Kiwiburn: The Glocalisation of Burning Man in Aotearoa New Zealand

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had faith in me as an insider to do the community proud. You saw my intentions were good, and you often showed support and encouragement throughout the entire process. You are my Burner family, and you will always be a part of me. Thank you, also, to my Burner research participants for your time, input, and interest. Without you all, this thesis could not exist. These are your stories, perceptions, and experiences. I hope I did them justice as you deserve for them to be well represented and received.

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Abstract

This thesis consists of tales, narratives, and anecdotes of Kiwiburners, interpreted through anthropological and philosophical theory. Kiwiburn is a regional Burning Man event hosted in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is the longest-running regional community and event to exist outside of America. In a world that influences and impacts our personal experiences, many often encounter a lack of a sense of belonging. This lacking can, at times, be exacerbated by the fragmentation of cultures worldwide (due to the process of globalisation, pluralisation, and mobility). Kiwiburn's counterculture is an example of social development in response to such processes or fragmentation. Through doing so, Kiwiburn offers a space in which Burners can embody something meaningful about identity, community, locality, and belonging.

Kiwiburners are postmodern neotribal thinkers, fiercely embracing the postmodern elements of such a position, conscious of the transience of all things in the unfixed nature of realities. This position leads to normative frameworks, such as those focused on social norms and reality, being re-evaluated, rejected, restructured, reinterpreted, or repositioned within postmodernist Burner perspectives.

Kiwiburners create a reality constructed around communitas, personal agency, and even rebellion. Kiwiburn provides a space where the limitations of broader society can be abandoned and habitus can be embraced. New Zealand has influenced and been influenced by Kiwiburn; at times, this has been achieved through subversion. Kiwiburners often achieve this challenge against the limitations of broader society through humour and a pattern of play. In some cases, this humour is identified through performance and art; sometimes, it is communicated as a form of protest. Ultimately, such practices are collectively shared and understood at Kiwiburn, leading to a sense of belonging being experienced and identified within Burner spaces as well as an example of an expression of New Zealand culture.

Key Words: Kiwiburn; Burning Man; Glocalisation; Neotribal Carnivalesque; Split-habitus; Counterculture; Postmodernism; Spontaneous play; Humour and protest; Sense of belonging.

Preface - Setting the Scene: A Glimpse of the Effigy

A magnificent wooden dragon-shaped structure appearing to be over 10 feet tall sits in the middle of a paddock on the edge of Hunterville township in Rangitikei, New Zealand. The sun has set, and the temporary village of people occupying this farm paddock has been graced with a stunning display of fire dancing involving a horde of highly talented people.

The exhibition ends. A single person steps into what is being called the safety perimeter that surrounds the dragon structure. The person has a flame thrower attached to their back. They spin in a circle, scorching the sun-baked earth as they shoot flames into the ground. They then raise the nozzle of the flame thrower high into the air and let it go full throttle. Flames shoot up to the height of a tall human above this person's head, lighting up the surrounding area as onlookers cheer with infectious levels of enthusiasm. Eventually, the person beckons towards a spot in the crowd, still sitting in darkness. Suddenly, a procession of people steps out of the shadows. Each person appears to be holding a long unlit torch. Instantly, I recognise the reason for the flame thrower. Each person from this line steps up to the flame thrower, lighting their torch before walking towards the dragon Effigy. The circle of torchbearers dig their torches into the jumble of wooden crates and pallets piled around the structure's base.

I am so focused on watching these torchbearers do this in near unison that I do not notice what is happening in the dragon's mouth until I hear the crowd cheering louder. I snap my head up to look at the dragon, whose gaping jaws are now holding a ball of fire. I turn and stare at Lumos, my key participant, in amazement. "How did they do that?" I wonder out loud. Apart from a few flames starting at the base of this towering effigy, the dragon is not yet begun to catch alight, yet flames are leaping out of the dragon's mouth.

Without warning, the flames in the jowls of the dragon turn green. "Ahhh," I say to Lumos, "I bet that's boric acid they are using", recalling this as being a fire dancers' trick from my years working as a professional fire performer (back when I was 20-something, young and spritely). The crowd seemed equally impressed with this

science-come-magic-trick that has clearly been planned by the Effigy build crew (the ones who lit the structure on fire). The crew can still be seen inside the perimeter of the Effigy, hugging each other and slowly moving away from the structure, their arms raised to the sky as the dragon continues to billow flames from its muzzle.

The crowd is screaming. Hundreds of people howl like wolves whilst swarms of others ululate the sound of a Persian tongue trill. Meanwhile, close to a thousand people cheer and clap with joy, enthusiasm, excitement, and expectation. The crowd's energy seems higher than your average rugby or football game already, and the Effigy burn has not yet reached its peak. The Effigy build crew have another surprise in store for the Kiwiburners on the Paddock this year.

Great canvas wings begin to slowly unfold from the dragons back as its head is engulfed in flames. The fire spreads down to the dragon's chest, where more boric acid has been stored. Green flames can be seen at the dragon's centre as orange flames radiate to the shoulders and base of the wings, which continue to unfold. Sadly, the mechanism on the left wing fails, and the wing folds back in; however, the right wing continues to unfold. The crowd do not seem to care in the slightest that there was a minor hiccup. We get what the builders were aiming to do. We are all showing how impressed we are with our vocal encouragements. "Well, they got one wing", I hear someone from the crowd note. "It's so amazing", another says. "It's massive", someone responds. In the end, the right wings mechanism catches fire, and the right wing folds back in on itself as well. The quick display was well worth it, nonetheless.

The entire upper half of the dragon is now swallowed in flames. It has only been about 45 seconds since green flames were rising from the dragon's mouth to now when its entire upper body has been swallowed by fire. Yet, this is also one of those moments where time seems to be moving much more slowly. This one minute of initial burning is the part of this community event that will be remembered and often discussed year long, amongst friends, online, and through our art and creativity. The entire Kiwiburn village is here (over 2000 people), all fixated on this breath-taking giant wooden dragon (that took weeks and weeks to build leading up to this event) burning down to the ground. This moment is one experienced all over the world at Burning Man events annually. This point in the event is one of the main elements that first attracted me to Kiwiburn over ten years ago. We are all just itching to watch the Effigy collapse. To be

amongst and a part of the letting loose of wild energy that seems to occur as this anticipated aspect of the 'Effigy Burn' happens.

Another minute passes, and the Effigy is now entirely consumed by flames. Small tornados of hot air spring from the massive column of fire, a fun natural effect that happens every year and is always fascinating to watch. Parts of the Effigy begin to collapse, and the crowd goes even wilder. Wolf howling and high-pitch trilling start up again; this time, the howling drowns out the trilling. It feels like the entire village is howling as loud as they can. I smirk to myself as I wonder what it sounds like to neighbouring farms and homes. Multiple sound-themed camps and sound-themed art cars are heard around the Effigy perimeter, emitting various styles of music depending on who or what is situated nearby. Sounds of different base beats vibrate to the spot that Lumos and I occupy at the edge of the perimeter close to the entrance where the fire performers had previously used to enter and exit the safety perimeter. I am sure I hear snippets of *Flight of the Valkyries* floating in from somewhere. "That's perfect", I think to myself as I decide there could not have been a more fitting song to play as a winged dragon burned in ritual.

There is a feeling of camaraderie amongst those in the crowd. However, one individual gets a little too rowdy. Multiple Kiwiburners, including myself, do not hesitate to remind them that radical self-expression should not come at the expense of the community (which is essentially 'Burner' speak for "Hush, mate. You're being obnoxious and it's getting annoying"). Despite the odd person who gets overstimulated through alcohol, substances, and sheer sensory overload, most people feel connected to those sitting around them. People chat and joke as we wait for the next anticipated part of the Burn (when the final pieces of the immense structure collapse and crumble to the ground).

Meanwhile, whether you are sitting with your group and talking to them or joining in a conversation with the group next to you, a high level of social connection is also being fostered within the community. The entire village is here. We all came for the same reason. We are all Kiwiburners. These shared threads of interest connect us as a community. These rituals foster community engagement and feelings of togetherness. Any isolation or loneliness one may have been experiencing before the event has the opportunity to melt away with this fire ritual. This is only the start of an epic night that we will collectively share. This is Kiwiburn.

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A to Z Thesis Lexicon

The lexicon provides a list of terms that have been used and applied within this thesis. The researcher defined these terms with the aid of the Burning Man community, where relevant. The definitions provided are generalised interpretations. Terms may differ between different regional communities or Burners.

10 Principles aka 'The 10 Principles of Burning Man' – Guiding principles, created by Burning Man's founder Larry Harvey, that give shape to ideology and behaviours at Burning Man events and within Burner communities.

Art car (aka Mobile art or Mutant vehicle) – Mobile art installations featured on the Kiwiburn Paddock. At times, these mobile pieces are just for show. Sometimes, they provide a function like transporting people across 'the Paddock'.

Bogans - Commonly used in New Zealand and Australia to describe a Ford or Holden driving, black plastic sunglasses, black jeans- and metal shirt-wearing low- to middle-socioeconomic group. Mainstream culture may also refer to Boganology as 'bad taste'.

Burn (A) – The term used to identify a Burning Man regional event or ritual.

Burners – The term used to identify someone who self-identifies with the international Burning Man community.

Default world – What Burners call mainstream or broader society as it exists and functions outside of Burner spaces.

Effigy (The) – In addition to its normative meaning as a representation of a person or divine figure, this term is used by Burners to identify the structure built each year and burned in the culminative ritual.

Fire circle – This term refers to the cordoned off area where fire dancers can perform, practice, and play with their fire props/toys in a safe and supervised space.

Kiwiburner – The term used to identify someone who self-identifies with the New Zealand Burning Man community.

KnowYourStuffNZ – A grassroots movement that started out of Kiwiburn and has gone on to affect law and practice around harm reduction at festivals in broader New Zealand.

Paddock (The) – The site where Kiwiburn is held each year.

Playa (The) – The site in the Black Rock Desert where the original Burning Man hosts their event each year.

Running of the hippies (The) – The final aspect of the Effigy ritual, which involves a naked sprint around the burning collapsed Effigy structure.

Safety perimeter – The safety circles cordoned off around the built Effigy and Temple structures before they are burned down in different rituals.

Sound camp – A theme camp (see Theme camps) that provides music through events hosted at the theme camp during Kiwiburn.

Sparkle Pony - Anyone who attends Kiwiburn (or any Burner event) and is generally perceived by the community as treating Burner events like a party without engaging in or acknowledging the community that exists year-round or respecting the '10 Principles of Burning Man', especially 'Radical self-reliance'.

Survival camping – Being equipped to sustain oneself throughout Burning Man events, which are often held in remote, harsh environments, without relying on the generosity and resources of others.

Temple (The) – How Burners refer to the structure that is burned down in ritual at the end of Burner events.

Theme camps – Camps of friends and like-minded individuals that create and maintain spaces that reflect a shared interest or position of that group of people. This may include sound camps, fire dancing camps, camps that offer meals, drinks, or workshops, and much more.

Chapter One – Burning Origins

Figure 1. Photo taken by J. Watt (2020). History of the Kiwiburn Effigy board in the Kiwiburn 2020 'Artery'.

A Burning Introduction

This thesis is about the New Zealand Burning Man community known as Kiwiburn. It is based on over twelve years of personal experience within the community and a year of ethnographic research and data collection as a Massey University master's student in social anthropology. I have attended over ten Kiwiburn events and have actively engaged with the community during this time. I ran a theme camp for a large part of my history with Kiwiburn. It was known as Kiwiburn's first fire dancing theme camp, 'Balrogs Playpen'. To explain, 'theme camps' are friends and like-minded individuals who create and maintain areas within Kiwiburn that reflect a shared interest or position of that group of people. These may include 'sound camps' that provide music at events, 'fire camps' that host fire dancing circles, camps that offer meals, drinks or workshops, and much more. 'Theme camps' will be explored further in Chapter Five. Additionally, I sat on the Kiwiburn board, known as ExCom, as the board Secretary. It feels as though I spent a large part of my adult youth growing up in this community. I learned of Kiwiburn through word of mouth whilst working predominantly as a fire-breather within the fire and circus entertainment sector of New Zealand. Thusly, I consider myself to be an insider of the culture.

My approach to fieldwork has been qualitative as I focus on people's stories, experiences, and attitudes. I entered this research with a personal and subjective connection to the community, which meant painting the group I was studying with an idealistic brush. As evidenced in my research findings, it is a brush that many of my fellow Kiwiburners seem to hold. Many aspects of this regional community that first attracted me to Kiwiburn are also shared and perceived by others in the community. This seems especially apparent around noted experiences of what Victor Turner and Graham St John (2008) may refer to as *spontaneous communitas* – where "individuals interrelate relatively unobstructed by sociocultural divisions of role, status, reputation, class, caste, sex, age, and other structural niches" (p. 7). For example, my findings illustrate how Kiwiburn offers a space for many 'Burners'- those who identify as being part of the Burning Man community, to experience social acceptance, community connection, and inclusive social engagement. My research participants have noted these experiences as often lacking in what they often refer to as the 'default world'- what Burners call mainstream or broader society. In turn, these spaces appear to

foster a sense of belonging in many who participate in Burning Man events, including Kiwiburn. However, my findings also highlight that groups of people at a localised level do not always feel included in Burning Man events, particularly members of indigenous communities- an aspect that will be addressed in Chapters Three and Four.

Before entering into this research, I understood Burning Man to be a growing postmodern counterculture that originated in America during the 1980s and is spreading globally. For example, in Australia, NSW, there is both 'Burning Seed' and 'Modifyre', in Western Australia- 'Blazing Swan'; in Africa –AfrikaBurn; in China – 'Dragon Burn'; in Spain, it is called 'Nowhere'; in Israel, it is called 'Midburn' (BurningWiki, 2021). These regional communities reflect universally shared ideologies and practices, yet, as my research within New Zealand has highlighted, each region also appears to have its own unique cultural and geographical differences. This is known as *Glocalisation*, as first coined by sociologist Roland Robertson (2021). Within this thesis, glocalisation means the manifesting and interpreting of globalised phenomenon through localised ways. Glocalisation will be further discussed under the subheading 'A Brief Outline of the Theoretical Concepts', as well as Chapters Two and Four.

This research is timely; little has been published on the Aotearoa regional Burning Man (BM) to date. Yet, Kiwiburn is the longest-running regional BM event outside of America. Additionally, BM has attracted countless researchers and academics to the American event. Many of these works are viewable via the BM website, under the heading 'Burning Academics'; however, this literature usually focuses on American regionals, if international BM regionals are acknowledged at all. Hence, this thesis aims to provide a vibrant representation of how a regional variation of a globalised festival and counterculture manifests at a localised level. In doing so, this research will also provide a more accurate snapshot or understanding of the contemporary Burning Man counterculture as a whole.

Three main concepts have been unified within this thesis and will be discussed later in this chapter - Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) *Carnivalesque*, Michel Maffesoli's (1995) *Neotribalism* and Roland Robertson's concept of *Glocalisation*. To a lesser degree, Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) *theory of practice* (also known as *Field* theory) has been utilised to support this theoretical discussion, especially regarding glocalisation and

enculturation. Likewise, the work of Victor Turner has been cited through the works of others employed within this theory, especially concerning anti-structure and communitas. As such, Turner is also featured to a minor degree.

This research was approached by considering how *neotribal carnivalesque* elements of the Burning Man counterculture manifest in the Kiwiburn community; whilst also considering how the cultural and geographic environment of Aotearoa shapes these globally shared characteristics at Kiwiburn. By initiating research around the Aotearoa New Zealand regional community and event, this study aims to produce research focused on one of the more geographically out-of-the-way Burning Man regionals. In short, my research question is:

'Does Burning Man culture embrace and reflect neotribal carnivalesque within the glocalised contexts of Kiwiburn? If so, how?'

This chapter will start by exploring the concept of festivals as used within this thesis. Following this, Kiwiburn will be introduced as an international regional Burning Man (BM) event by briefly exploring BM as a global countercultural movement. The impact that COVID-19 has had on recent international BM events will also be acknowledged. This discussion will then transition into a brief academic exploration of the 10 Principles of Burning Man shaping ideology and behaviour within BM communities. Finally, this chapter will conclude by providing an outline of each chapter.

As an anthropologist-in-training, I find Kiwiburn fascinating as an international Burning Man regional event due to the remote geographical location of New Zealand (NZ), Kiwi culture and because, as noted, Kiwiburn is the longest-running BM regional event outside of America. Furthermore, in 2020, 1,500 Kiwiburn tickets went on sale in mid-October for Kiwiburn 2021 (with 500 tickets reserved for sale to core volunteers and a second wave of 150 tickets released to those on the ticket resale waiting list). Public ticket sales booked out during the first wave in 15 seconds (Kiwiburn, 2020). I found this significant for an event that does not advertise (and given the international travel restrictions still primarily in place because of COVID-19). It is aspects such as these that inspired me to explore the community academically.

Defining Festivals

Within my recently published *Sites* journal article, 'Kiwiburn- a 'Biophilic festival': Considering mind-body-environment connections to nature in blended festivalscapes'*,* I use anthropologist Nicola Frost's (2016) discussion on festivals to outline what one typically means when using the term *festival* within anthropological dialogue. For example, I cite that Frost outlines festivals as being a concept ranging from "high culture, to large-scale popular music extravaganzas, to religious commemorations or thanksgivings, to neighbourhood celebrations of a migrant presence, and to statements of alternative sexuality or national pride" (2016, p. 569). Frost acknowledges that festivals can be spaces that foster social regeneration, diversity, and cohesion. Additionally, Frost recognises anthropology's lengthy love affair with the study of festivals, primarily through ethnography. Within anthropology, festivals are sites in which to consider "public ritual, political and cultural discourse, and/or the strengthening of kinship ties" (Watt, 2021, p. 134).

Contemporary anthropologists have often described festivals as spaces of "social and political development and experimentation, as well as protest and subversion" (Watt, 2021, p. 134). This sense of protest and subversion appears to foster social cohesion and a sense of belonging, common themes that will also be explored often throughout this thesis (Frost, 2016). As mentioned in Watt (2021), "it is also this paradoxical quality to festivals that eliminates opposition and promotes harmony between community and commodity; leisure and politics; spontaneity and staging; work and play; individuality and a communal body" (p. 134). Frost (2016) also calls for academic consideration and investigation on this growing festival phenomenon to stimulate broader academic discourse around festivals many aspects and impacts. It is within this spirit that I write this thesis. As I further summarised in Watt (2021, p. 135),

> whether anthropological inquiry is focused on a single case study as an example or explores a wider comparative approach, both tactics offer deeply descriptive windows into a complex phenomenon... As anthropology's ethnographic approach is multi-level, multi-actor, multi-sited, and multidisciplinary, whilst considering multiple ecologies, it can

conduct an in-depth, empirical, critical, systematic analysis of blended festivalscapes that encompasses multiple disciplinary approaches.

In *The Pacific Festivals of Aotearoa New Zealand: Negotiating Place and Identity in a New Homeland*, anthropologist Jared Mackley-Crump (2015) acknowledged that festivals have been a part of human culture across space and time, highlighting the importance of festivals as addressing basic human needs, such as leisure and a sense of belonging. The globalisation and subsequent localisation of festivals have resulted in such spaces manifesting as new environments and new cultural contexts (Mackley-Crump, 2015). By focusing on a more localised sample of a globalised culture and comparing it to what has already been published we achieve a greater understanding of said cultures complexity (Bennett et al., 2014). As Bennett et al. (2014) further explained,

> in a world where notions of culture are becoming increasingly fragmented, the contemporary festival has developed in response to processes of cultural pluralization, mobility, and globalization, while also communicating something meaningful about identity, community, locality and belonging. (p. 1)

Glocalisation concerning festival culture in a way that fosters a sense of cultural locality, community, identity, and belonging will be explored further in Chapter Four in relation to my findings. Community, identity, locality and belonging also reflect the underlining themes of the findings presented within this thesis.

What is Burning Man?

Burning Man is Born

The Burning Man event began in 1986 on Baker Beach in San Francisco, where a woman called Mary Grauberger hosted an annual Summer Solstice event (McCaffrey, 2012; Morrison, 2019). Akin to traditional Summer Solstice celebrations, Grauberger created driftwood effigy-like sculptures that she would burn on the sand (see figure 2; McCaffery, 2012; Morrison, 2019). Larry Harvey began to attend these Solstice celebrations and subsequently took over the event in 1986 (Morrison, 2019).
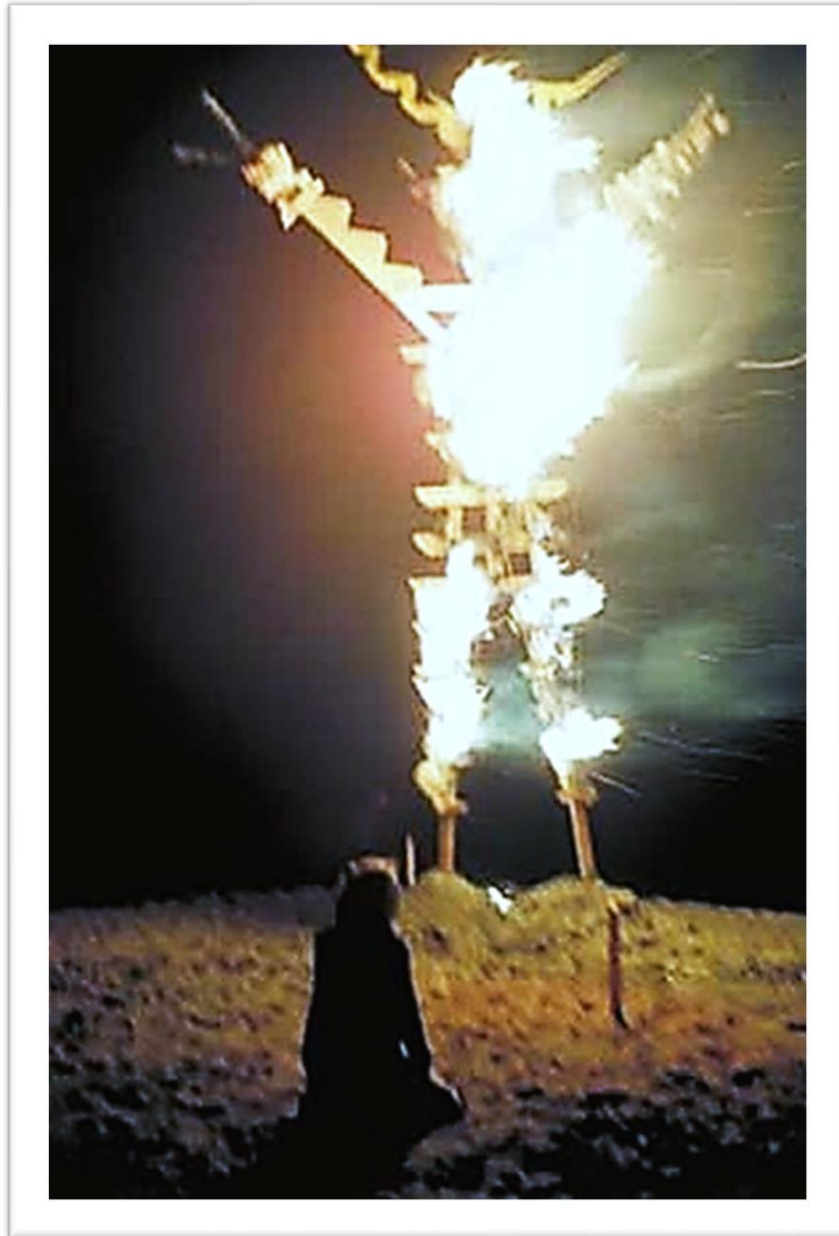
Figure 2. Photo sourced from Morrison's (2019) article, 'The Anthropological History of Burning Man'.

Moving the burning of the Effigy from Baker Beach in San Francisco to Nevada's Black Rock Desert in 1990 was a significant transition for this 'Burning Man', as people were beginning to call it (Burning Man, 2021a; Morrison, 2019). Survival camping in the desert swiftly became a genuine and immediate aspect of the event. Communal effort was now required to aid in supporting and looking after each other (Burning Man, 2021a; Morrison, 2019). So, everyone was a participant. "A pilgrimage was now [also] required to reach the new home of Burning Man" (Burning Man, 2021a, para. 6). The Effigy now "resided in a consecrated space, a place apart and separate from the

ordinary world. The desert had enlarged the scope of human struggle and intensified involvement" (Burning Man, 2021a, para. 6). As student anthropologist Jessica McCaffrey (2012) outlined in her master's thesis,

> Burning Man is a 'ritual without dogma'. It is based on direct experience rather than rigid rules… Burning Man is also a rite of pilgrimage in the sense that participants leave the mundane routine of everyday life and enter a liminal space. A feeling of communitas is fostered in this liminal world where social hierarchies and status are temporarily levelled. (p. 16)

Regional Burning Man events, including Kiwiburn, would come to reflect these aspects introduced by a desert venue. Burning Man regional sites are held in remote, sometimes harsh, environments that become spaces removed from the 'default world' (Burning Man, 2021a; Kiwiburn, 2021; Morrison, 2019).

Additionally, as Morrison (2019) observed in his online article, 'An anthropological history of Burning Man':

> Marian Goodall, Harley Dubois, Crimson Rose, and Will Roger helped [Larry Harvey to] steer the event from the early 90s. They [did not] build stages, they [did not] play music, they [did not] book bands or DJs. They just provide[d] people with a platform and the permission to be themselves. They believe[d that] if you give people the chance, they will do incredible, kind, daring, beautiful, generous, profound things. What they have created is a truly remarkable accomplishment. (para. 30)

The attitudes and positions illustrated in this quote, which key Burning Man (BM) organisers conceptualised, are reflected in the 10 Principles of Burning Man, which guide the contemporary counterculture and international community. Ultimately, the counterculture of BM did not occur in a vacuum. It arose out of nurtured planning and execution, developing out of vision, communal effort, and, in some cases, research (McCaffrey, 2012).

The American BM has transformed into one of the largest 'leave-no-trace' events in the world. It is a temporarily-constructed city that had a population in 2019 of over 80,000 people. The city is constructed in the weeks leading up to the event and is inhabited for an entire week. It is built with city planning that considers 'biophilic' design- love of nature, aesthetics, and sensory planning (that consider noise pollution, quiet zones, and visual stimuli; McCaffrey, 2012; Rohrmeier & Bassett, 2015). Burning Man events, globally, are remote, held in natural environments. These BM sites are used annually, as the practices of Burner events (also known as 'Burns') are sustainable. Burners often refer to these sites as 'home'. This phrase can be found on Burner websites, in the event guides, through the Greeter's rituals as you enter BM events, and in typical Burner dialogue within BM spaces.

As this thesis will highlight, Burning Man is a *counterculture*, meaning it generates a culture that counters or challenges the status quo, social norms, and harmful aspects of Westernised social structures (McCaffrey, 2012). When this thesis refers to the *Westernised* social structures of the default world, it refers explicitly to the cultures of capital found in the US, parts of Europe, and the Commonwealth. As will be explored in later chapters, Burning Man became an international event through the development and launch of Kiwiburn in New Zealand (NZ). Kiwiburn is Burning Man's first international regional and NZ's first official BM event. Since this first global expansion to the Burner family, Burning Man has spread globally and within Aotearoa. For example, the 'Snailed it' festival will soon likely be recognised as the second official BM event in NZ.

The universal ideology of the Burner community is centred around the '10 Principles of Burning Man' (also known as 'the 10 Principles' or 'the Principles'), which shape the community and its annual global events (Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012). Burning Man events' social and cultural engagement nearly always reflect the 10 Principles (Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012). As a regional Burning Man event, Kiwiburn reflects the 10 Principles. These principles, which will be explored further in this and later chapters, are 'Radical inclusion', 'Gifting', 'Decommodification', 'Radical self-reliance', 'Radical self-expression', 'Communal effort', 'Civic responsibility', 'Leave-no-trace', 'Participation', and 'Immediacy'.

