other groups. The idea behind the festival was to get people together and to remind the community what it had, what it was already doing. This was the start of that sense of reminding a community what it has. In terms of what it was already doing - capitalising on me as the outside catalyst able to bring it together (2012).

³ <http://beltane.org/about/beltane/>

After 4 or 5 years as a drama worker in the highlands, Danziger decided to study contemporary circus and physical performance at Circomedia in Bristol: "I went there very much knowing that I wanted to develop those techniques for use in this kind of environment" (2012). After completing his studies Danziger did return to develop circus and physical performance as a core part of Modo's practice in the northern regions of Scotland. In 2007 community worker, Katie McLean, saw Modo's festival work in Buckie, a town on the Moray Firth coast, close to where McLean, a Glaswegian, had relocated with her family. She observed the teenage participants (14,15,16 year olds) "jumping about the street and having a great time" (2012). McLean leads the Community, Learning and Development team for the North of Aberdeenshire (Banff and Buchan, and Buchan). Several years earlier, she had tried to develop a project for young people in Banff. She observed that the ways in which the people of the North East had traditionally come together in barn dances and bothy ballads had been lost to the younger generation (2012). Furthermore, she noted that incomers to the NE of Scotland tended to be middle class people who brought cultural experiences with them or took children out of the area to access them (2012). Given this lack of traditional local culture and with the disparity between indigenous and incoming populations revealing inequality in access to cultural activity/participation, McLean determined to develop a project called the Carnival of Youth in Banff. She worked with a community arts worker with the aim to get young people to experience cultural activity and to express themselves in a way they were comfortable but, according to McLean, "it was really difficult" (2012). Thus, McLean was impressed by the Modo's work with teenagers in Buckie and invited the company to work on a 'youth engagement' project under the auspices of the CLD in Banff in 2008.

Macpherson's Rant drew on the history and legend of the adventures, capture, lament, rant and death of Jamie Macpherson to celebrate the culture and community of Banff and the surrounding areas. The parade included approximately 300 performers between the ages of 10 and 18 drawn from a larger group who had participated in 5 weeks of workshops in school classes, and youth and community groups. The parade through the streets of Banff culminated in a fireworks show.. McLean compared Modo's work to that of other artist/practitioners who had been commissioned by the CLD to undertake residencies – in street dancing and graffiti, for instance - in North Aberdeenshire. While the work of these other artists in residence "looked fantastic", according to McLean, the artists "couldn't communicate

with the young people. They weren't inspiring them and failed to take them somewhere with them" (2012). Modo, she said,

have the creative skills, knowledge and experience to do the parade and the celebration bit and the show – the razzmatazz bit. But they are just really good at enthusing young people, at inspiring them and talking to them and listening to them and believing in them and creating things for them to do themselves without saying 'no that's not the plan, you can't do that'. They allow young folk to go with certain things but within their limitations (2012).

In addition to Modo's ability to engage young people in cultural activity, McLean made a further important observation to do with the scale of engagement of young people:

In terms of working with young people I had never really encountered creative cultural work with young people in the masses before we brought Modo up to do the first project. The cultural involvement of young people tended to be very selective and it was very dependent on young people who were high achieving or high attaining and who were part of a family where there would be cultural experiences. We never succeeded in engaging masses of young people until we actually found partners like Modo (2012).

Thus the success of the CLD-initiated project in Banff revealed, particularly for McLean, the potential for further partnership work with Theatre Modo. Because of Modo's ability to engage young people in large numbers, McLean saw a possibility to scale up Modo's work to larger towns in NE Aberdeenshire. And she also saw that work of this scale would require the "freedom and flexibility to work out of the confines of local authority regulatory structures" within, instead, a wider community partnership framework (2012).

Youth and Regeneration in Fraserburgh and Peterhead.

Peterhead (pop 19,000) and Fraserburgh (pop 12,500) are the largest settlements in Aberdeenshire, a predominantly rural governmental area excluding the city of Aberdeen. Traditionally, the economy of Aberdeenshire has been dependent on primary sector (fishing, agriculture and forestry) and associated processing industries. The discovery of North Sea Oil in the late 1960s led to the development of offshore oil and gas industries and associated service sectors. The commercial base of the offshore oil and gas industry is in Aberdeen. Aberdeenshire benefits from its close proximity to the city. For the most part, it is also an affluent region with "low levels of unemployment and crime, high rates of educational attainment and an overall high quality of life" (*Reaching Out Project. Aberdeenshire Community*

