Exploring Agonism with Mischief:
Participatory Performance in the Public Realm

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Abstract

This thesis explores how agonism can emerge through participatory art practice. The practice-based research is contextualised by Chantal Mouffe's political theory of agonism, and the instances in which she applies agonism to art practice (2001-2013). The research highlights the intrinsic and substantial value Mouffe's agonism holds for understanding conflict as an adversarial relation. The problem I identify is that when Mouffe applies agonism to art practice, she locates her examples within the frame of political theory, rather than in or through *art practice*. Consequently, this research questions agonism from the perspectives of participatory art practice, mischievous performance, and politicised dissent as relational conflict.

I employ a methodology of theory and practice. Chapters One and Two expand upon Mouffe's theory of agonism, and her application of agonism to art practice. Chapters Three and Four situate the research within art theory, art history, art practice, and within *mischief* as a method of explaining relations of power. I expand upon the importance of participation, and I investigate how mischievous performance can facilitate the emergence of agonistic relations. In the final chapter I analyse video recordings of my practice of guerrilla street theatre. The outcome of the research is reflective analysis of evidence, and an understanding of the circumstances in which an art practice does, or does not, become agonistic. The research output is a two-fold analytical framework, and a set of criteria that can be used to clarify when and how an art practice *becomes* agonistic.

I argue that to explore agonism through mischief facilitates (some) participants in performing their politicised dissent in the public realm. Thus, agonism as adversarial political conflict contributes to the vibrancy of the public sphere. However, by focusing on agonism and participatory art practice, I attend to the difficulties and complexities of agonistic art practices. As a result, I develop and extend Mouffe's theory of agonism through my exploration of agonism in mischievous and participatory art practice.

Keywords: Mischief, Agonism, Participation, Street theatre, Participatory Art Practice, Chantal Mouffe, Politicised Practice, Dissent

Acknowledgements

Contents

Instructions, Conventions

Instructions

Selected video clips to provide evidence of the practice component of the research and accompany my exegesis, analysis, and reflection. In chapters 1-4 these are YouTube or Vimeo clips and the web link appears in the footnote with the artist or performers' name. In Chapter 5, I discuss my art practice and the film clips of these performances are listed as numerical Episodes. When I introduce a new performance, or Episode, the reader watches the film clip before continuing to read. Take note of the timecode, for example: [1:04 seconds] as the performance at this point in the film will directly relate to my argument.

Conventions

The majority of this thesis is written in the first person. This use of I emphasises my role as the researcher, street performer, and the performer-and-gatherer-of-research in the public realm. My background is in Fine Art and I position myself as an artist and street performer. Implicit in this distinction between performing and acting is my political position. In performing the Lion, I am performing a specific extension of myself. I am not acting a role that bears no relation to who I am. The main exception to the first-person voice is in Chapter 5. Here, I also refer to we and us, in order to acknowledge I worked in collaboration with two other performers.

List of Illustrations

Introduction

I spent the summer of 2013, just prior to beginning this PhD, dressed as an ex-banker. With my two street-theatre colleagues (one also dressed as an ex-banker, and the other as our parole officer) we performed *BACS: Bankers on Active Community Service*[1] at street arts festivals in Bath, Kendal, and Devizes. Through *BACS* we drew attention to the bankers, their (at that time) lack of public remorse, and their refusal to take responsibility for their actions that contributed to the global financial crisis. We asked the participants of the performance - those we met on the street - how should the bankers be punished? I positioned my character as a glib and adversarial opponent to the participants who stopped to take part in the performance: I was simultaneously sorry, and not sorry. I was also charming, defiant, provocative, and mischievous. What my practice of mischief-making offered my character was a way to playfully wriggle out of hostile, aggressive, and confrontational situations, whilst simultaneously maintaining a level of adversarial and political conflict with participants.

Figure 1: The Delegates, *BACS: Bankers on Active Community Service*, 2013

At the festival in Devizes, in the late afternoon, the crowd swelled, and for a while I became accidentally isolated from my co-performers. During this brief period, an older gentleman became a highly active participant in my now solo performance.

[1] The Delegates guerrilla performance, London https://vimeo.com/77479708 Accessed 13 March 2018

This recollection stands out not just because we became politicised adversaries, but because I became aware of how easily the encounter could slip into the hostility of antagonism. As I developed my flippant, selfish, self-serving ex-banker narrative he became an agitated, and then an irate adversary. As his anger increased, the performance shifted out of the register of humorous political satire and into a grittier politicised reality. Whilst I was simultaneously staying in character and trying to figure out an escape route, I became alert to how physically uncomfortable and vulnerable I felt. I also had a growing awareness he was teetering on the brink of antagonism: I countered his anger with exaggeration and mischievous City-banker logic. The opportunity for a graceful exit from this encounter did not arise, so I committed to this adversarial, and on my part, improvised game until his wife, sensing the social precariousness of the situation sharply poked his belly. This literal puncturing of the moment caused him to remember I was not an ex-banker, but a street performer. Upon this sudden realisation, he looked at me with a blank expression and walked away. This performance highlighted the dilemma of how to deal with unanticipated political conflict as a fictional character in public. This experience informed the PhD research rational and guided the development of the research aim and research question.

In seeking a theoretical understanding of how politicised and adversarial conflict can take place in art practice, I turned to political theorist Chantal Mouffe because she defines the relationship between adversaries as agonistic. Agonism is a form of conflict that stops short of, or chooses not to become antagonistic, hostile, or violently aggressive. Mouffe's version of agonism originates from her field of Political Theory, but from 2001 she began to apply her theory of agonism to art practice. In reading Mouffe and reflecting on my Devizes experience I identified a gap between Mouffe's articulation of agonism in art practice, and my street theatre experience. Her account of agonism in art practice did not fully depict or explain my experience of provoking and performing adversarial conflict with a participant. This doctoral investigation arose from questioning what agonism is, how agonism can be performed as guerrilla street theatre, and through examining the complexities of agonism *and* art practice.

The aim of this PhD research was to examine what happens when mischievous street theatre performers are deliberately agonistic in the public realm in the United Kingdom. This aim draws together the practice of mischievous performance, participation by members of the public in the public realm, and the act of provoking a specific type of conflict. This is a practice-based PhD, and I use a specifically devised piece of street theatre performance in order to answer my research question. Through the practice, I test, analyse and question the circumstances in which agonistic conflict does, or does not arise through performances in the public realm. By working through the process of questioning what is, and what is not, an example of agonism in art practice, I am also looking for the limits of agonism, and where the boundary between agonism and antagonism takes place.

Locating the research

This research is located within the general context of art practices that relate to the public sphere, specifically those that deliberately provoke participation, politicised discussion and dissent. As one of many public sphere theorists, Mouffe's work is innovative because of the connections she makes between conflict, democracy, and politicised art practices. Within this field of art and the public sphere, some practices focus on dissent and others focus on activism. This research focuses on politicised dissent and attends to the provocation and production of conflicting points of view. The construction of politicised dissent takes place through the art practice. My practice of street theatre draws upon mischief as a playful, participatory and politicised mode of performance in the public realm.

The two overarching contexts through which I position this research are therefore: practice-based research and politicised art practice. Art historian Christopher Frayling defines practice-based research as '[r]esearch though art and design' (Frayling 1993:5). *Through*, in this context, locates the process of research within the art practice and states that the research outputs and outcomes will emerge from the art practice. Art practice in this thesis holds an equal status to the written theoretical enquiry because it is through the art practice that I question, test, explore and evidence how I answer my research question. Politicised art practices belong to the

wider field of socio-political, and often interdisciplinary, art practices that engage with the world from a political position. Politicised in this context refers to the discursive and critical examination of a contested subject in a range of public arenas. My politicised art practice engages with contentious topics to provoke specifically politicised discussion, dissent, and conflict with participants. As I will explore below, my practice of politicised dissent takes place through guerrilla street theatre. My intention is to be mischievous, provocative, and to draw out and amplify politicised differences of opinion *as they emerge* through the processes of conflict and participation.

It is this characteristic of dissent that emerges *through* participation that distinguishes politicised dissent from political activism. The common ground between activism and politicised dissent is that both entail the public performance of disagreement and difference so as to communicate the terms of the disagreement more widely. The key difference is that activism carries a pre-determined intention to bring about a specific act of 'social [economic, or political] change' (Bishop 2012a:38). In this context, to pre-determine a specific issue is to decide in advance what that issue is and to articulate which specific (social, economic, political) change you want to enact or bring about through the process of activism. In contrast, an act of politicised dissent may use verbal, visual, and/or theatrical devices to specify the terms of the conflict but it does *not* call for a specific 'social change'. The main implication of not pre-emptively calling for a specific change on a specific issue is that the act of dissent must *emerge* through the process of politicised participation. My aim is for the terms of the disagreement to emerge through participation. This aspect of the research attends to the relational qualities of conflict.

Contextualising the research

I focus specifically on Mouffe's work on agonism to unpack how the connections between agonism and art practice can take place. Other theorists in the field of art and the public sphere also include Mitchell (1992), Miles (2006), and Sheikh (2004). Theorists who explore the public sphere and public space include Acconci (1990), Deutsche (1996), Lacy (1995), Marchart (2002), and Miles (2009, 2011). Whereas

Balme (2012, 2014), Patrick (2011) and Warner (2002) focus on the public sphere and performance. Theorists who consider the public sphere, Mouffe, and art practice include Fisher (2017), Gielen (2011), Mahony (2013, 2016), Schmidt (2017), and Stavrakakis (2012).

My rationale for selecting Mouffe, over other theorists[2] who deal with agonism is three-fold. Firstly, her articulation of agonism in politics and political contexts is well reasoned, and unproblematic for the purposes of this research project. Secondly, over a number of years she has persistently applied agonism to art practice in ways that I find problematic, as I will discuss. Thirdly, Mouffe constructs agonism as a social relation to describe conflict, power, and authority. This structure facilitates a correspondence between her political theory, and my art practice as a mischief-maker. My research develops, expands, and qualifies how an art practice can become agonistic, drawing upon a theoretical *and* a practical understanding of agonism and street theatre. As I detail in Chapter 4, I situate mischief as a relation of power and substantiate this connection through Steven Lukes, and in particular to Amy Allen. The opportunity power ascribes is a direct, if eccentric, correlation from Mouffe's agonism to my practice of mischief, hence the title of this research: Exploring Agonism with Mischief.

Mouffe's political theory of agonism is valuable and offers many insights for political discussion. One of Mouffe's strengths is the importance she places on agonistic conflict as an indicator of healthy and thriving democracies (see Chapter 1). Another Mouffian asset is her articulation of the relational or interpersonal aspect of conflict, and her differentiation between agonism and antagonism. Mouffe defines antagonism as the relation 'between enemies' and agonism as the relation 'between adversaries' (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:161). She expresses the antagonistic relation as a 'we/they' relation that foregrounds antagonism as a political relation of inclusion and exclusion: of defining who belongs and who does not (Mouffe 2005a:16).

In contrast to antagonism, agonism is an adversarial relation where some kind of common ground exists between the adversaries. For example, two political parties

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[2] For example: Hannah Arendt, Bonnie Honig, or William Connolly.

agree on the broad parameters of the discussion (e.g.: social welfare reform as the issue at stake). However, they disagree on how the welfare reform should take place, how much money should be allocated, and who should be eligible to benefit from the reform. An adversarial debate may take place in which the details of the disagreement are argued back and forth. The debate may become heated and feisty. But if the debate spills into threatened or actual violence then the discussion is no longer agonistic, but antagonistic. Likewise, if one party wanted to reform social welfare, and the opposing party wanted to erase social welfare from the government portfolio, then the agonistic common ground between the two parties ceases to exist.

Mouffe's distinction between antagonism and agonism clarifies how antagonistic conflict operates within politics and the political. Difficulties and opportunities arise in Mouffe's definitions of antagonism and agonism when these terms are explored relationally and applied to art practice, specifically performative art practices. My proposal is that the division between agonism and antagonism is blurry when viewed in an artistic, rather than a political context. Mouffe's qualifying characteristics of antagonism (enmity, exclusion, lack of common ground) do not fully describe or define the specific *relational* qualities of antagonism. For example, what level of opposition, hostility, or actual violence constitutes antagonistic behaviour? Philosopher Jason Miller paraphrases and develops art historian Claire Bishop's line of thought by stating that 'dissent, friction, unease, instability, confrontation, [... are] the aesthetic equivalent[s] to the politics of antagonism' (Miller 2016). However, many of the items on Miller's list can also be applied to agonistic art practices (see Chapter 3). Consequently, a problem this thesis tackles is to understand and define the relational qualities of agonism, whilst also acknowledging the difficulty of pinpointing exactly when antagonism takes place in an art practice.

I argue that Mouffe's approach to applying agonism to art practice is under-developed and based on a number of assumptions, which I will examine and discuss in Chapter 2. My central critiques of Mouffe's approach are that she assumes that there is a direct connection between the political performance of agonism, and the performance of agonism in art practice. She applies agonism as a political concept to the context of art, without developing her ideas in relation to the discipline of art

practice.³ Then when she does refer to examples of art practice, she does not analyse them in depth. Mouffe also makes a number of assumptions regarding the performance, communication, and the complexities of reception by participants of politically critical agonistic art practices. However, Mouffe's agonism does offer a way to help me make sense of my lived experience of antagonism/agonism and street performance (see Chapter 5). My reflections on the *BACS* performance in Devizes begins to illuminate some of the challenges of using an art practice to be political, participatory and argumentative in the public realm. A task I undertake in this research is to specify how I develop and amplify Mouffe's theory through art practice.

Unlike the agonism and welfare reform example above, establishing the opposing positions of the debate within a street performance takes time, encouragement of participants, and a level of personal risk. In *BACS* I was a fictional character embodying a stereotype in the contemporary and politicised imagination: the boundaries between truth, reality and fiction were deliberately blurred. The blurring accentuated the potential for humour and political satire, but also anticipated the satire would be understood by participants. In 2013, the impact of the coalition government's programme of austerity (following the financial crisis) had evolved into tangible economic, social and cultural consequences for many people. When I approached the older gentleman as an ex-banker, I had no idea how the repercussions of the financial crisis/austerity might have affected him. His situation may (or may not) have accounted for his anger. As his anger increased, I deployed increasing amounts of mischief: thus, the level of conflict, just like the levels of truth fluctuated during the performance. The difficulties of agonism in art practice here include: how to be unexpected in the public realm, and how to deal with unexpected responses, how to create a context for the performance, how to encourage politicised speech through fictional narratives, and how to bait conflictual situations without escalation into antagonistic forms of communication.

My encounter in Devizes with the older gentleman did not begin with agonism or antagonism, but with an actual, not theoretical, economic context and my practice of

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³ Mouffe does not state why she began applying agonism to art practices, other than expressing a general interest in thinking through the potential of the political, of which antagonistic conflict is a component.

mischievous performance. As a life-long mischief maker for me to spend the summer performing as an ex-banker was not a surprising development. I began designing and performing participatory pranks at the age of eight. Over the years, my art practice as a mischief maker has evolved to encompass visual art, interventions, and performances. The two key developments in *BACS* were the political content and the role of participants as impromptu collaborators. In *BACS* I situated mischief as a politicised practice: I addressed a topic of topical concern, and I invited opposition to my sorry-not-sorry ex-banker character. The *BACS* performance sustained the aspiration to work *with* participants. In order to work *with*, we needed to improvise in response to the participants, rather than follow a predetermined script. This approach relied on participants having an opinion, and/or lived experience of the financial crisis, and the willingness to share that opinion in the public realm with strangers. A guiding concern throughout the development of my PhD was: what is the potential of conflict in an art practice that is adversarial, participatory, *and* mischievous?

Research Question, Methodology, Method

My research question is:

How can mischievous and participatory performance facilitate politicised dissent?

This question has five sub-questions that each address a structural element of the research.

Research sub-questions

1. What are the strengths of Mouffe's theory of agonism for an understanding of politicised art practice?
2. What opportunities, difficulties, limitations arise in Mouffe's application of agonism from political theory to art practice?
3. What roles do conflict and conviviality play in the participatory performance of dissent?

4. How can mischief be used as a form of facilitation to provoke conflict and politicised dissent?
5. How can agonism in art practice be identified and evidenced?

The research question connects mischievous performance, and participation with the act of facilitating dissent as (ideally agonistic) conflict. The framing of this question indicates a causal link between the performers' need for participants, and the acts of dissent and conflict. Dissent is an important structural device: because in order to dissent, an adversary or opponent must first be identified. With an adversary in place, the opportunities for an adversarial exchange, or agonistic conflict increase. By questioning *how can* agonism in art practice be identified, I challenge Mouffe's assumption that art practice can provoke agonistic conflict. Instead I focus on exploring the ways in which conflict can manifest, and how agonism might emerge, be prompted to emerge, or fail to emerge during the performances. Similarly, the question recognises that conflict between strangers in the public realm requires some sort of facilitation. Facilitation here takes the form of mischievous prompting to enable, and/or manage how the acts of dissent, and/or conflict might take place between the participants, and performers.

Methodology

Using art practice as a method of research, my methodology employs argumentation using both theory and practice. My purpose was to create a productive and creative tension between agonism, participation, and mischief as the core components of the research. My aim was to facilitate an analysis of how agonism, participation, and mischief interact. The street theatre performance practice was devised specifically to respond to and answer my research question. The construction of the practice sought to provoke agonistic relations with participants in order to test and question how agonism can manifest in art practice. The theoretical argumentation is developed through Chapters 1 to 4, and sequentially addresses the research keywords: agonism, participation, mischief. These chapters incorporate a literature review and analysis, and examples of art practices in order to connect the argument at hand to both theory and practice.

Chapter 5 focuses on discussing the findings gained from the practice, and on making connections between the theory and practice. This chapter is structured to develop key concepts from the preceding Participation, Mischief, and Agonism chapters and investigate them in relation to the practice. The methodology I use to analyse the practice is argumentation using both theory and practice. This methodology is supported by four practice-based objectives, and nine practice-based methods (see section 5.1). The objectives each address core components of my research question. Chapter 5's title of Analysis and Reflection of the Practice foregrounds, and is subsequently limited by, *my* analysis and *my* reflections on the practice. Due to time and financial limitations of the doctoral research project, I did not undertake follow-up surveys or interviews with participants. The evidence of their participation is limited by what the filmmaker caught on film (see introduction to Chapter 5). I also did not interview my co-performers. As co-performers, their perspectives could potentially verify or challenge my research findings. My rationale for this limitation is twofold. Firstly, whilst the co-performers are experts in their field, they are not academic researchers. Secondly, the implications of interviewing my co-performers - as participants of the research - would insert a relation of power between Tinman and Scarecrow, and myself as the researcher. This might impair the development of an ensemble and the collaborative nature of the performance.[4]

I situate my practice as following the tradition of strolling guerrilla street theatre, that encompasses theatrical, unauthorised, and playful incursions in the public realm. The situating of the practice acknowledges four influential sources: guerrilla theatre, Henri Lefebvre, Allan Kaprow, and the Natural Theatre Company. My application of the term guerrilla street theatre recalls Peter Berg of the San Francisco Mime Troupe's (SFMT) adoption of the term 'guerrilla' to define non-commercial, participatory, and deliberately politicised outdoor performances. Davis's 1966 article expands Che Guevara's term 'guerrilla fighter' in relation to politicised and theatrical incursions in public spaces (Guevara 1961 in Davis 1966:130). The emphasis on guerrilla conflict notes a connection to antagonistic conflict and serves to differentiate my research from contemporary street theatre. Contemporary street

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[4] However, after the majority of the rehearsal days, we did collaboratively create a reflective video journal: https://vimeo.com/freckledmischief Accessed 19 November 2018. These reflections did inform the collaborative development of the practice.

theatre can take place within, or outside of street arts festivals. These sanctioned performances are often instrumentalised for the objectives of commerce, tourism, place-making, and/or urban regeneration. In contrast, my emphasis on the guerrilla nature of the performance prioritises the unsanctioned production of conflict and opposition.

Through utilising the street as the site for unauthorised playful conflict, I acknowledge the influence of philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre depicts how theatrical performances during the 1968 political and cultural revolution spill out on to the Parisian streets. His description foregrounds theatrically playful incursions in the public realm: '[t]he street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder. […] The disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises.' (Lefebvre 2003 [1970]:18-19). Lefebvre connects the idea of the street as a playground, as the site for politicised disruption, and the location where unanticipated encounters with participants can occur. Lefebvre makes significant connections between performance, playfulness and the political. What playfulness brings to guerrilla street theatre and the performance of conflict is a warmth and friendliness: a type of conviviality amongst strangers. I expand Lefebvre's framing of the potential the street holds by extending the playful disruption into mischievous conflict with participants. Playfulness can blur the edges of how, and with whom the conflict within the performance takes place. Play can enable performers and participants to navigate the terms of the conflict. Play can also be deployed to counteract hostile relations with participants.

Through blurring the edges of conflict with playfulness, I recognise the influence of Allan Kaprow's Happenings (1950s-1970s) live art practice. Kaprow sought to blur the distinctions between performers, audience members/participants, and the edges of the performance space. Kaprow is influential in addressing the spatial and relational shift between audience members, and those who (un-expectantly) participate in the performance. When Kaprow's performances took to the street, he blurred the edge of the stage with real life, and he blurred the boundary that historically separated performers from audience members. One consequence of removing the stage is that it releases the performers from physical constraint. Unconstrained performers are able to reduce the physical distance that enables spectators to watch the performance from afar. Thus, spectators can find themselves

unexpectedly in the physical and relational remit of a participant, because the performers have moved and closed the geographic space between them.

The ways in which the performers as particular characters inhabit and explore the public realm acknowledge a formative inheritance from the Natural Theatre Company (NTC 1970s-current).[5] I trained with two co-founders of the NTC, Brian Popay, and Pavel Douglas in 2011 and 2013 respectively. What I carry forward from these experiences is a focus on the creation of detailed and committed characters. These characters are dislocated, through incongruous costume, behaviour, and narrative from their natural or original context. This technique of dislocation enables the performers to naively embrace their autonomy in order to explore the streets geographically, and socially.

Method

Strolling guerrilla street theatre, and mischievous performance are the methods deployed to provoke participation and agonistic conflict in the public realm. Strolling street theatre is an artform that enables a temporary, mobile, and unauthorised habitation of the public realm. Guerrilla street performance foregrounds the intention of the performers to seek out willing participants: those who (ideally) become agonistic adversaries. Implicit within the practice of strolling guerrilla street theatre are the methods of mischief and participation. Mischievous performance as a method is utilised as a sequential process to: intrigue, invite, engage, and facilitate (ideally) conflictual participation in the public realm. The primary aim of these methods is to examine when and how a participatory art practice *is* agonistic, and to evidence through analysis, reflection, and argumentation the conditions under which agonism becomes apparent. The secondary aim of these methods is to identify the conditions in which agonism fails and the participation becomes relationally convivial, and when agonism fails differently and participation becomes hostile and antagonistic. As a result of these methods, I am able to discuss the possible circumstances in which agonism emerges in art practice. Additional methods that

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[5] NTC are a street theatre company based in Bath, UK. They specialise in surreal, interactive, and walkabout street theatre performance. The way in which their characters are dislocated from their natural or usual setting is evident in *High Street Bowling Club* (Bath, 2009) https://youtu.be/0nBpqo3SCA0 Accessed 13 December 2017.

specifically relate to adapting the research to meet the needs of the participants are detailed in Chapter 5.

I explore the research questions through the thesis chapters, but also through my practice-based research, which is modelled on *The Wizard of Oz*. I selected and adapted L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* because of the opportunities it presents to facilitate public discussions about power, hegemony, and conflict through the structure of a journey. I extracted three characters who become exiled leaders who want to return home to Oz. In order to be allowed back, Lion, Tinman, and Scarecrow must learn how to be fair and just leaders before the Wizard will allow them to return home. The only way the characters can gain this information is by asking those they meet on their journey for advice. Therefore, public participation is a vital aspect of the performance. Each character leads with the quality the Wizard gave them with in Baum's original novel: Lion with courage, Tinman with heart, and Scarecrow with brains. Consequently, each character interprets the advice they receive from participants with a particular bias. This ensures that conflict is a potential component of every performance. Baum's motif of the yellow brick road as a journey full of obstacles and challenges is adapted to suit strolling guerrilla street theatre in the public realm.

About the practice

The street performances were planned and developed in Spring-Summer 2015, the performances took place over one day in August 2015. The practice is presented as images in the thesis, and as links to online film clips.[6] The film clips are titled as Episodes in order to emphasis the iterative nature of the street performances. The body of photographs is available on the Internet.[7] Only instances of practice with ethical approval from each participant is included.

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[6] Video episodes: https://vimeo.com/politicizedmischief/videos Accessed 16 November 2017

[7] Photographs: https://www.flickr.com/photos/politicizedmischief Accessed 16 November 2017

Original Contribution to Knowledge

Contributions to knowledge are made within four overlapping fields of research: agonism, participation, mischief, and politicised art practice. These fields converge through an original articulation of how agonism in art practice can be identified, performed, experienced and interpreted. Firstly, a contribution is made to the field of agonism and political theory by specifying which aspects of Mouffe's political theory of agonism are especially pertinent in identifying agonism in art practice. An interdisciplinary approach bridges political theory and art practice by addressing agonism *through* art practice, and from the innovative practice-based position of a strolling guerrilla street performer. Secondly, participation is proposed as an essential component of agonistic art practice. Agonistic art practice as a specific form of participatory art practice is located within the canon of art history and art theory. Thirdly, mischief's novel relationship to agonism contributes an inventive understanding of how conviviality and conflict can be facilitated through counter-hegemonic performance. Lastly, the value of agonistic art practice as a viable form of politicised art practice is articulated in terms of participatory performances of political dissent.

Chapter structure

Chapter 1: Exploring Agonism

Chapter 1 asks how can agonism shift from political theory to participatory art practice. It scrutinises how Mouffe defines and situates agonism within politics, democracy, and forms of conflict. I locate the origin of her theory of agonism and highlight the importance of agonism as a relational form of conflict. Through an exploration of agonism's etymology, I reflect upon the wider implications and connotations that agonism holds. I draw attention to the contexts and complexities of transferring agonism from political theory to art practice through my analysis of *Crude / Sunflower* (London, 2010), a performance by Liberate Tate.

Chapter 2: Questioning Agonism

Chapter 2 considers what questions Mouffe's interpretation of art practice raises. I analyse the instances when Mouffe discusses agonism and art practice from 2001 to 2013. I pay attention to the language Mouffe employs as she applies agonism as political theory to art practice. I question the assumptions Mouffe makes about agonistic art practice in terms of participation, and politicised dissent. I examine Hans Haacke's artwork *Der Bevölkerung (To The Population)* (Berlin, 2000), because Mouffe discusses this artwork at length in 2001. The Liberate Tate example in Chapter 1 is expanded to specify how their work *can* be understood as agonistic. This chapter concludes with a list of qualifying characteristics that I identify for agonistic art practice. The list operates as an analytical structure to aid the understanding and specification of what is, or is not, agonistic art practice.

Chapter 3: Participation

The central themes of Chapter 3 are conviviality, conflict, and politicised performances in the public realm. I explore how agonism in art practice is neither wholly convivial, nor wholly conflictual. I situate conviviality and participation in art theory via Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and his emphasis on sociability and friendship. Claire Bishop's argument for friction and antagonism in art practice informs how I position participation as conflict and dissent. I expand upon participation that invites conviviality and conflict and dissensus through an analysis of Dread Scott's performance *Money to Burn* (Wall Street, 2010), and agonistic participation as conflictual conviviality by examining the *Sea Turtle Brigade* (Seattle, 1999).

Chapter 4: Mischief

In Chapter 4 I expand the definition of mischief and situate mischief in terms of power, and as a counter-hegemonic act in relation to authority. By expanding the social and relational implications of mischief, I challenge the victor/victim dynamic. Instead I propose a relation of power that initiates reciprocity and collaboration between participants. I draw upon guerrilla street theatre performances by Mark Thomas *The Nick Clegg Piñata* (Sheffield, 2014), the Yes Men *"Last Iceberg" Snow Cones* (New York, 2015), and the Billionaires for Wealthcare performance *Profits*

Before People (2009) to articulate how mischief can operate as an agonistic, politicised and participatory practice.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Reflection of the Practice

The analysis and reflection in Chapter 5 scrutinises the films created during the guerrilla street theatre performances of *The Wizard of Oz* (London, 2015). This chapter reflects back to the research aim in order to qualify what did happen when three street performers set out to be deliberately agonistic in the public realm. I identify how, where, when, and under which circumstances agonism becomes evident in the art practice. This chapter highlights the difficulties and complexities of persuading participants to engage in conflictual discussions in the public realm. The analysis links key concepts in the preceding chapters, and pinpoints to what extent those ideas are apparent or absent in the episodes of participation. I apply my eight criteria for agonistic art practice, and my etymology of agonism to the processes of analysis and reflection.

Chapter 1: Exploring Agonism

> A relation of antagonism is one that takes place between enemies, while a
> relation of agonism takes place between adversaries.
> (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:161)

Mouffe's definition and concept of agonism is concise and specific to her field of political theory. I explain Mouffe's definition of agonism and explore the wider implications of agonism as a performance of dissent. By highlighting the strengths and characteristics of Mouffe's theory of agonism, I specify how agonism can shift from political philosophy into (specifically) participatory art practice. My approach to investigating agonism begins from my position of artist and performer, and from the field of art. My intention is not to become a political theorist, but to identify the possibilities agonism holds for art practice.

1.1 Introducing Mouffe's concept of agonism in relation to democracy, dissent, and art practice

Mouffe's major contribution to political theory and political philosophy is her insistence that conflict is an essential and *relational* component of liberal democracy. Mouffe positions relational conflict as either antagonistic conflict 'between enemies', or agonistic conflict 'between adversaries' (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:161). Mouffe locates these relations between enemies or adversaries within the paradoxical form of liberal democracy. She states that: '[c]onflict in liberal democratic societies cannot and should not be eradicated, since the specificity of pluralist democracy is precisely the recognition and legitimation of conflict' (Mouffe 2013b:7). For Mouffe, the paradox of liberal democracy entails the liberal values of unrestricted individual freedom in correspondence with, and contradiction to the democratic values of equality and fairness for the many within a system of political governance. According to Mouffe, within this paradox, conflict is inevitable and essential. A difficulty with Mouffe's use of the word 'conflict' is that she does not expand upon the potential implications and variables of how the conflict might manifest. Her focus on the relational focuses on two forms of political performance,

but does not attend to whether, for example, the potential enmity of antagonism will, or will not, become violent.

Mouffe states that a 'well-functioning democracy calls for a *vibrant clash* of democratic political positions' (Mouffe 2000:104 my emphasis). The 'vibrant clash' indicates a healthy democracy in which participants (and groups of participants) of multiple ages, ethnic backgrounds, faiths, economic circumstances, genders, sexual orientations, each compete to bring their voices to the forefront of the democratic debate. This definition stands in contrast to an ill-functioning democracy could be described as authoritarian: one that quashes political dissent, and uses intimidation, and violent forms of conflict against those who challenge or oppose state rule. Mouffe emphasises that the vibrant conflict arises between multiple, and oppositional political positions. Mouffe regards the competing or clashing for attention as assets to a democratic state. What this plurality, or exponential range of opinions also entails is constant conflict, and for the potential for agreement, or consensus on topics of common concern to be elusive.

Mouffe values dissensus and warns against a politics of consensus as a process of democratic dialogue. This is because she regards consensus as a politics 'harmonized by dialogue' (Mouffe 2000:111). To harmonise in this context is to flatten out disagreement and conflict by imposing a middle ground, or to determine a Third Way as described by New Labour, under Tony Blair's leadership. To be in harmony with others, is to deny the naturally occurring differences (for example between Left, and Right), and therefore block, or withhold the potential for conflict within a polity. Mouffe does not deny that consensus is a valuable tool of democracy, but she caveats how consensus is utilised. 'Consensus [she states] is indeed necessary but it must be accompanied by dissent.' (Mouffe 2000:113) Dissent in this context is not a refusal to comply, or acquiesce, but an invitation to actively consider alternative options. Dissent in terms of democratic confrontation is a strategy of persuasion, and a method of performing a counter-hegemonic act: to challenge those in power and the political decisions they are either implementing, or about to implement.