It has been acknowledged that Burners utilise the 10 Principles to demonstrate ecological, political, and social mindfulness out in the so-called 'default world', where aspects of capitalism have proved to be sometimes uncaring toward people and the environment (Kozinets, 2002; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007). This research project often refers to the guiding principles to understand and interpret the community's shared beliefs and practices. It appears Burners are now focused on introducing the guiding principles and Burner counterculture into the default world. For example, ecological sustainability has become an encouraged dialogue within the global community that Al Gore publicly acknowledged back in 2007 (Burning Man, 2021b; Burning Man Project, 2019); Google has been cited as conducting CEO interviews at Burning Man to see how they would react in such an innovative hive-mind environment (Avella & Reilly, 2017; Robinson, 2018; Turner, 2009); and, BM has hosted American Mayors from multiple cities to introduce the positive aspects of a Burning Man-run city structure to broader aspects of American society (Burning Man, 2021b). In fact, in the 'About Us' section of the Burning Man website, their mission statement says, "the mission of Burning Man Project is to facilitate and extend the culture that has issued from the Burning Man event into the larger world."

Burning Man and COVID-19

At least thirty-six Burning Man (BM) events, both in America and many other international regional communities, did not occur in either 2020 or 2021 owing to the global COVID-19 pandemic (BurningWiki, 2021). Twenty-one other BM events worldwide are unsure whether their event will occur in 2021 (BurningWiki, 2021). As it stands, only forty BM events are confirmed to take place (BurningWiki, 2021). Kiwiburners believe that they were one of only a handful that could host a BM space during 2020. The cancellation of the original American BM event had a significant impact on the Burner community, raising social anxieties about the original event's survival (as well as many of the international regionals) through times of instability. Such concerns hit the mainstream social media platforms. For example, I saw the following meme (see figure 3), which some argue was in bad taste (a concept that will be explored further in Chapter Five in connection to Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque* theory), circulating in a few of the major social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram.

Due to New Zealand's low case numbers and well-contained cases of COVID-19, the pandemic has had significantly less impact, allowing Kiwiburn to continue to host in-person/physical events during these uncertain times, whilst many other international communities are engaging in online or even virtual reality events.

Figure 3. Screenshot taken by J. Watt (2021) of a meme about the cancellation of Burning Man.

Scholars adding Global Context through the 10 Principles

As noted previously, the universal ideology of the community is centred around the '10 Principles of Burning Man', which shape the community and its annual global events. As the academic literature surrounding Burning Man generally highlights, it appears

there is a political tone to 'the Principles', and these are "upheld quite strongly in the global Burner community" (Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018; Watt, 2021, p. 137). Numerous Burners assert that the 10 Principles are a guideline for "being ecologically-, politically-, and socially-minded in a world where capitalism [generally] does not care about the environment or people" (Chen, 2011; Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018; Watt, 2021, p. 137). In other words, the 10 Principles allow for Burners to engage in their passions, their interests, their protests, their projects, and their personal narratives, embodying the aspects of their identity that may not be given the opportunity to do so in broader society. Further, Burner ethos and the 10 Principles open up Burner spaces by allowing Burners to act with personal agency to express and act out their identities in authenticity (McCaffrey, 2012). The 10 Principles, therefore, allow for diversity of thought and action.

Burning Man as a community is generally founded on the notion of "social cohesion, civic engagement, and a sense of belonging, producing a communal ideal of caring, trust and sharing" (Watt, 2021, p. 140). The 10 Principles are typically considered as breaking free from dominant narratives that structure the default world whilst allowing for interpretation in a way that reflects one's own unique life experiences (McCaffrey, 2012). The guiding principles are displayed on all officially recognised Burning Man regional websites, with a general interpretation of each principle being offered. The Principles will be explored further in the following and subsequent chapters.

A Brief Outline of the Theoretical Concepts

As highlighted, Burning Man has ten guiding principles which underpin the structure of the international Burner community. Within this thesis, these principles have been linked to Maffesoli's concept of *Postmodern tribalism* or *Neotribalism* and Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque* theory (Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984; Maffesoli, 1995; Maffesoli et al., 2004; Maffesoli & Foulkes, 1988). The link to these theories was made because, as my findings will highlight, Burners share a postmodern counterculture, passionate desire for connection to others in the community, collaborative community identity (whilst still promoting individualism), set community practices, rituals and new-age spirituality, with collective ideology (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St

John, 2018). Burner discourse and practice foster a 'sense of play' reminiscent of Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque* theory, which also focuses on practices that aim to deconstruct dominant social narratives in a way that removes the threat they make to the communal body (Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984; McCaffrey, 2012; Robinson, 2011). Similar to Maffesoli's *Neotribalism* is the rejection of dominant market economy at Burning Man events and within the 10 Principles, which seek to offer participants an escape from the occasionally exploitative dehumanising nature of Westernised, capitalist-driven environments (Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018).

The theoretical framework of this thesis engages in three main concepts. The first two have just begun to hint at how they are unified within this thesis to become *neotribal carnivalesque*. The third concept is *glocalisation*, which, in reflecting my research question, considers how Burning Man, as a globalised phenomenon, manifests itself at a localised level within Kiwiburn. Glocalisation was a term that Robertson (2021) first conceptualised through his research on globalisation in the 1970s and '80s. Robertson's (2021) conceptualisation identifies glocalisation as something universal or global with particularising or localising aspects. This concept is most fitting for considering the localised aspects (or *glocal* aspects) of Kiwiburn as an international regional Burning Man event.

Thesis Overview

This thesis consists of seven chapters, including this introductory chapter.

Chapter Two is a literature review outlining the philosophical history of Burning Man and the theoretical framework of this thesis. Three key concepts have been unified to create a theoretical framework: *Glocalisation*, *Neotribalism* and *Carnivalesque*. These concepts also set some of the themes for the presented data in the three findings chapters- Chapters Four, Five, & Six.

Chapter Three outlines the methods and stages of this research projects data collection whilst also hosting an ethical discussion and consideration of both Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as well as the collection and publication of participants intimacies. Additionally, this Chapter will outline the impact COVID-19 has had on this research

and introduce my research participants, as well as discuss ethical considerations around development, recruitment, data collection, and the presentation of findings.

Chapter Four, the first findings chapter, initiates a discussion about glocalisation. This discussion is explored by considering how the Burning Man counterculture was introduced to Aotearoa and manifested itself in localised ways that reflect New Zealand's culture and geographic environment. However, this chapter also recognises that the lack of engagement in local indigenous cultures means that Burning Man's counterculture does not provide a sense of belonging for all.

Chapter Five, the second findings chapter, focuses on Burner perceptions of reality and counterculture through neotribal carnivalesque frameworks. Ultimately, Chapter Five has a prominent focus on how Burner narratives identified during data collection reflect Maffesoli's theoretical discussion on neotribalism and, to a lesser degree, Bakhtin's theorising of carnivalesque, especially around sense of community.

Chapter Six- the final findings chapter looks more closely at the carnivalesque side of the theoretical framework utilised within this thesis. This examination considers both the humour and playfulness of Burner spaces. In doing so, humour and protest in carnivalesque spaces, aka carnivalesque protest, will also be explored through a glocalised focal point, as will the concept of *spontaneous play-* recognising the immediacy created in neotribal spaces that also embraces a carnivalesque pattern of play.

Chapter Seven will ultimately conclude this thesis by recapitulating on the central themes that have been outlined within this first chapter and the broader thesis: community, identity, locality and belonging.

Conclusion

A worldwide counterculture has arisen from the American Burning Man event and community. That is, a culture that counters and challenges the status quo, social norms, and harmful aspects of Westernised social structures. There are now regional Burning Man events worldwide; however, as this chapter has highlighted, the global COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the running of international

Burning Man events. Burning Man events are temporarily constructed cities and towns that are momentarily occupied by regional members of the Burning Man community. Burning Man events are held in remote locations structured around specific development and planning that considers sustainability, noise pollution, aesthetics, and promoting a love for nature, that is, biophilia. Burning Man has ten main principles that form the foundation of the global community. Burning Man's guiding principles form the international community's ethos. These principles are observable in regional events and are implemented by Kiwiburn.

Festivals like Kiwiburn have been noted within this chapter as subjective and experienced through participation. Therefore, participant observation has been utilised through data collection for this thesis. Kiwiburn and similar spaces are also linked with social reform, regeneration, experimentation, and development, fostering social cohesion, diversity, and engagement. Festival spaces such as Kiwiburn eliminate opposition and promote harmony between community and commodity; leisure and politics; spontaneity and staging; work and play; individuality and the communal body. Overall, festivals such as Kiwiburn are considered a fruitful site of research for social anthropologists.

As this chapter has noted, this thesis aims to provide a colourful and vibrant representation of the Burning Man counterculture as it manifests itself at a localised level within New Zealand. The manifestation and interpretation of a globalised phenomenon in localised ways is referred to as glocalisation. Ultimately, this research asks if Burning Man culture embraces and reflects neotribal carnivalesque within the glocal Aotearoa NZ contexts of Kiwiburn. A review of the theoretical frameworks which outlines Neotribal carnivalesque will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Two – Neotribal Carnivalesque Burning Man: A Literature Review

Figure 4. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) of carnival-style activities at Kiwiburn.

Introduction

This chapter introduces the literature that has been used to create the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. The work of the scholars introduced in subsection 'The Theoretical Framework' will be discussed in detail with my findings in Chapters Four, Five and Six. This literature review will, therefore, survey academic literature focused on the neotribal carnivalesque elements that comprise this theoretical framework to create a basis from which to explore the glocalisation of Kiwiburn. As mentioned in Chapter One, apart from my own recently publish journal article (Watt, 2021), there are no academic journal articles available on Kiwiburn. As such, elements of this literature review that explicitly discuss Kiwiburn will either be hermeneutically linked to the pre-existing academic literature on the global phenomena that is Burning Man or supported through grey literature that is displayed on the Kiwiburn website.

In order to understand Burning Man as a global counterculture today, it is essential to understand its origins and its original philosophy (McCaffrey, 2012; Morrison, 2019). Leaving out the temporal perspective of Burning Man's inception and development risks us understanding Burning Man (and Kiwiburn, as a contemporary regional Burning Man event) in reductive ways. Burning Man's counterculture was nurtured and developed through specific approaches that can be identified by considering its early history (Burkes, 2014, 2015; McCaffrey, 2012; Morrison, 2019). This section on Burning Man's philosophical history will lay a vital foundation of understanding for later discussions around neotribal carnivalesque at Burning Man and Kiwiburn.

This chapter will examine the theoretical framework of this thesis in relation to the literature available on Burning Man and Kiwiburn. Accordingly, this section will begin by introducing and exploring some of the literary works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Maffesoli (including through the works of Graham St John), Roland Robertson, and, to a lesser degree, Pierre Bourdieu and Victor Turner. In doing so, this literature review will explore neotribal carnivalesque as a framework whilst utilising the concept of glocalisation and the theories of Bourdieu and Turner to support this theoretical discussion.

The Philosophical History of Burning Man

As was just introduced, the Burning Man (BM) event began in 1986 as a Summer Solstice celebration on Baker Beach in San Francisco. However, the origins of the BM counterculture start with the 'San Francisco Suicide Club', which existed between 1977 and 1983 (Law, 2019; Morrison, 2019). Due to the Suicide Club's risky exploits and pranks, such as infiltrating the 'American Nazi Party', they were a somewhat underground club, considered a secret society (Law, 2019; Mathieu, 2013). The club was challenging to find and, consequently, membership dwindled (Morrison, 2019). In 1986, a handful of ex-members formed another group, a still-active group that has since spread globally to hold international membership. This group is known as the 'Cacophony Society' (Mathieu, 2013; Morrison, 2019). In contrast to the Suicide Club being exclusive, the Cacophony Society is radically inclusive (Law, 2019). "Taking inspiration from the Dadaist artistic movement, and the American Indian tradition of coyote tricksters, they revelled in the surreal and absurd" (Morrison, 2019, para. 8). The Cacophony Society defines themselves on their website as "a randomly gathered network of free spirits united in the pursuit of experiences beyond the pale of mainstream society through subversion, pranks, art, fringe explorations, and meaningless madness" (The Cacophony Society, n.d.).

This group has a heavy influence on the development of Burning Man not only as an event but as a counterculture (Law, 2019; Mathieu, 2013). One of the Cacophony Society's founding documents (Burkes, 2015) is an 'infamous essay', *Carnival Cosmology*, written by one of the founders of the Suicide Club, Gary Warne (2012). The first paragraph of this essay is featured below:

> The world is a midway; cities are its sideshows. The only difference between children and adults is that there is no one to take care of us. When we left home, it meant we were lost on the midway and, unlike God, the carny boss will only let us ride as long as we pay.

Burning Man acknowledges the influence this essay had on the development of Burning Man counterculture. They state on their website, "we are all carnival and circus fetishists here, to some degree. For many of us, life and work are the same

thing, to be ridden like a … well, like a carnival ride" (Burkes, 2015, para. 3). These positions and attitudes at BM events inspired me to link BM counterculture to Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque* theory, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The Cacophony Society's other founding document is Hakim Bey's essay, *Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, which also goes on to influence Burning Man's stance that its events (including Kiwiburn) are 'an experiment in temporary community', held in spaces removed from general society (Bey, 2017; Burkes, 2015). When BM moved the event to the Black Rock Desert, this removed space became an influencing aspect that mirrored the Cacophony Society's *temporary autonomous zone* events, as a space that was created to be removed from the rest of the world, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically (Law, 2019).

As McCaffrey (2012) stressed, it is essential to note that Bey's (2017) discussion outlined that *temporary autonomous zones* (TAZs) are considered to be

> outside of the state in several ways. TAZs are tribal gatherings with a horizontal organization reminiscent of bands. They may vary from a few individuals to thousands, but their organization refrains from the implicit hierarchy of the nuclear family… These tribal gatherings participate in a festal culture characteristic of insurrection. Festal culture is outside of profane time and privileges spontaneity. The TAZ also uses the tactic of psychic nomadism… The TAZ liberates these psychic spaces from the state; the psychic nomad is free to engage with cultural diversity as innovation (rather than simulation). (p. 19)

I see correlations between Hakim Bey's concept of TAZs and Maffesoli's *Neotribalism*. In both cases, groups of people are creating spaces removed from everyday life and society. Autonomy plays a huge part in both concepts. Further, in both instances, autonomy is discussed in relation to people seeking spaces that enable them to remove the restrictions and barriers perceived to be in place in broader society, to embrace higher levels of personal agency. Additionally, I see correlations between Warne's (2012) *Carnival cosmology* and *Carnivalesque* theory. In both conceptualisations, again, restrictions in everyday life and society are identified. Carnival spaces are perceived to be a reprieve from such strictures.

Interestingly, McCaffrey (2012) referred to TAZs as being similar to pirate utopias. In some ways, given the frivolity and satirical nature of carnival, one would not need to dig deep to begin seeing correlations between carnivalesque, TAZs and pirate utopias as well. The correlations teased out here between neotribalism and carnivalesque are often noted within this chapter and the broader thesis. This is because Burning Man regional sites are held in remote locations that become spaces removed from the default world (Burning Man, 2021a; Kiwiburn, 2021; McCaffrey, 2012; Morrison, 2019). Like both carnivalesque and neotribalism, Burning Man events become temporarily occupied spaces, where participants can embrace personal agency and autonomy (McCaffrey, 2012).

The Theoretical Framework

As discussed in Chapter One, sociologist Roland Robertson (2021) coined the term glocalisation back in the 1970s. Robertson is a sociology professor who lectures on global society at the University of Aberdeen (Berkley Center, 2021). He is an influential voice in academic discussions that focus on globalisation and glocalisation, especially concerning religion, identity and nationalism (Berkley Center, 2021). His recently published article 'Glocalization: Self-Referential Remembrances' primarily engages in how and when he defined the concept of glocalisation, offering the original outline for this term. Consequently, this article has been heavily utilised to set a foundational understanding of glocalisation in this chapter.

Russian philosophical anthropologist and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of *Carnivalesque* was developed in the 1970s and '80s. Predominantly drawn from the French satirist Francois Rabelais, Bakhtin's (1984) *Rabelais and his world*, and, to a lesser degree, his work in collaboration with Emerson (1984), *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* have been influential in considering carnivalesque theory as a form of protest, politics, art, humour, and 'second life'. Bakhtin's theory is also significant to the theoretical framework being discussed in this thesis. Indeed, carnivalesque has been implicitly and explicitly linked to multiple theoretical discussions about dance and festival culture, including academic dialogues that engage in neotribalism as a theoretical framework (McCaffrey, 2012; McIver, 2007; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2008, 2018).

French sociologist, Michel Maffesoli is known by some in the academic world to be an intellectual 'maverick' (Tyldesley, 2010). Having first caught the public's attention for praising and supporting a sociological piece on astrology, a topic many scholars contested had no academic merit at all, Maffesoli's early work often clashed with popular French opinion (Tyldesley, 2010). Maffesoli has adamantly argued the value of considering ancient practices of "those glorious ideas that were, in their time, revolutionary" (Tyldesley, 2010, p. 1). He has also often criticised society by highlighting that tribalism challenges our contemporary "ways of being" (Maffesoli et al., 2004, p. 133).

Anthropologist Graham St John (St John, 2008, 2018) has been an instrumental academic voice in considering postmodern tribal elements of festival and dance culture. He has published multiple articles that engage in discussions on the American Burning Man event. Significantly, anthropologist Victor Turner has influenced St. John's work. St John has often linked these with more recent theories such as Maffesoli's postmodern theories on tribalism (McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2008, 2018). As St John notes, Turner's work has been influential in guiding contemporary academic dialogue situated at the crossroads between postmodern culture and cultural performance, especially regarding ritual (McCaffrey, 2012). Turner's work was instrumental in the development and evolution of the concept of *communitas*, primarily through his engagement in the conceptualisation of *spontaneous communitas* (McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2008). Such concepts lay the baseline for both neotribalism and counterculture (McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2008, 2018).

Lastly, I would like to introduce the works of anthropologist and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who, although not part of the unified framework in a major sense, has been used to support said discussions, providing additional depth to the theory. Pierre Bourdieu offered an interesting framework through his *theory of practice* (especially in connection to his concepts of *habitus*, *doxa* and *field*) that can be utilised to support glocal aspects of Kiwiburn, Kiwiburners, and Kiwi culture as an influence on the New Zealand regional event. Bourdieu theorised that human behaviour is influenced by subjective agency and the objective structures that construct our society (Power, 1999).

Ultimately, this chapter will highlight that Burner beliefs and practices mirror existing theories such as Maffesoli's theory of *Neotribalism* and Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque*, through attitudes of irony and scepticism that deny the probability of objective true truths and dominant social narratives of the default world. Kiwiburners are passionate about communitas and individual self-expression. These elements can be seen across the community through their beliefs, practices, and worldviews.

Glocalisation

Glocalisation was conceptualised through Roland Robertson's (2021) research on globalisation in the 1970s and '80s; however, he believes that scientific enquiry had been skimming around the concept since the 1960s, with terms like *cosmopolitanism-localism* and *universalism-particularism* developing around this same time. He also acknowledged older, similar ideas, such as *transcendence-immanence* and the *sacred-profane* (the latter has also been linked to neotribal and carnivalesque academic dialogue; McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007).

Robertson (2021) acknowledged that in 1992 an anthropologist named Eric Swyngedouw (2004) was also developing a concept under the same term, which Robertson generously feels was a close enough timeframe to be recognised as being developed around the same time as his conceptualisation. Robertson (2021) claims that both himself and Swyngedouw were inspired by the Japanese word 'dochakuka', meaning *indigenisation* (p. 9). Since then, the concept has been picked up, developed, reinterpreted and even omitted by others in the social sciences, including being misinterpreted as the concept of *Indigenisation* (Robertson, 2021) – which means the protest and resistance from indigenous communities of globalised changes at a localised level (Omohundro, 2008). Robertson clarifies that his term was meant to be much broader than the term *indigenisation*, reminding his readers that glocalisation was a concept 'inspired' by this Japanese discourse but was not a copy of it. This is an important distinction to make in discussing this thesis as glocalisation is addressed in relation to indigenous voices within the upcoming chapters. However, these voices are linked with many within the Kiwiburn community and are not always utilised within an *indigenisation* context. As Robertson (2021), himself, pointed out, in many instances (even within his own work), the two terms- *glocalisation* and *indigenisation*,

could mistakenly be interpreted as being one-in-the-same due to both definitions usually fitting the contexts where the term *glocalisation* is often evoked. Robertson stresses, however, that understanding the nuanced meaning of each term is vital.

As will be highlighted through Bourdieu and in my later findings chapters, it is not the indigenous cultures of New Zealand that are being identified as being glocalised, but aspects of the larger national culture that New Zealanders are enculturated into through growing up in contemporary Aotearoa. As was discussed in the introduction chapter, although Burning Man academic literature exists, said literature rarely engages in a discussion about the different regional Burning Man events if other Burning Man events are acknowledged at all. As such, I identify the identification of regional differences in Burning Man events as being a gap in the literature.

The concept of glocalisation and counterculture have been supported and explored within this thesis through the work of Pierre Bourdieu (especially *Field* theory and his notions of *habitus* and *doxa*). Although this may seem like an unusual link, Bourdieu's theories explain why different people in different places (or *fields* as Bourdieu would have called them) may act differently under similar structuring structures.

Burners and Bourdieu

Bourdieu conceptualised the *field* as a structured space influenced by various capitals (Bourdieu, 1984). If you consider them in terms of Bourdieu's *Field* theory, the 10 Principles of Burning Man are the *doxa* of the community or, to put it simply, their shared social norms (Bourdieu, 1977). Like Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*, the social norms of Burner neotribes influence the social structures of that community and individuals' perceptions and practices (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018). Further, the 10 Principles are also influenced by the community's social practices and continue to develop with the growth of the community, especially in terms of communitas, community needs and sustainability (Burning Man Project, 2019; Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012). In short, the 10 Principles of Burning Man, which will be explored further in the following subsections, are intrinsically linked and upheld by the global community both at the regional events and in the default world (Chen, 2011; Kozinets, 2002; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007).

One's position in the *field* is predetermined by what Bourdieu identifies as *habitus* and *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Power, 1999). *Habitus* is influenced by numerous social structures such as class, gender, nationality, and religion; and, therefore, reproduces social norms and conditions as well as individuality within individuals (Bourdieu, 1984). New Zealand (NZ) society has its own set of social standards and structures that influence the perceptions and practices of New Zealanders. For example, Gration et al. (2011) noted that when the "self-image of citizens, is grounded in landscape-related imagery, [this usually] reflects the attitudes and political environment of the day" (p. 344). The authors additionally highlighted that these attitudes could impact ideologies and behaviour connected to this imagery.

Cultural studies PhD student Sharon McIver (2007; whose dissertation will be discussed in Chapter's Three and Four) likewise discussed how festivals, dance, and music events could begin to foster a culture that reveres the land in a way similar to the indigenous culture of Aotearoa NZ. McIver (2007) goes on to say that "utopianism is a central theme in the ideology of outdoor dance culture… In Aotearoa, it underlies the notion that dancing outside can engender change within the culture as a whole" (p. 118). McIver explains that New Zealanders are likely to take their counterculture and rebellion against the status quo from the 'urban centres' into non-urban, green spaces, such as those I have identified at Kiwiburn. So, when the founder of Kiwiburn introduced a counterculture event to NZ (as will be discussed further in Chapter Four), one that required you to travel to a removed space disconnected from the default world, such a concept took root and began to flourish.

Similar to the discussion held around TAZs, I find it interesting that the term 'utopia' has again been cited in connection to festival spaces that are removed from everyday life and society. There are undertones of idealism present in the creation of these spaces that are being implicitly linked in each of these cited discussions. When utopianism is a fundamental theme to these types of festival spaces, and this is mixed in with Burning Mans near brandishing of postmodern satirical counterculture, framed within removed temporary autonomous spaces, I can see how the suggestion that this leads to picaresque utopian ideation being somewhat accurate.

Neotribalism

Consumption is generally a key aspect of commercialised societies; this is not the case with small-scale social structures, which are typically self-sustainable (Bodley, 2015; Hetherington, 2011). In this way, tribal structured societies and neotribal structured societies have many correlations, which is one of the reasons why neotribal communities often refer to themselves as 'tribal' (Maffesoli, 1995; Maffesoli et al., 2004; O'Reilly, 2012; Ratushniak, 2017; St John, 2018). Small-scale societies, such as the one I have identified at Kiwiburn, are created through what is often described by Bodley (2015) as humanising perceptions and practices. For example, these societies are also often referred to as 'tribal' because of the lack of commercial centralisation (Bodley, 2015; Hetherington, 2011). The sometimes harmful self-interested practices of commercial centralisation, which may seek to gain an advantage or seek a profit, are aspects that Burners are seemingly escaping. As St John (2018) outlines,

> when Burners adopt 'tribe' as an identifying trope (from the casual to the serious), the common appeal is to a soft tribalism inconsistent with conventional anthropological depictions of the 'tribal' as social organisations defined by ascribed traditions of common descent, language, culture and ideology, and reliant on the mainstream of boundaries. Rather, the identification is consistent with the sensual and flexible forms of association echoing Maffesoli's social philosophy. (p. 5)

Both Maffesoli and St John suppose that *postmodern tribes* (or *neotribes*, as they are alternatively called), such as those identified within the Burning Man global community, have subsequently begun to form in response to commodified environments. *Postmodernism* is a philosophical stance that structures beauty and aesthetics as subjective and arbitrary. Postmodernists reject the dominant frameworks of modernism through attitudes of irony and scepticism that deny the probability of objective true truths, contradicting the possibility of universal, objective reality. (Maffesoli et al., 2004; Philosophize This!, 2018; St John, 2018). This philosophical position lays the foundation for Maffesoli's *Neotribalism* theory (Maffesoli et al., 2004).

Maffesoli has been critical of the contemporary worlds large-scale social structures, and his work on postmodern tribalism has been prevalent in consideration of subcultures that attract youths, such as raves and festivals (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2008, 2018; Tyldesley, 2010). As such, his work is highly relevant to this thesis.

In citing St John, Jessica McCaffrey (2012) notes that the 'vibe' at neotribal festivals like Burning Man (BM) is experienced through "immediacy and intersubjectivity" (themes that will appear often within the presented findings); and, that such vibes can be compared to

> a sort of spiritual experience that 'is commonly translated by participants as 'tribal', which appears to signify a desire for a sacred sociality, a social warmth howsoever temporary, perceived to have been lost or forgotten in the contemporary world of separation, privatization and isolation'. (p. 33)

In *Civilised tribalism: Burning Man, event-tribes and maker culture*, St John (2018) acknowledges that the 10 Principles, and the Burner community itself, are a form of postmodern tribalism, connecting the community to Maffesoli's *Neotribalism* theory. In addition to St John, other anthropologists have likewise used neotribalism to examine contemporary sociality at festivals, such as Jessica McCaffrey (2012) on BM, Adrienne Ratushniak (2017) on Shambhala Music festival, Robert Kozinets (2002) on BM, and, John Sherry and Robert Kozinets (2007) on BM. Although all of these researchers engage in this discussion in some way, Ratushniak (2017) explained it best when he said that in considering these types of community-centred festivals through a neotribal lens, contemporary festival communities appear to "counteract the alienating effect of neoliberal society" (p. 54). Festivals of this nature, as temporary communities, are constructed and embodied to be "powerful, emotional [and] experienced collectively; sharing with and caring for each other" (Ratushniak, 2017, p. 54). Similarly, as noted on their websites, the global and NZ Burner community call their regional participatory festivals a "social experiment in temporary community." They do not consider regional events as a typical festival experience.

According to the literature focused on BM, American Burner perceptions appear similar to those that I have identified within both this framework and my later findings chapters. Shared experiences reveal features that consist of how one can lose oneself in the collective, yet connect with that most profound part of oneself that is often locked out of our everyday lives and practices (Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2018). It is a place where one can be open and embraced (Betts, 2019; Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012). It is a place where one can push oneself to their very limits spiritually, socially, creatively, psychologically, and physically (Betts, 2019; Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012; Morrison, 2019; St John, 2018).