However, as the same report states, “the more remote coastal fringes” whose economies have not diversified greatly and, therefore, remain “heavily reliant on fishing”, have been impacted by the imposition of EU quotas to restore falling North Sea fish stocks (ibid: 3). The strains within the fishing industry are most apparent in the two traditional fishing ports of Peterhead and Fraserburgh. While both towns remain busy commercial harbours, parts of the larger settlements of Peterhead (Central-Roanheads) and Fraserburgh (North) feature prominently in the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). According to the SIMD 2004 (in ibid: 4-8) Peterhead Central-Roanheads falls within Scotland’s 10-20% most deprived zones for income, unemployment, education, skills and training, and health. Fraserburgh Central falls within the bottom 10-15% for the same indices. Fraserburgh Central also has relatively few community facilities located in the area, despite it being a clear area of deprivation, which compounds difficulties in accessing employment, health and education, skills and training services. Based on these pockets of inequality and deprivation within the towns of Peterhead and Fraserburgh, which are of a kind much more commonly associated with inner city neighbourhoods, Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership (ACPP), established in 1999 with the key objective of “improving life for everyone in Aberdeenshire”, initiated the Fraserburgh and Peterhead Community Regeneration Project. The Project’s working title was “Reaching Out” (ibid: 8).

The Reaching Out Project (ROP) was formally established in 2005 as a partnership initiative funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund awarded locally through the Tackling Poverty and Inequality Group (TPIG) of Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnerships (ACPP). In 2009 the ROP invited Theatre Modo to lead a Youth Regeneration Project in Peterhead. Peterhead and Fraserburgh both have largely young populations: 44% and 49% of the population is between the ages of 0-34 years, respectively (ibid: 5-6). After Modo’s *Macpherson’s Rant* in Banff, the partners’ felt that “Modo had a fresh, innovative approach which they were looking to bring to their youth work” (White, 2012) in Peterhead and Fraserburgh. It was anticipated that bringing Modo into the partnership would address “major issues around social inclusion” which “other provision”, while “good”, hadn’t as it “appeals to the middle class and middle aged group” (White, 2012) Another partner elaborated on issues around social exclusion/inclusion stating that in the partnership with Modo they were

“looking to find ways to address ‘anti-social’ behaviour and health and employability targets” (Scott, 2012). While some partners foregrounded the regeneration related targets they were aiming to achieve by bringing Modo into the mix, the situation is a lot more complex and contradictory than it might appear in large part due to the specific context. For one thing, according to White, “more people are born and remain in the communities of Peterhead and Fraserburgh than anywhere else in Scotland” (2012). McLean described the north east of Aberdeenshire as a “geographical corner” (2012) referring to the region’s remote-ness and also, perhaps, a self-imposed isolation, concurring with White that there is “little traffic in and out” (2012). These descriptions paint a picture of a ‘closed’ or traditional, but self-contained/self-reliant community: ‘if it’s not invented locally then it’s not good’ (White, 2012), and yet also not un-self-critical: “The community can be quite inward looking and it is difficult to get them to value what they have” (White, 2012). This presents challenges to attaining certain employability targets as young people tend not to want to leave the area to work and their employment choices are restricted where they are due to the lack of economic diversity. It also, perhaps, makes it difficult for certain groups in society. Fraserburgh and Peterhead have a long-term endemic drug and alcohol problem (linked as much to affluence as deprivation) and the public perception of that group of people, as for young people ‘hanging around’ on the streets in general, tends to be highly critical. In terms of the issue of ‘anti-social behaviour’ it may be, partly, a problem of public perception. At the same time, while part of the society may be ‘closed’ and “inward looking” immigration from Eastern Europe is changing north east Aberdeenshire. It is estimated that 85% of employees in the food processing industry is immigrant labour and that, now, it is more usual for whole families, rather than individuals, to make the journey. While this type of immigration has had an impact on the SIMD, for instance, local schools have taken in large numbers of children from ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ (or non-English speaking, if you like) backgrounds, project partners tended to view immigration from the EU as a positive for the area.

Many of the factors discussed here also come into play in the “below local average attainment” (White, 2012) of schools in Peterhead and Fraserburgh. As mentioned above Fraserburgh North falls within Scotland’s 15% most deprived zones and Peterhead Central-Roanheads is in the bottom 20% for education, skills and training. The partners signed up to the Youth Regeneration project agreed to address this area of inequality by providing skills training (in circus/physical performance) and, through this, to provide links to further training and routes into further education.