Mouffe's idea of democracy stands for a participatory political process that acknowledges the *vibrancy*, and plurality of individual citizens within a specific

polity. The concept of a participatory political process is equally important as a method of constructing a participatory art practice. Whilst the topic of participation is addressed in Chapter 3, here I want to highlight the relationship between Mouffe's articulation of democracy, and how art practice can be described. In the contexts of both democracy and art practice, the act of participation defines how participants are brought into a relationally decision-making process: a process that offers an array of seemingly conflicting alternatives. Although the exercise of democracy, the decision to vote in an election for example may impact upon an entire populace, and participation within an art practice may only concern a few people. The actions of stepping forward, taking part, and speaking up are key motifs for the act of participation: in democracy, and in art practice. The wider setting of democracy and specific context of participation are key elements of this research project.

What art practices can bring to the practise of democratic dissent is more than just increasing the range, and number of voices participating in dissent. Art practices contribute to Mouffe's 'vibrant clash' (Mouffe 2000:104) by providing additional methods of accessing political debates, and other opportunities to contribute, and participate in politicised conflict. Art practices bring a wide range of tactics in representing, and interpreting issues of shared concern, but also in considering, through discussion, alternative options. This includes how topics are, for example, visually depicted, textually summarised, and/or theatrically performed. Whilst the art practices may represent the issue(s) from a particular perspective, artists (like other cultural, and political commentators) may use devices like paradox, metaphor, satire, or personification to communicate their position. This could be, for instance, through text, speech, and/or performance, each method contributing to the publishing, and circulation of opinion. Political dissent framed by art practice exists whether the dissenter stands in opposition to the object, or objects of their dissent. Or whether the dissenter stands in chorus, as one of many dissenters. Dissent, in terms of this research, is a relational, participatory and performative act, and a process of making public the act of politicised disagreement.

Agonism and antagonism: my etymology

In this etymology of agonism I define and explore the implications and nuances of agonism and antagonism as research keywords. I focus on understanding and interpreting the relational qualities of agonism. In Chapter 5 I refer back to this etymology when I apply agonism as an expanded and multifaceted type of relation to the film recordings created during the participatory performances.

My etymology expands on how the agonistic struggle can take place. I bring to light the possible ways in which agonism can shift from political philosophy to art practice. In contrast, Mouffe is consistent in her definition of 'antagonism (struggle between enemies)' and 'agonism (struggle between adversaries)' (Mouffe 2013b:7) in the broad contexts of liberal democracy, and democratic plurality.[8] However, the emphasis Mouffe gives to antagonism and agonism does shift. In 1998 she frames conflict in terms of 'enemies' or 'adversaries' (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:161). In 2013b she emphasises conflict as a form of struggle. 'Struggle' implies difficulty and disagreement, but not a violent form of conflict. I propose that Mouffe's contextualisation of agonism within political theory is a limiting factor when she discusses agonism and art practice (see Chapter 2). Paradoxically, Mouffe's definition of agonism as adversarial is also central to understanding and interpreting the potential agonism holds for art practice.

Agonism is historically defined not as a conflict but as a form of 'contest' (Brown 1993:42), a dispute between two or more combatants who disagree on a particular issue or topic. This aspect of the definition tallies with Mouffe's categorisation of agonism as adversarial. This is a contest to which there may not be an easy answer, or a short-cut solution. The subtleties of agonism as a form of argument become apparent when considered in context with the linguistically adjacent terms agonise, and agony. Agonising is a mental process and refers to a state of mind, not a physical action. To agonise is to deliberate between two or more positions, a process of carefully considering the available options in which a decision is a struggle, and hard to make. An agonising process connotes a painful method of arriving at a decision, in

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[8] More specifically, Mouffe locates agonism and antagonism within the political, politics, the social as forms of inclusion and exclusion, power, and hegemony and I address these in sections 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, and 4.1 respectively.

that the agonist may experience mental 'anguish' (Pearsall and Trimble 1996:25). An agonising process could also suggest the lack of a final decision, a stalemate in which the participants fail to reach a conclusion to their discussion or disagreement. In this sense, an agonistic dispute is one that potentially takes place over a period of time, is unresolved, open ended and does not result in physical conflict.

Agony, and the colloquial agony aunt, refers to experiencing conflict or struggle, and in seeking support, or leadership from another. Here, agony is a relational value between two individuals or parties, one of whom is ascribed a greater knowledge, status, power, or (moral, social, cultural, economic) authority over the other. Equally agonism refers to a mental wrangling, a process of feeling conflicted, of exchange and deliberation in which the options, and their potential implications are contemplated. Agony denotes a struggle with the cause(s) of a disagreement, the relative and relational positions of power, and the potential implications of a final decision. Power is a constituent component of the political, which Mouffe defines as 'power, conflict and antagonism' (Mouffe 2005a:9). In this context, power also speaks to the social context, and interpersonal and socially instituted hierarchies that exist between the participants.

Agonism has several etymological associations that are relevant to this discussion: agon, and agora. Agon, from the Greek, refers to 'games' and 'verbal contest' (Brown 1993:42). Whilst games could refer to sporting, or physical events, and verbal contests to debates, both activities refer to a type of contest. A contest that takes place between clearly designated teams or individuals who compete, using a predetermined set of rules, and a pre-agreed definition of what constitutes winning the contest. Agon is a useful term in constituting the ground rules, the remit and purpose of the contest, and in framing competitors within the structure of a game. This is not an aspect of agonism that Mouffe refers to. Agon, and agora are however useful aspects of agonism when an extension is made from agonism in political theory to agonism in art practice. What is key here is in understanding 'games' and a 'verbal contest' in terms of playful mischievous performance, and the structure of a game being some kind of back-and-forth between players (as per the Devizes vignette in the Introduction).

Agora, also from the Greek, is defined as 'a place of assembly' (Brown 1993:42). Agora also describes a public meeting place, a location where individuals gather in the public realm to exchange opinions. Agora locates the type of space where participants can meet, and performatively contest the opinions of others. Whilst agora is predominantly a historical term, a contemporary iteration of the agora is the term public sphere. The unifying characteristics of both are: public assembly, public speech, and the public exchange (and circulation) of opinion as acts of publicity. The public sphere is a key idea for this research, and this explored in section 1.4 in order to connect the public sphere with Mouffe's near-equivalent term 'critical public space' (Mouffe 2013b:85). The aspect of agonism and agora that is also pertinent here is the act of participation. Participation occurs in the act of public assembly, and participation takes place in the practice of agonistic contestation.

The primary definition of antagonism is conduct that results in 'active opposition or hostility' (Pearsall and Trimble 1996:55). The aspect of hostility directly aligns with Mouffe's usage as the quality that distinguishes antagonism from agonism. The term antagonist locates the hostility in a person, or persons; as an act, or series of actions recognised as antagonistic by others. To antagonise, denotes a mode of behaviour to wind up, infuriate, or provoke others into enmity, aggression, or violence. To antagonise characterises not only a struggle between opposing parties, but within that skirmish, the potential for the antagonistic aspect to 'neutralize' the conflict (Brown 1993:85). This characteristic to neutralise, to nullify the arguments made by opposing parties has the possibility to short circuit a solution to the disagreement in hand. To 'neutralize' can also take place when one party exerts a violent form of power to subdue or remove their opponents. An antagonistic argument (similar in this respect to agonistic argument) could be described as a circular one, forever being fought, but never making any progress towards a resolution or point of agreement. Each party is entrenched in hostility and, as a consequence the argument is often equally stuck.

1.2 Investigating the relational qualities of agonism: context, inclusion, and exclusion

Antagonistic clashes, with their possibilities for violence and hostility contain the potential to shut down and negate open debate. Mouffe questions what could keep political debates open and participatory, whilst maintaining the constructive quality of conflict. Mouffe states that '[p]roperly political questions always involve decisions which require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives' (Mouffe 2005a:10). For example, to go to war, or negotiate a peaceful settlement; to vote with for the party ideologically Left, or Right; to vote to stay in Europe, or vote for Brexit (the British exit from Europe). Each of these examples is a conflicting alternative. To choose one, is to reject the other. Those who support one position may be antagonistically, and vehemently opposed to the alternative. Whilst Mouffe proposes this is a necessary paradox of liberal democracy, antagonistic positions also have the potential to shut down plural, and wide-ranging dialogues and to become violent, physically and through abusive language. The potential for art practice here is to find a form of agonistic dissent that simultaneously maintains an open debate *and* maintains a level of conflict.

The question Mouffe poses is: 'what could constitute a "tamed" relation of antagonism, what form of we/they would it imply?' (Mouffe 2005a:19). In questioning how to reduce the negative or destructive implications of antagonism, Mouffe is not seeking to negate political conflict, but to propose the adversarial relation between participants as being a positive, rather than negative aspect of conflict. Mouffe defines the political as 'power, conflict and antagonism' (Mouffe 2005a:9). What Mouffe gives us with her definition of the political is a context, not just for understanding antagonism, but understanding the contexts in which agonistic conflict can take place. The political is 'ontological' (Mouffe 2005a:8), meaning it belongs to the experiential world, rather than the ontic of procedure, or bureaucracy. Mouffe's definitions of agonism and antagonism describe the adversarial and hostile relation, but the political extends this into a wider social context through the inclusion of power.

The relational value of the political attends to the context of the conflict, and the interpersonal and social encounters between participants. Mouffe defines the dynamic between antagonists as enemy/enemy, and the dynamic between agonists as adversary/adversary. Each of these relationships is conflictual, performative, and contains a power dynamic that Mouffe positions within a vibrant democracy. She argues for agonism within a plural democracy, and warns against both succumbing to antagonistic relations, and denying antagonism altogether. For Mouffe the relational 'context of conflictuality' (Mouffe 2005a:9) is a fundamental aspect of the political. The political defines the way that relationships between participants are framed and established. This includes how power and conflict, as relational tactics can be proposed, perpetuated, acquiesced with, and dissented against. The social context of the political and the ways that power and conflict manifest and can be experienced is explored in Chapter 2.

Mouffe arrives at her answer on how to tame agonism in the work of political theorist Carl Schmitt and his concept of the "people"' (Mouffe 2000:41). Mouffe's focus lies in piecing together her theory of liberal democracy that encompasses conflict and pluralism as a form of 'democratic participation' (Mouffe 2000:42). Schmitt's definition of 'people' is premised on citizenship, and defining whom rightfully belongs to a specific polity, and who does not. Schmitt's version of citizenship includes ascribing equality and human rights to those who belong, and also withholding those rights from those who do not belong. Schmitt's position can be historically, and politically contextualised by his identification and involvement with the Nazi regime.

What is relevant for my thesis is Schmitt's emphasis on the political: the relational distinction between belonging, and exclusion. For Schmitt, the notion of belonging involves the creation of a '"friendship" which [as Mouffe states] defines the "us" in a democracy' (Mouffe 2000:50). Friendship, as a friend/friend relation, here stands in opposition to an antagonistic relation of enemy/enemy. Mouffe extends Schmitt in defining the "us", but also in specifying who is excluded from belonging to 'us': those who belong to the category of *them*. When conflicts arise amongst friends, Mouffe's category of 'us' shifts. The allegiance, and common ground between the friends endures: and the category of friendship shifts to a relation between adversaries.

Mouffe notes that Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction is not necessarily permanent or fixed: but a relationship that is vulnerable to (antagonistic) fluctuation. For example: a friend can *become* an enemy, maybe over a period of time or due to a significant event that involves one, or both parties. As a result, the identification shifts from an inclusive *us* to a separation that results in an excluded you, or *them*. The choice between conflicting alternatives remains a viable proposition. But the mode of identification changes.

To summarise, between Mouffe and Schmitt there are three potential modes of forming political relationships between participants. The friend/friend dynamic creates an "us". This mode is important because the friend/friend dynamic is instrumental in defining who is included and belongs to a particular group. Whilst the friendship relation is without conflict, the friend/friend formation of an us can only take place in context with an opposition *them*. The enemy/enemy relation between antagonistic parties describes two sides in hostile conflict: both parties refer to the other side as *them*. This dynamic denotes who is excluded, and where there is an absence of common ground. The agonistic relation of adversary/adversary denotes a shared or common interest between parties who are engaged in a level of conflict. In order to expand on how agonistic relations can engender both conflict and belonging, I will now situate these relations in *Crude / Sunflower* (2010, Figure 2) an unauthorised guerrilla intervention by Liberate Tate.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.

Figure 2: Liberate Tate, *Crude / Sunflower*, 2010[9]

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[9] Image available at: http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/performances/sunflower-september-2010/ Accessed 18 May 201

In *Crude/Sunflower* (Figure 2) fifty members of Liberate Tate created a representation of a sunflower by stamping on tubes of black paint bearing the BP logo.[10] The guerrilla performance took place in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern. The sunflower shape echoed the BP logo, and the black paint mimicked an oil spill, one the Tate staff was compelled to clean up. Liberate Tate formed in 2010 and is an art collective committed to social change and creative disobedience. They create critical performances, interventions, and texts as direct-action artworks: protesting against BP's (British Petroleum) corporate sponsorship of aspects of the Tate's artistic programme.[11] Liberate Tate object to BP's use of an art institution as a method to clean up their public image. BP's image has been tarnished by oil spills, and oil disasters that caused significant human, and environmental damage. (This is notwithstanding the on-going climate cost caused by drilling, burning, and disposing of oil-based products.) Liberate Tate use art practice as a method to bring into focus the ethics of BP art-washing (white-washing) their public image.

A key difficulty of Mouffe's definitions of agonism as 'relations between adversaries' and antagonism as 'relations between enemies' (Mouffe 2005a:52) is the appearance of clarity, and a coherent distinction between the two types of political relation. However, when these definitions are applied to the relations within an art practice, clarity is replaced with complication. For example, as artists and cultural consumers, Liberate Tate shares an adversarial relationship with the Tate as cultural venue(s) and a cultural institution. The two parties share common ground in: (1) the arts in general, (2) London as specific geographic location, (3) the act, and belief in the value of public participation in the arts and (4) the use of publicity and the media to communicate and promote their art works. Liberate Tate also hold the Tate responsible for making a contractual sponsorship deal with BP. So, although I describe their primary relationship as agonistic, Liberate Tate also position

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[10] Liberate Tate *Crude / Sunflower* (2010) performance https://vimeo.com/45436934 Accessed 18 May 2017

[11] On 11 March 2016, BP announced that their sponsorship contract with the Tate would not be renewed. My purpose in using Liberate Tate is to explore the agonistic qualities of their art practice. To speculate as to whether their approach was the contributing factor to BP's decision is beyond the scope of my research.
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/11/bp-to-end-tate-sponsorship-climate-protests Accessed 20 March 2016

themselves as an 'us' against *them* (the Tate-BP partnership). Thus, Liberate Tate hold an enemy/enemy relationship with BP: one of antagonistic hostility and intractability. This aspect of their relationship connects back to Mouffe's definition of the political as the combination of power and conflict. Financially BP hold a level of power over the Tate in term of guaranteed arts funding for a pre-agreed period of time. The conflict between Liberate Tate and the Tate can only end when the BP sponsorship deal ceases.

A key question agonistic practices ask is: who is included and who is excluded, on whose terms, and why? Liberate Tate's performances and interventions take place in public and in, therefore the relational spaces of the Tate's exhibition spaces. Their practice makes visible the private fiscal exchange through artistic interventions that are witnessed by the Tate's visitors. Liberate Tate utilise versions of the BP corporate logo and they include visceral representations of oil spills in performances. They demonstrate who else (namely BP) is visibly included, but physically absent in their acts of protest. Liberate Tate include and identify with the Tate as a cultural beacon, and simultaneously exclude and oppose the Tate on the basis of their BP funding. This twofold approach creates the opportunity for an adversarial discussion.

This example demonstrates that agonism is never experienced, performed, or participated within as an isolated moment. The performance of agonism by Liberate Tate also contains elements of antagonism, and the boundaries between the relations of adversaries and enemies are layered and blurred. I propose that agonism within an art practice is always experienced as a relational, and critical intervention within a specific context. The context might be provided by a historical event, a geographically or culturally specific location, and/or a socially constructed event. The context also includes the hegemonies present or perceived in the social, or everyday life, those of societal position, wealth, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, ethical, and ideological beliefs that pervade social interactions. These subtle, and overt social signals differentiate how, and with whom participants align themselves with in terms of identify, and identification.

Liberate Tate performs agonism through the methods they use to critique, intervene, and communicate their political dissent at the Tate-BP funding relationship. Liberate

Tate re-imagine the Tate through critical interventions and reflexive dialogue that seeks to question, and open up, not shut down the opportunities for debate. Liberate Tate's art practice forms an on-going dialogue with the Tate, and their choices of visual imagery directly engages with the Tate's collection, and gallery spaces. Here, agonistic dissent is encountered as a relational, and conflictual exchange: a 'vibrant clash' (Mouffe 2000:104) of positions. Agonistic performance in this context clarifies the choice between conflicting alternatives, summed up by the *art not oil* slogan that Liberate Tate utilised during an intervention in 2010. The slogan operates to highlight the financial-cultural hegemonic relationship between the Tate and BP, and the agonistic relationship between Liberate Tate and the Tate. The slogan succinctly proposes a counter-hegemonic position in which BP is removed from the Tate. These considerations enable the agonistic dissent to be read, not just by the Tate's management, but also by Tate visitors, and the media.[12]

This example shows how agonistic dialogue can only open up debate, when the participants share, and to some extent agree upon a 'common symbolic space' (Mouffe 2005a:20). In this example, they share a sense of belonging to the Tate, but are simultaneously in an adversarial conflict on how a specific issue should be managed or dealt with, i.e. who the Tate accepts funding from. The common space helps to locate the site of the contested issue, and situates the participants in relation to each other, and to the conflict. In art practice this 'common symbolic space' can be physically tangible like the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, and relational as per Liberate Tate, and Tate's relationship with BP. Liberate Tate is agonistic in relation to the Tate's staff, infrastructure, art works, and visitors (adversary/adversary). But Liberate Tate is antagonistic towards BP (enemy/enemy), and the aspects of Tate that directly relate to BP. Significantly, the structure of an agonistic intervention considers other possibilities. These possibilities arise through drawing upon the political, and analysing how the relations between participants, particularly those of inclusion and exclusion take place.

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[12] It could also be argued that the Tate benefits both culturally and financially from Liberate Tate's creation of artistic products, publicity and media attention, and adding novelty surprise and intrigue for Tate visitors/customers. These aspects fall beyond the scope of this analysis.

1.3 How Mouffe situates agonism within politics

Whilst this research is not about politics per se,[13] this section locates Mouffe's agonism within politics in order to explore where the edges of agonism exist. The ability to identify where agonism begins and ends is key to understanding how agonism can shift from political theory into art practice. Mouffe defines politics as 'the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organise human coexistence' (Mouffe 2013a [2000]:203). This definition understands politics as a series of 'ontic' structures (Mouffe 2005a:8). These are administrative and regulatory processes that implement the decisions of a specific authority. For example, the process of calling a general election, enabling the electorate to vote for their preferred candidate, and organising the counting and fair adjudication of the whole election process. Politics in this democratic context is experienced by the adherence or avoidance of rules and regulations. Politics, as discourse and institution, is also concerned with defining and separating between ideological beliefs. This aspect of politics is dependent on the political, and the quality of antagonism that is ever-present in social relations.

Conflict in politics often arises at a party-political level: the differentiation between beliefs, and the separation between you and me. The frontiers between you/me, and them/us, leads us back to agonism and considering how the relational terms of the conflict are established. Mouffe retains agonism's original meanings of a dispute in which the combatants carefully consider, or who agonise during the deliberations. In this context conflict refers to a range of possible behaviours rather than a singular approach. Thus, agonism becomes a method to manage disagreement and conflict, through facilitating participants and their conflicting positions. This process of managing disputes acknowledges the potential violence of antagonism, and instead, chooses to address difference and dissent with agonism. Mouffe uses the example of Syriza, a Greek coalition political party to describe an agonistic approach to managing conflict.

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[13] Politics, as political satire is utilised as a tactic to garner public participation during the practice-based research and will be addressed in Chapters 4, 5.

> There, [Greece] the popular mobilizations are currently led by Syriza, a
> coalition of several left parties whose objective is to come to power through
> elections in order to implement a set of radical reforms. (Mouffe 2013b:120)

Mouffe's Syriza example presents what can be described as an agonistic democratic intervention, and my focus is on their origin. Syriza was formed as a coalition party with members who shared: an ideologically similar symbolic space, a desire to give the Greek people a choice between democratically conflicting alternatives, the decision to make a critical political intervention. Syriza coalition members did this by subsuming their individual party identities to form a collective identity. This is a political identity contextualised by the Greek democratic system, at a specific point in Greece's political and cultural history. The agonistic relation here is between Syriza coalition members, and between Syriza and the subscribing party members.

Mouffe warns that a democracy without agonism could become a polarised polity: with antagonism, and ambivalence occupying the extreme points of the political and relational spectrum. At one extreme there is only antagonism. Here antagonism can be characterised, for example, by right-wing nationalism, religious fundamentalism, anarchic civil disobedience, and terrorism, characterised by political theorist James Martin as 'forms of violence' (Martin 2013a:3). Each example of antagonistic behaviour listed above outlines an ideologically driven position that foregrounds not only a type of violence, but also a disconnected, severed, or damaged relationship with the structures of democracy. Politicised action performed by antagonists is action aggressively inserted in to the public sphere, potentially without recourse to, or engagement with the existing democracy.

At the other extreme of the relational spectrum there is a lack of conflict. This could also be described as political ambivalence. These are members of a polity who are disillusioned and disengaged with democracy. These potential democratic participants could be characterised as a section of the population who may complain about the status quo but do not dissent, vote, or participate in democratic processes. Mouffe identifies that a democracy which places 'too much emphasis on consensus, together with an aversion towards confrontations, leads to apathy and to disaffection with political participation' (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:159). Thus, within the context of

politics, antagonism and ambivalence exist beyond the edges of an agonistic engagement with politics.

Thus, within the context of politics, agonism can operate as a pressure valve: a social and political device through which dissent, disagreement, and conflict can be legitimately expressed. By acknowledging and legitimising the plurality of opinions that exist within any given democratic polity, agonism emphasises an adversarial form of conflict that both informs and engages with democracy. This model of agonism stands in opposition to hostile, antagonistic conflict, that negates or circumvents the structures of democracy. Mouffe states that from a pluralist perspective, 'the aim of democratic politics is to transform *antagonism* into *agonism*' (Mouffe 2013a [2000]:204 her emphasis) when deliberating between conflicting alternatives.

The possibilities of conflictual consensus in relation to the edges of agonism

In order to understand the potential agonism holds in relation to art practice, I will identify the edges of agonism in terms of the political. This extends my discussion in section 1.3 where I identify the edges of agonism within the remit of politics. The political offers an ontological perspective on where the edges of agonism might exist, and the opportunity to consider how agonism can relate to art practice. I lead this discussion with Mouffe's term: 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52). This term encapsulates a paradox: an agreement to disagree. Mouffe values consensus, as long as that consensus is managed in a conflictual manner. Mouffe positions this idea as the choice between conflicting alternatives argued by legitimate adversaries within a liberal democracy. I return to and develop Mouffe's paradox of 'conflictual consensus' in relation to art practice in section 2.4.

The genealogy of Mouffe's insistence on the conflictual nature of democracy can be traced back to her early work with Ernesto Laclau (political theorist). Laclau and Mouffe state 'there cannot be radical politics without the definition of an adversary' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001 [1985]:xvii). Their classification of 'adversary' separates political participants by highlighting the differences between their positions and clarifying the conflict between them. Mouffe uses the term 'frontiers' to define the ground between adversaries (Mouffe 2005a:64). These frontiers are based on belief,

opinion, and political positioning, they demarcate the edges between the participants. The adversarial encounters that take place acknowledge the impossibility of democratically achieving a consensus. The value Mouffe emphasises here is placed on the process and style of political debate: of encounter, discussion, conflict, and disagreement, rather than an end point of a consensus decision: a unanimous agreement amongst all participants.

Mouffe's insistence on adversarial conflict establishes a break with theorists. Habermas for example, argues for rational-critical argument as an inclusive process that results in consensus-based decisions. Whilst this is the ideal scenario for Habermas, the consensus model does not exist as a political practice within liberal democracy. The adversaries Mouffe proposes may utilise rational and critical argumentation, they may speak for some, but not all. This process of demarcation, and separation is intrinsic to the practice of agonistic participation. Mouffe's frontiers identify and delineate 'relations of domination' within hegemonic structures (Mouffe 1992:238). Whereas in the ideal Habermasian public sphere, participants are expected to bracket, or set aside positions of wealth, gender, privilege, or power, so that 'discussants […] deliberate as peers' (Fraser 1990:59). Mouffe's use of frontiers acknowledges the relations and potential inequalities of power between participants. The agonistic approach directly questions: who is speaking, on what grounds, and for whom? This process challenges whether a consensus-based decision benefits a specific, or general polity, or a specific group of individuals. The act of questioning who is speaking, and for whom, acknowledges the plurality of a given society, and the hegemonic structures embedded within that society.

Consensus for Mouffe is caveated, temporary, and recognises the impossibility of a universally agreed decision. In *On the Political* (2005a) Mouffe proposes a society that values the freedom, equality, individuality, and plurality of its citizens. This is a society and a political framework that values difference and accepts that consensus and dissent can occur simultaneously. Dissent in this context recalls Mouffe's frontiers of difference between adversarial participants, the political choice between conflicting alternatives, and the relational difference between us and them. Mouffe proposes the alternative of a 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52). That is, a consensus that recognises dissent, conflict, and the legitimacy of difference.

Consensus in this context is a temporary state, and one that is always contingent on disagreement and dissensus.

In this framework agonism is an attitude to challenge those with power and authority, and also one of curiosity in considering how else the political might be arranged. Agonism as 'conflictual consensus' is qualified by authorising participants to dissent without the necessity of reaching agreement. Agonism, as conflict without antagonism potentially enables discussion to remain fluid and open. In an agonistic state, curiosity and intrigue remain viable modes of participation and communication. When the hostility of antagonism emerges, there is a greater potential for arguments to become fixed and entrenched. There is also the possibility that those in actual, or perceived positions of power will dominate, and the value placed in plurality will be disregarded.

Consequently, I propose three edges of agonism: (1) hostility, aggression, and enmity as indicators of conflict, (2) ambivalence as an absence of disagreement, and (3) consensus without the acknowledgement of dissent. An agonistic debate *cannot* take place if these characteristics are present. Hostility can also be viewed as an entrenched position from which the conflict arises. At this deep-rooted point, counter arguments and debate are unlikely to change a fixed opinion. An agonistic argument could be experienced as conflict in a state of flux: a discursive state where arguments are proposed and considered. Each participant listens, and then responds to the other in a considered (or ill-considered) manner. A temporary agreement may, or may not be reached, but each aspect of the conflict is debated and agonised over. Agonism is not a technique to aggravate adversaries to the point of the (physical, or other) retaliation. Agonism therefore is not a truncated form of antagonism, but a decision to refute the potential violence contained within antagonism.

Agonism has another edge: the necessity of participants to become adversaries. The relations between participants of the disagreement are key to defining the conflict as agonistic. These interpersonal qualities may alter, depending on the characters involved in the dispute, and the issue(s) at stake. Whilst agonistic discussion excludes what can be perceived as the hostile qualities of antagonism: agonism cannot mitigate the potential of antagonism. This is not to say that agonistic conflict

is always polite, or civil, or without interpersonal friction. Therefore, how the mode of adversarial participation is established and facilitated is vital. Within a discussion of politics, agonism also has three indicators. These are: the frontiers that highlight the differences between participants, the existence of 'common symbolic space' between participants (Mouffe 2005a:20), and 'conflictual consensus' where consensus is accompanied by dissent (Mouffe 2005a:52). I return to these aspects of agonism in the context of art practice in Chapters 2, 3, 4.

1.4 Agonism, political theory, art practice

The function of agonism requiring particular attention is Mouffe's statement, the 'critical dimension of agonism consists in *making visible* what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate' (Mouffe 2013b:93 my emphasis). The act of 'making visible' does not just reveal what already exists. It draws attention to how the object or practice is instituted within social and hegemonic frameworks. Once 'visible', the object - made apparent through participatory art practice - can become the focus of agonistic debate, contestation, and dissent. However, Mouffe caveats this agonistic process. Agonistic practices must 'challenge power relations […] in a properly hegemonic way, through a process of *disarticulation* of existing practices and *creation* of new discourses' (Mouffe 2005a:33 my emphasis). Mouffe specifies that in order to be considered agonistic, art practices must engage in the creation of new subjectivities as a two-stage process of dis-articulation and re-articulation. To be properly counter-hegemonic, the original hegemonic construction must be undone, and a new counter-hegemonic identity proposed. Through the act of reconstruction, the original problem, identified as the object the 'dominant consensus [wants to] obscure and obliterate' becomes visible (Mouffe 2013b:93). I investigate Mouffe's brief art practices examples in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 5 explore 'making visible' in my art practice.

The term '*critical public space*' (Mouffe 2013b:85 my emphasis) unites Mouffe's principle for agonisms' 'critical dimension', with the type of public location in which agonism can be performed (Mouffe 2013b:93). Mouffe favours the term 'public space' when arguing for critical artistic practices (Mouffe 2013b:91). These art

practices take place in public, and operate to counter-hegemonically challenge the social order whether symbolically, performatively, and/or visually. Before I address how agonism can activate 'critical public space' (Mouffe 2013b:85), and why this is significant for art practice, I will first define the keywords for this discussion. Mouffe's use of the term public space differs from mine and I will clarify my use of public space, public realm, and public sphere.

Public realm, and public space both describe a physical site. These terms are inter-changeable within the context of this thesis. The public realm describes the built urban environment: open-air spaces to which members of the public have unrestricted access. In contrast to private property, and privatised public space. The public realm might be a specific geographic area, not a singular location, because it is plural, striated, diverse, social, and in constant flux. The physical infrastructure of the public realm is inert and it requires agonistic activation and critical intervention in order to over-ride other social designations including the bureaucratic, and commercial. My definition applied to art practice in the public realm draws upon the etymology of agonism as a contest, an agon or game and agora as a gathering place. Spaces where performers can initiate critical interventions to convert the passive public realm into an active, critical public space.

In terms of art practice, the public realm definition separates the site of agonism, and the performance of adversarial, critical, playful discussion with participants in public. My definition differentiates the potential of the public realm as a physical location from the acts of agonism the site could host. My activation of public space views the public realm as a municipal playground, a landscape with the capacity to produce spaces for participatory and agonistic play, and adversarial conflict. In order for the public realm to become activated 'critical public spaces' artists, whom I refer to as performers must intervene in the public realm to find participants for public performances and conversations in sites that can host agonistic public conflict.

Mouffe's use of the term public space is closer to my definition of a public sphere. Publicity and critical discursivity are the activating characteristics for Mouffe's public space. Publicity, discursivity, participation, and dissent are the activating characteristics for my definition of a public sphere. Mouffe makes a break with the

histories of the public sphere by (typically) using the term public space instead. Here I reconnect my research with public sphere theory, to separate the location of the public sphere (in public realm/public space), from performative art practice in agonistic public spheres. Mouffe states: 'the task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted' (Mouffe 2005a:2). This agonistic public sphere is an extension of the vibrant clash, the adversarial confrontation Mouffe describes as characteristic of a healthy democracy. Mouffe specifies the usefulness of an agonistic public sphere is in challenging those with authority and/or power in a way that remains 'open and therefore "unfinished"' (Mouffe 2002:96). Whilst this is a specific task Mouffe sets democratic theorists and politicians, this task also has relevance to art practices in general, and to my research in particular.

By separating out the components of: agonism, public realm, and 'critical public space', I draw attention to how I position the potential for critical performances in the public realm (Mouffe 2013b:85). How agonism can activate 'critical public space' is dependent on performers identifying the inert, the hegemonic, and the inclination towards consensus and conviviality in the public realm, and then using art practice to interrupt those expectations. Through acts of agonistic conflict, my research explores how the transition, from the built urban environment to the ignition of agonistic public spheres can take place. My practice emphasises the form and function of critical interventions. I see the performers and the participants they recruit as fundamental to the counter-hegemonic acts they hold the potential to develop.