Fundamentally, I support St John's position that Burners are a neotribe, reflecting Maffesoli's theory; however, I argue that the carnivalesque aspects of this counterculture and its events are equally significant and symbiotic to such theoretical discussions as well. This is a position that McCaffrey is noted to hold also. Although she does not engage in a unified framework, much of her thesis is a balanced discussion between neotribalism and carnivalesque theory. Coincidently, she hosts a brief dialogue around Bourdieu's habitus, too. Although I understand that neotribal carnivalesque frameworks, under whatever term they are called, exist, an explicit unified neotribal carnivalesque framework as not been featured in any of the research I have come across to do with Burning Man. As earlier highlighted, virtually nothing exists around Kiwiburn academic literature. As such, I identify this as being a gap in the academic dialogue surrounding Kiwiburn and Burning Man.

Carnivalesque

Burner discourse and practices foster a sense of play reminiscent of Bakhtin's Carnivalesque theory, which also focuses on practices that aim to deconstruct dominant social narratives in a way that removes the threat they make to the communal body (Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984; Robinson, 2011). As has been highlighted throughout this chapter, I see similarities between the theoretical framework of this thesis and the founding philosophy of Burning Man. Like neotribalism and TAZs, carnivalesque also recognises a need for spaces removed from everyday society's dominant rules and structures (McCaffrey, 2012). Further, and as this section will illustrate, the sometimes exploitative structures of certain aspects of Western

culture have been identified by many academics as a significant element that carnivalesque spaces attempt to deconstruct or oppose (Chen, 2011; McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2018).

According to Bakhtin (1984), Carnivalesque is the condition for the 'structure of life', formed by 'behaviour and cognition'. In discussing Bakhtin and Emerson's (1984) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, within the preface of one of his later books, *Rabelais and his world,*

> in carnival, the new mode of man's relationship to man is elaborated [meaning the dismantling of ethnic and socioeconomic hierarchy is accentuated]. One of the central aspects of this relation is the 'unmasking' and disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks [what Bourdieu would call doxa. It is this breaking down of 'ranks' that allows for spontaneous communitas in such spaces]. Bakhtin repeatedly points to the Socratian dialogue as a prototype of the discursive mechanism for revealing truth. Dialogue so conceived is opposed to the 'authoritarian word'… in the same way as carnival is opposed to official culture. The 'authoritarian word' does not allow any other type of speech to approach or interfere with it. Devoid of any zones of cooperation with other types of words, the 'authoritarian word' thus excludes dialogue. Similarly, any official culture that considers itself the only respectable model dismisses all other cultural strata as invalid or harmful. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. x)

This 'authoritarian word' is actively rejected at Kiwiburn, which has also been identified as often rebuffing or challenging aspects of high cultures present in the default world (broader society). By authoritarian word, Bakhtin partly refers to the language used in 'high society', official language that represents authority or structuring structures of conformity and hierarchy within everyday life.

Bakhtin (1984) was likewise interested in *semiosis* – the production, process and interpretation of signs and meaning, as it exists and occurs both in and outside of art,

> or, as he puts it, 'the organisation of life itself'. In opposition to interpretations of life as inert 'chaos' that is transformed into organised 'form' by art, Bakhtin claims that life itself (traditionally considered as 'content') is organised by human behavior, and cognition… and is therefore already charged with a system of values… the moment it enters into an artistic structure. (p. viii)

Fundamentally, Bakhtin believed that we often communicate value systems in all aspects of life, including art, humour, behaviour, social engagement, and even our internal dialogues. According to Bakhtin, we are either internally or externally responding to or representing value systems through different spaces, communications, and engagements. Carnivalesque spaces are no exception, being Bakhtin's epitome of this semiotic rule. Considering Burning Man's philosophical history and, thus, the foundation of its value systems, it appears this theoretical discussion supports Bakhtin's example.

Michael Lane Bruner (2005) noted that "across the centuries, those on the losing ends of the political and economic spectrums have periodically counteracted repressive forms of government with carnivalesque forms of protest" (p. 136). In *Carnivalesque protest and the humourless State*, Bruner argues that "carnivalesque is a resource of political action" (p. 151). As Bakhtin (1984) was noted by Bruner as saying, "laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation" (pp. 122-123). Bruner, thus, argues that humour is a vital aspect of *carnivalesque protest*. Bidgoli (2020) explained that there is a level of ethics to laughter and humour. Bidgoli (2020) noted that carnivalesque laughter opens "the self to the other" by breaking down social barriers through a pattern of play that helps to reduce taboos (p. 82). Bidgoli additionally identifies carnivalesque humour as being performative.

Similar to Turner's musing on ritual (as cited earlier by St. John, 2008c), carnivalesque is generally considered a type of collective performance where there are no spectators (McCaffrey, 2012; Robinson, 2011). This idea of no spectators reflects the Ninth Principle, 'Participation', which encourages the same (Chen, 2011; St John, 2018). This environment, where everyone is an equal participant, can break down social barriers and introduce a sense of *communitas* (Chen, 2011; Douglas, 2020;

McCaffrey, 2012; Robinson, 2011). As this thesis will highlight, it is a place, perceived by many Burners, to escape harmful Western ideologies and expectations, to see humanity stripped away of such Western constructions (Chen, 2011; Douglas, 2020; Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; St John, 2018). As will be explored in Chapter Five, my own experiences coupled with accounts from research participants support the suggestion that Kiwiburn is a space constructed to be a completely different reality from anything one will experience in the default world. This line of discussion has been noted within this chapter to fit both carnivalesque and neotribalism. It could lead to the conclusion that there are active correlations and overlap between the two theories, especially in relation to Kiwiburn and Burning Man, as the following subsection will illustrate.

Burning Man's Neotribal Carnivalesque

Capitalist forms of production are an aspect of Western culture that carnivalesque neotribes, such as Kiwiburn, are attempting to escape (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018). As St John (2018) notes in discussing Maffesoli's work in relation to Burning Man, a ritualistic part of the community also needs to be present to fall under the definition of a neotribe. These rituals, such as the Kiwiburn 'Effigy Burn', 'Temple Burn', and 'Greeters' ritual, reflect antique practices that have since been altered by capitalist-driven behaviour, thus, ritualistically evoking a time when consumerism could be resisted (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018). As anthropologists Victor Turner and Graham St. John would likely attest, carnivalesque spaces are also a type of ritualised performance (McCaffrey, 2012). Akin to Carnivalesque, neotribes embrace freedom of choice and promote individualism paired with a desire for togetherness within the community (McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018). As Maffesoli, in collaboration with Charles Faulks, add that

> it is important to point out, describe, and analyse the social configurations that go beyond individualism and to understand the undefined mass, the population without identity, or the tribalism that though nebulous, contains small local units. (1988, p. 143)

McCaffrey (2012) noted similarly in saying that there was value in studying "the fragmentation of community in contemporary social organization [which] is often discussed in relation to new global capital relations that emphasize mobility over fixity… These transitional communities constitute emerging social formations" (p. 21).

Like carnivalesque, a fundamental part of neotribalism is passion (McCaffrey, 2012). As the academic literature on Burning Man acknowledges, Burners have a passion for communitas, collective ideologies, and, paradoxically, individual self-expression. These elements can be identified across the entire community through their beliefs, practices, and worldviews (Chen, 2011; Kozinets, 2002; McCaffrey, 2012; Sherry & Kozinets, 2007; St John, 2018). Such passions can be found whether you are standing in the middle of Black Rock City amongst 80,000 people at Burning Man in America or hanging out in the green paddock town of nearly 2,500 Burners in New Zealand (Watt, 2020, 2021).

Conclusion

Originating from a Summer solstice celebration and influenced by both the Suicide Club and Cacophony Society, Burning Man was developed with purpose and forethought. There are now regional Burning Man events worldwide, which adds variation to the global social movement at a localised level. The 10 Principles of Burning Man and Burner beliefs and practices mirror existing theories such as Maffesoli's theory of *Neotribalism* and Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque*. As such, three main concepts are being utilised in this thesis by engaging in the works of three main theories. Theoretical frameworks around the glocalisation of neotribal carnivalesque aspects of the global Burner counterculture have been discussed in this chapter. This examination has been achieved by focusing on the theories of Maffesoli, through the work of St. John, as well as the ideas of Bakhtin, Robertson, Turner and Bourdieu. As highlighted, the equitable community environment, the sense of belonging, as well as the pattern of play and humour utilised to deconstruct the threat posed by a globalised, Westernised, capitalist world all speak to a neotribal carnivalesque space being identified at the NZ Burning Man regional event.

Postmodern neotribal carnivalesque Burner spaces at Kiwiburn reject dominant frameworks through attitudes of irony and scepticism that deny the probability of objective true truths and dominant social narratives of the default world. They create spaces that counter the status quo of broader society whilst embracing their own set of social norms and communal ideals that deconstructs the threats of a sometimes socially isolating default reality. This sets the foundation of the unified theoretical framework that has been utilised throughout this thesis to engage in the findings presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Carnivalesque neotribes, such as Kiwiburn, embrace freedom of choice and promote individualism coupled with a desire for togetherness within the community. Kiwiburners are passionate about communitas, collective ideologies, and, paradoxically, individual self-expression. These elements can be seen across the community through their beliefs, practices, and worldviews, creating a 'second life' for Burners to live out the aspects of their habitus that broader society ultimately stifles. Kiwiburn happens at that juncture where life and art meet, creating a reality constructed around a pattern of play, humour, and rejection of the authoritarian word and dominant high culture. Ultimately, this chapter has explored the theoretical framework that has emerged from this overall research project. The ethical considerations and methods of this research will be outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter Three - Methods and Reflections

Figure 5. Image created by J. Watt (2020) to print on unexpected gifts, like mugs and tote bags, for research participants.

Chapter Overview

Research that engages with human participants requires careful consideration regarding research design, including ethical considerations. As an overview, this chapter will explore the methods and ethics of this research project, including the rationale for my approach with the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating a change in research plan. In addition, I discuss the complexities of the insider/outsider balance within my role as both a researcher and an insider of the Kiwiburn community. Influenced mainly by O'Connell Davidson's (2008), 'If no means no, does yes mean yes? Consenting to research intimacies', this section explores the responsibilities of collecting people's private thoughts and textually recording them. This thesis chapter concludes by engaging in a reflexive discussion about te Tiriti o Waitangi guided by McIver's (2007) *WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture and Music of Aotearoa*.

Ultimately, the value of this research design is in the qualitative data it allowed me to collect, highlighting the subjective lived experiences and perceptions of people within the Kiwiburn community, which can be linked to the larger communal body and theoretical frameworks that are utilised to answer the research question for this thesis.

Introducing the Methods

In my qualitative approach to fieldwork, I focus on people's stories, experiences, and attitudes. This research has predominantly been an inductive enquiry that constructed and applied theory to the data collected from participant observation, netnography, and auto-ethnography, i.e., an evocative/heuristic perspective (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Crotty, 1998). These approaches were appropriate for considering participants' subjective experiences, especially in connection to performative and discursive practices within the New Zealand Kiwiburn community that reflect neotribal carnivalesque structures, practices, beliefs, and ideologies. To hear from various perspectives, I recruited participants through different approaches in three data collection stages. This research approach resulted in extensive data being collected, much more than I could utilise within this thesis.

Impact of COVID-19

My rationale for what ended up being an excessive amount of data collected is connected to COVID-19. During the early planning stages of my research, New Zealand (NZ) was in level-four lockdown. This is outlined by the NZ Government (2020) to be in place when the COVID-19 "is [likely] not contained." During a NZ level-four lockdown, people were instructed to stay at home, apart from essential workers. All businesses and public venues close, except for essential services such as medical practices and supermarkets. During NZ COVID-19 level-four lockdowns, "travel is severely limited" outside of your neighbourhood (New Zealand Government, 2020). The rest of the world was even more frightening, and the trajectory of this pandemic was and still is generally unknown.

During the planning stages of this project, Kiwiburn's 2021 annual event, scheduled annually in January, was several months away, and the possibility of any participant observation at this event was uncertain. Faced with this, I had to ensure that I would be able to engage in enough data. Thus, two initial stages of data collection were designed in online settings to ensure that no matter what alert level the country was at, I could still engage with people to discuss their subjective, unique experiences.

Kiwiburn had released a COVID-19 policy that stated that, in acknowledging the Principles of 'Radical inclusion' and 'Civic responsibility', if any part of this community could not attend the event, no community members would experience the event. Meaning, if any part of NZ were in any raised COVID-19 alert level, then the event would be cancelled or postponed. So, five days before the 2021 event, when community transmission cases were confirmed in Northland, I was still not sure I would even have participant observation featured at all in this anthropological study. Thankfully, these COVID-19 cases were contained; no additional lockdown levels were introduced. Participant observation ended up being more than enough data to contend with and answer the research question, but the data collected from the earlier stages was also informative and valuable. Thus, my presented findings in later chapters engage in data collected from all three phases but reflect only a tiny sample of the qualitative data I collected overall. As the following section will acknowledge, this has allowed me the freedom to consider which narratives address my research

question with the most relevance whilst also engaging in elements of Burning Man that appear to be the most underrepresented in BM academics.

Sorting through the Data

Choosing what data to use and what data to leave out was challenging. Much of my data reflected my research question in multiple ways, from consideration of ritual to liminal spaces and beyond. Even selecting the data that held the most direct relevance to the research question left me with enough to fill a PhD. In the end, I decided to concentrate on areas that are not commonly featured in academic discussions on Burning Man (BM). For example, both within neotribal and carnivalesque-type conversations, as well as in broader academic dialogue, ritual tends to be a huge focal point in BM academic literature, with good reason. I, myself, could not describe this regional community and event without mention of the ritualesque aspects of the group. However, I have decided not to engage in any detailed discussion around the rituals of BM due to this already being a common narrative in 'Burning academics' – referring to both the field and the BM website page previously discussed. Likewise, I have not utilised any of the collected data to engage in such a discussion; the same could be said for the 10 Principles of Burning Man. Although they are often mentioned and even featured in my discussions to support my findings and Burner narratives, I have not engaged in any academic analysis of the interpretation of the Principles themselves, nor utilised any of the collected data to do so, recognising that much of the existing literature out there adopts this thematic approach to academic discourse in this field. The academic material available around both ritual and the interpretation of the 10 Principles is already highly valuable. I felt I could not contribute anything significantly new to those conversations, only supportive dialogue.

Although neotribal and carnivalesque aspects of Burning Man have been explored in Burning academics, I felt that not only is the carnivalesque side of this conversation meagre but that the concepts were not being engaged in a unified way. Further, the humour that seems apparent at all BM events is not as featured in Burning academics as much as I thought it would be. Additionally, it appears as though humour at Kiwiburn is somewhat unique in the way it is expressed and performed due to the influence of NZ culture. Similarly, humour and protest is a conversation that appears to be lacking

in Burning academics and also appears to have a unique presentation in NZ cultural contexts. Humour and protest are vital aspects of Carnivalesque theory (and even Postmodern tribalism to a certain extent), so these elements will be explored often in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Lastly, the regional aspects of BM events are rarely focused on in BM related peer-reviewed literature, if acknowledged at all. As such, these are the central areas of my data that I have decided to engage in. Ultimately, I chose to feature underrepresented areas or aspects generally not discussed and, thus, have highlighted gaps in the literature within this field. Additionally, I hope that my choices in the data featured and engaged in will add something new, or at least of some value, to the Burning academics conversation.

Stage One Data Collection

The first stage of my research focused on an online setting, recruiting through the New Zealand Kiwiburn community Facebook group, which is heavily utilised outside of Burner events by people within the Kiwiburn and the broader international Burner community. I posted a request for participants within this Facebook group page, asking for community members identifying as Burner's. Twelve potential participants contacted me; they were emailed an information sheet and a consent form. Of those twelve, seven returned their consent forms. I then created a private Facebook group to host group discussions with recruited participants (see figure 6). This private Facebook group was a space for participants to openly discuss a series of subjects that I posed to them in the form of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to invite participants to think about discursive and performative practices in the community and what these practices mean to them (see figures 7 & 8). Of the seven participants, six participated, to varying degrees, within the focus group. One chose to send his responses to me privately, via email. These six participants go by the Burner names 'The Naked Panda', 'Bia Bliss', 'Bean', 'Eli', 'Lumos' and 'Lynelle'.
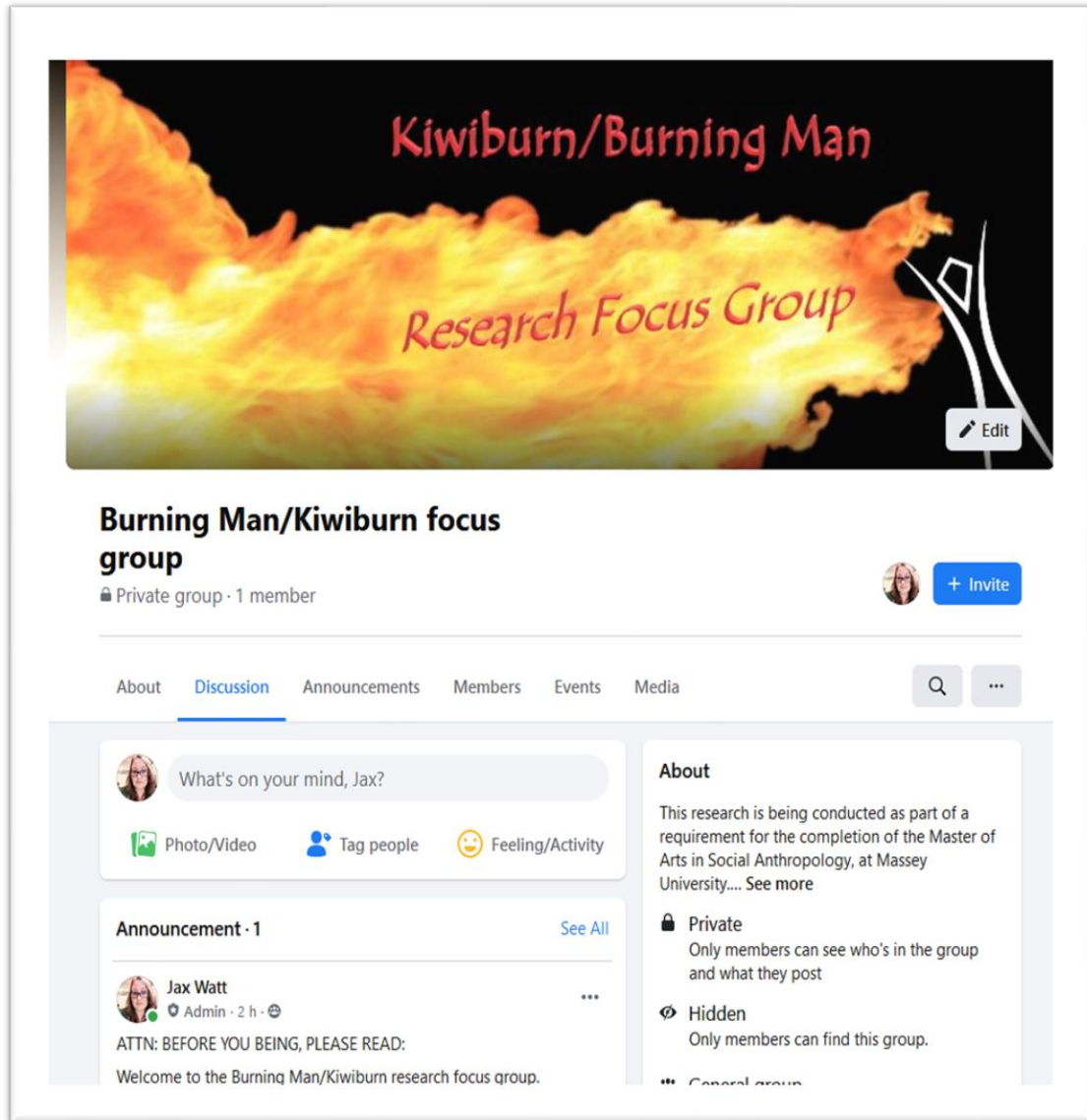
Figure 6. Screenshot by J. Watt (2020) of the private online focus group.
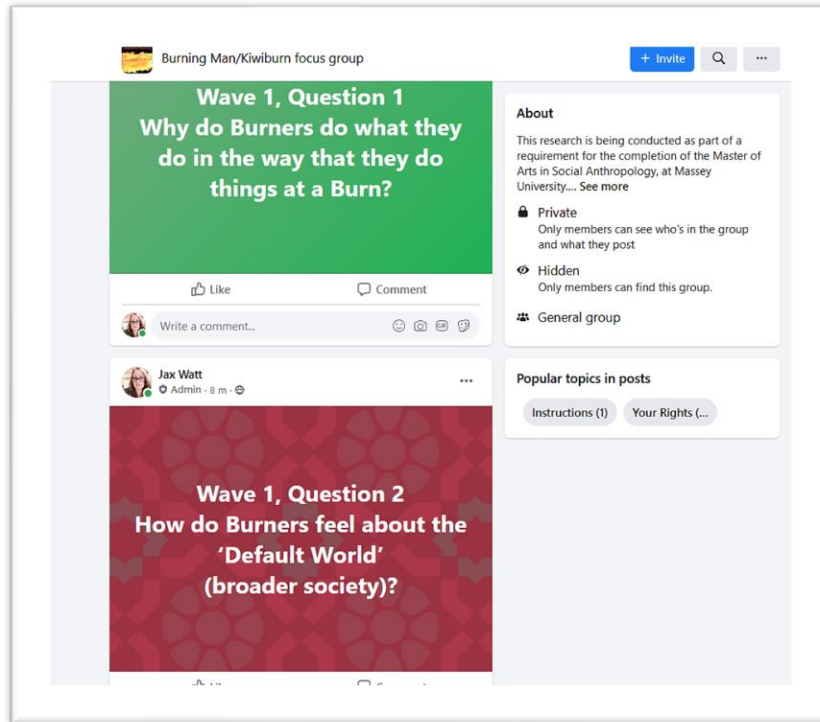
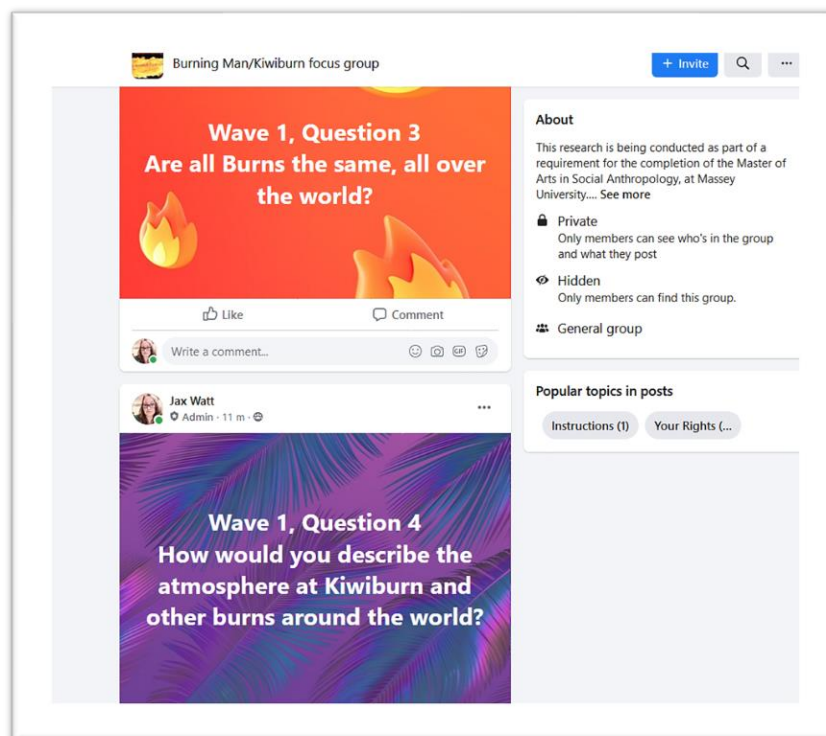*Figure 7. Screenshot by J. Watt (2020) of focus group questions 1 & 2.*

Figure 8. Screenshot by J. Watt (2020) of focus group questions 3 & 4.

The list of questions posed during this online focus group was:

- Why do Burners do what they do in the way that they do things at a Burn?
- How do Burners feel about the 'default world' (broader society)?
- Are all Burns the same, all over the world?
- How would you describe the atmosphere at Kiwiburn and other Burns around the world?
- What impact does a Burn have on Burners? And what do you gain by being a Burner?
- Is Burner culture important/significant? How so?
- Is there a social structure to Burns?
- In what ways do different Burners interpret the 10 Principals of Burning Man?

As these questions were open-ended, the answers given provided a range of perceptions and responses. In most cases, data collected from this stage has been utilised in a supporting capacity to reenforce observations made out in the field (at the event), in correlation with my theoretical framework, and to provide additional examples. Answers to the first listed question have been heavily cited within this thesis, especially regarding Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and doxa, as well as in connection to Carnivalesque theory. Many of these questions offered responses that were also very relevant to considering the conditions of society that may lead one to seek alternative spaces (such as neotribes and carnivalesque spaces), the aspects of Burning Man events that are considered appealing and universal, and the aspects of Kiwiburn that are considered culturally or geographically specific. Humour, irony and a sense of play were often present in these discussions as well.

Stage Two Data Collection

The second recruitment approach consisted of contacting two prominent or long-standing community members, who had been involved in stage one, to interview before the annual community event commenced, in the form of recorded interviews online via Zoom. I approached and recruited these community members through formal emails. The two interviewed participants are known by the Burner names Eli and Lumos. The discussions from their interviews provided me with nearly five hours

of recorded data. As such, their responses have been heavily utilised within this thesis. Interviews were structured as informal semi-structured discussions on several topics.

These topics were:

- The Temple Burn
- The Effigy Burn
- Kiwi culture at Kiwiburn
- Burner humour
- The 10 Principles
  - Burner politics
- Greeter's station and entering the Paddock
  - Volunteering in general
- Festival? Temporary community? or both?
  - The Burner saying "Welcome Home"
  - Sense of belonging
  - Kiwiburn as a community

Stage Three Data Collection

In the end, I was able to attend the 2021 Kiwiburn annual event in January and conducted participant observation. I had one key informant/participant and multiple other research participants (all of whom will be introduced later in this chapter), predominantly sourced from my previously recruited participants. This aspect of my research, participant observation, was also utilised to ensure that the previous data I collected from interviews and focus groups reflected what happens in the field. As O'Connell Davidson (2008) points out, sometimes what your participants say in interviews and what they do out in the field are two entirely different things. Further, I observed and participated in the noted performative aspects of the community, experiencing them as a researcher. This approach helped in understanding embodiment and participation differently from what I experienced as an insider of the community in previous years of attendance.

Pseudonyms and Key Participants

Attending Kiwiburn's annual event in 2021 was the perfect opportunity to take the focus off my perceptions and experiences within the community to gather data focused on the involvement of others. For Kiwiburn 2021 (which was my eleventh Kiwiburn event overall), I spent most of my time conducting participant observation with several participants and one primary/key informant/participant. This key informant, who goes by the Burner name Lumos, generously gave up his time to be involved in all three stages of my data collection. Before introducing these participants, I feel it is important to note that Burner names have been utilised within this thesis for two reasons. Participants were given the option to choose their pseudonyms. They each decided to use their Burner nicknames. In this sense, the names they have chosen act as a pseudonym. Further, this is a small Burner community; it would be impossible to promise complete anonymity. Consequently, engaging in the ethics of handling collected data when a level of trust is in place due to insider links to the community will be considered later in this chapter.

Since its early years, Lumos has been involved in many aspects of Kiwiburn. He has also experienced numerous international Burns in Australia, Africa, and America. Lumos does not hold a position within the Kiwiburn organisation but has what I call a sideways position, where what he does and his contribution to the community are notable, especially from a social leadership point of view. Community members turn to him for guidance; he does his best to assist them all. Lumos was also valuable because he participates in what many call a 'sober Burn', meaning he consumes no mind-altering substances at Burner events. This also made data collection during peak times of the event much simpler on an ethical level, as I did not have to contend with whether informed consent still holds if a participant is not sober.

I, likewise, got the opportunity to hang out with a Burner, Eli, whilst he did his volunteer shift assisting newly arrived Kiwiburners to park their cars at the event in 2021. Eli has a tertiary education through which he studied carnivalesque communities before he stumbled upon Kiwiburn. He said he appreciated being given the opportunity to contribute his knowledge and experiences to this academic conversation through his participation in this study. Consequently, Eli is also featured prominently in this thesis.