This is discussed more below. Curiously, another point that the partners touched on was the lack of or low levels of aspiration amongst young people. McLean attributes this to the fact that there have traditionally been high levels of well-paid employment in Peterhead and Fraserburgh. Young people have had “quite a good quality of life” (2012), which probably also explains why they don’t want to leave the area. Having seen their parents leave school at 14 or 15 and go either into fishing or into oil and gas and make good money, young people tend to want to do the same. According to McLean, “there’s a sense of ‘I’ll get offshore eventually so why should I go and do something else’... there isn’t a lot of ‘what else is out there?’” (2012) McLean also, critically, notes the traditionally gendered nature of work in the fishing and oil and gas industries and the impact of that on the education of young women in particular: “men go out and work and women stay at home... Schools have girls saying why would I want to do x, y or z?” (2012) McLean notes that after the strains placed on the local economy by the decline of the fishing industry revealed the risks of a non-diversified economy, corporate, government and third sectors partners are now addressing the ‘problem of aspiration’: “oil and gas ... come into schools and explain to kids that yeah you might get a job but if you really work at it you could do something else, maybe something better” (2012). Modo’s inclusion in the ROP aims, partly, to establish creative (physical/kinaesthetic) routes into learning, and to re-establish connections between young people’s aspirations, education and training, and employment.

In Peterhead Modo held 42 workshops per week for 6 weeks working with approximately 500 young people in schools, and youth and community groups to produce a street performance/parade concluding with a fireworks spectacular in a local park. About half the young people Modo worked with performed in the parade. Approximately 30 school, youth and community groups were represented or worked behind the scenes to help create it. A crowd of approximately 3500 turned out to watch the event, called *Pandemonium*. According to the ROP, Modo’s work allowed “young people’s energy, vibrancy and potential to be seen by the wider community” and “increased the confidence and self-belief” of the young people themselves. Furthermore, the project saw “more hard to reach young people participating in community action”, “created better and more effective links between formal and informal education”, and “developed skills that can be nurtured and developed further by Regeneration Workers, Community Learning and Development, teachers etc.” (*Pandemonium Peterhead Youth Regeneration Project Report*, pp2-3). The success of the *Pandemonium Fireworks Parade* in Peterhead inspired project partners,

including Shell, to sign up for a three-year Youth Regeneration Project to build a sustainable legacy of skills and opportunities in the arts for young people. Modo has mounted a 'Shell Fireworks Parade' each year since alternating between Fraserburgh (*Fantasmagoria*, 2010; *Maelstrom*, 2012) and Peterhead (*Leviathan*, 2011), and taking in smaller towns (e.g. Mintlaw, pop. 2500) and communities in the region.⁴ The *Maelstrom Shell Fireworks Parade* in Fraserburgh, in 2012 came at the end of a 3 to 4 year Youth Regeneration Project partnership between the Reaching Out Project, Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partners, Shell, Aberdeenshire Council and UZ Arts/Roofless.⁵

Modo in Fraserburgh in 2012.

The researchers caught up with Modo's work towards the end of that four-year period of engagement (2009-2012) in Peterhead and Fraserburgh. In an interview, Danziger reflected on what he identified as a major change in Modo's methodology over that time:

we are increasingly about deliberately working with hard-to-reach young people. Who identifies that is everyone else whether its schools or youth services or whenever people go 'whoarr they're quite a tough crowd'. In the last few years we have been actively moving towards it, deliberately seeking it out (2012).

With this change in focus to working with 'hard-to-reach' young people Danziger observes that 'while we originally described ourselves as community artists we now see ourselves much more as a kind of social circus and a catalyst for social change' (2012). Modo, he explains further, is "more a social organisation that uses arts" (2012). It is "a circus with purpose no matter what the purpose is, as long as it has one" (2012). In other words, Danziger places Modo on the more useful, instrumental or applied end of the social-art practice continuum. Rather than understand the perceived move away from community arts towards social utility or application as a fixed state or definitive position, the researchers aim to explore Modo's fluid practice in relation to the context of social/community partnerships in Aberdeenshire and as, therefore, dependent on multiple intersecting factors including, at least, space, time, commission, funding, the community partnership ecology, social context, and self-definition. In fact, Danziger described Modo's practice differently at different points

⁴ Videos of Theatre Modo events can be viewed on you tube channel at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/theatremodo#p/a/u/0/>

⁵ UZ Arts Roofless came onboard in 2012. For more on the outdoor art programme coordinated by UZ Arts see: <http://roofless.org.uk>

during the research. At times the artistic focus would feature more strongly, while at others he described himself as simply a youth worker and described the work of Modo as simply about social change. Danziger's description of Modo's work also differed from that of community partners' and participants' who tended to foreground the creative or artistic practice and Modo's (welcome) difference from social services. This isn't a point of criticism but one of exploration of the way in which practices are shaped, understood and perceived with respect to particular contexts and relationships, including research.