Conclusion

This chapter refers to my first research sub-question: what are the strengths of Mouffe's theory of agonism for an understanding of politicised art practice? The strengths include Mouffe's identification of conflict and political dissent as essential components in a plural and thriving liberal democracy. She recognises agonism and antagonism as two different forms of conflict offering distinctive ways of signalling who is relationally included or excluded from issues in hand. Agonism as exemplified

in the Liberate Tate example is always experienced as a relational and critical intervention within a specific context, and at a specific point in time. Agonism as an act of dissent holds the potential to operate as reflexive dialogue: responsive, open-ended, and fluid. This model of agonism operates within the public sphere: participating in and contributing to politicised public debate.

Mouffe's concepts that are key to strengthening the transition between political theory and art practice include: the political as the ontological experience of power and conflict, the paradox of 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52), the act of 'making visible' (Mouffe 2013b:93), and the location of the public realm as a potential 'critical public space' (Mouffe 2013b:85). The emphasis I bring to this discussion takes place firstly by expanding the definition of agonism in my etymology and secondly, by identifying the edges of agonism.

Chapter 2: Questioning Agonism

> The objective of artistic practices should be to foster the development of […] new social relations […]. Their main task is the production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds. What is needed […] is the widening of the field of artistic intervention, with artists working in a multiplicity of social spaces […] in order to oppose the program of the total social mobilization of capitalism. (Mouffe 2013b:87)

Mouffe's writing on agonism and art practice from 2001-2013 elaborates her theory of agonism. Her references and observations about how art practice can operate tend to be brief, and lack specificity. I identify the assumptions Mouffe makes about art practice by teasing apart her ideas and questioning how a nuanced understanding of agonism can be articulated, positioned within, and performed by participatory art practice.

2.1 The development of Mouffe's enquiry into agonism and art practice 2001-2013

To introduce the issues Mouffe's interpretation of art practice raises, I focus on the specific book chapters and journal articles in which Mouffe directly addresses art practice (Mouffe 2001, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2012, and 2013b). I concentrate on the linear origin and development of key ideas that inform Mouffe's position on agonism and art practice. Just as Mouffe has applied her political theories to here-and-now politics, she equally applies her ideas to here-and-now interventions, and performances emerging from art practice.

My opening quote could stand as Mouffe's manifesto as to how she believes art practice can address the agonistic approach. However, I view the quote as a polemic, a series of connected statements that for the most part I argue against. Mouffe states the 'objective' and 'main task' is to focus on the social, and as I interpret her words, the relational aspects of agonism (Mouffe 2013b:93). I see Mouffe's insistence on the

social aspect as fundamentally important.[14] Social, in this context asserts the public nature of participation in this type of art practice, and the practice of publishing and making ideas public. However, Mouffe does not clarify how art practices can reach this objective. Nor does Mouffe acknowledge how she compresses, and instrumentalises art practice to automatically be in service of challenging hegemonies.[15] As I argue below, agonistic art practices can engage in counter-hegemonic acts, and I articulate the ways that this can take place. The 'new subjectivities' Mouffe refers to includes the process of seeing the world anew: a reframing, or re-contextualising that which already exists. Mouffe does not elaborate in detail on how this might occur. The Hans Haacke case study in section 2.2 investigates this process of re-perceiving, alongside analysing how an art practice can intervene in order to reframe public debate.

One of Mouffe's most substantial contributions to the exploration of what agonism contributes to art practice was her first analysis. The focus for 'Every Form of Art has a Political Dimension' (2001), is Hans Haacke's architectural and 'artistic, political intervention' in Germany's Reichstag building in 2000 (Mouffe 2001:109). Mouffe is challenged by art historian Rosalyn Deutsche, interdisciplinary art historian, Branden W. Joseph, and human rights scholar Thomas Keenan to address the contribution she believes art practice can make to concepts of political art, political participation, and the ways that citizenship can be defined and contested. Participation in this instance considers the social, and political dimensions of belonging to a specific place. This mode of belonging encompasses inclusion, or exclusion, and considers the grounds upon which the decision to include or exclude is taken. The article is structured to reflect Deutsche, Joseph, and Keenan's interview of Mouffe.[16] Due to the significance of this article and the implications it holds for this thesis in terms of intervention, participation, and the agonistic public sphere, I examine the nuances of Mouffe's position in section 2.2.

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[14] I extend this argument on agonism and participatory art practice in section 2.4.

[15] I expand upon the instrumentalising of art in section 2.3.

[16] The remit of the *Grey Room* journal (*MIT Press*) concerns the application art practice to theoretical, political, and philosophical debates. This includes cross-discipline, and critical discussions that contribute contemporary perspectives to historical analysis.

The difficulty 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' (2005b) presents is Mouffe's conflation of a public who form an audience in public space, and not participants in or of 'critical arts practices' (Mouffe 2005a:160). The opportunity her paper[17] presents is an elaboration of the connections she perceives between critical public space, art in the public realm, and agonism. To this end, she first defines public as an oppositional term, for example to private, and secondly, public in terms of people in a public space and a public as a specific group of audience members. She also distinguishes between public art as, for example, sculptural objects placed in the public realm and critical art 'that institutes a public space, a space of common action among people' (Mouffe 2005b:152). Her term 'common action' implies a shared endeavour with an agreement (of some kind) on the course of action and/or the outcome/s of the action. However, when Mouffe positions the public engaged in a 'common action' as audience members she diminishes the status of potential participants who are potentially agonistic adversaries.

In 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces' (2007), Mouffe outlines her premise that agonism, when incorporated into art and activist practices, has the potential to intervene in the public realm by creating spaces of dissensus and counter-hegemonic critique. Mouffe briefly introduces agonism's potential to 'unveil' (Mouffe 2007:4). This is an idea that in later iterations becomes agonism's capacity for 'making visible' this issues that a hegemonic, or governing body hopes or seeks to conceal (Mouffe 2013b:93). Mouffe positions political activism in the wider context of the social relations of power and the political that includes anti-capitalist movements, and the commodification of cultural production. She poses questions as to whether critical art loses the role of critique when appropriated and 'neutralised' (Mouffe 2007:1) by capitalism, or whether art practice can maintain an oppositional role. Her answer focuses on listing, rather than analysing activist practices that create artistic interventions.[18] The list includes: the Yes Men, Reclaim the Streets, Tute Bianche,

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[17] The Cork Caucus took place over three weeks in 2005 at the National Sculpture factory in Ireland. It brought together artists, philosophers, and writers to discuss the intersections between art, visual culture, politics and democracy.

[18] Published in 2007 by *Art & Research*, a journal that from 2006 to 2011 focused on fine art practice and research from an interdisciplinary perspective. This particular edition addressed the relationships between art, politics, and political theory.

and the Nike Ground-Rethinking Space. Mouffe repeats this inventory of practices without significant development in *Agonistics* (Mouffe 2013b:97).

Mouffe develops her vision of the public realm as an agonistic battleground in a book chapter titled 'Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space' (2008). She asks whether art practices positioned in public and social spaces are able to maintain their distinction as art, and operate as counter-hegemonic critique or, in this public context are critical art practices subsumed (and negated) by advertising, and commerce. Ultimately, Mouffe sets the history of artistic critique and the tradition of the avant-garde to one side. Instead, she proposes that artistic critique that takes place in the public realm is interpreted in terms of how the art practice 'questions the dominant hegemony' (Mouffe 2008:11). From the wide-ranging list of art practices Mouffe gives as examples, the specificity of which hegemony she is referring to is unclear. The key point Mouffe does make is that artistic critiques in the context of antagonism have the potential to operate as counter-hegemonic critiques (of something specific and identified by the art practice). The agonistic struggle in the public realm is one not just of counter-hegemonic acts but acts that intend to cause dissensus and develop 'new social relations' (Mouffe 2013b:87). Mouffe reiterates ideas from 2007, but she locates her opinions about art practice in political theory.[19]

The Space of Agonism[20] (2012) explores Mouffe's theory of 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2012:3) through an informal dialogue between Mouffe and architect Markus Miessen.[21] The discussion focuses on democratic practices and political participation makes two fleeting references to art practice. Miessen begins a conversation thread about participation and art practice. He proposes that 'it could be useful to think in terms of "conflictual participation" as a productive form of intervention' (Miessen

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[19] The chapter appears in a book titled *Art as a public issue: how art and its institutions reinvent the public dimension*. The remit of the publication situates the practice of art within social, political, democratic, institutional contexts. The publication *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain*, utilises publishing as an interdisciplinary public sphere to expose, and debate tensions between publics, publicity, public space, and the influences of globalisation, privatisation, and the media on art practice.

[20] *The Space of Agonism* is the second book in a series titled *Critical Spatial Practice*, published by the Berlin-based *Sternberg Press*, a press that specialises in interdisciplinary critical debate, and in responding emerging issues in the fields of art, design, architecture, political theory, and philosophy.

[21] Miessen is an architect with specific interests in spatial practices, conflict, and participation.

2012:23). Rather than explore 'conflictual participation' within art practice, Mouffe instead relays Miessen's term back to the remit of political consensus and globalised politics. Miessen's term 'conflictual participation' presents a valuable insight into the way in which Mouffe's 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2012:3) is relevant to participatory art practice. Whilst participation is the topic in Chapter 3, here I want to highlight that participation, whether in democratic, or participatory art practice settings, is an active position of making choices and deciding between conflicting alternatives. The pursuit of those choices need not reach a consensus and may involve a variety of exclusions.

Art practice is present in *The Space of Agonism* in the form of a series of photographs by photographer Rabih Mroué. This presents an example of a lost opportunity for Mouffe to expand upon and connect her theory of agonism to an art practice. The photographs appear on the opening and closing pages of the book and are not mentioned in the conversation between Mouffe and Miessen. The opening photographs are accompanied by a short text by Mroué titled *Double Shooting* (2012). The text describes 'the moment of eye contact between sniper and cameraman' (Mroué in Mouffe and Miessen 2012:1) during Syrian conflict in 2011. Mroué reflects on the act of a shooting film and shooting bullets. Here the camera and the weapon are used as extensions of the human body: each fighting the same war at the same time, but on their own terms. One shooter is engaged in a war of violence, the other in a war of documentation, representation, and communication: this is mediatised violence ready for global distribution. Participation in this context is premised on hostility, and the enemy/enemy dynamic of antagonism. I regard the antagonistic hostility represented in Mroué's work as a factor that excludes his practice from my exploration of agonism and art practice.

Agonistics (2013b) sees Mouffe reiterate, but also expand upon how art practices that act in counter-hegemonic ways can ignite 'critical public spaces' (Mouffe 2013b:85). She suggests that in order to create agonistic spaces in the public realm art practices must confront and overcome the hegemonies of: capitalist modes of production, the increasing privatisation of public space, and the 'blurred' boundaries between persuasive art and advertising. The purpose of art practices addressing the hegemonic, political, and social contexts of public spaces, exists in the potential

'production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds' (Mouffe 2013b:87). The production of 'new worlds' relies on the inherent capacity of artists and art practices to imagine, create, and to contradict. To contradict here means to perform a counter-hegemonic position as a method of not just dissensus, or of being critical, but also as an approach to opening up the debate to imagine what else might be possible. The imaginary potential for agonism is the process Mouffe calls 'making visible' (Mouffe 2013b:93). In *Agonistics*, Mouffe eloquently frames the political contexts in which art practice can operate agonistically. What is missing from her three art practices case studies is a detailed examination of *how* agonism is taking place.

The three art practice examples in *Agonistics* are: the curatorial and institutional practice of Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (between 2000-2008); Alfredo Jaar, and the Yes Men. The examples broadly share the following qualities: a critical and counter-hegemonic approach, conflict, and participation. This list lacks specific discussion of how an art practice can become agonistic. The three art practices are completely different types of art practice, and very diverse in the contexts and modes of production. Mouffe's articulation and description in *Agonistics* elides these differences. The Yes Men are significant as Mouffe cites their text-based work, and their performative parodies World Trade Organisation (WTO representatives) in her work in 2007, 2008, and 2013b more frequently than other artists or practices. I examine the work of the Yes Men in terms of how they construct their performances as pranks, their strategic use of conviviality, and how they deploy agonism *and* antagonism in Chapter 4. In analysing and specifying they types of conflict the Yes Men incite, I draw attention to nuances that Mouffe's description elides.

The development in Mouffe's articulation of art practice from 2001 to 2013b that I detect is in how she positions agonism and art practice in terms of the social. My interpretation of Mouffe's 'social' has four characteristics: (1) artwork directed towards specific participants or a citizenry, (2) being in public and to making ideas public, (3) being in conflict with others in social setting; (4) positioning the artist as a 'social agent' (Mouffe 2013b:93). The social agent is an artist able to cross social boundaries and create conflictual interventions in public locations. The key term I connect to the social, and the 'social agent' is 'social relations' (Mouffe 2013b:87).

This is important because the ability to define and describe the *relations* between artists and participants facilitates the possibility of analysing how agonistic relations might take place.

Whilst the difference between participation and social relations is subtle, participation qualifies the necessity for people to engage actively with and participate in the art practice. The questions I raise here are whether the quality of agonism, in an agonistic art practice is an unwavering and consistent quality or, whether agonism as a relational characteristic is subject to fluctuations within a social context? Are the social relations instigated by the artists agonistic, antagonistic, or neither? If the social relations between participants begin as agonistic, and then become antagonistic, how can that shift, or edge between agonism, and antagonism be facilitated? I return to agonism and social relations below in Chapters 3, 4, 5.

2.2 Mouffe and Hans Haacke

I analyse the implications of Mouffe's interpretation of Hans Haacke's artwork *Der Bevölkerung* (translation: *To The Population)*.[22] I examine how Mouffe situates and relates her political theory of agonism and the political in relation to Haacke's artwork. In this way, I question the assumptions Mouffe makes about how art practice can operate in terms of the political. Through identifying the limitations of her analysis, I articulate the ways in which her analysis of Haacke's artwork is curtailed. I conclude with my exploration of Haacke's artwork and highlight the opportunities Haacke's artwork holds for understanding agonistic art practice.

Haacke's *Der Bevölkerung (*subsequently *To The Population*, 2000, Figure 3) began as an invited proposal Haacke made for the German Reichstag building in Berlin. The Reichstag building hosts the Bundestag, the German parliament of elected representatives. Haacke proposed that the text Der Bevölkerung would be made in raised neon letters, and installed in a planter situated within an open-air courtyard: a space visible from each floor of the Reichstag building. Haacke's proposal stated his

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[22] This analysis extends the discussion in section 2.1 of the *Grey Room* journal article.

invitation to elected representatives of the Bundestag to bring '100 pounds of soil from their elected districts' to collectively fill the planter (Haacke 2013:61). The latent seeds[23] in the soil would form a wild garden, one Haacke specified should be unstructured, and untended. Haacke's proposal was 'approved [...] by a vote of 9:1' in 1999 despite lengthy opposition from one member of the Bundestag's art committee, and the artwork was installed in the Reichstag in 2000.

Figure 3: Hans Haacke, *Der Bevölkerung (To The Population)*, 2000

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[23] Heimat is a German term that can be roughly translated as an identity-based relationship and sense of belonging to a homeland. Whilst the notion of identity based on soil, within a specific geographic location is allied to my discussion of Haacke and Mouffe, heimat falls beyond the thesis scope.

The political tension Haacke's artwork proposes exists between his text *To The Population* (Figure 3) and, Dem Deutschen Volke (translation: To The German People, Figure 4). The latter is a pre-existing inscription carved into the West entrance of the Reichstag. Haacke states that Dem Deutschen Volke (subsequently To The German People) refers to a conception of identity based on 'ethnic' (Haacke 2013:61), or nationalistic grounds: German by blood, and/or German by birth.[24] Thus, the definition of To The German People excludes everyone who is not classified as German by those ethnic criteria. In contrast, *To The Population* as a definition includes the German People by blood, *and* includes those residing within the geographically defined German territory. Population in this instance is an all-encompassing term that recognises inhabitants that might be permanent or temporary residents in Germany. Population in this context also does not separate the differences in terms of status between legal, and illegal residents, or those, including refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants whose official status might be indistinct or under official consideration.

Figure 4: Paul Wallot, Dem Deutschen Volke (To The German People), 1916

Haacke intentionally highlights the tension held in the terms: people and population. This not a generic friction, but one specific to German history, language, with its implications for who belongs, and who is excluded from the definition of being German. *To The Population* recalls twentieth-century German history, and the

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[24] This nationalistic definition distinguishes between parentage, and location of birth (which includes German's living abroad and ascribing children German identity via legal documentation, a passport, for example). As German nationality is traditionally based on blood, that is the definition I will use.

identity-based atrocities of the Nazi era. Haacke places the past and the present in a deliberately conflictual and relational context. His artwork questions the ways in which history informs the present: as an uncomfortable, disquieting reminder that acknowledges the past, and situates the implications of the past in to the present day. The 2001 *Grey Room* article concentrates on discussing the political interpretations and implications of Figures 3 and 4. The discussion, in a question-and-answer format, focuses on how the language of belonging to a place by blood, and/or dwelling has implications for the articulation of political inclusion, or exclusion. The context of their discussion and the location of the artwork in the Reichstag, raises the implications of citizenship within the remit of democracy and Mouffe's theory of the political.

Mouffe's conception of agonism in *To The Population* frames boundaries between those who are politically included, or excluded. This tension between inclusion and exclusion contributes to Mouffe's construction of the citizen, and the right (or denial thereof) of human rights, residency rights, and the right to participate in democratic processes e.g. voting. The status of being included or excluded is a fundamental aspect of Mouffe's articulation of the political. She expands upon her definition of antagonism and conflict as core components in her understanding of the political by drawing on Schmitt to define the 'friend/enemy' aspect of the political, and to separate out different types of social relationships (Mouffe 2001:99). Mouffe describes the processes of identity formation as relational activities that exist within social and by extension hegemonic contexts. She proposes that 'every form of art has a political dimension' but she does not develop this idea further (Mouffe 2001:100).

Mouffe's insistence on the political aspect of *To The Population* highlights a limitation: she does not address Haacke's artwork *as* art practice. This has three key implications: the nuances of the physical site; the possibilities of artworks as interventions; and the potential for politicised participation in art practice, which I address in turn. The artwork exists within and beyond Mouffe's political-theoretical interpretation: it has a physical, sculptural form located in a specific site and it can be described as site-specific art because it foregrounds the specific and non-transferrable location of the Reichstag as the site of the German parliament. As public art it describes the context of the work in a public setting, and the

commissioning of the work by a public body, and as environmental art, it references Haacke's desire for plants to grow around the neon letters. As art in the public sphere it deliberately provokes political dissent. By not situating Haacke's artwork within the context of *art*, the nuances of the work are lost. For example, Haacke's insistence that soil is donated from each political constituency blurs the distinctions between constituents with/without citizenship rights, and metaphorically blends existing divisions between races, ethnicities, and genders.

When Mouffe describes *To The Population* as 'an intervention' [...] that question[s] the way in which "the German people" could be understood', I consider that she limits the potential for art practice to become politicised (Mouffe 2001:101). She misses the connections between political theory, art practice, and the understanding of *how* an art practice can become political. Haacke's artwork requires participants to consider the implications of both statements as a dialogue between two conflicting propositions. His artwork is an intervention that requires participation in public space. Mouffe does identify that the two conflicting positions raise political questions. However, she argues that population is not a 'political concept' because a population does not address the ontic of politics and the identification of democratic rights (Mouffe 2001:108). In contrast, I define Haacke's *To The Population* as political because the artwork brings into play: the socially constructed relations of the political, the hegemonic context of the Reichstag building as a site of politics, power, and authority over the citizens and residents of Germany. It is the visual interpellation between the two inscriptions *To The Population* and To The German People that enables Haacke's artwork to provoke conflict by bringing into question historical narratives of Germanic inclusion, and exclusion.

Mouffe overlooks the subtleties of participatory art practice, and the implications these nuances hold for *how* politicised participation in an art practice can take place. I propose participation is an essential aspect of *To The Population*. Haacke's artwork risks becoming decorative public art without politicised participation in the discussion of the differences between people and population. Mouffe, in contrast, suggests: '[i]t's a question of making people aware of the gap between people and population' (Mouffe 2001:108). Mouffe does not position the act of 'making aware' in terms of the artwork, artwork interpretation materials, artists, audience members or

participants of the artwork. She situates 'making aware' within politics and in terms of democracy. This act of situating and interpreting Haacke's artwork within the fields of both art and the political is a core difference between Mouffe's approach and my own. Deutsche's argument, like mine, proposes that participation in Haacke's work is essential, and that it is critical public participation that activates the artwork. She states: '[t]he space *between* the two Reichstag inscriptions, the space of the question, is the heart of the work' (Deutsche 2001:104 her emphasis). The 'space *between*' is blank or unwritten space, space that does not physically, or tangibly exist, but that does exist in the participants' critical reflection, and in their discussion of both inscriptions.

Haacke's choice of language is deliberately provocative: his intention is to incite debate. His intervention invites participants to reflect back on Germany's history, and how excluding members of The German People based on ethnicity, or religion has consequences. Equally, *To The Population* would today include, for example, the often-tense politics of free movement of European nationals within the Schengen Area of which Germany is a member country. From the perspective that Deutsche and I position our arguments, Haacke's intervention looks towards keeping the question of who is included, and excluded open and active, rather than closed debate.[25]

To The Population

Now I explore *To The Population* from an agonistic perspective. *To The Population* proposes relational, and adversarial conflict between the interpretation of the terms people, and population. This agonistic relation extends beyond the inscriptions to those who participate by exploring the implications contained within the terminology. People and population, articulate the choices between 'conflicting alternatives': to remember the past and the implications of excluding sections of the population based on ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation (Mouffe 2005a:10). This dilemma between inclusion and exclusion acknowledges the antagonistic

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[25] In 2004, again published by *Grey Room* Deutsche returns to *Der Bevölkerung (To The Population)*. This time she is in conversation with artist Hans Haacke, and art historian Miwon Kwon. Their conversation addresses in detail the political, historic, and artistic site specificity of Haacke's commission, from the perspective of art practice.

chapter of Germany's Nazi era, and looks beyond the German by blood definition, to consider German identity by residence. The friction of antagonism manifests as a 'conflictual consensus' by foregrounding the potential hostility between the definitions of being, or not being classified as German in the context Haacke, and the site of the Bundestag provide (Mouffe 2005a:52). The absence of a consensus here indicates the conflict between people and population remains unresolved.

To The Population is situated in a 'common symbolic space' (Mouffe 2005a:20). The Bundestag, as the location of Germany's political governance, and the Reichstag as a building re-designed to give the German public and tourists physical access to view politicians at work. The symbolic space equally exists in the actions of elected politicians representing their constituents, and to be observed in the act of representing. The metaphorical implications contained within the soil and seeds of the artwork amplifies the symbolism. *To The Population* functions by 'making visible' debates that exist, as Deutsche describes '*between'* the two inscriptions (Deutsche 2001:104 her emphasis). The artwork creates a 'critical public space' where ideas about belonging to a specific place can be contested by participants in public. Participation in this artwork activates debate, that has the potential to result in the creation of 'new subjectivities' (Mouffe 2013b:93). These are new ways of considering how political inclusion/exclusion in Germany can be discussed and contested. In this respect, *To The Population* operates as a 'counter-hegemonic intervention' (Mouffe 2013b:104). Haacke does not glorify, or smooth over the past, nor does he install an artistically convivial sculpture.

2.3 What are the difficulties, and opportunities that arise from Mouffe's interpretation of agonism and art practice?

This section explores three distinctions between Mouffe's conception of agonism and art practice, and my own. My focus is to identify the difficulties and opportunities that arise through exploring the nuances of how agonistic art practice can be positioned. This includes: the compression of art into existing hegemonies, the act of speaking for others, and the definition and application of the term artivist.

Mouffe, often with great brevity, compresses art practice with the capacity to effect, for example the existing hegemonies of: 'capitalism' (Mouffe 2013b:87), 'neo-liberal hegemony' (Mouffe 2013b:91), and 'post-Fordist labour' (Mouffe 2013b:87). Relating this back to the quote with which I opened the chapter, Mouffe uses the phrase 'in order to'[26] when she describes how art practice operates within a political context. What Mouffe's 'in order to' does here, is to compress art practice and transition it into something else. This instrumentalises and puts the art practice in service of challenging something else: e.g.: capitalism. In this respect, Mouffe is underplaying and under-estimating the potential of art practice in and of itself. Mouffe's position also contains a number of assumptions: that artists can/should/will oppose 'the social mobilization of capitalism' as an objective, or outcome of their artworks; that artists will be successful; that this type of objective is universal and equally relevant to artists as it is to Mouffe. Through the act of reduction-and-compression, *how* art practice can operate as a counter-hegemonic, and agonistic force is lost, because the artistic, relational, and social qualities are absent from the analysis.

Rather than situate art practice as beholden to a vast hegemony, I contextualise agonistic art practice as a counter-hegemonic process. The approach I advocate is one that explores how the nuances of agonism as a conflictual relation can take place in art practice. This provides an opportunity to intervene in Mouffe's reductive connection between art practice, and the enormity of a particular hegemony. Thus, I focus on the exploration of 'counter-hegemonic interventions' (Mouffe 2013b:104). Interventions are contextualised by Mouffe's definition of the political: 'power, conflict and antagonism' (Mouffe 2005a:9). Hegemony, for the purpose of this thesis is a 'social practice [...] seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which [...] express the needs of the dominant class' (Williams 1983:145). I foreground the relational and social aspects of hegemony because they hold the potential to be challenged by art practice with a counter-hegemonic perspective. (See Chapters 4, 5.)

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[26] The objective of artistic practices should be to foster the development of [...] new social relations [...]. Their main task is the production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds. What is needed [...] is the widening of the field of artistic intervention, with artists working in a multiplicity of social spaces [...] in order to oppose the program of the total social mobilization of capitalism. (Mouffe 2013b:87)

Mouffe states that the agonistic approach can give: 'a voice to *all those* who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony' (Mouffe 2013b:93 my emphasis). Mouffe infers that members of an existing society are voiceless and have no recourse to contribute or contest the hegemonies they live within or under, except through the medium of other people's art. She makes a judgement that art can speak for the silenced: perhaps art can, but Mouffe implies that it does. What is missing from Mouffe's analysis of what art can do is the relationship between democracy and participation. Democracy can be considered as an on-going process of participation in how a polity is governed, and how those with power are challenged and held to account. This includes the act of voting, but also petitioning, and protesting. The connection here is that the process of participating in democracy as a critical citizen, and the act of speaking for yourself have equivalents in participatory art practice. For example, Liberate Tate addressing the Tate, or Hans Haacke artworks operating as a reflexive address to Reichstag visitors, and Bundestag members.

This emphasis on participation marks a significant difference between Mouffe's perception of how art practice operates, and my own. I view the potential of agonistic art practice as an approach to recruiting and facilitating participation in public spaces, and for those participants to take an active role in the process of dis-articulation and re-articulation of existing hegemonies. These participants speak for themselves, and the artists or performers facilitate their opportunity to do so. This process operates in direct contrast to the artists beginning with a didactic or singular position that they inscribe onto the participants by way of a script or cue cards that force a prescribed response. I perceive the purpose of facilitation is to enable plurality and to explore the issues that the participants deem important or relevant. My version of agonism's potential to make 'visible' relies on the ability of the artists to facilitate, and to open up critical spaces. These are spaces that can (but not necessarily) be inhabited by those who may feel silenced or forgotten by the existing hegemony. I propose that an alternative approach to agonistic participation is to prioritise inquisitiveness, and a version of participation that is adversarial, and critical: an agonistic public sphere that seeks to convene dissensus, not consensus in the public realm.

Whereas Mouffe compresses art practices that seek to contest the consensus under a universal banner of 'artivist' (Mouffe 2013b:99). Here, I want to expand the definition of political, critical, social, and participatory art practices that operate in public. Artivist, as a portmanteau of artist and activist was first used by postcolonial feminist Chela Sandoval, and art historian Guisela Latorre in an article titled: Chicana/o artivism: Judy Baca's digital work with youth of color (2007). Their use of the term 'artivist' (Sandoval and Latorre 2007:81) refers to participatory art practice that addresses the inequalities of (social, ethnic, gendered, historical, economic) power: characteristics Mouffe terms as the political. Whilst there is equivalence between Mouffe's usage, and the original, Mouffe tends to use artivist as an over-arching term for all art practices that generate conflict. The examples Mouffe gives in *Agonistics* include: Reclaim the streets in Britain, and Nike Ground-Rethinking Space in Austria (Mouffe 2013b:97). Although Mouffe is accurate in describing activist practices that draw upon artistic methods as 'artivist', the difficulty with her application of this term is the potential to homogenise all artists into activists. In amplifying the distinction between activism and dissent, I highlight the differences between practices of artistic activism,[27] and performances of political dissent and playful disobedience.

2.4 Mouffe's agonism: points of contact and extension to my art practice

The first point of contact and extension is what Mouffe terms 'development of […] new social relations' (Mouffe 2013b:87). I amplify and specify 'social relations' as participation, and participatory art practice. I agree with Mouffe that social relations are key to defining the potential for agonism and art practice. But, when Mouffe refers to 'social relations', as in this chapter's opening quote, she does not expand upon how, or between whom, these relations will take place. When I refer to participation, I carry forward Mouffe's emphasis on the political, and the potential for conflict, inclusion, and exclusion. In situating my art practice in 'critical public space' (Mouffe 2013b:85),[28] I am seeking to facilitate opportunities for participation,

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[27] As I described in the Introduction, activism calls for, or demands a particular political change.
[28] As I described in section 1.4.

whilst acknowledging that a simultaneous process of exclusion will also occur. The activation, power, and control of whether to participate, or not, is given by the performers to potential participants.[29]

In the context of guerrilla street performance, out of all the tacit or verbal invitations the performers give out to potential participants in the public realm, only a few invitations will be accepted and acted upon. As the performers stroll through the public realm in search of willing participants, the potential for including new participants increases. Equally, the plethora of participatory possibilities reduces when a group of individuals coheres into a (temporary) group of participants. Once the performance and participatory episode ends, and the group disperses the scope of potential pluralities for the next participatory moment increases. The structure of a strolling guerrilla street theatre performance as a research method holds the potential to be repeated, and this increases the number of available participatory opportunities.

Another key point of contact and departure that I make with Mouffe's theory of agonism regards her paradox of 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52). As I discussed at the end of section 1.3 Mouffe's term 'conflictual consensus' recognises the plurality of legitimate positions, the impossibility of consensus, and the ineradicability of dissent within a democracy. The term defines a temporary state of agreement: a resolution that functions for right now, whilst simultaneously acknowledging and internalising antagonism and dissent within a democratic decision-making process. Whilst the adversaries in this context disagree, they share a common symbolic space and recognise the legitimacy of each oppositional position. This manner of decision making is separate to the model of reaching agreement through compromise. A compromise would denote a universal agreement had been reached with both sides conceding something of value. The conflict becomes nullified through the process of reaching a compromise settlement. The important characteristic of Mouffe's term is the paradox of a simultaneously agreeing-and-

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[29] The performers can also choose to withhold the option to participate from potential participants, usually on the grounds of the participant being a vulnerable child or adult, under the influence of a substance, or if the performers are standing on private (rather than public) land.

disagreeing: the participants in a 'conflictual consensus' simultaneously dissent and consent to a particular political outcome.

I extend and develop Mouffe's term with my equally paradoxical term *conflictual conviviality*. Whereas Mouffe's 'conflictual consensus' relates specifically to politics and the political, my elaboration of conflictual conviviality creates the opportunity to extend the political context into art practice. Conviviality brings a way of exploring how 'social relations' can be prompted, performed, and participated within the structure of art practice in the public realm. The opportunity that conflictual conviviality holds, is in the simultaneous combination of potential conflict and relational friendship. In Mouffian terms, this is the relational constructions of *us* as friendship, and *them* as adversaries.[30] In terms of my art practice, conflictual conviviality focuses on the potential construction of agonistic relations: between the performers; and between the performers and participants. Conflictual conviviality combines the desired agonistic and adversarial conflict, with a social geniality. The geniality inherent to conflictual conviviality is a key strategy in the street theatre performances and to the way that agonism can be instigated as a participatory art practice. (Conviviality, as an expression of friendliness, and sociability in participation is discussed in Chapter 3.)