In addition to the two re-recruited participants introduced, I spent time engaging with a few other notable people. I conducted a spontaneous interview on 'the Paddock'- where Kiwiburn is held each year- with the founder of Kiwiburn, who goes by the Burner name 'Yonderman'. I spent an hour or so sitting in his themed camp listening to the story about how he accidentally stumbled upon Burning Man when he was out in the Black Rock Desert doing geographical data collection.

Additionally, I spent the evening with a group of Burners running their first themed camp, 'Royal Tea'. I participated in their first outing as a newly formed group to experience the nightlife of Kiwiburn. I had the opportunity to observe them hosting theme camp events at 'Royal Tea'. At one of these, they hosted their version of a 'high tea'- essentially tea and cookies (made by a food technologist who baked hundreds of free biscuits for this event), which were served to anyone who visited them (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of 'High Tea' at 'Royal Tea'.

Kiwiburn seems to be a hotspot for intellectuals and deep thinkers. For example, although it was unintended, and only having realised this just weeks before my thesis submission, at least 70% of my research participants hold some level of university degree. At least two of them hold some form of doctorate. Despite this being unintended, it is notable. I was aware that a number of them were educated. Still, I did

not realise how many were university-educated until I began discussing my findings and introducing them within this thesis.

Ethical Considerations

Due to my history with the community over the past decade, I knew I needed to assess my data and data collection approaches constantly and reflexively. Ethical considerations had a significant influence on my methods. For example, I have treated informed consent as an ongoing process considering this study's potential impact on participants post-publication. As a member of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand (ASAA/NZ), my approach needed to be as ethical as possible. Therefore, I gained permission from the Kiwiburn Executive Committee (ExCom) to research the community for this thesis (ASAA/NZ, 2016). As such, I have adhered to both ASAA/NZ's code and Massey University's *Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants* (Massey University, 2017).

Informed consent

As previously mentioned, before initiating interviews or approaching the community for participant observation, recorded online interviews, or being part of the focus group, each potential participant was given an information sheet and consent form (see examples in Appendix 1 & 2). These forms outlined the purpose of my research and each stage of data collection to be carried out. I made it clear that participants would be able to withdraw at any stage during the data collection process and were under no obligation to answer questions and discuss what they felt comfortable discussing.

Insider/Outsider Positions and Ethics

As O'Connell Davidson (2008) points out, we must form close connections with our participants to understand and interpret them, their way of life and the social contexts they live in. Vargas-Cetina (2013) similarly identifies these as 'personal and cultural intimacies' obtained during participant observation. O'Connell Davidson expands that "in this sense, interpretive research is always and necessarily about transcending boundaries that separate the researcher and researched, and, to this extent, it could

be said that… friendship and research goals [are] compatible" (2008, p. 54). However, she also highlights that we simultaneously have to distance ourselves from our participants to maintain even a modicum of objectivity. We struggle as ethnographers over maintaining these boundaries of insider/outsider or, as O'Connell Davidson puts it, being 'here and there'. Within his chapter in *The ground between: anthropologists engage philosophy,* Singh similarly states

> the ethnographic stance demands a certain distancing from - an exoticising of - the people under observation, but that perceptual artifice… is still rooted in one's own culture without any cross-cultural corrective. (Singh, 2014, p. 257)

Vargas-Cetina (2013) likewise observes, "there is no unified anthropology… we can go to unquestioned", against which we can check our work (p. 6). Thus, navigating the insider/outsider boundaries of fieldwork is complex. Further, the intimacy that springs from all long-standing friendships fosters a level of loyalty that creates tensions between maintaining these boundaries.

As an insider of the community, I wish to return to my fieldwork site in the future both as a community member and again as a researcher. Because of this, I need to be mindful of the friendships and other relationships I have within the community I have been studying - my community. Further, O'Connell Davidson's (2008) insights on intimacy in research participants sharing personal details out in the field have made me more mindful of the friendships and knowledge I have cultivated within the Kiwiburn community long before becoming a researcher. I would be highly disappointed with myself if I were ever to betray the sometimes private aspects of my participants. I understand this makes the balancing of the insider/outsider position much more complicated. Humans are complex creatures. It, therefore, makes sense that any research involving human subjects will be complex, ethically speaking. Consequently, I have had to be constantly mindful that my participants (my friends) are fluid, ever-changing people with feelings and reputations who are placing a great deal of trust in me handling their intimacies.

As previously acknowledged, I have been in the Kiwiburn community periodically for well over a decade, having stopped attending events when I became an

undergraduate. I began attending again once I decided to enter into the master's programme. A decade ago, my conduct at the community's annual event was rather different from how I would conduct myself these days (the perceived differences between those new to the community and seasoned Burners are discussed in further chapters, especially Chapter Four). If there were a textual representation of me (freely and likely enthusiastically given) from ten years ago, permanently fixed as a snapshot of whatever free spirit I was then, present-day me would be absolutely horrified. If I feel that way, then certainly others could feel that way, especially over time.

So, I must be mindful of the way I have represented people, even hidden from the general public behind pseudonyms/Burner names. I must be cognizant that whatever textual representations I have created must be not only appropriate to who my participants are now but will not become harmful to them in the unknown future. This consideration required me to hold back certain details from the pages to make my participants less vulnerable in the years after publication. However, I, too, note that similar to O'Connell Davidson (2008), if I were to label any of my participants as vulnerable, they would find this incredibly patronising. Indeed, many in this postmodern counterculture community will likely see any official forms and researcher positions as a symbol of authority or representation of a problematic default world system.

A high level of trust needed to be in place to get over this hurdle. I had to use the trust that I had already cultivated as a friend and community member to use in my role as a researcher to get past this barrier. I perceived this to be a huge responsibility. To do this without causing some level of betrayal, I had to be mindful of how I represented and recreated the people from my community. I also tried to avoid one-dimensional or fragmented representations that fail to show the readers that my participants are 'whole' people. This consideration also required collaboration with the participants from all three stages of my data collection to maintain consent throughout the entire research process. They were provided with copies of the thesis and relevant chapters throughout my writing journey, as was Kiwiburn ExCom. Participants mostly fact-checked what I wrote (such as earlier dates in Kiwiburn's development), stressing areas that they felt were important in understanding the overall community and culture (such as the history and philosophy of Burning Man). The value of this collaborative

approach was in that it encouraged reflexive practices through such collaboration, allowing participants a chance to challenge reductive or subjective perceptions written by the researcher, i.e., me.

<u>'Going Native'</u>

I would like to highlight that the insider/outsider balance has been a challenge for me as a researcher-in-training. I recognise that the idealism and totalising language often utilised by Kiwiburners has often influenced my work. I have worked hard to counter these subjective insider perceptions with more objective outsider critical analysis. However, I fear there are still many instances in this thesis where it is clear that I was never at risk of what anthropology calls 'going native' because I already was 'native'. Being a part of such a counterculture whilst writing about it means that the insider or emic position within this thesis is well represented. The difficulty has been balancing this with an etic perspective.

As Bean, a participant from stage one, stated, the external world "is our world too"; it has both the good and the bad. However, I note that often during the data collection and writing of this thesis, there were times where perceptions and ideologies were presented as being completely totalising. Such narratives often seem to be accentuated within Kiwiburn dialogues and practices on purpose to deconstructed or reject unwanted elements of life and society. I often did not even realise I was using Burner language and phrases; at other times, points I had written, that I thought glaringly obviously, were completely lost on my supervisors. Sometimes, I would read my work and it would sound very close to a watered-down version of an anti-capitalist, or dare I say communist, manuscript. I reflected on why this seemed to be happening in the textualizing of my findings over and over again. It appears I am too close to my subject, a challenge for any anthropologist; but, also, it appears the culture I decided to focus on utilises practice and dialogue in multiple ways to counter the status quo of contemporary society. This can mean that language can be utilised in very totalising ways even when perceptions and the ethos being discussed are not necessarily as totalising. Similarly, I note that St John (2008) argued that "Bakhtin exaggerated the inherent disorder of normative texts and social arrangements" (p. 42). This suggests

that exaggeration through totalising practice and dialogue is a common theme within carnivalesque spaces as well.

An Auto-Ethnographic Reflection and Revelation

During the early stages of data collection, I experienced what I perceive to be a significant turning point in my understanding. An online community discussion about my research became confrontational, with a Burner stating that what I was studying was just a big party on stolen land. Myself and my study were both accused of being eurocentric. It left me feeling low about myself and my research for a few weeks afterwards. I respect this community. I wanted to take a textual snapshot of a space and group of people that had embraced and supported me. I was so invested in what I was doing, and someone had strongly criticised that passion. I was disheartened. It led to a lot of reflection and discussions with my supervisors. Eventually, what first appeared to me to be gaping holes in my research became a reflection of what I was asking and researching. I just could not see it until I took a step back from my study and rechecked my insider/outsider position. My research question is considering how the glocalisation of neotribal carnivalesque aspects of Burning Man manifests in New Zealand; so, I am considering a Westernised culture that has manifested in NZ in glocalised ways but this does not mean that all local cultures are thus reflected in that glocalisation. *Neotribalism* is also a very Westernised concept that, in part, considers Westernisation. So, this combination was creating some blind spots in the early stages of my study.

Glocalisation does indeed mean the manifestation and interpretation of a globalised phenomenon in localised ways, but, in many cases, such glocalisation can also be met with protest at a local level for numerous reasons (Omohundro, 2008). In this case, like many others, it is the overlooking or lack of engagement in local indigenous cultures, aka *indigenisation*. This is an area that Burning Man regional communities have been criticised for before. The voice of protest that I had seen against BM as a Westernised corporate brand hosting a party on stolen iwi land highlighted that this globalised phenomenon has still manifested itself in very Westernised ways at a local level. Essentially, what I observed and experienced through that specific community

engagement is right in line with an aspect I was exploring and, consequently, further supported it.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

As noted in Sharon McIver's (2007) thesis, *WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture and Music of Aotearoa*, "the overriding theme to emerge" from her study on music and dance culture within Aotearoa NZ was

> that of utopia, a concept that in Aotearoa is also central to the Pākehā mythology that often stands in for a hidden violent colonial history, of which te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) has been a source of division since it was signed in 1840. (p. 2)

This quote reflects similar dialogues to what I have observed at Kiwiburn, including forms of protest through community discussions on the colonising undertones of Westernised events. For example, such dialogue has supposed that no event could ever be decommodified due to the far-spread colonising Western ties of capitalism.

As someone raised predominantly in Pākehā culture and only recently begun to return to my whakapapa, hapu and iwi ties, I recognise the blind spots in my thinking and my limitations in understanding the full impact of te Tiriti o Waitangi on tangata whenua. Likewise, I recognise the limitations in understanding the impact that Pākehā culture continues to have on Māori. In 'balance' with the sense of communitas within Aotearoa's music and dance culture is what McIver's (2007) calls "the weight of the real history of Aotearoa" (p. 5). She gave examples through New Zealand music history, remarking that

> running parallel to the original Pākehā rock music of the 1980s was a reggae scene that was inspired by Bob Marley's visit in 1979, the Springbok Tour, and the ongoing struggle to have te Tiriti o Waitangi honoured. (McIver, 2007, p. 6)

Although some steps have been taken in recent decades to address the harm done by colonialism and the lack of adhering to te Tiriti o Waitangi, many aspects of life and governance in Aotearoa NZ are still negatively and significantly impacted by the

positions and values introduced through colonisation. I echo McIver's (2007) sentiment that the only way to address the harms of the past is by te Tiriti o Waitangi being "honoured as our founding document and the terms agreed to in the Māori version acted upon" (p. 6). It is only then that "Aotearoa could lead the way towards being a truly multi-cultural society where no one group dominates over the other" (ibid.).

McIver (2007) outlines that because land continues to be disputed, conflict will continue to exist. When festivals, dance, and music events begin to foster a culture that reveres the land and mirrors the Māori spiritual connection to whenua (land), the weight of Aotearoa's history will be felt. Events such as Kiwiburn celebrate Aotearoa's geographical magnificence, 'repositioning' relationships with the land, as well as ideologies. 'Land-based spirituality' grows in such places (McIver, 2007). Although McIver's discussion extends beyond the scope of my research, being complex enough to have filled a PhD dissertation on its own, I recognise the important and relevant dialogue she offers to the academic conversation on festival, dance, and music culture within New Zealand. As such, I have acknowledged elements of this discussion in Chapter Four. As she observes, her case study offers "proof that" such culture within Aotearoa still has "the potential to fulfil its promise as an alternative lifestyle that merges the past, future and present" in an authentic and genuinely multicultural way (McIver, 2007, p. 9).

Conclusion

COVID-19 meant having to develop and carry out a research project during unstable times. This uncertainty meant putting failsafe's in place to ensure I had enough data to answer my research question. The restrictions placed around COVID-19 lockdown levels in New Zealand were the main concern as I was unsure if participant observation would take place through my data collection. However, in the end, no additional lockdown levels were in place during the Kiwiburn event, so participant observation was able to commence. Subsequently, I ended up with more than enough data to engage in an authentic conversation around my findings. Consequently, this meant I had to make critical decisions around what data to feature within this thesis and what to leave out. In the end, I decided to engage in the data and areas that are not

commonly discussed or represented within academic dialogue surrounding the Burning Man community.

This research is a big responsibility that has required me to view the impact that textual representations of my research participants and Burning Man events will have in the years to come. In doing so, I am considering informed consent after publication as well as what details my participants will be comfortable to have printed in another ten years' time and beyond. Such an approach recognises that I cannot protect the anonymity of my participants in such as small community. So, the data I have collected and discussed has been handled in a way that causes little to no harm to these participants, even if that data was freely and enthusiastically given.

This research has also been challenging for me, as I have had to engage in a tight rope walk which balances both the emic and etic perspectives. What made this most difficult was that I am too close to my research subject. As an insider to the community and culture in question, this has presented a number of complications due to the totalising language utilised as part of Burning Man counterculture and the ideological narratives that tint the lenses that Burners often use see through. As such, this has made the presentation of my data both a constant and reflexive challenge.

When Kiwiburn was introduced as a counterculture event to New Zealand, it flourished. As McIver (2007) supposed, this may be because festivals and events such as those that have arisen out of the Burner counterculture tend to venerate the land in a way similar to the indigenous culture of Aotearoa NZ. As McIver was also acknowledged as saying, New Zealanders are more inclined to take their counterculture against the status quo out of the urban centres into removed green spaces, such as those that I have identified at Kiwiburn. These elements of NZ culture that shape and impact Kiwiburn will be examined further in the ensuing chapter.

Chapter Four – Glocalisation and a Sense of Belonging

Figure 10. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) of Kiwiburn Temple steps, where someone has written love in Te Reo Māori, 'aroha'.

The Glocalisation of Burning Man: An Introduction

This chapter uses fieldwork accounts from participants coupled with my reflexive understanding to consider how this counterculture manifests in New Zealand. This will be done by exploring the glocalisation of Burning Man in Aotearoa. The discussion will begin by identifying the specific New Zealand (NZ) cultural elements of Kiwiburn. Through doing so, an identified nurturing of a sense of belonging at Kiwiburn will be explored. However, it will also be acknowledged that certain aspects of NZ culture are not reflected at Kiwiburn, leading to some experiencing ranging levels of exclusion and subsequent protest. Within the context of festivals, considering the specific localised and cultural manifestations of globalised events allows us to identify "shared values, ideologies and mythologies central to the world-view of relatively localized communities" (Bennett et al., 2014, p. 1). As such, it is important to examine how different regional communities of this globalised phenomenon impact the default world. This will be explored by acknowledging a grassroots movement originating from Kiwiburn and has influenced recent law changes in NZ. This section will also demonstrate how Kiwiburners have interpreted the Burning Man ethos of community focus, especially around community support and wellbeing. Lastly, through considering the introduction of Kiwiburn to NZ through an interview with its founder, this chapter will consider the value that the Burning Man organisation places on its international events by viewing the future of the culture to be in its regionals.

As this chapter will highlight, there is an identifiable element of self-care, community focus, sense of community, and sense of belonging that both the World Health Organisation and the NZ Government recognise to be protective factors for a community's overall resilience, especially regarding mental health and wellbeing. This chapter will conclude that Burner events, on an international scale, demonstrate the mobility and globalisation of the Burner counterculture. Further, localised manifestations of these globalised Burner events communicate something about NZ identity, values, and worldviews. Essentially, Burner events and communities provide a space for the expression of identity whilst achieving a sense of belonging through a sense of community.

What is Kiwi about Kiwiburn?

Lumos' experience with international Burning Man events and the early days of Kiwiburn provides a broad viewpoint that offers insight from a multi-cultural perspective. Lumos can consider Kiwiburn compared to the other Burning Man (BM) events he has attended, identify what is culturally and geographically specific to Kiwiburn as well as what represents an international counterculture and global community element.

As Lumos highlighted during online interviews, in comparing Kiwiburn to the other international Burns he has participated in,

> what I like is the fact that we didn't just try and do our best to photocopy what Burning Man was. We do occasionally still get people who say, 'well, let's move from the site, let's go to Desert Road because that's the closest thing we have to a desert', but it's not a desert. Because it's an Army training ground, you can't get permission to play there, and it's full of unexploded munitions, so DOC [Department of Conservation] wouldn't want you burning stuff there and using accelerants. So, rather than trying to copy Burning Man, you have a look, and you go, 'okay, AfrikaBurn is in a desert, very similar. Blazing Swan, that's in a hot, dusty dry part of WA [Western Australia], pretty similar. It's actually got salt flats which is kind of similar. So, rather than trying to copy any of those things, we just went 'No'. We'll go 'what have we got in New Zealand?' 'What's typical about New Zealand?' Beautiful farm paddocks and rivers and lakes. So, on a hot day, instead of doing what the other ones are doing, which is struggling with the heat, we just go down to 'The River' and jump in the river. I think that makes us unique to other Burns around the world...

> Some parts of the operations at Kiwiburn are a copy of Burning Man. They have 'Department of Public Works' [aka DPW], and we have Ministry of Public Works [aka MPW]. A lot of things we just copied. Although, yes, we have 'Rangers' [like Burning Man; see figures 11 &

12] but we call them 'Black Sheep Rangers' because, again, what's special about New Zealand? Sheep. What's special about sheep? Black sheep. Black sheep don't follow the crowds. Black sheep are the odd ones out. So, our black sheep do the job of looking after the rest of the sheep. What else would you expect in the middle of a farm paddock?

Figure 11. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of Black Sheep Rangers HQ sign.

Figure 12. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of Black Sheep Rangers 'Gone Rangen' sign.

As Lumos went on to say in his interview,

> it's all about trying to find a bit of fun. A bit of fun with everything, but, yes, you've got to be a little bit serious because you've got people's lives at stake. But, you know, you can still have some fun. At Burning Man, it's very much 'safety third'; that's been a by-word for years, and that's still a by-word. Some of the art projects that go to Burning Man wouldn't be allowed, from health and safety reasons, at Kiwiburn, probably. Some of the things I've seen over there, it's like, you wouldn't want to fill out a

> health and safety report for. It would just be too hard… I think Kiwiburn has had to be a little bit more responsible from a Burn point of view…
>
> So, Kiwi culture, that friendliness, that 'let's do it' [attitude] that makes us quite strong, I have been told by numerous people [international Burners] that Kiwiburners are possibly the friendliest Burners in the world. We might have some competition from the Canadians, but they're not going to argue about it, and we're not going to argue about it. But, yeah, those people who have been to Kiwiburn from elsewhere in the world tend to love that thing that we've created with that unique Kiwi touch.

This interview with Lumos gave some explicit examples of what is unique about Kiwiburn compared to other Burns, identifying tangible manifestations of Burning Man counterculture in Aotearoa NZ through a New Zealand perspective. From the "beautiful farm paddocks, rivers and lakes" that have been a feature of Kiwiburn's site's to the jest about black sheep, there are aspects of contemporary NZ identifiable at Kiwiburn. I noted a similar dialogue during the online focus group from Lynelle and Lumos.

Lynelle: While I haven't been to a Burn elsewhere, I have spoken to Burners that have visited Kiwiburn. They all seem to love it here, but it is still different. I think like anything a Burn will be influenced by the background and culture of its participants... plus Kiwiburn is cooler coz it has a river. 🤣

Jax (me): What do you think adds to Kiwiburn because of the NZ culture/background? No pressure, just what perceptions you get as a Kiwi about what seems Kiwiana at Kiwiburn.

Lynelle: Very laid back and number 8 wire vibes. Burning man seems very polished in pics I have seen while we are happy with our rake in the grass art and shirtcocking parades [when you wear a shirt but no pants]. Also, sheep poo....lots of sheep poo.

Jax: I can't help but laugh when I read your comments. Gold!

I have a follow-up question. How would you explain the 'number 8 wire vibes' to an international reader or Burner?

Lumos: I have seen many well organised and professional level camp setups, at kb [Kiwiburn], we build our camps with tarps, scaffolding and timber and very few proper structures, that attitude of 'make it' extends all through kb.

Lynelle: Like, I'm pretty sure if the sheep poo was structurally sound, it would get used to make camps. 😆

In both conversations, there are identifiable expressions of Kiwi culture, particularly in connection to farming and sheep, as well as comments on how they both believe other international Burners perceive the culture at Kiwiburn. Further, both narratives discuss what others in NZ may label as 'Kiwi ingenuity'- meaning that due to our geographically remote, and, until recent decades of globalisation, sometimes cut off location of NZ at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, New Zealanders (those living in rural NZ may still do) work with what is available to them, sometimes using unusual materials to fulfil the needs that unavailable resources would typically be used for. It is through these dialogues and these noted practices that one can locate the localised and glocalised aspects of Kiwiburn. As will be outlined in the following sections, in some cases, this glocalised manifestation of Burning Man has created visible changes to aspects of NZ society.

Providing a Sense of Belonging for Some

A sense of community is maintained year-round through smaller Burner-run events and online in the community social media groups (Watt, 2021). Through this practice, the community has a chance to take focus from engagement at the event to engagement through alternative avenues. I would like to highlight that many of the theme camps at Kiwiburn are hosted by groups of friends who often have relationships outside of the event, relationships that may have pre-existed before Kiwiburn or been fostered through the Kiwiburn community. Kiwiburn is also a place to network. For instance, when I was running a small business as a fire entertainer, I often contacted my Kiwiburn fire dancing friends when I required more performers and vice versa. The sense of community that is maintained year-round subsequently fosters a sense of belonging for many.

Numerous participants within my research noted that Kiwiburn is a space to seek healing and connection. For example, as Lumos explicitly stated during participant observation, Kiwiburn can attract many "damaged people" seeking a safe space to heal and feel less isolated than they may in the default world. In support of Lumos' observation, Compton & Shim (2015) suggest that sense of belonging and cultural identity are essential elements to consider as experiencing a lack of both have been linked to mental health issues.

These feelings of struggling with self-esteem, isolation and disconnection seem to be commonly expressed in multiple ways at Kiwiburn. For example, as photos of the messages left on the Kiwiburn Temple in Chapter Five will show, Kiwiburners seek to counter feelings of isolation, anxiety and even depression. This feels important to note as, in New Zealand, youth are more likely to die from suicide than in a car accident (LifeKeepers, 2021). This is significant in a country that counts a road toll of deaths during all long weekends and the summer holidays, in order to impact driver behaviour, because car accident deaths are prevalent on NZ's country roads. In addition, suicide is one of the main contributors to what the World Health Organisation (WHO) describes as the global burden of disease (Collings et al., 2018). The Ministry of Health (2017) states that suicide rates will not improve unless New Zealanders get involved in implementing suicide prevention strategies, especially at a community level. Such strategies include nurturing and developing areas that foster community engagement and a sense of belonging. These are considered protective factors against suicide and mental health issues (Compton & Shim, 2015; Ministry of Health, 2017). My research suggests that Kiwiburn both practically and theoretically fulfils this function for those that attend.

As will be explored later in this chapter in 'Burner Politics Impacting New Zealand', Kiwiburn takes a harm reduction approach to community health and welfare, considering the psychosocial needs of Kiwiburners as well as the physical, through community services at the event. As was also noted in the literature review, Maffesoli's work on postmodern tribalism has been prevalent in consideration of subcultures that attract youths, such as raves and festivals. What these narratives highlight is the theme of youths seeking such subcultures to experience community connection, obtaining a sense of belonging that is free from, what they often perceive to be, the

self-serving, profit-driven, isolating general nature of broader society. As Ratushniak (2017) was cited as saying, such neotribal spaces are constructed to be empowering, embodied, emotional, and experienced collectively. Ratushniak (2017) further explained, "neoliberal society is individualizing… temporary and episodic emotional communities, [such as Kiwiburn, have] formed through collective interest that counteract the[se sometimes] alienating effects of neoliberal society" (p. 54). During the writing up of my findings, one of my participants, Eli, felt it was important for me to stress that Kiwiburn is not considered by many within the community to be just a week-long event. As previously noted, both the Burning Man and Kiwiburn website state that their events are not a typical festival experience but "an experiment in temporary community." When you consider this identified position in terms of other acknowledged narratives, such as Lumos discussing how Burners typically perceive Kiwiburn as a healing and safe space, as well as the purposeful harm reductive approaches identified through community services at Kiwiburn to foster safe spaces, it appears my findings reflect Ratushniak's neotribal discussion.

In considering the accounts of what Burners perceive or experience through being part of the Burner community, such as sense of community, it has been noted that this can also reflect the sense of belonging that Burners achieve by being part of the collective (Betts, 2019; Chen, 2011). However, it is likewise acknowledged that this space does not provide a sense of belonging for all. In discussing social dynamics at Kiwiburn, Eli (during online interviews) engaged in a discussion that reflected this idea.

> The Burn exists outside of a normal socio-cultural dynamic. It has its own cultural norms, and I think it's really good and important that, like I've noticed personally in recent years, there's been more open conversations about how we want to shape this culture, especially as the Burn gets larger.

Due to this suspension of social norms, those new to a Burn may experience varying levels of culture shock. This was hinted at multiple times during data collection. For example, Lynelle wrote during one of discussions in the online focus group, in answering the question 'Why do Burners do what they do in the way that they do things at a Burn?'

> I think it depends on their experience with Burns and who they are outside of the Burn. For example, a first time Burner may behave in a way that suits the 'default world' when they first arrive to the Burn, then as the week progresses and they realise that the Burn is a safe space for self-expression, they may let themselves go more, or they may close up and not participate as fully. The Burn is so diverse, and each participant gets something different from it. I personally get protective around people in altered states, so rangering works best for me. Others love to party so let loose and dance all weekend, I have met others that love nothing more than spending the whole Burn in a quiet corner and just observing everyone else having a good time. That is the beauty of the Burn everyone is welcome, and everyone can find their niche in our little slice of temporary heaven. We say, "welcome home", and at home you can be yourself...and not wear pants.

I responded with, "Thanks, Lynelle. What do you think makes a Burn a safe space for participants to express themselves?" To which Lynelle replies,

> it's hard to say. I think it is something that has built up over time, and the atmosphere now is something that has been made by hundreds of participants over the years, slowly creating a safe space. In general, I think it is seeing other participants being free and strange and having a great time being a fantastic weirdo, that helps new Burners relax into it. They kinda see that someone is doing it, and no one is judging them for it, so why not give it a go.

During this same discussion, Eli also said, "I genuinely love encountering new Burners, flush with the sparkly-eyed wonder of wholesome culture shock." Later, he also noted,

> my motivations for parking shifts run in that direction. It's a fairly quiet moment for the volunteer, depending on where they're stationed, but it's also an opportunity to facilitate those quiet moments of connection for people arriving at the festival. That can be super helpful after spending all that time in transport and navigating the queue of gate + greeters, but

I have also seen it be a good mental assist for new Burners who need a less stimulating space for orientation.

In a later discussion around the question 'Is there a social structure to Burns?', The Naked Panda responded in a similar tone to the others with

yes, an ever-changing one, much more apparent on day one with virgin Burners [new Burners] looking for guidance, and veteran Burners (mis)informing them of a way, which the virgin will immediately stumble away from. Volunteers, leads, and theme camp organisers [are, thus,] unintentional role models for people to follow.