In terms of the elements of space and time and how these shape the practice, Danziger explained that the small size of Aberdeenshire enabled Modo to inter-link existing projects and get people across them: "you can bring people from one project to another quite easily so our presence in shire is much more than it should be if you simply looked at it on paper, because you can join the dots quite easily" (2012). Thus, the small size of the shire allowed Modo to connect discrete projects into a more coherent and forceful programme. Similarly, the duration of Modo's engagement with the communities of Aberdeenshire - Modo was in its fourth year of focused work – meant that other project partners knew them and what they did, or didn't do, well. The partnership relationships that had developed over time tended to be supportive and complementary. Continuous project funding also allowed Modo to have a semi- permanent presence in Aberdeenshire, which led to the company establishing a permanent base in Peterhead, in addition to Glasgow, in 2012. This level of presence meant that Modo were able to offer "more of a progressive route through participation" (Danziger, 2012). Some community participants moved "from participating to volunteering to starting to take responsibility to getting employed" (Danziger, 2012). Workshop assistants working with Modo in Fraserburgh in 2012 were former participants who had begun as parade participants at school, then became volunteers who were trained and mentored, taking on more responsibility the following year until they gained employment the year after. In this way Modo, itself, was able to provide a direct link between skills training for the performance/parade and fireworks event, further training, and employment.

Danziger was very clear about Modo's commission: "What we're tasked with is how can you engage young people and then pass them onto other services, or point them in a positive direction " (2012). Asked to elaborate he stated that:

It works at lots of different levels. At a high end it can be as a result of having done stuff with us they then go on to college ... we deliberately

work with lots of partner organisations who are kind of 'flocking around like vultures' waiting to pick off the enthusiastic ones ... so you're almost acting as a recruitment tool for those groups [...] At another level it can be that they can go on to a life skills or Prince's Trust course. Or at another level as a result of having got involved with us they might become participants in an ongoing youth group whether that's an arts-based youth group or a youth group. We encourage and support them to make the moves ... and we actively signpost or flag those things up. Then at the other level there is those people who we realise through working with them that there are specific issues that need addressed. And we're linked into all the child protection services up here and we've got an increasingly good relationship with that side of it which is great because it means that if there are disclosures or signals that things are not right with someone we can deal with it in a linked up way that its not just us dealing with it ourselves or us not just us handing over a card but we can talk people right through the process and follow up the journey to make sure that everything that can be done is done (2012).

As Danziger reveals, Modo's work isn't, in the first instance, targeted to a specific constituency, that being 'hard-to-reach' young people. Rather, Modo works broadly to engage young people in general on a number of different levels. Working closely with agency and community partners, some young people are channelled into education (college) or further training (Prince's Trust), or into youth groups, whether arts- or social-based, or into contact with social services, if need be. While Modo, supported by community and agency partners, works broadly across a large number of young people at many different levels (from high achievers to those who need more targeted services), the 'partnership ecology' does, at times, allow Modo to differentiate and focus on specific groups. Danziger notes, for instance, that Shell (Modo's major funder, through its 'community relations' team) targets "bright young things" via "grad schemes and science fairs" (2012). Modo can then concentrate on "everyone else - we're about the ones who won't work for Shell, or not at any significant level" (2012). He states that:

Clearly up here economically and educationally there are limited opportunities and possibilities. Job opportunities are limited, training possibilities are limited and aspirations are limited. So the fact that we can do something different and provide a different range of opportunities is different. If you want to work in offshore or marine industries there are lots of possibilities but if you're not that sort of person how you jump that bridge ...is a challenge (2012).

Nevertheless, while there is differentiation both of young people as a homogenous group (which breaks down into wider spread of different groups some of whom are more in focus than others) and between project partners, Danziger is adamant that the parade has to be seen to be a 'mainstream community event':

what we want to do is work with lots of people who wouldn't normally take part, lots of challenging, hard-to-reach young people. However, we can't

describe it like that because if we start describing it as a 'parade of the hoodlums' its going to be clear to those young people why were doing it and they'll walk away because of that. There's a balance to be drawn. Enough people need to be involved so its seen as widespread mainstream activity that just happens to involve lots of people who present particular issues or challenges (2012).

Modo, as Danziger explains, works hard to achieve broad community participation in the project process and event. One of the key ways they do this is by working with curriculum (drama, dance, art) classes in schools and 'mainstream' community groups (dance, drumming, Boy's Brigade, Scouts, Guides etc.) as well as with students with special education plans in school and with specific issue groups, for example, groups addressing drug and alcohol dependency, in the community. Danziger explains that:

Within schools we continue to work in curriculum classes – art and drama – it's important that we go into these classes almost to justify the participation of all the other folk. Then we spend as much time working with those pupils who don't excel in mainstream education. ...We spend a lot of time with people who, for whatever reason, aren't in mainstream education, whether that's full time or part time. In some sense while I think we do lots of lovely work, especially now with the curriculum for excellence, our role in curriculum classes is highly valued actually I think our role with the other young folk is much more important and is probably where we have our real impact. And it's the same in the work that we do out in the community (2012).

Arts funding, or the lack of it, plays into the process of self- and other-definition that sees Modo moving between a broad community/participatory arts practice and one that is more applied to a specific or targeted social group. Modo worked without arts funding until 2012 when they gained support from UZ Arts' Roofless programme, an 'outdoor arts programme designed to engage directly with local and regional communities' across Scotland. Danziger asserted that not being tied into arts funding " means that artistically we can be much freer and bolder than we ever could if we had to justify it back to a committee" (2012). He explained that in the past Modo had trouble accounting for the participation of 'hard-to-reach' young people in performance:

If you get a bunch of really difficult to engage people you're not necessarily going to have the most polished result and in the past there has been quite a struggle to justify having some of those groups in. Commissioners go "well they're not very good and they're not very focused, why don't you just get someone else in to do that bit?" and in fact they are the people who really need to be in there. With the commissioners we've got at the moment clearly it's our job to make sure that those folk look as good as they possibly can and that we support them in a way that makes them really proud of their achievement but

we're not necessarily having to justify that to someone who has just got an arts head on (2012).

UZ Arts/Rootless did appear to weigh the social use/benefits of Modo's youth engagement, that is, the strong links between the process and professional development, training and employment, and community wellbeing, against what Neil Butler, the Director of UZ described as 'fairly established, well tried techniques' for achieving these (2013). Butler appeared not to be in total agreement with Danziger about the 'bold artistry' of the work, but was "impressed with their true commitment to young people, and the immense scale at which they work" (2013). This may explain the lack of support from other arts funding bodies who value the social benefits of the work less than the 'quality' of the art. However, without evidence/data from arts funding bodies we are speculating here. It may well be that within the arts field itself there are conflicting notion so of what community, participatory or engaged processes/practices entail. Suffice to say that it should not be surprising that without arts funding, Danziger positions Modo at the instrumental end of the art/social spectrum. For Danziger participation is the critical point of Modo's work and the company does everything it can to encourage this:

the low-fi, cheap things we do – we don't do aerial for instance because it is expensive – juggling, stilt walking, fire - can be 2 of us and 30 people doing it at once time, We are always trying to find ways to make sure that it is affordable, possible and inclusive so we don't have to make choices about who takes part (2012).

While Danziger found it necessary to positioning Modo's practice on a sliding scale somewhere between social work and art, project partners and participants were clear that Modo were different to and distinct from the social provision of various institutions, services and organisations Modo were in partnership with. CLD team leader, McLean, asserted that Modo were not youth/social workers but a 'creative artistic project and company' with exceptional skills in youth engagement (2012). Indeed Danziger admits that Modo's different way of working, their distinction from other providers, their ability to make a different kind of connection with people, was what they were valued for. Danziger refers to Modo's difference as an 'outsider status': "we are outsiders and we make a different kind of connection with people" (2012).

The 'different' space that Modo occupies as 'outsiders' is probably best described, after Gillian Rose, as a 'spatiality of action and performance' (Rose 1997: 191). This became most apparent when talking to project participants, volunteers and

paid workshops assistants (formerly participants and volunteers). They insisted that the Modo experience offered something different beyond that which is offered to local young people by the existing service provision (education, social services, other community, other arts), or even, at home: 'it was different and I didn't expect it to be that fun' (Participant 1, 2012); 'you're not cooped up in a classroom and at Modo you can actually have a laugh with them, it's not all serious like school' (Participant 2, 2012); 'my mum was really over protective...she kept saying that she wouldn't have let me do it [walk on stilts] but she was really proud of me being able to do it' (Participant 1, 2012); 'everyone really likes it, it brings a different feeling...people get excited... my dad is really excited about seeing the Bonaventura' (Workshop Assistant 1, 2012). It was evident from what participants said and from what we observed them doing that Modo created spaces in which young people could, happily, 'be themselves': '[Modo artists are] just like teenagers...you can be yourself around them...you don't have to be scared about being a nutter like me because they're all nutters too' (Participant 2, 2012). At the same time, there were opportunities 'to make or do stuff'. While there isn't a compulsion to do anything, the opportunities are there, and participants acknowledge the difference between being and doing and appreciate being able to determine their mode of participation: 'I like being in here [the fish hanger], I don't always feel like speaking to people. I just feel comfortable in here...I feel like I can be and do what I want' (Workshop Assistant 2, 2012). While a lot of the Modo activities were presented and perceived as 'fun', rather than learning, the disciplines required to walk-on-stilts or juggle-with-fire present intrinsic challenges that provide a framework for learning. Participants acknowledged that they were learning new skills and gaining confidence, and also that what they got out of the process went beyond this. Some described enjoying connecting with 'different people' from other children to theatre technicians (whose skills they admired) to those who came out to watch the parade: 'it makes you realise that Peterhead isn't just full of horrible folk' (Workshop Assistant 1, 2012). Others talked about how the process had changed them personally: '[Living in Peterhead] was rubbish, I didn't like it and I wanted to move away...I'm quite happy where I am at [now]. I'm always doing things and there is point in being there. It's given me a heap more confidence, I feel useful. I feel valued as a person' (Workshop Assistant 1, 2012). While others, again, spoke about subtle changes that it had brought about in close/familial relationships: 'My mum and dad didn't understand me spending all my time on it. They totally disapproved of it for a while...they didn't get it. But when they saw what I had done they were like 'I didn't know you could do that' and I was like 'aha'' (Workshop Assistant 2, 2012). Taking part in the process also presented new

possibilities for the future: 'I always wanted to do something like that [circus/physical performance] but I didn't think you could really...but then when I saw Modo, I thought you can do it' (Participant 1, 2012); "Before I couldn't think I could do arty things...I've always felt I was too rubbish to do it ... [now] 'I've a little bit [of a plan]...I want to go to college to do art. I want to do the lowest course so I can build up to being good...I just want to learn how to be good at art' (Workshop Assistant 1, 2012).

A workshop assistant who had progressed from participant to volunteer/mentee to her current role as a Modo employee, described her engagement with Modo over several (4) years. When Modo came to her school she was in ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and drama curriculum classes. She states that, "[Modo] made it sound like they really needed us to be in the parade. They made us feel we were wanted for something. [...] In drama classes we came up with movement and choreography to go into the parade [...] They said 'you've got really good ideas'" (Workshop Assistant 3, 2012). The following year, she wasn't in school and, rather than be in the parade attached to a particular group, she opted to volunteer behind the scenes making the various bits and pieces that went into the parade: "Fergus [a Modo artist] showed us how to do things and we'd do it. Fergus gave us more responsibilities. We got to spray paint all the flags with stencils. If we made a mistake, it wouldn't look as good, but would be used. It made us feel more responsible to make it perfect" (Workshop Assistant 3, 2012).

In the initial phase of engagement Modo makes young people feel needed and wanted, creates spaces for young people to (happily) be and/or do, and provides positive feedback and encouragement on their creative input. In later phases the emphasis shifts to becoming a more independent practitioner [the Modo artists act as role models in this respect] and taking responsibility for the collective creative process. It is interesting that the workshop assistant notes that mistakes are made in the process of making. There wasn't a sense that this was a problem or made a deliberate point of discourse. Everything made in the process went into the parade, and it was through the process of putting everything on show, that participants developed an increasingly reflective practice. This might be anathema to artists who prefer to maintain control of the artistic product. Others might argue that it is the role of artists to push the young people to produce work of a high/professional standard because from that achievement comes a sense of pride and recognition and, in fact, the researchers had this very debate. However, for Modo, "it's all about the ideas coming from the young people and making sure that they have complete ownership

of it.... It all comes from them and that's the whole point. For me, if there is a choice, then the main thing is they've come up with it, they love it and they want to show people what they've done." (Modo Artist 1, 2013), and "it's also about understanding that they've gone through a process and it is creative process ... learning and creative development" (Modo Artist 2, 2013). Thus, Modo seems to typify Rose's notion of community arts workers as committed to process as a communicative, performative act, rather than as something that will produce representational meaning or significance (1997). At the same time, as much as Modo values process in and of itself, and views the fireworks parade simply as another iteration of process, these iterative processes do involve experiential and reflective, if informal, learning and development. In order to make 'quality' art young people need to 'begin where they are' and go through processes of making – and 'owning' – mistakes, as well as achievements.

The *Maelstrom Shell Fireworks Parade*: 'what people seem to want is the liberty to demonstrate ... that joy of doing stuff'

Three researchers were in Fraserburgh on November 2 for the Maelstrom parade. Whereas on the previous visit we'd spent most of the time shadowing Modo, this time, because Modo were in final preparations for the event itself (less process more event management oriented), we were able to see more of Fraserburgh and we took up an invitation from the Reaching Out Project to attend a 'stakeholder event', which was our first opportunity to meet with, talk to and interview key stakeholders in the project. The event itself was hosted by Shell, the major, named parade sponsor, and included a buffet supper at the Broch Community Centre about 90 minutes before the parade start time. The centre is adjacent to the Fraserburgh Academy (secondary school) where participants gathered/assembled various elements of the parade in readiness for the start at 7pm. While a couple of the researchers moved between the centre and the school, another remained behind at the centre to talk/interview stakeholders. The researcher left behind was therefore able to note an array of views about the project. The narrative from John Raine, Community Relations Manager for the main sponsor, Shell, emphasised the impact of the project on improving the employability of young people. There were other contrasting views at the event. One other view characterised the parade, and process that led to it, as a key learning/development experience, one that would stay with the young people for life as an experience leading to sense of personal achievement and growth for those who took part (McLean, 2012). The two researchers who went to the school

came back buzzing with energy. Thus, mixed in with official and unofficial narratives of the event was a heightened sense of excitement, anticipation, enjoyment and pleasure.

As researchers we were struck, but not surprised, by the range of different perceptions (including our own) of the parade. We wanted to unpick these contrasting depictions of the parade, particularly the dissonance between Shell presenting it, formally at least, as an exercise in employability and our overwhelming sense that it was an incredibly joyful and pleasurable experience, something that participants would remember, be proud of and feel a sense of achievement in relation to. Earlier in the day we'd had our own discussion about Modo's work after visiting the Scottish Lighthouse Museum. The lighthouse at Kinnaird Head, along with the wreck of the *Bonaventura* off the north east coast of Scotland in 1556, and a seal that frequented Fraserburgh Harbour were three key local reference points that would be transformed into larger than life puppet/lantern creations in the parade. Before workshops got underway the parade themes were chosen by way of community consultation, including Facebook polls to include the ideas of young people. The Kinnaird Head lighthouse, the first built in Scotland by the Commissioners of Northern Lights (founded 1786), was a popular choice. It was built in the tower of a castle (owned by Lord Saltoun) in Fraserburgh. The engineers who installed and maintained the lantern/light were related to novelist Robert Louis Stevenson. Hence the literary allusion (treasure Island) contained in the story of the *Bonaventura*. The *Edward Bonaventura* was wrecked in a storm returning from an expedition investigating trade routes to the east. It was classified as a 'treasure wreck' because it was carrying extraordinarily valuable gifts from Russian Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) for Mary Tudor. Local people helped themselves to what cargo was washed ashore. What we were discussing after the lighthouse museum visit was the great opportunity for deeper learning through engagement with the museum: for instance, the technologies of light and sound that are incorporated in lighthouses and fog horns; local myth/legend and stories of place. We were questioning the substitution of spectacle for a deeper mythopoetic, critical and collective transformation in the manner of Welfare State's work (Fox, 2002).

At the stakeholder event we put this question to McLean, She referred to *Macpherson's Rant* and how Modo's work there did go deep into a local story – about which there were references about the town – and how the young people Modo worked with researched the story and interviewed older generations (in

homes), led by a youth reference group. McLean felt that Modo's work had changed – in scaling it up it had lost that specific focus. She stressed how important it was that this particular process in Fraserburgh and Peterhead was an active or dynamic one, and not to underestimate the significance of that (2012). Danziger justified this approach, asserting that he had found young people were more actively engaged by the challenges of parading through the streets while performing routines, many on stilts or manipulating puppets, in costume, in front of friends and family, showing off what they had created over a fixed time period. It wasn't so much a parade with a story or narrative exploring local history and culture. It was about young people showing that they could do something:

You can remind them as much as you like about what the parade's about and how its connected into their story but actually ... the identity and sense of place that they're interested in is their identity on stilts. It's not about their identity in the story. Their sense of place is in the fact that they're walking down the main street of their hometown on stilts and that place and identity actually always seems stronger than any identity or place that you can do by historical or cultural analogies. ... when you actually go into the groups what they talk about is what the route is and what their costume is and what they're going to do rather than how it all connects back into the lighthouse and its quite often been like that (2012).

The Maelstom parade was less about expressing a discursive narrative or identity and more about the event itself and, within that, the enactment of an identity not necessarily tied to place, family, school, or community, but to a newly learned skill. The rejection of narrative representation in the parade is accompanied by rejection of discourse in the workshops:

We don't do the discourse thing. In an odd way that's one of our strengths. We do the same as lots of people working with young people – try to encourage them to communicate, to have confidence, and self esteem – but we don't ever really mention it. [...] We'll bring out the stilts and people will realise having gone through that journey from terror to exhilaration that actually somewhere along the line they've become proud of what they've achieved. [...] (Danziger, 2012).

According to Rose, the resolute focus by community arts workers on action and event, process and performance, is a tactical "refusal of the discursive space of legibility of the areas, practice, products and participants in which these arts projects are located". This lack or, alternatively, surplus of discourse (observed earlier around Danziger's 'double talk' about Modo's work as youth work and arts work, as instrumental and artistic) is one way in which community arts workers unsettle the "the dominant culture's discursive myths of identity and community" (Rose 1997: 187). These silences or 'double talk' hold open spaces beyond discourse for the un-

working of discursively constituted individual and communal identities, as well as the 'power relations that structure definitional practices' (Rose 1997: 188). The 'performance' spaces thus created allow for the enactment of 'something different', including acts of communication and connection, that might lead to subtle changes in perception, and future performances, of self and/or others. Danziger asserts that:

Making some of those stilters the centre of attention in a positive way is to radically change how they are normally perceived and what their normal role is in the community context ... and there is something about getting criminal justice or the drugs offenders to come along and steward on the night when they are suddenly in hi-vis vests walking alongside police. There is that sense of 'it can be different' (2012).

Further to Danziger, the researchers were particularly struck by comments made by a parade participant who came to the process and event via a drug rehabilitation programme. He expressed how being in the parade and manipulating a puppet in it provided a way to be together with others and to communicate with them via the puppet in a way he wouldn't normally be able to due to the stigma attached to drug users in society. This, and other stories like it, reinforced our sense that Modo's praxis was not one of revolutionary transformation but one of quiet gains in communication, and intercultural and intergenerational connection and understanding, through many different modes of participation in a large-scale shared activity.

Conclusion

In this chapter we've attempted to explain how Modo's work in a particular part of NE Scotland/Aberdeenshire has developed, survived, even thrived, and how the work has been shaped by the specific contexts of 'community' both as formally enacted through policy in relation to community development, youth and regeneration initiatives, and also informally through engagement and challenge with a complex confluence of values, attitudes towards young people, families and their creative potential. Rather than discuss the impact or effects of this kind of work in an area of multiple deprivation – the 'arts as a social elastoplast' model (White, n.d.: 21) - we've sought to focus on the process (defined very broadly). We have observed and documented the process and explored the perspectives of artists (including workshop assistants), project partners (a mix of government, third sector/charity and corporate), participants *and* researchers, in an attempt to get at the *values underpinning* the work more than 'effect' it has.

Modo's work has developed in and through these particular contexts, which has influenced the way the company, in the broadest sense, defines the work. There is not a methodologically or theoretically fixed Modo practice; it is dynamic, evolving, and dependent on navigating policy and funding opportunities. While at times they seem to think they are youth/social workers more than arts workers, one key aspect of their work is the company's status as outsiders, different to the other service providers they are partnered with. There is also deep pragmatism and opportunism in the work, which could perhaps be criticised from a more radical political perspective: at a time where sponsorship of major cultural institutions by the oil/gas industry is criticised by campaigners as 'buying legitimacy'⁶, there is an expedient local logic for the involvement of Shell, a significant regional employer and 'community stakeholder' in the parade. John Raine, community relations manager, repeatedly emphasised the need for Shell to be seen as a "good neighbour, as good citizens...as giving something back" (2012). This is an example of the kind of ideologically messy, pragmatic partnership working that characterises community arts practice, particularly when attempting to achieve projects at large scale away from major centres of cultural power.

Energy generation of a different kind is an important part of Modo's practice: they use fire and physical circus skills to generate enthusiasm and fuel creativity. Modo artists spend much time in being encouraging and energising young people. The performance is the culmination of a lot of activity – which is task focused and produced by the company, which but also which allows space for people to be. Lots of people – besides those who participate – feel like they've taken part even if from the sidelines – and they have. By stressing accessible artistic activity Modo create a communicative and performative space which demonstrates how things could be done differently: how it is possible to create spaces for different things to happen however small, piecemeal, fragile. Modo's is a pragmatic politics of place rather than a set of sweeping statements or grand gestures. However, it still manages to enact other possibilities, other modes of valuing, other kinds of community as a celebratory experience. Therefore, the fireworks parades can be viewed within new critical paradigms of community practice (see Rose 1997) as an example of a 'radical, local, cultural' praxis (p84).

⁶ See, for example: <http://platformlondon.org/2013/08/28/margaret-atwood-talk-at-the-southbank-centre-sponsorship-shell-dystopias/>

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