The aim of conflictual conviviality is to also counter-balance potentially antagonistic relations with participants with a bond of friendship. The need for a counter-balance acknowledges the political potential of conflictual conviviality and denotes how I develop Mouffe's theory in relation to art practice. Mouffe's 'conflictual consensus' is vulnerable to political ambivalence, and vulnerable to antagonism: both of which are inimical to agonism (Mouffe 2005a:52). Conflictual conviviality holds the potential to become antagonistic conflict, or wholly convivial and lacking in conflict: both of which are detrimental to the development of agonistic relations. Conflictual conviviality in my art practice deliberately blurs agonism's adversarial remit and operates to surprise and disconcert participants. This relational disconcertion creates opportunities to pose politicised questions to participants, and to create a convivial and relational space for participants in the performance. As one aspect of a

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[30] Conflictual conviviality and the blurring of us and them is a development from my Mouffe/Schmitt analysis in section 1.2.

performative and mischievous strategy, conflictual conviviality has the potential to create and facilitate agonistic public spheres in the public realm. These are public spheres in which topics of common concern can be debated with both conflict, and humour.

Key questions that arise for me in exploring the agonistic approach through art practice, includes the following. Is it possible to be deliberately agonistic in public (without the performance inciting antagonism and violence)? Is it possible to provoke conflict with strangers in the public realm (as an act of politicised dissent, and without the context of activism or civil disobedience)? Is it possible to incite counter-hegemonic dissent with strangers (without the street theatre performances collapsing into a convivial and visual spectacle)? Is it possible to develop a performance for as-yet-unknown participants speak politically for themselves (without creating and circulating a dictatorial script)? These questions address the performativity and some of the complexities in provoking agonistic conflict through art practice. These intricacies begin to outline the conflicting positions that become apparent when shifting the field, and context to which agonism is applied. I address these questions in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses the second research sub-question: what opportunities, difficulties, limitations arise in Mouffe's application of agonism from political theory to art practice? It offers a detailed inventory of where, when, and how Mouffe has applied her theory of agonistic political theory to art practice over a twelve-year period. This survey reveals how Mouffe relays her ideas about art practice back to political theory, rather than expanding upon the context of art. She is consistently quite brief in her descriptions of art practices (Mouffe 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013b), compresses ideas, makes generalisations (e.g.: artivist), and instrumentalises art practice to contest particular hegemonies (e.g.: capitalism).

My survey of Mouffe's writing on art practice was useful for providing a point of departure for re-thinking what agonistic art practice is, and how it can take place.

This review enabled me to develop a useful list of criteria to articulate *how* agonism can transition from political theory to art practice. The purpose of this list is not to provide a definitive list of characteristics. But rather to develop an analytical process to think through *how* an agonistic art practice could be identified. My eight criteria for agonistic art practices are:

1. 'adversarial' conflict (Mouffe 2005a:20),

2. the choice between 'conflicting alternatives' (Mouffe 2005a:10),

3. 'the ineradicability of antagonism' (Mouffe 2005a:19),

4. 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52),

5. 'common symbolic space' (Mouffe 2005a:20),

6. 'counter-hegemonic interventions' (Mouffe 2013b:104),

7. 'making visible' (Mouffe 2013b:93),

8. creating 'new subjectivities' (Mouffe 2013b:93).

These criteria are utilised in my concepts of Participation in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Participation

> For the agonistic approach, [...] the public space is where conflicting points of
> view are confronted without any possibility of a final reconciliation.
> (Mouffe 2013b:92)

In this chapter participation refers to the process of taking part in an art practice,
specifically street theatre. What Mouffe hints at in the comment above is the
importance of participation. She implies the necessity for participants to express
conflicting views, but she does not state whether participation is necessary for the
performance of agonism. In contrast, I argue that participation is indispensable to an
agonistic art practice. Without conflict or dissent the potential for agonism to emerge
through participation is not viable. However, I highlight the difficulties of an art
practice premised on conflict and offer a dual approach of conflictual conviviality
instead.

This chapter asks how can participatory art practice perform both conflict and
conviviality within street theatre? I investigate this by situating convivial art practice
in an art historical context. I explore the political implications of conviviality in
relation to agonism. Then I scrutinise participatory art practices that focus on
dissensus and antagonism. I identify the limitations and opportunities these art
practices offer my interpretation of agonistic art practice. I challenge the art
historical division between conviviality and dissensus and offer a model of
participatory art practice that explores the possibilities of conflictual conviviality.

I elaborate upon conflictual conviviality through an analysis of two art practices
performed in the public realm: Dread Scott *Money to Burn* (2010)[31] and the *Sea
Turtle Brigade* (1999).[32] (You need to watch the film clips before reading this
chapter. Then watch again prior to reading my analysis of the performances against
my eight criteria for agonistic art practice.)

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[31] Dread Scott https://youtu.be/oSclYWiEMQk Accessed 12 December 2016
[32] *Turtles* marching https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=25s Accessed 31 January 2016
Turtles dancing https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=21m17s Accessed 31 January 2016
Turtles gathering https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=24m37s Accessed 31 January 2016
Turtle interviewee https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=10m28s Accessed 31 January 2016

3.1 Intentionally convivial, and deliberately argumentative

I argue conviviality as a singular mode of address in participatory art practice limits the potential for agonistic and politicised conflict. However, rather than proposing that conviviality is redundant, I explore how conviviality can facilitate participation in the public realm. To explain my implementation of conviviality, I review the pertinent history of convivial participation within art practice and art history. My intent is to explore how conviviality is historically positioned and manifested but also to explain why conviviality has a role to play within my art practice of participatory conflictual conviviality.

I instrumentalise conviviality in my approach to agonism, because conviviality enables me to build relationships with participants, instigate conflict, and facilitate the level of conflict between participants. To amplify the importance of conviviality, I reiterate an art historical division between conviviality and dissensus.[33] In contrast, Mouffe does not mention conviviality. She advocates for agonism as a method to explore conflict and differences of opinion, and as a pressure value to prevent conflict escalating into antagonism. Mouffe is concerned with the processes of democratic decision-making, rather than the geniality (or lack thereof) of the confrontation. The issue of conviviality is, therefore, a fundamental difference between the way Mouffe and I perceive how agonism can operate within art practice.

Within art history participation is often used as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of practices including: socially engaged practice, new genre public art, relational aesthetics, dialogic art, collaborative practice, and art's social turn. Convivial participation is characterised by co-production of artworks,[34] and the individual voice of the artist is incorporated into a convivial and socially inclusive participatory experience. The process of making the work is characteristically valued

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[33] This division is echoed by: art historian and art critic Claire Bishop (2006a), artist and academic Mary Anne Francis (2013), theatre and performance academic Jen Harvie (2011), and art historian Miwon Kwon (2002).

[34] Theorists, curators and critics who argue for convivial art practices include: curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), artist Liam Gillick (2006), artist and educator Pablo Helguera (2011), academic Grant Kester (1998, 2004, 2006, 2011), social practice artist Suzanne Lacy (1995, 2010), and curator Maria Lind (2007, 2012).

to a greater degree than the finished product. For example, Welfare State International[35] enables participants in community settings to create large-scale processional, and celebratory events in the public realm. Fallen Fruit facilitate the identification of fruit-producing trees and shrubs that are located on public land. They argue the fruits are public property and can be legally picked and consumed. Fallen Fruit organise collective fruit picking events to walk and navigate the boundaries between public land, and private property. Their project *Public Fruit Jam*[36] situates convivial communication between groups of strangers through the process of making fruit jam. Whilst these examples are convivial and politicised, their emphasis usually leans away from political conflict, and towards geniality and collaboration.

Nicolas Bourriaud is a key advocate for convivial art practices. He is a curator, art critic and author of *Relational Aesthetics* (2002). Whilst Bourriaud's position within the gallery sector is at odds with my art practice, his arguments for conviviality inform how I understand and implement conviviality. He defines relational aesthetics as 'a\ moments of sociability b\ objects producing sociability' (Bourriaud 2002:33). Bourriaud use of the term *relational* foregrounds his intention for the artist to propose and form social relations between artist, artwork, and exhibition visitors. Bourriaud curated *Traffic* (1996) at CAPC,[37] here he articulated how these 'moments' of sociability could take place through his selection of artists, and artworks curated predominantly from the 1990s. An archetype example from *Traffic* and relational aesthetics is artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. In *Pad Thai* (1990, Figure 5) Tiravanija cooks' meals for gallery visitors. Tiravanija draws upon the social dimension of conviviality: the festive act of bringing a community together through a shared meal or celebration. The 'objects producing sociability' in *Pad Thai* include the tables, chairs, saucepans, and noodles. These objects indicate that 'moments of sociability' are or have taken place in the gallery. Bourriaud highlights how convivial relations *can* be assembled, *can exist* and, *can take place* in art practice. For

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[35] Welfare State International http://www.welfare-state.org/index.htm Accessed 15 November 2016
[36] Fallen Fruit http://fallenfruit.org/projects/public-fruit-jam/ Accessed 15 November 2016
[37] *Traffic* was a benchmark exhibition for relational aesthetics at CAPC, a contemporary art gallery in Bordeaux, France.

Bourriaud, the potential for participation, and actual participation in art practice are indistinguishable.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.
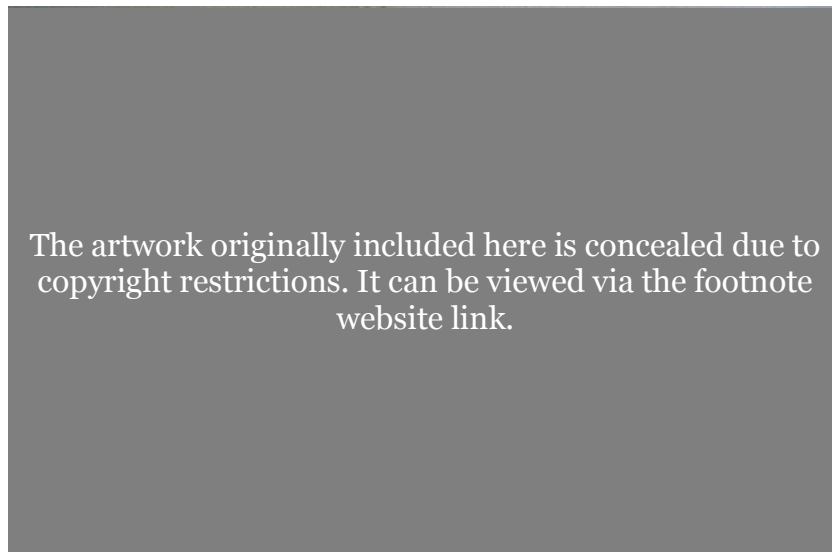
Figure 5: Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Pad Thai)*, 1990[38]

I inherit Bourriaud's emphasis on the importance of conviviality and sociability in art practice. The caveat of *can*, is the characteristic that separates the Bourriaud's position from my own. In my art practice participation *must* take place, and participation *must* have an element of conflict. For example, whether or not Tiravanija's *Pad Thai* engenders tangible social relations is beyond the scope of relational aesthetics. Participation in *Pad Thai* can be described as a utopic condition in which the proposal of convivial participation fulfils the remit of the idea. In this respect, whether gallery visitors share the meal or witness the post-meal debris in the gallery space, Bourriaud still classifies their experience as relational aesthetics. Bourriaud defines artworks that conform to this model as 'places where alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of *constructed conviviality* are worked out' (Bourriaud 2002:44 my emphasis). I interpret Bourriaud's phrase: 'constructed conviviality' as encompassing a version of conviviality that is assembled. The emphasis here is less about building a convivial rapport between strangers, and more about setting a stage where for the rapport between strangers *can* take place. Thus, conviviality in relational aesthetics is an end point.

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[38] Image available at: http://www.kurimanzutto.com/en/partials/artist_image/24/28 Accessed 19 February 2018.

In contrast to Bourriaud, conviviality in my art practice is a mischievous strategy intended to insert conflict into the act of participation. The difference between my implementation of conviviality and Bourriaud's is clarified by his definition of conviviality: 'as part of a "friendship" culture' (Bourriaud 2002:32). Bourriaud's version of conviviality is a social relation that excludes the dimension of adversarial conflict. Bourriaud's friendship relation succeeds in creating what Mouffe would define as *us* without the existence of an oppositional or potential *them*. Likewise, Kester argues for participation in art practice to produce an *us* through the construction of cohesive and harmonious communities. Kester defines his version of dialogue-based participation as 'a convivial rapprochement' (Kester 2006). Conversation is performative and conciliatory dialogue that offers participants a convivial relational exchange without conflict or disagreement. Therefore, I argue that the edge of convivial art practice for both Bourriaud and Kester is agonistic disagreement or conflict. This is the frontier when the social relations that are implicit in friendship are put under pressure or questioned: the point when 'friends' become adversaries who disagree.

I agree with Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics when she states: '[t]he *quality* of the relationships in "relational aesthetics" are never examined or called into question' (Bishop 2004:65). Bishop's concern hinges on her frustration with Bourriaud's lack of scrutiny of the relational aspects of relational aesthetics. Bishop's analysis addresses the implications in terms of democracy in general, and antagonism in particular. My curiosity focuses on how the political boundaries between conviviality and conflict can be facilitated through agonism. Unlike Bishop, I am not seeking absolutes of conviviality and antagonism. Nor am I seeking, as Bishop describes,[39] to use antagonism to 'sustain a tension between viewers, participants and context' (Bishop 2005:34). Instead, I am questioning how the conflictual and relational edges of agonism can be blurred, stretched, and deliberated over. This includes asking how I can be intentionally convivial - and simultaneously - deliberately argumentative.

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[39] In relation to artists Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn.

Jeremy Deller's *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* (2009, Figure 6)[40] is a project that instrumentalises conviviality and politicised conflict as a potentially agonistic form of participatory art practice. The public realm context locates this art practice back to Mouffe, and the quote with which I opened this chapter: 'public space is where conflicting points of view are confronted' (Mouffe 2013b:92). I propose that Deller's project facilitates conflict in the public realm through conviviality, participation and via the use of a symbolic object: the burnt-out car. The car, originally destroyed in a suicide bomb blast in Iraq, stands for the Iraq war, for lives lost in the conflict, for the destruction of communities and cultural artefacts, and for America's role in the war. Deller travelled across America with the car and a number of experts, including 'an Iraqi citizen and an enlisted American soldier' who potentially stand for oppositional sides of the Iraq conflict (Deller 2012:152). In each town they visited, they utilised the car as an object to provoke conversations with passers-by about American involvement in the Iraq conflict.

Figure 6: Jeremy Deller, *It Is What It Is: Conversations about Iraq*, 2009

The car creates agonistic 'common symbolic space' between America and Iraq, and between the experts accompanying the car (Mouffe 2005a:20). The project holds the potential to introduce adversarial conflict between the experts, and participants who engage with the project. The car, in this example is a mode of facilitating conversations that have conflict as a starting point. From a Mouffian perspective, the

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[40] Jeremy Deller http://creativetime.org/programs/archive/2009/deller/index.php Accessed 15 November 2016

combination of experts and participants indicates the impossibility of a consensus, therefore, the opportunity this project presents is an exploration of opposition and conflict. However, the team accompanying the car are carefully chosen to mediate and interpret the potential antagonisms that may arise with participants. Therefore, the type of conflict this project may engender might be antagonistic but is more likely to be agonistic. What I describe as the agonistic turn in this project is Deller's insistence that the experts hold a variety of perspectives on the war. In choosing experts on the conflict including an American veteran and an Iraqi citizen to speak with, and speak to the passers-by, the possibilities for a harmonious consensus about the Iraq war are deliberately curtailed. Even if the acts of participation are convivial, the potential for conflict is ever-present.

Whilst the genealogy of my approach incorporates Bourriaud's emphasis on convivial 'social exchanges', my emphasis exists in the relational characteristics of both conviviality and conflict in the public realm (Bourriaud 2002:41).[41] Unlike Bourriaud, I introduce conflict into the act of participation, and instrumentalise conviviality as a mode of facilitation in order to develop rapport and trust with potential participants. Facilitation in this context is a social process of navigating the potential for hostility that is inherent to provoking conflictual situations with (unpredictable) strangers in the public realm. I propose that the structure of a participatory art practice *must* build a convivial rapport with participants first, before the conflictual elements are introduced. I position conviviality as a relational invitation that can be accepted, challenged, and/or declined by potential participants. Thus, in my 'agonistic approach' to participation, I use conviviality to (1) build rapport, (2) provoke and facilitate conflict with participants, (3) as a method to diffuse antagonistic hostility, and (4) address the risks and vulnerabilities inherent in provoking conflict with strangers in public (Mouffe 2013b:92).[42] Subsequently, I position agonistic conflict as a mid-point between extreme antagonism and extreme conviviality: a simmering point of conflictual conviviality

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[41] I explore my process of participation in detail in Chapter 5.

[42] For example, guerrilla street theatre takes place in an unauthorised environment, and therefore without the backup or support that a cultural institution may provide for authorised performers. Equally, the performers may meet vulnerable members of the general public: those with mental health issues, substance use, or homelessness who may act erratically.

that requires facilitation. The methods of facilitation I draw upon to facilitate conflict and dissensus include conviviality and mischief.

3.2 Participation, dissent and dissensus

I argue for the production of dissensus by participatory art practices that generate a social friction in the public realm. Friction introduces conflict between passers-by and/or participants, and holds the potential to be agonistic, or antagonistic. Dissensus highlights disagreement, discord, and difference. Friction and dissent are central qualities to agonism and the participatory performance of conflict. Mouffe describes dissensus as the public process where 'conflicting points of view are confronted' (Mouffe 2013b:92). Dissensus in contrast to consensus is the absence of agreement. I situate politicised dissent and dissensus within participatory art practice and art history and review key arguments within this field. My intention is to highlight which art historical arguments have informed my implementation of participatory art practice, and to identify *how* art practices can provoke dissent.

Dissensus locates my research[43] within a specific field of participatory art practice in art history. Marked by plurality, dissensus is not a singular activity but one that requires multiple participants. An act of dissensus can be defined as a group of people who are (temporarily) unified in their vocalisation and/or performance of dissent in regard to a politicised issue. Art practices that nurture and/or encourage dissensus as a performative and political act indicate and/or exclaim who is included or excluded from a particular topic or debate. For example, The Church Ladies for Choice (1993, Figure 7, subsequently Ladies)[44] are a choir of predominantly gay men who perform a drag parody of puritanical church-going women.

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[43] Academics, artists, curators, and critics arguing for participation and dissensus include: artist Dave Beech (2002, 2008, 2010), Claire Bishop (2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2012a, 2012b), art historian Kim Charnley (2011), architect Teddy Cruz (2012), visual culture academic Anthony Downey (2007), theatre and performance academic Jen Harvie (2009, 2011), artists Hewitt and Jordan (2016), art critic Brian Holmes (2012), Stewart Martin (2007), philosopher Jacques Rancière (2010), and curator Nato Thompson (2004, 2012).

[44] The Church Ladies for Choice https://youtu.be/WRcSbDOYSJs?t=44s Accessed 12 December 2016

Figure 7: The Church Ladies for Choice, *March for Women's Lives*, 2004

The Ladies' usual performance of politicised dissent takes place as a pro-choice choir who perform outside American abortion/family planning clinics. They act in opposition to the pro-life protestors, who simultaneously perform their vocal and aggressive disapproval to the patients and staff of the clinics. As a choir, the Ladies perform détourned versions of Christian hymns. They utilise identity and gender construction to playfully undermine the religious arguments made by their pro-life counterparts. The Ladies' performance of dissent operates in a number of ways. Firstly, they distract the pro-life protestors and 'diffuse' the level of antagonistic conflict (Cohen-Cruz 1998:90). This strategically splits the pro-life attention away from objects of their dissent: the staff and patients of the clinics. Those who are potentially vulnerable to the antagonistic pro-life position. Secondly, the Ladies utilise humour, absurdity, and playfulness to communicate with, and ridicule the pro-life position. The Ladies instigate a 'common symbolic space' between themselves, the pro-life protestors, and the clinic users (Mouffe 2005a:20). This symbolic space affirms the relational and adversarial conflict and clarifies their political disagreement with the pro-life position. The act of ridiculing inflames the pro-life protesters and makes 'visible' (Mouffe 2013b:93) the choice between 'conflicting alternatives' (Mouffe 2005a:10): pro-choice, or pro-life.

Claire Bishop (2004) emphasises the antagonistic potential of participation in art practice to generate politicised dissensus within social settings. Although Bishop argues for antagonistic art practices, not agonistic ones, her arguments inform how I

situate my practice of participatory art practice. This includes: (1) her positioning of participation within art history; (2) her argument for antagonism in participatory art practice; (3) her critique of ameliorative participation; (4) 'co-authoring' participants (Bishop 2012a:36); and (5) the deliberate production of 'friction' (Bishop 2004:79). Dissensus in the context of participatory art practice includes acts of disagreeing, prompting, performing, and challenging oppositional opinions. Conflict here is the driver of dissensus and art practice provides the means to communicate dissent. Bishop's perspective accords to a degree with Mouffe's definition of democracy as a 'vibrant clash' of oppositional opinions that indicate the plurality and diversity of a specific polity (Mouffe 2000:104). Bishop's position aligns with Mouffe's view that dissensus is required to 'subvert the consensus [...] and to re-establish a dynamic of conflictuality' (Miessen and Mouffe 2012:21).

Bishop traces her history of participation as an avant-garde, social, and political critique from Dada (1916), to the Situationists International (SI, 1957), to the political and social upheavals in 1968, to artists like Allan Kaprow and the Happenings of the 1950s. The connection between these artists and art movements are how they variously sought to blur the boundaries between art and life. Bishop annexes participation in art practice from the history of spectacle. She draws on Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and emphasises the social implications of spectatorship, those of inertia, passivity, and a reliance on consuming a pre-packaged product within the frame of capitalism. If an artwork causes inertia, through watching or spectating a performance, then the potential participant is relegated to an audience member: a non-participant. Participation for Bishop is an active experience of taking part, whereas spectacle is a passive visual experience for audience members. Through connecting practices that challenge both passivity and capitalist modes of production, Bishop focuses on art practices that address the avant-garde. Artworks and art practices that are classified as avant-garde contain the capacity to shock, to challenge, and to cause discomfort through radical critique.

Bishop argues for antagonistic art practices that 'think the aesthetic and the social/political *together*', in this respect she draws upon the tradition of the avant-garde (Bishop 2006a:182 her emphasis). However, I interpret Bishop's emphasis here as: art practice + shock (avant-garde) + social + political = antagonistic

participation. By antagonism, Bishop denotes art practices that invoke or provoke conflict and/or hostility. In this context, Bishop's version of antagonism resembles Mouffe's definition. The practice of Spanish artist Santiago Sierra is one that Bishop consistently returns to in order to make her case for antagonistic art. For example, in *160cm Line Tattooed on 4 People* (2000)[45] Sierra's participants were financially recompensed for being permanently (hostilely) marked by a tattoo and the photographic documentation of the artwork. Sierra's critique of the exploitation of workers is 'visible' through his process of producing the exhibition, which in itself is a process of exploitation (Mouffe 2013b:93). His participants become commodities that are bought and exhibited as objects. The artwork represents economic systems of inequality, and antagonistic exploitation. This type of artwork exists beyond my definition of agonistic art practice.

In advocating art practices that operate antagonistically, Bishop critiques art practices that seek to politically 'ameliorate' their participants (Bishop 2012a:38). Bishop takes an oppositional position to Bourriaud and Grant Kester, whom prioritise art practices that advocate conviviality, 'ameliorat[ion]', and 'morality'. Amelioration for Kester is participation that seeks consensus with conviviality *and without conflict.* Bishop's concern is that these art practices do not necessarily address the underlying causes of social, or political exclusion. For example, Wochen-Klauser's[46] hostel for drug-addicted women, sought through practical and dialogic means to re-adjust existing political inequality and social need, but only for eight weeks in 1994. Kester proposes that consensus can be achieved with an eloquent argument, empathy, and careful listening. Unlike Bishop, Kester rejects dissensus because it does not operate to 'catalyse consensus' (Kester 2004:8). This art historical perspective situates my twofold approach to participatory art practice. Bishop stands for participation with antagonistic conflict and without conviviality; Kester stands for participation with conviviality and without conflict. In contrast, I position my agonistic approach to participatory art practice as requiring both conviviality and conflict.

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[45] Santiago Sierra http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sierra-160-cm-line-tattooed-on-4-people-el-gallo-arte-contemporaneo-salamanca-spain-t11852 Accessed 2 January 2017

[46] Wochen-Klauser http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekte/02p_kurz_en.htm Accessed 2 January 2017

Bishop's proposal for 'co-authoring' participants is the first of two ideas I inherit from Bishop and develop further (Bishop 2012a:36).[47] These 'co-author[s] and/or co-producers of the art practice who speak for themselves and use the medium of art to do so' (Bishop 2012a:36). Bishop situates 'co-authoring' participants within participatory art practices that nurture dissensus contextualised by 'activat[ion]' and 'freedom' (Bishop, 2012a:38). 'Freedom' in Bishop's version of participatory art practice indicates that participants are agents of change in a social context. These participants 'activate' and self-determine the parameters of their participatory experience. This stands in contrast to subjects of an art practice that emphasises amelioration and does not seek to fundamentally address an existing and acknowledged injustice or inequality. Co-authorship entails that the participants' contributions are specific and identifiable. In order to prioritise emancipatory practices, Bishop challenges the narratives of spectacle (as an act of observing)[48] as a barrier to active participation.

The second idea I inherit is valuing the production of 'friction' in participatory art practice (Bishop 2004:79).[49] Bishops situates 'friction' in context with 'tension' (Bishop 2004:70) and 'doubt' (Bishop 2006a:181). She aligns their art historical context with Dada, Surrealism, and the avant-garde. These three qualities can disrupt the social and political contexts of the artwork. They operate as oppositional forces to undermine conviviality and amelioration. 'Friction' can provoke a social tension that can be a precursor to generating conflict. Therefore, friction is a potential method of igniting agonistic conflict with participants. Friction and agonism share a social un-palatability: friction is uncomfortable and awkward to experience, particularly in public and with strangers. Bishop's 'friction', 'tension' and 'doubt' share the quality of uncertainty. They exist in an awkward in-between space, the space before a final decision is made. This quality of uncertainty relates back to my etymology of agonism in section 1.1, and the act of agonising between conflicting alternatives.

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[47] In section 3.3 I evolve 'co-authoring' participants to articulate who my ideal participant is for the practice-based element of this research project.
[48] In section 3.3 I expand upon the relationships between spectacle, interactive art, and participation.
[49] In section 5.4 I expand the idea of generating friction within the street performances as inter-character squabbling.

***Money to Burn* on Wall Street**

In *Money to Burn* (2010, Figure 8)[50] American artist Dread Scott utilises guerrilla street theatre to perform politicised and participatory dissent in the public realm. His performance contributes to my argument by examining how friction can be performed by utilising context, conviviality and conflict. In this performance Scott strolls along Wall Street sonorously calling out: "Money to bu-rn, money to burn" and "Has anyone got, any money to burn?". In these repeated refrains, Scott directs a specific invitation for participants (a mix of Wall Street traders, and tourists) to join him in burning money on Wall Street. Although Scott's performance does not create participants who are active 'co-authors' of the performance, the Police Officers do respond to the qualities of friction, doubt, and the adversarial nature of his performance (Bishop 2012a:36). I examine how Scott's confrontation with law enforcement officers demonstrates how conviviality as critique can be instrumentalised by dissensus. I will first describe, then analyse the performance (as an edited three-and-a-half-minute film)[51] against my eight criteria for agonistic art practice.[52] The performance meets seven of my eight criteria. In the analysis I focus on differentiating between agonistic and almost-agonistic art practice.

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[50] Dread Scott https://youtu.be/oSclYWiEMQk Accessed 12 December 2016
[51] Scott's original performance lasted for forty-minutes.
[52] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

Figure 8: Dread Scott, *Money to Burn*, 2010

Scott is dressed in black and has with dollar bills pinned to his shirt. He carries a lighter, an aluminium ladle, and bucket filled with (perhaps) sand that he uses to extinguish the burning currency. Scott resembles a street hawker or carnival showman selling an experience, and a town crier making a public announcement. However, as a politicised performance of dissent his intention is deliberately ambiguous. This ambiguity operates to intrigue and engage the attention of passers-by and potential participants. The location of the performance is critical to politicised context. Wall Street was the epicentre of the 2008 global financial crisis, a crisis in which public money was metaphorically burnt in order to shore up and bail out crumbling financial institutions. Scott's performance bears a parallel witness to the 2008 crash, and in doing so, he creates the opportunity for participants to burn dollar bills in a highly politicised public realm.

Under the guise of conviviality, the 'adversarial' conflict takes place as a friction between Scott's act of burning money, and the politically-charged (social, historical, geographic) context of Wall Street (criterion 1). Scott adversarily issues an invitation and challenge in his refrain to potential participants. The significance of his location provides a 'common symbolic space' between Scott, his spectators, and his participants (criterion 5). They share the space but have conflicting ideas as to how that symbolic space should be organised. In this context, the process of burning money, symbolising privilege and prosperity is offered as transgressive act. The notes symbolising a *promise to pay*, go up in flames. The value is rescinded, but an exchange does take place between Scott and his participants. His phrase "has anyone got, any money to burn?": implies an abundance of money that requires removal; devalues money as a commodity because of the apparent surfeit; and offers a metaphorical connection with the bailout funding Wall Street institutions received during the financial crisis. Scott uses the dollar bills to performatively 'mak[e] visible' the public funds that rescued private companies during the crisis (criterion 7).

My evidence that friction creates a social tension and holds the potential for conflict occurs when the Police Officers arrive [1:54 seconds]. The officers struggle to read the artistic intent of the performance, but accurately interpret the performance as a 'counter-hegemonic intervention' that they want to shut down (criterion 6). Scott utilises friction to create a sense of doubt about the underlying intentions of the performance. Doubt is evident on the faces of the officers, and by the arrival of six officers who use their physical presence and legal power in order to intimidate Scott [2:25 seconds]. In turn, Scott implements an agonistic congeniality to politely defuse the tension with the officers. Scott maintains the potential for antagonistic conflict during the exchange (criterion 3). The antagonistic potential forms a tense undercurrent to the exchange. The social friction is amplified by Scott's single-minded commitment to the performance, and his convivial attitude towards the situation. The Officers are initially unable to decide what offence he is committing. A stalemate, or 'conflictual consensus' exists between Scott and the officers regarding the use of public space (criterion 4). Scott's unauthorised use of the public realm prioritises democratic dissent. The officers' priority is removing sources of social and political friction. Eventually, the officers issue Scott a citation for "disorderly conduct" [2:39 seconds]. Scott departs and defiantly continues the performance.

Scott's performance does not present a choice between 'conflicting alternatives' (criterion 2). Instead Scott presents his metaphorical version of the status quo: that public money bailed out failing private financial institutions during the crash. To be properly agonistic, Scott's performance would have needed to present his political critique, *and* clearly articulate an imagined/alternative scenario. Scott presents a 'new subjectivit[y]' by performing his political position in the public realm (criterion 8). However, he does not expand upon his position, and this diminishes the ability of this performance to meet criterion 8.

The agonistic strengths of this performance exist in Scott's determination to maintain social and political friction, whilst developing a convivial rapport with participants and passers-by. Scott's choice of guerrilla street theatre as an unauthorised performance in the public realm facilitates the potential for politicised conflict to arise during the performance. Scott prompts relations with passers-by and participants that range between: disinterested, convivial, interactive, adversarial, antagonistic. I propose that Scott deploys conviviality in order to *reduce* the potential of antagonism during the performance.