Not only do these discussions hint at or downright acknowledge the culture shock experienced by outsiders coming into Burner spaces for the first time, but these conversations also highlight the focus placed on creating safe spaces. It is within these safe spaces where exploration of the self and of the community typically occur. These appear to be common themes with my collected data- community, identity, locality and belonging. I note locality amongst these due to the earlier noted importance cultural expression has on community, identity and belonging. As was likewise noted earlier, aspects of New Zealand culture have manifested through the development of Kiwiburn. However, Eli notes that not all local cultures are necessarily reflected in the localised manifestation of this globalised phenomenon. In line with this type of narrative, during one of our online interviews, Eli discussed how he was

intrigued, and I hope that eventually, Kiwiburn gets to the point where it is able to operate as a New Zealand Burn and incorporate the fact that we are a multicultural immigrant nation. There are a whole bunch of practices and cultural influences from New Zealand that can be applied to the Burn, and I don't necessarily think are because it's a corporate brand and an event that has been imported to New Zealand.

"I'm really interested with where you are going with this", I respond. "Do you think it's just completely because of the corporate brand? Or do you think because there's also still a level of Westernised eurocentrism within the global culture [reflecting a

conversation we had had earlier in the interviews], that's been brought in to start off this Kiwiburn culture, and, maybe, there's still a level of that going in there?" Eli replied,

> the Burn was established to try and serve a cultural purpose in terms of festivals, and it grew to the point where it's recognised as an international brand. New Zealand has been running as a regional Burn for longer than any of the other regional Burns, so we have had a chance to develop our own cultural practices and rituals within Kiwiburn. But I think we've now reached a point where it is not just 'how do we make a Burn that operates within New Zealand?' but, 'how do we make a Burn that operates with New Zealand cultural practices?' You raise a very valid point that needs to be recognised that it is a very eurocentric festival… and I know there are groups of people working to shift that and try and find ways to make it more inclusive. I find it interesting that every year when this discussion is raised, people are like, 'well, if we're going to include Māori culture and Tikanga, why can't I include Viking culture and my heritage?' and there is absolutely no one stopping anyone from doing that. 'Steve, if you want to have a Viking camp, I would be so keen to come along to listen to Viking bardic music and storytelling nights. Dude, you're only raising this argument to shut down conversations about 'how can Kiwiburn incorporate more cultural practices?' and you need to examine why you're asking that question because it's getting in the way of people who want to make it a more inclusive and accepting space'. I don't know why people think that's a bad thing. But also, please, someone make a Viking camp. I want to go listen to Viking stories.

I laugh and wholeheartedly agree. Earlier in this same interview, whilst discussing the Temple Burn, Eli made specific reference to Māori culture at the Burn. As he commented,

> the last Temple Burn, there was a really beautiful waiata, or it could have been 'E Toru Nga Mea'. I could be wrong; it was about a year ago at this point. I know for some people that's a point of contention about singing during the Temple Burn. Also, some people feel that singing a waiata is kind of exclusionary for people that can't understand the lyrics

but, ahh, I have things I would say to those people in a different conversation.

"Do you think the community can embrace more localised culture?" I ask Eli, "or do you think we're kinda digging our heels in? Like, what is your perceptions on this being an old conversation that keeps popping up?"

> I would question who was having that conversation to start with, and I would 100% agree that the community is digging their heels in because New Zealand is a racist country.

"Yes", I say, nodding in agreement, recognising that racism through the long-lasting effects of colonisation still exists in aspects of contemporary Aotearoa. Eli continues,

> for a lot of people, acknowledging the 'what's been happening needs to change' means acknowledging taking part in systems that haven't been operating as best they can. And trying to deal with that without taking it as a personal attack is a question of ego… I would ask 'what benefit is gained for local iwi in being involved in this conversation because Kiwiburn can look at becoming more multicultural and inclusive as a way of appeasing their own guilt, or they can look at how they actually operate in partnership that benefits all parties.

"A very good point", I say as I encourage him to continue.

> I think a really good point was raised about greeters, which is a part of the [original] Burning Man culture. But what right do festival attendees have to welcome people on to indigenous land? There are three parties in that relationship. You've got the greeters, you've got the farmers and the farms that they're operating on, but you've also got the iwi who have a claim to that space as well… This is not a conversation that they are going to be having in Burning Swan or on the Playa. This is specific to our cultural contexts.

What this discussion with Eli represents (besides being a common Kiwiburn narrative) is the resistance of glocalisation. Glocalisation is the manifestation and interpretation

of a globalised phenomenon in localised ways; however, such glocalisation can also be met with protest at a local level due to the lack of engagement in local indigenous cultures (or without recognising that contemporary Aotearoa is a multicultural nation). Another example of protest from an indigenous perspective, reflecting what I perceive to be a glocalisation of the global 'Black Lives Matter' social movement, can be seen in figure 13 and the cover photo for Chapter Six. What this dialogue ultimately highlights is that although aspects of New Zealand (NZ) culture are reflected in Kiwiburn practices that provide, for many, a sense of belonging, Aotearoa's original culture is yet to be fully and authentically embraced. This is leading to some still experiencing some level of exclusion that mirrors the default world, such as experiences of exclusion in broader society that may, for instance, be caused by ethnicity. In reflecting on earlier discussions about perceptions of belonging, this highlights a level of idealism present in the Burning Man Principle of 'Radical inclusion', which influences Burner perceptions and narratives. Many do indeed experience a deeper level of community connection and thus belonging. Still, such spaces are not perceived to be radically inclusive by and for everyone, despite what the 10 Principles of Burning Man outline.

One could argue that, with this being recognised as being a conversation lacking with indigenous communities at other Burning Man (BM) events, this is an imported aspect of BM which has been met with protest and could be considered in terms of both *glocalisation* and *indigenisation*. Furthermore, whilst this section has just featured a vital narrative in the Kiwiburn and broader BM conversation, which highlights that in some ways, Kiwiburn is only beginning to consider how it can include more Kiwi culture, this is not to say that local Kiwi culture has been lacking in the manifestation of BM in New Zealand. Lumos' interview, for example, shed light earlier on some of the aspects of Burning Man counterculture that have glocalised with a NZ twist. As the following section will highlight, in some cases, Kiwiburn has also been identified as having an influence on broader NZ society, as well.
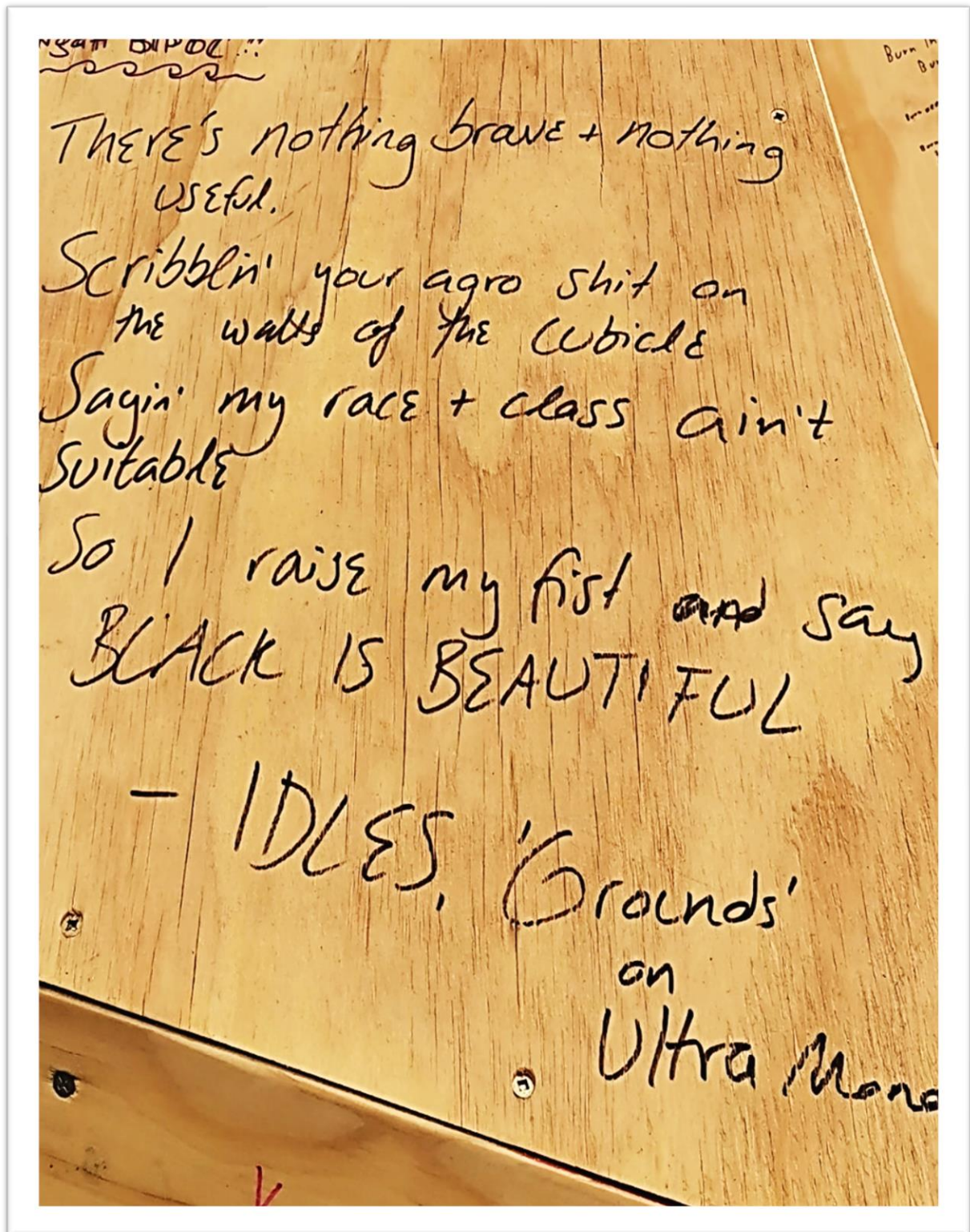
Figure 13. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of a message written on the Kiwiburn Temple saying, 'There's nothing brave and nothing useful. Scribblin your agro shit on the walls of the cubicle. Sayin' my race and class ain't suitable. So I raise my fist and say Black is Beautiful – Idles, 'Grounds', on 'Ultra Mono'.'

Burner Politics Impacting New Zealand

A recent development within the Kiwiburn community illustrates how this New Zealand (NZ) regional Burning Man event impacts Aotearoa. 'KnowYourStuffNZ' (KYSNZ) is a charitable service originating out of collaboration between two theme camps known as 'Chur' and 'Camp Incoherent' at Kiwiburn. As KYSNZs founder and Managing Director, as well as long-standing Kiwiburner, Wendy explained, Chur "provided the venue" for community members from Camp Incoherent to come into their theme camp and host drug testing services. "That was the first year," Wendy said, "in the second, we had our own tent cause it got well popular" (sic). What Wendy means is those services were later moved to Kiwiburn's specially created 'Services Lane' to cater for the number of community-run services that exist during Kiwiburn events. KnowYourStuffNZ engages in harm reduction techniques to minimise the harm caused by drug use at festivals and similar events. Since its inception, KYSNZ has also challenged and impacted NZ legislation around drug testing at festivals, taking a harm reduction approach to drug use in such environments. In late 2020, due to the work and lobbying of KYSNZ, *The Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Bill* was passed in NZ Parliament, amending *the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975* in the process (Cooke, 2020; KnowYourStuffNZ, 2020, 2021; Maoate-Cox, 2021; Neilson, 2021; Wade, 2020).

I was able to chat with Wendy, who was noted as being a prominent and long-standing Kiwiburner, to gain permission to discuss this generally unknown connection to the Kiwiburn event. We had a long chat about harm reduction one sunny afternoon at Kiwiburn, chilling in the sun on a couple of random couches down the road from her theme camp. I enjoyed this, as the minor of my BA was in 'rehabilitation studies', which focused heavily on harm reduction approaches. I remember discussing the potential for a NZ law change happening in one of my undergrad classes and thinking, "this came out of my community." I had such pride in Kiwiburn and the work that Wendy and her team were doing. Wendy stated that by testing drugs (on a FTIR spectrometer, at certain times throughout the Kiwiburn festival), she was protecting her community. She had noticed that many of her friends "were getting hurt" taking recreational drugs, for example, taking a substance that was not the substance they thought they were taking or taking a substance also laced with something else. Others did not know about

harm reductive ways to engage in mind-altering substances at festivals. The lack of information around such practices were creating unsafe situations around drug use in these spaces.

Figure 14. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of KnowYourStuffNZ's sign.

Community and self-care, primarily through preventative and harm reduction techniques, seem most apparent through considering the community-run services that focus on these areas. I myself happen to volunteer for a couple of these services on an annual basis. As such, I see this as a way to personally acknowledge the Principles of 'Participation', 'Communal effort', 'Civic responsibility', and 'Gifting'. It also appears Kiwiburners understand the importance of these services for the community, predominantly supporting them. My data has highlighted similar perceptions in my research participants. For example, Eli discussed services on Kiwiburn's Services Lane, like KYSNZ, during online interviews.

> [Kiwiburn is] not a party. It's not a space for meditation and healing. It's not a social event. It's not a political event. It's not an art event. It's all of these things to some extent and more for some people than others. And, yeah, it's definitely a culture that has problems it needs to address, and there are issues around drug use and, I guess, making sure people are getting enough eat and sleep and care (sic). But there is one aspect that

counteracts that, which I really appreciate about the Burn, which is that they also have things like an entire alleyway [see figures 14 & 15] of 'KnowYourStuff' and 'Deep space' [a space held for psychedelic harm reduction and care guided by trained individuals], and Consent care [known as consent guardians on the Paddock to ensure that consent culture is nurtured on the Paddock as well as offering a safe space for when it is not], and there are core aspects of the community that go out of their way to take care of the rest of the people on site. And not just the festival exec. who build, you know, people who make that infrastructure happen, but the people whose gift to the festival is more care services. Yeah, I think it is a culture that exists and can reflect on what it needs and adapt much faster than you would see in the outside world, and everyone is given active agency to do so. Which, I think, is why it's so effective in shifting to meet the needs of its own community.

Figure 15. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of Services Lane sign.

In considering KnowYourStuffNZ and what they have accomplished, I note a discussion in *Carnivalesque protest and the humourless State*, held by M. Lane Bruner (2005), who adds a carnivalesque element to this discussion. As Bruner (2005) argues,

> a state's sense of humour is proportionate to the strength of citizens' rights and freedoms against the state, the general openness of government deliberations, the breadth and depth of political dialogue, and the degree to which state officials are legally constrained to tolerate public criticism. (p. 137)

In this sense, *carnivalesque protest*, such as what has just been identified at Kiwiburn, is seen as vital to "State health" (ibid.). Bakhtin (1984) considered festival spaces such as carnival to carry the seed for 'real' revolution. In exploring the conceptualisation and impact of KYSNZ, this section outlines that carnivalesque protest can help the 'State' grow and develop with the times, addressing the needs of the people that may otherwise go unchecked. What this tells us about NZ as a Country hosting a Burning Man event, allowing that community to influence legislation, is that Kiwiburn appears to exist in a somewhat healthy country that allows its citizens to rebel against the status quo in order to meet the needs of its people. Even the former American President, Thomas Jefferson, said, "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing" (Bruner, 2005, p. 137). Thus, when "institutional forms of repression [are occasionally] defeated, transformed, or at least temporarily checked by carnivalesque protests… when conditions are favourable", such developments should be acknowledged and noted (Bruner, 2005, p. 137). Bruner's discussion, although kept very broad and generalised, says much about carnivalesque protest within the State. Bruner explained that

> sick and humourless states are populated by strict 'conservatives' who crave certainty and discourage dissensus, have anaemic and passive public spheres, have bland and diverting forms of public entertainment, and are led by individuals who repress critical citizenship. (ibid.)

In quoting Ladurie's (1979) *Carnival in Romans*, Bruner (2005) expands that, within healthy states, carnivalesque spaces allow for the modification of "society as a whole in the direction of social change and possible progress" (p. 139). This is because,

traditionally, during carnival, people were given license to be disruptive. For example, Bakhtin (1984) noted that carnival was expressed most clearly during the Roman Saturnalias. During the renaissance and middle ages, Bakhtin (1984) described that the function of this carnivalesque culture was to maintain social order/structure by providing a time and space in which to be disorderly, pushing against the limitations of everyday life and society (Robinson, 2011). Bakhtin (1984) noted that carnival is a

> temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time, a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of… speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. (p. 10)

What this ultimately highlights is that carnivalesque aspects are not only identifiable within Kiwiburn spaces but have had an impact on a national scale.

Due to NZ being considered a relatively healthy State, this has allowed for such carnivalesque manifestations to act as changemakers. As Bakhtin (1984) explained, "all symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities" (p. 11). Bakhtin had likewise commented that

> one might say that carnival celebrate[s] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order; it mark[s] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. (p. 10)

It is in this way that Bakhtin (1984) identifies carnival spaces such as Kiwiburn carry the seeds for 'real revolution' and is, thus, not just a moment in time when people challenge, reject or transform social norms and restrictions. As Burning Man philosophy outlined in the literature review, this is Burning Man's purpose. This same philosophy was likewise introduced to Kiwiburn through its introduction into New Zealand.

The Conceptualisation of Kiwiburn

I spent an afternoon sitting in the shaded structure of 'Cape Carnival', the theme camp of arguably some of the longest standing Kiwiburners in the community, listening to this tale from the lips of the founder of Kiwiburn himself.

Yonderman settles down, with his ever-present open and friendly smile, to tell his Burning Man journey. I love hearing his story about how he got Kiwiburn started. It is only my third time hearing the story in the decade or so that I have known him. Yonderman gives off such a feeling of joy when he tells the tale of Kiwiburn's origins that listening is all the more gratifying. I read an article about Yonderman, where he briefly acknowledged founding Kiwiburn (Zega, 2016). The same article noted he had been a lecturer in his chosen field of study, so I get the feeling he is used to speaking in this way, especially to students.

I ask Yonderman to begin right at the beginning of his tale. We delve into the first two years of Kiwiburn, which were held within an existing festival called 'Visions' in 2003 and 2004, in Pakawau (in the South Island of NZ). "Back then," Yonderman casually explains as he relaxes in one of the fold-out camping chairs, "Kiwiburn was a 1-night event." It had its own paddock, where the erected effigy sat during the Visions festival until Kiwiburn night. Yonderman also noted that the 10 Principles were present at the event, inspiring the Visions festival to be guided by the Principles. He went on to describe that first Kiwiburn night.

"A parade of around a hundred people would walk around the Effigy", Yonderman went on to say, which brought to my mind scenes from the original 1973 *The Wicker Man* movie, with its Summer Solstice parade up to the erected effigy.

"Visions only lasted about four years", Yonderman noted with regret, interrupting my musings, so Visions was never destined to be Kiwiburn's 'home'.

"And how did this all start from you stumbling upon Burning Man?" I asked him.

It turns out that, in 1993, Yonderman was living in the USA and had been attending a party with some fellow Geologists on the 'Playa'- the name for the site where Burning

Man is held every year; 'Playa' is Spanish for beach, recognising that the Black Rock Desert was once a prehistoric ocean floor. Yonderman did not know about Burning Man yet and had been drawn to the Black Rock Desert area for research purposes. Eventually, Yonderman returned to the site in 1994 with a post-doc, interested in carrying out more research.

"I was sitting in the hot springs and happened to bump into a couple of Burners. They described what Burning Man was." After that, Yonderman said he was determined to go. Subsequently, whilst he was living in the USA, Yonderman managed to attend Burning Man four times. Following this, he moved back to New Zealand. He continued attending Burning Man from 2000 onwards (sometimes flying over during NZ's Labour Day weekend). However, Yonderman did observe with his geographical eye that, despite the 'Leave-no-trace' Principle, the Playa was and is being impacted. "The flat plane is being ripped up. Dust during the event also pollutes the surrounding areas during and just after the event", he explained. This observation is an element of 'Leave-no-trace' that Yonderman felt was being overlooked on the Playa.

"2018 was the last" Burning Man event, he continued, "I've been to eighteen Burning Mans; I wanted to get to twenty, but by the eighteenth, I wasn't as into it. I wasn't feeling it as much. The survival aspect was getting old." By 'survival aspect', Yonderman refers to the survival camping required in all remote Burning Man locations, which requires constant vigilance (against exposure and exhaustion) around radical self-reliance and self-care in sometimes harsh climates, like the Black Rock Desert.

"Tell me about the Burning Man where you got permission to make Kiwiburn a Burning Man regional?" I ask Yonderman as I furiously scribble chicken-scratch notes in my almost full notebook.

In late December 2003, Yonderman was able to speak to the founder of Burning Man, Larry Harvey. Yonderman had been unsure whether to seek permission as he thought it would be considered too casual a request. He wanted to seek consent to start a regional Burning Man that was not in the USA, but, at this time, there were no international regional events.

"They held a big board meeting", Yonderman exclaimed as he leaned forward in his chair and showed an amused grin. He was invited to attend. "It was not casual", he chuckled. "The Burning Man board meeting was held in an old, coloured room with a big whiteboard. It had a map of the world at the end of the room. All these younger folks were asking lots of explicit questions about insurance. They were worried. 'It's not in the U.S.' as they saw it, so they saw it as problematic." I found this comment about insurance interesting considering Lumos' earlier descriptions of art installations on the Playa being "safety third" compared to the NZ contexts of Kiwiburn making health and safety laws much stricter. Additionally, for a group and event that some may argue flaunts being a counterculture, a concern about insurance seems almost counter-counterculture.

Yonderman's feelings were that they would give "a lot more hoops" for him to jump through until Larry Harvey stood up and pointed at the map. "Larry said, 'Burning Man is here,' pointing to the American event, 'and New Zealand is here' pointing to the other side of the map. 'That's major. Let's make Burning Man international'."

"Larry wanted there to be a Burning Man network. He foresaw a day when the Playa could no longer hold Burning Man. Larry said that the future of Burning Man was in the regionals", Yonderman went on to say. "So, permission for the use of Burning Man's official status was granted. I came up with an interim name, Kiwiburn, and it stuck!" he laughed.

The community Yonderman seeded has since flourished within New Zealand. Back when I joined Kiwiburn, it was still considered somewhat low key. Community growth was slow but steady, with a 50-100 person average increase per annum (based on the reports of other Kiwiburners and my own memories of that time). I remember one of the early years when we all got very excited because we reached almost 300 people. Nearly ten years later, as noted in Chapter One, Kiwiburn booked 1500 tickets in 15 seconds.

In considering Kiwiburn within New Zealand contexts, it is important to identify the cultural distinctiveness that a Kiwi variation of the global Burning Man counterculture offers. This seems especially relevant in light of the founder of Burning Man foreseeing a day when the future of Burning Man would be in its regional events held across the

world. Further, as has been highlighted both within this thesis and by Bennett et al. (2014), festivals within NZ or other localised settings provide a space for "the expression of… cultural identities and lifestyle practices" (p. 1). Such festivals acknowledge a space within NZ that celebrates "what is otherwise an intangible notion through the tangible concepts of" a festival culture (Mackley-Crump, 2015, p. 32). These festival spaces "highlight collectivity, meeting, socialization and celebration" within New Zealand (Mackley-Crump, 2015, p. 32). From Kiwiburn's inception to its first event, this feeling of celebration through social collectivity and joining together was ever-present. Kiwiburn is an example of the type of space where belonging and cultural identity can be embraced and nurtured (Mackley-Crump, 2015; Watt, 2021)

Conclusion

Kiwiburn is an example of spaces where belonging and cultural identity can be embraced and nurtured. In saying that, glocalisation does not necessarily mean that all local cultures are present in Westernised global countercultural manifestations. Certain aspects of New Zealand culture are not authentically represented or engaged in at Kiwiburn events. As Kiwiburn was developed upon the foundation of Burning Man, it has been identified that such countercultural manifestations may also manifest some of the negative aspects of this globalised phenomenon. As highlighted within this chapter, such negative elements include a lack of engagement in indigenous communities. Such gaps run the risk of eurocentrism, which creates blind spots within the development of glocalised BM regional events.

This chapter not only engaged in what local cultures are missing from Burning Man and the subsequent protest in the glocalisation of BM in Aotearoa, but it also identified some of the aspects of New Zealand's geography and parts of its culture that have been influencing or introduced. This chapter also provided an example of how NZ has both influenced and been influenced by Kiwiburn. For instance, NZ's farming influence has been identified. Further, as Lumos highlighted, Kiwiburn's site has not been chosen to reflect the physical conditions of the original BM. Instead, it has been developed to reflect New Zealand's connection to its green spaces, rivers, and lakes.

Kiwiburn counterculture has also impacted New Zealand through grassroots projects like KnowYourStuffNZ. This charitable service originated from a theme camp at Kiwiburn, changing NZ legislation around drug testing at festivals and similar events. This change reflects a harm reduction approach that has been embraced by Kiwiburners, signifying communal focus, creation of safe spaces, and desire to look out for one another. This observation also reflects an example of 'State health', highlighting that only a healthy State or country would have allowed its citizens to engage in meaningful change-making countercultural practices. As one of my research participants additionally highlighted, Kiwiburn is a culture that can reflect on what it needs and adapt much faster than you would see in the outside world. Everyone within the community is given active agency to do so, which allows them to create their own little pockets of reality shaped by global and localised cultures and a focus on community, as well as the needs of Burners. As Eli was noted to have outlined, this is why Kiwiburn, as a community, is so effective in shifting to meet the needs of Kiwiburners, even when the 'default world' cannot. The concept of Kiwiburn shaping pockets of reality through culture and agency will be explored further in the coming chapter.

Chapter 5 – Kiwiburn Reality and Counterculture

Figure 16. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) from inside the Kiwiburn Temple, in the middle of the ceiling.

Our 'Sense of Reality': An Introduction

Discussions on the subjective nature of reality circulate at the Kiwiburn community event as casually as discussing the correct way to hang toilet paper, or, conversely, yet just as frequently, with the same intensity as discussing American or New Zealand politics. Burner positions and interpretations of reality are as fluid as their perceptions of gender, sexuality, and class stratification. These systems of value are utilised to build pockets of reality at Kiwiburn that foster a sense of community. For instance, theme camps at Kiwiburn are considered 'pockets of reality' created and maintained by groups of people who share sociocultural experiences and perceptions. This idea will be explored further in subsequent sections. This chapter will also be touching on the theoretical themes of glocalisation, neotribalism and, to a lesser degree, carnivalesque.

In doing so, this chapter will discuss counterculture, interpreted through Bourdieu's concept of *split-habitus*. This section will highlight that the realities we are enculturated into alter our life trajectory and our perceptions of our life's trajectory. Our *sense of reality* is constructed through both internal and external structuring. As this section will acknowledge, our world-views and previous life experiences shape who we are, which does not always align with our life trajectory. In some cases, when this occurs, my research coupled with my own experiences have shown that it can lead to people seeking alternative spaces that may counter and challenge the status quo. The 'pockets of reality' created at Kiwiburn are linked as an example of this.

This chapter will highlight that, in many ways, the Burner community amplifies the postmodern position, questioning conventional perceptions such as subjectivity, the body, society, reality, and what it means to be human, moving beyond binaries to embrace diversity. In order to do so, the following section will open by considering constructed pockets of reality at Kiwiburn, known as theme camps.

A Peek at Theme Camps

Kiwiburn outlines on their website that,

> when a group of people camp together, that's a camp…. when they do it with interactive style and have a rocking great time – that's a Theme Camp. Theme Camps are an essential part of the heart and soul of Kiwiburn.

Theme camps are a core aspect of Burning Man events; they are hotspots for social interaction, activity, and engagement. Additionally, according to Kiwiburn's website, theme camps are "pocket[s] of reality, created by a group of friends who get together to do something interesting." This phrase, pockets of reality, will be explored further in this chapter. As Eli noted during an online interview, "I think each individual theme camp attracts people who have similar socio-cultural values." He went on to later muse,

> I think theme camps are a stronger example of the 'Each one, teach one' [meaning each experienced Burner should teach a new Burner about the Burn]. If it is your first Burn and your friends say, 'hey, come camp with us. We're already an established camp.' It will make things easier for you than trying to navigate the Burn when it's just you and a single tent, trying to make sure you get enough food, water, and rest. And, you know what parts of the festival are going to line up with what will give you a better experience.

Eli also said,

> it's interesting in the way that camps cluster together and form neighbourhoods because, when you look at things like 'Bogan Alley' where you've got [the theme camps] 'Two couches and a rug' and 'Skull fuck', that's a really different experience at the festival to someone who, say, wants to camp by themselves down in quiet camping. Or, when you've got camps like 'Dancealot' and 'Chur', which are close to the Effigy because that's where the party is. So, if you want to go to the festival to party, then chances are you're going to camp in, around, or with the larger sound camps, or, to an extent say, with the fire [dancing] camps.

In my early years at Kiwiburn, one of my favourite theme camps was 'Balrog's Playpen', Kiwiburn's first fire dancing camp. Balrog's was named after a fire demon featured in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. At my third Kiwiburn, a fearless fire-breathing friend of mine, Jack the Muss, asked me if I would be interested in taking over the overall planning and organising of the theme camp because he liked "my style." At the time, I was dancing in the Paddock by myself, blowing bubbles, dressed in a black fairy costume (see figure 17- The film canister seen tied to the dress in this photo is typically known as a 'MOOP' tin, to collect small pieces of 'Matter-Out-Of-Place' such as cigarette butts or stray bits of applique from my fairy dress).

Figure 17. Photo taken from the 'Kiwiburn Photo's' Facebook group. Author unknown. The photo contains a picture of me at Kiwiburn.

The overall theme of Balrog's Playpen was fire performance. It was a place to spin your fire Poi, staff, fans, and whips within a controlled area equipped with fire safety gear. The evenings at those early Kiwiburn's typically saw crowds of Burners hanging out in a built bamboo structure, watching fire dancers share the fire circle and spin fire toys, sometimes to show off, sometimes to learn new tricks, but primarily just for the joy of it. If people watched, fantastic; if they didn't, that was fine too, because everyone

was welcome to do their own thing. As has been noted, theme camps offer something for everyone, offering an array of subcultures, subcommunities, and collectives tied together by a common interest. As Lynelle described during the online focus group,

> it's like the internet, you connect a big group of people, and they naturally settle into loose groups. They aren't strict groups or anything, just like attracting like. But kb is special because anything goes, it makes it more likely you will find your tribe of paper mâché giraffe worshipers

What Lynelle means is that no matter what interests or connections you are looking for, at Kiwiburn, there is so much diversity on the Paddock, offering you an opportunity to foster community connection through shared interest.

Community Engagement through an Afternoon Stroll with Lumos

"Let's take a stroll over to Bogan Alley", Lumos says to me.

"Sounds good; I love that crowd" over at Bogan Alley, I reply, as Lumos and I leave 'the Den', a theme camp that Lumos has close ties with, to go on an afternoon stroll as part of my participant observation data collection. His van, which has been converted into a camper, is parked up next to the Den. During the many years it has existed at Kiwiburn, the Den has offered a different sort of vibe from that just described at Balrogs Playpen. The Den is a place to sit under shade, sip a cup of tea or coffee, and chat with Burner's as they lounge on the grass. Lumos has an impressive array of solar panels charging up various car batteries next to the Den. Different theme camps and artists, trying to avoid generators or needing to light up their art pieces, come to Lumos to charge their batteries during the day. It is one of the many services Lumos provides to the community.

Lumos was attending Kiwiburn years before I first heard about the event. Still, I remember him aiding me during my disastrous first year at Kiwiburn when I turned up woefully underprepared for the survival aspect of camping at Kiwiburn. Although the survival camping aspect is not as extreme as the American Burning Man due to Kiwiburn being hosted on a paddock instead of in a desert, the event is still remote and removed; if you show up without enough resources, there are no shops down the

road you can pop in to buy what you need. Lumos is one of those Burners who is always there, willing to lend a hand to a fellow Burner and contribute to the 'Burner family' in any way he can. As such, it is no surprise that within a minute of leaving The Den, Lumos was over in Bogan Alley territory, aiding a Burner with his cantankerous and uncooperative generator. Bogan Alley is the actual name of the temporary street we are standing on; it is named for the general culture of this sub-group.

Each theme camp on the Paddock provides something unique, offered by a group of people connected through a common interest, e.g., boganology (which will be discussed in the following chapter), fire dancing, friendship, or community support. These are considered gifts provided by the community in the spirit of the 10 Principles. What I appreciate about Lumos' camping setup is what he offers is community-focused. This is not to say that other camps are not contributing to the community. However, in this case, that contribution is specifically focused on helping facilitate others in the community to contribute and gift, such as providing a solar recharge station for other theme camps to charge car batteries (a common source of portable and rechargeable power on the Paddock that can easily be rigged up to power lighting within theme camps). Although community support in this way is not necessarily uncommon, it is an area of community practice at Burner events that is not often explicitly acknowledged in academic dialogue.

As we continued on our stroll around the Paddock, looking at Lumos' favourite streets and theme camps, he told me that it was helping the community that made his Kiwiburn experience special. He placed no judgment on his friends' experiences (referring to substance use and experimentation); he took enjoyment in making sure his friends were safe and looked after. He explained that he does not consider himself an extrovert, often having to take time for himself to recharge during the festival, but that, for him, this event was also like spending time with his family.

We stop at a breath-taking well-detailed wooden sculpture of a Phoenix (see figure 18), and a family with young children approach us whilst on their own afternoon walk. It was clear this was not their first interaction with Lumos at the festival. Lumos began jesting with the little girl, pretending that the Cookie monster soft toy attached to his cowboy hat was not a Pikachu the day before (it most certainly was a Pikachu the day before), leading to the little girl erupting in laughter. The close-knit community feel was

never more present than when I walked the paddocks with Lumos and observed interactions such as these. We were stopped at least a dozen times by those wanting to greet him: from the example of the family on an afternoon stroll to well-wishers wanting to make a point of saying hi to Lumos whilst he was out and about. It was wonderful to watch the joy that came out of these interactions experienced by Lumos and community members. Many interactions started and ended with a hug, and, overall, these experiences offered a kaleidoscope of beautiful smiles and kind faces. This observation provides a typical example of community interactions on the Paddock and Burners' vibes through engaging in and creating a sense of community.

Figure 18. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) of Kiwiburn art installation, 'The Phoenix' by J. Artemis.

'Pockets of Reality'

Similar to Hage (2014), I am drawn to Bourdieu's idea of "politics as a struggle, not between views of reality but between realities" (pp. 148-149). Bourdieu's *habitus* is one's internal character and disposition. It is subjective and influences social structures but is also influenced by external structuring structures (Waltrop, 2015). Our relationship between our habitus and the objective social structures of society creates what Bourdieu calls our *sense of reality* (Bourdieu, 1977). Our *sense of reality* is constructed and kept orderly through the connections we make between "social structures and mental structures" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164).

Burning Man and its New Zealand (NZ) regional event, Kiwiburn, are events run by the Burner community for the Burner community, creating an alternative reality in a world of realities. The Burner community defines itself as an alternative to the default world, meaning that it offers a balanced alternative to everyday life and society. As Lynelle likewise stated, "personally, I see it as a yin and yang in my life, and they work together as a balance." Bia Bliss, also from the online focus group, wrote that she "personally learned to blend Burner life and culture in [her] default reality, so [she did not] feel that [she was] missing out that much" in trying to find that balance to her realities.

This sense of an alternative reality as a balance to everyday life and society is reinforced with a general rejection of dominant narratives in Western culture that are considered arbitrary, harmful, or restrictive. As was previously acknowledged throughout this thesis, the Westernised focus on individualism has allowed for concepts such as radical self-expression to be expressed and developed. Still, such narratives have also commonly been critiqued for emphasizing individuality at the expense of the communal body (Kozinets, 2002). Although this allows for one to deviate from the pack, so to speak, there are times where this can lead to experiences of isolation and disconnection (Chen, 2011; Kozinets, 2002). These experiences, coupled with consumerism, which can at times have exploitative aspects- especially around workers rights and manipulation of consumer behaviour, leads to some people experiencing varying levels of harm through the modern freedom of individualisation (Kozinets, 2002; Ratushniak, 2017).

As was acknowledged in Chapter Four, there are times when these everyday life and society contexts can make Burners feel out of place in the default world, leading to a lack of a sense of belonging and sense of community. As Bean, one of the participants from the online focus group, highlighted, "there needs to be a balance between the different worlds/realities", and many of my participants viewed Kiwiburn as offering balance to their default world realities. Bia Bliss wrote that she felt that Kiwiburn and other Burning Man events "expands peoples' view of what reality is." She went on to explain that

> what happens at Burns don't usually happen at everyday life for most folks, many people are exposed to nudity, lots of drugs/alcohol, public sex, etc., for the first time at a Burn. Also, there is the sense of community. Most people are super friendly and willing to talk to strangers. A Burn is a mind opener for most.

In that same discussion, Lumos contributed by pointing out that "for many, [Burns] fuck with your life, it gives you vision beyond the rose-coloured glasses you were born with", meaning it challenges the status quo leaving one to question the reality they have come to be familiar with and perhaps even reject a previously embraced reality.

As noted earlier, our sense of reality is produced by what Bourdieu (1984) calls 'social and mental structures'. By mental structures, Bourdieu is predominantly referring to habitus. Habitus is influenced by numerous social structures such as class, gender, nationality, and religion, reproducing social norms and conditions, as well as individuality within individuals, through what Bourdieu calls *reproduction* and *reconversion* strategies (Bourdieu, 1984). As also identified in the literature review, these strategies reflect Turner's work around the way sociocultural structures are produced or reproduced. Turner was interested in antistructure through ritualesque practices that provide an alternative to the structure of everyday life and society (St John, 2008). In Chapter Three, under the subheading 'Going Native', I cited St John as discussing Bakhtin. The entire quote from St John (2008), which actually also cites Turner, states,

> Turner's preoccupation with antistructure caused him to downplay the structural or regulatory force of ritual events, just as Bakhtin exaggerated

the inherent disorder of normative texts and social arrangements. One could recast this argument by noting that in repeated practices, the heart of what has been called 'social structure', there is always an interplay between replication and adaptation or improvisation. Any re-enactment is always partly a re-creation as well as a reproduction, whether in the realm of daily life or during special events. Therefore, any enactment adheres somewhat to the normative constraints of the past while also creatively reconstituting them to account for present circumstances, as well as conceptual ideas. (pp. 42-43)

The Bourdieuian definitions of reproduction and reconversion strategies as described by Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes (1990) are similar. *Reproduction* strategies are practices that maintain and improve a person's position in society; *Reconversion* strategies are practices that convert one type of capital to another, thus transforming structures and positions in the field. In Bakhtin, Turner and Bourdieu's conceptualisations, reconversion of structuring structures is noted as being in play. As the rest of this section will outline, I argue that in some cases, these reproduction and reconversion strategies allow for the creation and development of countercultures, such as Burning Man and Kiwiburn, through what Bourdieu calls *split-habitus.*

Split-habitus and Counterculture

In 1999, in *The Weight of the World*, and then again in 2004, within *Sketch for a self-analysis*, Bourdieu muses on the concept of *split-habitus* (Callewaert, 2006; Waltrop, 2015). He considers how to reconcile what the real world had given him and why this was in contradiction with his own ambitions (Callewaert, 2006). As outlined earlier, habitus is influenced by multiple positions in multiple fields that we are exposed to along the trajectory of our lives. Our past experiences shape habitus. It is through these experiences in the field that we learn doxa (Waltrop, 2015). As defined in Chapter Two, doxa is the social norms and social conditioning from structuring structures. It is shared belief in an established social order that holds unwritten rules about behaving, thinking, and feeling (Bourdieu, 1977). As Lumos would call it, doxa can be the rose-coloured glasses that society teaches one to see through. Doxa is, therefore, the naturalisation of society's arbitrary classifications and categorisations

within the social order (Bourdieu, 1977). It is the parts of our day-to-day perceptions and actions that we do not usually consciously think about. In Bourdieu's concept of field, doxa leads us to readily accept our sense of reality and social position (Deer, 2014).

What happens, however, when our habitus is "out of line with field", such as the field (or 'pockets of reality') commonly found in the default world or at Kiwiburn? (Waltrop, 2015, p. 58). This is what Bourdieu has labelled *split-habitus* (Waltrop, 2015). The narratives offered by my participants lead me to wonder if this is how counterculture occurs. Our habitus is exposed to numerous positions in numerous fields throughout our lives, but it cannot prepare us for every position in every field. When something happens, that alters which field one is exposed to and positioned in, this can change one's life trajectory as well as contradict the field and one's position in the field. It leads one to experience a lack of connection and sense of belonging or even question the status quo one is enculturated into.

Split-habitus contradicts one's anticipated life trajectory and life experiences (Waltrop, 2015). When it does occur, *split-habitus* produces internal feelings of conflict, "challenge and [even] suffering" (Waltrop, 2015, p. 58). *Split-habitus* is the feeling that you hold an illegitimate position in the field; it is the feeling that you do not belong. It is the result of a disturbance in the conditions that produced one's habitus. When the conditions of a new field (or an old field) are too unfamiliar to recognise, internal conflict with one's habitus will likely occur. *Split-habitus* can, therefore, be both liberating and limiting (Waltrop, 2015). It can lead to challenging the status quo, questioning what seems normal, and seeking an alternative field for a sense of belonging. When one perceives that there are threats posed in the spaces we have been exposed to, moments in life where you feel like the space you are in is not for you, it makes sense that one may search for spaces where one does feel a sense of belonging and where the 'rules of the game' make sense and are easy to follow.

Considering the messages written on the Kiwiburn Temple each year by fellow Burners, it is clear that Kiwiburners often experience a sense of belonging at Kiwiburn. This is perceived as missing in the default world (see figures 19, 20, 21 & 22). In these messages, Burners question how they could feel so much joy and offer support to

others by assuring them they are enough just as they are, writing empowering messages of resilience, and simply offering love and acceptance.
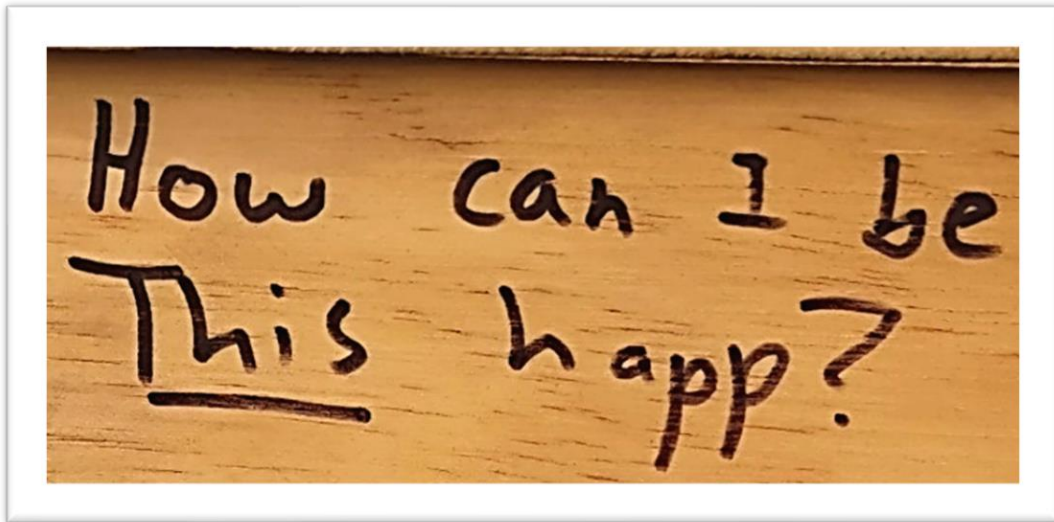

Figure 19. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of a message written on the Kiwiburn Temple saying, "How can I be this happ[y]?"
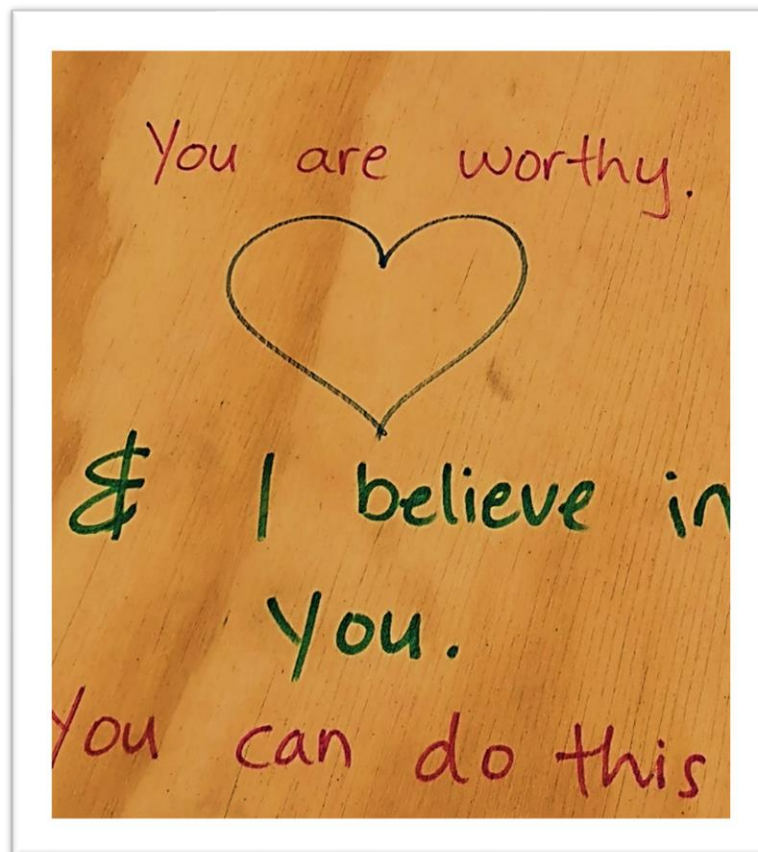

Figure 20. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of a message written on the Kiwiburn Temple saying, "You are worthy. & I believe in you. You can do this."
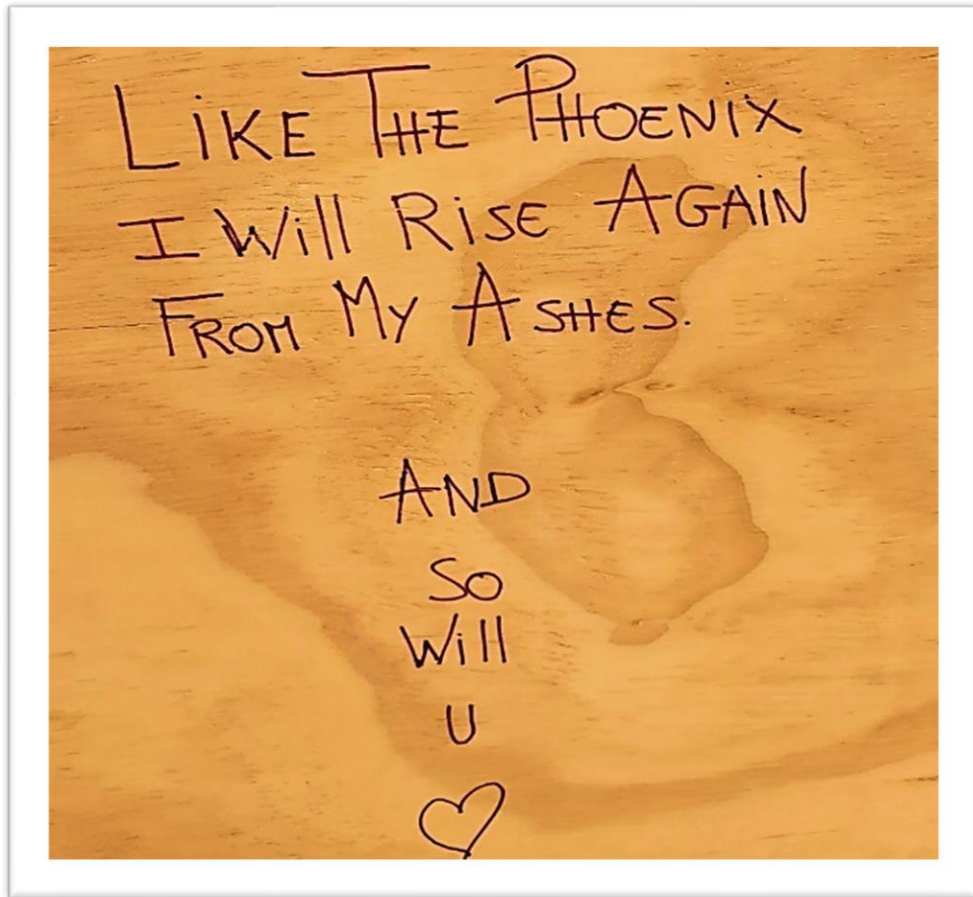
Figure 21. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of a message written on the Kiwiburn Temple saying, "Like the Phoenix, I will rise again from my ashes. And so will you."
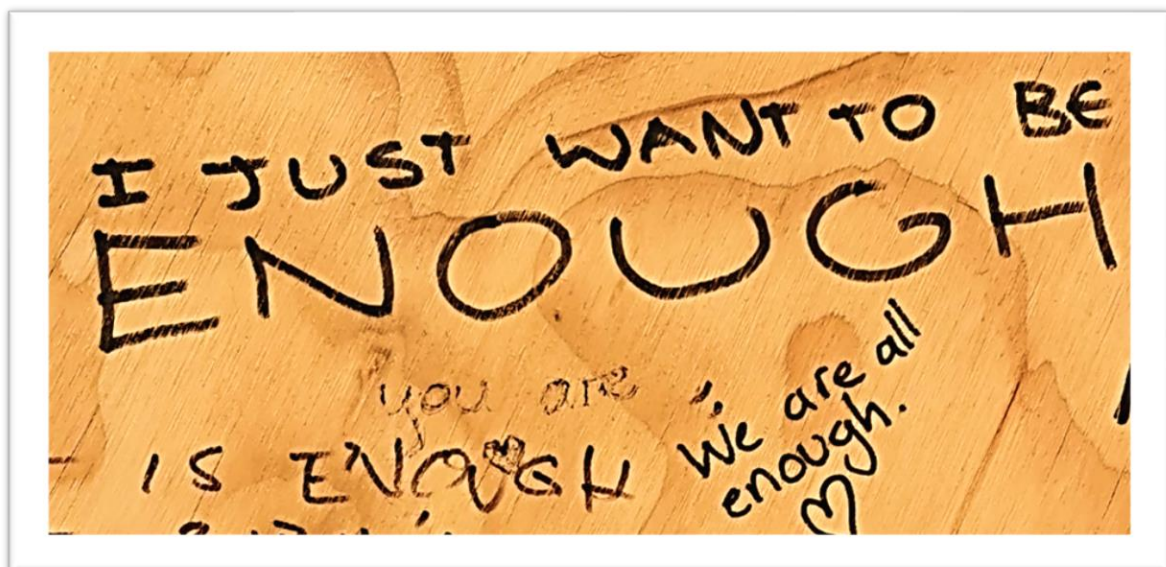

Figure 22. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of a message written on the Kiwiburn Temple saying, "I just want to be enough." In faded words, the first reply says, "You are." The second clearer reply says, "We are all enough."

Kiwiburn Doxa

While some may argue that the 10 Principles are not taken for granted enough to be considered doxa, I argue that given the influx in new Burners and the difficulty in volunteering currently being noted within the community, one could say seasoned Burners do take the 10 Principles for granted. We take for granted that the 10 Principles are the status quo at Burner events and thus will be embraced by all within these spaces. Yet, as this subsection will highlight, the community also have terms such as 'Sparkle Pony' to identify those that act outside of this doxa, as will be defined shortly. Additionally, although the Principles are said to be open to interpretation, any interpretation of 'Radical self-expression' is expected to not come at the expense of the overall community. When this does not occur, it can be easy to see where certain Principles, as doxa, get taken for granted. So, within the Burning Man field, doxa is considered the assumed standard for behaving, thinking, and feeling. Although the 10 Principles are an aspect of the original event, conceptualised by the founder, Larry Harvey, to guide international regional events in understanding the Burning Man ethos, each regional interprets and embraces the 10 Principles of Burning Man, and the overall ethos, in different ways. Kiwiburn, for example, displays the international community *doxa* through a New Zealand lens, which has likewise been influenced by NZ society.

Figure 23. Photo taken by Watt (2021) of Yonderman's 2021 Kiwiburn t-shirt.

When I arrived at his theme camp to interview him, Kiwiburn's founder Yonderman was wearing a Kiwiburn t-shirt that his camp, 'Cape Carnival', had printed especially for this year's event (see figure 23). It features a 'Sparkle Pony' hunter. To explain, as noted on one of the various Burning Man-inspired community websites:

> A 'Sparkle Pony' is someone who comes to Burning Man unprepared and ends up relying on the generosity of others, purposefully or otherwise, for basic things like food and water and sometimes even more. (Lam, 2020)

What this broad definition does not entirely outline is that, at Kiwiburn, a Sparkle Pony is considered to be anyone who turns up to a community event and just treats it like a party without engaging in or acknowledging the community, which exists year-round or respecting the 10 Principles of Burning Man. Although this may sound mean-spirited and must be acknowledged as an imported term from the original event, this phrase serves a common purpose in protecting the community's values. Sparkle Pony tends to be a label placed on those new to or unaware of the community's principles. Some Burning Man events acknowledge an additional Principle for similar reasons, aimed at those genuinely interested in learning about or embracing the culture, and this was also imported into Kiwiburn. Originating out of AfrikaBurn, the 'Each one, teach one' Principle encourages that each experienced community member teaches something about the culture and events to a new Burner. Although it is not recognised as an official Kiwiburn Principle, 'Each one, teach one' is still a known Principle on the Paddock amongst many Burners. In both cases, these imported phrases and concepts are used not only to protect community values but also strengthen the overall sense of community through insider/outsider dialogue and positioning.

The t-shirt that Yonderman displays shows Kiwiburner doxa through a typical form of Burner delivery – humour. At Kiwiburn, humour is used to remind people of the communities guidelines. It is also used to push against the social norms of broader society. Humour reflects the carnivalesque attitudes of multiple Burners. At Kiwiburn, the term Sparkle Pony is more likely to be thrown around in jest than with any serious derogatory undertones. As such, the 'tongue in cheek' aspect of New Zealand humour will likewise be explored further in Chapter Six. The 10 Principles of Burning Man outline through the Fourth Principle, 'Radical self-reliance', that there is a general

expectation to turn up to this removed space (aka temporary autonomous zones), which requires people to be prepared for survival camping, equipped to sustain themselves throughout the event without relying on the generosity and resources of others. Otherwise, aspects like the gifting economy at Kiwiburn start to lose meaning, making such transactions more focused on providing goods and services rather than gifts.

This shirt also shows an example of how Burners challenge external threats brought in from the default world. Default world is a very broad term that can refer to any scale of society, from regional to global, external to Burner spaces. This not only strengthens insider/outsider boundaries, and thus, a sense of community but attempts to address threats to the community from the external world. Whilst the Burner community know that the external "world is our world too", as Bean was noted to have said during the online focus group. What terms like 'default world' and 'Sparkle Pony' do is challenge those potentially harmful self-interested and self-centred perceptions created through capitalism and Westernised ideologies of individualism. Although there are many positive aspects to our world (which allow for concepts such as the Principle of 'Radical self-expression' to develop), harmful structuring perceptions from our globalised world exist also. These harmful aspects of external society may influence those new to the community or those who may be unaware of community values. Therefore, one of the purposes of the term 'Sparkle Pony', in particular, is to address those who may seek to gain an advantage by improving their experiences at such an event even to the detriment of others and the overall communal body. This also reflects discussions around the concept of Neotribal carnivalesque.