3.3 Situating agonistic participation and my ideal participant in terms of: conviviality and conflict, interactivity and spectacle

My purpose is to articulate how agonistic participation in art practice relates to and extends the art historical contexts of sections 3.1 and 3.2. Although Mouffe briefly outlines how art practices relate to the contexts of economic modes of production, and capitalism[53] she does not contextualise how agonistic art practices relate to the history of art. I develop the art historical perspective to include two other forms of participation: interactivity and spectacle/spectatorship. I argue against the participation they offer on the grounds that they hinder participation, evade conflict, and offer a convivial and consensus-led model of performance in the public realm. What interactivity and spectacle do offer my argument is the potential to

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[53] In Mouffe 2013b:85-90.

differentiate how my *ideal participant* will engage with the street performance of this research project. In my *Spectrum of Participation in Art Practice* (Figure 9, subsequently *Spectrum* diagram), I look towards how agonistic participation can take place in art practice.
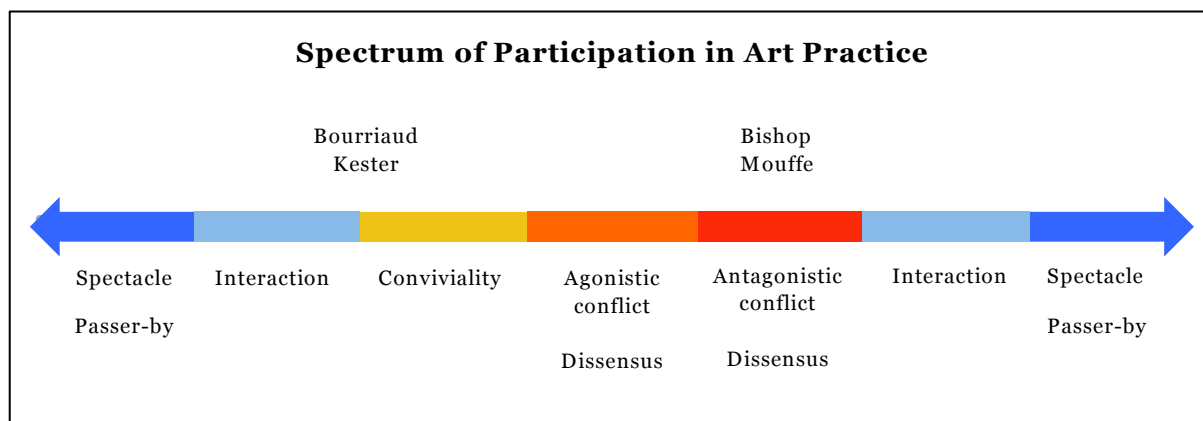
Figure 9: Antoinette Burchill, *Spectrum of Participation in Art Practice*, 2017

The purpose of the *Spectrum* diagram in Figure 9 is to situate different types of participation in art practice, including agonistic participation. By positioning participation on a continuum, I emphasise how participants can move between types of participation, and different levels of conviviality and conflict. Although participation is presented in a linear format, I argue that participation takes place across a spectrum of possibilities. This capacity for variation stands apart from other over-arching interpretations of participation. For example, Bourriaud and Kester's version of conviviality without conflict, and Bishop's argument for antagonistic participation. By locating participation in this way, I seek to open up, rather than foreclose or pre-determine (in favour of either conviviality, *or* antagonism) how participants engage with the art practice. In arguing for agonistic participation as a form of conflictual conviviality, I deliberately blur the boundaries between agonistic conflict and conviviality whilst highlighting the importance of each characteristic. I propose that agonistic participation borrows a shared association between participants from conviviality to create the relation of *us* and borrows conflict and dissensus between participants to create the relation of *them*. The impact of

combining conflict and conviviality to become conflictual conviviality enables agonistic participation to fluctuate between conviviality and conflict.[54]

Jeremy Deller's *Sacrilege* (2012, Figure 10) is an interactive artwork that offers a convivial experience but, as I will argue, is not an example of a participatory art practice. The distinction I make here is between participation and interactivity. I define interactive art as artworks where potential participants have a *limited capacity* to self-determine, challenge, or to change the scope of engagement set by the artist. As a large-scale inflatable version of Stonehenge, the only modes of interaction that *Sacrilege* makes available to participants are: to spectate, bounce, or not bounce on the inflatable. Those who play, do so by following the artists' guidelines and without, for example, shoes or implements that would damage the structure. Those who interact comply with the restrictions and opportunities provided by the artist and artwork. *Sacrilege* in this example represents a performative public realm artwork that resists conflict and dissensus, in order to provide an interactive version of participatory art practice. Dread Scott's *Money to Burn* is an example of a convivial and interactive performance that incorporates politicised conflict and dissent. However, Scott's participants (with the exception of the police officers) can only interact by burning dollar bills: thus, participants follow his singular narrative direction.

Figure 10: Jeremy Deller, *Sacrilege*, 2012

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[54] I return to Figure 9 in section 5.2; and my analysis of participation in the practice.

Spectacle also limits the opportunities for conflict and participation. Spectators of *The Sultan's Elephant* street performance by Royal de Luxe (2006, Figure 11)[55] could follow the procession on foot, and whilst this is a form of interaction, spectators are obliged to maintain a distance between themselves and the performance. Spectators neither interact, nor participate in the production of the artwork or performance. Thus, spectators are audiences who only engage with the artwork by sight: viewing, peeking, glancing as they pass-by. The visual impact of spectacle turns audience members into consumers of an experience. This curtails the opportunities for audience members to become active participants in the artwork. Bishop defines the passive act of visual reception as the 'social relations of capitalism', in which the act of consuming a product takes priority over the roles of producing or participating (Bishop 2012a:36).

Figure 11: Royal de Luxe, *The Sultan's Elephant*, 2006

The distinction I make between participation and spectacle is that spectators step away and step back from the opportunity to participate, whereas participants step forward. The nuance of this distinction is that art practices like *The Sultan's Elephant* restrict the scope for audience members to be anything other than spectators. For a performance on this scale, risk, and complexity, spectatorship is a

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[55] *The Sultan's Elephant* https://youtu.be/BcoPoWfPzmI Accessed 12 January 2017

necessary restriction. However, in my art practice, potential participants may *choose* to become spectators. In order to communicate and enforce their identity as spectators, they may use an existing barrier e.g. a wall or window, or create a temporary barrier e.g. recording the performance on a mobile phone. These barriers recreate the fourth wall: the distance between, for example: actors on stage, and the seated audience members. Both *Sacrilege* and *The Sultan's Elephant* focus on convivial participation. This social relation perpetuates the formation of a congenial consensus in the public realm. They both lack the capacity to provoke the social friction necessary to forms of conflict.

My ideal participants are curious, vibrant and playful participants, who contribute to performances of political dissent. These participants exhibit a curiosity in street theatre and choose to transition from spectator or passer-by, to active participant. My ideal participants share a conviviality with the performers. Conviviality in this context is central to transitioning spectators, to interactors, to participants of the performance. For example, I utilise conviviality to build rapport and trust between strangers in the public realm and the performers. Conviviality forms an *us*: a relation between strangers. My ideal participants also respond to the quality of conflict. For example, they confidently challenge and disagree with the performers, and/or they contribute a politicised critique of a third party: creating the relation of *them*, and *us*. My ideal participants also reciprocate the performative qualities of improvisation and unpredictability. The job of the performers is to facilitate the participant in the process of taking part. Rather than a pre-determined script, the performers improvise in response to participants. Thus, a marker of participatory success will be if each act of participation tells a slightly different story: based on participants' individual contributions.

During participation, my ideal participants will transition across my *Spectrum* diagram (Figure 9). They may begin as spectators who interact, then engage in convivial rapport, and who then develops the confidence to engage in conflict and dissensus. Convivial rapport is the foundation from which, ideally, the agonistic and adversarial conflict emerges. However, if there is too much conviviality, then conflict may not occur. Likewise, if there is too much conflict, the participation may become antagonistic. In order for agonistic participation to occur, the oppositional critique of

dissensus needs to be introduced, but without destroying the bond between participants. My definition of participation hinges on the *facilitation* of both conviviality and conflict.[56] In the *Spectrum* diagram (Figure 9) conflictual conviviality exists on the relational cusp between conviviality and agonistic conflict.[57] I expand on this in Chapter 5.

3.4 The *Sea Turtle Brigade*: a street theatre performance of conflictual conviviality

The *Sea Turtle Brigade* (1999, Figure 12) participate in, and communicate conflictual conviviality. The brigade members are both participants (of the project, and the protest) and street performers in the public realm. I argue the *Sea Turtle Brigade* (subsequently *Turtles*) perform conflictual conviviality without negating the potential for antagonistic conflict to emerge.

The *Turtles*[58] comprised of approximately 250 participants. Each participant wore handmade turtle costumes constructed from cardboard, household and spray paint, staples, glue, and duct tape. The *Turtle* performance formed part of a larger protest against the World Trade Organisation's (subsequently WTO) Ministerial Conference that began on 30 November 1999 at Seattle's Washington State Convention and Trade Centre, United States. The protest, known as N30 and The Battle of Seattle, sought to challenge the power, authority, and ethics of 'corporate globalisation' perpetuated by the WTO (Reed 2005:241). The purpose of the N30 was to prevent the WTO conference from taking place, and to do so using non-violent tactics. Approximately '60,000' protestors (including the *Turtles*) shared the objective of physically blocking crucial road junctions, thereby preventing WTO delegates from reaching the conference venue (Lane Bruner 2006:145).

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[56] I expand upon the importance of facilitation in Chapter 4.

[57] I recognise conflictual conviviality is a paradox, one that I devised in response to Mouffe's 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2005a:52) see section 2.4.

[58] *Turtles* marching https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=25s Accessed 31 January 2016

Figure 12: Ben White, *Sea Turtle Brigade*, 1999

The deliberate deployment of conviviality to offset potential antagonisms was a strategy instigated by Turtle organiser Ben White. In his pre-performance briefing for volunteer-performers, he outlined:

> the characteristics of turtles – long-lived, patient, placid, gentle – he first told the group that if they encountered any kind of violence whatsoever they were "to stop and surround it with peaceful turtle power". Second, he announced that if anyone did anything aggressive they would be "de-turtled on the spot," and this included any use of hostile language. Third, he told the group to comport themselves like turtles: as ancient repositories of wisdom they should not fight back if provoked by police protecting their corporate clients. [...] Finally, he announced that their job was quietly to block major downtown intersections leading to the WTO conference in order to prevent delegates from attending. (White quoted by Lane Bruner 2006:147).

White's briefing is important because he is describing how to perform conflictual conviviality, how to develop agonistic relations with fellow protestors, and how to counteract antagonistic situations. White is describing an agonistic form of dissent when he categorises all forms of aggression as beyond the scope of the *Turtles*. Consequently, the *Turtle*'s homemade stubborn tranquillity masks their intention to mischievously perform dissent.

The existing literature on the *Turtles* is scant, many book chapters and articles briefly cite the *Turtles* and none address the quality of agonism that I identify in the

Turtle's performance. M. Lane Bruner, a rhetoric and public communications academic highlights the ability of the *Turtles* to 'blend the fictive and the real' (Lane Bruner 2006:140-1), and to perform a humorous, and contested public sphere. Hoad (2000), DeSombre and Barkin (2002), DeFilippis (2001), and Bleiker (2002) speak to the reform of the WTO, and the anti-globalisation movement. Cisler (1999), and Dixon, (2009) record eyewitness commentaries from protest participants. The use of emerging digital technologies (circa 1999) including mobile phones, digital cameras, internet connectivity, and their use by protestors acting as citizen journalists is addressed by Briggs (2000), DeLuca and Peeples (2002), and Reed (2005). Solnit (2009) is concerned with telling the story of Seattle, and in challenging myths and cycles of disinformation. Marchart (2004) examines the element of antagonism present at Seattle. There is a paucity of good quality still and moving image documentation of the *Turtles*. The online film clips of N30 tend to focus on the violence, rioting, damage to property, and the documentation of those injured during the violent clashes between police and protestors.

The *Turtles* meet seven of my eight criteria for agonistic art practice.[59] The criterium they do not meet is the condition for a 'conflictual consensus' because they are political activists in conflict with the WTO (criterium 4). To meet this criterium the *Turtles* would need to reach an *agreement to disagree* with the WTO. This interaction is impossible in this example because the *Turtles* hold an antagonistic relation of enemy/enemy with the WTO: each side regards the other as *them*: there is no *us*. This is the key distinction I make between performances of activism (as a relation of enemy/enemy), and performances of dissent that Mouffe does not. The *Turtles* as a group of environmental activists highlight the impossibility of consensus agreement between themselves and the WTO: they are *not* agonistic adversaries. This aspect of my analysis looks beyond the *Turtles* physical street performance, and towards the WTO as the subject of their protest. The Turtles do not share a 'common symbolic space' with the WTO (criterion 5). Each side holds a position on the sea turtles as an endangered species, but they vehemently disagree in their responses to that knowledge.

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[59] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

The strength of the *Turtles* is their ability to perform conviviality without denying the capacity for conflict. This potential for conflict addresses 'the ineradicability of antagonism' (criterion 3). The capacity for hostility is deliberately *counteracted* by the variety of methods the *Turtles* draw upon to perform conviviality. The impact of countering potential antagonisms with conviviality results in the *Turtles* performing conflict on the Seattle streets as agonistic adversaries (criterion 1). Methods of conviviality include: humour, playfulness, 'eccentricity' (Bishop 2006a:181) and the homemade/handmade quality of the turtle costumes. The costumes offer the performance an individual authenticity and a personal investment in the issue at stake. These convivial methods establish and amplify the *Turtle*'s conflictual position in relation to the WTO. The *Turtles* locate their positions in conflict with the WTO through costumes and participation, vocally through chants, and visually with stickers, flags, and banners. The *Turtles* can be seen on the YouTube films marching, dancing,[60] gathering,[61] and giving interviews.[62] The *Turtles* perform agonism as relational and adversarial conflict with gentility and playful insouciance. The performers instigate agonistic public spheres in order to publicly communicate their political dissent, and performatively contest the WTO position.

The *Turtle's* gentle conviviality camouflages their defiant and oppositional intention. Their performance of conflictual conviviality evidences criteria 2, 6, 7, and 8. The *Turtle's* costume and mode of performance 'mak[es] visible' the decision by WTO not account for the environmental impact of their economic policies (criterion 7). These WTO policies prioritise free trade, whilst disregarding the fact that the sea turtles were 'one of the hundreds of creatures threatened with extinction by WTO policies' (Reed 2005:258). The performance acts as a 'counter-hegemonic intervention' in relation to the hegemonies of the police force at a local level, and the WTO at an international level (criteria 6). Through performing their opposition to the WTO, the *Turtles* position the choice between 'conflicting alternatives': sea turtle survival or extinction (criterion 2). Unlike Scott's *Money to Burn* performance, the *Turtles* theatrically, vocally and in media interviews participate in outlining an alternative to the WTO trade fishing policies (and specifically those that directly affect sea turtles).

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[60] *Turtles* dancing https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=21m17s Accessed 31 January 2016

[61] *Turtles* gathering https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=24m37s Accessed 31 January 2016

[62] *Turtle* interviewee *https://youtu.be/117D7NWHAYg?t=10m28s* Accessed 31 January 2016

The *Turtles* create 'new subjectivities' by positioning the sea turtle's fate in direct and public conflict with the WTO (criterion 8).

My analysis of the *Turtles* demonstrates that the theatrical performance of agonism is nuanced, paradoxical, and exists in context with social, relational, and political factors. The analysis emphasises how agonism as a nuanced form of conviviality-and-conflict can be expressed through street performance. The turtle-performers demonstrate how conviviality can moderate the potential level of antagonism. Thereby reducing the level of antagonism, or potential violence to an adversarial and agonistic level within the context of street protest. In this respect, the *Turtles* deliberately facilitate of a particular type of conflict and inhabit a performative persona in order to achieve this objective. The *Turtles* implement conflictual conviviality to order to critique the WTO, and as a result, the *Sea Turtle Brigade* blurs the boundaries between street theatre and political dissent.

Conclusion

This chapter responds to research sub-question three: what roles do conflict and conviviality play in the participatory performance of dissent? I conclude that both conflict and conviviality play vital roles in participatory and politicised performances of dissent. Conviviality can relationally dial-down antagonistic conflict, and adversarial conflict can dial-up convivial relations. Whilst Bourriaud, Kester, and Bishop do not address *how* participants become convivial or conflictual during the process of participation, I examine how participants can transition through different modes of participation. My *Spectrum* diagram (Figure 9) situates agonistic participatory art practice in an art historical context. I emphasise the importance of conflict *and* conviviality to the development of agonistic relations. The paradox of conflictual conviviality enables agonistic performance and participation as a series of relational exchanges that emerge through and are politically contextualised by the art practice.

Chapter 4: Mischief

> [T]he agonistic struggle should bring about new meanings and fields of
> application for democracy to be radicalized. This is, in my view, the effective way
> to challenge power relations, not on the mode of an abstract negation but in a
> properly hegemonic way [...]
> (Mouffe 2005a:33)

I explain how mischief is politicised and embedded within the practice and theory of
this PhD through the relations of power. I scrutinise examples of guerrilla street
performances by Mark Thomas (2014), the Yes Men (2015), and Billionaires for
Welfare (2009) and a film clip accompanies each example.[63] You need to watch the
films prior to reading the rest of this chapter. Then re-watch the relevant clip before
reading my analysis of it.

4.1 Defining and re-situating mischief in relation to power

I define mischief as a mode of performative intervention that aims to generate and
facilitate participation. Central to my application of mischief is an understanding of
how the relations of power can be politically deployed by mischief-makers. I draw
upon Mouffe and Amy Allen, by way of Steven Lukes, to resituate mischief in relation
to the performance of power. I separate mischief performed as a cultural expression,
for example on April Fools' Day, because those acts often utilise mischief to create a
victor/victim power relation. Through focusing on mischief as a social act, I highlight
the potential that mischief holds as a performance of politicised dissent. I explore
three relations of power, one of which contains the potential to re-position mischief
beyond an amusing cultural frippery. The mischief in my research foregrounds the
potential that mischievous performance holds to act playfully and politically with
participants. Consequently, I frame mischief as an agonistic counter-hegemonic
performance that takes place amongst willing participants.

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[63] Mark Thomas https://youtu.be/W4VtD8_1VCQ?t=3s Accessed 12 December
Yes Men https://youtu.be/nkqO-qOHFT8 Accessed 27 January 2017
Billionaires for Weathcare https://youtu.be/T7fzUaa3ms8 Accessed 27 January 2017

My implementation of mischief utilises the contemporary definition of mischief as unruly and playfully teasing, and a disruptive approach to creative thinking. When these disruptive ideas take form, mischief becomes a performative mode of intervening in the world. When mischief manifests into a performative act, whether this is participatory or interactive, the context is usually a social one. Mischief is rarely a socially isolated act. Through defining the contemporary version of mischief, I discard the historical definition of mischief as: 'a person whose conduct or influence is harmful' (Brown 1993:1788). I reject the historical correlation between mischief and harm. When a mischief-maker, or an act of mischief causes harm, the implication is that mischief causes victims: whether by neglect, carelessness, or through the design of the prank.

In order for the mischief I create to be playful and benign, avoiding the power dynamic of victor/victim is of paramount importance. For example, when the BBC television network broadcast a mini-documentary on the Ticino spaghetti harvest[64] on 1 April 1957, they used the authenticity of the presenter Richard Dimbleby, the historical trustworthiness of the network and the programme's reliable reputation to deliberately trick members of the British public. Dimbleby and the BBC used their position of power to prank ill-informed viewers that spaghetti does grow on trees. The prank created victims by exploited the public's lack of cultural knowledge about how pasta is made. A distinguishing feature of my interpretation of mischief is that participants are not victims. Instead, I frame the mischief as a participatory and performative act. One that can take place within relational, social, and political contexts. For the purpose of situating my research, I discard the terms: prank, hoax, parody, spoof, trick, practical joke. Whilst they describe acts of mischief, they tend to rely on dividing participants into victors or victims.

I overcome the victor/victim dynamic by exploring how the relations of power can be constructed politically. Power can also be understood in terms of authority, and influence within political, economic, ideological contexts. Political theorist Steven Lukes speaks about power in terms of the level of conflict, and the level of force. He

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[64] *Panorama* https://youtu.be/tV0_wkxH9dU Accessed 27 January 2017

defines power as a conflictual relation that is 'exercised *over* people' (Lukes 1974:31 his emphasis). His three-dimensions of power begin with 'manipulation' that might take the form of persuasion or incentives for an individual or group to act in a particular way (Lukes 1974:32). Power as a form of domination to force a change of behaviour can take place through coercion, or threat of coercion and the deployment of 'sanctions' to ensure a behavioural change (Lukes 1974:17). Lukes third stage is the use of violence to 'force' compliant behaviour (Lukes 1974:32). My twofold approach acknowledges Lukes, but specifically draws upon Mouffe, and Amy Allen's formation of 'power-with' (Allen 1999:123).

Mouffe defines power as an aspect of the political, and from the perspectives of hegemony, antagonism, and the social. Mouffe states that a core aspect of the 'agonistic struggle' is to 'challenge power relations' (Mouffe 2005a:33). To contest 'power relations' agonistically requires both a 'disarticulation' and a re-articulation (Mouffe 2005a:33) of the issue at stake. This process operates as part of 'making visible' that I describe in section 1.4 (Mouffe 2013b:93). Power as a relational act connects agonism to mischief: both take place within a social architecture that includes relations of power and authority. Here mischief operates as a counter-hegemonic act to intervene, contradict, or counteract authority. Mouffe facilitates my understanding of how power operates within a macro/social context, Allen enables development of the micro context: as relations between performers and participants.

The innovation that feminist critical theorist Amy Allen (1999, 2012a, 2012b, 2015) makes is to develop the idea of performing power *with* others. She extends the theory of power proposed by Lukes and specifies three relational modes of performing power: 'power-over, power-to, and power-with' (Allen 1999:123). Of these 'power-over' relates to the power one person, or one group maintains in order to dominate another. A nuance of 'power-over' is 'power-to': to force an obligation, or to deny the capacity of another to resist. Allen clarifies that the performance of power (domination or force) must take place in a politically significant and 'nontrivial way' in order to qualify as act of power (Allen 999:124). Allen frames both 'power-over' and 'power-to' as negative dynamics of power. In contrast, Allen situates 'power-with' as an emancipatory and collaborative force, rather than one that is innately negative.

The potential 'power-with' holds for mischief is the possibility to overcome the relation of victim/victor, and instead facilitate a relationship that is participatory. The keyword here is *with*: power in this context is a resource, not of subjection or control, but one of reciprocity. In terms of the ontic of politics, *with* describes an ideal democracy.[65] *With* implies collaboration, willingness, and an association between participants who work together. *With* holds the capacity to establish connections between participants, whilst acknowledging existing social differences, for example: ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or religion. *With* leans towards the construction of 'common symbolic space' between participants (Mouffe 2005a:20). This shared association does not preclude conviviality, conflict, or the agonistic association of adversaries.[66] The mischievous participants of this research are those who share power in a complicit manner. First, I describe how power can inhibit mischievous participation. The first example is a voice-activated card reader (Figure 13) as an example of 'power-over' (Allen 1999:123).

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[65] This aspect of the research could be extended to explore the topics of citizenship, and prefiguration.
[66] In Chapter 5 I investigate where the limits, tensions, and participatory reciprocity of 'power-with' arise in street theatre performance.

Figure 13: Unknown artist, *Voice-activated card reader*, 2015

This April Fools' Day participatory performance (Figure 13)[67] is an example of mischief-making as a cultural tradition.[68] Here the mischief-maker holds 'power-over' the way their colleagues can access a secure entrance. This power dynamic deliberately limits the potential for participants to move beyond the victor/victim relation. The success of performances like the voice-activated card reader relies on the components of credibility, gullibility, and publicity. The credibility lies with the location of the poster, the tone of an authoritative yet helpful text, along with the official credentials: name, job title, institutional logo. Some may believe the Estates Advisor's notice, whilst others may recognise the contradiction of speaking into a card reader. This type of prank relies on the public humiliation of the victims. Thus, what I reject from April Fools' Day and the cultural history of mischief are pranks that utilise a relation of power in order to create victims.

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[67] April Fools' Day https://twitter.com/paulcoxon/status/583175602158604288 Accessed 1 April 2015

[68] April Fools' Day (1 April) and Mischief Night (Lancashire 30 April, Yorkshire 4 November) are examples of culturally instituted mischief.

Figure 14: Unknown artist, *The Pie'ing of Jeremy Clarkson*, 2015

In the pie'ing of Jeremy Clarkson, environmental activists (Figure 14) take 'power-to' and perform their counter-hegemonic protest of Clarkson's position on the environment (Allen 1999:123).[69] However, this performance of 'power-to' undermines the activists' politicised intent. For a moment, television celebrity Clarkson becomes the activists' cream-splattered punchline. The honorary guest becomes a ceremonial clown as the social hierarchy of power is inverted. The political efficacy of the prank is destabilised by the power relation and by pie throwing as a carnivalesque performance of politicised dissent. Literary Critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) defines the carnivalesque as the temporary, and (usually) sanctioned inversion of power relations. In these 'authorised transgression[s]' of power, the king becomes a pauper, the pauper becomes king (Malbert 2000:11). But the carnivalesque builds a level of redundancy into the performance: once the prank ends, the relations of power revert back to normal. Clarkson, in this example, ends up as the victim because this act of mischief is unable to articulate and sustain politicised critique *with* willing participants.

The mischievous performance of this research acts socially, politically, and *with* participants. The power dynamic of Allen's *with* enables the performers as mischief-

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[69] The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/education/2005/sep/12/highereducation.television1 Accessed 2 February 2017

makers to circumvent the usual victor/victim relation with participants in favour of a collaborative approach. In this way, I separate the mischief pertinent to this research from cultural acts of mischief and activist acts that negate their own political critique. I uphold mischief's connection to agonism through positioning mischief as political and counter-hegemonic. Mischief retains the qualities of unruly, convivial and playful teasing, but operates as a method of performing politicised dissent. As such, politicised mischief is a form of conflictual conviviality.

4.2 Situating mischief as a politicised practice

My positioning of politicised mischief draws upon mischief as a counter-hegemonic act that is performed in the public realm in order to create the relation of 'power-with' between participants (Allen 1999:123). I develop architect and urban designer Kim Dovey's term 'public mischief 'to discuss how politicised mischief can transform public spaces into critical public spheres (Dovey 2009:2). In the *Braggadocious* placard (Figure 15), I examine how 'power-with' is performed as a politicised, collaborative and counter-hegemonic act. Although this is ostensibly an activist performance, I focus on the capacity of politicised mischief to communicate multiple narratives. *The Nick Clegg Piñata* (Figure 16) is a participatory performance of politicised mischief as 'power-with'. Both examples utilise politicised mischief as a form of conflictual conviviality to communicate their adversarial politicised dissent in the public realm. These acts of mischief hold the potential to bridge the divide between the performance of agonism within politics and the theatrical performance of agonism.

As a politicised practice, mischief brings playful, defiant and critical thinking, plus, the capacity to recruit participants to take part in adversarial conflict. To politicise is to speak politically, and to facilitate or activate others to also speak on political topics. Mischief, in this context, has the ability to temper both conviviality and conflict by using humour, satire and politically-defiant performance. In more general terms, politicised art practices extend dissenting political speech into verbal, visual, and/or theatrical art forms. They extend the vocalisations and modes of political dissent through performance, publicity and circulation in the public sphere. Most

importantly, politicised art practices have the capacity to call forth additional narratives in order to comment upon and critique the actions of others, including political leaders.

Architect and urban designer Kim Dovey (2009) defines 'public mischief' as spatial, politicised and performative dissent in the public realm (Dovey 2009:2). Dovey's emphasis rests on the construction, use and habitation of urban public spaces. These public spaces maintain free and unconstrained civic access. Civic, for Dovey describes the performance of citizenship and democracy in urban public space including the public spherian qualities of dissensus, public debate, and publicity. The public realm for Dovey is a public space for the performance of political dissensus, not for consensus. Dovey argues against private and privatised public spaces. This is because private space denotes private ownership and thus limits the potential for political dissent. What Dovey hints at but does not explore is the potential mischief holds to re-purpose public space in order to defiantly intervene in politicised discourse and dissent. The *Braggadocious* placard (Figure 15) appeared at the Women's Day March in January 2017, the day after Donald Trump's presidential inauguration. *Braggadocious* is an illustration of 'public mischief" but as I will argue, a strong example of politicised mischief.
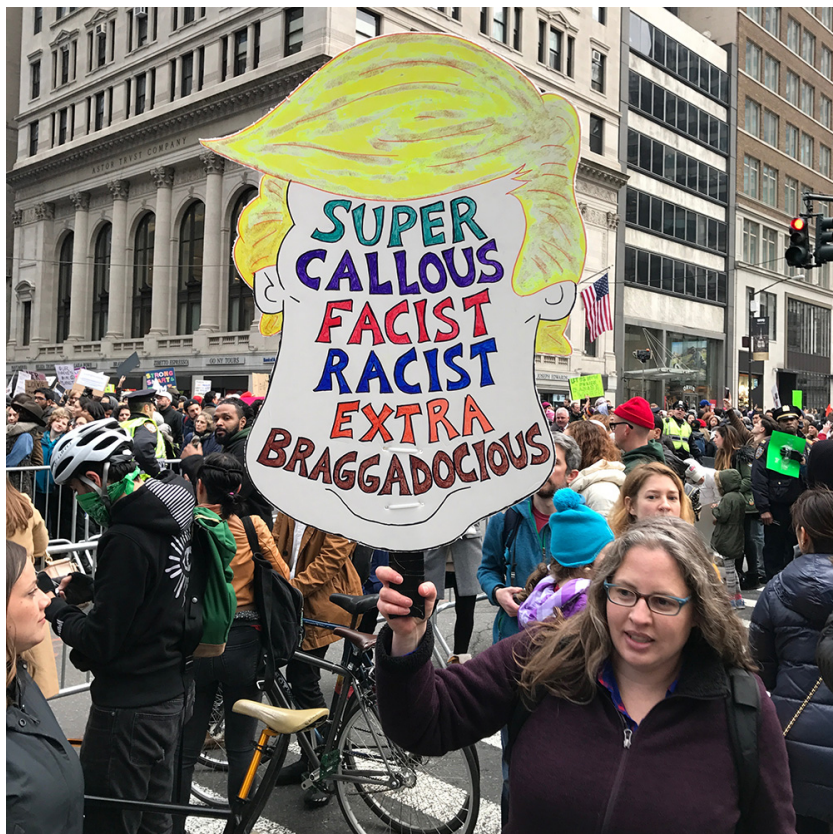
Figure 15: Unknown artist, *Braggadocious*, 2017

The *Braggadocious* placard (Figure 15) is an example of politicised mischief because the protestors draw upon 'power-with' to perform their playful and critical counter-hegemonic dissent (Allen 1999:123). Through highlighting the relation of *with*, in the participatory performance, I elaborate upon the role mischief plays in this protest. *With,* in this example amplifies the collective, collaborative, and participatory nature of the Women's Day marches. *With* situates a symbolic body of women who collectively critique Donald Trump's ideological stance on gender equality, racial discrimination, and human rights. Although this example is similar to the pie'ing of Jeremy Clarkson (Figure 14) in terms of an activist protest, the key difference is the relation of power as a collective expression against an authority figure. The 2017 Women's March in general, and the *Braggadocious* placard in particular emphasise an agonistic form of conflict. The placard takes an adversarial stance to Trump, it critiques his limited vocabulary and child-like reaction to criticism. The placard infers that Trump's style of leadership lacks the type of hegemony Mary Poppins

embodies: a hegemony established on honesty, kindness, respect for others and moral virtue.[70]

The role mischief-making also plays in the *Braggadocious* placard is to combine multiple motifs with politicised wit. The communication of multiple narratives is an important attribute of politicised art practices. Mischief makes 'visible' a light-hearted, yet sharp counter-hegemonic critique (Mouffe 2013b:93). Politicised dissent in this instance stops short of specifying an alternative to Trump's presidency. This is significant because the placard-and-performer create a 'common symbolic space' between their critique of the president and the president himself (Mouffe 2005a:20). As a consequence of the visible critique and the creation of 'common symbolic space' this aspect of the protest can be classified as agonistic dissent. In order to develop my argument for politicised mischief that utilises 'power-with' (Allen 1999:123), I will analyse *The Nick Clegg Piñata* (2014, Figure 16*)* against my eight criteria for agonistic art practice.[71] The *Piñata* performance meets six of my eight criteria. In the analysis, I focus on the ways that politicised mischief has an impact on the performances of antagonistic dissent.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.

Figure 16: Mark Thomas, *The Nick Clegg Piñata*, 2014[72]

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[70] *Mary Poppins* (1964) https://youtu.be/tRFHXMQP-QU Accessed 17 February 2017

[71] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

[72] Image available at: https://twitter.com/ThePennyLicks/status/464158924049235970 Accessed 16 December 2016.

In *The Nick Clegg Piñata* (Figure 16, subsequently *Piñata*)[73] the activist comedian Mark Thomas recruits' participants to perform an act of politicised and adversarial conflict with Nick Clegg.[74] The *Piñata* resembles a crude cartoon-like sculptural portrait of Clegg. It is filled with sweets and slips of paper specifying (real and imaginary) broken manifesto promises. The *Piñata* satirically and mischievously aligns Clegg's political integrity with a children's party game. The participants are given blindfolds and the opportunity to symbolically and violently hit the piñata with a stick.[75] The object of the performance is to break the piñata open. Then to publicly reveal, by speaking aloud, broken Liberal Democrat manifesto promises. This participatory performance highlights, if not a method of holding political leaders to account, but one of retaining the relational memory of political promises. The *Piñata* performance takes place in the Sheffield Peace Gardens, a public space in Sheffield city centre, and one of the locations in the Liberal Democrats 2010 Election Manifesto film.[76] In the film, Clegg makes a number of promises to the electorate. This includes Clegg's promise to end student tuition fees. The geographic context is significant because the Sheffield-based participants may also be Clegg's political constituents.

The *Piñata* performance instrumentalises mischief and conviviality in order to transition comedic antagonistic violence into a participatory agonistic dissent. The 'adversarial' conflict in the *Piñata* performance meets criterion 1. The role of mischief draws upon the relational definition of mischief as playfully benign teasing. Irreverence in this context maintains an association between the piñata-puppet and Clegg's actual political authority. Clegg's political efficacy is metaphorically reduced into his representation as a puppet on a string. Here, the ingenuity of mischief rests in the politicised legibility, and the relational nature of this performance. Whilst the participants violently strike the piñata with the stick, the relational context of the

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[73] The *Piñata* performance is one act, from a project titled: *100 Acts of Minor Dissent* (subsequently *100 Acts*). *100 Acts* took place between 13 May 2013 and 14 May 2014 under the authorial instigation of Thomas and his collaborators.

[74] In 2014 Nick Clegg was: Deputy Prime Minister (in coalition government with the Conservative Party), elected leader of the Liberal Democrats, and Minister of Parliament for the constituency of Sheffield Hallam.

[75] Mark Thomas https://youtu.be/W4VtD8_1VCQ?t=3s Accessed 12 December

[76] The Liberal Democrats: *Say Goodbye to Broken Promises* film accompanied their 2010 Election Manifesto: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTLR8R9JXz4 Accessed 27 February 2017

violence is polite and orderly. The high level of playful conviviality amongst the participants reduces the potential antagonistic violence to an agonistic act.

Piñata meets five more criteria that relate to antagonistic violence that is deliberately comedic. Antagonism in this example reinforces the adversarial relationship between Clegg's piñata proxy, and the participants' dissent. This comedic hostility addresses 'the ineradicability of antagonism' (criterion 3). The irreverent transformation of Clegg into a small papier-mâché puppet operates as a mischievous 'counter-hegemonic intervention' (criterion 6). This acts visually to subversively challenge the authority and legitimacy of Clegg's leadership. The impact of this irreverently antagonistic behaviour 'mak[es] visible' the gap between Clegg's pre-election promises, and the post-election reality (criterion 7). Through the participatory act of 'making visible', Clegg's piñata proxy is held to account. The choice between 'conflicting alternatives' in this performance highlight the promises made in the election manifesto video, and Clegg's governmental decisions (criterion 2). For constituents voting for Clegg in 2010, the conflicting alternatives of him keeping, and breaking, manifesto promises were both viable political outcomes. The *Piñata* performance also meets: 'common symbolic space' by taking place on the location the Liberal Democrats used for their 2010 election manifesto video (criterion 5).

The *Piñata* performance does not meet two criteria for agonistic art practice. Firstly, the *Piñata* does not offer a political alternative, nor create a 'new subjectivity' (criterion 8). Instead *Piñata* utilises political satire to bring into focus an existing subjectivity: that Clegg and the Liberal Democrats broke election manifesto promises. Second, the participants perform a consensus on their poor opinion of Clegg and his broken political promises. Thus, a 'conflictual consensus' as an agreement to disagree does not occur between the participants during the act of dissent (criterion 4). This is, in part because the piñata is a proxy for Clegg, rather than an actual adversary.

My analysis of *Piñata* demonstrates that mischief as a politicised practice extends beyond Dovey's 'public mischief' in the public realm (Dovey 2009:2). Through exploring the relational aspects of conflict, I emphasise how agonistic conflict can be celebratory, orderly, polite, and convivial. The *Piñata* performance demonstrates

firstly, how mischief can facilitate conflictual conviviality. Secondly, how agonistic qualities can emerge from a surfeit of both conviviality and antagonism. Both *Piñata* and *Braggadocious* evidence politicised mischief as inventive, playful and unruly critical thinking. The relation of 'power-with' is evident in how collaboration and reciprocity between groups of strangers strengthened the performance of politicised dissent in both examples (Allen 1999:123).

4.3 Mischief as guerrilla street theatre

I expand upon politicised mischief as guerrilla street theatre and outline the genealogy of my guerrilla street theatre by highlighting influential examples from America in the late 1960s, early 1970s and to the Yes Men's *"Last Iceberg" Snow Cones* performance (2015, Figure 17). My application of the term 'Guerrilla [street] Theatre' references three art practices: the San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT), The Diggers, and the Yippies (Davis 1966:130). Peter Berg of the SFMT adopts the term guerrilla to describe non-commercial, participatory, and politicised performances. Berg locates the origin of the term guerrilla with Che Guevara and his guerrilla warfare strategies. The qualities that guerrilla warfare and guerrilla street theatre share are: politicised counter-hegemonic incursions, and the ability to surprise. Guerrilla warfare and mischievous performance both emphasise beguiling and sneaky tactics in order to achieve public participation. The Diggers (1966-68),[77] a radical collective of former SFMT members, further amplify the quality of guerrilla conflict by re-siting guerrilla theatre onto the city streets. They deliberately blurred[78] the boundaries between 'spectator and performer' in order to involve participants in performative acts of politicised dissent (Doyle 2002:80). Pertinent here is The Diggers politicised intent, and their application of guerrilla street theatre to inhabit and travel through the public realm.

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[77] The San Francisco Diggers took their name from the seventeenth-century English Diggers who cultivated common (public) land to produce edible crops as an act of political dissent against private land ownership.

[78] The blurring of art and life through performance art owes a debt to Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) and his practice of instigating Happenings in the 1950s.

The influential aspect of The Youth International Party (1967-n/d subsequently Yippies) are the ways they blurred the boundaries between performers and participants to amplify the level of potential conflict. Their mischievous performances highlight the counter-hegemonic aspect of Guevara's term 'guerrilla fighter' in order to perform performative incursions against hegemonic institutions (Guevara 1961 in Davis 1966:130). The Yippies utilise antagonism to disrupt (American) hegemonic institutions.[79] The Yippies' playful stunts sought to capture the attention of the media (newspapers, and television in particular). In this respect, their version of guerrilla theatre prioritises spectators, rather than participants. In contrast, the Yes Men's *"Last Iceberg" Snow Cones* performance (subsequently *Snow Cones*) is an example of mischievous and participatory guerrilla street theatre.

Figure 17: Yes Men, *"Last Iceberg" Snow Cones*, 2015

In the Yes Men's *Snow Cones* performance,[80] I analyse *how* guerrilla street theatre performers can facilitate conflict with participants in the public realm. I highlight how difficult the agonistic relation is to achieve and maintain with participants. The five-minute film of the performance does meet all eight criteria for agonistic art practice.[81] However, individual participatory episodes within that film may not meet

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[79] For example, in 1966, the Yippies threw dollar bills from the New York Stock Exchange's public gallery onto the trading floor. As the traders (acting as unwitting participants of the performance) greedily rushed to collect the un-earned money. Consequently, the American financial market experienced an unauthorised hiatus.

[80] Yes Men https://youtu.be/nkqO-qOHFT8 Accessed 27 January 2017

[81] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

all eight criteria.[82] My analysis of *Snow Cones* challenges Mouffe's view of the Yes Men's art practice. When Mouffe labels the Yes Men as agonistic, she loses the nuances of when art practice is, isn't, or is almost agonistic. Instead, I propose that agonism in art practice exists as a constantly fluctuating relation and one that takes place between conviviality and antagonism. As a result of this fluctuation, agonism requires the relations between performers and participants to be facilitated by the performers.

The Yes Men's performance of mischief is playful, unruly, and politically critical. To deliver this performance they collaborated with Greenpeace[83] and Rolling Stone[84] to deliver a public relations (PR) marketing campaign *on behalf of* Royal Dutch Shell (Shell). The snow cones are allegedly made from an iceberg harvested from the Arctic. The performance satirically mimics a new product launch, in which free tasters are given away to passers-by in New York's Central Park. The performers/PR team aim to persuade participants to view the exploitation of the Arctic's natural resources as a positive, profitable activity. This includes the snow cone drink and the Arctic's natural oil resource.

The Yes Men seek to deliberately mislead their participants. To achieve the deception, they deploy mischief as a relation of 'power-over' (Allen 1999:123). As a result, their participants are often victims. This victor/victim dynamic is the key differentiating factor between my previous example, the *Piñata* performance (Figure 16), and the next example by the Billionaires for Wealthcare (Figure 19). The Yes Men take 'power-over' by wilfully misrepresenting the identities of globalised institutions or corporations. They do so 'in order to offer [politicised] correctives. Instead of identity theft, [their art practice proposes] *identity correction*' (Bichlbaum, Bonanno, Spunkmeyer 2004:11 original emphasis). The '*correction*' the Yes Men offer in this performance creates 'counter-hegemonic interventions' (criterion 6). In *Snow Cones* the intervention takes place through performative

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[82] The two commonly absent are: (criterion 5) 'common symbolic space' in which the participant denies the legitimacy of Shell's Arctic exploration; and (criterion 8) creating 'new subjectivities' in which the participant is moved to action following their experience.

[83] Greenpeace http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/yes-men-arctic-drilling-deja-vu/ Accessed 27 January 2017

[84] A commercial multimedia platform.

politicised and conflictual discussions in the public realm. The Yes Men utilise Shell's economic, political, and social power in order to 'mak[e] visible' the discrepancy between Shell's PR rhetoric and their impact on the environment (criterion 7).

The following analysis focuses on three participants, whom I refer to numerically. Participant two is important because he demonstrates what happens when a guerrilla performance in the public realm is overloaded with conflict: it disintegrates. He appears to be a member of a Greenpeace street campaign team. Whilst this connection is unclear, what is apparent is his belief in the Yes Men's performance. Participant two does not read *Snow Cones* as politicised satire, or as a corporate identity corrective, but as a factual representation. Participant two subsequently falls victim to the Yes Men. At 2:55 seconds he is furious and demonstrates 'antagonism' (criterion 3). Participant two then disengages from the performance by walking away. When the performance disintegrates, the opportunities for agonistic conflict disappear. Whilst participant two is angry, his Greenpeace colleagues are relaxing and enjoying the spectacle of antagonism. In this instance, mischief as 'power-over' negates the potential for agonistic participation (Allen 1999:123). Likewise, spectacle also negates the potential for participants to engage in agonistic conflict with the performers.

In contrast, participant four engages in an agonistic debate with the performers. Participant four appears in the film [timestamp 3:16 seconds] and is a man wearing a red t-shirt. Participant four evidences 'adversarial' conflict with the performers (criterion 1). He participates in a feisty and dramatic manner with the performance. His quick thinking challenges the performers to improvise, elaborate and defend their argument. This exchange demonstrates how an agonistic art practice can address the choice between 'conflicting alternatives' (criterion 2). The conflicting alternatives focus on Shell's potential to accelerate climate change through oil extraction. Participant four facilitates the process of 'making visible' and the tensions between public benefit, private profit and Shell's corporate responsibility to the environment (criterion 7).

Participant five exhibits curiosity, doubt, and an agonistic position in relation to the performers [timestamp 4:15 seconds]. He is remarkable because he remains

steadfast in his convivial scepticism. He refuses to let the performers take 'power-over' him by persuading him of the positive social and ecological exploitation of the arctic (Allen 1999:123). The performers' agonistic persuasion creates a 'common symbolic space' between themselves and participant five (criterion 5). The two parties *agree* on the value of the Artic environment. But they *disagree* on who can legitimately benefit from the Arctic's natural resources. Whilst this agreement to disagree theoretically describes a 'conflictual consensus' (criterion 4). In practice, this looks like an impasse, neither side is willing to concede to the others' position.

The stalemate between participant five and the performers highlights one of the difficulties of provoking conflict with strangers in the public realm. Conflict is a difficult relation to sustain because it creates tension and social discomfort. The performers release this tension by declaring "We're not really from Shell" [4:47 seconds]. The intonation of this declaration is that we (performers and participants) share our objection to Shell. Conviviality replaces conflict in this performance and the potential for agonism to re-emerge is lost. The declaration acts as an invitation to collude in the relation of friend/friend. This revises the power relation from 'power-over' to 'power-with' (Allen 1999:123). Participant five is now a collaborator, not a victim. The Yes Men's declaration has a detrimentally impact on the ability of the performance to create 'new subjectivities' (criterion 8). Mouffe specifies that 'new subjectivities' occur with the disarticulation of an existing problem (Shell's exploitation of the Arctic), which is followed by a re-articulation: the 'new subjectivity' as an alternative response to the problem. The second move, the alternative solution, is absent from the Yes Men's interaction with participant five.

The agonistic success of *Snow Cones* relies on the Yes Men's appropriation and deliberate misperformance of Shell's corporate identity. The Yes Men hijack, or forcibly take without prior permission, the identity belonging to Shell. They utilise the gap between appearance and performative reality to satirically 'make[s] visible' their counter-hegemonic critique of Shell (Mouffe 2013b:93). By focusing on three separate participants, I have identified a range of participant responses to the *Snow Cone* performance. Whilst there are occasions when the Yes Men are in adversarial conflict with participants, this performance could not be described as *consistently*

agonistic. The level of agonism in *Snow Cone* fluctuates, just as the levels of antagonism and conviviality also fluctuate.

4.4 Détournement as an identity hijack

The Billionaires for Wealthcare (subsequently BfW) draw upon mischief that is playful, unruly, and inspires a level of complicity with potential participants. This complicity evolves, in part, because BfW relationally facilitate 'power-with' their participants (Allen 1999:123). Central to the development of *with*, is how the performers construct counter-hegemonic street theatre characters with a politicised identity. Whereas the Yes Men correct an existing identity, through a process of '*identity correction*' (Bichlbaum, Bonanno, Spunkmeyer 2004:11 original emphasis) (Figure 17). The BfW focus on how identity can be hijacked in order to reveal a hidden truth. I use the term identity hijack to emphasise the unauthorised and subversive appropriation of a pre-existing identity. As a consequence, the BfW avoid the Yes Men's victor/victim dynamic. I utilise my eight criteria for agonistic art practice to analyse an atypical guerrilla street theatre performance by the BfW. My analysis focuses on the performative identity hijack in terms of agonism, power and politicised mischief.[85]

The BfW are one of a number of performative iterations of the predominantly American Billionaire model of political protest.[86] Typically the BfW dress up as caricature billionaires. The women wear posh frocks with ostentatious jewellery. The men wear suits with top hats, some smoke cigars, and some hold briefcases spilling cash. They make visible the vested interests of the wealthy into the healthcare debate via guerrilla street theatre. The purpose of the BfW is to satirically expose the economic inequality embedded within the American healthcare system. In existing analysis of the Billionaires, activist and author Andrew Boyd (2002, 2012), cultural studies academic Amber Day (2011), and ethnographer Angelique Haugerud (2004, 2012, 2013a, 2013b) each broadly analyse the Billionaires in terms of political satire,

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[85] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

[86] Other Billionaire manifestations include: Billionaires for Forbes (1999), Billionaires for Bush (or Gore) (2000), Billionaires for Bush (2004), Billionaires for Bailouts (2008), Billionaires & Oligarchs Opposing Bernie Sanders (2015-2016).

parody, and irony. Whereas performer/activist and author Larry Bogad (2016) discusses the Billionaires in terms of tactical maneuverers to 'scavenge, filch, and *repurpose* the dominant players' words and tropes for cultural sabotage' (Bogad 2016:5 my emphasis). Bogad's 'repurpose' bears a resemblance to the definition of détournement.

The Situationists International (1957-1972) contribute two key ideas to this argument: détournement, and the prioritisation of participation (rather than spectatorship). To détourne is to hijack an existing idea or motif and rework that idea into something new. The motif retains the original meaning, along with a new meaning that subverts, and/or critiques the original. Détournement is not only critical process, but one that also embeds a layer of conflict into the act of transitioning one thing into another. For example, a Situationist slogan spray painted onto a wall (Figure 18). The slogan translates as "*Under the Cobblestones, the beach*", it is attributed to the Situationist member René Viénet.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.

Figure 18: René Viénet, (attributed) *Sous les Paves, la plage*, circa 1968[87]

This Situationist slogan presents a ludic situation. *Under the Cobblestones, the beach* is a paradoxical proposition that connects the idea of the beach as a site of play and

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[87] Image available at: https://www.thenatureofcities.com/TNOC/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/sous-les-paves-la-plage-681x560.jpg Accessed 27 January 2017.

relaxation, with the paved city streets as a site of work and commerce. The détournement of the city into a beach connects the workers' strikes, student protests, social unrest and performances of political dissent on the streets of Paris in 1968. The social, political, and critical context is the refusal to work. The slogan's emphasis rests on inviting and provoking a subversive, politicised imaginary via public participation. Here, the Situationists proposal for public participation blurs the boundaries between art and life, and between art and politicised dissent. The theme of blurring the boundaries between art, real life and political dissent is also present in the BfW's *Profits before People* (Figure 19). Here détournement takes place through characterisation, costume, and performance.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.

Figure 19: Billionaires for Wealthcare, *Profits Before People*, 2009[88]

The *Profits Before People* (2009, Figure 19)[89] guerrilla street performance is atypical because the BfW present an austere (rather than ostentatiously wealthy) version of power. The BfW wear suits with lanyards. They claim to represent Cigna (a health insurance provider). The BfW use détourned identity as a paradox, like the Yes Men they inhabit the identity they are protesting against. However, because the BfW perform 'power-with', they convert the counter-protestors who initially vocally object to their performance into complicit participants (Allen 1999:123). As I will explain, because of this power relation, *Profits Before People* meets seven of my eight criteria for agonistic art practice. The criterion the performance lacks is 'conflictual consensus' (criterion 4). The context of this performance is the public debate (circa

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[88] Image available at: https://youtu.be/T7fzUaa3ms8 [0:44 minutes] Accessed 27 January 2017.
[89] Billionaires for Wealthcare https://youtu.be/T7fzUaa3ms8 Accessed 27 January 2017

2009) about the inclusion, or exclusion of the public option in the Affordable Healthcare Act (aka ObamaCare). The purpose of the public option is to increase the competition in the healthcare market. The impact of increasing the competition challenges the economic dominance of the private providers and strengthens the public healthcare provision. The beneficiaries of a public option are the state, as representatives of the public sector, rather than private healthcare providers.[90]

In *Profits Before People* détourned identity is constructed using spectacle-as-entertainment, then performatively deconstructed utilising agonism, conviviality and political satire. The performance takes place at a site of activist protest. In this performance, the BfW assume two paradoxical positions. They are simultaneously representatives of Cigna/private health insurance. And the BfW are political activists who advocate for the public option. Their implementation of character development is crucial here: they begin as sombre representatives of Cigna, then evolve their characters into jovial musical theatre entertainers. The issues of healthcare reform and the public option creates 'common symbolic space' between the BfW and the counter-protestors at the performance site (criterion 5).

The BfW performers cut through complex political argumentation in order to 'mak[e] visible' the interests of the private healthcare market (criterion 7). The process of 'making visible' takes place through a number of performative strategies, including satirical détournement and identity hijack. Satire, as a process of exposing a hidden or veiled truth corresponds to Mouffe's definition of making *something hidden* visible. The politicised satire begins with the BfW verbally introducing themselves as representatives of Cigna and as "responsible corporate citizens" [0:43 seconds]. The counter-protestors receive the visual and verbal representations of the BfW as truth. The BfW corporate-camouflage costumes visually reinforce this position (Figure 19). Even when the BfW begin singing, the counter-protestors take a while to re-interpret the performance as political satire.

The song's repeated refrain of "profits before people" [1:16 seconds] makes 'visible' the profit-driven intention of the private healthcare market and the corporate

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[90] As of the 3 May 2017, the American Affordable Care Act does not include a public option.

opposition to the public option. The refrain clarifies the choice between 'conflicting alternatives': those arguing for affordable healthcare, and those lobbying for the interests of the private sector (criterion 2). The refrain reinforces the 'common symbolic space' between the performers-as-Cigna, BfW, and the counter-protestors (criterion 5). Each party agrees on the necessity of a healthcare market, but not the priorities of that market. The performance, via the refrain, does not reach a 'conflictual consensus' (criterion 4). The BfW and the counter-protestors do not form an agreement to disagree. Instead they form a consensus regarding the perception of economic inequality, the necessity of affordable access to healthcare provision. The consensus is evident in the counter-protestors chant of "People, not Profits" [0:02 seconds] and "Medicare for All" [0:23 seconds]. However, the identity hijack performed by the BfW deliberately blurs how the conflict can be interpreted.

The clash between public benefit versus private profit pinpoints where the 'adversarial' conflict takes place within the performance (criterion 1). In the belief that the BfW *are* representing Cigna, the counter-protestors vocalise their antagonistic hostility. Heckles from the counter-protestors include: "Yeah, but people are dying because you're denying service" [0:46 seconds], and "You've got blood on your hands" [0:50 seconds]. These heckles demonstrate 'the ineradicability of antagonism' in the performance (criterion 3). However, the BfW appear immune to the hostility of the counter-protestors who implement the relation of enemy/enemy towards the BfW. In contrast, the BfW situate the agonistic relation of adversary/adversary with the counter-protestors. The BfW are steadfast in their agonistic position, and in their identity hijack as legitimate representatives of Cigna. Although, the BfW vocally maintain an agonistic position, they comically amplify their adversarial position towards the counter-protestors, as Figure 20 illustrates.

The artwork originally included here is concealed due to copyright restrictions. It can be viewed via the footnote website link.

Figure 20: Billionaires for Wealthcare, *Profits Before People*, 2009[91]

The physical comedy in *Profits Before People* (Figure 20) diffuses the counter-protestors' antagonism by anchoring the performance as political satire. The physical exaggeration in the performance gradually reveals the identity hijack, and the BfW critique of the private healthcare sector. The impact of this reveal takes place at approximately 01:38 seconds. Consequently, the counter-protestors reinterpret their experience. Their collective disposition transitions from antagonism to conviviality. During this reveal, the counter-protestors become complicit participants of the performance. The BfW's underlying intention to instigate 'power-with' becomes apparent to the participants, and they respond accordingly (Allen 1999:123). Although the BfW nominally maintain their adversarial stance, a new relation of friend/friend is formed between the counter-protestors/participants and BfW. At the reveal [01:38 seconds] the BfW create 'new subjectivities' through use of agonism, mischievous identity hijack, and the emerging clarity of their political critique (criterion 8). The reveal also clarifies that *Profits Before People* is actually a 'counter-hegemonic intervention' (criterion 6).

This performance is significant because BfW implement 'power-with' (Allen 1999:123). This move facilitates a transformation from antagonistic counter-protestors to complicit participants who stand *with* the performers. The qualities that enable this shift to 'power-with' to take place is the identity hijack, in conjunction with mischief, agonism, and conflictual conviviality. The identity hijack begins with the use of everyday suits, rather than the typical BfW's ostentatious

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[91] Image available at: https://youtu.be/T7fzUaa3ms8 [2:47 minutes] Accessed 27 January 2017.

formal wear. By wearing suits, the BfW disguise their dissent in plain sight. The costume choice facilitates the evolution of the BfW characters in relation to the politicised context of the performance. The performers maintain, via the song lyrics a critical and political position in relation to the private healthcare industry. The performance as Cigna representative's rework a détourned and hijacked identity into something new: a counter-hegemonic critique of economic inequality in the American healthcare market. Mischievous performance sustains the tension between the oppositional conflict of agonism, and the conviviality of an increasingly ludicrous performance.

Conclusion

This chapter refers back to the fourth research sub-question: how can mischief be used as a form of facilitation to provoke conflict and politicised dissent? Mischief's qualities of playfully defiant humour create opportunities for participation, and therefore facilitation, in the public realm. When performers facilitate politicised mischief as a relation of 'power-with', the potential to sustain politicised dissent and conflict increases (Allen 1999:123). When performers take 'power-over' or 'power-to', the facilitation of (agonistic) conflict becomes difficult to maintain (Allen 1999:123). Notably, the BfW performance of conflictual conviviality does maintain politicised conflict, and the BfW manage antagonism by increasing the level of mischievous conviviality. The function mischief plays here is not just facilitating conflict and dissent, but in facilitating a consistent and specific type of power relation *with* participants. My analysis in this chapter highlights how difficult it is for an art practice to facilitate agonistic conflict. But also, that mischief can address the 'agonistic struggle' and 'challenge power relations […] in a properly hegemonic way' (Mouffe 2005a:33).

Chapter 5: Analysis and Reflection of the Practice

> [...] what I call agonism is an us/them distinction thought of in terms of
> adversaries. There is a real confrontation between adversaries, but there is
> nevertheless also a symbolic space which is common [...]
> (Mouffe 2001:124)

The aim of this research is to discover what happens when street theatre performers are deliberately agonistic in the public realm (Figure 21). For the purposes of this research I created a piece of guerrilla street theatre because this artform enables a mobile and unauthorised habitation of the public realm. Guerrilla street theatre also facilitates the performer's ability to seek out willing participants, who (ideally) become agonistic adversaries. The performances took place in four locations in Hackney and London Fields in East London on the 11 August 2015 between 10:30 and 16:30. The ambition of the route was to encounter a wide-range of potential participants in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, and income. The performances were filmed and photographed in order to provide evidence of the practice for reflection and analysis. Only films with ethical approval[92] from participants are included.[93] The film clips are organised into "Episodes". I use the term Episode to describe both the duration of the participants' engagement, and the iterative nature of the street theatre performances.

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[92] The project received full approval from Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee. All participants opted-in to the research project.
[93] Films: https://vimeo.com/politicizedmischief/videos Accessed 2 July 2017
Photographs: https://www.flickr.com/photos/politicizedmischief Accessed 2 July 2017

Figure 21: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *The Wizard of Oz*, 2015

In this chapter I analyse the research question and I examine how the performances draw upon participation, mischief and agonism. I extend ideas and arguments introduced in previous chapters and consider to what extent those ideas are significant in the films of the practice. In 5.1 I introduce the practice and explain how the objectives and methods support the research aim. In 5.2 I focus on the complexities of participation. I highlight how ideal participants benefit from conflictual conviviality in order to engage in conflict with the performers. In 5.3 I emphasise mischief in terms of facilitation and as a relation of power. Attention is given to how power is given, taken, and shared, and I reflect upon the implications of power and participation in terms of politicised dissent.

In 5.4 I explore agonism in terms of mischief, participation, and in relation to Mouffe's version of agonism. I analyse Episode 13 using my eight criteria for agonistic art practice and scrutinise Episode 11 by re-introducing and using my etymology of agonism as an analytical framework.[94] Both of these analyses contribute to answering the fifth research sub-question: how can agonism in art practice be identified and evidenced? In this etymology I take agonism as a keyword from Mouffe and significantly expand the etymological associations. My purpose challenges Mouffe's political descriptor of agonism as adversarial and as a relation of 'us/them' in relation to my art practice (Mouffe 2001:124). I explore whether an

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[94] My etymology originally appeared in section 1.1

expanded understanding of agonism is more useful and pertinent to defining what an agonistic art practice can be.

I raised £29,500 in project funding for *Oz*.[95] This enabled me to employ a team of professionals, and the resources to develop the performance. Detailed attention was paid to each aspect of the performance including: the recruitment of professionals, costume (Figure 22), characterisation/physicality, narrative, participation and how conflict could be provoked. My co-performers[96] and I are experienced in street theatre. Our strength lies in our ability to collaborate and improvise, particularly in public and with participants. My role as researcher and performer was to juggle the complexities of the performance, to manage my co-performers and to keep each performance on task. Their role as professional performers was to collaborate, embrace the research topics, to develop their roles and to contribute to the development of the performance.

Figure 22: Antoinette Burchill; Tim Heywood, *Costume Designs*, 2015

The rehearsals took place over ten days during Spring-Summer 2015. The structure of the performance adapted the thematic context of *The Wizard of Oz* (subsequently *Oz*) in order to create a narrative with which potential participants are (ideally) familiar. While the performance was not scripted, the roles of each performer were

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[95] I set up Freckled Mischief as a new street theatre company as part of the project.
[96] Ben Adwick/Scarecrow, Paul Broesmith/Tinman http://thelostboys.org.uk/ Accessed 7 November 2018

cast in advance and developed in terms of performing a consistent characterisation. We devised material in the rehearsal studio and then tested the ideas on the street with passers-by and participants. For the last three rehearsal days, Holly Stoppit[97] joined us as facilitator and visiting artistic director. Stoppit's expertise is in clowning, and in particular how performers connect with audiences and participants. She enabled me to focus on my performance, and to take a step back from my project management responsibilities.

I recruited four crew members to support the public performance and the production of the films. This included: Owen Tooth[98] (film maker and film editor), Phil Arnold[99] (sound engineer), Kev Ryan[100] (street photographer), and Ben Skidmore (ethics support). In my role as project manager, I coordinated the cast and crew, created the job descriptions, and managed the project budget. The majority of the project management activities took place by emails and phone calls over the three-month project development period. I arranged several face-to-face meetings with Owen Tooth to discuss the technical logistics of filming, the artform requirements, and specific needs of the performance as practice-based research. Owen's expertise takes place in his technical and artistic abilities, and in his understanding of film making in relation to street theatre. Owen's fee included filming the performances, and editing the film into segmented Episodes. I gave Owen five explicit instructions regarding how to cut, and what to edit into Episodes:

1. *Edit every instance when the performers interact with members of the public*
2. *This might be very short non-verbal*
3. *This might be one-sided verbal*
4. *This might be two-way verbal*
5. *Participation episodes with children (without parental or adult supervision), young people or adults, who (visually) appear, or present as potentially vulnerable, are to be excluded from filming. This accords with the remit agreed with the LU Ethics Committee.[101]*

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[97] Holly Stoppit http://www.hollystoppit.com Accessed 18 May 2018
[98] Owen Tooth https://www.toothpix.co.uk/ Accessed 14 November 2018
[99] Phil Arnold http://smartaudiovisual.com/ Accessed 14 November 2018
[100] Kev Ryan https://www.flickr.com/people/71297673@N00/ Accessed 14 November 2018
[101] During the performances, I gave visual and/or verbal confirmation as to when to stop filming.

The filming of an Episode begins when the performers make contact (or attempt to do so) with potential participants, and when Owen is in position to begin filming. Occasionally there was a short gap between the start of participation and the start of filming. This is due to the mobility of strolling guerrilla street theatre, and the responsiveness of the performers to the public realm and in relation to finding participants. Each performer wore a radio microphone, and Phil Arnold managed the sound recording during the performance day. In discussion with Owen, the only post-production request I made was to adjust the sound in Episode 13. When Tinman begins crying in Episode 13 he overwhelms the conversation between Lion and the participants. Owen fixed this by reducing the Tinman's audio and increased the Lion's volume. Ben Skidmore's role was to follow behind the performers, speak to participants, and explain the doctoral and ethical contexts of the performance. I created a leaflet for Ben Skidmore to give to participants. This explained how each participant could opt-out of participating in the digital recordings: the photographs and videos. Two set of participants opted out: those from Episode 7 and Episode 14.[102] These Episodes and the corresponding still photographs have been digitally deleted.

A number of issues arise from the performance that fall outside the scope of my analysis. These include a number of ethical issues that I will outline here. My ethical stance recognises the social vulnerability of some potential participants; and the risk to performers of unpredictable and antagonistic behaviour. Ethical considerations form part of an on-going risk analysis during each performance. This is important in an art form where the performers are deliberately exposed. If through initial observation the potential participants appear to be vulnerable, whether as a result of homelessness, drugs or alcohol, the film recording ceases. The role of the camera in this research is to record the acts of participation for my self-reflective analysis and evaluation. However, what I also recognise is that the presence of the camera may bias the types of participant who take part in the performance. The camera may attract more flamboyant, confident and performative participants, and may deter others from taking part. In addition, a number of issues arise through participation that are irrelevant to my analysis. Therefore, I exclude any extended discussion of the

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[102] See Appendix 1: Figshare archive of the practice-based research.

following topics from my study: UK politics, as an institution, and set of practices; *The Wizard of Oz* as a literary adaptation; Political activism; Political protest; Leadership.

Instructions to the reader

I have selected film clips to accompany my analysis and reflection, you need to watch these Episodes[103] before you continue reading this chapter. When I introduce a new Episode, you need to re-watch the film before you continue reading. You also need to take note of the timecode, for example: [1:04 seconds] as the activity at this point will directly relate to my argument.

I will shift between the plural and the singular throughout this chapter in order to acknowledge the importance of collaboration in rehearsals and performances

5.1 Objectives and methods

The two contexts of my research are Mouffe's political theory of agonism, and guerrilla street theatre as an instance of practice as research. Mouffe positions agonism as a relational form of conflict that takes place between adversaries. She applies her theory of agonism to political theory, and on a number of brief occasions to art practice. She indicates the potential contribution that agonism could make to art practice, but Mouffe does not elaborate further. In this example of practice, guerrilla street theatre enabled performative interventions designed to disrupt the flow of passers-by, and as a means to introduce conflict into the public realm. Through engaging and retaining the attention of participants, the performers aimed to create the conditions through which agonistic conflict may or may not emerge.

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[103] Episode 4 https://vimeo.com/137964258 Accessed 6 August 2017
Episode 8 https://vimeo.com/138069456 Accessed 12 July 2017
Episode 9 https://vimeo.com/138071218 Accessed 10 August 2017
Episode 11 https://vimeo.com/138614832 Accessed 12 July 2017
Episode 13 https://vimeo.com/139833059 Accessed 14 August 2017

The process of devising an intentionally agonistic art practice required the development of practice-based objectives and methods.[104] The objectives address how the practice addresses my research question and sought to make performative, participatory, and conflictual interruptions in the public realm. The four objectives are:

1. Promote participation
2. Use mischief as a form of facilitation
3. Provoke agonistic conflict
4. Provoke politicised dissent

These objectives also relate to the way I challenge Mouffe's position on art practice, in which she does not identify the importance of participation, nor how agonism as a nuanced form of conflict can take place through art practice. As I have argued throughout this thesis, participation is an essential component of agonism, and agonistic art practice. One difficulty in answering the research question and achieving these objectives is in developing a street theatre performance that is engaging and relevant to the participants. Our approach to overcoming this problem began by viewing the performance from the perspective of the participant, and asking ourselves what does the participant need in order to take part?

The substitution of the term leadership to replace the term hegemony, is an example of how the research was re-framed through the choice of vocabulary to meet the anticipated needs of the participants. Hegemony is an essential component of Mouffe's the political and is key to how I frame mischief as a counter-hegemonic act. Hegemony is an unsuitable word to use within the street performance because it is not a word in common usage. Instead I substituted leadership as a participant-friendly alternative. Leadership retains the underlying meaning and connotations of hegemony, without the performers asserting a relation of power onto the participants through their vocabulary. Each *Oz* character *leads* with a different quality (heart, brain, courage). This embeds conflict and the connection between power and authority into each performance.

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[104] The practice-based methodology is detailed in the Introduction.

Location was another aspect of the participants' experience I took into consideration when planning the performance route. The four locations included pedestrianised streets, busy bus stop areas, streets with pubs and cafés with outdoor seating. As I will explore in Episode 11, I timed our arrival at Hackney Town Hall to coincide with lunchtime. The raised flower beds and steps provided ample space for blue and white-collar workers to sit and eat lunch, thus providing us with potential audience members who may become participants. These picnic spots are also on public land, not private or privatised public space, so the guerrilla aspect of our performance was legal and not a performance of civil disobedience.

We approached the development of methods from the participants' perspective. The methods listed below enabled the performance to address the objectives and, in turn, the research question. During the rehearsals and performances, the methods operated as a pick-and-mix selection, inasmuch as we shifted between methods by instinct and in response to each other and to the participants. Through this chapter, when I discuss and analyse the practice, I will refer to the key method at play in the Episode of participation and in relation to my argument. The methods are:
- Improvisation Framework
- Mischief
- Context of *Oz*
- Naiveté
- Jeopardy
- Participant-advisor
- Intimacy
- Invitation (direct and indirect)
- Sibling-like squabbling

Next, I will explain each of these methods in turn, beginning with the Improvisation Framework.

The Improvisation Framework method is a way of structuring each performance to account for the unpredictable nature of participation in the public realm. The framework's four modes of operation are as follows.

Initiating and introducing and demonstrating the characters in conflict with each other, characters causing a spectacle and attracting the attention of potential participants in the public realm.

Developing and building rapport with participants through conviviality, and ludic play.

Escalating the encounter by amplifying the relational conflict, getting political and defining oppositional positions.

Exiting the encounter by thanking the participants for the advice/information. The framework operates as a shared language between the performers. Thus, when one performer moves between modes, the other performers know how to react, what might happen next, and how to develop the direction of the encounter. The framework also enables the performance to grow in each of the four modes in context with, and in response to, the contributions of the participants. The framework can operate in a linear form, and progress through from Initiating, Developing, Escalating, to Exiting. The framework can also be adapted to support a non-linear progression between each mode. For example, the performers can switch between ludic play (Developing) and spectacle (Initiating) in order to build a rapport with prospective participants. Mischief, as a method of irreverent playfulness is prevalent during the Initiating, Developing, and Escalating modes and thus supports all four objectives.[105]

I will now explain the Improvisation Framework through the examples contained in Episode 11.[106] In this Episode, the performers introduce themselves to two participants who are sitting on the steps of Hackney Town Hall. The Improvisation Framework starts in the Initiating mode with Tinman's monologue about being "stiff" [0:56 seconds]. As a result, the prospective participants smile and laugh at Tinman's double entendre. The Lion takes their curiosity and engagement as a cue to move to the Developing mode. This shift between modes is marked by the Lion's remark: "You can see how they were bad leaders in Oz, can't you" [1:08 seconds]. The Lion directly addresses the prospective participants, but in a deliberately low-key manner. What the Lion is doing here is building trust and rapport, but without

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[105] In this way, Mischief supports all four objectives.
[106] Episode 11 https://vimeo.com/138614832 [duration 0:00 to 3:00 seconds] Accessed 4 July 2017

putting pressure on the participants. The main job of facilitation takes place in the Developing and Escalating modes. The purpose of these phases is to build rapport and trust with participants, in order to (ideally) secure their confidence to speak politically and to engage in conflict in the public realm.

The Improvisation Framework benefits from the characters' backstories. These backstories belong to the Context of *Oz* method. The backstories connect the performance to Baum's *Oz* and articulate how the street theatre version is similar, but different, to Baum's original version. In improvisations during rehearsals, each performer created a character backstory[107] that was designed to reveal the personal histories, and motivations of each character. In a separate improvisation, we jointly imagined a collective backstory[108] that unites and binds our characters together. The purpose of the backstories was to create a network of narrative anchor-points. For instance, in Episode 11 the Lion's backstory emerges at [1:23 seconds] and is subsequently elaborated upon by the Scarecrow [2:19 seconds]. The backstories stand in lieu of a linear script and operate to create an internal logic for each character that supports the process of improvisation. Communication of the backstories varies according to the responses and questions of the participants. This is why themes and motifs reoccur in different participation episodes, but not necessarily in the same order. The backstories are an improvisation safety net for the performers: whatever the participants present, the performers have a context and structure to improvise within. Thus, improvisation is also a fundamental quality in how each performer responds to each participant.

The Episode 11 performance begins off-camera with a spectacle of Sibling-like squabbling [and on-camera from 0:11 seconds]. The Sibling-like squabbling method speaks to adversarial conflict. Squabbling as a form bickering conflict contains tension and disagreement, but not enough conflict to become hostile. The purpose of this method is to demonstrate conflict and the theme of politicised leadership, which the performers aim to develop with participants. In order to build a rapport with

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[107] Lion backstory https://freckledmischief.wordpress.com/2015/09/23/lion-is-courage-everything-oz-adapted-feste15/ Accessed 23 September 2015
[108] Collective backstory https://freckledmischief.wordpress.com/2015/08/07/inviting-mischief-into-oz-mass-killings-weasels-and-jam/ Accessed 23 September 2015

participants the performers demonstrate conviviality not conflict towards them. The combination of Improvisation Framework, Mischief, and Sibling-like squabbling intrigue and entertain the two participants on the Town Hall steps. This facilitates the performers' ability to introduce themselves. The performers contextualise their characters in relation to Baum's *Oz*, and clarify how their arrival in London took place. The Lion states: "we were excommunicated by the Wizard" [1:17 seconds], and Scarecrow adds: "we've been sent here to learn what it takes to be better leaders" [2:06 seconds]. Each character leads with a quality that is portrayed as a flaw, that they must overcome. For example, the Lion leads with courage, the Tinman with compassion, and Scarecrow with intellect.[109]

These character flaw declarations present the opportunity for the participants to step into the role of Participant-advisor, who offers suggestions to help the characters on their journey. This is a participant who offers suggestions in the (socially familiar) form of advice, or examples to help solve the difficulties the characters are facing. A function of the Participant-advisor method to is help participants feel at ease during the performance. This role deliberately mimics Dorothy, in Baum's *Oz*. Dorothy held the correct answer to any question asked of her,[110] and her journey was guided by her desire to return home. Likewise, whoever the participant happens to be and whatever advice they give, they are always correct, and the performers then improvise in response to their advice. When the Lion says: "we'll never get home if you two just sit and relax; how are we going to learn anything?" [0:11 seconds], she communicates two key pieces of information to the participants. Firstly, that the characters need help, but that they are also in Jeopardy and are unable to collectively agree on a solution.

Jeopardy as a method communicates how clueless the characters are, and how they are at risk of failing in their desire to return home. When Jeopardy is combined with the Participant-advisor, the participants with their knowledge and common-sense hold a degree of power over the performers. This higher-status position supports the development of a relationship between the performers and the participants, and thus

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[109] A similar introduction which builds rapport with participants also takes place in Episodes 1, 4, and 13.

[110] The advisor role is similar to the Mantle of the Expert in drama studies.

aids the transition from spectators or passers-by into participants of the performance. The methods of Intimacy and Naiveté take place when Tinman and Scarecrow sit next to the participants on the steps.[111] Uninvited, they deliberately close the physical gap: now the performers can have a more intimate conversation with the participants. A deliberate consequence of this manoeuvre is to curtail spectatorship and to amplify the potential for a convivial rapport. Naiveté reinforces the characters' cluelessness, in that they don't know the social norm to leave space between themselves and strangers in the public realm. The final method is Invitation and this can take place directly and indirectly. In Episode 11 the Invitation is given by the Lion [0:23 seconds] to the prospective participants. She does this by asking them to weigh-in on the disagreement that is taking place between herself and Tinman and Scarecrow.

The purpose of drawing upon such a wide range of methods was to ensure the performance could adapt to the participants of the performance, and then develop from conviviality into conflict and politicised dissent. In concert, these methods were designed to address the objectives, the research aim, and the research question.

5.2 Analysis and reflection: the complexities of participation

I address the participatory performance aspect of my research question and analyse participation in Episodes 8, and 11. These Episodes include participants who range from ideal to reluctant. In Episode 11 I consider the difficulties in persuading participants to step beyond conviviality in order to speak politically. I explore why the paradox of conflictual conviviality is important, and I contextualise this term in relation to my discussion of Bourriaud and Bishop in Chapter 3. In Episode 8 I attend to the difficulties in recruiting participants, and I identify two types of reluctant participant: the spectator, and the tentative participant. I highlight the obstacles and difficulties the performers face in terms of their attempts to overcome reluctance from participants.

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[111] In theatrical terms, the characters collapse the fourth wall: the physical separation between actors on stage and audience members.

The ideal participant

My focus in Episode 11 explores participation in terms of my ideal participant.[112] The participants in Episode 11[113] become ideal participants (Figure 23) because they reciprocate, improvise, and playfully engage with the themes of conflict and politicised dissent in the performance. A distinction I make between participants and ideal participants is that the latter are able to feel uncomfortable, and yet continue to participate. This discomfort indicates that the ideal participants have a strong rapport with the performers and are confident in engaging in conflictual conviviality with them. An indicator of an ideal participant is that Episode 11 meets all four objectives[114] of the practice. The key method that facilitates this attainment is the Context of *Oz*.[115] Evidence of ideal participation is demonstrated as they transition across my *Spectrum of Participation in Art Practice*: from spectator/interactor to convivial participant, to agonistic participant who engages in participatory dissent.[116]

Figure 23: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, Oz/Recruiting Participants 2015

Although speculative, there are additional factors that potentially contribute to how these participants become ideal participants. These factors are: leisure time, social

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[112] As described in section 3.3.

[113] Episode 11 https://vimeo.com/138614832 Accessed 12 July 2017

[114] Objectives: (1) Promote participation, (2) Mischief as a form of facilitation, (3) Provoke agonistic conflict, and (4) Provoke politicised dissent.

[115] Four other significant methods in this Episode are: Mischief, Sibling-like squabbling, Participant-advisor, and Improvisation Framework.

[116] See Figure 9, section 3.3

and political equivalence, gender, class, ethnicity, and cultural familiarity. The participants are relaxing on the steps of Hackney Town Hall. They are on their lunchbreak and have time to be interrupted and entertained by the performers. In my estimation, these participants are, like the performers, of a comparable age, middle-class (as in university educated, professional, white-collar workers who answer to senior management), politically left-wing or liberal, and politically-engaged. This probable equivalence creates a gendered, economic, political, and social correspondence between the performers and the participants. The participants seem to be familiar with the artform of participatory street theatre. They exhibit an ability to read and interpret the cultural signals embedded within the performance. These participants are also familiar with the context of *Oz*. They confidently improvise and politicise the opportunities *Oz* presents as a contemporary political satire.[117]

What differentiates ideal participants is the capacity (notwithstanding some hesitation) to engage with the political, and their experiences of power and authority. Agonism in an unconventional[118] form takes place through the proposal of conflict that is adversarial but not violent. Agonism emerges as the performers and ideal participants collaboratively invent a narrative of adversarial politicised dissent with David Cameron as the target. The female participant advocates that Tinman should not "crush him [Cameron] to the point of death" [6:48 seconds], but that a hug should "stop him for a bit" [6:53 seconds]. The blurring between the political context, and the satirical/metaphorical application of the Context of *Oz* method enables the participants to articulate their politicised dissent. Their application of blurring conceals where the edge of their personal politics meets the politicised narrative as a form of social protection. Protection in this instance eases the participants' social discomfort of speaking politically in public with strangers. Unlike Mouffe's descriptions of agonism in art practice, agonism in Episode 11 is not an absolute, or consistent adversarial relation. Agonism emerges out of a facilitated relation that develops during the process of participation. However, the performers struggle to convert the convivial rapport into a direct adversarial relation.

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[117] A similar version of participants becoming ideal participants also occurs in Episodes 4, and 13.
[118] I extend my analysis and interpretation of agonism in this episode in section 5.4.

The participant's suggestion that the Tinman might hug David Cameron highlights how the paradox of conflictual conviviality can emerge in participatory performance. Conflict and conviviality are *both* integral to this participatory performance. In Episode 11, conviviality conforms to, and exceeds Bourriaud's position[119] on participation as: 'moments producing conviviality' (Bourriaud 2002:33). Whilst the performers create an *us*, a convivial friendship with the participants, they do so by performing politicised conflict. The formation of *us* coheres in relation to *them*: an adversarial opposition to David Cameron. This meets Bishop's[120] description of antagonistic participation: in that the 'relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased' (Bishop 2004:66 her emphasis). Also, following Bishop's version of antagonism, the participatory exchanges highlight difference, inequality, and politicised dissent. Yet the adversarial relations in Episode 11 are not wholly antagonistic, nor are they entirely convivial. But they are simultaneously conflictual and convivial. In this instance, conflictual conviviality meets Mouffe's description of agonism as an 'us/them distinction' (Mouffe 2001:124).

The complexities of participation are amplified by reflecting upon the paradoxes at play in Episode 11. Conflictual conviviality is the most significant. Conviviality between the performers and participants is an easily won relation. In contrast, the moments of agonism are hard-won and difficult to sustain. The emergence of conflictual conviviality is facilitated by mischief and by the blurring of fact and fiction, of which hugging David Cameron is a vibrant example. The joyful conviction the participants invest in this idea evidences how agonism can take place on the participants' terms. The paradox of conflictual conviviality is evidenced by the contradiction presented in the participants' verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. This is the paradox of uncomfortable-comfort. Throughout Episode 11 the participants' body language belies their personal discomfort: they keep their arms and legs crossed as a self-protection mechanism. Paradoxically, their verbal communication is confident, inventive and self-assured. Whilst this discomfort

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[119] As per my argument on Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics in section 3.1.
[120] As I argue in section 3.2 on Bishop, participation and dissensus.

contrasts with their verbal communication, it confirms their transition into the ideal participant's role.

Reluctant participation

In contrast, I explore my two types of reluctant[121] participation in Episode 8: the spectator,[122] and the tentative participant. In this episode, the Improvisation Framework method does not operate to transition a spectator into a participant. This failure to reach a point of conflict is striking because it demonstrates that an art practice with the capacity for agonism, *does not always* meet this potential. This nuance accentuates how my understanding of agonistic art practice is different to Mouffe's.

Reluctance addresses the method of Invitation, and how the performers attempt to convert a spectator into a participant. These reluctant participants highlight the tension between spectatorship and participation in street theatre. The first potential participant, an older man wearing a beige sunhat (Figure 24) clarifies the boundaries of his engagement by using a camera phone. He asserts his position as a spectator by filming the performers on his camera phone [0:45 seconds]. He holds the camera between himself and the performers and creates a barrier through which he watches the performance. He focuses his attention on the screen and prioritises a visual engagement with the performance. This spectator is communicating his desire to observe, not participate to the performers.[123] Consequently, the performers respect the camera-barrier he erects, and we do not approach him as a participant.

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[121] Episode 8 https://vimeo.com/138069456 [duration 3:34 seconds] Accessed 12 July 2017

[122] A similar version of spectatorship also takes place in Episodes 5, 6, and 10.

[123] Based on my experience, if he had wanted to both film the performance and participate, he would have made sustained eye contact with the performers.

Figure 24: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *Oz /Spectator*, 2015

Later in Episode 8, the performers utilise the method of an indirect Invitation to gently communicate with a tentative male participant.[124] The potential participant arrives [0:26 seconds] wearing a grey t-shirt, and then [0:37 seconds] moves closer to the performers. Whilst he exhibits curiosity, his body language is ambivalent. He stands on the edge of the pavement: as far away from the performers as possible. His position indicates his preference to spectate. However, he makes eye contact with the performers, which usually indicates a desire to participate. In order to overcome the problem of his inconsistent body language, the Tinman offers him an indirect invitation. Tinman says: "Let's talk to these lovely people here. Look, they want to make friends with us…" [1:15 seconds]. On hearing this, the potential participant's partner recoils with an anxious expression, and they move swiftly away. In this instance, the difficulty in converting a spectator to a participant also rests in part with a wide pavement, the bus schedules, and his anxious partner. These physical and social hurdles create a subtle disconnection between the performers and their surroundings. This disconnection becomes a barrier that affects the performers' ability to improvise in response to the potential participant.

I propose that participants like those in Episode 11 can be (but not always) more easily provoked into politicised dissent when there is a form of equivalence between participants and the performers. The identification of an equivalence extends my argument that agonistic conflict develops from relations provoked by the art practice.

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[124] A similar method of Invitation takes place in Episodes 1, and 6.

In Episode 11, I speculate that this equivalence exists in social, economic, political, educational, and cultural contexts. As I will expand in section 5.3, Episode 4 presents a variation on this theme of equivalence. In my estimation (and based on the condition of his teeth)[125] the central participant, an older man with crutches, is not of a corresponding social, economic, or possibly educational standing as the performers. He does share their liberal, left-leaning political position. He exhibits a warm gregarious character, cultural confidence, and the advantage of (probably) being on his home territory. In my estimation, he views the performers as entertaining interlopers, and he has the time, confidence and the curiosity to find out more about them.

A significant feature of participation and politicised dissent in Episode 11 is mischief as a form of playful, surreal and eccentric street theatre. Equally, mischief in the form of playful facilitation nurtures the participants to speak politically with strangers. Mischief in this instance is a form of collaboration that is consistent, persistent and gives participants a confidence that they will not become unwilling victims of the performance. Persistence in tandem with the methods of Participant-advisor and the Improvisation framework operate to gradually increase the politicised content. Central to how participatory performance can facilitate dissent is the relationship between performers and participants, but also in how the performers model conflict, and participants are given permission to reproduce conflict.[126]

Ideal participants collaborate with performers to vocalise their politicised dissent, and articulate their adversaries, or subjects of dissent. These participants take control, speak for themselves, and their contributions are acknowledged and valued by the performers. My emphasis on participants who collaborate in devising their version of politicised dissent diverges from Mouffe when she states that agonistic art practice 'giv[es] a voice to all those who are silenced' (Mouffe 2013b:93). Mouffe implies that participants are without a voice prior to engaging with the art practice, and that the practice empowers, or speaks for the participant. In contrast, because

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[125] His teeth are clearly visible in Episode 4.
[126] I analyse the importance of the Sibling-like squabbling method in section 5.4.

Mouffe is vague, my intention is to look more closely at what the manner of 'giving a voice' to participants both entails, and results in. As such, the participants, like those in Episode 11 can use their voices ideally for agonistic political critique, and politicised dissent (or not, as per the spectators in Episode 8) through the act of participation or spectatorship.

5.3 Analysis and reflection: mischief

Mischievous performance operates as a strategy to first encounter, and then entice participants to take part. Mischief is a method to translate passers-by into participants of the practice by intervening in the lives of potential participants. Whilst provoking conflict with participants is difficult, mischievous facilitation offers a process of enabling performers to coax participants into conflictual situations. Mischief offers a way to soften the edges of conflict through playful teasing, humour, and the structure of a performative intervention. I consider how mischief can facilitate conviviality and conflict and support the performers to transition into politicised dissent.[127] I apply Allen's terminology to Episodes 8, 9, 13 and interrogate the implications of mischief as a relation of power in participatory performances.

In Episode 4[128] I reflect on how mischief, and the Intimacy and Invitation methods facilitate conviviality and conflict.[129] The central participant in this episode is a man on crutches (Figure 25). He is accompanied by two others who witness the episode. These two seem content for their friend to be the focus of the performers' attention. Intimacy facilitates conviviality as the performers close the physical gap between themselves and the participant. Intimacy, as kind-hearted and convivial, yet mischievous facilitation takes place in how the performers support the participant to engage in the performance. Including:

- Ludic playfulness and physical comedy [0:02 seconds].

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[127] This relates to Objective 2: Mischief as a process of facilitation, and Objective 4: provoke politicised dissent.

[128] Episode 4 https://vimeo.com/137964258 Accessed 6 August 2017

[129] A similar mode of facilitation takes place Episodes 9, 11, and 13.

- Aiding the participant to contextualise and interpret their experience [0:41 seconds].

- Sheltering the participant whilst the performers are in conflict [1:27 seconds].

- Valuing the participants' contribution [3:31 seconds].

- Reassurance [3:43 seconds].

- Finding an affinity [4:11 seconds].

- Giving the participant encouragement and permission to speak openly [4:42 seconds].

- Refocusing the discussion [5:44 seconds].

The performers take turns to improvise, facilitate and invite this participant to speak politically about the provision of public healthcare in the UK. This turn-taking structure is expanded to engage, then include the participant.

Figure 25: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *Oz/Episode 4*, 2015

Intimacy also facilitates mischievous conflict in Episode 4 under the guise of social impertinence. The shift to the political begins when the Lion asks (in the role of an empathetic friend): "So, is your health well?" [3:54 seconds]. Tinman continues the call and response pattern but breaks the rhythm when he impertinently and naïvely asks: "And how much did you pay for that [meaning his leg]? [4:04 seconds]. The participant responds with: "What the leg? Err, it's my own leg" [4:06 seconds]. This participant drops into humour to socially lubricate the awkwardness of talking about money in public. He initiates the shift in the Improvisation Framework from

Escalating/getting political, to Developing/ludic play. The Tinman follows his lead, and draws upon conviviality, intimacy, and his character backstory in order to pursue the topic of healthcare. Tinman explains how he has an affinity with the participant: "I paid handsomely for mine." [4:16 seconds]. Through mutual disclosure, Tinman is able to gradually shift the conversation from the personal, to the wider political question as to who should pay for healthcare services. Mischief facilitates a politicised topic with intimacy and playful impertinence. Ultimately, the performers get away with their brazen questions by applying conflict and conviviality.

The performers use the Invitation method to facilitate how this participant is provoked into politicised dissent. The provocation to dissent takes place through mischief's oppositional relationship to power and authority in the form of counter-hegemonic critique. In Episode 4 the participant gives a direct if resigned answer when the performers ask if the government is any good. He replies to their politicised Invitation with: "They're no good... They don't help the people" [4:44 seconds]. His direct answer is in contrast to the participants in Episode 11 who, on the steps of Hackney Town Hall spoke in metaphorical political terms; and to the participants in Episode 13 who, as I will explore, speak politically with reluctance. I propose the difference here is how the performers build rapport, and then locate the political in relation to the participants' poorly leg. The direct and factual basis for politicising the performance is absent from both episodes 11 and 13.

Mischief and the three relations of power

I examine each relation of power in context with an Episode of participation.[130] I address their impact on mischief, participation, and the potential to provoke politicised dissent. Episode 13 evidences that 'power-with' holds the greatest potential for mischief, participation and conflict (Allen 1999:123). This is in part due to the playful eccentricity, and the trust that develops between the performers and participants. The two participants in Episode 13 (Figure 26)[131] are sat outside a pub drinking and chatting in the afternoon sunshine. There are condiments on the table

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[130] See section 4.1. Allen's three relations of power are: 'power-with', 'power-to', 'power-over' (Allen 1999:123).
[131] Episode 13 https://vimeo.com/139833059 Accessed 14 August 2017

that indicate they may have eaten earlier. They are watching the world go by and do not appear to be in a hurry, for example, to get back to work.

Figure 26: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *Oz/Episode 4*, 2015

In Episode 13, the relation of 'power-with' takes place as a series of humorous exchanges between the performers and participants (Allen 1999:123).[132] The Context of *Oz* method supports an improvised, surreal and absurd narrative that evolves during the episode. Reciprocity takes place as the narrative bounces back and forth between performers and participants. This turn-taking structure is significant, and takes place as, for example: question and answer; speaking and listening; conviviality and conflict; fact and fiction; security and vulnerability; triviality and the political; and for the participants' self-confidence and self-doubt. Mischief facilitates and escalates the momentum of the call-and-response patterns. As a consequence, the power and the responsibility for maintaining the narrative is shared. Sharing adds the qualities of collusion and solidarity. The surreal and absurd narrative elements help to propagate humour, and the freedom for the participants to improvise whilst being supported by the performers.

Although I position 'power-with' as the optimum relation for mischievous performance, achieving this dynamic with participants is not only difficult, but it also requires constant maintenance (Allen, 1999:123). *With* requires the performers to hold the level of mischief in a precarious balance of just enough, but not too much.

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[132] A similar relation of 'power-with' takes place in Episodes 4, and 11 (Allen 1999:123).

By positioning mischief as a relational balancing act, I can subsequently describe the limits and tensions of 'power-with' in terms of surfeits and deficits. Thus: if there is a surfeit of conviviality, the performance can lose the potential to provoke conflict. If there is a surfeit of conflict, the performance can become an antagonistic spectacle. If there is a surfeit of aggressive or threatening power, the qualities of collaboration and reciprocity can be lost. If there is a deficit of trust, the potential for politicised conflict can be diminished.

In contrast to Allen,[133] my mischievous conception of power draws upon reciprocity and often trivial topics (fondue, for example) to perform 'power-with' as politicised dissent (Allen 1999:123). For example, *after* the awkward hug[134] as a moment of Intimacy between the female participant and Tinman, she declares: "Love, affection, fondue and free seeds for all" [12:53 seconds]. Her vocalisation of politicised dissent is self-conscious, and her body language communicates her social discomfort at speaking politically in public. Her statement belongs to a discussion[135] about hungry birds who steal seeds. She challenges Scarecrow's belief that birds (standing metaphorically for humans) should pay for the resources they consume. Instead she proposes that everyone should be valued for the innate contributions they make to society. She recognises social and economic inequality exists, and she implies that basic resources should be shared regardless of ability to pay. The duration of this episode also speaks to the persistence of the performers and the willingness of the participants to reach a politicised conclusion.[136]

In Episode 8 [3:20-3:22 seconds][137] I scrutinise mischief as a reductive relation when a passer-by takes 'power-to' and photobombs the performance (Allen 1999:123). To photobomb (Figure 27) is to insert yourself into a photograph or film without permission and/or knowledge of the intended subjects. This passer-by, a young man on his phone, deliberately walks into the film maker's viewpoint, he looks straight into the camera, pulls a comedic face, then exits to continue his original journey.

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[133] Allen qualifies that her conceptions of power must takes place in a non-trivial context.
[134] This takes place at 12:30 seconds in Episode 13.
[135] This discussion begins at 8:43 seconds.
[136] At 13:15 seconds, this is the longest episode of participation.
[137] Episode 8 https://vimeo.com/138069456 Accessed 10 August 2017

Concurrently, the performers are dithering about where to go next and they do see the young man's interruption. In this sense, his photobomb operates as a mischievous performance that is witnessed and recorded by the camera. Although he mischievously takes power and relationally connects to the camera, he disconnects from the performance and the potential to participate. As such, photobombing is an instance when mischievous performance nullifies the potential for participation, mischievous facilitation and by extension, politicised dissent and agonistic conflict.[138]

Figure 27: Antoinette Burchill; Owen Tooth, *Oz/Photobomb*, 2015

In Episode 9[139] I examine the relation of 'power-over' and the potential for mischief, but not necessarily conviviality *and* conflict (Allen 1999:123). The female participant utilises religion to engender a social and performative compliance that the performers abide by. She successfully diverts the politicised intent towards a discussion of faith. She implies through a good-natured and mischievous conviviality that the conditions of her participation are apolitical ones. The two main participants (one female, one male) in this episode are waiting for a bus. They participate willingly when the focus of the episode is mischievously absurd and convivial. However, when Scarecrow asks: "What could make this place better?" [2:09 seconds] the participants are perplexed. When Tinman steps in and asks: "What makes you so happy? [2:28 seconds] they become more confused. The young woman takes 'power-over' the performers in order to make sense of the exchange. She states: "God makes

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[138] A similar relation of 'power-to' (Allen 1999:123) takes place with the spectator in Episode 8 [0:45 seconds], and a participant in Episode 3 [7:39 seconds].
[139] Episode 9 https://vimeo.com/138071218 Accessed 10 August 2017

me happy" [2:48 seconds]. She situates in the context of leadership with God, rather than in politics, and thus deliberately thwarts the performers' politicised intent.

The female participant draws upon mischief's capacity to enable conviviality, but she does this in a way that simultaneously shuts down the potential for both politicised dissent, and agonistic conflict. The female participant consents to participate, but on her own terms. Whilst this explanation may over-extend the usual context of taking power over somebody else by force, or threat of violence, my focus is on how mischief can be used against the performers to obstruct and divert their politicised intention. In this occurrence, mischief's ability to facilitate limits, rather than enables dissent. This episode also highlights are the difficulties of the Improvisation Framework and Context of *Oz* methods, and the inability of the performers in this instance to articulate an effective question to develop the performance further.[140]

In Episodes 4 and 13, mischievous performance and facilitation cultivates participation that becomes conflictual, politicised, and counter-hegemonic. These episodes share the relation of 'power-with' between participants and performers (Allen 1999:123). Rather than consider this to be coincidental, I propose that the relation of *with*, combined with mischief's form as a counter-hegemonic act enables politicised conflict to emerge. The capacity to emerge in this context is significant in relation to Mouffe's understanding of art practices that she calls agonistic. The practice points to the necessity for participants to develop into a conflictual relation that *then* has the potential to become agonistic. In this instance of practice, mischief is a central component of the transformation from purely convivial to conflictual conviviality.

5.4 Analysis and reflection: agonism

The behaviours that enable agonism in Episode 11 (Figure 28)[141] include participation and mischief. The key method that facilitates agonism is Sibling-like squabbling. The ideal participants in Episode 11 are friendly, curious, and willing to

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[140] A similar relation of 'power-over' takes place in Episodes 3 and 10 (Allen 1999:123).
[141] Episode 11 https://vimeo.com/138614832 Accessed 12 July 2017

roll with the eccentric adaptation of *Oz*. Their agonistic participation is enabled through facilitation, mischievous reciprocity and their ability to interpret the performance as a counter-hegemonic act. Squabbling models' conflict that is adversarial, but not antagonistically aggressive. Agonism as a form of bickering conflict emphasises the positions of each character and recognises the characters as a dysfunctional team who share a collective fate. Within the act of squabbling, the Context of *Oz* serves to differentiate the inter-character conflict between leading with heart (empathy), or brain (intellect), or courage (brute force). Squabbling combined with the Context of *Oz* allows participants to side with a particular performer (creating *us*), and against another performer (creating *them*).

Figure 28: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *Oz/Participants Episode 11*, 2015

Sibling-like squabbling in Episode 11 evidences how agonism in art practice meets, adapts (and as I will argue, extends) Mouffe's definition of agonism. In order to discuss this, I return to Chapter 5's opening quote, in which Mouffe defines three key aspects of agonism. These are:

1. The 'us/them distinction',
2. the 'confrontation between adversaries', and
3. adversaries who share 'a symbolic space' (Mouffe 2001:124).

The 'us/them distinction' evolves as the performers and participants collaborate to develop a politicised narrative with an adversarial opposition to David Cameron. Simultaneously, the squabbling contextualises the type of conflict the performers are inviting the participants to take part in. The common 'symbolic space' that all parties

share is how "disabled people" [5:07 seconds] are cared for, and what level of social responsibility is (or should be) held by the government.[142] However, the adversarial hug [6:48 seconds] meets Mouffe's definition of agonism, but it does so with warmth and by visualising ludicrous physical comedy. Hence, my description in section 5.2 of agonism here as an unconventional form of adversarial conflict. The level of conviviality in this instance amplifies *how* the adversarial conflict is performed.

As we discovered during rehearsals, if conflict is not modelled then shifting the dynamic from conviviality to conflict is extremely difficult. However, to model conflict is not sufficient. Participants also need encouragement and permission to participate in conflict with strangers in the public realm. The purpose of the Invitation method is to socially reassure participants and to give them permission to disagree. The Invitation in Episode 11 is offered first by Tinman [4:15 seconds], then by Lion at [4:30 seconds]. The performers notably give the participants permission to engage in conflict through facilitation, persistence and persuasion. The adaptability of the Improvisation Framework per specific participants also aids this process.

The two significant qualities that emerge through the political satire in Episode 11 are: conflictual conviviality, and the dissonance between the participants' verbal and non-verbal communication. Here I extend my discussion from section 5.2 and the participant's proposal that Tinman hugs David Cameron, but that he does not kill him [6:48 seconds]. The participants' satirical narrative of politicised dissent encompasses political critique with humour and warmth. In this instance, agonism is enabled by conflictual conviviality: conviviality gives permission for conflict; and conflict is proposed with conviviality. This version of agonism as a paradox of conflictual conviviality is also evident in the contradiction between the participants' verbal and non-verbal body language (Figure 28). Their verbalisation of a playful, inventive and jolly satire is infused with mischief and reciprocity. However, their openness, conviviality and apparent verbal ease does not wholly match up to their physical posture. The participants' non-verbal facial expressions and body language communicates anxiety, apprehension, and fear of attack: their arms and legs are

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[142] Although he is a physically absent party, the symbolic space includes David Cameron.

often tightly crossed during the performance. Agonism as conflictual conviviality can extend beyond the verbal exchanges to include the participant's physical expression of conviviality and conflict.

Applying my etymology of agonism to the practice

In Episode 11 I recognise a version of agonism that exceeds Mouffe's definition of agonism as a relation 'between adversaries' (Mouffe 2013a [1998]:161). I use my etymology of agonism to differentiate and interpret the aspects of agonism that are present in Episode 11. This evidences my argument that Mouffe's description of agonism limits the understanding of how agonism can be performed in art practice. And by using my etymology of agonism, I draw upon a structure and process for *identifying and evidencing* how agonism – as a multi-faceted relation - in participatory art practice can take place. The keywords from my etymology[143] of agonism are:

- Anguish as a form of distress provoked by conflict.
- Agony Aunt/Agony Uncle as a person held in high esteem by another because they hold the ability to give insightful advice to those agonising over a decision or situation.
- Agony and Agonise as characteristics of a participants' internal struggle, deliberation or distress prior to reaching a decision.
- Agon as a game that is played in public, and also refers to verbal dispute or contest that takes the form of a game.
- Agora as a public meeting place in the public realm, but what qualifies an agora (or public sphere) is also the exchange of ideas and opinions that encompasses conflict and dissent.
- Antagonise as a process to provoke, exasperate, or aggravate another, with or without violence or hostility.

The Lion's anguish (as she arrives at the steps of Hackney Town Hall) operates to position the participants as Agony Aunt and Agony Uncle [0:06 seconds]. In this instance, the Agony Aunt/Uncle role elaborates upon the Participant-advisor through the context of an agonising dilemma and a request for help. Lion verbalises

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[143] See section 1.1.

her exasperation with Tinman and Scarecrow and their desire to relax by sitting on the steps. The Lion's outburst 'mak[es] visible' the adversarial conflict between the characters, and how Tinman and Scarecrow's actions are antagonising Lion further (Mouffe 2013b:93). When Lion asks for the participant's advice [2:12 seconds], the Lion's body language and her tone of voice communicate both the agony and the conflict she is experiencing. Anguish is evident in the male participants' body language. He moves from looking at ease [0:32 seconds], to looking anxious and uncomfortable [2:17 seconds] as he refuses the Lion's request. Whilst the shift to the political can account for the change in his posture, he also mirrors the Lion's initial anguish back to her. Agonism, as a form of mental wrangling (both internally, and socially between himself and the performers) is evident as he eventually accepts the role of Agony Uncle [3:06 seconds]. Agonism can become visible and can be evidenced through observation of the participants' body language.

A significant moment of anguish for both participants is when Tinman asks a politicised question [4:19 seconds] and deliberately antagonises the exchange. The participants agonise over as to how to respond to Tinman. This is evident in their verbal and non-verbal communication: their anxious laughter, their shared self-conscious sideways glances, and nervous denials of knowledge. To antagonise in this instance operates, not as a form of hostility or threat of violence, but as a form of mischief: as a playful and oppositional force that increases the agony, or social pressure, that the participants are experiencing. The key difference here is the application of mischievous conviviality. This reduces the level of conflict between performer and participants from antagonism to agonism.[144] Agonism emerges as a contest that takes place between Tinman and the participants. This contest results in a stalemate. However, when Lion adapts the context of Tinman's question from the personal to politics-in-the-UK, the participants accept what is to them a more palatable proposition. On this occasion, to antagonise operates to clarify how, and with whom the adversarial relation can take place through mischievous facilitation, provocation and participation.

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[144] As per my *Spectrum of Participation in Art Practice*, Figure 9, section 3.3.

The performers antagonise each other and the participants through the context of a game (agon), and as a process of politicised playful teasing (agora, or public sphere). The game in Episode 11 relates directly to the Improvisation and Invitation methods. Improvisation informs the verbal contest and the satirical elaboration of *Oz*. Invitation takes place through the process of: offering an idea, accepting, developing, and then inviting another to take part. Improvisation is central to this process. Invitation makes visible the act of participation and collaboration. On this occasion, the agonistic wrangling that takes place focuses on persuading the participants to speak politically. In Episode 11 the acts of playful persuasion are a significant feature. For example, the male participant's agonising internal struggle is evident in his facial expression [5:26 seconds]. Prior to this point [5:00 seconds], he confidently performs an elaborate addition to the satire about David Cameron, then when pushed further, stalls. His pause also marks a point where the performance transitions from a surreal narrative, into direct politicised dissent and an agora. This agora, as a public discussion in the public realm, focuses on adversarial politicised dissent, whilst retaining the qualities of mischief.

Thus far I have discussed factors that enable agonism to manifest within my art practice. Equally, there are factors that disable or inhibit agonistic relations from emerging during the performance. The following list indicates how difficult agonism is to perform with participants in the public realm, and how many factors each performer is contending with as they improvise in response to each participant. For example, in Episode 4[145] when the performers drop into the comfort of conviviality and lose the momentum to escalate and maintain the level of conflict using the Improvisation Framework. In Episode 8,[146] where there is not a cultural confidence or equivalence (social, political, economic) between the potential participants and the performers. Also, in Episode 8[147] the performers fail to convert spectators into participants, and without participation developing agonistic relations becomes impossible. On this occasion, the difficulty rests in part with performers who are hungry, tired and need a break, yet continue to perform. Consequently, they lose their concentration and focus on the needs of their prospective participants.

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[145] Episode 4 https://vimeo.com/137964258 [5:16 seconds] Accessed 6 August 2017
[146] Episode 8 https://vimeo.com/138069456 [1:17 seconds] Accessed 12 July 2017
[147] Episode 8 https://vimeo.com/138069456 [0:06 seconds] Accessed 12 July 2017

Applying my eight criteria for agonistic art practice to the practice

Just as I have examined other art practices against my eight criteria for agonistic practice, I will now analyse an example of my art practice. This analysis focuses on Episode 13[148] and the participants sitting outside the pub (Figure 29). Episode 13 is the only episode that contains evidence of all eight criteria.[149] This lack of practice-based information emphasises that agonism is a difficult relation to provoke in the public realm. In contrast, Episode 11 does contain agonistic qualities, but a consensus arises between the performers and participants in opposition to David Cameron's policies towards disabled people. Episode 11 only meets seven criteria, with 'conflictual consensus' absent (criterion 4). If Cameron, or a representative of the Conservative party had been present at the performance, then a position of 'conflictual consensus' or an agreement to disagree may have emerged because the conflict would be irresolvable. Likewise, Episode 4's discussion about funding the health service contains agonistic relations, but this episode only meets six out of eight criteria. It also does not meet criterion 4's 'conflictual consensus', nor does this episode clarify the choice between 'conflicting alternatives', for example, by proposing how else the health service could be funded (criterion 2).

Figure 29: Antoinette Burchill; Kev Ryan, *Oz/Participants Episode 13*, 2015

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[148] Episode 13 https://vimeo.com/139833059 Accessed 28 August 2017
[149] My eight criteria for agonistic art practice are detailed in section 2.5.

Episode 13 'mak[es] visible' how contemporary politicised dissent can take a narrative form (criterion 7). This episode reveals how difficult agonism as adversarial conflict is to provoke on the street. The 'adversarial' relations between performers and participants are facilitated by the duration of the episode, and the convivial rapport that develops during the performance (criterion 1). The pivotal moment of agonism takes place at [10:01 seconds] between Scarecrow and the female participant. They disagree on whether the crows should receive free food. The agonistic tension continues until Scarecrow agrees that the female participant makes a good point. She argues that the crows pollinate the crops, and thereby fulfil an important social and economic function in Oz [10:50 seconds]. The internal logic of Scarecrow's backstory could enable him to maintain his original and conflictual position. However, Scarecrow drops back into conviviality because maintaining agonistic conflict though argumentation is visibly challenging. Scarecrow concedes his leadership style is problematic and yields to the stronger argument. However, his agreement lacks the promise of a long-term conviction. This moment highlights the social and relational discomfort of a 'conflictual consensus' (criterion 4). If this discussion continued he might have agreed to disagree. However, the exchange drops back to a convivial fondue-led tangent in order to ease the awkwardness of conflict and free food issue remains unresolved.

One difficulty in sustaining agonism on this occasion is the mutual agreement of the terms of the discussion: should the workers (crows) be given free food and leisure time in exchange for their labour in Oz? When the Lion states: "so, who should pay for the good times?" [9:09 seconds] she addresses two criteria for agonistic art practice. Firstly, the Lion's question helps to outline the topic under discussion as social welfare and economic security. By defining the scope of the discussion Lion also outlines the 'common symbolic space' (criterion 5). The symbolic space shared by the characters and participants questions who should be responsible for the "good times" as a reward for labour and for contributing to society. Lion is hinting at questions of leadership and hegemonic responsibility. Secondly, her phrasing of this open question clarifies the discussion as the choice between two 'conflicting alternatives' (criterion 2): whether seeds should be freely provided, or whether they are withheld from the crows. These criteria, and this section of the performance

raises a fundamental issue in terms of agonism and the practice, namely, that once an argument is proposed and argued, the ability to sustain the relation of agonism beyond the conclusion of that argument is problematic.

Conviviality and antagonism both support the relation of agonism to emerge in Episode 13. The 'ineradicability of antagonism' is present, not as animosity, but through the exertion of deliberate social pressure by the performers onto the participants (criterion 3). For example, at 6:42 seconds, the performers appeal for help, then at 6:57 seconds they lean into the participant, close the physical space, and intensify their level of attention. The male participant's body language communicates what could be interpreted as reservation or possibly doubt (Figure 29)[150] provoked by the social friction the performers create by asking deliberately politicised questions. This is potentially why antagonism also manifests in the comical violence of, for example, crow fondue [11:23 seconds]. The violence is transferred by the female participant onto the crows as a fictionalised third party. I propose that antagonism in a comedic form can relieve the social tension that can develop through asking politicised question during the performance. The participants appear to manage agonism and antagonism through their culturally confident and intuitive reading the performance as some type of 'counter-hegemonic intervention' (criterion 6). These participants insert surreal questions about flying monkeys into the discussion to potentially alleviate the tension of speaking politically in public. The 'new subjectivities' arise in this episode by deploying the context of *Oz* as a metaphor, and thereby blurring the edges of politicised dissent (criterion 8).

The Episodes evidence that agonism does not take place in isolation, but in *combination* with participation, mischief, and with a range of methods. Sibling-like squabbling is the most significant method for provoking agonism. The squabbling method models' conflict and facilitates the participants to speak politically and engage in politicised dissent. This signals the importance of inviting and giving permission for participants to become conflictual. Agonism in Episode 11 develops because the participants take control of the politicised narrative. They further adapt and détourne the Context of *Oz* to become a comedic politicised satire about social justice. This version of agonism develops Mouffe's framing of agonism as an

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[150] This assertion is caveated by the methodological limitations I outlined in the Introduction.

adversarial relation because it is adversarial, *and* eccentric, mischievous and participatory.

What becomes evident in applying my etymology of agonism to Episode 11 is how the etymology more accurately and extensively describes the nuances of an agonistic art practice can be described. Notably, Episode 13 is the only instance of practice – out of a whole day of street performances - that exhibits all eight criteria for agonistic art practice. This speaks to how difficult it is to provoke and sustain agonistic relations in a participatory art practice. In both Episodes 11 and 13 it is the paradox of conflictual conviviality that enables adversarial conflict to take place. In these examples, participants found it easier to be conflictual, if they performed that conflict in a convivial and paradoxical manner.

Conclusion

My analysis of my practice relates to the fifth research sub-question: how can agonism in art practice be identified and evidenced? Agonism in art practice can be identified and evidenced using two research outputs: my eight criteria for agonistic art practice, *and* my etymology of agonism. My eight criteria for proposing characteristics of agonistic art practice are extracted and collated from Mouffe's publications. The criteria serve to frame agonism in art practice in political terms, and with direct reference to Mouffe's political theory of agonism. My etymology of agonism expands on *how* agonism in art practice can be identified and analysed in relational and participatory terms. My analysis and interpretation of the practice signals that agonism is an extremely difficult relation to provoke with participants in the public realm. Whilst further work is needed, my analysis and interpretation of the practice does offer enough evidence to substantiate where Mouffe's theory confronts serious problems when applied to art practice.

The instances of agonism I pinpoint reveals that agonism in art practice takes place as a series of subtle and socially complex distinctions. Agonism in art practice is much more than an adversarial relation. My application of guerrilla street theatre holds the potential to amplify and develop Mouffe's conception of agonism in art

practice in five ways. These are: (1) the ability to rehearse and embed conflict within the structure of the performance. (2) The capacity of the performers to create critical public spheres in the public realm and to develop ideal participants. (3) The use of mischievous performance to facilitate conflict. (4) The deployment of conviviality to manage potential antagonisms with participants. And (5) that agonism in art practice is an inconsistent, not fixed relation between performers and participants. The methods that provoke agonism in one setting, may fall flat with different participants. But through the artform of guerrilla street theatre and a range of practice-based methods, the performers can optimise the conditions for agonistic relations.

Conclusion

I began this research by questioning the ways in which Mouffe applied her theory of agonism to art practice from 2001 to 2013. As I explained, Mouffe's description of agonism in art practice did not fully explain my experience of performing adversarial conflict in Devizes. As a result, the central aim of this practice-based research was to discover the circumstances in which agonism, as a deliberate and particular form of conflict, could emerge during participatory street theatre performances. What I have discovered is, that while it is possible, it is difficult to be consistently agonistic in a participatory street theatre performance in the public realm where one encounters a diverse range of potential participants.

In order to arrive at this discovery, I worked through Mouffe's political theory but through the lenses of participatory art practice and art history. I also collaboratively devised a street theatre performance, *The Wizard of Oz* as an instance of practice specifically designed to test the research question. The research question: how can mischievous and participatory performance facilitate politicised dissent? was framed to remove the presumption that Mouffe makes: that agonism in art practice is an automatic eventuality. Instead, the question addresses the core elements I believed an art practice might need in order to become agonistic. These are: participation, because agonism cannot take place without adversaries; mischief as a form of provoking and facilitating conflict; and politicised dissent as the basis upon which a conflict between participants can occur.

Original contributions to knowledge

To evaluate my research and identify my contributions to knowledge about the field of enquiry I consider my three guiding keywords: agonism, participation and mischief.

Agonism

My original contribution to knowledge is the articulation and evidence of what agonism, as a specific area of art practice, is in the context of mischievous and participatory guerrilla street theatre. This contribution to knowledge responds to research sub-questions: (1) what are the strengths of Mouffe's theory of agonism for an understanding of politicised art practice? and (2) what opportunities, difficulties, limitations arise in Mouffe's application of agonism from political theory to art practice?

My research demonstrates that whilst a similarity does exist between agonism in political theory and agonism in art practice, Mouffe does not fully account for how agonism can manifest in art practice. The opportunity that Mouffe's work creates for this body of research is her anticipation that there is an equivalence between the performance of agonism in political theory and the performance of agonism in art practice. However, I argue that, whilst Mouffe rigorously defines her theory within the field of political philosophy, her application of agonism to art practice lacks development. I identify the assumptions and generalisations she makes about how art practice operates.[151] For example, Mouffe categories the Yes Men's art practice as agonistic (Mouffe 2013b:97-98), whereas in my analysis[152] of their *Snow Cones* performance, I identify intermittent moments of agonism in their performance. What I can prove through theory, practice, and analysis is that while the performance of agonism in art practice is possible, agonistic art practice is also an incredibly difficult and very specific relation to provoke and sustain with participants in the public realm.

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[151] In Chapters 1 and 2
[152] In section 4.3

My contribution to defining agonistic art practices is to develop agonism in a deliberate and meticulous way from theory to practice, and to expand the definition and etymological understanding of what agonism can be in relation to art practice. The two theory-based research outputs that substantiate this claim are my list of eight criteria for agonistic art practice[153] (identified and developed from Mouffe's work), and my etymology of agonism.[154] My twofold approach to analysis[155] reveals how Mouffe's conception of agonism does not fully describe agonism in relation to art practice. However, the result of combining my eight criteria with the etymology of agonism is a process of scrutinising and proposing *what is, and what is not* an agonistic art practice. Therefore, the etymology of agonism contributes an analytical method of differentiating between different modes of *adversarial relationships*, (anguished, agonised for example), and different types of *adversarial contexts* (agon and agora for example). My critique of Mouffe's approach to art practice focuses on her reliance on generalisations, her assumptions that agonism in art practice is a singular, static address, and her under-estimation on the importance of participation. A strength of my dual approach to agonistic art practice is in the detail and specificity of the analysis: of participants, performers, and of the social and relational contexts in which the art practice takes place.

My research extends Mouffe in specifying that a social and relational negotiation must take place through the art practice, and before the art practice can become agonistic. This is because the participants[156] of the art practice must first define who the adversary is, *before* they enter into a conflict with that adversary. As such, I argue that agonistic art practice *becomes* agonistic through a process of facilitation, provocation, and by revealing the context of the performance through performance and participation. This idea of *becoming* agonistic stands as a contrast between the performance of agonism in politics, and the performance of agonism in art practice.

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[153] In section 2.5

[154] In section 1.1

[155] In section 5.4

[156] Participants in this context includes: artists, performers, and participants.

Whilst an experiential approach to agonistic art practice is an area for further study, my experience in performing agonism whilst dressed up as the Lion has been instrumental in my *understanding* of how agonistic art practice - as a politicised art practice - can operate. My analysis reveals the importance of verbal, non-verbal, metaphorical, satirical, and/or paradoxical modes of communication between performers and participants.[157] These social exchanges determine how the adversarial conflict might emerge between those involved in the performance. As nuanced communicatory components they may coalesce and tally-up during the process of participation, or they might become contradictory pieces of information. The participants can choose to conceal, reveal, negate, and/or establish their political position through their vocalisations of dissent. This in turn amplifies agonistic art practice as not a singular address, but a multi-faceted process of communication and that metaphor, satire, paradox, characterisation and costume may also serve to blur or emphasise the edges of the adversarial conflict.

Participation

I make three contributions to knowledge in the field of participatory art practice. I argue that participation is a fundamental prerequisite to the performance of agonism and to the participatory performance of dissent. I insert agonistic art practice within an art historical model of participation via my *Spectrum of Participation in Art Practice*.[158] I contend that conflict and conviviality are both central to how an agonistic art practice can take place in the public realm. I emphasise the potential of conflictual conviviality as an approach to developing agonistic relations with participants. These contributions to knowledge answer research sub-question (3): what roles do conflict and conviviality play in the participatory performance of dissent?

Participation is an aspect of agonistic art practice that Mouffe does not overtly acknowledge in her applications of agonism to art practice. Without participation, the social exchanges and negotiations that, as I argue above, are vital for agonistic art practice cannot take place. Likewise, without participation the opportunities for

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[157] In section 5.4
[158] See Figure 9, section 3.3

performers to engage in politicised dissent and political critique with participants are lost. The theory and practice of participation connects the adversarial conflict of agonism with the sociability of mischief. The Episodes of participation demonstrate the trust and rapport that the performers build with consenting participants is essential in moving participants towards an agonistic relation. Participants are also enabled to become agonistic because of the range of methods embedded in the performance.[159] These methods draw upon conflict and conviviality as relational modes of persuading participants to engage in conflict.

In my *Spectrum* diagram (Figure 9) I insert agonistic art practice into art history and the canon of participatory art practices. I do so by specifying the adjacent and contextual practices: those of conviviality and antagonism. This diagram enables me to extract agonism from Mouffe's model of political theory, and re-situate agonism within art practice and art theory. From art history, I evidence how agonistic art practice inherits sociability and conviviality from Bourriaud and Kester,[160] and antagonistic friction and dissensus from Bishop.[161] I connect Bishop's 'friction' with agonism through the capacity of both to generate an unsettling tension between participants (Bishop 2004:79). I highlight the value that friction holds as a precursor to generating conflict within a participatory and agonistic art practice. I also examine how spectacle and interactive art practices inhibit agonism from developing in participatory art practices.

To the field of participation in art history, I propose conflictual conviviality as one form of participation pertinent to agonistic art practice. Conflictual conviviality offers a way of balancing and moderating the levels of conviviality and antagonism, in order to (ideally) arrive at agonism. As per the participatory episodes, the performers (on the whole) apply conviviality to reduce the level of antagonism, and then apply antagonism in order to increase the level conflict beyond conviviality. Within the performances, conflictual conviviality operates as a form of social negotiation between performers and participants. The performers deploy and

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[159] As described in section 5.1
[160] In section 3.1
[161] In section 3.2

facilitate this form of adversarial participation in order to facilitate politicised dissent.

Conflictual conviviality blurs the social boundaries of both conviviality and conflict. In this way, conflictual conviviality operates in a similar way to participants who utilise humour, exaggeration, satire, and/or metaphor in order to blur the edges of how they communicate their politicised dissent. The blurring of boundaries offers agonistic practice a means, not just of social negotiation between performers and participants, but also a way for participants to take control of how they step into, or out of an agonistic art practice. And, by extension, when they choose (or decline) to engage in conflict and politicised dissent. When both conflict and conviviality are offered to participants by performers in a flexible and adaptable way, the potential for politicised dissent increases because participants have the freedom to choose how they wish to respond.

Mischief

My construction and performance of mischief makes three original contributions to knowledge. These take place by situating mischief and agonism as counter-hegemonic practices, through framing mischievous performance as a relation of 'power-with' participants, and by highlighting the ability of mischief to adapt and respond to the needs of individual participants (Allen 1999:123). This contribution answers research sub-question (4): how can mischief be used as a form of facilitation to provoke conflict and politicised dissent?

Through reconceiving mischief as a counter-hegemonic relation of power, I argue the performance of power is equally essential to agonism and mischief. Mischief is usually understood as a participatory performance that challenges power and authority in some way.[162] The counter-hegemonic connection between mischief and agonism is amplified by my interpretation of mischief as playful, defiant, and critical. I connect mischief to Mouffe initially through her definition of the political as 'power, conflict and antagonism' (Mouffe 2005a:9), and then via Mouffe's characterisation of art practices that deploy agonism as those able to perform 'counter-hegemonic

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[162] As discussed in section 4.1

interventions' (Mouffe 2013b:104). In situating mischief ontologically in relation to power and authority, I re-classify mischief as a politicised practice.

I further develop mischief as a counter-hegemonic relation of power by specifying the participatory and collaborative qualities. In contrast, Mouffe does not specify how power operates on an interpersonal level. Her articulation of power is useful as an overarching perspective on the construction of power. Instead, I turned to Allen's 'power-with' to articulate power as relational and reciprocal (Allen 1999:123).[163] Choosing a collaborative relation of power deliberately circumvents mischief's usual victor/victim dynamic, and instead supports the agonistic identification of us, and them. Through my combination of Mouffe, Allen, and mischief I describe how art practices can operate as 'agonistic interventions [or performances] within the context of [the] counter-hegemonic' (Mouffe 2013b:88). As I evidence in the analysis of practice,[164] agonistic relations took place when the participants intentionally echoed back the aspects of mischief and politicised dissent within the performance. Mischievous performance contributes the counter-hegemonic aspect to power: an oppositional force that is, and following Mouffe, relational and conflictual, and following Allen, relational and reciprocal.

In order to meet the potential of mischief as a politicised and agonistic practice, mischief must adapt, facilitate, and accommodate participants. To deliver conflict as politicised dissent, by-standers of the performance need to be transitioned, through a process of facilitation, into participants. Facilitation in this context draws upon mischief's functions of playful sociability, improvisation, and the artform of guerrilla street theatre. This artform provides legitimacy to the temporary occupation of public spaces, but also embeds conflict in the performance from which agonism can emerge. Guerrilla street theatre and mischievous facilitation create artistic and relational contexts for participants to engage with. Evidence of facilitation is evident in the practice,[165] and specifically in how the *Oz* narrative evolves in response to individual participants. Mischievous performance holds the potential to diffuse the

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[163] As discussed in section 4.1
[164] In section 5.4
[165] In section 5.3

social tension of agonistic conflict, and is able to give permission and reassurance to hesitant participants wishing to speak politically in public.

Value of the research

I have investigated and challenged Mouffe's assumptions regarding agonistic art practice by devising an analytical process to explore how and when an art practice can become agonistic. My argumentation focused on how Mouffe's version of agonism could be applied to, and developed through art practice. In this way, I have explored and amplified Mouffe's theory of agonism to illuminate the possibilities an agonistic art practice holds. I also evidenced how mischievous performance can facilitate participatory and politicised dissent. The research value has four key characteristics. These respond to research sub-question (5): how can agonism in art practice be identified and evidenced?

Firstly, I specify agonistic art practice is a participatory and politicised practice that encompasses political dissent. My eight criteria for agonistic art practice, and my etymology of agonism are both central to how I identified and evidenced how agonism in art practice, specifically street theatre, can take place. These two specific pieces of research can exist beyond the argumentation of this thesis. They are outputs that other researchers could utilise to test other forms of (potentially) agonistic art practice. Secondly, I identify agonistic art practice as a viable form of participatory politicised dissent. This viability highlights the connections between agonism and politicised dissent, and between agonism and politicised participation. Politicised participation is the process of critiquing and challenging the existing hegemony by the people of that hegemony. Consequently, I draw a parallel between participation in the process of democracy, and participation in art practice. Participatory guerrilla street performance offers a public space to question, rehearse, and explore how political dissent can be expressed. However, the art practice needs to be structured to enable the asking and discussion of politicised questions.

Thirdly, mischief holds value as a responsive form of facilitating agonistic participation as a form of politicised dissent. Mischief enables participatory and politicised dissent that is playful and challenging. Mischief contributes to the

facilitator-performers ability to improvise and adapt to individual participants. Mischievous performance facilitates participants to speak politically and engage in conflict with strangers in the public realm. This enables agonistic art practice to overcome a significant social limitation: a reluctance on the part of potential participants to take part, and a hesitancy in speaking politically. This reluctance is evidenced in the practice by performers and apprehensive and hesitant participants who consistently lean towards conviviality. Mischief's additional value in this context is in playfully blurring the edges of the conflict, so the contrast between conviviality and conflict is less distinct.

Fourthly, my narrow focus on Mouffe's version of agonism allows a detailed exploration of what agonistic art practice is, and what it holds the potential to become. My methodology of testing theory and practice evidences and supports this value. In exploring agonism with mischief, I limited my theoretical definition and context of agonism not just to Mouffe, but also to the instances where she applies agonism to art practice. I acknowledge that this excludes not just the wider body of Mouffe's research but also, all the other theorists in politics, philosophy, and art whose research concerns agonism in some way. In the practice I tested how agonism can manifest through engaging in conflict with participants. In performances, the boundaries between my roles of researcher, artist, performer, and project manager often become blurred. However, it is this blurring of the roles, particularly between researcher and performer, that has been instrumental in my ability to discover and define what an agonistic art practice is.

Future developments and further work

In this thesis I expand upon conflict and conviviality. There is a second combination of agonistic art practice and vulnerability that is worth further study. The question that this begins to ask is to what extent does vulnerability contribute to the performance of agonistic art practice in general, and to street theatre and politicised dissent in particular? For example, when a street performer leads with vulnerability as a plea for help, there were many occasions when a participant responded with advice and support. To a degree this is an example of 'power-with', but the quality of

vulnerability adds another dimension to the collaborative and reciprocal relation of 'power-with' that is significantly different to conviviality (Allen 1999:123). As such, there is more information worth exploring and analysing in the episodes of participation.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Figshare archive of the practice-based research

Burchill, Antoinette. (2018). *Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Collection.
https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.c.4244951

Episodes of Participation

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 1: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133027

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 2: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133039

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Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 6: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133036

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 8: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133024

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 9: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133045

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 10: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133033

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 11: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133051

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Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 13: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133054

Burchill, Antoinette. Tooth, Owen. (2018). *Episode 15: Exploring Agonism with Mischief*. figshare. Media. https://doi.org/10.17028/rd.lboro.7133057