Linking it back: Neotribal Carnivalesque Reality

In *The return of the tragic in postmodern societies*, Maffesoli et al. (2004) discuss "the astonishing return of archaic values to the forefront of the social scene" (p. 133). He explains that tribalism swirls around us, both valuable and disturbing in our contemporary societies (Maffesoli et al., 2004). As tribal structures challenge the status quo of modern large-scale societies, denial of this re-emergence of ancient perceptions and practices through neotribalism becomes 'mandatory' in some circles of 'established thought' (Maffesoli et al., 2004). According to Maffesoli, these neotribal

social structures have emerged out of "the tragic sense of life" as contemporary life is 'inescapable' and 'fated' (Maffesoli et al., 2004, p. 133; Maffesoli & Foulkes, 1988). There is a temporal aspect to Maffesoli's theory on postmodern tribalism, as he noted that time moves faster in commodified societies, using science, economics, and technology as critical examples. In contrast, neotribes such as Kiwiburn create a reality in which time moves more slowly, through a sort of 'idleness' that creates "motionless movements [and] eternal moments" (Maffesoli et al., 2004, p. 134). Maffesoli goes on to note that

> it is this inversion in the polarity of time that gives presence to life and accords value even to what is stifling in the present, that promotes the sense of tribal belonging, and that allows us to view ordinary life under the sign of destiny. Ordinary life, banal life: this is the mulch from which communal renewal comes. The great paradigm that is taking place, thanks to this presentism, is indeed the slippage from an 'ego-centred' to a 'place-centred' worldview. In the former instance of modernity that is now ending, primacy is given to the rational individual living in a contractual society. In the latter instance, of an emerging postmodernity, it is groups that come into play, 'neotribes', that lay siege to specific spaces and harmonize with them. (Maffesoli et al., 2004, p. 134)

Bruner (2005) adds a carnivalesque tone to this discussion by likewise recognising that "carnivalesque also displays temporal features with political ramifications" to these temporarily constructed alternative realities (p. 139). In citing Leach's (1961) *Rethinking Anthropology*, Bruner (2005) goes on to say that carnival "create[s] temporary windows of opportunity for freedom from political subjection" through "three main features that mark the temporal dimensions of political carnival" (ibid.). These three temporal dimensions are:

> Masquerade [including the costuming that has been identified in Burner spaces], role reversal, and closing formalities: masks [and costuming] signify a breaking away of ordinary time and entrance into fictive or sacred time via anonymity and normal role loss; role reversals – or the turning of the world upside down- signify a divine instance of group fusion as people enter liminal spaces where normally highly disciplined

> social roles are temporarily exchanged or discarded; and closing formalities (e.g., orderly processions)… occur at the end of the carnival period [just as, in Chapter Four, the Temple and Effigy Burns were noted to occur at the end of Kiwiburn] to signify a return to the world of humourless repression where such politically consequential fictions as 'the divine right of kings', 'state sovereignty', or 'free trade' become 'real' again. (ibid.)

Burner reality and its critiques of other realities are produced through a carnivalesque pattern of play, which performatively and discursively removes the perceived threats of dominant social narratives and practices created in the default world (Robinson, 2011; Toraldo & Islam, 2019). Reflecting the data that has been presented in this thesis, echoing the narratives and perceptions of other Burners, this position feels entrenched in Burner world-views, interactions, and dialogues. Bruner is cited as noting three key aspects of carnivalesque: costuming, the temporary changing or loss of social roles and hierarchies typically held outside of carnivalesque spaces, and explicit practices around closing or ending this temporary space way that prepares participants to return to everyday life and society. Also, like both carnivalesque and neotribalism, and similar to what Bourdieu has also been cited as discussing, this thesis has highlighted that capitalism has forced a dominant reality onto Burners, who, in turn, strategize to create a temporary "space where one can be at home in the world" (Das et al., 2014, pp. 151-152).

Social orders transform and are reproduced in neotribal carnivalesque spaces, removing the alienating, dehumanising perceptions and practices, collectively repressive in broader society (Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984; Das et al., 2014; Robinson, 2011; Toraldo & Islam, 2019). Through this rejection and transformation of dominant social narratives, the default world's social barriers and hierarchies ostensibly break down, creating a sense of communitas (Betts, 2019; Chen, 2011; Douglas, 2020; St John, 2018). Bakhtin (1984) highlighted that carnivalesque spaces acted in opposition to interpretations of life as inert 'chaos'. Further, akin to Bourdieu's theory of practice concerning sense of reality, field, habitus, and doxa, at festivals, reality is a different kind of chaos from the default world; thus,

our perceptions and practices in such spaces will be structured differently (Toraldo & Islam, 2019).

Conclusion

"How Can I be this Happy?"

"I just want to be enough," "You are."

"You are worthy. & I believe in you. You can do this."

These statements featured in the photos displayed throughout this chapter highlight a pattern in Burner dialogue. Underpinning the expressions of love and empowerment offerings is a more subtle expression of isolation and social disconnection experienced by Burners in broader society. Conversely, at Kiwiburn, one may experience complete strangers being willing to embrace and accept each other, showing genuine interest in what unique aspect of you that you possess that no one else does. As this chapter acknowledged, in these moments, such interactions are perceived to occur not out of any self-serving interest nor exploitation but out of genuine curiosity in hearing and learning something unique and exciting about a stranger. Accounts reveal that when one has experienced hurt or damage out in society, these alternative experiences can be substantial. These narratives have also been identified to reflect neotribal carnivalesque spaces.

Split-habitus is the contradiction between life trajectory and life experiences, producing internal feelings of conflict, challenge, and suffering, as expressed through the writings left on the Kiwiburn Temple walls. It is the feeling that you do not belong. Therefore, split-habitus can be both liberating and limiting, leading to developing or exploring countercultures such as the neotribalism identified in temporary autonomous zones at Burning Man and Kiwiburn. Experiences of communitas in these neotribal carnivalesque spaces may lead to expressions of surprise in experiencing such a level of communal acceptance and perhaps even inner peace. As this chapter has demonstrated, such subsequential explorations of alternative spaces and countercultures can be embodied, communicated, and perceived in very positive

ways. In other words, split-habitus can lead to one challenging the status quo of broader society whilst seeking alternative spaces that provide a sense of belonging.

Kiwiburn is an annual event run by the Burner community for the Burner community, creating pockets of reality in a world of realities. Burners define the spaces at these events as being a balanced alternative to the default world. This sense of alternative realities is reinforced by recognising a system of values guided by the 10 Principles of Burning Man, coupled with a general rejection of prevailing social narratives, including dominant frameworks for conceptualising reality. The carnivalesque pattern of play and humour that is often used to performatively and discursively construct alternative neotribal realities at Burner events will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 – Performance, Protest and Humour

Figure 24. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) of Kiwiburn Temple, where someone has written 'Fuck the Police.'

An Introduction and a 'Fake Fox Hunt'

Whilst I was interviewing Yonderman for his story in Chapter Four, we were temporarily distracted by an extraordinary sight. A couple of Burners, dressed as foxes, ran past us at high speed and hid behind a nearby art installation. These Kiwiburns were panting like they had run a marathon and were displaying behaviour as if they were in the middle of a game of 'hide and seek'. Suddenly, from behind me, I hear the parody of a hunting horn. More Burners appear, some dressed as hounds, others dressed as aristocracy on a fox hunt, equipped with large wooden sticks carrying toy horse heads at the end (like one once played with as a kid). There were shouts of excitement, fake barking, and the foxes were off to find somewhere else to hide. Yonderman and I turned our attention back to the interview and continued as if nothing had happened. After all, it was just another day on the Paddock where you are bound to see interesting and often hilarious scenes, such as a parade of silly walks (in the spirit of Monty Python) or, as just described, a fake fox hunt. This anecdote highlights some of the playful performative aspects of Kiwiburn spaces that are sometimes staged and at other times arise from out of nowhere. Whether these aspects are planned or spontaneous, they add a level of immediacy by drawing participants into the here and now through such practices.

In answering the question 'Why do Burners do what they do in the way that they do things at a Burn?', one of my participants from the online focus group, The Naked Panda, answered,

> because they can, because they can't anywhere else. Because they want to have fun. Because they don't care. Why does the way that they do things change even the mundane things like walking? We become more mindful, we want the experience, we want to feel, and feel safe to do so.

> But also, there's that level of fakeness, and this isn't a bad thing, fake it till you make it can work in wondrous ways, and in this environment, I've seen people very quickly switch from faking it to making it. Some people just adjust social behaviour to meet their goals; they can pay attention to

> how they are coming across and adjust their behaviour to match the situation; they see how everyone else is acting and try to act the same to fit into the Burner crowd. In saying that, a lot of Burners have been rejected through their lives for not being normal and have had to conform to do things different to how they would naturally when out in the default world, and the Burn finally gives them the opportunity to conform into unconformity.

As has been often highlighted within this thesis and as The Naked Panda just explained, Burners have generally found it necessary to discursively and performatively deconstruct the threats introduced and shaped by what some may find to be isolating aspects of a globalised world. As this chapter will emphasize, this deconstruction is often achieved by Kiwiburners through humour and a pattern of play. In some cases, this humour is identified through performance and art; sometimes, it is communicated as a form of protest. Ultimately, such practices are collectively shared and understood at Kiwiburn, leading to a sense of belonging being experienced and identified within Burner spaces as well as an expression of New Zealand culture.

Humour, Culture and Protest

Humour and humorous antics at Kiwiburn can be collectively enjoyed, shared, and understood. Take the example featured in figure 25, for instance. I love the 'tongue in cheek' element of this sign. I think it is so Kiwiburn and so Kiwi. Bill English was the leader of 'the National Party' in New Zealand (NZ). National reporting and comments from this political party's counterparts consider 'the National Party' to be conservative and not necessarily open to new ideas such as harm reduction through drug testing at NZ festivals (Cooke, 2020; Maoate-Cox, 2021; Wade, 2020). This included comments that 'the National Party' were "high-horse moralising", implying there was a note of arbitrariness to such a position (Wade, 2020). As Philosopher Henri Bergson noted, humour has 'social signification' (Bidgoli, 2020). Some further argue that humour also has an 'ethical sensibility' (Bidgoli, 2020). In quoting Chattoo's (2018) *A funny matter: toward a framework for understanding the function of comedy in social change*, Bidgoli (2020) also suggests that humour "is a powerful source of public influence and cultural information… help[ing] to reduce taboos and open conversation" (p. 83).
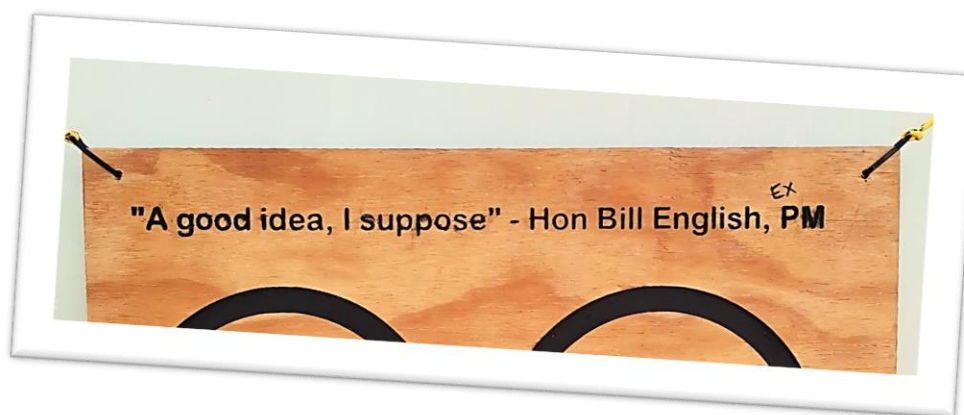
Figure 25. Photo taken by J. Watt (2021) of the caption featured on the top of the 'KnowYourStuffNZ' sign at Kiwiburn's 'Services Lane'.

In New Zealand, the reduction of taboos in such spaces includes a challenge against certain impressions from NZ culture, where there may be a reticence not to stand out due to influences of *Tall Poppy Syndrome*. In quoting the *Oxford dictionary of New Zealandisms*, Anna Dediu (2015) defined a *tall poppy* as being "a conspicuously successful person, whose distinction attracts envy or hostility" (p. 6). This aspect of NZ culture has typically encouraged people to be humble in what they do; don't stand out from the pack; don't deviate from other people's experiences; don't celebrate personal success obtained through individualism (Dediu, 2015). Otherwise, you are straying from the collective (Dediu, 2015). Kiwiburn's contexts allow participants to act with agency within a collective body and do so without societal pressures of conformity to NZ social norms and expectations. In explicitly discussing this reticence, Eli mentioned during his second online interview,

> the reticence to stand out in New Zealand or for a lot of people coming into the Burn. It could be, I guess, a clash of cultural values. Where it's safer to sit back and watch what's happening, but the participatory aspect of Kiwiburn kind of means that that doesn't work on the Paddock. So, you've got first time Burners who are just a little unsure or feeling like they don't have, say, enough to contribute or that this isn't their space to come forward because they don't want to put themselves out there and say 'Yeah, I've got this! I'm capable. I'm competent. I'm good at this.' And, eventually, they find their place, or they recognise they don't

have to be good at something. And there's less likelihood of people putting them down… Which is nice.

In discussing the participatory aspect of the Burn, Eli highlights the carnivalesque characteristic of no spectators, which is supported at Kiwiburn through the 10 Principles, especially the Ninth and Tenth Principles. The Ninth Principle, 'Participation', encourages the community to embrace radical participation. The Burner position is that authentic participation in experience is the only way to produce genuine transformative change. The Tenth Principle, 'Immediacy', likewise encourages Burners to aspire to overcome the barriers that stand between them and authentic participation in society or with the natural world. However, as Eli acknowledged, tall poppy syndrome can conflict with this ethos within New Zealand cultural contexts. As this chapter will highlight, one of the ways that this barrier is overcome is through humour. Humour takes on many forms at Kiwiburn, from satire to a communal sharing of a common message. In some cases, reflecting carnivalesque, humour is also used as a form of protest.

<u>Humour and Protest</u>

Like all things within carnivalesque contexts, humour is a type of performance, and performance is a type of art. Bakhtin outlined that art is a type of communication that expresses a system of values. Further, he recognised humour and carnival laughter as a "totality of language and culture" (Bidgoli, 2020, p. 83). Thus, humour communicates cultural and value systems that display the Burner neotribes ethos. This is because "humour is actually built on intersubjectivity, sociality, and reform" (Bidgoli, 2020, p. 83). Whether it is a Kiwiburn theme camp activity where booths feature satirical snake-oil salesmen trying to 'sell' you intergalactic prostitutes and palm-readings (hinting at themes from the *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy;* see figures 26 & 27) or Burners performatively and ironically acting as the 'Weed police' as they provide social commentary on New Zealand's recently unsuccessful cannabis referendum, everyone is generally in on the joke and can identify with the deeper meanings behind such behaviours.
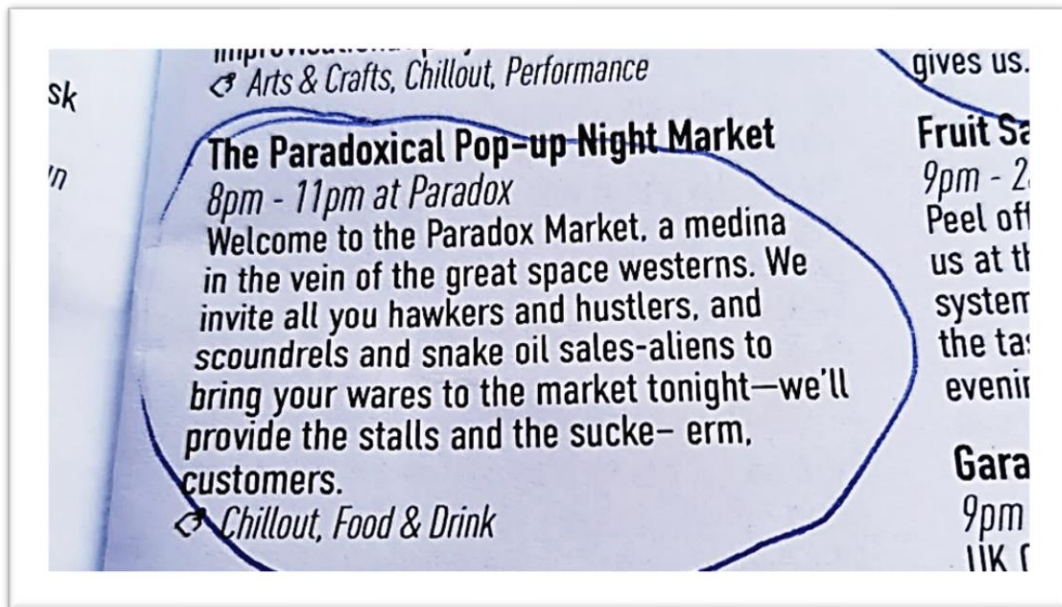
Figure 26. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of an insert from the 2021 Kiwiburn survival guide and event programme.

Figure 27. Image provided by Paradox theme camp (2021) of a flyer for an intergalactic prostitute.

As likewise discussed in Chapter Four, Ratushniak (2017) identified community-centred performative rituals and practices, considered through a neotribal lens, as appearing to counteract the alienating effects of neoliberal society. In this way, carnivalesque and performative protest happens in that juncture where life and art meet, creating a narrative expressed through what Bakhtin (1984) typically called a 'pattern of play' and performance. As Eli highlighted, "the suspension of normal cultural norms ala Carnivale and the open-ended emphasis on participation [at Kiwiburn] allow for individual participants to shape their experiences with an unusual amount of agency." As acknowledged in Chapter Two, such agency reflects the attitudes and political environment of the day in such spaces. These attitudes can also influence the beliefs and practices of the communal body. That basic human need for belonging and community is strengthened through this collective sharing of humour and play.

Glocalised Profanity and Humour

In some cases, it is still unclear if what I see from my collected data is because of Burning Man counterculture or New Zealand culture, which made data collection enjoyable. I will use an example from the online focus group concerning profanity, which Bakhtin links to curse words and cursing. As Bakhtin (1984) highlighted, swearwords are an imprint on our language of carnivalesque. It is a rebelling against the authoritarian word, which is also rather classist in its authoritarianism. I am about to use some strong language here, and I hope this thesis's NZ cultural and academic contexts will make this a little more acceptable.

In response to Question 4, 'How would you describe the atmosphere at Kiwiburn and other Burns around the world?', Eli discussed how there is always a bit of social and cultural confusion from international Burners who come to an annual Kiwiburn event. I asked him to elaborate with an example. He responded with, "try getting a cup of sugar from any of your neighbours in Bogan Alley. You will probably get it, but they'll call you a munter or a c*nt in the process. It is how they show affection." Now, in general, this use of profanity could easily fit into a discussion about Bakhtin's Carnivalesque. Still, I note that this is an aspect of NZ culture as well. I refer to an article I read many years ago, before everything became digital and accessible online, in the University of Waikato's student magazine *Nexus*. The article title was called

'Kiwi's: A bunch of 'Good Cunts''. It was written by an American student who had had to grapple with culture shock over our use of the word 'cunt' as a term of endearment in New Zealand. As the author explained, it is one of the very worst profanities you can use in America. This use of profanity is widely acceptable in carnivalesque contexts, but NZ's cultural contexts also make the use of this particular word acceptable in certain social contexts.

As briefly discussed in the literature review, Bakhtin drew on his experiences from Russian tradition to explore this particular facet of culture, especially theories focused on laughter. Influenced by Russian scholars of the early twentieth century, Bakhtin (1984) acknowledged "the importance of the lower 'strata' of culture [that existed in opposition] to the uniform, official 'high culture'" (p. ix). Similarly, Aristotle said, "comedy is an imitation of inferior people" (Bidgoli, 2020). As Bakhtin acknowledged, high culture prohibited the presence of laughter and comical relief during the pre-renaissance era. This position contrasts with post-WWII subcultures, indicating an ethnic and socioeconomic hierarchy being dominant pre-WWII. Such post-WWII influences can be seen in present-day New Zealand through the use of profanity as terms of endearments in often jocular ways.

The authoritarian word is rejected clearly at Kiwiburn and, in some ways, rejected by Kiwi culture. This can be seen in the use of profanity as terms of endearment as being both an aspect of NZ and Kiwiburn culture. This becomes especially apparent when this is considered in relation to how other cultures perceive using certain types of profanity. Kiwiburn has also been identified as often contradicting or challenging high cultures present in the default world, such as 'Bogan Alley' (an alleyway at Kiwiburn full of theme camps connected to boganology). To explain, Bogans also reflect a local aspect of Kiwiburn as 'Bogan' is commonly used in New Zealand and Australia to describe a Ford or Holden driving, black plastic sunglasses, black jeans and metal shirt-wearing middle- to low-socioeconomic group. The existence of Bogan Alley at Kiwiburn offers an example of the glocalised neotribal carnivalesque elements of this Burning Man regional. The beliefs and practices of Bogan's reject the authoritarian other in a way that removes the threat such authority causes. Bogan's flaunt what others in the default world might call 'bad taste'. Bogans at Kiwiburn challenge what may seem like the status quo at Kiwiburn events through performative and discursive

practices that identify such areas with irony and cynicism. Reflecting both Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque* and Bourdieu's concept of *Distinction*, Bogans distinguish themselves by flaunting the tastes and practices of low-socioeconomic groups, defining themselves by their status in a way that rejects the perceived alienating attitudes of the higher classes. In this way, Bogan Alley also critiques the counterculture at Kiwiburn, keeping them on their toes, so to speak. As will be next highlighted, this can sometimes occur through critiques on mainstream trends identifiable at events like Kiwiburn, such as the stereotypical hippy with dreads.

 As Eli likewise explained about Bogan Alley during recorded interviews, it

> is where the muntery, drinking culturey aspect of New Zealand culture becomes almost an intentional performative quality. They've picked that specific axis to build not the identity but almost the culture of their camp around. So that's camps like 'Two Couches and a Rug', 'SkullFuck'… 'The Rusty Joint'. I don't know how well those particular camps would translate to overseas Burns. I think we find the place in, like, a combination of factors. It's aspects of New Zealand culture that exist separate to the Burn but also it [Bogan Alley and boganology] services as a counterpoint to the fluffy, huggy, Chakra sniffing, sandal-wearing, hippy aspect of the Burn. Sort of like a cynical counter-response. One of my favourite memories is [Burner's name removed for confidentiality] at 'Two Couches and a Rug' on a megaphone telling people at loud volume as they walked past, 'White people, shave your dreads!'

It circles back to that premise of what Eli described during his recorded interviews as "not taking yourself too seriously." At Kiwiburn, if you do, the ridiculousness of your seriousness will be challenged and mocked through performative and discursive humour. Eli's memory also highlights another aspect of political and cultural discourse through performance. For example, statement's like 'White people, shave your dreads' are short and to the point but deliver a clear if jocular message about cultural appropriation.

In discussing Kiwiburn humour, Eli brought up another aspect of Kiwiburn, although features at other Burns, is believed to be most prominently practised at New Zealand

Burns: the ritual of the 'running of the hippies' around the collapsed burning Effigy. At the 2021 Kiwiburn, at least 70% of Burners present at the Effigy Burn ritual took part in the naked run around the fire.

During online interviews, Lumos and I discussed the energy present at the Effigy Burn. As Lumos similarly described,

> Effigy is a wild, crazy party. So, you're building something monumental and impressive, and, vibrant and full of life, and you're going to burn that sucker and we're going to rip our clothes off and run around it naked, and, over the embers, later on, we're going to be sitting around drinking and talking, and, it's a huge amount of energy you put into that.

Lumos describes identification and acknowledgement of a space removed from the outside world, allowing for free expression and a letting loose of wild energy. Eli supposed that the running of the hippies also gave an excellent example of Kiwiburners not taking themselves too seriously. As he explained during online interviews,

> 'The running of the hippies' is definitely not a term without some derogatory undertones. There is an aspect of taking the piss. Also, I feel that it's now integral. Yeah, sort of an integral part of the Burn. I mean, it can happen without it, but, yeah, it's definitely [now] an integrated part of the Burn. I feel that same aspect of taking the piss can be found in Bogan Alley.

I respond,

> I do like this example because it takes the focus away from, like, I've gotten this impression from people who haven't been to Burning Man that they think it's a very big hippy festival. So, these examples that you're giving really does show another side. Especially the cynicism that you bring up as well. That's also a very good representation of 'No. It's not just like this hippy, flower power, spiritual, crystal healing so and so.'

There's these whole other layers that are there that have absolutely nothing to do with that but still have their place.

Eli nods, the hint of a smirk on his face. He replies,

yeah, there's definitely the fluffy, sunshine, flower power vibes built into the crust, but there are also things that happen in response to that. Recognising more recently that some people DON'T want to hug for various reasons. So, developing a consent culture (see examples in figures 28 & 29) that allows for not just 'No, I don't want to do x, y, and z', but also like those stages of comfort. So maybe you don't want a hug, but you're fine with a high five.'

Figure 28. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of a sign displayed at the Kiwiburn Depot on Services Lane. It says, "If they're out of it, it's not consent. Consent is a sober YES! Our consent guardians will be roaming throughout the night and holding space in our tent for kōrero and support."
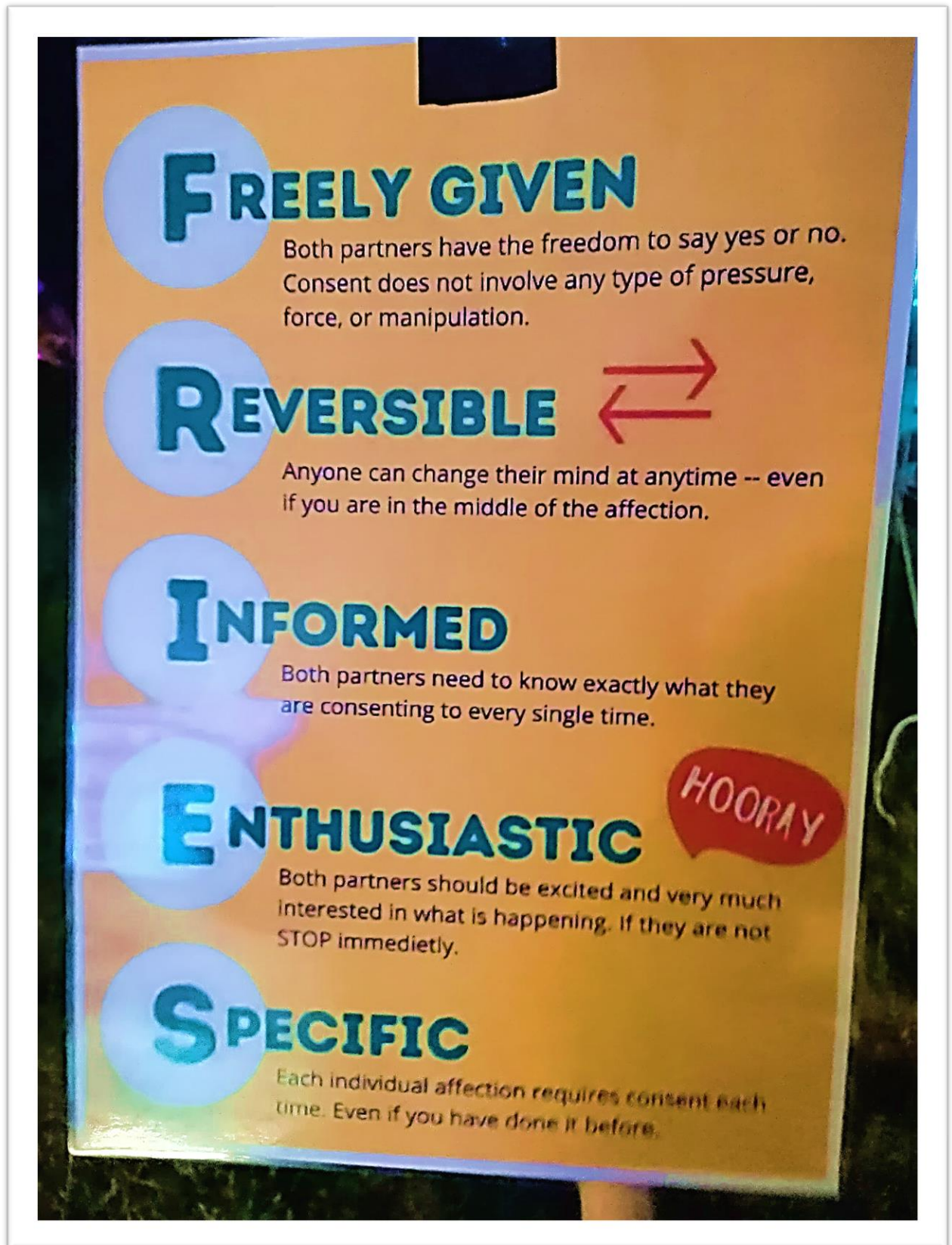
Figure 29. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of a sign at theme camp 'Devour & Delight' outlining consent.

In that same interview, Eli later picked up this train of thought again concerning Australian and NZ culture, connecting language in these contexts to what Bakhtin engages in when discussing the authoritarian word. As Eli continued,

> the anti-formality in Australian [and New Zealand] language compared to, say, a lot more formalised languages where honorifics are a very important part of communication verbally and written. Whereas, if you are being formal to someone in Australia or New Zealand, you are making fun of them… If you were to look at Kiwiburn's 10 Principles as being the dominant culture on site… New Zealand's reflex against cultural formality, you get things like Bogan Alley, where, yeah, it's a hippy festival, but we can come in and subvert or satirise those same cultural values by either choosing to ignore them in blithe antagonism or performing them ironically and satirically [See an example of this in figure 30]. Yeah, essentially, it's a carnivalesque performance of those cultural values.

Figure 30. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of signs displayed at theme camp 'Camp No Fun' saying "Have a sad day" and "Fuck your Burn!"

A 'Pattern of Play'

Not all humour in Burner spaces is focused on a political message. Just as often, comedy and antics at Kiwiburn are simply about having fun and being playful in safe spaces. For example, I spent a fantastic night early on in the festival with a group of friends who had decided to run a theme camp, 'Royal Tea', together. This beautiful, kind, cheery group of twenty-something-year-olds allowed me to tag along. I followed them up to the theme camp, 'Pangea' (see figure 31), where good quality live music, and Chai tea was available to all. We also walked past an art installation called 'Talk to God', which we discovered didn't always guarantee that someone was on the other end of the line. Finally, we ended up at a dance party, complete with flame throwers and a stripper pole (which allowed many clothed Burners to show off the skills they had picked up from pole dancing classes out in public but within a safe space). The anecdote that stands out from this participant observation was an interaction that one of the people in this group had with an art installation called 'Mate roulette' (see figure 32).

Figure 31. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of the front sign of the theme camp 'Pangea'.

A 'Pattern of Play'

Figure 32. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of 'Royal Tea' theme camp interacting with a Kiwiburn art installation- one of a pair of phone booths connected by a telephone.

'Mate Roulette'

I asked Pat, the person who engaged in the art installation, to message me the story surrounding 'Mate roulette' because I didn't want to get any wrong. He wrote:

> Okay, so the premise of the joke is obviously to lead everyone on for the longest time, putting emphasis on waiting in lines as much as you can to get people to recognise being in a line as an important plot point. Then simply waffle on a tangent making random stuff up on the spot but follow a narrative so that people feel like they're getting somewhere. I used the narrative of a boy preparing for a school ball. You can politely ask someone if they want their name used in the joke to make the story more engaging, even though you know there's no significance for the joke other than to make it more relatable. Your character is then waiting in line for a corsage, then for a suit, a ride into the ball on a fancy vehicle. They finally get to the ball and are dancing with their date. By this stage, people are hanging on and wondering what the heck the punchline is and when you say that the boy asks their date if they're thirsty and they say, "Yeah, I could do with a drink", then quickly wrap it up with: "So the guy goes to where the punch is, and there's no punchline" and then revel in their frustration having just been subjected to the worst joke ever. Hope this helps, Jax! Telling this joke at Kiwiburn was so much fun. It was hilarious at the end because the girls on the other end of the line were like, "FUCK YOU PAT!!" But you could tell in their voices that they found it entertaining.

The joke was a waste of everyone's time, it had no point, yet it was the best story of the night. It wasn't centred around protest; it was simply about laughing with not only your friends but a complete bunch of strangers. The pattern of play at Kiwiburn is nearly always focused on social interactions. This play is done in a spirit of spontaneity and the embracing of authentic moments.

<u>'A Toilet Audience' and 'Spontaneous Play'</u>

The day after my night-time adventures with Royal Tea, I had my next memorable encounter with *spontaneous play* at Kiwiburn. I was strolling back to my campervan, which required me to walk past two different portaloo areas. I wandered past the first set of toilets and noticed a large crowd of people seeming to be casually hanging out close to the toilets. It looked perfectly standard for Kiwiburn, apart from its location. As I continued to walk towards and then by the toilets, an unsuspecting Burner approached one of the portaloos and entered. Suddenly, there was a flurry of quiet activity as the now not so casual looking group of people crept up to surround the door of the portaloo. Then they waited. By this point, the portaloos are behind me as I slowly walk down a steep, dusty dirt pathway that connects the middle paddock to the lower paddock, where I am camped. I hear the portaloo door swing open and bang against its neighbour. The group erupts into applause, accompanied by "Hoorays!" and yells for "Speech! Speech!" The sounds of the crowd begin to fade as I reach the bottom of the hill and step over the stile into the bottom paddock, yet I am still able to hear the poor fellow who was ambushed begin to play along as he started his speech, "I would like to thank you all for getting me through the hard times."

This story highlights another interaction that wasn't planned. These are the experiences that you will not find listed in the event guide. Further, as previously noted, these experiences may not be repeated, although sometimes they are. For example, I saw that toilet audience approach the second set of portaloos, situated close to where I was camping. I heard them do the same to someone else before moving on, no doubt to find another set of portaloos.

As outlined in this chapter, humour and play take on many forms at Kiwiburn. Sometimes it is spontaneous, and sometimes it is staged. Eli and I had some great conversations about play at Kiwiburn during his online interviews. Eli is part of a theme camp called 'Playhouse', focused on offering adults precisely what it is named, play. Eli has some interesting perceptions and grand narratives about Kiwiburn that are very insightful and often amusing about Burners and play.

> Some of us frolic about day drunk, hugging naked strangers, and wearing a carousel of costume pieces because there is no outlet for that

in their 'real' life. Some people are invested in building infrastructure and having a chill Burn because they derive joy from knowing their contribution of logistics and labour built a playground for everyone else to be a child. Some people come to focus on holistic social connection and recharge themselves for the year ahead.

There is something for everyone's level of play. In the recorded interviews, Eli also told a great story about how different levels and styles of play co-exist and even merge at Kiwiburn. As he recalled, he walked away from the river towards the forest after an afternoon swim and noticed a group of people doing yoga in the mud. He made his way up onto the forest pathway and soon passed someone dressed as a dinosaur heading towards the river. Not long after that, Eli heard the dinosaur roaring and an entire yoga class roaring back. He didn't see it, but he heard it and could just see how these two experiences of the Burn combined when they met.

What is fascinating about this recollection is that this is an experience that likely will not occur on the Paddock again. Spontaneity means that what arises from one moment to the next cannot be copied, replicated, and reexperienced. The loss of authenticity would also mean the loss of what makes these experiences so meaningful to Burners. This chapter may appear to be a list of random funny good times, and they are. Still, they also express a pattern of play through spontaneity that manifests a level of authenticity to the experiences that could not be replicated in a structured way. Meaning comes out of interacting with the chaos at these events. Further, many of these narratives express a belief that Kiwiburn offers a space to play and behave that is suppressed or even prohibited in the 'default world'.

Conclusion

So, why *do* Burners do what they do in the way that they do things at a Burn? Why *are* humour and play so prominent in Burner behaviours on the Paddock? Although I do not claim to have answered these questions in full, this chapter has shed light on some of the undercurrents of experience, ethos, and perceptions that influence Burner practices and discourse on the Paddock. In some ways, it is as simple as the Naked Panda said, Burners do what they do simply because they can. As this chapter, thesis

and the Naked Panda's quote acknowledged, Burners do not always conform nor feel accepted in broader society. Thus, in a space where personal agency is allowed and, better yet, explored, Burners may do things simply because they can and cannot do so anywhere else with that same level of agency and social acceptance. Other times, Burners do what they do to collectively enjoy and share in an activity or aspect of the Burn, drawn by the embodied communal connections they can experience in those moments. As this chapter has also highlighted, the things that Burners do can be hilariously funny in many instances.

Humour at Kiwiburn can take on many forms and communicate many things, whether mocking aspects of the external world for taking themselves too seriously or providing social commentary of how broader society is developing. The 'tongue in cheek' aspect of communication at Kiwiburn also reflects NZ cultural perceptions and practices, from satirically quoting 'ex' Prime Ministers to profanity being used as terms of endearment by Bogans and New Zealanders in general. As this chapter has discussed, through Bakhtin's work, there is an acknowledgement of the value of this noted stratum of culture and subsequent humour. Such humour may exist in opposition to the uniform, high official cultures of the default world that are ridiculous in their seriousness. The authoritarian word and high culture are rejected clearly at Kiwiburn and, in some ways, rebuffed by Kiwi culture. This is often achieved by 'taking the piss' and 'not taking yourself too seriously'.

Humour is influential and communicates information about culture and society. Thus, Kiwiburner's performative and discursive humour communicates the social and cultural aspects of the Burn as well. Consequently, humour at Kiwiburn can help reduce the taboos brought in from the default world and open up social discourse. In this way, the impact of taboos such as those imposed by tall poppy syndrome is minimised in Burner spaces. Likewise, the 10 Principles of Burning Man aid in breaking down the taboos brought in from the default world. For example, like this chapter has discussed, through the Ninth and Tenth Principle, the reluctance to stand out in New Zealand is challenged by encouraging participation and practising immediacy.

Additionally, as this chapter acknowledged, carnivalesque spaces, such as those identified at Kiwiburn, are spaces with no spectators. Everyone is a participant.

Humour is built on intersubjectivity, sociality, and reform. Not all humour in Burner spaces is focused on a political or social message, however. Just as often, humour and antics at Kiwiburn are simply about having fun and being playful in safe spaces. Carnivalesque spaces at Kiwiburn, therefore, allow Burners to shape their experiences with an unusual amount of agency, which is usually carried out in a spirit of spontaneity and the embracing of authentic moments. Spontaneous play at Kiwiburn means that what occurs from one moment to the next cannot be copied, replicated, and reexperienced. The loss of authenticity would also mean the loss of what makes these experiences so meaningful to Burners. In this way, the following conclusion chapter will acknowledge that play becomes about social connection and self-discovery, experimenting with boundaries of the self and the social collective through genuine, authentic, spontaneous interactions.

Chapter Seven - The Glocalisation of Neotribal Carnivalesque: A Conclusion

Figure 33. Photo by J. Watt (2021) of the Kiwiburn Temple before it was burnt down in ritual.

The Final Introduction

Although COVID-19 made the early stages of this research project uncertain and unknown, I was able to collect data through three different approaches. Two stages were conducted online through a focus group and recorded interviews, and the last was conducted through participant observation at the event.

Stepping into this research project, I already understood some of the value of this community and festival. Furthermore, I already understood that Kiwiburn is an offshoot of Burning Man. As such, part of this research's significance has been in providing a clearer picture of how different regional variations of a globalised festival and counterculture manifest whilst also providing a more accurate snapshot of the contemporary global counterculture as a whole. Ultimately, this research project has been a qualitative enquiry that has featured and explored the stories, narratives, and participation of Kiwiburners at New Zealand's regional Burning Man event and within the Kiwiburn community.

As has been highlighted within this thesis, in a world that influences and impacts our personal experiences, many Kiwiburners and those seeking such alternative spaces often do so because they have encountered a lack of a sense of belonging. This lacking can, at times, be exacerbated by the fragmentation of cultures worldwide due to the process of globalisation, pluralisation, and mobility. Kiwiburn's counterculture is an example of social development in response to such processes or fragmentation. Through doing so, Kiwiburn offers a space in which Burners can embody something meaningful about identity, community, locality, and belonging. This final chapter will consider these themes, which have been featured and explored throughout this thesis, by discussing the theoretical framework also featured in this thesis. In doing so, the research question for this research project will also be reviewed in relation to the presented findings.

The Research Question

By initiating research around the Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) regional community and event, this study produced research focused on one of the more geographically out-

of-the-way Burning Man international regionals. The research question for this thesis was:

'Does Burning Man culture embrace and reflect neotribal carnivalesque within the glocalised contexts of Kiwiburn? If so, how?'

Three main concepts were unified within this thesis to consider the New Zealand Burning Man community and to answer the research question - Mikhail Bakhtin's *Carnivalesque*, Michel Maffesoli's *Neotribalism* and Roland Robertson's concept of *Glocalisation*. This provided the theoretical framework for this research question and overall thesis. Considering the research question was, thus, approached by exploring how neotribal carnivalesque elements of the Burning Man (BM) counterculture manifest in the Kiwiburn community. Furthermore, in considering these elements within NZ's cultural and geographical contexts, engaging in this research question also meant considering how Aotearoa shapes these globally shared characteristics at Kiwiburn and vice versa. This was achieved by viewing Kiwiburn through the lens of glocalisation.

A Glocalised Kiwiburn

Due to my long-standing history with the community, I identify as being a Burner. I recognise that, like many Burners, I have grown into a stronger and better person because of my link to the Kiwiburn/Burning Man community. I have learned life skills, vocational skills and made social and biophilic connections that I still have today. Through my eyes and the eyes of many Burners, the world is a better place, life is richer, and there is a more profound sense of belonging because of our Burner identities. As this thesis has highlighted, I have not been the only one who has felt this through the BM experience. It is these sorts of stories and reflections that I have explored in other Burners. What these narratives also highlight (including my own), however, is that there is some element of idealism within community members which can lead to both blind spots in the level of inclusiveness that the community fosters, particularly around indigenous cultures, and resistance to cultural change, especially in connection to the imported aspects of the event. As one research participant noted, the Paddock can be immune to cynicism and can even, at times, dig their heels in on traditions and long-standing perceptions within the community. It appears to me that

the idealism of Kiwiburn is exaggerated on purpose, in what I have identified as the spirit of carnivalesque, totalising perceptions and positions to stress the ethos and rationale for such ideals. Although this has an identifiable purpose, such exaggerations of idealism may also make it more difficult for certain traditions and deep-seated positions and narratives to change and develop with the needs of the growing community. Despite this, I also recognise the ongoing mahi (discussions) that others in the community are holding around issues like cultural inclusion and feel that 'slow and steady wins the race'. Kiwiburn has stepped out of its infancy and is now well established. It has had time to get comfortable and consider a transition from a global Burn in New Zealand to a NZ interpretation of a Global Burn developed in multicultural Aotearoa. It appears Kiwiburn is only beginning to take the first steps in that journey of self-discovery.

Conversely, yet just as often, there are notable changes being identified within the Burning Man counterculture when the event and community manifest in localised places. These can be seen in the discursive and performative aspects identified at Kiwiburn, including through protest, humour, boganology and swearing, as well as what some in this thesis have referred to as the "number 8 wire" type of Kiwi approach to life, especially in rural New Zealand. More importantly, in a country that has been noted as having high levels of youth suicide that are significantly contributing to what WHO calls the global burden of disease, spaces such as Kiwiburn provide a space within NZ contexts for the exploration and affirmation of identity, sense of community, sense of belonging, and cultural expression. Kiwiburn has been noted to attract New Zealanders who may be looking to fulfil these basic human needs. In some cases, considering the expressions left on the Temple at Kiwiburn and the dialogues featured within this thesis, it appears that many Kiwiburners are finding some of these needs are getting fulfilled within these Burner spaces. Whether is it considering the social aspects of theme camps as groups of friends creating pockets of constructed reality, or community members providing services to meet the welfare and needs of the growing community, a community focus is ever-present within the Burner community and their events.

Additionally, and as explored in the final findings chapter, the general breaking down of social hierarchies, where Kiwiburners are able to interrelate relatively unobstructed

by the sociocultural divisions that otherwise exist in broader society, aka communitas, seems most identifiable when looking at Kiwiburn through a glocalised and, thus, cultural lens. Boganology, for example, is a cultural aspect that has been identified to have been brought into Kiwiburn by New Zealanders. As such, it offers an example of how communitas is not only accepted but perhaps, even flaunted within the community. This can again be identified through the performative and discursive practices in place at Kiwiburn, from swearing as terms of endearment to protests on a megaphone yelling for "white people, shave your dreads." Kiwiburn spaces allow for an unusual amount of agency through communitas and the overall Burning Man doxa.

The universal ideology of the Burner community is centred around the 10 Principles of Burning Man, which shape the community and its annual global events. As a regional BM event, Kiwiburn also reflects the 10 Principles. It has been acknowledged that Burners utilise the 10 Principles to demonstrate the BM ethos. As such, this research project has often referred to the guiding principles to understand and interpret the community's shared beliefs, dialogues, and practices, including understanding the reason for terms like 'Sparkle Pony'.

Kiwiburn as a Neotribe

The literature highlighted in Chapter Two, and the findings presented in the subsequent chapters, show that groups of like-minded people were looking for social connection and were doing so by forming communities that construct or seek temporary alternative spaces from everyday life and society. Such communities have been labelled by others to be postmodern neotribes. Such neotribes have likewise been identified as finding festivals and similar events to be a type of alternative space to fulfil this identified need. Other academics have noted that festivals generally offer alternative spaces that allow for expressions of identity, culture, kinship, and lifestyle. However, Burning Man does not consider their events to be a typical festival experience; instead, identifying themselves as 'an experiment in a temporary community'.

Kiwiburners are postmodern neotribal thinkers, fiercely embracing the postmodern elements of such a position, conscious of the transience of all things in the unfixed nature of realities. In doing so, Kiwiburners create a reality constructed around

communitas, personal agency, and even rebellion. Like other Burning Man events, Kiwiburn is held in a space removed from general NZ society, requiring a sort of pilgrimage to the site. In doing so, Kiwiburn provides a space where the limitations of broader society can be abandoned and habitus can be embraced. These temporarily constructed spaces reflect Burning Man's founding philosophy around temporary autonomous zones. Such spaces are identified as existing and acting outside of 'the State'. Temporary autonomous zones were conceptualised to be 'tribal gatherings' but not in the way anthropology traditionally defines tribal communities. Instead, it has been labelled by St John to be a 'soft tribalism'. When Burners label their community as being 'tribal', they signify a desire for sociality and belonging in a way that is perceived to have been lost through the fragmentation of globalisation and modernity. Maffesoli believes that this type of postmodern tribalism challenges our contemporary 'ways of being'.

A Carnivalesque Kiwiburn Neotribe

Kiwiburners often achieve this challenge against the limitations of broader society through creating temporary autonomous zones occupied by the Kiwiburn neotribe via practices that reflect both humour and a pattern of play. This can be identified in both the spontaneous and planned aspects of Kiwiburn's community events, from the 'toilet audience' and 'fake fox hunt' to the 'mate roulette' art installation and parody of a marketplace with snake-oil salesmen featured at a theme camp. In some cases, this humour is identified through performance and art; sometimes, it is communicated as a form of protest and subversion. For instance, the sign from 'KnowYourStuffNZ' features the 'tongue in cheek' aspect of NZ culture. This aspect of Kiwi humour has been identified as helping to reduce taboos and open up conversation. As Bidgoli's article was cited as saying, humour is "built on intersubjectivity, sociality, and reform." In that same chapter, one of the research participants of this thesis, Eli, was also quoted as saying that the style of humour and language identified at Kiwiburn are based on 'anti-formality'. This was noted in comparison to more formalised languages, where honorifics are a very important part of communication verbally and written. In contrast, it was noted that when one is generally formal within Kiwiburn contexts, one is making fun of the other through subversion or satire, aka 'taking the piss'. It is within

these discussions and examples that the lines between neotribalism and carnivalesque become the most blurred.

As one of Burning Man's founding philosophy's, inspired by the concept of carnival cosmology, BM, as an organisation, and Kiwiburners seek less restricting 'playgrounds' to those made available in everyday life and society. Burners are often noted to be people who work hard, non-stop year-round, and seek spaces where they can play and let loose the wild pent-up energy that accumulates from operating in the external world. Like neotribal spaces, carnivalesque provides a temporary alternative space, considered separate and apart from the ordinary world, in which this can be achieved. As McCaffery was cited as saying, in this way, BM is a 'ritual without dogma', being based on direct experience rather than rigid rules. Similar to neotribalism, within these carnivalesque spaces, a feeling of communitas is fostered where social hierarchies and status are temporarily abandoned.

Neotribal Carnivalesque and Spontaneous Play

Like neotribalism, carnivalesque allows for spaces where participants can push against the challenges and limitations of everyday life and society. This is often achieved through a pattern of play and humour. Carnivalesque play and humour within the neotribal context that promote immediacy leads to examples of what this thesis has called spontaneous play. Spontaneous play is that term that has been used to identify playful interactions at Kiwiburn's community events that are not planned and occur out of spontaneity. These were noted as being the experiences that one will not find listed in the event guides. In other words, what potentially arises from one moment to the next at Kiwiburn cannot necessarily be copied, replicated, and reexperienced. The loss of authenticity through spontaneity would also mean losing what makes these experiences so meaningful to Burners.

Ultimately, discursive and performative practices are collectively shared and understood at Kiwiburn, leading to a sense of belonging being experienced and identified within such alternative Burner spaces as well as an example of an expression of NZ culture. This makes Kiwiburn a community that fosters resiliency and other protective factors that promote mental health and wellbeing in individuals as well as the overall community. This is achieved through community engagement and

community doxa; personal agency and the freedom to explore and express both habitus and counterculture; cultural development, expression, and growth; and a nurturing of both sense of community and belonging.

This thesis will end by providing a bookend to the opening story in the preface. I find this fitting, for, just as was highlighted around carnivalesque having clear endings to give its participants time to adjust to returning back to everyday life and society, this thesis ends by discussing the end of the Effigy ritual at Kiwiburn, whilst touching on many themes and aspects explored within this thesis; thus, closing the opening story and giving it an ending.

Prologue: *The Running of the Hippies*

The Effigy has finally collapsed in a shower of embers. We all get a sense of exaltation as this happens. It's like New Year's Eve. Just like when the clock strikes midnight on the last day of December, during the final collapse of the Effigy, most feel a sense that the pain, anger and hurts of the past are crumbling away as well. This allows one to embrace the aspects of themselves that they want to improve, develop or simply acknowledge. It represents every broken system, every harmful transaction, every dehumanising moment being burned away and released. Effigy allows for primal energy, anger, happiness, release. It is untamed, energising, and wild. The final aspect of the Effigy Burn really solidifies these feelings during the ritual.

I see Lumos discreetly removing his clothes. I find his modesty endearing because I know what he is about to do. I glance around and only then notice that nearly everyone has removed their clothes now. I suddenly feel highly overdressed. "Am I going to do it this year?" I ask myself, knowing full well I will chicken out again. I just can't bring myself to do it. Lumos explains to me that he used to not take part in the final part of the ritual. He, too, felt that no one wanted to see a middle-aged man without clothes on. He told me, "Two lovely ladies changed my mind… They didn't care that I looked like naked, people trying to put me down in the past have used words like short, fat and ugly, our bodies as well as our spirits are running free and are not encumbered by the other world restrictions." I relate to how Lumos felt and love that this empowered him to take part. Logically, I know that I am not sitting there judging naked people or even staring at them (that would be rude), so likely most others aren't either. I still cannot do it though. I cannot take part in the 'running of the hippies'.

The fire crew give the nod and the safety perimeter is opened. Suddenly, well over a thousand people, completely naked, rush toward the now roaring bonfire. They form a circle and sprint around the fire. There must be at least 70% of the festival out there this year, I think to myself. This is by far larger than it was five years ago or even last year. There are so many naked people! They are all empowered, unencumbered, happy. I wish I could be part of it, but also, I am quite happy where I am. Maybe next year, I say to myself, as I do every year.

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Appendix 1 - Example of the Research Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Jacqueline Watt's Master of Art's Social Anthropology Research Project:
Kiwiburn: the glocalization of neo-tribal carnivalesque at Burning Man in Aotearoa New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR STAGE TWO

This consent form will be held for a minimum period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand the details of this study as provided in the information sheet. I also understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. As such:

• I *agree/do not agree* to be a participant in Stage Two of this research project, as outlined by the information sheet;

• I *agree/do not agree* to be interviewed online for this research project, and for this interview to be recorded;

• I *agree/do not agree* that my name will be published by the researcher, Jacqueline Watt (aka Jax). Please provide a pseudonym if you wish to remain anonymous in publication:

_____

Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Full Name - printed _____

Te Kunenga
ki Purehuroa

School of People, Environment & Planning
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Appendix 2 - Example of the Research Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪRENGA TANGATA

Kiwiburn: the glocalization of neo-tribal carnivalesque at Burning Man in Aotearoa New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher introduction

This research is being conducted as part of a requirement for the completion of the Master of Arts in Social Anthropology, at Massey University. I am the researcher for this project, Jacqueline Watt (aka Jax). I warmly invite you to participate in this stage of the research project- STAGE TWO

Invitation

You have been identified as a potential participant in this research due to your connection to the Kiwiburn community. Your participation and assistance is warmly invited and greatly appreciated.

Project description

This project investigates questions of how Burning Man counterculture embraces and reflects carnivalesque and neo-tribalism, within the regional Aotearoa New Zealand contexts of Kiwiburn, whilst considering how New Zealand geographical and cultural contexts transform this international event and community in localised ways. The equitable community environment, the promotion of aesthetics as subjective, and the 'pattern of play' utilised to performatively and discursively deconstruct the threat posed by a globalised, western-driven, capitalist-focused, isolating world, all speak to a neo-tribal carnivalesque space being identified at the New Zealand Burning Man regional event. The ultimate goal is to initiate academic inquiry that holistically acknowledges Burning Man not only as an American phenomenon, but as a global social movement with regional variations. This will be initiated by considering how carnivalesque and neo-tribal aspects of the Burning Man counterculture manifest in the Kiwiburn community; whilst considering how the cultural and geographic environment of Aotearoa New Zealand shapes these globally shared characteristics at Kiwiburn: New Zealand's Burning Man event.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

I aim to present the opportunity for participation to those who participated in Stage One of this research project, i.e. the online focus group. Those invited will be participants from Stage One who have visited other international Burning Man regional events, as well as Kiwiburn; AND, have experience in the running of the infrastructure and/or organisation of the Kiwiburn community and event; AND, self-identify as a 'Burner'; AND, have been part of the Burning Man and/or Kiwiburn community for at least 8 years.

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Project Procedures

All three stages will be conducted according to the ethical principles that underpin the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand (ASAA/NZ) and Massey University.

- Stage One

Stage One of this research project consisted of being part of a private Facebook group where a series of questions were asked in connection to the identified research topic. Participants were invited to discuss posted research questions. The focus group was active for 1 month during October 2020.

- Stage Two

3-4 participants have been invited to consider participating in Stage Two, which is, doing two recorded online interviews (each 45mins via Zoom). These interviews will occur late 2020, in November and/or December. Interview questions will reflect the identified research topic and developments or questions that have developed in response to Stage One.

- Stage Three

I will be looking for one or two participants for Stage Three. If you were involved in Stage Two, and depending on the COVID-19 climate in New Zealand at the time. I may also invite you to consider being involved in stage three, meaning I may further request to spend some time with you during the Kiwiburn event in January 2021.

Data Management

Data from this project is primarily intended for completing my Master's thesis. However, there is also potential to develop this work further in possible academic journal articles and presentations. Any raw data will be stored by the researcher, me, for up to 5-years. Individual participants may access their own data at any time before the 5-year period on request. You can ask for a copy of the raw data or the written pages relevant to your contribution at any time after its completion. If you wish your identity to be preserved, the researcher will use pseudonyms and remove any identifying information. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

Your Rights

If you decide to participate, you have the right to

- decline to share any information about yourself;
- withdraw from the study;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;

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• be given access to raw data, i.e. interview recordings and transcriptions, pertaining to your participation during and after the research project; and an e-copy of the thesis when it is concluded;

Project Contacts

You are invited to contact me if you have any questions about the project.
I am responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. You can email me at
jax_in_a_box@hotmail.com, or by cellphone: ▉▉▉▉▉▉
If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Robyn Andrews, who can be contacted by email at R.Andrews@massey.ac.nz, or by phone at +64 (06) 356 9099 (ext. 83653); and Amy Whitehead, who can be contacted at
A.R.Whitehead@massey.ac.nz, or by phone: +64 (09) 414 0800 (ext. 43846).

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz