

# **Becoming Multiple**

## **Collaboration in Contemporary Art Practice**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis begins with the question of whether a collaborative art practice inspired by, or drawing upon, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of 'the rhizome', and the notions of movement and change it implies, is possible within the structure required of doctoral study. The study is a vital contribution to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary collaborative art practice, with reference to more than half a dozen contemporary collaborative art groups, as well as The Situationist International, Zurich Dada and Fluxus, the thesis explores the composition and maintenance of collaborative practices. The study's art-practice-as-research has focused on the production of unexpected events or 'glitches' and the problems of hierarchy and control where roles such as 'collaborator' and 'participant' come into contact. The relations in and between collaborative groups are considered in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'molarising' and 'molecularising' forces, and the research included the discovery of new forms of what I have termed 'Molecular collaboration'.

The study seeks to address perceived weaknesses in certain (dominant) Marxist forms of critical/dialectical practice in relation to art by exploring alternative, more anarchist approaches to relations, roles and types of group organisation. The work of Manuel DeLanda on 'assemblage theory' and Erving Goffman's concept of 'role adjustments' are combined with Deleuze and Guattari's 'diagrammatics' to develop the new concept of 'Molecular collaboration'.

Molecular collaboration is an important concept because it frees collaborative working from the burden of individual and group identity by allowing creativity to be expressed immanently within a network of relations rather than in relation to any specific ideal or structure.



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## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

This study concerns the concept of rhizomatic<sup>1</sup> practice in relation to contemporary collaborative art groups. In this thesis I would like to propose that rhizomatics is an appropriate mode of production for all art practice, but that it has a particular significance for collaboration. In the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the rhizome is a concept that relates to a model of thought and practice that stands in contrast to what they call ‘arborescent thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 3-25). The term ‘arborescent thought’ is based exclusively on the binarisms we usually encounter, man/woman, good/evil, artist/audience, whereas the rhizome is focused on ‘becoming’,<sup>2</sup> connection, creativity, and expression, responding locally to prevailing conditions.

Since my own earlier attempts to develop a ‘rhizomatic’ art practice, which I first explored during my Masters Degree, my practice has increasingly developed along collaborative lines. This has provided the impetus for this current research on collaboration, and consideration of whether it is possible to think through collaboration in terms of the concept of the rhizome. This study is a vital contribution to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary collaborative art practice, including the discovery of new forms of what I have termed ‘molecular collaboration’.<sup>3</sup> While other writers have discussed art in ‘Deleuzian’ terms, notably Simon O’Sullivan’s *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari* (2006) which dealt with Deleuze and Guattari’s challenge to representation, this study is the first to consider collaborative practice in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s writing. This is an important development in considering collaboration because current dominant theories of collaborative or collective art practice, such as those described below, treat groups as unities with distinct identities so they are often considered as analogous to individual solo artists – as ‘a’ practice. This study seeks to address this oversimplification by exploring the mechanisms of collaboration and the way relations are actually organised in networked

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<sup>1</sup> The terms rhizomatic, and rhizome, as developed in DELEUZE, G. & GUATTARI, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London, Athlone., are based on the botanical form of an underground network that spreads out laterally, and distinguished from a ‘tree like’ or bifurcating root system.

<sup>2</sup> See glossary.

<sup>3</sup> I heard Ana Benlloch use a term something like this during a discussion in 2008, and it excited me, so we discussed what that might mean. Ana had originally used the term as shorthand for the series of a.a.s projects that had started with *KR-36* and *DY-66*, since they were named after elements in the periodic table. We then began to consider the term as a way of discussing our overall collective art practice, incorporating our various collaborative groupings in one interdependent set of connections. It very quickly became obvious to us that we could not consider this molecular collaboration without taking into account the practices of all of our collaborators too.

collaborative practice. Writing on collaboration has previously tended too much to focus on the reasons for collaborating rather than on how collaboration actually functions and what it offers beyond solo practice. This re-evaluation of collaborative practice is necessary in order to free creativity from the burden of identity and to develop new ways of discussing collaboration that affirm the production of new potential.

## The Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome is first introduced in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 3-25), and derives from the botanical category of modified stems of the same name. The concept departs from its origins and is developed by Deleuze and Guattari to mean a particular type of movement that makes connections between things as it goes. In *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, when referring to life in terms of a rhizome, Carl Jung writes:

'Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away – an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilisations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures underneath the eternal flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains' (Jung, 1993, p. 18).

This rhizome metaphor works as a description of the way collaborations flower into projects or exhibitions, which then wither away even though the life of the group continues 'underground'. The description is also strikingly similar to George Woodcock's description of Anarchism as an attitude that 'can flourish when circumstances are favourable and then, like a desert plant, lie dormant for seasons and even for years, waiting for the rains to make it burgeon' (Woodcock, 1975, p. 453). These metaphorical descriptions are in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the rhizome as a philosophical concept, but the processes and movements involved are in accord, giving a good sense of the rhizome as a set of relations between different forces, over time.

To begin with, I understood the rhizome to be a kind of 'network' that is under constant development; something in the order of a lattice that connects concepts together. The rhizome will be addressed fully below but, put simply, thinking and behaving rhizomatically

allows for apprehending things in an expanded way; an exploration of how systems and elements relate to each other. Even though I have come to think of the rhizome more in terms of the way it occupies or moves through situations that does not necessarily mean it should be thought of as spatial; rather, that there may be a habitual tendency to visualise the concept in terms of space, similar to Bergson's discussion of the relationship between the concepts of concrete 'duration' and abstract, spatialised, 'time' throughout his writings (Bergson, 2002a, p. 382, n. 2).<sup>4</sup> The distinction between duration and time, and that between continuous multiplicities and discrete multiplicities, found in Bergson and, later, in Deleuze, are of the same nature as the distinction I will make, throughout this thesis, between rhizomatics and critical/dialectical<sup>5</sup> practices. The former being a continuous, affirmative, response to local conditions, while the latter is segmenting, analytical, and based on negation.

## Views of Collaboration

As in any field, or discipline, made up of individuals, groups and institutions, the art world is shaped by socio-political forces. People enter into various combinations and relations with each other, with markets, and with public bodies, and of course these relations take place within a context of global capitalism. Although there are a variety of reasons for working with other artists, for example sharing the workload or studio rent, collaborative practice or collective working is also, among other reasons, one of the strategies that artists have used 'to promote their work outside the entrenched gallery system' (Saper, 2001, p. 113). During this study, none of the accounts of collaboration I read seemed like the kind of collaboration I was experiencing in my own practice. The accounts of collaboration I read were based on the assumption that social groups are made up from people who have something in common, and therefore tend to treat groups as having an identity, as being a 'body', whereas the collaborations I am involved in are more fluid than that. Dave Beech, Mark Hutchinson, and John Timberlake write that artists 'form duos and gangs for the same reasons that business partnerships are made: to pool expertise, divide the labour, get more done' (Beech et al.,

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<sup>4</sup> For Bergson, duration is a continuous flow of reality unfolding, every moment is a specific, unique mixture, whereas abstract time is discontinuous, segmented, and counted out in identical 'units' of number, layed out in sequence and therefore 'spacialised'. BERGSON, H. (2002b) *The Idea of Duration*. In PEARSON, K. A. & MULLARKEY, J. (Eds.) *Key Writings*. New York and London, Continuum.. The difference is between interpenetration (duration) and juxtaposition (abstract time), where the former suggests that each moment in duration includes within it previous moments in that series, the latter involves visualising units of time laid out in space, in a line. BERGSON, H. (2002a) *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, London, Athlone.

<sup>5</sup> See glossary.

2006, p. 11). This is typical of the accounts of collaboration I encountered in my review of literature on the subject. Collaborations are thought of as a joining together of discrete units or groups of units, each with its own clearly definable identity, usually with the aim of achieving something that could not be done as individuals, or at least not as easily.

This thesis addresses the practical concerns of collaboration, of pooling expertise, and so on, but focuses mainly on the processes and forms of collaboration, and in doing so it encounters several texts co-written by Dave Beech with several of his collaborators. These texts are consistent in committing notions of collaboration, participation, and art practice in general to a, usually dialectical, critique in the manner of Marxist critical theory. In this respect, Beech has proved to be a significant figure in the study, providing me with contemporary writing on the subject to which I have chosen to respond. Rather than carrying out a critique of collaborative and participatory processes, I will develop the thesis using the rhizome and additional concepts from the work of Deleuze and Guattari such as, ‘becoming’, ‘molecularity’, and ‘assemblages’ in order to propose a practice based on affirming a creative, collaborative production of relations. Whenever individuals, groups, and institutions come together there are questions concerning hierarchies and power relations: Who is in charge? Who has final responsibility? How free are the different parties to make their own choices? Is everyone equal? These are ethical and political questions. One dominant political model in usage by contemporary art historians and critical writers is drawn from Marxism. I would like to propose another political philosophy that is possibly more suited to discussing the affirming of free production, and that is Anarchism, specifically drawing on poststructuralist anarchism as described by Todd May (1994). May’s poststructuralist Anarchism draws on the writings of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard to develop a ‘micropolitical’ affirmation of liberty, as distinct from what he describes as Marxism’s ‘macropolitics’, which is based upon masses opposing each other (May, 1994, pp. 95-98).

## **Methodological Approach**

The research was undertaken using a ‘hybrid’ methodology including processes derived from an established research methodology called ‘action research’ within the context of my own collaborative art practice and also involved more empirical methods, such as the interview, and subsequent analysis, of four separate collaborative art groups for comparison with each other and my own practice-as-research. Special attention has been paid to where



people agreed or disagreed on a particular detail, and evidence that contradicted my understanding of the situation at a given stage of the research was actively sought in order to help avoid bias and to question assumptions. Interviews were used as a means to draw together the theoretical concerns of the research and the practice by encouraging interviewees to reflect on their own theoretical concerns as well as the more practical details of collaboration. The interviews were not formal social science interviews, but took the form of conversations between artists as a collective exploration of a set of themes.

I chose to research historical and contemporary groups that are precursors in one or more of the areas of collaboration, participation or ‘anti-art’<sup>6</sup>: Historical groups such as Dada (specifically Zurich Dada) whose work with language served to emphasise the notion of ‘difference’<sup>7</sup> and to destabilise ‘sense’ in order to affirm alternatives to dominant forms of logic and rationalism; Fluxus, because of their experiments in co-authoring artworks and the use of written performance ‘scores’ as triggers for unique events to occur; The Situationist International (SI) and their relationship to territories and the ‘construction of situations’; and contemporary collaborative groups The Bughouse, Freee, Parfyme, and Reactor. There is little archival or academic material on these contemporary groups, so the bulk of evidence concerning their practices has been derived from interview and discussion.

My historical review of the field of collaborative art practice, in Chapter 3, is followed by reflection on some contemporary currents in art practice which begins to suggest a direction for future practice, beginning with some consideration of the field of socially engaged and participatory practice, and how it relates to historical trends, then discussing what use can be made of elements of these practices in opening up new potential for collaboration and participation, and finally proposing a new way of considering wider collaborative processes.

### ***My Practice-as-Research***

Rather than forming collaborative partnerships as a singular practice for producing works, the emphasis in my related art-practice-as-research has been on ‘making collaborations as practice’, complemented by and extended through a reflexive writing practice. The kind of art practice I am engaged in explicitly seeks to explore new methods or models of collaboration with other artists, as performance, and involving the audience as ‘participants’

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Anti-art’ in the sense that the notion of art itself is a contested or problematised category.

<sup>7</sup> See glossary.

in the work, specifically those that increase capacities for interaction and creativity. On a pragmatic level, this research has investigated how and why acts are carried out in specific collaborative art practices and has explored the processes involved in the collaborative production of projects, objects, performances, and relations. This thesis also analyses the connections between the collaborative groups I am working in and the influences of each collaborative group on the others. Lastly, I have sought ways to draw audiences into the work as collaborators or participants, and of exploring the way that hierarchies crystallise within collaborations and what practices might resist or strengthen those hierarchies.

An artwork or project, especially when collaboratively produced, is a complex assemblage whose parts may operate either cohesively, or disjunctively. One element may evolve in a rhizomatic fashion, whereas another may be susceptible to hierarchies being produced, and somehow the practice needs to accommodate their synthesis. One of the challenges of art practice is to be able to track the practice as it occurs in an attempt to respond to the inevitable ruptures and halts in real time rather than letting them destroy or block any processes that develop; this requires a willingness to follow the demands of the practice to some extent, rather than leading it by design. My practice during the research period has been concerned with four connected and overlapping collaborative groups. All four collaborations were under way before the research began, and as such were not being driven by the research concerns or aims. I have not been 'in control' of these collaborations and have therefore not shaped them to be rhizomatic in themselves, although I have had an influence on those groups. In all of these collaborations my research focus has been on the practice itself rather than on the outcomes of that practice, and each of these groups used a different collaborative model. Therefore, I will describe, in historical and logical order,<sup>8</sup> the milieu, origins and form of each of the groups with the intention of indicating their inter-group relations and influences.

### **a.a.s.**

At the start of this study, a.a.s had two members who could be described as regular or permanent, Ana Benlloch and myself. However, since the inception of a.a.s in December 2001, we have always stated that any artists who worked on an a.a.s project, were part of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Zero Point and Red Line dates may suggest a different historical sequence, but for Red Line Group I have taken the start of the collaboration as being when all collaborators joined rather than when initial discussions began.

group for the duration of that project. The implication is that, even though Ana and I did most, if not all, of the organisation, the group has been a series of different, metastable, formations.<sup>9</sup> The recent addition of Alex Marzeta and Vanessa Page as ‘members’ of a.a.s means it has been useful in comparing how the addition of new members can affect the way a group operates. The effect of new members joining was discussed during interviews with the art groups Freee and Reactor, both of which expanded from established groups. If my art practice can be said to have a core, it is a.a.s and all three of my other collaborations considered in this research have developed out of it in different ways.

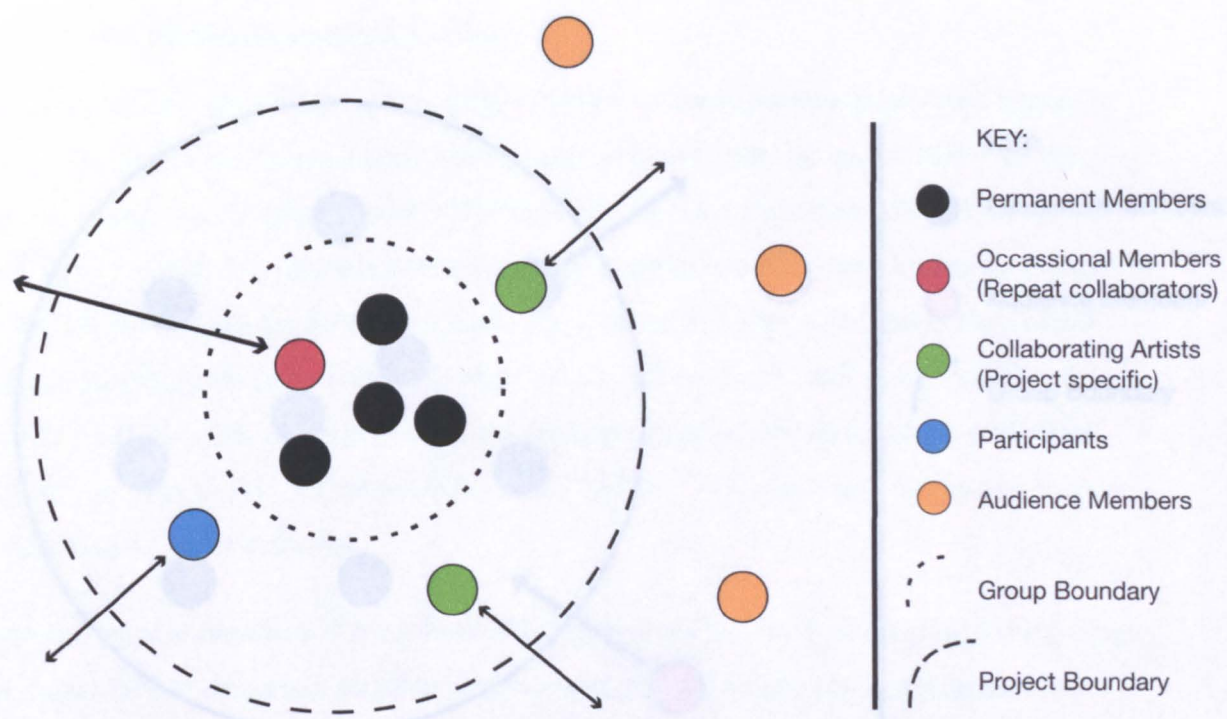
In an attempt to not be ‘identified’ with a.a.s, Ana and I have always been listed as collaborators with a.a.s in the same way as our other collaborators, although we have been referred to as negotiators on some occasions. We have always insisted that a.a.s are an ‘imaginary art group’ and have said so in several public statements. For Deleuze, the imaginary ‘isn’t unreal; it’s the indiscernibility of real and unreal. The two terms don’t become interchangeable, they remain distinct, but the distinction between them keeps moving around’ (Deleuze, 1995, p. 66). Between ourselves, we have always described a.a.s as imaginary ‘others’ who guide what projects we do. This may sound like psychosis, but what we mean is a programme of ‘a.a.s-ness’, which ensures that projects have an a.a.s ‘feel’ to them. I will relate the idea of a.a.s-ness to Deleuze’s notion of the ‘diagram’ below, a procedure that shapes practice.

In the figure below (Figure 1), which shows the form a.a.s takes during a project, there are several elements that I will compare with other groups in the study. There are two ‘boundaries’, or thresholds: the inner ring indicates the people who have collaborated to make the project happen, the ‘group’ boundary; the outer ring indicates the boundary of the project itself. Those inside the outer ring are the people ‘participating’ in the project, those outside are audience members, in the traditional sense that they do not influence the form or content of the project.<sup>10</sup> When considering the boundaries of different regions in a collaboration, I will state its ‘permeability’, by which I mean the capacity for new members to join the group, or the project.

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<sup>9</sup> Following Brian Massumi, I use the term ‘metastable formation’ to mean something like a whirlpool that takes a temporary shape as a result of forces at work.

<sup>10</sup> This is somewhat simplified, because the audience can affect the form of the project if those participating in the project choose to shape it based on their perception of what the audience wants or expects, but here it is still those within the project boundary choosing whether or not to disregard the audience.



**Figure 1. a.a.s. Fluid, Centralised, Permeable Group**

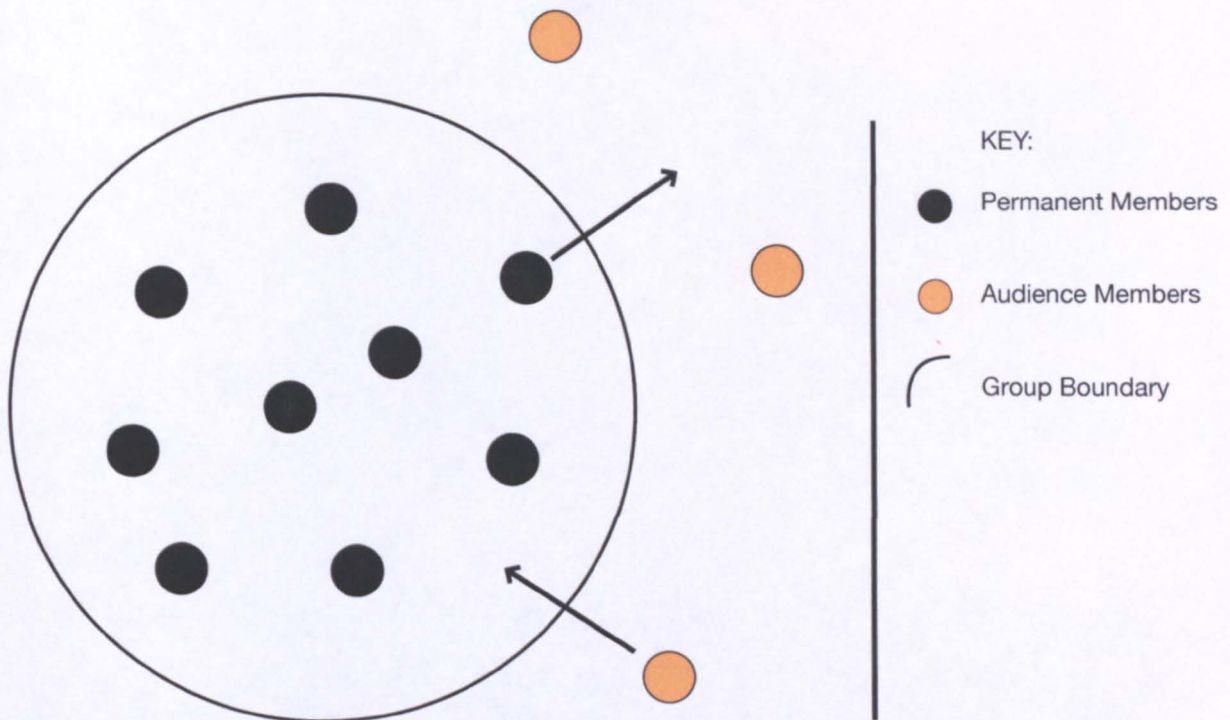
In addition to considering the different regions of the project based on the activities of those involved, for each of the groups considered in this study, I will be identifying whether their membership is fluid or fixed, if they have a centralised or administrative structure, and if they have an ideology or philosophy to which they are working.

My other three collaborations during this study have all developed out of a.a.s in some manner to become separate groups in their own right. The first of these groups to be formed was Insectoid.

**The ‘budding off’ of Insectoid**

Neither Ana nor I can remember where the original idea of Insectoid came from. There are no notes in the a.a.s ideas books pertaining to Insectoid until October 2005. This meant we had to reconstruct the likely sequence of events from memory. Insectoid developed gradually out of some experiments in computer-generated music that I was carrying out in the summer of 2005 that sounded ‘insectoid’. The first Insectoid performance, *we.are.insectoid*, took place as part of an event in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter on 29 June 2006 as a band made up of insects that made the kind of music insects would make if they had access to musical instruments and computers.





**Figure 2. Insectoid. Decentred, Accumulating, Semi-permeable, Ideological Group**

By the time we did the third Insectoid performance, in August 2006, it appeared that we had a relatively stable group of performers developing, so we made a decision to list the group as Insectoid in the event leaflet, rather than as a.a.s doing an Insectoid performance. So, Insectoid became a separate group at some point between June and September 2006. No sooner had it done so, than we began considering if Insectoid could ‘move beyond just doing “music” performances’.<sup>11</sup>

In the figure above (Figure 2), one can see at a glance that the form the group takes is different from a.a.s. Instead of a central group of artists who coordinate the projects that other artists then take part in as collaborators, Insectoid is decentred, but has a less ‘permeable’ boundary. Artists are either in Insectoid or not, there are no temporary members, and members leave by ‘resigning’, no one is expelled. The group can be considered ideological to some extent because all of its projects are ‘insectoid’ in nature and members have to make their own insect head or mask in order to join. This has been the case since the decision was made that Insectoid was a separate group with its own identity. In the case of the Zero Point Collaboration an ideology emerged in a more ‘organic’ way.

<sup>11</sup> Research diary entry 20 September 2006

## Zero Point attempts to evade hierarchy

On 1 June 2006, approximately fifty artists in the a.a.s email address book were invited to meet to form 'a Zero Point Collaboration group'. About twenty people attended the meeting but attendance was poorly documented. Obviously, nothing truly starts from zero, but the email was a signal to potential collaborators that nothing had been pre-decided and that there was a desire to start a group without hierarchy. For me, this desire for a non-hierarchical group stemmed from an interest in Taoism, which is sometimes cited as a precursor of anarchism (Horowitz, 1970, p. 346), specifically the third of the 'three jewels of Taoism', 'not daring to be first in the world' (Lao-Tzu, 1989, p. 137), which can also be translated as a refusal to assert authority.

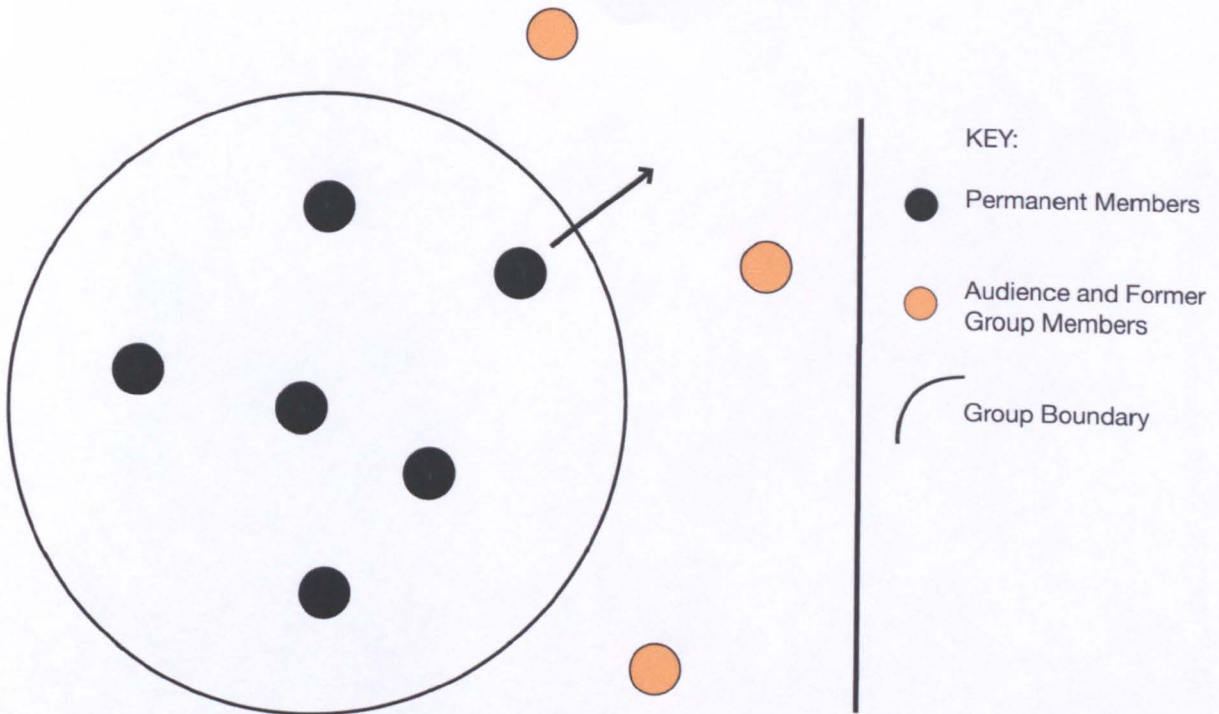
Niki Russell and Jonathan Waring from Reactor turned up to the first meeting having taken the suggestion of zero point to mean that they should purposefully come to the meeting without any ideas. This significantly shaped the subsequent collaboration and at the second meeting we discussed further the idea of 'zero' as a starting point. It was decided that we would resist 'inventing' a project that the group would do, unless a really good reason for doing it was present. An online discussion forum was set up<sup>12</sup> that was initially a relatively fluid discussion space with different threads for different subjects, but evolved into a space for weekly online meetings (OLMs) in addition to the 'in real life' (IRL) meetings.

From the figure below (Figure 3), it appears that the Zero Point Collaboration has a similar form to Insectoid. However, there is one significant difference. No new members can join the Zero Point Group, and members who have left cannot rejoin. The decision was made in order to prevent a hierarchy developing between new and existing members. It means that rather than being an 'accumulating' mechanism like Insectoid, the Zero Point Group is reductive, it can only stay the same or get smaller.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://zeropointgroup.proboards.com>

<sup>13</sup> The smallest the group can get is three members, as it was decided that two people did not constitute a group

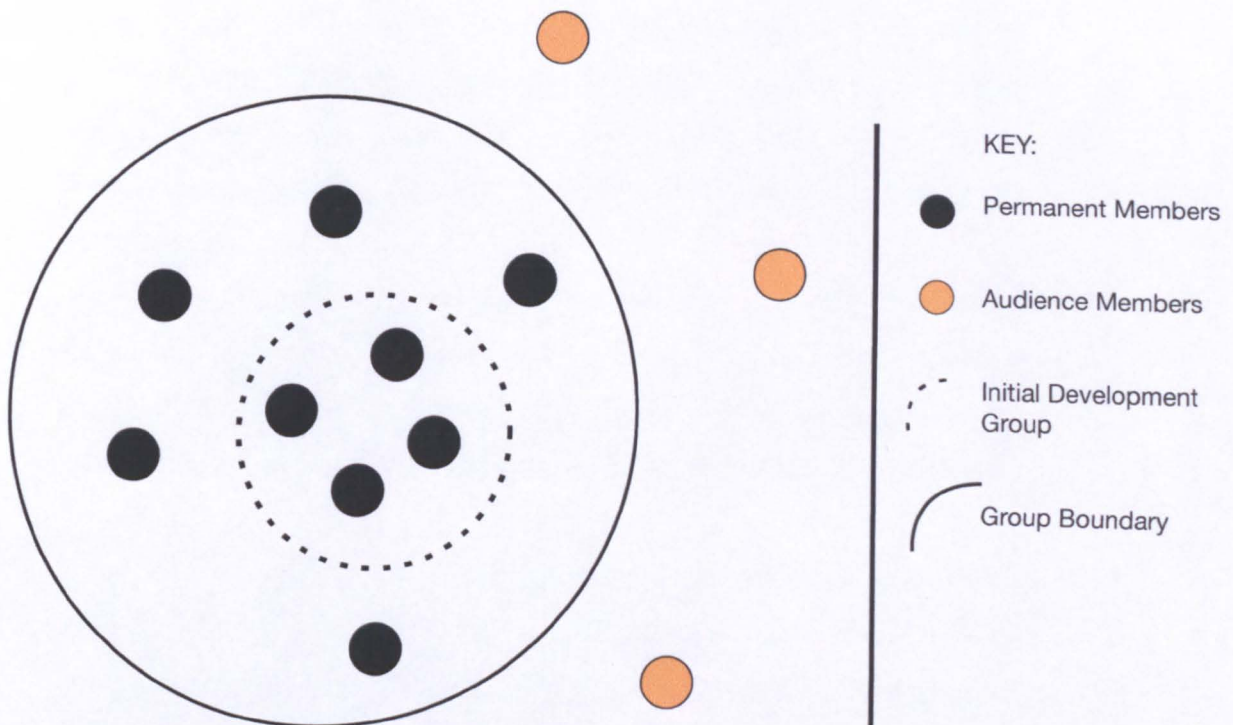


**Figure 3. Zero Point Group. Decentred, Reductive, Non-permeable, Ideological Group**

### **What is the red line?**

In late 2005, I began discussion with Niki Russell and Ed Orton about forming a new, European collaborative group. During our subsequent research trip to Europe, we chose to meet with specific artists who had experience of working collaboratively, based on the assumption that they would be able to adapt most readily to a new grouping formed with us. We discussed the project with people as being an open collaboration, where we would decide what the project was going to be after choosing who to invite as collaborators. The reason things were done in that order was in an attempt at starting the project prior to deciding its form, as we had done with Zero Point. However, even though there was no theme or structure to the project decided in advance, the fact that Ed, Niki, and myself had instigated the approach was enough to result in us being treated as project managers by the others. Holding the first planning meetings with the selected collaborators in Birmingham compounded the problem.





**Figure 4. Red Line Group. Constructed, Decentred, Non-permeable, Ideological Group**

As can be seen in Figure 4, the Red Line Group had a permeable boundary. This fact may have changed if the group had lasted for more than one project, but no new members joined during the group's existence. Reasons for the group not lasting will be discussed below in Chapter 5, and compared with the dissolution of other collaborative groups. In the following chapters, I will discuss in greater detail how the four groups in my practice relate to each other, and also with the other associated groups Reactor and Parfyme, an association that has developed as a consequence of this research. That discussion will rely on concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's writing, with reference to development of those concepts in the work of Brian Massumi and Manuel DeLanda, and in contrast to more dominant models for considering collaboration.

### ***Central Problematics***

In the chapters that follow I explore several problematics of collaboration, including:

1. Group production and formation
2. How participation by audiences can become co-authorship or collaboration
3. How collaborations interact with external groups, individuals, or institutions.

To that end, the main problems being considered in this thesis are as follows:



1. The Rhizome as a concept for understanding and developing collaborative art practice that differs from the dominant dialectical/critical model used in much contemporary critical writing. The rhizome is specifically considered in relation to processes of change in collaborations, in relation to narratives, and as a process of production.
2. The processes involved in the production and maintenance of collaborative groups with reference to Manuel DeLanda's 'assemblage theory' which is a development from Deleuze and Guattari's 'three syntheses of production'. There has also been some consideration of the production of 'imaginary' groups, which occurs in my own art practice.
3. The processes involved in participatory art projects where members of the audience become active contributors to the work. This is done with reference to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and the concept of 'role adjustments' which is borrowed from Erving Goffman (1968).
4. Unexpected events<sup>14</sup> or 'glitches'<sup>15</sup> and whether they can be used to collapse the roles of audience and artists.
5. The tension between presenting a collaborative project for assessment, so that it acknowledges the participation and contributions of others, and the need for it to be assessable as my work in the context of PhD research.
6. The problem of capturing performance and the notion that documentation is unable to capture fully the durational and multiple qualities of performance

## *A Hybrid Research Methodology*

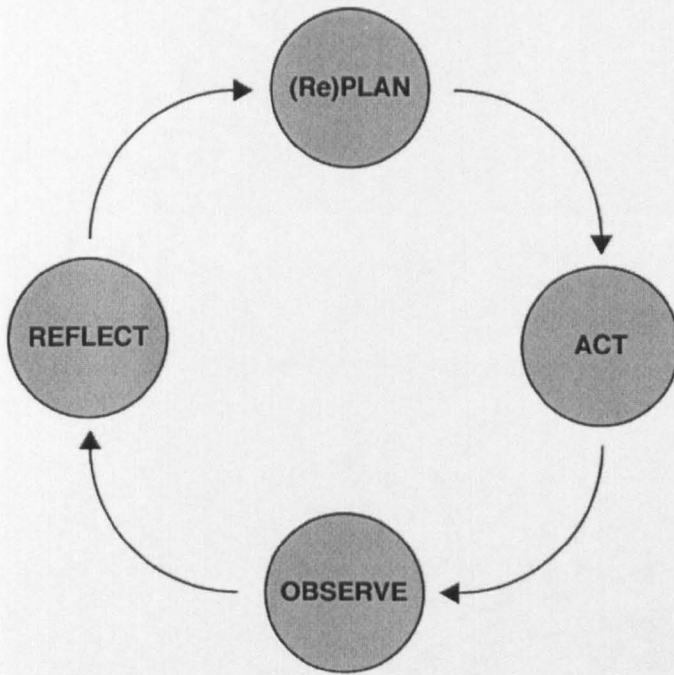
The research methodology in this study has drawn upon, and adapted as appropriate, methods employed by action research which involves 'direct involvement and collaboration of those whom it is designed to benefit' (Blaxter et al., 2001, p. 68). It is distinguished from other forms of participant research where the researcher keeps 'objective distance' such as

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<sup>14</sup> Where I use the phrase 'unexpected events' I refer to occurrences that are unpredicted, which is distinct from the Deleuzian concept of an event, which is 'the potential immanent within a particular confluence of forces' and should be thought of as a process rather than a particular state at a point in time. STAGOLL, C. (2005) Event. In PARR, A. (Ed. *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Etymology: Probably from Yiddish *glitsh*; a slip or lapse, and used in American English since the 1960s in connection with temporary interruptions in electronic hardware systems and popularised by NASA. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/glitch>. Similarities between the *glitch* and the characteristic of the rhizome described as 'asignifying rupture' are discussed below.

with participant observation. In action research there is more of a 'growth in objectivity' or an approach towards increasing objectivity through repeated cycles that refine knowledge (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Action Research Cycle**

As the name suggests, action research is a methodology which consists of researching a given context or community coupled with the simultaneous intention to act to improve the current situation. There is a possible conflict here with the concept of the rhizome which, since it is not a 'thing' or a subject but an imminent movement or process of change, can have no interest in 'improving' anything as that carries with it the suggestion of an image of the situation being produced against which the current state is being compared; i.e. there is a degree of representational thinking going on in this process. There is also a tension between the movement that characterises the rhizome and the need within research for reflection and to pin things down, which I have sought to resolve by means of taking field notes and keeping a diary whilst in the process of engaging with the practice. Because there is an obvious need to be aware of changes as they occur, a reflexive process has been employed to assess and explore findings in manner that is more or less simultaneous with the practice itself.

There is usually the assumption that collaboration will get us what we want with the help of others, but Emma Cocker describes collaboration as ‘a gesture of disturbance and motion or as a threshold state of ‘in-between-ness’ or uncertainty’ (Cocker, 2006, p6). Indeed, my own experience has been that the energy of collaboration often comes from communication problems, glitches, and even obstacles or challenges put in our path by our collaborators.<sup>16</sup> It has therefore been necessary for the research to explore how this idea of more antagonistic modes of collaboration might become manifest in contemporary art practice through the interviews with other practitioners, and by keeping a reflective journal. The need to balance being in control (analysis) with not being in control (experimentation/exploration) is a significant aspect of the rationale for choosing to apply an action research methodology in this research. Action research is a form of practitioner research where ‘there need be no gap between theory, research and practice. The three can be integrated’ (Dick, 1993).

Initial research questions are often fairly general in nature in action research, as the situation being investigated involves a fluid social system, and there is a need to take into account the needs and wishes of participants. However, the action research process, consisting of spirals of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting means that even though an initial question may be ‘fuzzy’, ‘the fuzzy answer allows you to refine both question and methods, you eventually converge towards precision. It is the spiral process which allows both responsiveness and rigour at the same time’ (Dick, 1993). Planning initially starts with two things: an overall plan for how to tackle the situation, and a decision about what the first stage of action will be (Robson, 1993, p. 438). What then follows is an iterative process of acting on the initial beliefs within the identified context; observation of the context before, during, and after the action; and reflection on the outcomes of that action stage. Through reflection on the situation, and with participants, a plan is drawn up for the next stage of action for another cycle with the intention in each cycle being to make improvements in some way. This was the point at which the methodology departed from action research. The idea of ‘improving’ suggests an ideal that the practice is approaching, even if that ideal changes with each cycle, whereas a rhizomatic exploration has less direction. Rhizomatics explores the potential of a situation, or is used to overcome a situation that is blocked or unproductive, it does not attempt to produce an ideal. A Deleuze and Guattari write: ‘The

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<sup>16</sup> A good example of this kind of obstacle that produces a creative response can be found in Lars Von Trier’s movie, *De fem benspænd* (2003) in which Trier challenges director Jørgen Leth to remake his own movie *Det perfekte menneske* (1967) five times, each time with a different obstacle to his carrying out the task imposed by Trier.

rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots' (1988, p. 21) and is focused on the immanent<sup>17</sup>; making transversal connections with what is adjacent. The structure of the rhizome is temporary and in a state of flux, and in certain instances the old connections 'rot away' at the same rate as new connections are being made. As such there is never any fixed structure to the rhizome, it is direct 'Experimentation in contact with the real' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 12): it responds to local conditions.

By making explicit the relationship of the researcher to the situation being researched and to the other participants in the research, action research avoids one of the main ethical difficulties encountered by other forms of participant research, the conflict between maintaining objective distance and affecting the results of the research by interfering in the situation (Hoyle et al., 1979, p. 414); which is, of course, the stated aim of action research – to change the situation. This research should also be distinguished from other forms of 'co-research' in that although the art practice is collaborative, my research aims are not necessarily shared by my collaborators; they may have their own research aims, or even no specific aims outside carrying out the practice itself.

### ***Existing research on collaboration***

Research into collaborative art practices in general has been carried out by Karen Scopa in her Doctoral thesis, *The development of strategies for interdisciplinary collaboration from within the visual arts* which, despite the title, is often descriptive of 'tactics' used in the engagement of participants in specific communities. Scopa's thesis is concerned with collaboration between artists and practitioners from other disciplines, rather than the production of artist collectives (Scopa, 2003). Charles Green's *The Third Hand* addresses the challenge of collaboration to the artist's identity and suggests it as a *modus operandi* proper for the move from modernism to postmodernism (Green, 2001, p.x); Grant Kester's *Conversation Pieces* (Kester, 2004) and Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002) both deal with the issue of collaboration as a process of dialogue or 'context provision' with audiences and participants, although each author has a different emphasis; and Craig Saper's *Networked Art* (Saper, 2001) describes the intimate situations and gift-exchange economies produced through the networked communication of the late twentieth century. However, as Mark Hutchinson pointed out in his 2006 conference paper

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<sup>17</sup> See glossary.

*All Art is Collaborative*, collaboration takes place at the level of ideas, even in solo practice (Hutchinson, 2006), and this way of thinking about collaboration has been developed by Cynthia McCabe to incorporate other social conditions. McCabe asserts that ‘the art world, especially in New York or such other major centers as Paris or Cologne, is itself a collaborative milieu in which the network of information about aesthetic trends, supply sources, and the conditions of the market place is ubiquitous’ (McCabe, 1984, p. 13).

Dave Beech and Mark Hutchinson propose in their essay *Inconsequential Bayonets?* (Beech and Hutchinson, 2007) that artists should oppose the model of ‘professionalism, competence, skill and so on’ with what they call ‘anti-art’. By this they do not suggest that artists should not produce art, but that artists’ practices should problematise existing practices and beliefs about what constitutes art practice (Beech and Hutchinson, 2007, p. 57). However, there is a possible contradiction here in the sense that by opposing certain modes of art practice, they are tying themselves to those very forms of practice. As Sadie Plant writes in her book about The Situationist International, *The Most Radical Gesture*, ‘all forms of criticism, dissent, and resistance occupy an internal relation to the system they oppose’ (Plant, 2000, p. 75). It has therefore been necessary to explore the difference between the rhizome, which can be understood as affirming the new, and the idea of art practice being a critique of, or in opposition to, the status quo. In their concise book, *Analysis*, Dave Beech, Mark Hutchinson, and John Timberlake describe four types of collaboration as follows:

1. Individuals involved in a shared project, e.g. an artist and a dancer benefiting from each other’s specialist knowledge.
2. Artist-run organizations, where ‘most artists involved [...] make a clear distinction between their individual artistic practices and their activities within the organization’.
3. Double acts, usually using the two artists’ surnames.
4. Large chaotic group shows, popular in the 1990s, set up for mutual support, and ‘promoted as a Situationist response to the prevailing economic and cultural conditions’ (Beech et al., 2006, pp. 16-18).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> They are specifically referring to artists of the London art scene at the time responding to the ‘Young British Artists’ (yBa) phenomenon.

To these four, they add 'collectives' as a substantively different form of collaboration. For Beech, et al, collectivity 'produces a transcendent subjectivity – the collective becomes a subject in its own right' (Beech et al., 2006, p. 32), a kind of practice where 'the point and practice of the collective can become the health of the collective itself, rather than the production of things' (Beech et al., 2006, p. 39). In collectives, work is focused on the health and maintenance of the group. The group can change but any new ideology needs to be ratified by the group. If unexpected events occur, the group has to decide collectively whether it will be incorporated under the agreed parameters of the group, or rejected. It is mainly this model of collective working that I intend to challenge below, with rhizomatics.

My initial review of literature on collaborative art practice indicated several standard models of collaboration that extend, or at least refine, Beech, et al's list. First, artist duos, including Charles Green's notion of *The Third Hand*, an idea derived from Statements by Marina Abramovic (Green, 2001) which has resonance with William Burroughs and Brion Gysin's Third Mind (Gysin, 1978) where, in both cases, it is argued that when two people work together there can be a synthetic third element that is somehow greater than just their individual contributions. This is an aspect of duos (double acts) overlooked or ignored by Beech, et al. but which sounds identical to the 'transcendent subjectivity' ascribed to collectives. They see the double act as simply being a convenience for coping with practical demands, rather than as the challenge to identity itself that Green supposes. Second, groups like The Situationist International or Fluxus, discussed below, are presumed, in what Cynthia McCabe refers to as a 'great person theory' of history (McCabe, 1984, p. 64), to have had a charismatic leader who controlled and shaped the group through 'excommunications'. This facet of collaboration, the influence of one individual over others, is not dealt with in *Analysis*. Third, although not a collaboration in the terms discussed in *Analysis*, a more decentred and distributed group like Dada could be considered in similar terms to those of the 'chaotic group show' or 'gangs' (Beech et al., 2006, pp. 17-18), in that they are formed in response to prevailing social conditions.

In addition to these more standard models of collaboration this thesis works through some other concepts for thinking about groups provided by Deleuze and Guattari, specifically in *A Thousand Plateaus*, such as 'war machines'<sup>19</sup> and the term 'molecular' which will be

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<sup>19</sup> War Machines are similar to gangs where leadership is defined or decided by the will of the group rather than an individual. The war machine is an attempt to map out social relations that are not captured by 'the

explored as a way of discussing relatively unstable collaborative groupings that are open to being reconfigured (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). Rather than attempting to illustrate or mimic any of these historical or theoretical models for groups, the collaborations I have engaged in have been allowed to develop following the immediate demands of their practices, then considered in comparison with the above models and concepts.

What I discuss in this thesis are collaborations between practicing artists, not between artists and institutions, or architects, or scientists, or anything else. The practices discussed below in Chapter 3 all problematised art's formations in order to undo any idea of a '(false) universal Art', so in Beech and Hutchinson's terms, they are 'anti-art' (Beech and Hutchinson, 2007, p. 57). However, while this kind of critique, practiced by Beech and Hutchinson, may open up new practices or positions through opposition, they are always 'based upon' those practices that have undergone the processes of negation. Although rhizomatics may indeed problematise art, it does not do so purposively. The affirmation of the rhizome is local, but not 'localised'; it is not tied to an object in the way that critique is. It is nomadic and responds to conditions as they emerge and change. The 'continuous' multiplicity<sup>20</sup> of the rhizome means that the whole and the part each have an effect on each other in a mutual becoming, they move towards an unknowable future. The rhizome does not analyse and critique, it moves, adjusts, and produces. In the case of collaborations a significant part of that production is of the social relations of the group itself.

During this research, I was asked several times why collaborative art practice is any more relevant to the possibility of a rhizomatic art practice (and vice versa) than solo practice. There are certain practices specific to collaboration that arise from a consideration of unexpected events (glitches): the interaction of different personal styles, the way conversation drives collaboration, and the ways in which collaboration challenges discursive structures; that is the way in which there is a break or rupture between the relations and roles taken up by individuals in the group. Solo artists can follow a single train of thought internally without any significant disruption, but, in a collaborative group, there is potential for disagreement and conflict between different practices. This is similar to the way different audio frequencies can cause destructive or constructive interference, where points of

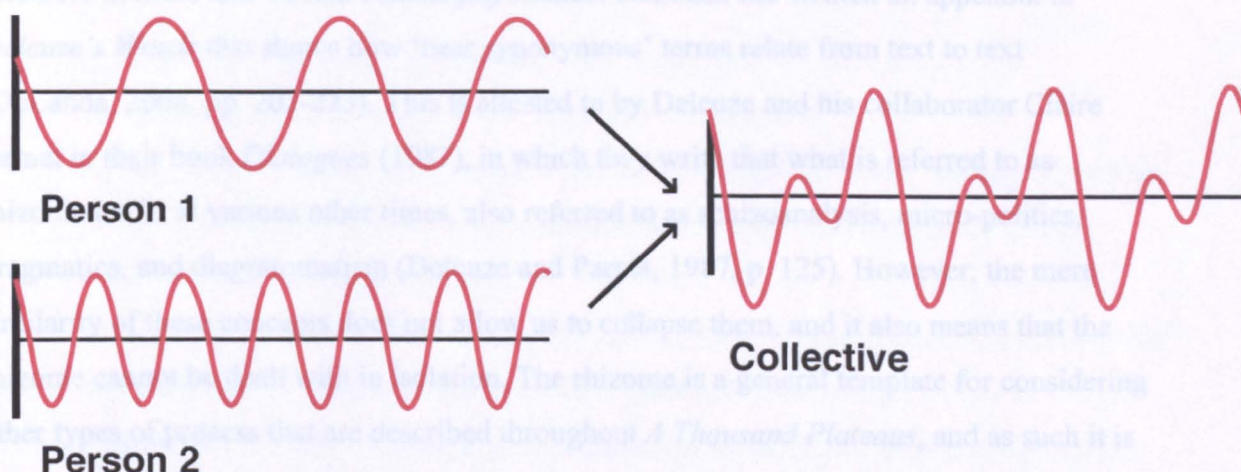
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state' (formal structure), and is nomadic in nature. DELEUZE, G. & GUATTARI, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London, Athlone.

<sup>20</sup> For a full discussion of the distinction between continuous and discrete multiplicities, see introduction in BERGSON, H. (2002a) *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, London, Athlone.



agreement are emphasised and disagreements reduced in importance. In the figure below (Figure 6), the points at which the signals 'Person 1' and 'Person 2' coincide has a higher peak in the 'collective' wave than either of the two original signals.



**Figure 6. Interference patterns**

There is also the opportunity for genuine misunderstanding and miscommunication. These interruptions in the communicative processes of the group behave like other unexpected events; they open up spaces that serve to highlight the preconceptions or habits of thought that existed within individuals or the group.

It is always a danger when making use of a philosophical concept in art practice or practice-as-research, that the work will end up simply illustrating the concept. However, I have used the concept of the Rhizome to consider the changes and ruptures that occur in the practice as a whole, which would exist relatively independently of my considering them through the rhizome, and to test the concept against observed collaborative processes. This has all been with the proviso that, where the concept was a poor fit, new perspectives have been opened up or new concepts developed. Although it is not immediately apparent why collaboration is more appropriate to rhizomatic practice than solo practice, this thesis seeks to show that a particular form of 'molecular collaboration', which is a decentred<sup>21</sup> collaborative practice involving several overlapping groups, actively makes use of rhizomatic processes.

Therefore, before starting to discuss the operation of 'Deleuzian' concepts in collaborative art groups, it is necessary to consider what the term rhizome means.

<sup>21</sup> I used decentred to mean having no central organising body or principle.



## Chapter 2. CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

### 2.1 The Rhizome

Several of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts have similar characteristics, so much so that in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* Manuel DeLanda has written an appendix of *Deleuze's Words* that shows how 'near synonymous' terms relate from text to text (DeLanda, 2004, pp. 202-223). This is attested to by Deleuze and his collaborator Claire Parnet in their book *Dialogues* (1987), in which they write that what is referred to as rhizomatics is, at various other times, also referred to as schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics, and diagrammatism (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125). However, the mere similarity of these concepts does not allow us to collapse them, and it also means that the rhizome cannot be dealt with in isolation. The rhizome is a general template for considering other types of process that are described throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, and as such it is afforded a privileged position within the text as the theme of the introduction. This kind of privileging of a term relates to what Vit Hopley and Yve Lomax call 'star power', which is a kind of power that 'shows off like a star' (Hopley and Lomax, 2000, p. 72). This is a 'tongue-in-cheek' term that refers to a 'hierarchical notion of power' that we are all familiar with, and which is very much associated with forms of knowledge that tend to dominate or dictate (Rogers and Burrows, 2000, p. 80). This is a problem for rhizomatics because its own impetus comes from what Hopley and Lomax refer to as 'constituent power' which 'acts to produce and in so acting acts to produce itself' (Hopley and Lomax, 2000, p. 74) which is to say that expression and its power are immanent to each other. Constituent power persists by constantly remaking itself and entering into composition and 'this way of showing off brings with it a way of conceiving of bodies as composites of an infinite number of other bodies' (Hopley and Lomax, 2000, p. 78). This problematic of wanting to privilege a particular term, even though that is the antithesis of the concept itself, runs right through *A Thousand Plateaus* as a kind of 'diagram' of the book and is discussed in the introduction as a tendency for the root/branch system ('star power' hierarchy) to take hold of the rhizome, and vice versa (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 9). The two modes of composition are never completely exclusive, and this non-exclusive assemblage of differing tendencies occurs again and again throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The use of the concept of the rhizome is an attempt to think beyond representation, beyond the subject-object dichotomy, and beyond hierarchical power structures (Deleuze and

Guattari, 1988, pp. 3-25). Deleuze and Guattari identify six defining characteristics of the rhizome, which move the concept a long way beyond its origins in botany, while still keeping in mind the image of the rhizome as a behavioural principle. These six characteristics, which will be addressed at various points in the following chapters, are:

1. Connection – Connecting individuals with each other to form a group, and connecting groups to form a larger, extended collaboration.
2. Heterogeneity – The things connected retain their own ‘individual’ composition. The notion of molecular collaboration discussed below relies on the separate groups retaining their own characteristics.
3. Multiplicity – After Henri Bergson; a complexity that is not constructed in relation to any prior unity. Changes in one part affect the whole assemblage.
4. Assignifying rupture – An event or encounter that leads to new experience and does not signify anything prior to this event. Glitches in a continuum can promote new directions and new connections to start up.
5. Cartography – An immediate ‘mapping’ of territory in time, which is distinct from *drawing* a map. It means responding to local prevailing conditions in a ‘tactical’ rather than ‘strategic’ way. It means being ready to respond quickly to changing conditions.
6. Decalomania – The process of transferring a tracing onto another surface. I will discuss this aspect of the rhizome in relation to documentation of live projects.

In the entry under ‘Rhizome’ in *The Deleuze Dictionary* Felicity Colman says ‘The nature of the rhizome is that of a moving matrix’ (Colman, 2005, p. 231); in Elizabeth Grosz’s essay *A Thousand Tiny Sexes* it is described as having ‘no given direction of growth’ (Grosz, 1994, p. 199); and in *Empire*, Hardt and Negri explicitly refer to the rhizome as a ‘network structure’, which is decentred and ‘democratic’ (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p. 299), and one important thing to note, as is clearly pointed out by John Rajchman in *The Deleuze Connections*, is that in rhizomatics ‘we must always make connections, since they are not already given’ (Rajchman, 2001, p. 7). If we are to take all of these, and many other commentators’ interpretations of the rhizome, we come to an uncertain picture of whether we are considering a structure in the form of a network or matrix, or a movement or growth that is seemingly directionless. By deciding to use the word rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari do indeed potentially tie the word to the idea of structure by reference back to its etymology

in botany. However, while they acknowledge that the rhizome contains lines of segmentarity, by which they mean that it has discrete structural features, for Deleuze and Guattari the actual form of the rhizome is not the most important feature, and as they explain, 'It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It is neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 21).

Deleuze and Guattari say the rhizome 'ceaselessly establishes connections' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 7), and one possible use of the concept is in terms of relations within a collaborative grouping or network of artists. However, in order to be considered rhizomatic, these 'relations' should not be considered as social relations between individuals, but rather as a set of interactions between parts, or vectors of interaction between forces in an encounter. One might think about the way playground alliances are formed, break apart, reform in a constantly changing set of relations with an off-hand comment by a friend or sibling outside the current set of connections sending ripples through relations so things fracture and reform along new lines. Ruptures and 'lines of flight' can erupt from any part of the rhizome, meaning that the Rhizome can have a tendency to reconfigure itself. The function of each artist within a collaborative group is not fixed in the same way as it might be considered within 'organisational' structures, but is in a state of flux and is able to enter into temporary alliance with other parts of the group, and other collaborative groups. Although I will not rehearse their work here, I have also considered the relationship of the individual to the group in the light of the work of Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies on social formations, such as the distinctions between charismatic, traditional, and rational forms of authority in social structures (Weber, 1970), or the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (association) (Tönnies, 2001) and how these are near synonymous with certain 'Deleuzian' concepts, such as the distinction between molecular and molar formations and 'lines of flight' that destabilise those formations. The distinction between molar and molecular will be discussed below but they can be broadly thought of as different ways of grasping a given situation. The molar is a 'macro' way of considering wholes, structures, and systems of organisation. The molecular is a 'micro' way of considering changes, particle flows, and the way that elements and forces interact to produce effects (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 279-281).

In *Duration and Simultaneity*, Bergson says ‘The thing and the state are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself’ (Bergson, 2002a, p. 205). If the rhizome is viewed at a particular point in time, it has a definite state, or form, but no structure as such, because the idea of structure suggests some level of planning or systematic ordering. This specific snapshot state is, rather, a ‘representation’ of the rhizome, an image, but with the movement subtracted it can no longer be called ‘rhizome’.

Simon O’Sullivan says ‘Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome is not just a critique of representation, but also an active attempt to rethink our own subjectivities differently’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 16). We find ourselves in a world in which ‘there are no fixed subjects or objects but only an expressive flux out of which individuations emerge or are actualised as temporary zones of relative order in a sea of indeterminacy’ (Goddard, 2005, p. 3). The rhizome is partitive: it is not ever simply ‘a rhizome’, but some of a rhizome, its edges are always open (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 9). In her book *Nomadic Subjects*, Rosi Braidotti describes the rhizome as Deleuze’s leading figuration and says it leads to a re-framing of philosophy as the quest for new images of thought, better suited to ‘the nomadic, and disjunctive self’ (Braidotti, 1994, p101) described above. It is not so much that the concept of the rhizome excludes other, more conventional, ways of discussing consciousness, the subject, or systems, just that it is an extra ‘tool’ in discussing the relationship between structure and movement in assemblages.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss hierarchical systems in which ‘an individual has only one active neighbour, his or her hierarchical superior... the channels of transmission are preestablished structuration’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 16). Historical avant-gardes are based on hierarchy, with activity at the margins being opposed to ‘tradition’ at the centre and, according to Michael Goddard, a Deleuzian aesthetics calls for ‘an abandonment of this centre-periphery system, even as the object of a deconstructive critique, since to affirm the margin only reinforces the power of the centre and to transgress only increases the power of the law’ (Goddard, 2005, p. 6). This problem is addressed by Todd May in his book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (May, 1994). May writes that although Lyotard, Foucault, and Deleuze were all drawn to transgression in their early writings, they all ‘gradually moved away from it and toward a notion of experimentation’ (May, 1994, p. 114). Rather than a focus on transgression, for

‘postmodern’ anarchists, struggle against hierarchical domination is identified with notions of ‘becoming’, creativity, and expression. Struggle is seen as ‘a continual process that is not so much focused on the individual as it is on networks of individuals and their movements. The dominant image [...] is of the rhizome [which] describes the nature of human interactions’ (Kinna, 2005). The rhizome responds to local conditions by probing to find the most productive pathways from here towards an unknown, rather than a critique of existing conditions, which may not be at all productive.

O’Sullivan describes the boundaries between disciplines being ‘smeared’ in rhizomatics (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 17), and through a radical reinterpretation of subjectivities, rhizomatics smears distinctions in authorship too. The rhizome does not concern the one or the many but the multiple whereas most collaborations seem to operate as the many rather than as multiplicities; although they contain many people, they remain ‘individuals’ and tend toward adopting fixed roles and identities within the collaboration. To some extent, the rhizome should be thought as impersonal, and a rhizomatic aesthetic strategy should not be driven by desires based on consolidating or bolstering a personal sense of identity or achievement, but on the creative unfolding of events as implicated in the project at hand, and driven by the principle of connection. The concept of ‘individuality’ has its roots in, and is suggestive of the notion that the person is whole, distinct, and indivisible. In his introduction to the BIAD<sup>22</sup> conference publication *Making a Scene*, Henry Rogers proposes a ‘practice predicated on, and in, “dividuality”’. The “dividual” marks the potentiality of “relation”, the potential relation between the individual as a site of practice and collaboration, not as a loss of identity but as a possibility for sharing’ (Rogers, 2000, p. 15). It could be argued that the dividual, a term drawn from Deleuze’s *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (Deleuze, 1992), which extends Foucault’s writing on disciplinary societies, is an extreme symptom of capitalist alienation. The term is used by Deleuze to describe the way in which people are coded in multiple ways for multiple systems. Each of us has a plethora of code numbers for passport control, National Insurance, etc. for identifying our position in various systems and passwords for gaining access, but access can be denied on any given day. However, like Rogers, I think that the term can be appropriated as one possible mode of being that opens the way for a more fluid, plural understanding of subjectivity.

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<sup>22</sup> Birmingham Institute of Art and Design

In the social field the rhizome could be criticised as being disruptive of existing social relations since it is an explorative practice; so what is the effect of a rhizomatic practice on collaborative groups which are, after all, social groupings? Is it invigorating or destructive? In relation to the individual, the rhizome complicates authorship by making the subject of the author unfixed. It is not a 'thing' but a process that undoes structures, or simply avoids them, even the structure of individual identities. So how does the rhizome affect how artists relate to their own products and practices? How is such problematic authorship named, registered, or branded? What are the ethical concerns of a rhizomatic practice, whose impetus is its own movements, not trying to achieve a defined objective?

## 2.2 Several Problematics of Collaboration

### *Collaborations as Assemblages*

At the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari give the example of the baby's mouth and the mother's breast as a form of machine for feeding (and bonding) and describe the way 'partial objects' like mouths enter into different 'machinic assemblages' with other partial objects, e.g. breast (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984). The use of the word 'assemblage' in translation belies the fact that it is translated from the French *agencement*, which has several meanings: arrangement, layout, or fitting (as in fitting two parts together), all of which have the implication of being connected 'in a particular way'. When concepts, bodies, or other individuations, get put together in a specific fashion they derive part of their sense from each other in relation and produce something new, and it is in this sense that the assemblages are described as 'machinic', they are productive.

'Assemblage theory', as a theory of the social, in Manuel DeLanda's *A New Philosophy of Society* (DeLanda, 2006), is a response to the age old theory of resemblances. In the latter, the social is imagined as a body with classes, groups, institutions, etc. as its organs (DeLanda, 2006, p. 8). Developing the theory of assemblages from Deleuze, DeLanda writes that the purpose of his own text is to provide an 'ontological basis' for the work of the social sciences. The theory seeks to address the relationship between parts and wholes in a way that evades 'state' formations based on hierarchy and identity. In most social theory the relationships are based on 'a strict reciprocal determination between parts' where they are defined by their position in the whole (DeLanda, 2006, p. 9). These 'relations of interiority' mean that if a part is detached from the whole, it cannot survive intact because those relations define it. In assemblage theory, the whole is rather characterised by 'relations of exteriority' meaning that elements can be taken out of one assemblage and inserted into another, where it can perform a different function. The theory relies on the idea that components may actualise different capacities in different situations or assemblages (DeLanda, 2006, pp. 10-11). DeLanda cites Deleuze and Guattari's example of the wasp and the orchid as an assemblage because the components interact but maintain their own 'self-subsistence' and this heterogeneity of parts is central to assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006, p. 11). This example of the wasp-orchid assemblage is drawn from the chapter on the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 10) and this particular assemblage demonstrates the first four characteristics of the rhizome: 1. The connection of

the wasp with the orchid forms a rhizome, 2. The heterogeneity of parts in the assemblage, the wasp is still a wasp, the orchid an orchid, 3. The wasp and the orchid have become caught up in each other's evolutionary, feeding, and reproductive processes, all of which intersect at this point, and 4. The asignifying rupture between the two heterogeneous elements, wasp and orchid. Each one causes the other, over time, to reconfigure itself on the image or code of the other. There is a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp that is ongoing, but which does not collapse the heterogeneity of parts. The wasp never 'is' the orchid; it is a process of becoming.

These rhizomatic processes involved in making productive assemblages are essential in understanding the molecular collaboration of my practice-as-research. The practice involves collaboration between artists in groups (assemblages), but also with participants who enter projects after the development stage. I will begin with the more disputed of the two roles, participants, before going on to show that the two roles are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

## ***Participation***

One element of my practice-as-research has been a focus on participation by audience members, which I initially thought of as a relatively unproblematic term meaning taking part in the project in some way. It very quickly became clear that the term participation could be interpreted in several ways. This caused some miscommunications during the interview stage of the research. Participants can be thought of in the following terms: as 'consumers' of an art project where they are relatively passive recipients of the work, which is more or less synonymous with being simply an audience; as a participating 'unit' moved through the work by the artist(s) as if they were objects or materials being used by the artist to make their work, such as Tiravanija's 'lots of people' listed as a material (Bishop, 2004, p 56); as 'active participants' in the piece, where they can be thought of as individual subjects whose decisions during interaction with the work dictate which of certain prescribed outcomes are activated, as in Reactor's *The Tetra Phase* (2007); as co-authors of the work where individuals are 'active agents' who have a direct, creative, influence in how the content of the project evolves, as in WochenKlausur's *Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women* (1994-5); and finally, as agents in the world's transformation.



A key recent text on participation is Claire Bishop's book *Participation* (2006). The book is a collection of essays by other authors, specifically concerning 'the *social* dimension of participation – rather than activation of the viewer in so-called "interactive" art and installation' (Bishop, 2006, p. 10). It should be noted that the subject matter of these essays is distinct from practices that might be described as 'community arts practice', models of participation where a lead artist works with people from a prescribed 'community' such as those with a particular ethnic cross-section or from (often disadvantaged) neighbourhoods. These community practices are not of central concern to this research, but worth mentioning because of their position in the continuum described above, and because this type of practice seemed to be invoked to some extent during at least one of the research interviews.<sup>23</sup> The works discussed in *Participation* strive to 'collapse the distinction between performer and audience, professional and amateur, production and reception. Their emphasis is on collaboration, and the collective dimension of social experience' (Bishop, 2006, p. 10). The works featured in the first two sections of *Participation* are, rather, critical of or antagonistic towards the status quo in favour of social change in various forms, a dimension less evident in the final third of the book, where the works discussed could be referred to as relational practices.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2009, in a presentation during the Radar Symposium *Art in the Social Sphere* at Loughborough University, Dave Beech stated at the conclusion of his paper that:

'It is not an adequate response to the current state of art to celebrate collaboration or participation in contemporary art. Nor can we merely add these social elements together and arrive at an ideal practice. [...] If you have collaborators and participants working together, you have a hierarchy of authorship, responsibility and control' (Beech, 2009, p. 9).

Referring to the writing of Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester, Beech describes a field of practices that he collectively refers to as 'the art of encounter.' These writers, respectively, describe encounters between artists, audiences, and art works that are

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<sup>23</sup> For discussion of the social impact of participatory arts programmes, specifically those which could fall under the banner of community arts, see the influential report, MATARASSO, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts.* and a critique of Matarasso's position in MERLI, P. (2002) *Evaluating the social impact of participation in arts activities.* *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8, 107 - 118.

defined by Beech as: relational and convivial (ethical); relational and antagonistic (political); and dialogical (within the sphere of politics) (Beech, 2009, pp. 4-5). The majority of projects described by these writers involve a social or relational encounter as something considered in or by the work, what Beech refers to as 'the art of encounter.' What I would like to consider below is 'art *as* encounter,' an art where an encounter with others, or a particular situation, is itself the work, or where such an encounter is engendered by the work. This can be understood as a subdivision of 'the art of encounter,' and is not simply an encounter 'with' the work.

A clear distinction is made by Beech between the roles of participants and collaborators in 'the art of encounter.' He supplies a simple dictionary definition of collaboration as co-labouring or working together, and defines participation as 'having a share, taking part, or being part of a whole' (Beech, 2009, p. 6). While he then engages in a critique of participation, in this conference paper he leaves collaboration as a relatively unproblematic term used only to stand as a superior practice to participation.

Although Beech relies on the various positions of Bourriaud, Bishop and Kester to develop his argument, the examples of practice cited by Bourriaud and Bishop maintain the unity of the artist as sole author of art objects or scenarios with which audiences interact. They present a particularly weak account of participation. The artists may be interested in the relations between work and audience, whether convivial or antagonistic, but it seems like a one-way street. There is a restricted opportunity for the audience to feed ideas back into the work. Based on these examples of practice, it is not hard to see why Beech has doubts about the claims being made for participation, stating that collaborators have more rights than participants, including the 'withholding' of authorship from participants. However, if we acknowledge that the subject is socially constructed, with which Beech agrees in his paper, then any withholding of authorship or control must also be the result of social forces. Institutions, as social constructs, also exert pressure on artists to maintain authorship, while simultaneously promoting participation and collaboration. The situation is confused.

For Beech, 'the art of encounter' is a fractured field where, he acknowledges, none of the practices described are complete or satisfactory, and there is a conflict or tension between participants and collaborators, which is brought to light by considering hierarchies of power and claims to authorship. It could be argued that by staging participation and collaboration

in the same project there is an antagonistic set of relations, which is what Beech argues is necessary for 'genuine democratic processes or political dialogue.' Beech refers (via Bishop) to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in his use of the term 'antagonism',<sup>24</sup> which, they claim, produces discursive formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001).

Beech's definitions of the roles of participants and collaborators are exclusive and artificially rigid, and this is the very root of the problem with critique. Entities are defined by distinct parameters and these entities may interact with each other, but do not undergo change in themselves. In rhizomatics, multiplicities or assemblages are formed that are processual and productive. I would like to propose that social roles, including those of artist, participant and collaborator, are altogether more flexible and permeable than those defined by Beech. I will use concepts from the writing of Erving Goffman to explore roles within 'art as encounter' and to consider ways of avoiding or dismantling hierarchies of power. I will then argue for a new synthesis of participation and collaboration that allows for all of Beech's convivial, antagonistic, and dialogical dimensions within a single assemblage. I will begin with Beech's suggestion that antagonism produces the social and propose an alternative model that seems to me less restrictive: actor-network theory.

### **Actor-network Theory**

Actor-network Theory (ANT) has been developed in the field of social science and is indebted to the writing of Deleuze and Guattari. Where Manuel DeLanda has developed his assemblage theory out of Deleuze and Guattari's work in order to provide an ontological basis for the social sciences, ANT theorists were carrying out more or less the same work independently in their own field. ANT and assemblage theory essentially relate to the same problems, but through the optics of different disciplines. Where one refers to 'assemblages' the other refers to 'networks', both are descriptions of multiplicities.

Our usual conception of a network is something made of units, groups, or segments of groups, such as Manuel Castells' use of the term in his writing on networks. In business terms, for Castells, 'large corporations are internally de-centralized as networks. Small and medium businesses are connected in networks. These networks connect themselves on specific business projects, and switch to another network as soon as a project is finished' (Castells, 2000, p. 478). While this gives us a sense of the fluidity of networked relations,

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<sup>24</sup> See glossary.

this is a description of what Bruno Latour refers to as ‘technical networks’ (Latour, 1997). This model of a network is one we are familiar with: a number of strategically positioned nodes connected together by more or less compulsory pathways. The main problem with networks of this type is that they have difficulty in coordinating functions and managing themselves, compared to hierarchical structures (Castells, 2000, p. 481). Because of their decentralised nature, a social struggle (antagonism) arises as individuals attempt to decide the network’s goals. At some point the network is programmed, often ‘democratically,’ so that hegemony is established and individuals’ choices are constrained by the network (Castells, 2000, p. 482). This is clearly a set of social relations involving antagonism, a set of exchanges that do not always have happy resolutions.

In contrast to this concept of a network, Actor-Network Theory proposes that, rather than using the term ‘network’ as a substantive, we should consider it as a ‘performative’ term. As with Laclau and Mouffe’s idea that antagonism produces the social (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), in actor-network theory (ANT) the social is not seen as a given or homogenous space within which social activity takes place, rather it is constructed. The social is not something that is given, or stable, but emerges ‘through the surprising movements from one association to the next’ (Latour, 2005, p. 247) It is a mobile, networking movement that constitutes the social. This is similar to Laclau and Mouffe’s account of the production of the social, except without the emphasis on relations being antagonistic, or convivial. ANT incorporates the physical with the social sphere, and refers to any individual, object, or even institution that affects the network as an ‘actor.’ The actor-network theorists owe a clear debt here to Michel Foucault’s ‘discursive formations’ (Foucault, 2007).<sup>25</sup> John Law describes how, in a lecture situation, all of the props (such as a projector), the setting, and the layout of the lecture hall count as actors since they participate in the shaping of the situation (Law, 1992).

It is clear that in actor-network accounts of participatory projects the extent to which individual ‘actors’ (including artists, participants, and other project elements) affect each other and therefore form a network of forces different in each instance. This makes it difficult or even impossible to say in advance what the nature of the specific set of relations will be, and therefore impossible to generalise on the likelihood of generating either conviviality or antagonism.

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<sup>25</sup> Discourse is that which is produced by groups of signs or sequences of signs (including objects) that belong to a single system of formation.

ANT is defined as a network tracing activity; it traces the movement and activities between people and things. Individuals, objects, institutions, roles, etc. are also networks in themselves, even if, for the sake of convenience, they are treated in some instances as unities. In actor-network terms, a 'participant' is a complex bundle of roles of which the role of participating is only one, and that one role among many is itself a network of forces and influences. Networks combine to form larger networks with more connections, each movement produces a unique configuration, and actors affect each other. Examples of art practice that considers relations in terms of networks are few and far between. However, in his book *Conversation Pieces*, Grant Kester describes Stephen Willats' collaborations with 'co-participants', specifically housing estate residents, as a process that helped the residents distance themselves from the 'life-world' of the estate in order to critically reflect on the forces that shape their existence (Kester, 2004, p. 93). Willats is engaging in something approximating an actor-network analysis of the estate with the participants. In this process the participants become reflective agents in the mapping of their social field. This is a clear shift in emphasis in their appreciation of the network of the estate, and is accompanied by a shift in relationship between the artist and other participants in the network. It is clear then, that there is a certain malleability to any role within a network. This runs counter to the notion of fixed roles for collaborator or participant, and provides a route out of the problems of hierarchy that Beech and others encounter. In order to discuss the issue of role malleability, I would now like to consider Erving Goffman's writing on roles and how it has the potential to free practice from hierarchies of power by decentralising the production of encounters.

### **Role Malleability**

Roles are what Goffman refers to as the basic unit of socialisation, inasmuch as they are complex assemblages of behaviours that present a particular 'front'. According to Goffman, we expect a 'confirming consistency' and coherence between setting, appearance, and manner (Goffman, 1971, p. 35); being served at the newsagent by someone dressed in surgical scrubs would be disorientating. A significant characteristic of social front is its generality, for instance, the use of a white coat to convey a front of scientific knowledge that can be played by a doctor or a salesman demonstrating a rug cleaner.

In the same way, the social front of different participatory art projects may be similar in surface appearance. A front's familiarity may lead the casual observer to categorise the

event in relation to past experience – therefore stereotyping the practice as simply participatory. This is a double-edged sword, familiarity may draw people into the project, but then expectations put pressure on the project in terms of what is possible from that starting-point. When the audience/participants first encounter the project there will be an established front, which inevitably suggests roles such as artist and participant, though these may be demarcated to a greater or lesser degree. There is no way around this, as there must be a set of ‘starting’ positions in any interaction, whether these are formally established in the project or simply habits of convention, and whether they are consciously registered or not.

Roles bring with them a whole set of behaviours and actions. When someone takes on the role of participant or performer they usually find that a particular front is already established for them (Goffman, 1971, p. 37). The adjustments participant and artist alike make to their separate roles are referred to by Goffman as ‘primary adjustments’, but in addition to these, he adds ‘secondary adjustments’. Secondary adjustments are ‘any habitual arrangement by which a member of an organization employs unauthorized means, or obtains unauthorized ends’ (Goffman, 1968, p. 172) thus ways in which they do not fit into the agreed roles; what they ‘get away with’.

In terms of participatory art projects, primary adjustments would be moves that the participants make in order to adjust themselves to the role of participant in this particular project. These adjustments would be based upon cues provided by the artists involved, any institutional structures the project takes place within, and also any other participants. Contained secondary adjustments would be those that the participant makes within the parameters of the project where the participant tries to work the system for self gain. These adjustments may be ‘permitted’ by the artist because they do not threaten the project, but rather serve to keep the participant engaged; they are like a release valve. Disruptive secondary adjustments are those designed to facilitate the participant leaving the project entirely or affecting radical change in the network. Disruptive adjustments would be rare in art projects because participants have usually chosen to be involved. I will discuss below the example of a participatory art project in which a significant change to the network of the project occurred, during which participants made adjustments in their own roles.

## Becoming Co-participants<sup>26</sup>

In a sense, roles are like ‘virtual selves’ that people come to and inhabit, or rather they are like positions within a discursive formation, actor-network, or assemblage that individuals can take up. Embracing a role means fully disappearing into the virtual self provided by the situation and to ‘confirm expressively one’s acceptance of it’ (Goffman, 1961/1997, p. 35). So if a participant gets the impression that the artist is indifferent to or does not believe in either their own role or that of the participant it can be a difficult time. Certainly, if a wedge is introduced between the role and its accompanying virtual self then ‘role distance’ is introduced meaning that the participant never really takes on the role, even though they may still continue to play it. A third possibility is that the participant may entirely throw off their role, and if the aim is for them to become collaborators, that is exactly what is needed. It may also mean that they walk away entirely: a disruptive secondary adjustment.

In participatory art projects, and arguably most social situations, we often find a division into a ‘back region’, which is the space where the performance is organised and prepared for, and a ‘front region’ which is the public face of the project (Goffman, 1971, p. 231). One of the first things an artist needs to do if they want to be open to the possibility of collaboration and the production of a public sphere is to allow participants access to the back region so no aspect of the project is hidden. This is an opening of the door, but the participant still must choose to walk through it, which they may not want to do. Actually, this picture is too simplistic; there are in fact multiple regions or positions within a project that individuals can take up. The adjustments necessary to switch roles from participant to collaborator may be beyond the ability of the participant, or simply undesirable to them. Transition from one role to another is a dialogical process and as such is sometimes convivial, and at other times antagonistic, but always immanent to the project unfolding. Because participatory art projects, as assemblages, are multiplicities, when one person makes adjustments to their role in the project it affects the project as a whole, causing others to make their own adjustments, and so on.

An example of participants making adjustments that have led to their role changing in character is Reactor’s *Geodecity* series of projects. The project concerns the development of

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<sup>26</sup> The term ‘co-participants’ is drawn from Kester’s discussion of the relationship between Stephen Willats and participants in his projects. KESTER, G. H. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art*, Berkeley, University of California Press.



the 'performance fiction'<sup>27</sup> of a utopian society loosely based around the work and ideas of Buckminster Fuller. For the first project in the series, *Destination: Geodecity* (2007), Reactor organised the project, which took place over a weekend, and they led the project as artists. Participating was the only way to experience the project except through photographic documentation, and participants made a genuine contribution to the way the project developed, generating a folklore and structure for the society of 'Geodecians'. Participants' engagement with the Geodecity universe has been maintained between projects by the use of a wiki.<sup>28</sup> The wiki is used to develop all aspects of the community and to fully involve participants in the planning stages of subsequent Geodecity 'outposts'. Having taken part in the first project, and one of the subsequent outposts as a participant I experienced progression from a relatively passive participation at the start of *Destination: Geodecity* through to a more active participation and then to a more collaborative or co-participatory role. The most difficult transition was from passive to active participant because it was accompanied by the suspicion that Reactor were essentially mining their participants for ideas that might be used on future projects from which we would not benefit. However, once it became apparent that there was a genuine desire on their part to develop the community of Geodecians, it was obvious that we were co-authoring the project. The transition from participant to collaborator was essentially a state of mind, an adjustment. The transition from audience/participant to participant/collaborator is symbolised within Geodecity in the performance of the 'Tabard Transition'. This involves the donning of a tabard made by oneself and making a declaration to camera of one's intentions in taking part in the project (Figure 7).

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<sup>27</sup> The term was coined by David Burrows for the *Performance Fictions* Conference at The Electric Cinema, Birmingham, 21 November 2009

<sup>28</sup> A wiki is a page (or collection of web pages) designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content, using a simplified markup language. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites. The collaborative encyclopedia Wikipedia is one of the best-known wikis.



**Figure 7. Participants making tabards in preparation for the ‘Tabard Transition’**

The transition is re-performed by each collaborator at each outpost they attend. While the tabard transition does not, in itself, guarantee that participants will collaborate or co-author the project, it symbolises that role adjustment. Not all participants who perform the tabard transition ‘actually’ make the transition, in the same way that not all people who take part in the ritual to become an American Citizen will actually consider themselves to ‘be’ American. New Americans may legally become citizens by performing the ritual, but it may be some time before they actually ‘feel’ American. Similarly, the project holds within it the potential for the Geodecians to break away from the ‘Reactor identity’ and constitute a new collective, in the same way Insectoid ‘budded off’ from a.a.s. This is something Reactor have been discussing for the future.

As Rudolf Frieling writes in his introduction to *The Art of Participation*, in the original Latin, *participare*, the emphasis is on the transitive verb element, *capere* (to take); ‘we actively become part of a larger whole without necessarily knowing what this might constitute. We trust that we will find out by participating.’ It is only by actively choosing to

‘take’ part that we get to understand what is going on (Frieling et al., 2008, p. 12) which is, hopefully, the production of a discursive social field. If the social relies on antagonism for its production, then critique of participation is an essential component of the development of a theory of participation (Frieling et al., 2008, p. 13) and in this Beech performs a valuable service to participatory art practice. However, it is only through taking part without knowing in advance how the social relations will develop, or how this particular assemblage, or lay out, will function that we can ever expect to produce anything new or unexpected.

### *Unexpected Events and Glitches*<sup>29</sup>

Whenever we talk about the boundary between artist and audience, or doing away with hierarchy, someone will raise the problem of the power relationship between artist and audience, or within the group itself, saying that no matter how much we give control to the audience it will still inevitably be on our own terms. This is obviously difficult to get away from, but one possible way to short circuit the problematic of the central role of the artist, may be to be ‘unrehearsed’ or to leave space within the work for things to ‘go awry’. When the unexpected happens it creates new conditions for production. The artist initiates a scenario that is activated by the audience or participants; the artist quickly loses ‘control’ of the situation and the artist and others involved then become partners in resolving or developing the scenario. The event of ‘the unexpected’ or ‘the glitch’ provides a common reference that can be considered and worked through by all of the participants. The glitch throws up other problems to do with authorship, especially with a co-authored work, since individuals may seek to take credit for the creative act when it was, at least partially, accidental or unexpected. The glitch is not always, or even usually, experienced as a ‘positive’ event as it is a disruption. In fact, if we are to think in terms of ‘becoming’, or the rhizome, instead of ‘being’ and any notion of a fixed subject, then the whole issue of individual authorship becomes contentious.

In developing this concept of the glitch I would like to suggest that there are three approximate types of glitch, all of which provoke a response:

1. A ‘fatal’ glitch is largely or completely irresolvable, and the response it provokes is a choice about whether to embrace it and incorporate the rupture into the practice as an

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<sup>29</sup> The term glitch is usually reserved for technical use in relation to machines but, following Deleuze and Guattari’s description of assemblages as ‘machinic’, I will use the term in relation to assemblages (groups and collectives) that are productive.

unexpected disjunction or to reject it and start the work again from scratch. This type of glitch is usually 'accidental'.

2. A 'slippage' glitch does not necessarily halt the practice completely, but does provoke an adjustment to get the work back on track. Etymologically, this is the closest to the original meaning of glitch.
3. A 'deliberate' glitch is inserted into or allowed by a system or project in the knowledge that it will provoke unexpected changes in the direction the project takes which then need to be incorporated. This type of glitch is closely related to 'chance' but is not the same since chance usually implies a process of repetition where the outcomes are uncertain for each occurrence. A third party can introduce a deliberate glitch into an existing system on purpose.

These are not clearly delineated types and can overlap. In fact whether a glitch is interpreted as deliberate or fatal may depend on one's perspective. An example of a deliberate glitch that is also a slippage glitch may be a journalist breaking a story that causes government policy to be abandoned or changed. However, an example of a fatal glitch would be a *coup d'état* that causes the whole political system to be restructured.

So, one possible way of negotiating a way through the problematic of the 'central role' of the artist, as identified above, is to be 'unrehearsed'. The artist can set up a starting point of a scenario to be activated by the audience or participants; the artist and others involved then become partners in resolving or developing the scenario. This is difficult to achieve and even when the hierarchical relationship actually breaks down the 'others' involved may try to shore it up in an attempt to maintain the artist/audience split. In the case of my *Unplanned Lecture*, (2002) at Springhill Institute, Birmingham, the audience seemed to be more disturbed than comforted by the levelling of the playing field. Within that performance I announced that I was going to give an unplanned lecture, where I had nevertheless laid-out some props (chalk, board rubber, etc.) and dressed as a 'teacher'. I had a vague idea of a starting point for the lecture and just began talking and making notes on a blackboard. After about fifteen minutes I began to 'dry up' and the performance stuttered. I began explaining to the audience that I could not continue, at which point they began to offer advice and assistance on how to continue. They began to participate actively in the event, rather than simply provide an audience for it. While I remained at the front of the room, the



performance evolved into a collective discussion of what was happening and moved from them simply participating (trying to get me to continue), into a collaborative, dialogical process. The piece lasted for about an hour. In this example the event of the glitch as a point of asignifying rupture, the fourth characteristic of the rhizome, can serve to highlight what expectations we had about the situation before the glitch, and provide a common reference that can be considered and worked through by all of the participants. This is a clear example of the 'fatal' type of glitch because it caused a complete change in the nature of the event from a spoken word performance into a conversation about catastrophe.

A 'slippage' glitch is not necessarily destructive, but is an unexpected event that causes an adjustment to the project. In my interview with Reactor, Dan Williamson described how the live situation of the project leads to unexpected situations that one could not have predicted 'when you were typing it up on your computer at home' (Interview with Reactor, lines 354-374). These unexpected events lead to the project making immediate changes that work better than the original plan. This is rhizomatic responsiveness to circumstances; an adjustment in the route being taken that is productive.

The most obvious example of a 'deliberate' glitching that came out of the research is the way The Bughouse work, and they describe the glitch as being 'central' to their practice. Drawing inspiration from Brion Gysin and William Burroughs' 'cut up' techniques, they manipulate analogue media such as audio tape by cutting, crushing, splicing, etc. and making multiple random segments of recording over each other. The resulting unexpected configurations of sound elements and phrases are then 'read' in search of 'significant moments' (Interview with Bughouse, lines 426-436). They interpret these as 'messages from the future' in the same manner as Burroughs, in that they are 'built into narratives, like it's all trans-temporal. The unconscious knows no time, so when you get into the deeper structures of all the fabric of all this paranoid universe stuff you might, y'know, the future might not be as randomly constructed as you might ordinarily think.' (Bughouse interview, lines 644-647) In fact, The Bughouse is not the only group in this study to have a rhizomatic process for opening their practice towards an unknown future. Reactor and Parfyme also have processes directed towards an unknown future. The only contemporary group in this study who produce an image of a 'known future', at which they aim, are Freee.

## Diagrams

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze presents the concept of the ‘diagram’<sup>30</sup> (Deleuze, 2004a), which is a development of Bacon’s own term ‘graph’. For Deleuze, each painter, or painting movement has its own ‘diagram’ that shapes its production. Bacon’s diagram causes a Sahara to be ‘inserted into the head’ of the ‘figurative unit’ or it stretches a rhinoceros skin over it, or splits the two halves with an ocean (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 82).

Another example is Van Gogh’s diagram which is ‘a set of straight and curved hatch marks that raise and lower the ground, twist the trees, make the sky palpate’ (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 83). The diagram is basically a particular trait in each artist’s practice that conditions the work and can be seen to approximately describe a ‘programme’ or a method which is used to rupture or deterritorialise the work, opening up unexpected ‘spaces’. The Bacon diagram consists of three phases: a pre-existing space, which is structured and contains figuration or figurative appearance, and which may only be in the artist’s head; a manual ‘diagram’ that is ‘insubordinate’ and disrupts the figurative space ‘in a catastrophe’; and finally, something ‘emerges’ from the diagram and ‘presents itself to view’ (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 125). To put that more simply:

1. Bacon starts off with figuration
2. His diagram intervenes and ‘scrambles’ things
3. A new form emerges, the ‘figure’

The basic idea of the diagram put forward in *Francis Bacon* is taken up by Manuel DeLanda in *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (DeLanda, 2006), which is a development of Deleuze and Guattari’s writing on assemblages. For DeLanda, the ‘diagram’ describes an assemblage’s ‘space of possibilities’, and is equivalent to a ‘body-plan’ such as ‘the space of all vertebrate designs’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 29) which indicates the possible capacities of an assemblage. In the case of Bacon the diagram is ‘the operative set of asignifying and nonrepresentative lines and zones, line-strokes and colour-patches.’ The operation of which is ‘to be suggestive’ or to introduce ‘possibilities of fact’ (Deleuze, 2004a, pp. 82-83). In the words of Daniel W. Smith, in the translator’s introduction to *Francis Bacon*, the painter’s diagram ‘undoes the optical organization of the

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that, throughout the thesis, I will reserve the term ‘diagram’ for the sense in which it is used by Deleuze, and use the term ‘figure’ for any illustrations of group organisation.

synthesis of perception (clichés), but also functions as the “genetic” element of the pictorial order to come’ (Smith, 2004, p. xxiv). Put another way, the ‘original’ space, which may only exist in the artist’s head, is a structured, molar space that is ‘molecularised’ by the diagram preparing it for reconfiguration.

Although, in *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze only uses the concept of the diagram to discuss painting, the term is developed further in *A Thousand Plateaus* in relation to assemblages in general. What I propose is that the procedure described, which makes use of the diagram to ‘undo’ habit or clichés and to produce new spaces or configurations, is a rhizomatic procedure that can be performed upon any existing configuration. Diagrammatics can be used to understand the processes of change that occur in collaborative, participatory, and performance projects.

### ***Summary - A New Synthesis***

As long as the separation in terms of artist and participants remains then there is a hierarchy, but it is no more or less than in traditional forms of practice. As long as this distinction remains there is the question of whether the artist is patronizing the participants. The accusation that the artists and participants are always in a hierarchical relationship, and that this relationship is exploitative, is problematic because it denies the participants’ ability to affirm their own rights to primacy or parity. The aim in a.a.s projects, during the research period, has been to negotiate with participants to make the group into something they are interested in, not just presenting them with a group, which they then decide whether to commit to or stay outside. They can choose to commit to a group that will change in nature because they have joined. This is a consideration of the group as a multiplicity, not only in the sense that a change in quantity has qualitative effects, but that when someone joins they contribute individually to changes in the group. The relationships in the group produce the social space of that group, which in turn means all members of the group needing to make adjustments to their role or function in the group.

Participation, and the transition into collaboration, cannot be forced and one of the biggest challenges for a truly democratic participatory practice is consent. How can we ask people to consent to something when we do not know what it will end up being? The problem with the assumption that the artists are ‘in charge’, is that they then have to ‘look after’ participants. This in turn robs participants of their own agency. The truth of the matter is that in good



participatory practice the participants affect the artists as much as the other way around and they construct the project together, artists and the audience produce the 'event'<sup>31</sup> of the project and there is a 'becoming co-participant' for both. This is what I consider to be a kind of 'poststructuralist anarchist' participatory practice, a multiplicity in which the project, its conditions and participants all respond to each other in an evolving network of relations. I agree that this is rare, but that does not mean it should not be an ambition. The focus for participatory practice needs to shift away from what Beech states as the impossibility of combining participation and collaboration to make a generalised 'ideal' practice (Beech, 2009, p.9) and towards specific cases; this particular set of relations, this particular participant, this particular building, etc. ANT allows for considering convivial and antagonistic relations simultaneously as they are presented in a participatory network.

Since ANT is a network tracing activity that bears a strong developmental link to rhizomatics, it does not pre-determine whether the model will be convivial or antagonistic, but allows relations to emerge from the particular situation, which includes the setting. The setting of a project is one of the main problems for developing a participatory practice. While appealing to the notion of participation to make their work appear 'democratic', artists can still control the parameters of the project through their choice of setting. A particular site can emphasise aspects that the artist wants to focus on, and the artist's position in relation to institutions<sup>32</sup> can lend them authority to which participants respond, thus maintaining the hierarchy. It is understandable that this often happens because having the authority of the institution gives artists a sense of security and validation.

Having set out the territory that this study covers (the rhizome as a concept for considering collaboration, how groups are produced and maintained, participation by audiences, glitches, and problems of capturing and presenting collaborative performance), I will now discuss three historical groups that provide a context for this current research, considering their formation, practices, and dissolution. I have chosen these specific groups because they each provide a different group model, they all address the performativity of art to some degree, they all address the issue of the separation of art and everyday life, and finally, many readers

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<sup>31</sup> I mean 'event' in the sense of a change to a situation, one that is never entirely reversible.

<sup>32</sup> By the term 'institution' I mean any framework that lends authority, which may be a physical location, but it may also be the more nebulous idea of 'the art world,' and simply not taking place in a gallery does not mean there is no institutional influence.

will already be familiar with their work. This last reason reduces the need to describe their outputs at length, allowing me to focus on how the groups operate.

### Chapter 3. A SELECTED HISTORY OF COLLABORATIVE ART PRACTICE

One of the focuses of this research on collaboration has been to investigate different formations of collaborative groups and interactions, unusual types in particular. In this chapter, I will consider three historical groups that are of particular interest to this current study: Zurich Dada, Fluxus, and The Situationist International (SI) – including the Second Situationist International (SSI). I have included in this study some of the history of how each group was formed. I do this in order to give a sense of the ‘milieu’ from which the ‘territory’ of the group formed, how a ‘molecular flow’ of artists at a particular time and place came together to form a group, a ‘molar’ formation. The groups are discussed in approximate historical order but, since Fluxus and the SI were more or less contemporary with each other, I deal with the groups in order from the most to least engaged with the art world. I have considered how these particular groups were formed, structured, and dissolved but also the ways in which they utilised processes that could be characterised as rhizomatic/anarchistic or critical/dialectical. I do this to provide a comparison with contemporary practices. These particular historical groups have also been cited as an influence by some of the groups interviewed in this study.

#### *Zurich Dada*

In early 1916 Hugo Ball and his partner Emmy Hennings<sup>33</sup>, both German emigrants to Zurich, approached the owner of the Holländische Meierei Café Spiegelgasse 1, with the suggestion of holding a cabaret of ‘artistic entertainments’ that would be popular with the many expatriate intellectuals who were in the city evading the war (Ball, 1974, pp. xxii-xxiii). The opening of Cabaret Voltaire on 5<sup>th</sup> February was the de facto start of Dada, even if the name did not appear until later that year<sup>34</sup>.

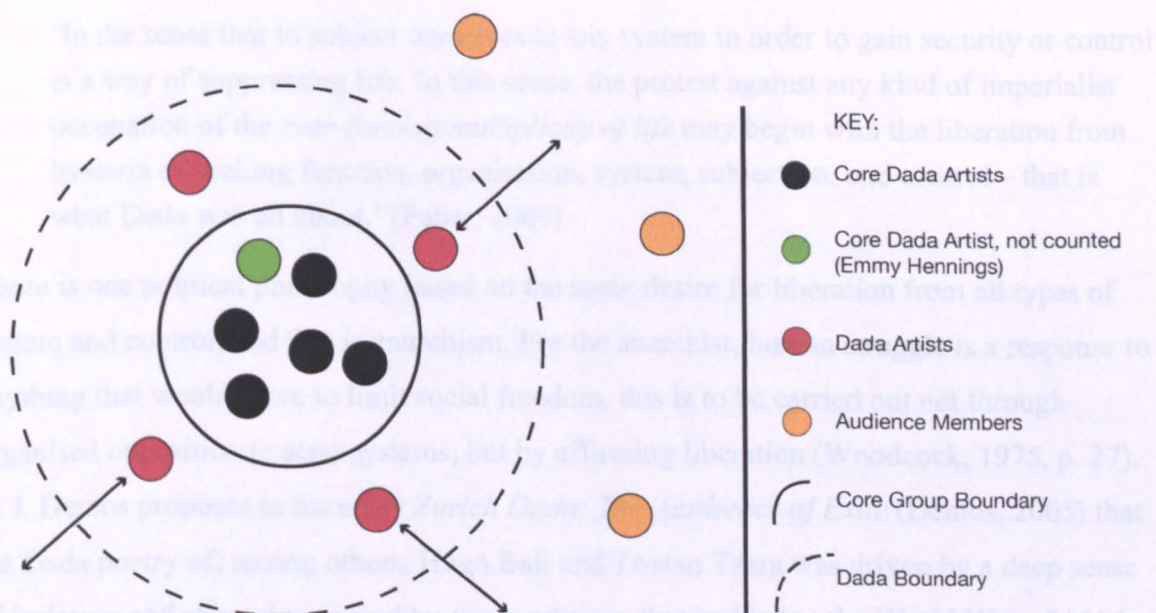
Cabaret Voltaire was prefigured a year earlier, in May 1915, by an *Expressionistabend* (Expressionist Soirée) in Berlin hosted by Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck that was held to show solidarity with Marinetti and the Italian Futurists. When Huelsenbeck heard about the

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<sup>33</sup> Despite being central to Cabaret Voltaire’s opening, and performing frequently at the events, Hennings is often sidelined in accounts of Zurich Dada; Ball himself says “There are five of us”; Ball, Huelsenbeck, Tzara, Marcel Janco, and Hans Arp. BALL, H. (1974) *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, New York, The Viking Press. p63

<sup>34</sup> Who came up with the name is disputed; Tristan Tzara claims it was him, Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck say they selected the word randomly from a dictionary while searching for a stage name for Mme Le Roy - GALE, M. (1997) *Dada & Surrealism*, London, Phaidon. p47

opening of Cabaret Voltaire, he turned up a week later, and together they comprised a German pole of Dada, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco forming another Romanian pole, with the Alsatian Hans (Jean) Arp as a point of stability between them. Although these five are usually accepted as the core members of Zurich Dada (Figure 8), there was a wider, loosely associated gathering of artists, writers, and performers involved in the cabaret and the journals *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Dada*.<sup>35</sup> In the case of Zurich Dada, these associated artists were still considered to be Dada artists even though they were not part of the core group of five, which suggests that Dada has, to some extent, an adjectival usage, as in ‘that is a very Dada performance’. One ‘is’ Dada, rather than a ‘member of’ a group called Dada.



**Figure 8. Dada. Fluid, Centralised, Permeable Practice with Non-permeable Core Group**

### *Nomadism and Glitching Language*

Although Dada is often characterised as iconoclastic ‘anti-art’ or ‘non-art’, art making was central to Dada practice, and the phrase only makes sense if considered in Beech and Hutchinson’s terms, in opposition to the standard model of ‘professionalism, competence, skill and so on’ (Beech and Hutchinson, 2007, p. 57). Dadaist art practice included painting, drawing, collage, sculpture (including Marcel Duchamp’s invention of the concept

<sup>35</sup> Programmes for Cabaret Voltaire soirées list Hennings, writer Friedrich Glauser, and composer Hans Heusser. BALL, H. (1974) *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, New York, The Viking Press. Other associated artists featured in the journals include Giorgio de Chirico, and Hans Richter. GALE, M. (1997) *Dada & Surrealism*, London, Phaidon.

'Readymade'), poetry (including cut-up poems, simultaneous poems, sound poems, and concrete poems), publications, and combinations of those ideas and forms; as Francis Picabia said, one should be a nomad and 'pass through ideas as one passes through countries and cities' (Plant, 2000, p. 125). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari dedicate an entire chapter to what they call the 'nomadic war machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p351), and in his essay *Nomadic Thought* (Deleuze, 2004b) Deleuze discusses Friedrich Nietzsche's aphorisms as a kind of 'exterior' language that carries the reader out 'away' from language, in accord with Picabia's notion of the nomad 'passing through' ideas. In his essay *O bitches of impossibility!* Roland Faber wrote that Deleuze 'is' Dada in that he finds 'functioning' dubious:

'In the sense that to subject ourselves to any system in order to gain security or control is a way of suppressing life. In this sense, the protest against any kind of imperialist occupation of the *ever-flowing multiplicity of life* may begin with the liberation from hysteria of seeking function, organisation, system, subjection, and control – that is what Dada was all about.' (Faber, 2009)

There is one political philosophy based on the same desire for liberation from all types of system and control, and that is anarchism. For the anarchist, human struggle is a response to anything that would serve to limit social freedom, this is to be carried out not through organised opposition to state systems, but by affirming liberation (Woodcock, 1975, p. 27). T. J. Demos proposes in his essay *Zurich Dada: The Aesthetics of Exile* (Demos, 2005) that the Dada poetry of, among others, Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara was driven by a deep sense of isolation and alienation caused by the conditions that had led to the World War of 1914 - 1918. They attempted to undermine the very systems of language and logic that they felt were responsible for causing the war. Demos discusses the 'nomadism' of Ball's poem *gadji beri bimba* as setting loose 'a wandering language, with roaming, mutative syllables flowing through an unstructured rhyme' (Demos, 2005, p. 10). The word 'bimba' metamorphoses from 'bimbala' to 'binban' to 'bin beri ban' to 'bimbalo' and so on in a repeated 'becoming different' (Demos, 2005, p. 10). Indeed, the idea of difference seems to be central to Zurich Dada (while the later Berlin Dada may be thought of as more overtly political); specifically the production of difference as an operative principle and as an attempt to avoid being captured in any form of organisational structure. This is a process that Félix Guattari refers to in other circumstances as 'heterogenesis' (another concept displaced from botany) and described in *The Three Ecologies* as 'processes of continuous resingularization' where

individuals ‘become both more united and increasingly different’ (Guattari, 2000, p. 69). An alternative strategy for the break down of language, undertaken by Tristan Tzara, were his ‘simultaneous poems’ which had at least two and up to twenty voices reading simultaneously. In the instance of *L’amiral cherche une maison à louer* (The Admiral is looking for a house to rent), the ‘score’ for the poem looks very much like a musical score. It appears precise and ordered and, as T. J. Demos states, ‘its symmetrical layout, unified typography, and evenly columnar distribution of text contradict the cacophonous effects of its simultaneous recital.’ and its impact could not be achieved through ‘its contemplation as a visual object by an individual viewer – one who could never realise its simultaneous effects; rather, its dutifully conventional form awaited explosion in its collective performance’ (Demos, 2005, p. 12-13).

### **Anti-community**

Both of these poetry forms resist any sense of there being a single interpretation of the work, and in the case of Ball, they resist any sense of resolution at all placing the work in a more tenuous relationship to the audience. For Tristan Tzara, ‘Dada was “born out of a need for independence, out of a mistrust for the community.” The simultaneous poem obviously “mistrusts” the community as well, if “community” designates a unification of individuals forming the being of a commonality, which would realize an etymological return to “communus,” implying “being together as one,” as in the nation’s “People” ’ (Demos, 2005, p. 16). Under Tzara’s guidance Dada became ‘an anti-movement for anti-art [...] who agreed nothing other than a general rejection of existing values’ (Gale, 1997, p. 55). Although Dada is often characterised as a negation of art, a rejection is not necessarily the same thing. Herman Melville’s character Bartleby chooses to opt out with the essentially anarchist formula ‘I would prefer not to’, thereby affirming his freedom to choose not to participate in the authority of his employer. This is the refusal of authority that characterises anarchism in all of its forms. Bartleby is a text which Deleuze refers to as ‘violently comical’ (Deleuze, 1998, p. 68), which could certainly serve as a description of Dada. The formulas applied by Bartleby and Dada are ‘neither an affirmation or a negation’ (Deleuze, 1998, p. 70), but instead carve out a ‘kind of foreign language within language’ (Deleuze, 1998, p. 71). This makes it difficult to quote a Dadaist like Tzara because, just when you think he has said something that makes sense, he immediately undermines it with nonsense. This kind of rupture causes one to doubt the sense in what was originally said. For example, in verse VII

of *Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love*, Tzara writes 'A priori, in other words with its eyes closed, Dada places before action and above all: Doubt. DADA doubts everything.' However, this is immediately undermined by 'Dada is an armadillo' (Tzara, 1977, p. 38).

Sadie Plant suggests that by 'trading on shock tactics, ridicule, and indeterminacy in the cultural domain, the movement could not survive without some larger social movement to effect the destruction of which it dreamed, and Dada was gradually forced into a dilemma of suicide or silence' (Plant, 2000, p. 47). This vision of Dada as negative is a familiar one that is reinforced by Guy Debord who saw their downfall as being their failure to 'realise' art (Debord, 2004, p. 136). However, it may be that the reasons for Dada's dissolution are more prosaic. Since its beginning as a collection of expatriates displaced by the war, Dada had internal struggles for leadership or influence of the group. Despite being the initial impetus for the group, Ball was only an active member of Zurich Dada for around nine months (Ball, 1974, p. xv), and the main tension within the group was between Tzara, who assumed leadership, and Huelsenbeck. According to Ball: 'The constellations change. Now Arp and Huelsenbeck agree and seem inseparable, now Arp and Janco join forces against H., then H. and Tzara against Arp, etc. There is a constantly changing attraction and repulsion. An idea, a gesture, some nervousness is enough to make the constellation change without seriously upsetting the little group' (Ball, 1974, pp. 63-64). Once Ball departed and the war ended either the tension between Huelsenbeck and Tzara, or simply a desire to return home, led to Zurich Dada dispersing to Berlin and Paris. While Zurich's neutrality during the war had isolated it, peace made the city more or less irrelevant to the normal functioning of commercial art markets once more, and this is probably the most significant reason for Dada dispersing or spreading to the main centres of Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, and New York.

What Zurich Dada brings to this study is, first, a consideration of the production of difference, especially through the insertion of nonsense into works and situations, second, an appreciation of the way meaning and thought can be 'nomadic' within and across works, and third, an anarchistic refusal of authority in the form of conventions or norms.

In *Performance*, Martin Carlson writes that '[Dada's] interest in non-musical sound of course prepares the way for the pivotal experiments of John Cage, himself a major influence on subsequent experimental theatre and performance' (Carlson, 2004, p. 99). One art group



that owes a significant debt to Dada via Cage is Fluxus, several of whose members attended his classes at the New School for Social Research in New York.<sup>36</sup> In fact, a 1962 George Maciunas penned Fluxus manifesto was called 'Neo-Dada in Music, Theatre, Poetry, Art' and an early Fluxus-related performance event was called 'Neo-Dada in der Musik' (Milman, 1998, p. 160).

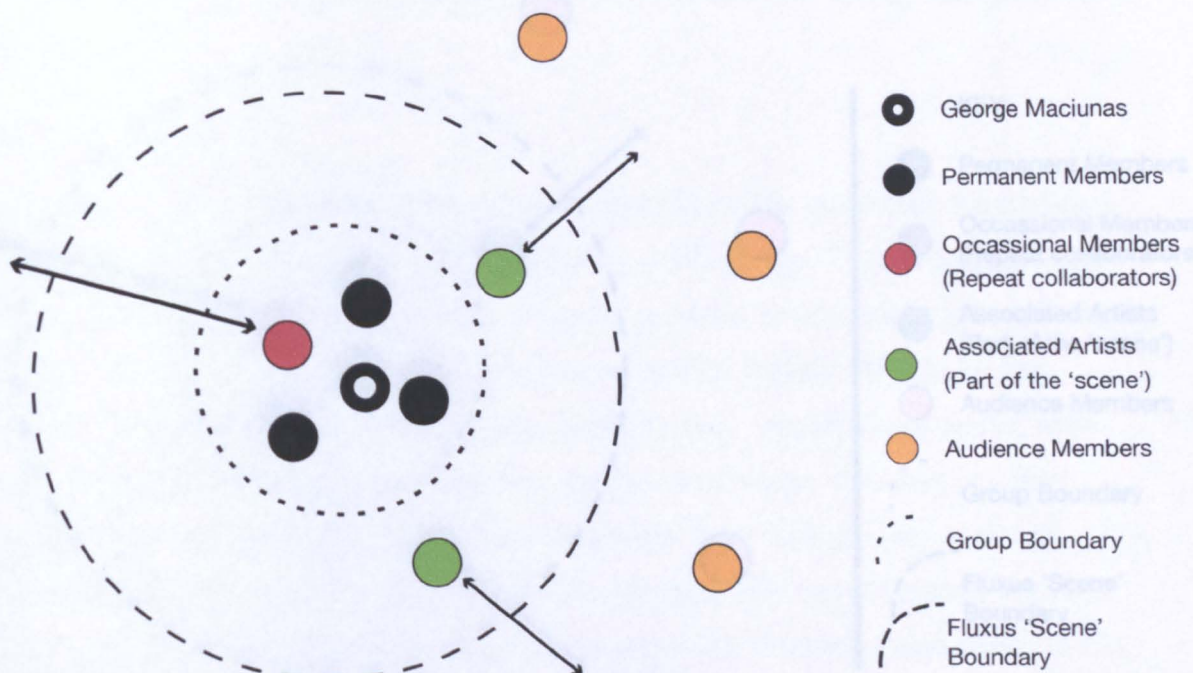
## *Fluxus*

The name Fluxus was originally intended as the title for a magazine for Lithuanian expatriates, but when George Maciunas was looking for a name for a new cultural journal, he decided to use Fluxus. There were eventually a variety of forms of Fluxus publication and Craig Saper suggests that 'In fact, the term *Fluxus* might refer to a series of publications rather than membership in a group, because there was never a membership, and most of the artists involved never signed any of the various manifestos' (Saper, 2001, p. 114). In his essay *Fluxus Publicus* Simon Anderson puts forward the argument that the main importance of Fluxus (as a publishing venture) was 'their attempt to subvert form in order to reflect content' (Anderson, 1993, p. 40). Indeed, Owen Smith's description of *Fluxus I* is reminiscent of the performance prompts that jazz musician and composer John Zorn uses with his compositions; The way an image, object, or colour can be used as an intensive 'associative tool' from which the performer can move through a new, molecular, becoming (Smith, 1998, p. 14).

There is a disputed history of the form of relations in Fluxus. One account is supported by collectors of physical artefacts, such as Gilbert and Lila Silverman, and positions Maciunas as a central 'Chairman' for the group (Figure 9), thus increasing his importance and perhaps by extension the value of works in their collection. The other account of Fluxus, given by (former?) members Ken Friedman and Alison Knowles, and Hannah Higgins (2002) has it that Fluxus was always, and continues to be a decentred, loose association of artists (Figure 10) with certain similar practices and a particular Fluxus style.

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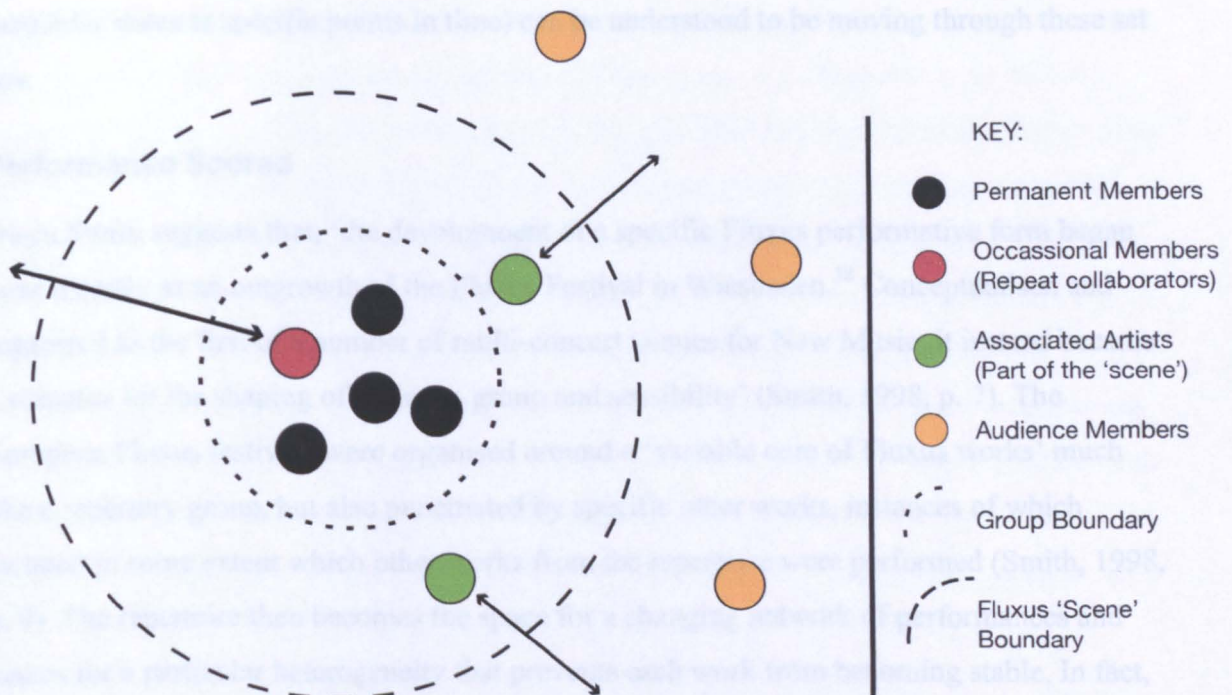
<sup>36</sup> Cage's 1958-59 class in musical composition included Georges Brecht, Al Hansen, and Dick Higgins with occasional visits from Jackson Mac Low, and LaMonte Young. HIGGINS, H. (2002) *Fluxus Experience*, Berkeley, University of California Press.



**Figure 9. Fluxus. Fluid, Centralised, Permeable Group (Maciunas as 'Chairman')**

David Doris, in his 1998 essay on Fluxus, *Zen Vaudeville*, quotes Tristan Tzara who writes, 'Dada is not at all modern. It is more in the nature of a return to an almost Buddhist religion of indifference' (Doris, 1998, p. 93). While in some schools of Buddhism there may be a certain indifference to personal desires, Doris goes on, correctly, to point out that Buddhism is not, in fact, a religion of indifference, but 'rather of a radical *involvement* with the world' and goes on to discuss the intimate relationship between a specifically *Zen* form of Buddhism and many of the operations of Fluxus. The proposition is that Fluxus performances were, in many cases, written to encourage a conscious casting aside of preconceptions 'in order that the things of this world be allowed to manifest themselves *as such*, as they present themselves in their fullness of being', and that 'the operations of the individual are themselves revealed through this unfolding; one becomes an actively perceiving, infinitely mutable organ of response, not differentiated from nature' (Doris, 1998, p. 93). The idea therefore is for the work to bring the audience into a direct perception of the duration and context of the event rather than a circumscribed, reproduction of an experience.





**Figure 10. Fluxus. Fluid, Decentred, Permeable Group**

George Brecht's definition of the concept 'events', in relation to Fluxus practice, comes from an interest in the then new development of quantum physics. His 1958/9 notebook 'The structure of a new aesthetic' is full of terms derived from physics, such as 'uncertainty principle' and 'space-time relativity' and his concern with the ontology of object versus the event is compared with the uncertainty of position and speed of an electron during measurement processes<sup>37</sup> (Bloom, 1998, p. 69). The word 'event', he claims, 'seemed closer to describing the total, multi-sensory experience I was interested in than any other...' (Doris, 1998, p. 96). For Brecht, the aim was to create works that opened up a sense of a duration within which every sound, every breath, every movement became a part of the work, and so subjectivity becomes the context of the art event and the event becomes a means for exploring or producing subjectivities. Brecht was not using the term *event* in the same way as Deleuze, since in the latter's usage it is a specifically philosophical concept that he developed in *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze, 2004c) in 1969 (translated to English in 1990), while Brecht began using the term in 1962. It may, however, be the case that Deleuzian events (thought of as active processes comprising the potential of a situation rather than

<sup>37</sup> Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle states that the more precisely one variable is known, the less precisely the other is known.

particular states at specific points in time) can be understood to be moving through these set ups.

### **Performance Scores**

Owen Smith suggests that, 'the development of a specific Fluxus performative form began most directly as an outgrowth of the Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden.'<sup>38</sup> Conceptualised and organised as the first of a number of multi-concert venues for New Music, it instead became a stimulus for the shaping of a Fluxus group and sensibility' (Smith, 1998, p. 7). The European Fluxus festivals were organised around a 'variable core of Fluxus works' much like a repertory group, but also punctuated by specific other works, instances of which dictated to some extent which other works from the repertoire were performed (Smith, 1998, p. 9). The repertoire then becomes the space for a changing network of performances and makes for a particular heterogeneity that prevents each work from becoming stable. In fact, the device of the performance score opens up the possibility for the audience to become performers by seizing the score and performing it themselves. The instability of the work comes from the fact that Fluxus 'events' are designed to be performed and re-performed by different people so that there is an open-ended, evolutionary quality to the development of the work. In this way the work actively acknowledges the situation within which the work is performed, registering a new and specific space that is non-reproducible. After that particular instance of the work, much of the specificity of the event is lost to the inaccuracy of memory, while other aspects are absorbed into the body of the work as a part of its historical content. As with Tzara's simultaneous poems, a unique configuration or different capacity of the work is unfolded with each performance, a fact that cannot be grasped by simply reading the text.

### **Aesthetic/Political Split**

From the beginning, despite Maciunas' efforts to present Fluxus as a united front, the group was only a loose assemblage spread across several countries. During what Stewart Home describes as their 'heroic phase' Fluxus developed a split within the movement. Since Fluxus' simple aesthetic implied an attack on serious culture, Maciunas believed that the group would support more direct action and issued the 'Fluxus New-Policy Letter No.6' (dated 6/4/63), which called for Fluxus members to disrupt high cultural activities and

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<sup>38</sup> September 1962

harass middle class commuters (Home, 1991, p. 53). A defining moment in the group's split was the Allan Kaprow organised performance of Stockhausen's *Originale* at the Judson Hall, New York, in August 1964. The split was roughly between the American Fluxists who Home refers to as being more 'aestheticised' and who supported the performance, and the European and East Asian Fluxists who were more politicised and who protested outside the venue. Dick Higgins annoyed both sides by taking part in the protest, then going into the concert (Home, 1991, p. 53). After this incident, in order to hold the group together, Maciunas removed political issues from future Fluxus literature and proclamations, having proved, according to Home, 'incapable of sustaining itself as simultaneously a political and cultural movement' (Home, 1991, p. 54). The same kind of split occurred in the Situationist International, but in that case, between a ludic (playful) tendency and an analytic (critical) one.

The significance of Fluxus for this study has been in considering the form of Fluxus 'events' (performance scores), which emphasised authorship as being plural. The scores provided a precedent for contemporary performative, participatory practice in so far as there is the potential for the audience to become performers by seizing the performance score, and in which not only new meaning is produced with each performance, but also new relations between performers, artists, and audiences.

### ***The Situationist International***

The Situationist International was officially founded in 1957 from the merger of the Lettriste International and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB) and had a turbulent existence from the start; three former IMIB members were expelled at the very first Situationist conference. According to Saper, IMIB founder Asger Jorn proposed the concept of 'constructed situations', from which the situationists get their name, but when they 'claimed to dispense with art making in favor of making "situations" Jorn split off from them because he believed in the usefulness of artistic practice. Although Jorn's faction of the lettrists [sic]<sup>39</sup> left, they still shared many of the situationists' methods and goals, and the two groups remained aligned if no longer merged' (Saper, 2001, p. 95).

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<sup>39</sup> Jorn was, in fact, a member of the Situationist International until his 'resignation' in April 1961

## Situations

A Situationist was simply ‘someone who “engages in the construction of situations” ’ (Ford, 2005, p. 58) and their conception of the term ‘situation’ was derived from Sartre’s *Situations* publications and was essentially about being conscious of one’s own existence within a specific environment or ambience (Ford, 2005, p. 50). To my mind there is a striking similarity between this sense of a ‘situation’ and George Brecht’s use of the term ‘event’, which is confirmed by Saper (2001, p. 95). The main difference appearing to be that the Situationists were less inclined to contextualise their ‘situations’ in terms of art because, as Sadie Plant points out in *The Most Radical Gesture*, the SI were hostile to ‘the separation of art and poetry from everyday life’ and demanded ‘experiences disallowed by existing society’ (Plant, 2000, p. 3). Following on from dada and surrealism’s attempts at subverting language in order to challenge ‘conventional arrangements of reality’, writes Plant, the situationists pursued the same attempt to ‘conjure a totality of possible social relations which exceeds and opposes the [seemingly inevitable] totality of spectacular relations’ (Plant, 2000, p. 3).

## Dérive as Rhizome and the Production of Paranoia

One of the significant practices utilised by the Situationists was that of the ‘dérive’; a practice first developed during the lifetime of the Letterist International.<sup>40</sup> Dérive, often translated as ‘drift’, but possibly closer to ‘wandering’, was developed as part of a programme for the development of a nomadic lifestyle, and could last ‘from an hour to three or four months (Ivan Chtcheglov recommended the latter)’ and involved being open to the psychological effects of the city, ‘the constant currents, fixed points, and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones’ (Ford, 2005, p. 34-35). The drifting of dérive has a rhizomatic quality and is a significant process in the ‘construction of situations’. Most striking of the dérives, according to Tom McDonough in his essay *Delirious Paris: Mapping as a Paranoid Activity*, took place before the formation of the Situationist International, around the New Year of 1953/4 when, on the 2nd January Debord and Chtcheglov, after feeling a hostile atmosphere in a bar, and consequently having left, realised they were being followed by two men that they managed to evade after an extended chase. ‘Spurred by intoxication, Debord and Chtcheglov indulged in a paranoid fantasy of

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<sup>40</sup> The Letterist International was an off-shoot of Isidore Isou’s Letterist group formed by Guy Debord and Gil Wolman and had 10 members.

the chase that transformed the workaday scene into a scene from an exotic American gangster film' (McDonough, 2004, p. 76). McDonough's suggestion is that, in addition to gathering material for the production of 'psychogeographical' maps, a significant part of the purpose of the *dérive*, inspired by the surrealists' writing on paranoia, was to develop a 'a kind of systematization of the practice of disorientation' (McDonough, 2004, p. 80). While the *dérive* was primarily an immanent procedure, there was always an aspect of critique to it as well. It set out to explore and identify different 'ambiances' and to map the changes from one ambience to the next, which was central to constructing their critique of urbanism. In the early, productive years of the SI, there was always this tension between productive and critical practices, but it did not last.

### Ludic/Analytic Split

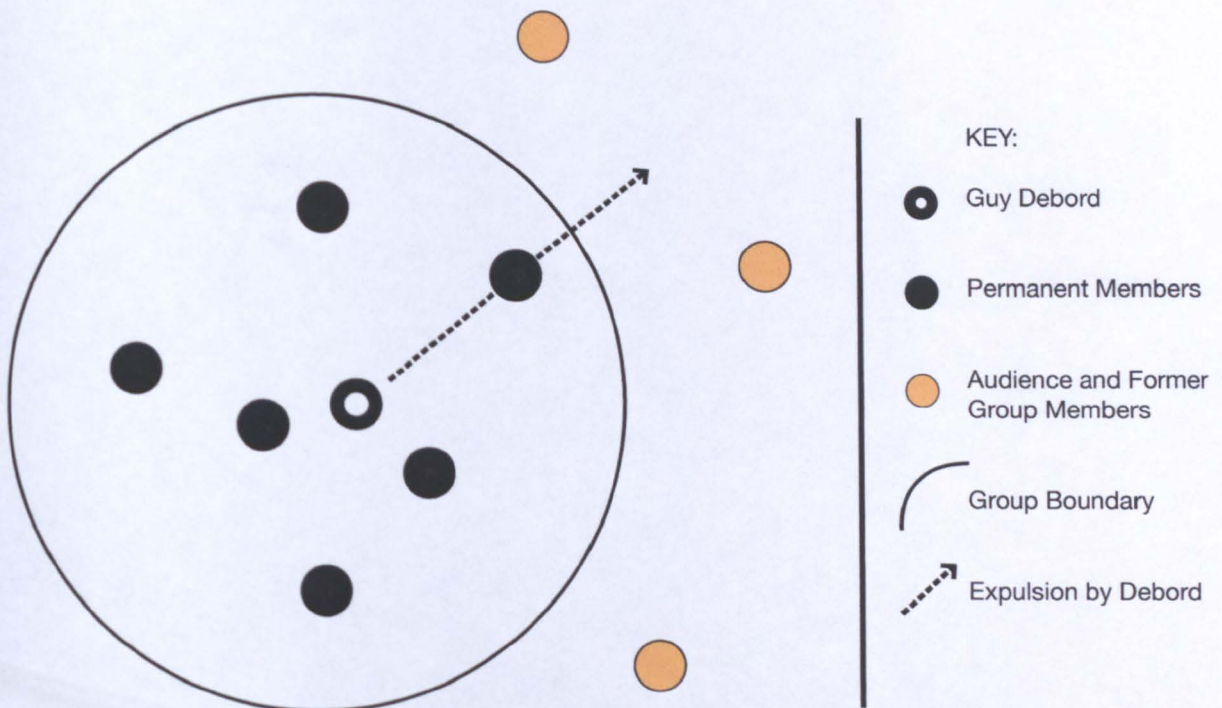
Just before the 1962 scission in SI at the fifth SI conference in Göteborg, recent recruit Raoul Vaneigem issued a statement within which he wrote: 'It is a question not of elaborating the spectacle of refusal, but rather of refusing the spectacle. In order for their elaboration to be *artistic* in the new and authentic sense defined by the SI, the elements of destruction of the spectacle must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as *situationism* or a situationist work of art or a spectacular Situationist' (Ford, 2005, p. 87). After this scission, the excluded Scandinavian Situationists still committed to artistic practice formed a Situationist Bauhaus in Sweden and engaged in actions called CO-RITUS that could be loosely described as 'street actions', while the Paris Situationist group including Debord became increasingly politicised.

This schism between what Stewart Home calls the 'Specto-Situationists'<sup>41</sup> (Home, 1991), led by Debord and centred around an ideological opposition to 'spectacular society' (Figure 11) and the 'Second Situationist International' (SSI) nominally led by Jørgen Nash was along the same lines as that which threatened Fluxus in the following year.

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<sup>41</sup> Home calls the post-schism, Debord-led, group Specto-Situationists for two reasons; the first of which is to challenge the implication that they were the 'real' Situationists by being the holders of the name *The Situationist International*, while the Scandinavian group had named themselves *The Second Situationist International*; the second reason is that by using the prefix 'specto' he is referring to their development and use of the term 'The Spectacle' in their analysis of capitalist politics and culture. HOME, S. (1991) *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War*, Oakland, AK Press.



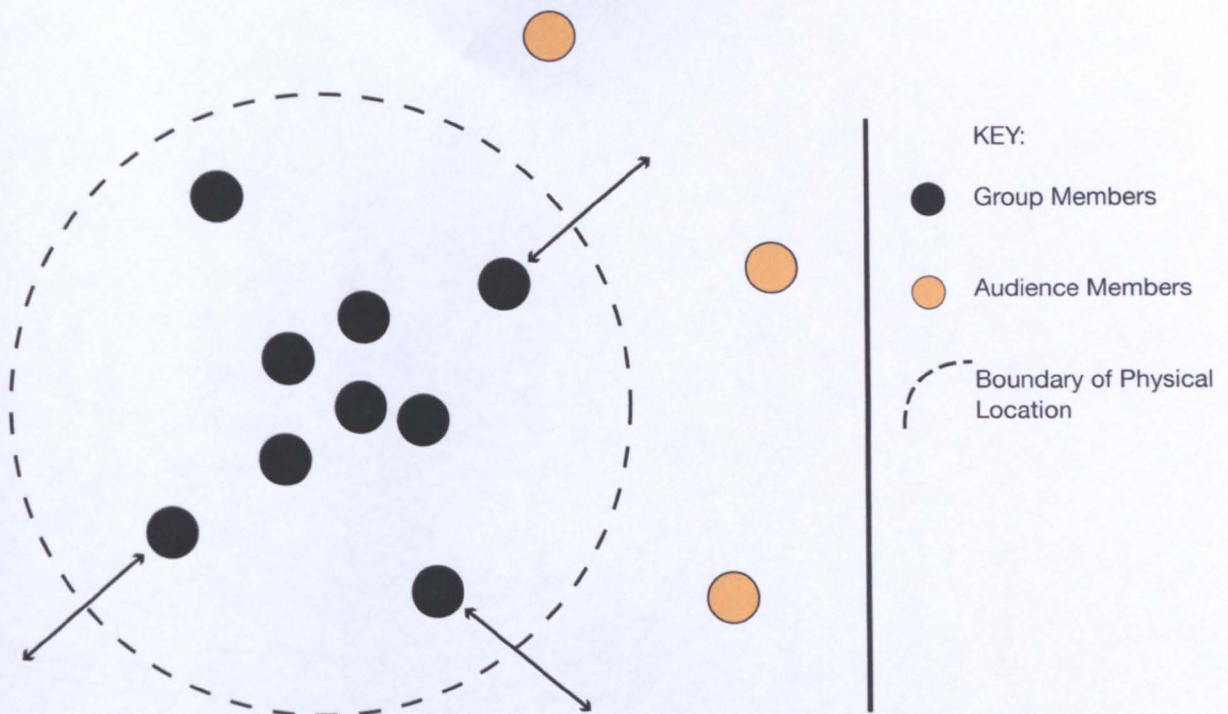


**Figure 11. 'Specto-Situationists'. Centralised, Semi-permeable, Ideological Group (Debord as 'Dictator')**

As the Specto-Situationists became ever more politicised, abandoning art practice entirely, the Second Situationist International continued the Situationist programme of attempting to integrate art and politics back into everyday life. The SSI had a decentred, less formal set of group relations, and were given consistency by a physical location<sup>42</sup> rather than a strict ideological framework and hierarchy (Figure 12). The SSI had a much more anarchist type of programme based on a ludic, experimental type of practice, which developed theory after the practice. In his essay, *Divided We Stand* (Slater, 2001), Howard Slater quotes the SSI's *Drakabygget Declaration* (1962) in which they explain how they do not distinguish between theory and practice and 'intend to produce our theories after the event....The French work exactly the other way round. They want everything straight before they start and everybody has to line up correctly' (Slater, 2001). So, although at first glance the SSI seem to operate to a more anarchist programme than the SI's overt Marxism, and they are certainly more concerned with affirming production, they are still critical in relation to the Specto-Situationists. They are still tied to their antagonists.

<sup>42</sup> Asger Jorn's farm 'Drakabygget' in southern Sweden.





**Figure 12. Second Situationist International. Decentred, Permeable, Ideological Group**

### *Summary – Two Poles*

The two poles that the SI split into correspond more or less exactly with what Jorn had earlier referred to as the two tendencies of situology (the study of situations), 'the ludic tendency and the analytical tendency. The tendency of art, spinn [sic] and the game, and that of science and its techniques' (Jorn, 1960). There is a similarity between this split and the schism in 'The First International'<sup>43</sup> between the Communist and Anarchist factions, a split between a tendency to organise and a tendency toward freedom from state power (May, 1994, p. 46-47). These tendencies of an analytic drive towards organisation and a ludic drive towards freedom can be mapped onto the distinction I have been making between dialectical/critical practices and rhizomatics. The same split can be seen in Dada between the more political Berlin Dada and Paris Dada, which evolved into Surrealism, and also in the Political/Aesthetic split in Fluxus.

The distinctions set up by Jorn and Home between different factions, causing splits in art groups, based upon different theoretical frameworks and different practices is not a complete picture. What they leave out is differences in organisation. The SI was a unified group, supposedly with a unified purpose, under the dictatorship of Debord. It was directly critical

<sup>43</sup> Officially, The International Workingmen's Association (1864 – 1876)

of and antagonistic towards 'spectacular society'. Whereas, the more fluid, anarchistic, organisation of Fluxus means that, even many years after the death of the supposed 'chairman' Maciunas, artists around the world still practice as Fluxus artists, including many who were not original members. Even artists who do not denote themselves as fluxus can stage fluxconcerts, but following a simple set of criteria set out by the earlier fluxists.

All three of the historical groups considered have significance for contemporary practice because of the different ways they dealt with playfulness, authorship and authority in the form of conventions or norms. Dada emphasised difference and nonsense as productive forces in order to problematise existing social relations and logic, which they held responsible for the war. They resisted the temptation to be directly critical of authority and developed a playful, anarchistic, model of refusal to participate. They preferred not to. Fluxus sought to challenge singular authorship with their 'event' performance scores, opening works up to unexpected reconfigurations and chance. This is of particular significance for the model of molecular collaboration I want to discuss below because both works and people's roles in relation to those works can be seen to be open to change. The Situationists produced the concept of the spectacle during their 'heroic' phase, which can be used as a tool for consideration of how art practice is often captured by dominant systems for its own ends. However, rather than following Zurich Dada's example and refusing the spectacle, they chose to emphasise critique, which led to the splitting off of the more anarchist, productive, SSI who returned to the original Situationist interest in reintegrating art and life.

## Chapter 4. FOUR CONTEMPORARY COLLABORATIVE ART GROUPS

### 4.1 Methodology

In tandem with the documentary research on the historical art movements or groups, this research has investigated four contemporary art groups. These groups were Freee art collective, The Bughouse, Reactor, and Parfyme. There were five reasons for selecting these groups:

1. I had prior knowledge of the people and their practices, which would inform anything else learnt during the investigation and would give me good access in terms of following up on details.
2. They all used performative or performed<sup>44</sup> elements in their practices.
3. All of their practices involved direct engagement with their audience in some form.
4. They each had varying degrees of collaboration with people outside their group, whether that is with other artists, participants, or institutions. This was of particular importance in providing a comparison for my own collaborative practice.
5. They have in common some kind of attempt at 'contesting' or exploring the separation of everyday life, art, and other disciplines.

The bulk of the data in this chapter is drawn from research interviews carried out separately with the four groups<sup>45</sup>. The account is also be supported by documentary evidence gathered from texts, artworks, and websites hosted by or concerning these groups; and experiences and information gathered from attending their projects and exhibitions, and from more informal conversations with group members.

In this research the interviews did not generate data that could be compared directly, in the manner of a social science interview. Rather, I interviewed the groups in a relatively informal way in order to discuss a set of themes or problematics central to collaborative art practice. It was hoped that they would serve partly to inform each other in a type of triangulation for pulling out generalities in relation to collaboration and to explore specific examples of those groups' experience of working collaboratively.

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<sup>44</sup> I use the term performative to mean that the work and the space of the work is produced by the act itself, while performance is the enactment of a new instance of an already existing work.

<sup>45</sup> For an example of one interview transcript, see Appendix 1.

The ideas used as themes in the interviews were used in an effort to organise a ‘confusing welter’ of potential information, but interviewees were given freedom to wander off subject at times throughout the interview. Jumbled information can be organised in a variety of ways and this depends upon what the researcher has a predisposition to seeing (Whyte, 1973, p. 357), so although there were initial themes for the interviews, during analysis other areas of interest began to emerge from what the respondents were saying, or how I was interpreting their responses. The data was analysed on several different occasions to re-analyse the data in the light of any new insights.

I prepared for the interviews by giving the respondents a clear idea of why in particular *they* had been chosen, basic information about the purpose of the interview and about the research project, an idea of the probable length of the interview and that it would be audio recorded, and details of where the interview was to take place (Gillham, 2000, p. 38).

### ***The initial themes of the interviews***

These starting points were contained in a document sent to each group in advance of the interviews. Some short indicative questions to give the groups a more specific idea of what I meant by each of the themes were also included. The themes were as follows:

#### **i] Structure and Hierarchy**

Because of my initial research aims to investigate collaborative art practices and explore how they operate within the contemporary art world (developing and exploring a connective form of art practice extending the concept of ‘the rhizome’; and identifying and developing new models of collaborative art practice) I felt it was important to understand how contemporary collaborations were organised and how order or coherence was maintained, if it was. This also seemed relevant in connection with the possible development of a collaborative practice that ‘extends’ the concept of the rhizome, bearing in mind that the rhizome can work by undoing or avoiding structure.

Having looked at literature concerning organisational forms, I found there were some pre-existing models against which to compare group structures and relational models, but I put these to one side while I considered each of the groups in isolation and then in comparison to one another. I had some prior knowledge of how all of the groups were organised, who I

thought were the leaders, and their group history, but some of these ideas turned out to be oversimplified, or just wrong.

## **ii] Unexpected events**

In my own practice with collaborators, the ways in which different types of unexpected events or occurrences affect projects has been explored, and since unexpected events can have catastrophic effects, it seemed essential that the groups were all asked about how they deal with unexpected events or glitches.

The fourth characteristic of the rhizome as described by Deleuze and Guattari, that of 'assignifying rupture' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 9), can be understood as a break with habit, or unexpected event, that leads to new insights or other 'deterritorialisations'. It is therefore crucial to any attempt at developing a rhizomatic art practice that the way unexpected events operate is understood.

## **iii] Theoretical interests**

I thought that it would also be useful to understand if there was any relationship between the groups' theoretical interests and the structure and mechanisms of their collaboration. I knew, for instance, that Freee had a particularly strong interest in Marxist theory, and that the Bughouse were heavily influenced by the science fiction writer Phillip K Dick, but I knew little about what the others were interested in, except that I had a few conversations with Jonathan Waring from Reactor about Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*.

## **iv] Other factors**

I also asked the groups for more general reflection on how their group fits into the art world, what their reasons were for collaborating, funding issues, and to what extent they reflected critically on their own practice. This was done to get a more comprehensive picture of the operation of their groups, and in case they yielded any information about their group that had not occurred to me.

## ***Assumptions about collaboration***

When I have discussed the issue of collaboration with other people over the past five years or so, or at various symposia, there are several things that are often said at some point in the conversation. These assumptions about collaboration are sometimes held by the person

speaking, but often ascribed to persons unknown, for example: 'A lot of people think that collaborations mean sharing the workload...' Or, as Beech et al. write, 'to pool expertise, divide the labour, get more done' (Beech et al., 2006, p. 11).

If one of the driving forces behind collaboration is, in fact, a desire to share the workload (and I believe this is often the case in early forays into collective working), then it might seem to be the case that more people would mean a lighter workload. However, when considering the effects of group size on performance in groups, there are two significant areas to consider, creativity and problem solving. If creativity is viewed as a balance of idea generation and idea recognition, small groups work most efficiently at the project development stage. This is because, initially, as group size increases so does idea generation, but this levels out as the possibilities of a situation are exhausted, and idea recognition tends to drop off sharply too as a larger group will have difficulty in coming to an agreement on the best idea. In the area of problem solving, 'results suggest that 3-person groups are necessary and sufficient to perform better than the best individuals on highly intellectual problems' (Laughlin et al., 2006, p. 644). In fact, Laughlin et al's research found the optimum range appears to be between 3 and 5 members, with teams of two performing no better than individuals. This goes some way to explaining why all of the groups in this study are between 3 and 5 members. It can make project administration easier. However, in comparison with solo practice, collaboration actually produces more work, such as having to arrange meetings or having to check each other's work. Experience shows that the assumption that collaborating reduces the workload is incorrect.

Another common assumption about collaboration is that it 'speeds things up'. Again, I have heard this said by people at several symposia, and what they are generally talking about, I think, is the way decision making in the planning stages of a project is speeded up, and in fact this can be coupled with a claim that I heard in 2008, which was attributed to artists Beagles and Ramsay, that 'collaborations are about doing the stupid ideas you think up down the pub'<sup>46</sup>. From my own experience, as well as from observation of respondents in all four of the research interviews, this process is significantly influenced by the conversational nature of in-group discussion. A further significant point to make in terms of collaborations speeding things up is that, unless the group has a regular, scheduled time for development

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<sup>46</sup> This account was given by Gordon Dalton and Mark Gubb at *Team Spirit: The Art of Collaborative Practice*, The New Art Gallery, Walsall on Thursday 20th March, 2008



meetings, group size will have a significant effect on how easy or difficult it is to get all group members in the same location at the same time. Collaboration neither makes things quicker or easier, it does however produce something new in terms of relations between individuals, even so far as to problematise the very notion of individual identity.

### *Identity and Naming*

In my interview with John Cussans and Peter Rockmount, Cussans described The Bughouse as 'the name for the collaboration rather than for the group, and it's a name for a particular type of collaborative practice that happens under that name. [It] is more a name for spaces for a series of collaborations.' (Bughouse Interview, Lines 9-11) I mentioned that this was something of interest for a.a.s art group, and how we were thinking in terms of 'qualities' of a.a.s or 'a.a.s-ness', to which Cussans described the Bughouse as 'an adjective'.

In the case of Reactor, the name was first used as the name for a group exhibition of a nameless studio group of recent graduates, and the name was then used for subsequent shows. It was initially a name for large group exhibitions, but then as the number of people showing together diminished, those who stuck with it coalesced into a group. The process of working together gradually led to a sense of group identity.<sup>47</sup>

The Danish group Parfyme<sup>48</sup> started as a duo, Pelle Brage and Ebbe Dam Meinild, who also started working together straight out of art school, but it has developed to include Laurids Sonne. Then after a period where they worked with New York-based Douglas Paulson as *Parfyme Deluxe*, they also incorporated him into the main group. Unlike many artist duos, they immediately began working under a collective identity. It may be that they simply decided to work under a group identity because it was a way of making the practice more anonymous, or as an exercise in ego-deflation, but whatever the case it meant that they avoided a problem faced by the fourth of the groups interviewed, Freee art collective.

Freee started out as the artist duo Hewitt & Jordan, who worked on several projects with Dave Beech under the name Hewitt & Jordan and Beech. They may have made the decision to re-name as Freee because it was less of a mouthful, but they also wanted to signal that

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<sup>47</sup> During the year 2006-2007 Jonathan Waring, the first 'secret member', joined just before two of the remaining four original members left.

<sup>48</sup> The name Parfyme arose from a typographical error in email discussion between Meinild and Brage when they were deciding upon the group name. Parfyme is a misspelling of perfume, Danish for perfume. They both liked and decided to keep the error.

their new collaboration was an 'exclusive relationship' (Freee Interview, line 185). Of course, creating a collective identity also means that if new members join, or others leave, the group does not have to be re-named, a problem that Parfyme, Bughouse, and Reactor managed to avoid from the start. In the end Freee have chosen to gloss over the issue by editing their own history; works that were produced under the name Hewitt & Jordan and Beech have been re-named as Freee works, so the name stretches back prior to the group's inauguration.

These group names operate in different ways, and in the case of The Bughouse, it serves to describe the practice itself. Their practice is heavily influenced by the Surrealists' 'Paranoid Critical Method'; the paranoid, science fiction, writing of Phillip K Dick; and the La Borde Clinic where Félix Guattari practiced. The name Bughouse has 'got that Bug, being bugged, the double meaning of bugged which is so Phillip K Dick.' (Bughouse Interview, Lines 148-152) and 'it's an American term for the nuthouse' (Line 146). Because the name is used in this case to describe a kind of fictional institution, and it is descriptive of a particular function or set of processes performed under that name, it does not delimit a particular set of players; if people leave or join it does not change the identity of the Bughouse. The identity of the group is then shaped by the set of concepts and practices that are enfolded by the name, and the practice is therefore always developing out of that implicit potential. This adjectival naming of the practice rather than the group can also be seen in Dada and Fluxus, artists are dada artists or bughouse artists, in the way that one might be a video artist, rather than artists who happen to sometimes collaborate in a particular group called Dada or Bughouse.

For Cussans and Rockmount, being in the Bughouse is part of what defines them, and comments such as 'the Bughouse thing, y'know, it sort of informs whether it's directly bughouse or not, it kind of informs so much of everything I do, and I absolutely love it.' (Bughouse Interview, Lines 299-301) Even when people are not in direct contact with other group members, we are still consciously 'part of' that group, we are 'continuously engaged in some kind of *symbolic interaction* or *reference* to groups of others *represented in our internal worlds*' (Morgan and Thomas, 1996, p. 67). This is by no means everyone's experience, for example, Niki Russell seems genuinely surprised and troubled by people's seeming inability to tell the difference between when he is 'on stage' and 'off stage'; between Niki Russell the solo artist and Niki Russell the member of Reactor, presumably

because he personally has no problem separating these different practices (Reactor Interview, Lines 520-540).

The name Reactor may have had an initial meaning in the context of their first large group show, which was like a reactor generating energy perhaps, but does not currently signify anything *about* their group practice. In this case, the name sets out a territory for a project by Reactor and then additional artists who take part in an individual project are absorbed into the project under that banner. Although Parfyme, in their current state, were formed by ‘accumulation’, with members coming together, as opposed to the way Reactor were formed by ‘condensation’ from a larger group, their names operate in a similar way, to mark out a space for the practice, and to indicate its authorship. The same can be said for Freee, the name serves a function to indicate a particular practice but its primary function is to operate as a marker of group identity, to name the collective subject. It is only Bughouse who use their name differently, and it is this notion of a name denoting a particular ‘space’ of practice rather than a set of individuals that is essential for the development of the idea of molecular collaboration.

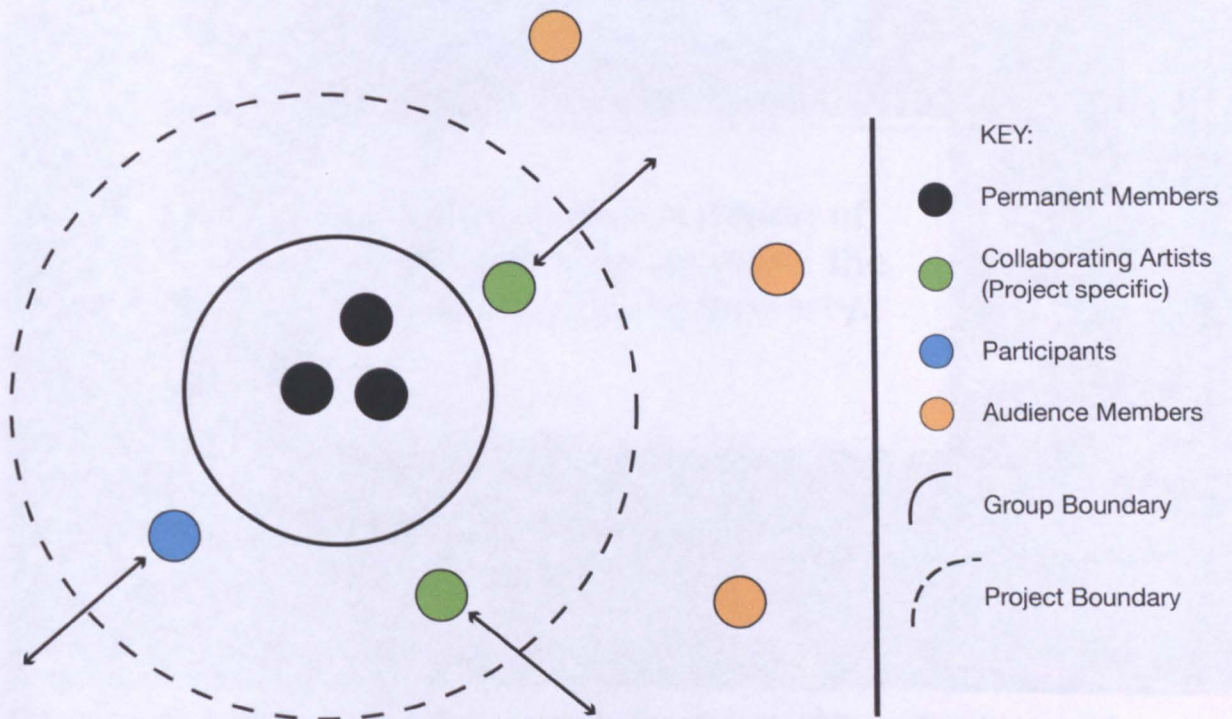
## 4.2 The Four Groups Interviewed

Each of the four groups interviewed has a distinct practice, but there are elements they each have in common with at least one other and they form a kind of matrix of collaborative practices that can be used for inter-group comparison. I will discuss each in turn, in the order they were interviewed, before exploring common traits and differences.

### *Freee art collective*

Freee have a fixed, clearly defined membership of three; no one else is ever a member of the collective, even if they collaborate with Freee; the group has a ‘solid threshold’ (Figure 13). The work is clearly authored by Freee, with a few individual works that stand out as recent exceptions. Freee sometimes work with current and former students of theirs, as well as with audience members (publics) as participants. This is a fairly limited type of participation which sets tight parameters on the extent to which participants are contributing; for instance, they may be told that the project is about making protest banners, then they are free to write whatever protest they like, but the form is controlled by Freee. The positive in this type of collaboration is that the participants have a genuine input; they are not just ‘anyone’, theirs is a personal contribution. None of these participants ever become part of Freee however.

The authorship and responsibility always remains with the three members of Freee, even if credit is given for individual participants' contributions.



**Figure 13. Freee. Centralised, Non-permeable, Ideological Group**

The form of Freee's work is usually significantly text based, and mostly political in content. The early Freee works were the *Functions* series of billboards and wall texts (Figure 14), which were originally identified as works by Hewitt & Jordan and Beech and retrospectively brought under the Freee banner. The suggestion is that they were, effectively, Freee before identifying themselves as such. Although much of their work is situated or takes place in non-art sites, such as billboards, or as performed works for photographic or video documentation, their work is nevertheless always positioned in relation to dominant structures, institutions and practices, easily finding its place within a gallery setting. Their work may wish to critique, or as they say 'contest', contemporary culture, including art institutions, but they are definitely working from a position within the art world and academia. For instance, they are all university art lecturers, they all regularly speak, together and individually, at art symposia and conferences, and they all write articles for art journals.





**Figure 14.** Free art collective, *The economic function of public art is to increase the value of private property*, Sheffield (2004)

In the interview, and in another with Andrew Hunt from International Project Space, they seemed reluctant to explicitly discuss this problematic of being within the system they are contesting. The main influence on Freee's practice is the writing of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' theory of 'communicative action' describes a two-tier model of society opposing the everyday 'lifeworld' with 'systems'<sup>49</sup> that have a 'steering' or 'institutional' role (Habermas, 1985). The role of critical thought is to defend the lifeworld from encroachments by systems of control 'by mediating between the two tiers of social existence and by supplying a link between 'expert knowledge' and everyday action' (Macey, 2001, p. 174). This means there is a tension between working 'within' the art world,<sup>50</sup> being employed or commissioned by that system, and seeking to 'contest' it, making a very complex set of relations. As Walter Benjamin wrote in *The Author as producer*, instead of, or at least before, asking what a work's attitude is towards the relations of production of its

<sup>49</sup> This might go some way to explaining Beech's speedy refusal during the interview of my suggestion that their practice sounded 'systematic' (Freee interview, line 244)

<sup>50</sup> The idea of 'the art world' is itself contested, and I use the term here to refer to the dispersed network comprised of all those engaged in the production, promotion, dissemination, etc. of art in any of its forms.

time we should ask ‘what is its *position* in them?’ i.e. what is its ‘function’ within the relations of production of its time (Benjamin, 1982, p. 214). This is what Freee’s work seeks to address. Or as Mark Hutchinson has written in a response to the 2008 symposium *Art as a ‘Public’ Issue*, at the Goethe Institute: ‘Art is not detached from the social and does not have the privilege of a critical distance from which it can put itself at the service of politics. Thus radical art cannot be social critique in any other way than the transformation of the very co-ordinates of art’ (Hutchinson, 2008, p. 9). Or again, as Benjamin wrote, what matters ‘is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and second to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers, that is, readers or spectators into collaborators’ (Benjamin, 1982, p. 216).

Freee are what Roger Caillois refers to as a ‘conspiratorial society’ meaning they are ‘formed expressly with an action in mind distinct from their own existence’, they are formed ‘to act and not to exist’ (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 154). As such they are distinct from what Caillois calls ‘secret societies’, which I will discuss below. Freee have in mind a ‘known future’ towards which they direct their practice, even if it is not a clear future. This is a ‘macropolitical’, critical, antagonistic movement towards specific changes to the ‘debased public sphere’. This marks out Freee from the other contemporary groups studied as much as Bughouse’s adjectival naming of a practice.

The way Freee talked mainly about their practice during the interview was in terms of ‘informal conversation’, between themselves as a group, usually described as being down the pub, and also with collaborators/participants, which was usually described as being ‘discussion’ over a cup of tea. This could be a cultural factor, perhaps we only go to the pub with friends but cafes are more generally social spaces, or it may be that because alcohol removes inhibitions, it is considered unprofessional to let too many barriers down in negotiations with ‘external’ collaborators. However, there are also historically class-based, cultural implications to these different sites and it may be that the pub is seen as a good, working-class, social setting for the group members to have conversations among themselves. There is also, obviously, a connection here with Beagles and Ramsay’s idea of collaboration being about ‘doing the stupid ideas you have down the pub’, but I would not call any of Freee’s ideas for projects stupid. The pub is probably just a site where, with our

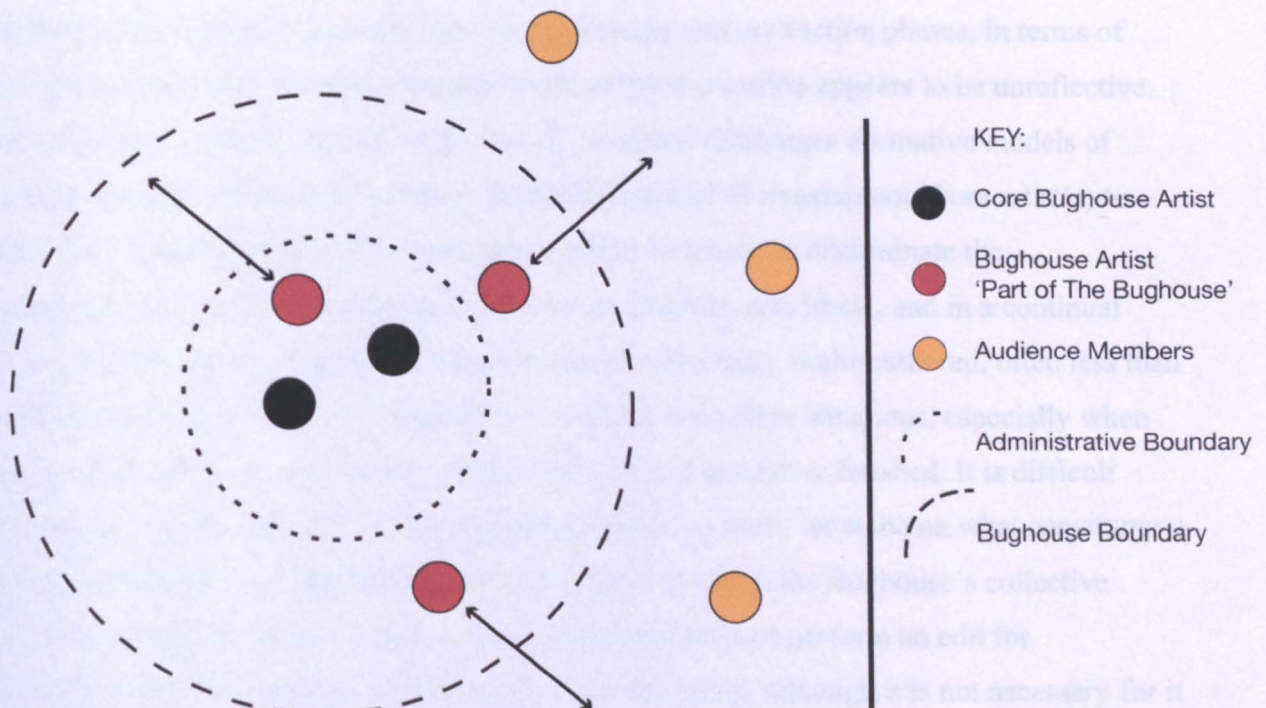


friends, we are likely to feel freer to brainstorm ideas without the usual levels of self-censorship.

It may seem to be a diversion to talk about these issues of pub and cafe conversation, but these were the main sites of interest for Freee in our interview together, and since the pub seems for them to be a significant site for idea generation and recognition it is key to their practice, which is significantly about the criticism and transmission of ideas about cultural phenomena.

### *The Bughouse*

Membership of the Bughouse is altogether less clear than with Freee, and Cussans describes himself and Rockmount as 'parts' of the Bughouse, instead of 'members'. In Figure 15, it can be seen that the Bughouse is the name for a type of practice rather the denotation of a group with a particular membership.



**Figure 15. The Bughouse. Fluid, Centralised, Permeable Practice with Permeable Administrative Core**

Cussans states, 'it's not really a group. I mean it has no defined boundaries, or memberships, or anything. It's simply a name for collaborative projects, which anybody can participate in at any point in time. It's the name for the collaboration rather than for the group.' (Bughouse



Interview, Lines 6-8) Despite this assertion, there did seem to be a fairly consistent core to the Bughouse consisting of Cussans, Rockmount, and the third member, Margarita Glutzberg. Since the interview, Glutzberg has, however, left the group. In addition to these three, there is an expanded group of regular collaborators to their online writing project, and for their live events, which are largely audio-visual performances. Further conversations since the interview have revealed that while Rockmount and Cussans are the more usual administrative bloc of the Bughouse, they are not exclusively so, which is the main distinction between them and Zurich Dada's organisation, which had a fixed core of artists. The Bughouse has an online wiki project has been running for about ten years and their first large live event was *Project Valis* in 2002. The Bughouse also have what they describe as 'meetings' as well as 'channelling sessions', which are social events where they get together and improvise around various combinations of technology in the way that musicians will have a 'jam session'. These jam sessions are what ends up being the most visible, public aspect of their practice as in the example of *Project Valis*.

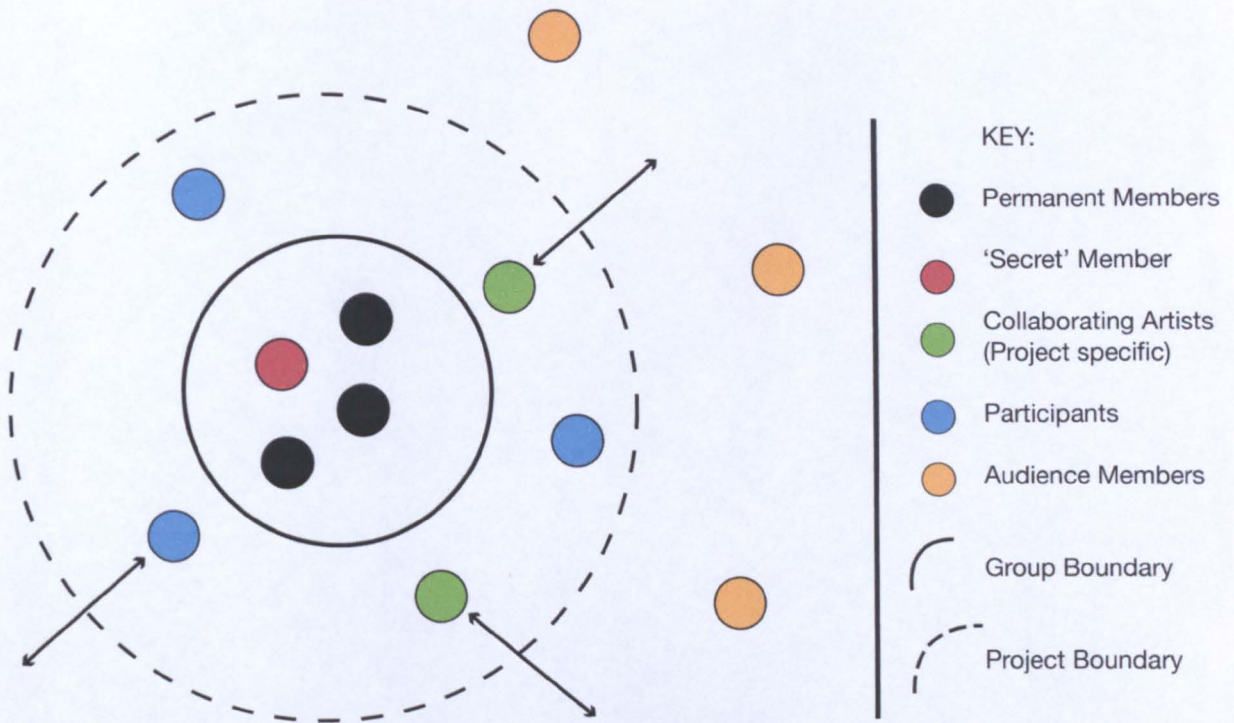
Although the Bughouse has very interesting planning and production phases, in terms of group relations, their model for dissemination of the work often appears to be unreflective. Performance of their work, although 'mixed', so that it challenges normative models of authorship, still conforms to a fairly conventional model of transmission from artist(s) to audience. Another problem they have encountered is in how to disseminate the collaboratively written wiki website. This text is multiple, non-linear, and in a continual state of development. The problem then is how to edit a long, multi-authored, often less than coherent text when it is to be presented at symposia or in other situations, especially when the whole point of the text is to be constantly re-edited and never finished. It is difficult enough getting a number of people to agree on where to meet, let alone on what constitutes a representative edit. So this then seems to be a point at which the Bughouse's collective working sometimes breaks down as Cussans and Rockmount perform an edit for presentation in their roles as 'administrators' for the group, although it is not necessary for it to be them who performs this function.

## ***Reactor***

There are two types of membership in Reactor, full membership, and 'secret' membership. To date, as far as I know, there has only been one secret member, which was Jonathan Waring during 2005-6. The process for becoming the secret member is that someone

'presents' them self at Reactor Towers (group studios) on 'Martinmas' (November 11th) for consideration. If selected, the secret member will be part of Reactor, in secret, until the following November.

Reactor's practice is almost entirely event based (Figure 16). Members devise scenarios that have a specific location, context, narrative and social model, and develop them into self-contained worlds that audiences then enter into as active participants. They collaborate with other artists who act as technicians and performers within that world, but who have only a limited amount of influence on the authorship. They are actors in the performance scripted by Reactor, but they still have the advantage over the audience, who are also actors in the scene, because they at least have knowledge of the world they inhabit, while the audience has none. The form of Reactor projects changes, they are based on different models of society and the form has a direct relationship to the theme. For instance, *Total Ghaos* (2005) was on the theme of a totalitarian society, so it physically took the form of a hierarchy with different levels of platform built from scaffolding. The projects are always recognisable as authored by Reactor; they have a similarity of style, and a similar humour to them. Even the *Geodecity* project has a close relationship between form and theme but, because the theme is utopian and egalitarian, they have had to let go of control of the project, to some extent at least, in order to be consistent with their theme. It is as if the project has cornered them into a new form of practice, which may be an unexpected consequence of the project.



**Figure 16. Reactor. Centralised, Semi-permeable Group**

Although Reactor projects always involve the audience in the performance of the work in interesting ways, there often is not any room for 'individuals'; each participant could be any-person-whatsoever who cannot really 'co-author' the work in any significant way. Projects such as *Total Ghaos* (2005) and *The Tetra Phase* (2007) were based on models of totalitarian regimes to which audiences were subjected. I have occasionally heard people complain at Reactor events, but surprisingly not about how they are being treated, which usually seems in some way inevitable. One project, which I attended, that stands out as a departure from this type of totalitarian system was *Destination: Geodecity* (2007), a utopian community themed project inspired by the work of R. Buckminster Fuller (Figure 17).





**Figure 17. Reactor, *Destination: Geodecity* (2007)**

In this project, as with their others, Reactor had devised a scenario but this time left the system very open for the audience to co-author the direction the project developed in. For a combination of reasons, however, the project felt a little bit flat and lacking in energy. This may be because the audience was expecting something similar to previous Reactor events, but may simply have been that the group size was too large and a ‘hands-off’ approach meant difficulty in idea recognition, as discussed above.

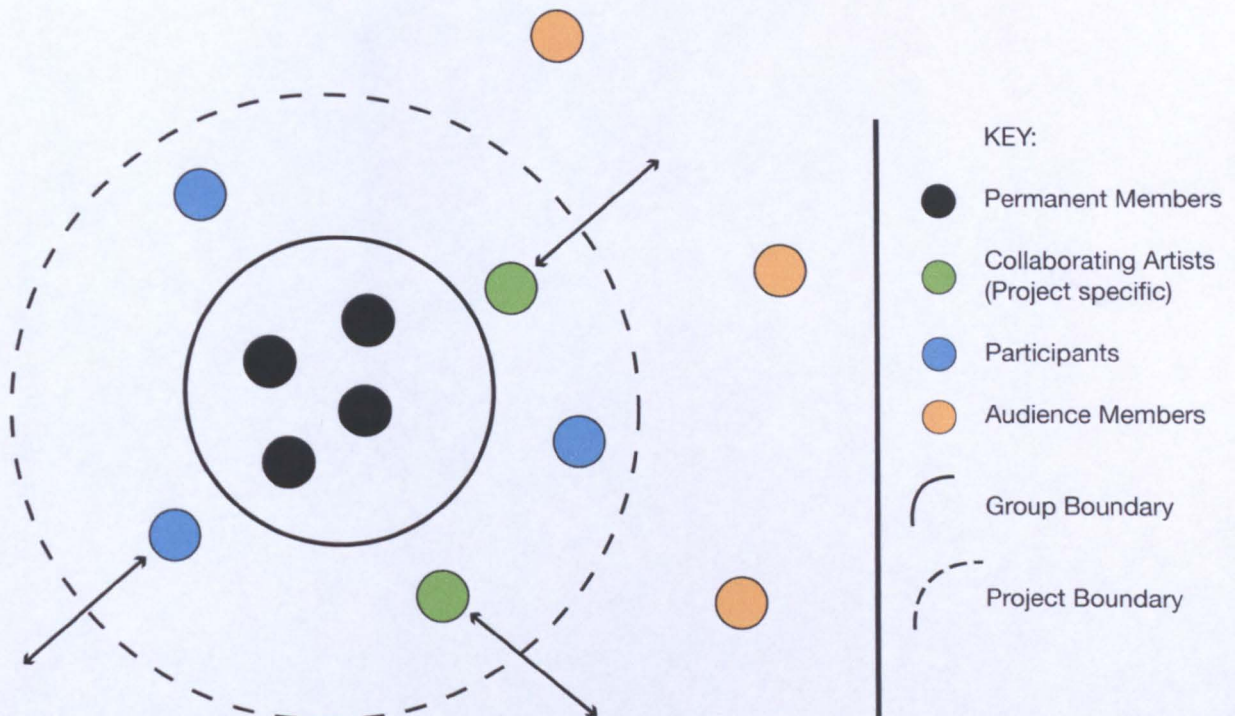
Although I have discussed several problems in Reactor’s practice, I think there is much of interest in their work in terms of their exploration of different models for interacting with participants as activators of the work, rather than simply as audience or passive recipients of a spectacle.

### ***Parfyme***

Group membership of Parfyme is fairly clear-cut; there are four members but, as with Reactor, they do have other collaborators on some of their projects, and they are similarly subsumed under the name Parfyme (Figure 18). In fact, Laurids Sonne, who was the third member to join, and first to join after the group was formed, worked with Parfyme on



several projects over a number of years before being an official member of the group. Douglas Paulson was the fourth member to join and, after a period as part of Parfyme Deluxe, the distinction between the two group forms was abolished and he became a full member.



**Figure 18. Parfyme. Centralised, Semi-permeable Group**

In terms of relationship with their audience, Parfyme can be the most ‘conversational’ or ‘engaged’, though this is not always the case. In the case of *Ideas* (2007), Parfyme distributed eight ‘Ideas boxes’ around the National University, Seoul and invited people to post their ideas, which would then be redistributed at their ‘Idea stand’ (Figure 19) where they were serving tea and coffee, as is often the case with Parfyme projects. If not at the ideas stand, they were away building things based on those ideas. In this way, every audience member is potentially a collaborator, or at least a contributor, and in the cases where Parfyme gives their ideas form, they even have the chance to change the shape of the project (Figure 20).



Figure 19. Parfyme, *Ideas* (2007)



Figure 20. Parfyme, *Ideas* (2007)



Parfyme also occasionally work on projects with other art groups, such as *Deluxe vs Flux Factory* (2007), where the groups worked in co-operation each other, but with the fiction that they were in competition.

### 4.3 Interview Reflections

#### *Where is the rhizome?*

Although the central conceptual tool at the time of conducting the interviews was the rhizome, I chose not to discuss it with the groups directly as it was felt that it would unduly influence the groups' responses. It was considered likely that drawing attention to specific philosophical concepts would provoke 'partisan' responses from some of the groups that would bias the rest of their answers. For instance, groups might be likely to emphasise rhizomatic or dialectical processes if they were given the impression that I had a particular bias myself. However, I continued to seek instances of practices that I thought might be considered in terms of the rhizome.

#### *Paranoiac-Critical*

During the Bughouse interview, Cussans spoke specifically about their use and extension of the Surrealists' practice of 'the Paranoid Critical Method'<sup>51</sup> (sic). Describing how the group actively look for connections between phenomena, and 'go looking for portals, y'know, holes in the time/space continuum' (Bughouse Interview, Lines 255-257) as a form of fantasy psychogeographical *dérive*, as a means for 'seeing the connections, seeing the networks, seeing the relationships, and understanding that there may be a direct connection between the sugar cubes that you are putting in your coffee, and the police that are walking down the street.' (Lines 112-114) It should be noted at this point that this usage of the term 'paranoid', derived from Salvador Dali, is not the same as that used by Deleuze and Guattari, for whom paranoia represents 'obsolete, or traditional, belief-centered modes of social organisation' (Holland, 2003, p.3). The form of connective, fluid, practice the Bughouse describe is more akin to Deleuze and Guattari's usage of the term 'schizophrenia', which Eugene Holland describes as designating 'freedom, ingenuity, and permanent revolution' (Holland, 2003, p.3), and in fact Cussans did also use the term schizophrenic in

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<sup>51</sup> Salvador Dali predicted 'I believe that the moment is near when, by a process of paranoiac character and activity of thought, it will be possible (simultaneously with automatism and other passive states) to systematize confusion and contribute towards the total discrediting of the world of reality' GALE, M. (1997) *Dada & Surrealism*, London, Phaidon. p. 291



the interview. In fact, the two terms seemed to be almost interchangeable in the Bughouse interview. Even though they do not name it as such, Reactor, like the Bughouse, also make use of the paranoiac-critical method. During the development stages of a project, Reactor spend a lot of time together getting themselves into a similar state of mind as each other. Russell describes how they enter into a particular 'mind-set' where they begin to experience chance encounters as significant and 'more or less everything to do with [a project] stems from accidental things, because you're constantly in that mind-set anything that occurs is brought into it, and it isn't important to begin with, like the lynx, or like Uncle Commie, y'know, Uncle Commie's a specific reference to a specific mind-set at a particular time, and then it becomes centrally important' (Reactor Interview, Lines 409-413). This kind of systematic production of delusional states is the same as that discussed by McDonough, referring to Debord and Chtcheglov's *dérive*, where they imagined they were in an American gangster movie, and similarly it has the effect of placing the paranoiac at the centre of the scene, placing them in danger of becoming self-obsessed, ego-centric. Therefore, while it may seem that one potential weakness with the paranoiac-critical is that placing the artists at the centre of their world makes it difficult to then achieve any 'critical' distance, that lack of distance is the whole point of the methodology, to be in the midst of things. Then one responds rhizomatically to those local conditions.

### ***Conversation***

Freee talk about how central 'informal conversation' is to their practice, both as a means of ideas generation and recognition among group members (Freee Interview, Lines 192-224), and also as a mechanism for bringing new collaborators on board for individual projects (Lines 107-122). In fact, there is a slight difference of emphasis of language on this point, and during the course of the interview they use the word 'conversation' when referring to instances of in-group communication; however when referring to occasions when they are talking with, external collaborators they use the word 'discussion' instead. This is a subtle distinction, but the idea of 'conversation' can be thought of as a process where the people involved are openly exploring a series of ideas that have room to develop in unpredictable ways; it is a creative process. Whereas the idea of a 'discussion' definitely brings to mind a situation where people are talking about a specific topic of interest, one that has been decided upon in advance, there is a more limited scope for creative input in a discussion than in a conversation. This distinction is one of the things ensuring authorship of the project

remains clearly with Freee and not with their collaborators. For the purposes of this study I consider conversation to be a rhizomatic mode of communication that proceeds without reference to pre-existing formations. The subject of a conversation can radically change at any point in time if a new connection or new pathway is noticed. This is where the rhizome can be found in Freee's practice, but they then bring it under control and subject it to critical analysis: discussion based upon the conversation.

The other group interviewed for whom conversation is a central part of the work is Parfyme, although they use the more neutral term 'talk', which is possibly due to English being their second language. Similarly to Freee, 'talking' is used as the basic means for idea generation and recognition, and also specifically as a means for maintaining group understanding and cohesion. They emphasise that this talking is not always a harmonious event and that 'not holding back' (Parfyme Interview, Line 219) is important if things are to be a genuine conversation. This is where it is important that there is sufficient group trust and cohesion to be able to accommodate disagreement and plain speaking. Parfyme also go further than any of the other groups interviewed in terms of having a conversation with their audiences. This is not true of all Parfyme projects, but when it is it involves the setting up of open, social scenarios. They spend extended periods of time at a site, often serving tea and coffee, and having discussions around a theme, or in some cases, more open conversations. They also take some of the ideas generated by audiences in these conversations and actualise them in some way, meaning that the audience has a genuine opportunity to help author the project.

Although the issue of informal conversation came up in two of the interviews explicitly, it was notable that in all of the interviews, collaborators reciprocated in keeping the conversation going with 'Mmm' and 'Yeah' throughout in order to consent to what was being said. In fact, this is something that I have noticed elsewhere in groups to which I have personally contributed and this form of assent also serves to signal to the speaker that what they are saying is acceptable to other group members at the time. In his book on conducting research interviews, *Learning how to ask* (Briggs, 1986), Charles Briggs describes this use of linking words and sounds in the following way:

'The conversational analysis group has identified a host of devices that enable co-conversationalists to coordinate their turns at talk [...] "Huh?", "right?", "Yes?", "okay?", "You know?", "see?" and so forth have traditionally been viewed as mere

fillers, phatic signals used to keep the channel open until we think of something to say. Research has shown, however, that they provide the person who dominates the floor with a great deal of feedback with respect to the manner in which her or his interpretations of the interaction are shared by the other participants' (Briggs, 1986, p. 109).

It is clear from this quotation that conversation does not simply involve the transmission of ideas, but is open to constant negotiation by all parties involved. In fact, this goes further and involves non-vocal cues and the setting within which the conversation is happening. This complex of signs and interactions between people, places and things is usually referred to as a set of relations. The constant affirmative signaling by conversational partners produces relations where the channels are held open, to let the conversation flow.

## ***Relations***

### **Audience Relations**

Between the four groups interviewed, there appears to be a continuum of audience interactive and participatory practices, from no engagement to co-authorship.

While Freee stand out among the four groups as being different in that they have a practice consisting mainly of critique, they still often engage directly with their audience as participants. Whereas, even though the Bughouse has a very fluid, and non-hierarchical, internal organisation, their relationship with the audience is fairly traditional and at a distance, although what they present to that audience is multi-authored and therefore unusual to some extent. It is, however, a one-way transmission of the work from group to audience.

Freee produce works for display in either public locations, such as billboards, or for gallery installation, as in video and photographic works, but they also hold projects that involve an audience as participants. In this type of project there is a sense in which the audience is being used as a stage in the production of an image that is then distributed as the work, and the audience is severely constrained in what actual effect they can have on the project, but they are engaged in the work's production to some extent.

Reactor work more closely with the audience on the performance of the project, and indeed the project could not take place without the audience 'performing' it and is dependent even on the size of the audience. For instance, in the case of *Total Ghaos* (2005), lower audience

numbers than expected at the opening night meant they had to improvise on how to fill some of the roles, and the situation reversed for the next two days of the event, where they found they did not have enough 'staff' (collaborating artists) to cover everything that needed doing. Even so, Reactor plan their projects and their staging so precisely that it is very difficult for audiences to identify opportunities to make unilateral decisions and so to co-author the project. Once people are trained, within the project, to think of themselves as subjects (in the sense of a psychological experiment) there is a tendency for them to try and do what is expected of them, to do things correctly. In Goffman's terms, there is little room for disruptive secondary adjustments that might reconfigure the project in some way.

The other group at this end of the spectrum of participation is Parfyme, and although their projects may seem to involve the audience less than Reactor, because they are less dependent on the audience's presence, any interaction is more based upon exchange. It is more like a conversation than a discussion. Therefore, if we focus on the influence the audience is able to exert over the direction the work takes, their co-authorship, Parfyme are definitely at the other end of the continuum from the Bughouse, but this may simply be because the whole notion of an audience is irrelevant to what the Bughouse are doing as the proper context of the work is 'within' the work. In Parfyme's practice, audience relations are rhizomatic. The group and their audience/participants become a multiplicity where the nature and shape of the project changes as people come and go, and with each interaction. Their projects and participants organise themselves around each other.

### **'Forcing' participation**

Something that came up in two of the interviews was an explicit reference to not 'forcing' participation from audiences. I had not mentioned force to them, and they mentioned it as something that they 'did not do' as a group. Since the idea of 'forcing' participation was a non sequitur, this statement may imply either that I somehow force participants to contribute, or that I was accusing them of doing so. However, I think that it is more likely that because Freee's practice is based upon a macropolitical, oppositional model, they are predisposed to think of relations in terms of antagonism. In Reactor's case, it is probably because of sensitivity to authority that their work takes the form of totalitarian systems, and that brings with it an awareness of coercive behaviours.

This issue of 'forcing' responsibility onto audiences is a curious one. Art groups who work with audiences as participants have to deal with the question of what the audience wants, but there is a discrepancy between what people say they want, and how they act. The notion of forcing is related to the notion of consent that I discussed earlier. The problem with the assumption that the artists are in a position to force participation is that, like the earlier assumption that artists are 'in charge' at all, it robs participants of their own agency. In productive participatory practice the participants affect the artists as much as the other way around as they take part in a mutual 'becoming co-participant'.

For both Reactor and Freee, I think there are two issues; it is possible that each group is conscious of the dangers of coercing participants or exerting too much pressure and so has made the assumption that others are less careful; and both groups seem to be suggesting a fairly limited definition of 'forcing' in order to justify other persuasive techniques which fall outside that definition. For instance, during the Bughouse interview, Peter Rockmount explicitly talks about the way collaborators can use knowledge of one another to 'manoeuvre' each other in order to get the best work out of them, and the same can be said of other participants. In the case of Freee, repeated assurances and cups of tea are used as persuasive tools, and in the case of Reactor, carefully planned scenarios that 'funnel' participants into cooperating, both of which give a good indication of the way props and settings serve as 'actors' in the actor-networks of projects.

### **Collaborative groups and the break down of discursive/power relations**

All four of the groups interviewed described a lack of trust in an organisation or institutions in general. This is because of a perception of institutions as being less flexible than their group, and having an inability or refusal to adjust to the needs of their group. Freee stand out as different again because, whereas the other groups seek to evade the tendency of institutions to exert authority by choosing to not to affirm that authority (preferring not to), Freee challenge institutional authority head on. For Freee, the contestation of culture, the contestation of the 'functions' of art, is their main driving force; the aim is a 'campaign' to draw into question any assumptions at all about how public spheres and cultural spheres operate and to encourage their audience to join this contestation, this critique, of culture. This sounds like a noble exercise; to problematise all of the discursive systems that constitute the cultural sphere, but there is definitely a blind spot here for Freee on the matter of hierarchy in their own projects (at the level of the group's collaboration with

participants), if not within the group itself. How is that relationship between group members and their collaborators contested? It may also be that there is a second blind spot in the way that they choose to direct their work specifically at the art world, often from within that system, but it is unclear how else that relationship could be contested without engaging it in the first place.

The Bughouse attempt to break down or simply avoid this issue of the relationship to the art world by working outside or at the edge of what they consider might generally be considered to constitute that world, and by challenging any normative notions of authorship. Another factor in this collapsing of hierarchy is the way the Bughouse perform many or all of the traditionally demarcated art world roles themselves; they are artists, curators, administrators, and even, sometimes, venue hosts. They also avoid entering into the funding power relationship with Arts Council or other funding bodies. However, they still have to 'capture' their projects, such as the wiki edit, for dissemination. This means someone inevitably has to take responsibility for fixing it at a certain point, if it is to be presented to an audience as a piece of work rather than as something in flux.

Parfyme discussed how, during a project in the town hall in Copenhagen, the cleaning and ancillary staff were 'defending their routine, their job their hours, their normality, - and that is very interesting to confront' (Lines 283-284) which led to a discussion of power structures in institutions and the way everyone has a certain amount of power in their job, even if it is only power to define when their routine can or cannot be interrupted. This is a good indication of how Parfyme interact with social settings; they take time to look around, see where they can make positive changes and then take action in line with their observations. This is done with humour, and they interact with members of the public during their constructions and events, so there is a dialogue throughout all stages of the project. While they are clearly aware of hierarchies and power relations in the institutions they encounter, they chose to not interact with the institutions on those terms.

Like the Bughouse, Reactor could be understood to be collapsing conventional discursive relations by blurring the distinction between generally accepted art world roles: they secure their own funding; they administer themselves; they arrange their own venues; they have, on occasion, curated other artists; and in addition, on some projects they also engage directly with the audience in an attempt at collapsing that hierarchy. These are rhizomatic practices

inasmuch as they seek to evade the usual distinctions between roles, which serve to dictate what actions are 'appropriate'. Reactor spoke about resisting hierarchies by mainly working outside of institutions and claim that, when they do work with institutions, it is Reactor that has the power. However, Jonathan Waring described those relations with institutions as taking place within a 'landscape of what's possible at any given moment [...] but it's not a challenging of a hierarchy or power, it's merely acting out the possibilities within an ever moving field of possibilities.' (Lines 246-250) I think that there is truth in what he says, and his description is clearly rhizomatic and anarchistic in nature. Rather than denying that hierarchies exist or choosing to confront them, they have developed a practice that simply makes them irrelevant by preferring not to play that game.

### *Thematic Influence*

Freee stand out as different from the other three groups by being oppositional in nature. They treat other individuals, groups and institutions as their 'enemies' as a way of reinforcing their own cohesion, apart from when they choose to bring in other collaborators, who remain external to the group, on individual projects that are selected on the basis that they are 'interested in the kind of things that we were interested in.' (Free Interview. Line 115-116) This is consistent with the thematic framework of their practice, since their motivation is towards a macropolitical, Marxist, Habermasian, 'contestation of culture', and within most strands of Marxism one of the main tools for bringing about change is through the dialectical, and essentially molar, oppositional process.<sup>52</sup>

At the May 2008 *Art Writing Beyond Criticism* symposium at ICA in London, convened by David Burrows, Beech stated that his writing on art is primarily 'campaigning'; and I think this is the key to understanding the relationship between how Freee model their group and how their practice relates to the thematics at work. Freee are essentially a 'campaigning' art group, and as such are inclined to stick very much to an agreed 'party line'. Freee are like a secretariat for a 'Counter Public Sphere' which includes those with whom they collaborate, whose choice is to either assent to the contestation of culture or declare themselves as separate from the programme. For Habermas, the public sphere is a social space within

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<sup>52</sup> A notable exception to the molar opposition to hegemony associated with most schools of Marxism was the Italian *Autonomia* movement. The autonomy movement sought to rescue proletarian power from the notion of a 'vanguard party' and recognised the value of a multiplicity of positions and interests, valuing diversity rather than homogeneity. Where they differed from anarchists was in retaining a strategic rather than tactical approach to challenging capitalism. MAY, T. (1994) *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University.



which debate occurs, and participants behave ‘as if’ it is an ideal communicative situation, where all are equal and will debate honestly. However, Freee state that they are producing a ‘counter’ public sphere which acts as an antidote to a ‘debased bourgeois public sphere’ where debate is controlled by globalization and the financial enticements of the art market<sup>53</sup> (Freee Art Collective, 2007).

Freee’s work provokes discussion on the role of art in society, as with the *Functions* series of works, which work most effectively as ‘public’ works, as posters or billboards and also raises questions about whether it is possible for a small art group to contest culture or change the gallery system in the way they describe with such great focus.

When listening to the Bughouse, it was interesting how they leapt from one thing to another, but there was always some thin thread connecting the two statements. Their familiarity with each other allows for rapid connections and associations being made that do not need to be explained to each other during the discourse. This may be what Freee were referring to when they talked about ‘knowing’ what their ideas are, but I think it is something different. During a recent a.a.s project called *The Family at The Event* festival<sup>54</sup> in Birmingham, we formed a group of eight people on one of the days and engaged in a Bughouse-style ‘paranoid-critical *dérive*’. Even though we did not all know each other, within about an hour a collective mind set was achieved and we were more or less finishing each other’s sentences and following each other’s connections. This is different from ‘knowing each other’s ideas’ in the way that Freee mean, which is to do with familiarity built up over time.

There seemed to be a real correlation between the way Bughouse view the collaboration as being a very loose, informal set of connections that can form or break apart quite unpredictably, and the kind of Paranoid-critical method they describe, where mental connections between things happen almost entirely by coincidence and are given significance simply by virtue of having been noticed. This is the same reading of significance into ‘chance’ events that they use in relation to technology glitches, and is thought by them to reveal an unconscious knowledge about the future, similar to the way tarot cards are thought by some to work. There also seems to be a relationship between the

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<sup>53</sup> *The Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art* is a détournement of the Communist Manifesto. [www.hewittandjordan.com/freee/manifesto/freee\\_manifesto\\_p1.pdf](http://www.hewittandjordan.com/freee/manifesto/freee_manifesto_p1.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> 4-8 November, 2009

blending or mixing of works and the way the paranoid feels that the world is penetrating him psychically.

While Reactor hold weekly meetings where all project and administrative details are discussed, there is still a rhizomatic developmental stage to their practice. On research trips, they enter into a collective 'mind set' in which 'anything that occurs is brought into it, and it isn't important to begin with, like the lynx, or like Uncle Commie, y'know, Uncle Commie's a specific reference to a specific mind-set at a particular time, and then it becomes centrally important.' (Reactor interview, lines 410-413) For Reactor, changing the organisation of the group itself, for each project, is a significant part of their working practices. This does not seem to be for anything other than purely pragmatic reasons though, with roles being allocated based on competence and availability, and the only other of the four groups that this is true of is Parfyme, who are of a similar age and career stage as Reactor. It may be that this kind of pragmatic reorganisation is a generational factor. In the case of Reactor, their focus on group organisation is also reflected in the content of their projects, which are all developed around different forms of social organisation, and they even use 'little trigger points' (Line 307) to encourage the audience into a similar mind-set as the group; to instil a paranoid state in which they begin to make the same associative connections. This worked best during *Destination: Geodecity* (2007), where participants began to co-author the project's narrative to some extent. As the form of individual Reactor projects change, based on different models of society, the relations between participants and artists changes too. In the *Geodecity* project, because the theme is utopian and egalitarian, they have had to let go of control of the project, to some extent at least, in order to be consistent with their theme, the theme has affected the form.

In the case of Parfyme, there seems to be little specific influence of the model of their group on the concerns of the work, except for the fact that the group seems to function significantly at the level of friendships, which seems to be valued above the work. This emphasis on conviviality leaks into the practice, so that many of the projects are more about the development of social interactions than on the surface content of the work. This is the most important factor of Parfyme's practice for this research. Parfyme projects have a loose starting point, a general idea of what the project will be, but the actual form of the work and the specific production of relations between people and sites within the project develop

together rhizomatically. Each new encounter has the potential to change the whole dynamic of the project, leading to unexpected outputs.

### *Unexpected Events*

During the Reactor interview members drew a distinction between two main types of unexpected events: 'Thematic unexpecteds', which can be incorporated into the project, such as the video camera being stolen at *Destination: Geodecity* and becoming part of the project mythology, and 'catastrophic unexpecteds' that cannot be incorporated. This is a good distinction to draw. In their discussion of 'thematic unexpecteds', they describe them as mainly taking place during the performance of the event, which means that the audience becomes involved in either resolving something considered to be a problem, or the unexpected gets rationalised by the audience as having been intended by Reactor, or there is a collective myth making about the occurrence. For Reactor, 'catastrophic unexpecteds' are ones that either stop the project from being able to progress as planned, which is extremely rare, or that cause an 'aspect' of the project to fail. Another type of unexpected event that came up in the Reactor interview is when a non-catastrophic unexpected event happens outside of the performance phase of the project and so cannot be integrated into the mythology, such as them getting locked in the car park the night before *Destination: Geodecity*. They acknowledge that unexpected events will inevitably occur, and talk about the use of careful planning to 'structure' the project in an attempt to control in which areas of the project unexpected events can occur.

Beech described Freee's practice as explorative and experimental, in contrast to my suggestion that they seemed to be systematic. He seemed to imply that being systematic is negative and has connotations of rigidity or conformity, whereas being experimental is somehow more positive. In this particular notion of systematic, the unexpected event breaks the system down (Lines 239-248). This is a Habermasian notion of a system, which is something that opposes the 'lifeworld' (Habermas, 1985) and does not allow for systems that are specifically designed to produce unexpected events. Eventually, after talking around the issue, they agreed their practice is 'about' producing 'unexpected situations'<sup>55</sup> that they have to deal with 'on the hoof.' (Lines 245-246) As in the case of their use of the rhomatics of conversation in development stages, although Freee agreed that they produce 'unexpected

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<sup>55</sup> Hewitt paused for quite a long time here, rather than use the word I had used. I believe he explicitly avoided using the word 'events' because of its meaning in the writings of Deleuze and Badiou, so he paused while searching his vocabulary for an alternative.

situations', they always bring the work back to critical analysis, and critique, as it is generally understood, is a molar process.<sup>56</sup> It may open up new practices or positions through dialectics, but they are always 'based upon' those practices that underwent the processes of negation. It is a migration rather than nomadism, from one state to the next. With critique, there is always a need to carry the programme through, and the belief that it will lead to a better situation. A belief that through careful, rational planning, in advance, a path to the future can be mapped out. Follow the template for creating a public sphere and communication will occur, which will, in turn, mean that there is no hierarchy. There is no place for unexpected events or glitches in critique.

Reactor and Freee both seemed, on the whole, to contemplate unexpected events as negative occurrences, but the Bughouse, while acknowledging these types, also discuss a positive type of unexpected event; the 'Glitch'. Rockmount talked about the glitch in terms of technology, but the circumstances of the interview then prompted him to reflect on unexpected occurrences in the location (a car went past making a particular sound). This is in line with considering the interview situation as a kind of machinic assemblage, one that produces an interview, recording, and subsequent transcript. Like any machine, it can glitch in its functioning. He seemed to be greatly enjoying the chance of talking about glitches. He then went on to tell an 'anecdote' about an unexpected problem at a performance event. He clearly enjoyed talking about dealing with something that could have been catastrophic, but which they were able to resolve. In this example, the 'machine' of the project encountered a problem, which Rockmount characterised as a glitch, and which provoked a creative, rhizomatic response to the change in local conditions. When I discussed with them the idea of being 'unprepared' as a form of practice, Cussans referred to it as 'conjuring events', which he also called a 'Situationist sensibility' (Lines 527-529). For the Bughouse, unexpected events or glitches are seen as markers for a change to occur rather than as a problem to be solved. In rhizomatics, glitches or ruptures are not seen as problems, but as a vital part of the process. They instantaneously reconfigure the space of the work, which then becomes the new space to which the rhizome responds.

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<sup>56</sup> This is not the case for Foucault, for whom critique is 'a practice that not only suspends judgment for him, but offers a new practice of values based on that very suspension.' BUTLER, J. (2002) What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue. In INGRAM, D. (Ed.) *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*. London, Basil Blackwell.

***Summary: One dialectical movement and three rhizomatic, 'spiroid' movements***

The least rhizomatic of the four groups is Freee. While there is a rhizomatic dimension to the early stages of their projects in the form of informal conversation, their practice is primarily dialectical and opposed to the 'debased public sphere'. The notion that conditions Freee's practice is the 'campaigning statement', which is textual, and its purpose is to be launched against hegemony. The 'campaigning statement' can be presented in a variety of media, from posters and billboards, to verbal presentations for video, but what is essential is its oppositional nature. The main problem for this practice is that it severely restricts the space of possibilities that can be opened up, limiting it to those possible future states that stand in opposition to the object of critique.

Reactor's practice has two distinct modes. The first is 'mimetic' and based upon the image of totalitarianism, for instance *Total Ghaos* (2005) with Uncle Commie as its figurehead, but there is also a 'ludic' quality to this mode of their practice, which sets up a 'rhythm' between two poles, oppression and freedom. The second mode of Reactor practice is that of the *Geodecity* project, which is more collective, cooperative, and cumulative, as it develops it accumulates its own 'history'. Instead of being ludic in character, this second mode is analytic. In each case, there seems to be a tension between two poles. In the first example, the playfulness of the way the project is presented masks the fact that the theme and structure is very controlled and dialectical/critical in nature, parodying totalitarian regimes. In the second example, much of the explicit content of the project is analytical, for example seeking sustainable power solutions, working out the 'best' way of doing things through discussion. However, the structure of the second model is much more fluid, decentred and exploratory. The second mode is more productive, but it still retains some of the more controlling relations of other Reactor projects.

The two groups in this study that have the most rhizomatic practices are Parfyme and The Bughouse. Parfyme take the form of a 'nomadic pack', a gang of artists which varies in size from two to four from project to project, and who accumulate collaborators wherever they stop for a time. Their practice is also ludic in nature, based on experimental, brightly coloured constructions. They colonise a site for a time before moving on, and are very active and productive both in terms of material outputs and the social networks they produce with artists and other communities.

The way Cussans and Rockmount describe the Bughouse is as a paranoid line that continually makes connections. The Bughouse overlay artworks on top of each other and 'mix' them, which causes unexpected 'rhythms' to occur between the layers. This overlaying/connecting process also takes the form of a kind of 'fabulating *dérive*' involving an overlaying of fantasy over the city. The Bughouse also overlay digital and analogue elements, in search of glitches. The group consider glitches to have a particular intensity or significance, in contradiction to the usually asignifying nature of the glitch. The biggest problem for the Bughouse is in terms of disseminating their work because, whether a live event or the collaborative wiki, capture of the work is only ever a 'snapshot', which cannot convey the nature of the work itself in process.

Following on from the discussion of Bacon's 'diagram', what is common to all of these practices, except Freee, is their 'diagrammatic' operation. First, there is a pre-existing space, the social space of the group or the wider social context. Second, the group's 'diagram' 'scrambles', or molecularises, that space. Third, a 'line of flight', or rupture, makes an adjustment to the original space, i.e. there is a reconfiguration of some kind. Fourth, the group reflects on the new configuration, producing new knowledge about the new space that has been produced. The second and third phases of this 'diagrammatic cycle' (Figure 21) show the movement, multiplicity, ruptures, and responsiveness that characterise the rhizome and the fourth phase, where reflection takes place is the decalcomania of the rhizome.

This 'diagrammatic cycle' takes the same form as the action research cycle and Deleuze's own 'counter-actualisation' which derives from Friedrich Nietzsche's 'eternal return' (Deleuze, 2004c, pp. 204-5). The procedure is not simply circular, the space that is returned to at the end of a cycle is not the same as the one at the start, it is transformed, meaning the movement has a spiroid quality to it.



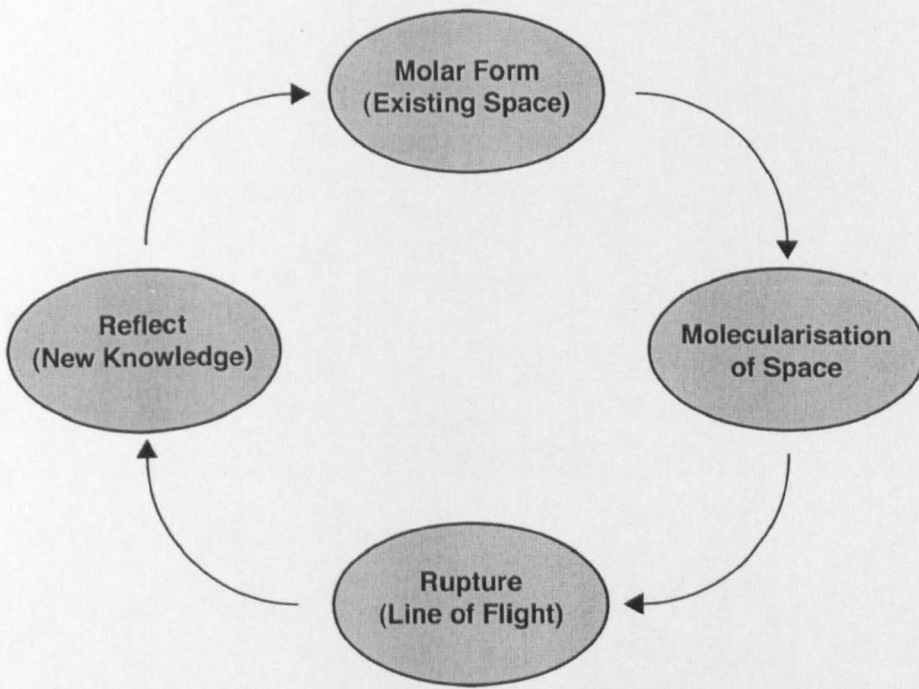


Figure 21. 'Diagrammatic' Cycle

The difference made to the existing space in each case may not be particularly noticeable because a specific cycle may not produce a line of flight at all. The molecularisation of the existing space provides the *conditions* for lines of flight, but they do not always occur, as in the case of rituals like Reactor's tabard transition, in which several people may perform the ritual, but only a small number make the mental adjustment to becoming part of the group.

Because the Bughouse's paranoid-critical method is clearly rhizomatic, I think there are two problems that distinguish their practice from what the name suggests. First, the term 'paranoid' has a negative connotation for Deleuze and Guattari, related to the most constraining, molar, characteristics of capitalism. This brings with it the suggestion that all the practice does is to trace the connections and 'influencing machines'<sup>57</sup> of dominant significations, and then subjects them to critique. Second, since I have been making a distinction between critical practices and rhizomatic ones throughout this thesis, the 'critical' part of the practice's name suggests that there is an object of critique, such as the dominant significations revealed through paranoid drifting. However, listening to the Bughouse's description of their practice, and Cussans' claim that the Bughouse is 'schizo', it

<sup>57</sup> The term 'influencing machines' was used by Cussans at the *Performance Fictions* Conference at The Electric Cinema, Birmingham, 21 November 2009 and derives from TAUSK, V. (1933) On the origin of the influencing machine in schizophrenia. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 519-556.

is clear that they are not just producing a trace of existing connections and significations. Rather than a paranoid-critical practice, then, I suggest that they are moving towards a 'schizo-productive' practice that evades the normative, dominant chains of signification by making new connections, even nonsense connections. A 'schizo-productive' practice should be an imminent response to the conditions and factors one comes into contact with, evading any fixed sense of meaning, and without reference to dominant structures, significations or 'ideal' states, which might only serve to constrain production. This still needs to be a reflective process however, the trace still needs to be placed back on the map for comparison before the next spiral of rhizomatic movement.

There is a clear distinction between the critical/dialectical practice of Freee and the affirmative/rhizomatics of the Bughouse. The former has a clearly defined, molar, organisation that stands in opposition to the 'debased public sphere' while the latter has a molecular organisation with no fixed membership or configuration and is concerned with producing glitches and unexpected reconfigurations. The molecular organisation of the Bughouse is the most suitable for the type of molecular collaboration I will discuss next, but what about Parfyme and Reactor? While they have a more molar group organisation, like Freee, in that they have a stable membership and identity, they are not 'exclusive' relationships like Freee. The members of Reactor and Parfyme are also members of other collaborative and solo projects. They behave as 'dividuals', having several roles in different networks, only some of which are activated at any given time. Taking the notion of the dividual, together with the more 'adjectival' naming of practices rather than denotation of group identities, the molecularisation the space of the project to encourage glitching, rhizomatic responsiveness to reconfigured local conditions, and a molecular group organisation, we now have the conditions for molecular collaboration.

## Chapter 5. MOLECULAR COLLABORATION

In *Analysis*, Beech, Hutchinson, and Timberlake describe four types of collaboration:

Individuals involved in a shared project, artist-run organizations, double acts (usually using the two artists' surnames), and large chaotic group shows (Beech et al., 2006, pp. 16-18) with which they contrast 'collectives' as their preferred, substantively different, form of collaboration. For Beech, et al, collectivity 'produces a transcendent subjectivity – the collective becomes a subject in its own right' (2006, p. 32). The kind of practice where 'the point and practice of collective can become the health of the collective itself, rather than the production of thing' (2006, p. 39) can hold within it the danger that 'group think' can result in closing down the creative potential of the group. There is a danger of the group becoming homogenous.

The dominant model for considering collaborative groups is as if they are collective subjects, unities, even in the case of artist duos. For instance, the practice of Beagles and Ramsay is considered as a single practice, not two. A significant problem throughout the research has been a tendency to slip back into this way of thinking of groups as unities and to ask how specific projects or groups are rhizomatic. To some extent this is the wrong question because it is rather the network of the wider molecular collaboration, the network of groups, that is rhizomatic. Raising the question of what individual groups do and what defines them is to deal with them as molar entities with hard boundaries, whereas this study is interested primarily in individual groups as fuzzy, adjectivally named 'regions' within the wider molecular collaboration.

What I am interested in is a decentred, molecular collaboration, which recognises something extra to the individual, or individual group. I have focused on the four groups in which I have been involved directly in their production. However, collaborations with these groups have included members from Reactor, Parfyme, and Pil and Galia Kollektiv to name a few, where those members were part of one of those groups at least for the duration of the project. There is, in this molecular collaboration, 'promiscuity' between the different practices, which stands in contrast to Freee's 'exclusive relationship'. Additionally, during the study period I collaborated with other artists and groups on specific projects where the groups maintained their separate identities within the project, such as with Henrik Schrat and Plastique Fantastique on *Product Clearing* (2008).

Even though they were not particularly productive of works, to not discuss the Red Line Group and Zero Point Collaboration would give an inaccurate, incomplete account of the network of practices comprising this study. As with a hologram, it is important that the part contains information about the whole picture (Bohm, 1999, pp. 10-11), so while I will not explore those two groups in detail, their inclusion is necessary to provide an image of the whole art practice element of this study. The Red Line Group produced the *Red Line Surveillance* project, but it became clear during its active phase that the group would not continue after the project. The differences in personal styles were too great, and without a strong ideology, a 'red line', and in the absence of a leadership or manager to coordinate the group's actions, there was nothing to hold the group together.

Far more productive than the Red Line Group, in terms of new practices and knowledge of group practices, has been the Zero Point Collaboration. This may seem paradoxical, since the group itself produces nothing except documentation of its own procedures and proceedings, but that has meant that there has been much more attention paid to group relations and processes. Several of the practices adopted by other groups in the molecular collaboration have come out of the experience and development of the Zero Point Collaboration.

Insectoid is currently in a state of inertia. Following the success of the Pil and Galia Kollektiv curated *The Institute of Psychoplasmics* (2008), after which Ana and I backed away from 'driving' the group due to research commitments, no one has had the willingness to push the group forward, but I do not see this as a permanent situation. Each of the collaborative groups I work in has members with particular interests. These members do not always have the same level of commitment at any one time, in the case of insectoid that has led to its current 'hibernation'. In the case of a.a.s, when one person has more time to contribute then the collaboration moves more in the direction of their interests or capabilities. This is different from an ideological group where the overall programme of the group is predecided, as in the examples of Freee and Reactor, which means that specific tactics and outputs can be decided at administrative meetings and carried out by whoever has time to commit. The distinction between the fluid and ideological types of group can be found in the work of Roger Caillois in the distinction between secret and conspiratorial societies, and that distinction is between groups that exist for their own sake (affirmative) and those that exist to act (critical).

## *Analysis*

### **Secret Societies and Nomadic War machines**

In a 1938 presentation to members of the College of Sociology<sup>58</sup> Georges Bataille delivered a presentation on behalf of Roger Caillois from a set of notes on the subject of secret societies in which he describes a dichotomy in society between cohesion and ferment (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 152). In his pre-amble to the presentation, Bataille described how 'the "elective community" or "secret society" is a form of secondary organization that possesses constant characteristics and to which recourse is always possible when the primary organization of society can no longer satisfy all the desires that arise' (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 149). The secret society in this case is not secret in the usual sense, since its activities and members are known, but rather it has access to some form of '*undisclosable* mysterious element belonging to it. This element is either magic or technical knowledge [...] or the knowledge of particular myths' (Caillois, 1938/1988, pp. 150-151).

This may all sound somewhat mystical, but the form of the secret society accords strongly with that of the collaborative art group in relation to the 'primary organisation' of the art world. The secret society introduces turbulence into 'encrusted' society. It introduces 'life'. 'Would not the 'secret society' or 'elective community' represent in every stage of historical development the means, and the sole means, for societies that have arrived at a real void, a static non-sense, that allows a sort of sloughing off that is explosive?' (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 153). The secret society introduces a glitch into the functions of society. It exists for its own sake and as such stands as a negation of political structures that would make necessity the founding rule of all human activity (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 155) and should therefore also be distinguished from 'conspiratorial societies' which are 'formed expressly with an action in mind distinct from their own existence: in other words, societies formed to act and not to exist' (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 154).

I would like to suggest now that Caillois' model of the secret society is more or less synonymous with what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'nomadic war machine'. Their use of the word 'war' in war machine may be a little misleading, but comes from their initial description of nomadic peoples' use of war as a means to 'ward off' formation into a State

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<sup>58</sup> The College of Sociology was a group of French intellectuals who came together out of dissatisfaction with surrealism, which they believed privileged the individual at the expense of society. They sought to understand humanity through moments of intense communal experience. It is worth noting that the College of Sociology itself takes the form of a secret society.

since it ‘maintains the dispersal and segmentarity of groups’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 357). At any rate, in the Chinese classic Sun-Tzu’s *Art of War* it is clear that with proper use and combination of ‘orthodox and unorthodox’ forces – territorialised and deterritorialised (Sun-Tzu, 2002, p. 19) – and proper planning then battle need never be entered. ‘The war machine is then defined less by warfare than the space it occupies and in fact generates’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 80) and the name Deleuze and Guattari give to this kind of space that is produced by the actions performed within it is ‘smooth space’<sup>59</sup>, a key example of which is found in the Chinese game of *Go*. In contrast to Chess, where each piece has a specific, defined role and the space of the board is sectioned up or striated in advance, in *Go* the pieces are not coded but ‘enter into relations that produce a field of hierarchies’ (Colebrook, 2005, p. 180). In *Go*, the influence or importance of each piece is determined by prior and subsequent moves and groupings of pieces form temporary, intensive territories that are rhizomatic in development.

The relationship of the war machine to the State is similar to that of the secret society to Society:

‘It is in terms not of independence, but of coexistence and competition in a perpetual field of interaction, that we must conceive of exteriority and interiority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity, bands and kingdoms, megamachines and empires. The same field circumscribes its interiority on States, but describes its exteriority in what escapes States or what opposes States’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 361).

Although the war machine and the secret society are not strictly synonymous, they are both responsive to, and productive of, social space. As Caillois states, they are formed to exist, not to act (Caillois, 1938/1988). This means that they are not tied to any set form or identity and change in response to prevailing conditions. They thereby transform those conditions in the manner that the potential of a *Go* piece is defined by its position in an assemblage, in relation to other pieces. In the same way, an a.a.s artist has particular capacities activated when working in an a.a.s project, but that same ‘dividual’ has different capacities activated when at a Zero Point meeting, and the group itself is also reconfigured depending on which

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<sup>59</sup> See glossary.

artists are present. The artist (or Go piece) and the assemblage condition each other in the multiplicity of the practice.

## Assemblages

Assemblage theory and actor-network theory essentially relate to the same problems, as I stated before, but through the optics of different disciplines. Where one refers to 'assemblages' the other refers to 'networks' both are descriptions of multiplicities. Where ANT refers to actors as 'intermediaries', which have little effect on the network/assemblage, and 'mediators', which play an active role in shaping the network/assemblage (Albertsen and Diken, 2003, p. 9), DeLanda refers to components that play a 'material' or 'expressive' role. Examples of components that play a 'material' role in assemblages are people, food, physical labour, simple tools, complex machines, and physical locales such as buildings or neighbourhoods. Examples of components playing an 'expressive' role are the content of what is said, facial expression, posture, dress, the manner of speaking, choice of topic, promises, vows, expressions of mutual support, and expressions indicating obedience to authority (DeLanda, 2006, pp. 12-13). A component in an assemblage can play a mixture of 'material' and 'expressive' roles depending on which of its 'capacities' it exercises in that particular assemblage (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). This movement between material and expressive roles performed by components also reminds us of Goffman's 'role adjustments' and the way that in a molecular project there can be a mutual 'becoming co-participant' of artists and audiences. Audience members can make a rhizomatic move from being intermediaries playing a material role in the project, to being mediators who play an expressive role in the project, changing the configuration of the assemblage.

The other dimension of assemblages is that of territorialising and deterritorialising processes. Processes of territorialisation<sup>60</sup> tend to increase an assemblage's internal homogeneity or the sharpness of its boundaries. Processes of deterritorialisation tend to destabilize assemblages by increasing difference internally, or by blurring or rupturing boundaries. Both types of process can be present at the same time and, in fact, a single component can be doing both, depending on which capacities it exercises (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). Examples of territorializing forces are the physical location such as a building or playground, the dimensions of a physical community like a neighbourhood or city, an organizational jurisdiction, sorting processes that exclude certain people from a club, and

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<sup>60</sup> For a definition of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, see glossary.



segregation. Examples of deterritorialising forces are communications systems that blur spatial boundaries (DeLanda, 2006, p. 13). Territorialisation is the process of synthesis by which the components of an assemblage are held together to form a coherent whole.

Assemblages are micro or macro depending on the spatiotemporal scale being considered (DeLanda, 2006, p. 32), for instance, a university can be considered macro in scale compared to the various faculties and individuals making them up, but micro when compared with the Research Assessment Exercise or the city where it is based. In other texts Deleuze tends more to refer to the distinction between structuring factors that open up or reduce possibilities, and the processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), in terms of three syntheses of production (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984), or three types of 'line', or the triad molar, molecular, and line of flight (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987). These are all near synonymous descriptions of the same processes.

### Three Types of Line

In *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, (Deleuze, 1992) Deleuze reflects on Foucault's writing on 'disciplinary societies,' preceding 'societies of sovereignty,' and the recent advent of 'societies of control.' Deleuze's description of disciplinary societies in the first paragraph of the essay is almost identical to the first paragraph of the chapter 'Many Politics' in the Deleuze's collaboration with Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 124) and the two descriptions can be used to clarify each other to some extent. The parallel accounts lead one to an understanding of the earlier disciplinary societies as being primarily 'molar' in formation, based as they are on 'lines of rigid segmentarity' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 124) or 'spaces of enclosure' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3). Examples of these molar formations are mostly the same in both texts: the family, the school, the barracks, the factory, the hospital, and the prison. The proposition is that, in molar series, individuals move from one 'segment' or 'space of enclosure' to the next, and that each stage in the series has its own 'laws.' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3) As well as these lines of rigid segmentarity, there are also 'lines of segmentarity which are much more supple, as it were molecular.' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 124) This second type of line is much more like a 'molecular flux' than a rigid line with segments. The flux is composed of thresholds that are crossed, which do not necessarily coincide with the edges traced by the molar segments. The molecular fluxes slip between the more rigid structures of our lives. Deleuze and Parnet describe these molecular fluxes as the attractions, repulsions, and 'forms of madness that are

secret.’ (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125) For Deleuze, as for Foucault, the disciplinary societies are gradually being replaced by societies of control, which are more of the order of molecular fluxes. When moving from one space of enclosure to the next in the series, one is ‘supposed to start from zero.’ They are analogues of each other, but separate. However, in the emerging control societies the different mechanisms are inseparable variations of the same system. No longer is it a case of workers in the same factory having the same pay scale and bonuses, but workers in a corporation competing with each other to secure their own personal rewards according to merit. No longer just progression from school to college to work, but perpetual, or lifelong, learning (Deleuze, 1992, p. 5).

Deleuze writes that ‘disciplinary societies have two poles: the signature that designates the individual, and the number or administrative numeration that indicates his or her position within a mass.’ Whereas, in control societies, ‘what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code: the code is a password’ as opposed to discipline’s ‘watchwords’ (Deleuze, 1992, p. 5). No longer are we dealing with the binary of individual/mass, individuals have become what Deleuze calls ‘dividuals’ and masses have become samples, data, markets, or ‘banks’ where the numerical language is that of ‘codes that mark access to information, or reject it’ (Deleuze, 1992, p. 5). Dividuals are capable of being ‘cut up’ and distributed in several data systems simultaneously, and it may be that this is one of the main conditions for molecular collaboration to exist. This is in distinct contrast to the more molar model operated by Freee, which is a fixed group of individuals who form a single collective subject, in an ‘exclusive relationship’. I have said that even when we are not in direct contact with other group members, we are still consciously ‘part of’ that group, we are ‘continuously engaged in some kind of *symbolic interaction* or *reference* to groups of others *represented in our internal worlds*’ (Morgan and Thomas, 1996, p. 67). Therefore, if we are part of several collaborations, even when the others are not present, we hold our membership of all of the groups in our ‘internal worlds’, simultaneously. We are not unified, individual subjects, but multiplicities with different, overlapping clusters of capacities, functions, and abilities where each cluster relates to a specific collaborative practice or set of relations. Movement from one collaborative group to the next means the activation of different capacities.

Molecular and molar are not separate, but different ways of seeing or ‘taking up’ the same elements, or the same assemblage, ‘as nomadic, polyvocal, rhizomatic, transversal, smooth,

processual, intensive and indivisible on the one molecular side; as sedentary, bi-univocal, arborescent, linear, striated, static, extensive, and divisible on the other molar side' (Mullarkey, 2006, p. 20). However, this shouldn't be simply thought of as belonging to our own apprehension, whether we perceive things as molar or molecular, but as always intermixed (Mullarkey, 2006, p. 20). There is a tendency to think of molecularity and molarity as a distinction of movement and stasis, but Mullarkey writes that even molarity is a movement, 'a making-the-same' (Mullarkey, 2006, p. 23). Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between 'arborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities. Between macro- and micromultiplicities. On the one hand, multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or pre-conscious – and on the other hand, libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing in nature' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 33).

It is not that either disciplinary or control societies are better or worse than each other, more tolerable or more tough. Within each of them there are 'liberating and enslaving forces' that confront each other. Deleuze writes that there is no need for fear or hope in either case, and entreats us to 'look for new weapons' (Deleuze, 1992, p4). This is the only indication in his text on control societies of the third type of line described by Deleuze and Parnet in 'Many Politics' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, pp 124-147), the line of flight. As well as the molar lines of rigid segmentarity (disciplinary society, structure), and the molecular fluxes of the less rigid lines of segmentation that compose our 'becomings' (control society, variation), we (individuals or groups) are also made up of a third type of line: the line of flight. These are 'even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent.' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125)

For Deleuze and Parnet (and Guattari), what is referred to as rhizomatics and at various times by other names (schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics, diagrammatism, etc.), 'has no other object than the study of these lines, in groups or as individuals' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125). Deleuze writes that in Scott Fitzgerald's terms, these lines are referred to as cuts (rigid, molar segmentarity, mass or public changes), cracks (molecular, threshold crossing fissures, secret mutations), and ruptures (lines of flight) (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, pp. 126-7). The line of flight, the rupture, is like Goffman's 'disruptive secondary adjustment' in that it causes the whole system or society to be re-evaluated or re-formed. I

will give you an example of this disruptive kind of adjustment. When one of the artists and one of the participants swapped identities during the a.a.s project *KR-36*, causing confusion between other people in the project. Whereas the more 'secret' molecular flows that cause or allow assemblages to mutate are more like Goffman's non-disruptive secondary adjustments, where people 'get away with' unauthorised behaviours within systems. An example of this, again from *KR-36*, is that, after the first week of the project, participants spontaneously began to pair off into small teams of two, after which we specifically began sending people on some missions in pairs, and in the following project, *DY-66*, it was formalised as the 'Bit-Buddy'<sup>61</sup> system.

Each of the lines has its dangers. The danger of rigid segmentarity is that it constantly overcodes us, imposing binary oppositions on us, such as man-woman, private-public, audience-artist, but we cannot simply avoid molar forms because they are 'so much a part of the conditions of life, including our organism and our very reason' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 138). The danger of the molecular fluxes is that of 'crossing a threshold too quickly' where 'a supple line rushes into a black hole'<sup>62</sup> from which it will not be able to extricate itself' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 138). The danger of the line of flight is that it can run away with itself and become a line of abolition or destruction (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 142). 'Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialisation down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 9).

## Summary

The dominant model for considering collaborative groups is as if they are collective subjects. This has been a problem for the research because of the tendency to slip back into habitually asking how specific projects or groups are rhizomatic. It is the wrong question

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<sup>61</sup> The 'bit' in bit buddy is a contraction of 'binary unit' and is drawn from computing terminology. It also refers to other 'buddy systems' involving the pairing of individuals engaged in dangerous activities. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddy_system)

<sup>62</sup> Black hole, here, refers not to the astronomical body, but to a state of subjectivity from which the subject cannot extricate their self. It may be characterised as an 'attraction towards an absolute (lack) of signification' or 'self-annihilation' that may derive from an overly self-conscious attempt at 'deterritorialisation'. The situation becomes unbearable. MESSAGE, K. (2005) Black Holes. In PARR, A. (Ed.) *The Deleuze Dictionary*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University.

because the overall network of the molecular collaboration is itself rhizomatic. Although the Red Line Group did not hold together because differences in personal styles were too great, and the lack of a strong ideology (a red line) or leadership meant the group's actions were not coordinated, there was enough overlap with certain individuals to allow a line of flight to develop into a new potential project involving a.a.s, Reactor and Parfyme.

The form of the secret society accords strongly with that of the collaborative art group in relation to the 'primary organisation' of dominant art world relations. The secret society introduces turbulence into 'encrusted' society, while collaborative art groups produce unexpected relations and products that then affect dominant significations. The secret society is a form of 'secondary organization' that possesses constant characteristics, various typologies of collaborative working, to which recourse is always possible when the primary organization of society (dominant artistic practices) can no longer satisfy all the desires that arise. The secret society (collaborative group) introduces a glitch into the functions of society (dominant art world significations). The secret society, or collaborative group, is productive of new social spaces. As Caillois states, they are formed to exist (like the rhizomatics of the Bughouse), not to act (like Freee's 'campaigning'). This means that they are not tied to any set form or identity, rather they change in response to prevailing conditions. They thereby transform those conditions in the manner that the potential of a Go piece is defined by its position in an assemblage, in relation to other pieces. Where, in molar series, individuals move from one 'segment' or 'space of enclosure' to the next, and that each stage in the series has its own 'laws' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3), in a 'molecular flux' the 'lines of segmentarity' are much more supple (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 124). The flux is composed of thresholds that are crossed, which do not necessarily coincide with the edges traced by the molar segments, for example the development of wiki use crosses thresholds between practices, from the Zero Point Collaboration, to a.a.s, to the Red Line Group. In molecular collaboration, artists, or participants for that matter, are not unified, individual subjects, but are multiplicities with different, overlapping clusters of capacities, functions, and abilities where each cluster relates to a specific collaborative practice or set of relations. Indeed, one collaboration overlaps with another too, meaning that practices can 'interfere' with, or molecularise, each other's spaces. In molecular collaboration, there are several interrelated practices, which are capable of keeping each other in a state of permanent revolution, in the form of 'diagrammatic spirals'. The interaction of different 'regions' of

practice aims at avoiding the risks of rigid segmentarity, the 'black hole', or the line of annihilation.



## Chapter 6. CASE STUDIES FROM MY PRACTICE-AS-RESEARCH

### How the case studies were selected

The projects selected for further consideration, *we.assimilate* and *KR-36*, were chosen as the most useful of my projects carried out during the research. They each have a different group model and different processes of production. Insectoid have a fluid group membership and are interested in colonizing spaces or scenarios. The performance *we.assimilate* had all of the main elements that had occurred in other Insectoid performances: no verbal communication, performers' heads covered by insect masks, and rhythmic but non-musical sound. Additionally, *we.assimilate* was a performative 'connective synthesis' of a new member joining the group in a manner similar to ants' 'social carrying' in which an ant travels to another colony and tickles another ant there in such a way as to make it go limp. It then carries the other to its home colony and puts it down. If the new ant 'prefers' the new colony to its old home, it will stay, if not, it will return home (Hölldobler and Wilson, 1994). If the new nest member and the colony are compatible, they will 'stick'.

The second case study, *KR-36*, was an a.a.s project with an 'open programme' meaning that even though it could be said to have a form that indicated its initial capacities, its potential; it was still open to variation or mutation. As Deleuze and Parnet write, programmes are 'means of providing reference points for an experiment which exceeds our capacities to foresee' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 48). This mutation is one of the key interests of a.a.s and is brought about through interactions with participants during the course of the project, bringing them into co-authoring the changes that occur. It also seems to me to be the most rhizomatic of the individual projects that occurred during the research period.

### 6.1 Insectoid – 'we.assimilate'

#### *Performers*

Ana Benlloch – La Zanzara  
 Alex Marzeta – Stinkbug  
 David Miller – [unnamed bug]  
 Paul Newman – Brundle Fly  
 Vanessa Page – aka-kami-ari  
 Antonio Roberts – Formio  
 Stuart Tait – Northern Paper Wasp  
 Vickie Woods – 'The Initiate'/Ocelli

## ***Project Development***

*We.assimilate* was an 'offsite' performance for the Pil and Galia Kollektiv curated exhibition *The Institute of Psychoplasms* at The Pumphouse Gallery, in Battersea Park, London. The performance took place at Shoreditch Townhall on 8 May.

The other performance on the night, by Tai Shani, involved an altar upon which people were going to be 'sacrificed' or 're-animated.' We were told that the altar was going to remain on the stage after Shani's performance so we had to work around that fact. Therefore, we re-designed our performance so that it was a response to Shani's, incorporating the altar into our performance.

I had recently made contact with composer Jonathan Green, and a.a.s were planning to work with him on the *Re:Flux* fluxconcert later in the year. Jonathan agreed to lend us some infrared sensors to trigger audio samples on a computer for our Insectoid performance.

The insight into the ants' method of colony expansion called 'social carrying' (Hölldobler and Wilson, 1994) bearing a similarity to Massumi's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'connective synthesis' led me to consider how membership increased in art groups. Many individuals come into contact with the group but only some of them 'stick' because they have characteristics enough in common (Massumi, 1992, p. 47-8). New members initially joined Insectoid by simply showing an interest in the group but, following *we.assimilate* (2008), we decided that new members should have some kind of 'initiation'. We also decided that existing members should go through a symbolic joining too, a decision influenced by the tabard transition in Reactor's *Geodecity* project.

## ***The Plan***

The plan for the performance was for one member of Insectoid to sit in the auditorium pretending to be a member of the audience and then for two other 'insects' go and fetch them. After searching for a while, they would be brought to the stage and converted into a member of Insectoid. We had originally imagined that the 'victim' might be Vanessa Page, who was already a member, but around the time we were making this decision we met Vickie Wood who expressed an interest in getting involved in Insectoid. Obviously, it made more sense for her to be the person we were converting into a group member.

One version of the performance we discussed was for the induction of Vickie into the hive to be the first twenty minutes then to have at ten minutes of solid 'drone' noise where we would be stood still on stage while a constant noise played. This would be a way of moving from something that initially had a form and seemed entertaining, into something less entertaining and more 'affective'. In the end, the group decided that would be too extreme for the audience.

In order to ensure that all of the work did not fall to one or two people, which had been a problem on other projects, a decision was made to have different 'teams' of people dealing with different areas or tasks of the performance. This had the effect of getting everyone in the group to contribute during the planning stage. A basic plan was made for the performance, and there were three rehearsal sessions.

### ***Protocols, Props and Resources***

During all Insectoid performances, except *we're.thirsty* (2007), there is no verbal communication, and no 'sign language' or other gestures that might stand as a replacement for language. However, during *we.assimilate*, communication did occur, some planned, some not.<sup>63</sup> All performers wear homemade insect heads or masks, which further reduces their ability to communicate through expression. Paul (Brundle Fly) wore a dark suit and white gloves and his role was a kind of 'overseer', Ana (La Zanzara) wore surgeon's scrubs and performed 'the operation,' and the rest of us all wore white, disposable, decorators' overalls.

Equipment remaining on stage from the previous performance that we used was as follows: A large wooden, table-like, altar set diagonally at stage right; two guitar speakers; and two large, bass guitar speakers. Additional resources were a small wooden table on top of which was a laptop computer, plastic sheeting to cover the altar, hazard tape, phono leads, various homemade audio emitting electronic devices, a Stylophone, a Nintendo Gameboy, four infrared detectors with associated software and USB controller, two 1m strip lights and two 2m strip lights.

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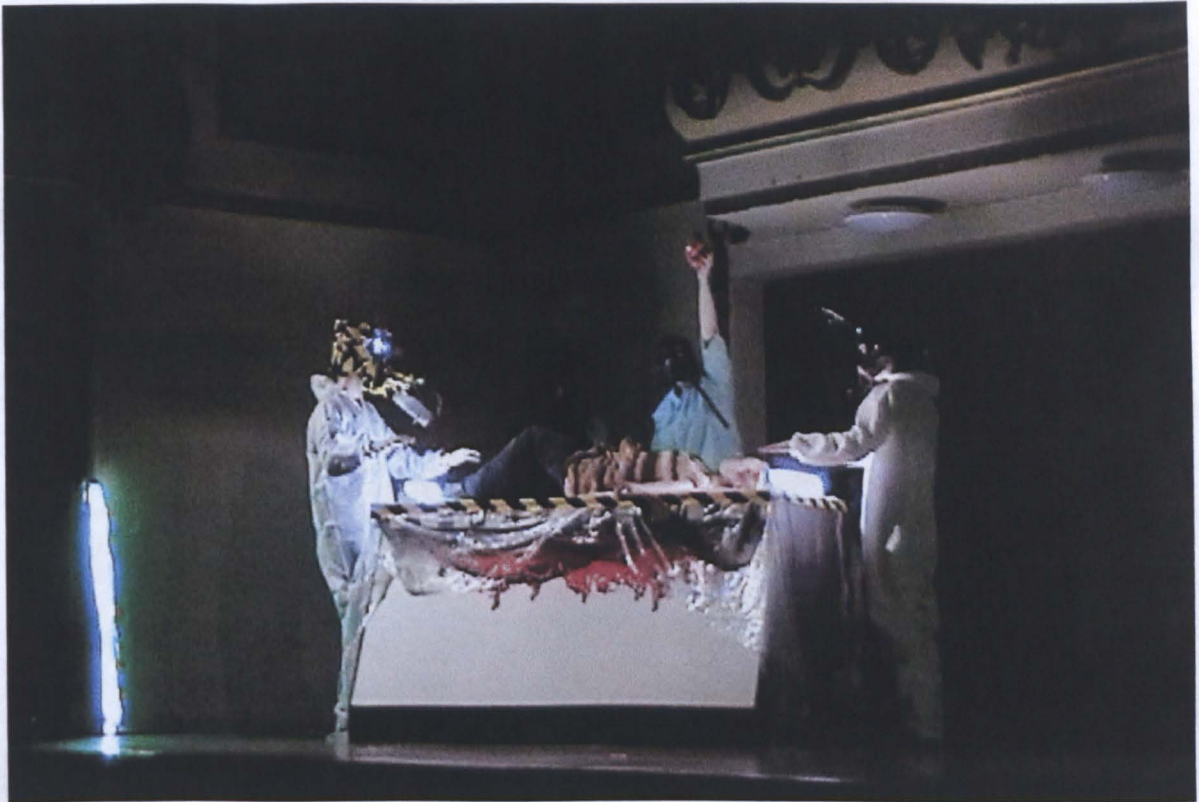
<sup>63</sup> Ana gestured to Paul in an attempt to find where the hazard tape was, and Alex and I gestured to each other by shrugging that neither of us knew why the speaker was not working.

## *Performance*

The performance began with the fading up of a bass-heavy, rhythmic background sound. It represented the rhythmic, pulsing of the hive, like a giant heart. It gave a structure to the performance that the other elements acted upon. Stage right, there was the altar from the previous performance, which was approximately 2m x 1m x 1m in size. Stage left, there were four speakers from the previous performance. Up-stage, centre, were a small trestle table and chair. After a few seconds, the 'surgeon' La Zanzara entered at the rear of the stage wearing an upside-down rucksack as a carapace and carrying a picnic cool box. The other performers followed and took their positions on the stage. Two performers plugged in the 1m strip lights and positioned them on the floor at the ends of the altar. One performer set up a laptop computer and its USB control box on the central table. Two performers plugged small electronic devices into the two smaller guitar speakers. The dark suited 'overseer' moved from one performer to another, and the green clothed 'surgeon' moved in front of the altar. The surgeon, La Zanzara, bent forward and two performers pulled several square metres of plastic sheeting, representing gossamer wings, from her carapace and draped it over the altar. The 1m strip lights were then placed on top of the altar at either end. New noises began to emerge from the group, generated by the two performers, stage left, with a Gameboy and a Stylophone. For a couple of minutes there was very little movement on stage except sensors being attached to the lights on the altar, cables and plastic sheet being taped down, and Stinkbug plugging and unplugging leads between the laptop and speaker. The two 'drones' by the altar began waving their arms in the air above the lights at the ends of the altar as if feeling for heat, then looking over towards Stinkbug at the computer. La Zanzara then brought a wooden step around to the front of the altar. One of the drones walked across the stage to Stinkbug and interacted with the equipment in some way before returning to the altar. Then, both altar drones left the stage and entered the audience. This concluded part one and was five minutes into the performance.

During part two of the performance, the two altar drones moved through the audience as if looking for something or someone. The intensity of the noise from stage left increased and, stage right, La Zanzara began waving her hands over the lights like the drones had done. After a couple of waves, a loud noise was emitted from somewhere. The altar drones continued to move around the audience, some of who recoiled when approached. At around seven minutes into the performance, La Zanzara's 'waved buzzing' over the altar increased

in frequency and urgency. This was a signal for the altar drones to select someone from the audience (Vickie), and they brought her towards the stage as if she was in a trance. Vickie was led to the altar and laid flat upon it. The two altar drones began to wave their arms up and down above the altar, triggering a variety of buzzing noises. It was as if they were communicating through gesture and noise, or conjuring something up.



**Figure 22.** *Insectoid, we.assimilate* (2008). The initiate's 'organ' is removed.

At about nine minutes into the performance, La Zanzara, the surgeon, also began to make large, conjuring gestures above Vickie's prone figure, before proceeding to cut her clothing open with scissors. The surgeon reached down into Vickie's abdomen and pulled out a bloody organ, about the size of a large heart, and held it aloft (Figure 22). The organ was placed behind the altar somewhere and the surgeon stood and made more conjuring gestures over the wounded Vickie.

At about ten and a half minutes into the performance, the overseer, Brundle Fly, held out the cool box to La Zanzara, which she opened. She extracted a slimy, flesh-coloured symbiont with a tail, and held it aloft. The symbiont was then inserted into Vickie's abdomen, tail first (Figure 23), and one of the altar drones stepped aside so that the overseer and the surgeon



could place a mask over Vickie's head. After conversion, Vickie then arose as Ocelli, the new hive member. She moved about on top of the altar for a while as if getting used to a new, unfamiliar body. The noise rose to a climax, Ocelli descended from the altar and all noises stopped except the background rhythm of the hive. The whole hive gathered around Ocelli, and they left the stage together. The rhythmic sounds faded out. The whole performance was about sixteen and a half minutes long.



Figure 23. *Insectoid, we.assimilate* (2008). The symbiont is inserted.

### ***Expectations and Problems***

We had several rehearsals in the lead up to the performance, and it proved very difficult in terms of communications. Because Ana and I are very keen for *Insectoid* to develop to an anarchistic, non-hierarchical model, when people asked one of us for direct guidance we kept reflecting it back to them, telling them that they had as much say as us. This meant that there were a lot of people talking over each other, decisions took a long time, and each rehearsal achieved very little which meant we ended up having to schedule an extra one. This is a challenge that comes up frequently in the kind of molecular collaboration we are



trying to develop, that the 'habits' of hierarchy and molarity are ubiquitous. New collaborators sometimes take a while to get used to the idea that there is no leadership. Some people never accept it and accuse us of being disingenuous, just before leaving. Once a decision was made to split the group into teams, operations became smoother and speedier, which confirms Laughlin, et al's finding that the optimum group size for planning and production of ideas is between three and five (2006, p. 644), and once the group was functioning better, it helped with group cohesion, everyone was more committed to the activity.

The fact that Tai Shani effectively had directorial control over the whole event meant that we had to rely on someone else to source speakers, which caused some friction between us. It also meant that we had to rehearse without really knowing what the audio set up on the day would be. There were significant communication problems in the planning and on the day, because several groups and individuals were coming together who had never worked with each other, all of whom had different communication styles. These problems led to both performances needing to be adjusted in terms of stage positioning. Fortunately, because our project had a molecular, rhizomatic programme, it was simple for us to adjust to changes in conditions without compromising the performance. A tightly planned performance would have proved more difficult to adjust. Although equipment was tested and sound checked, something had changed between our sound check and the performance that meant, as we began, there was suddenly a problem with the audio from the computer and sensors. Rather than just stopping, Vanessa and I had to hope that Alex could resolve the problem, which he managed to do by the time we got around to where Vickie was sat.

### ***Reflection on project: relation to rhizome and other concepts.***

Insectoid appropriated the form of Tai Shani's performance, taking up the various elements and re-performing them. It was not a parody, but an Insectoid re-performing. We took from Shani's performance the idea of reanimation of dead, female virgins and re-performed it as the reanimation of a human as hive member. The hearts/organs of Shani's virgins were mirrored by a symbiont/organ in our performance. In terms of sound, it was as if Insectoid, not understanding human music, deterritorialised sound so that it came from everywhere on the stage, distancing the sound from the action. Movements triggered sounds as if to say we had confused the two things. It was as if we had watched *Empire and Daughter Isotope* and thought the music was a form of communication to the dead that resurrected them. Our

performance mirrored one of the ways an art group can grow and, in fact, was a 'performative' act. That is to say, this was also a 'real' ritual inasmuch as Vickie was really becoming a full member of the group in front of the audience. The performance was programmatic, based upon how people join groups:

1. The collective is built one bug at a time.
2. An individual is enticed into the collective using persuasive techniques.
3. They have a change of heart
4. Finally, they become part of the collective.

Since Ana and Paul were the only two members dressed differently and they have responsibility for the symbiont implantation, they could be read as parents or special in some other way. It could then be inferred that the identically dressed 'musical' performers were sterile drones, as are the majority of bees in a hive, even though, as Elizabeth Grosz reminds us, Charles Darwin discusses musicality and sound in the animal kingdom as specifically linked to reproduction. Musical selection is often favoured in reproduction, for humans it has led to ever more ritualised and sophisticated forms of musical performance (Grosz, 2004). In *we.assimilate*, the central theme of the performance was obviously reproduction by implantation and assimilation, but even in Insectoid's earlier, non-musical-sound performances, there was often the unexpected effect that new members joined the group.

For Deleuze and Guattari, one 'becomes animal' molecularly, and the same could be said of becoming-insect. 'You do not become a barking molar dog, but by barking, if it is done with enough feeling, with enough necessity and composition, you emit a molecular dog' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 275). Additionally, they say becoming is a rhizome, by which they mean it is not genealogical (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 239) since becoming does not operate to a pattern or a plan: one does not genetically become an insect, or even mimic one. We become 'insectoid' but not literally, unlike Gregor Samsa<sup>64</sup>. In their book about his writing, Deleuze and Guattari describe Franz Kafka's treatment of sounds that show up on his work as 'an *unformed material of expression*, that will act on the other terms' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2006, p. 6). Kafka treated sound as a 'pure and intense sonorous material' and a 'deterritorialized musical sound' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2006, p. 6). In Kafka, noise escapes signification. It is a deterritorialising force. During the performance, apart from the rhythmic sound of the hive, noise was used in the following ways: to communicate to the

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<sup>64</sup> Gregor Samsa is the central character of Kafka's novella *Metamorphosis*.

altar drones which audience member to select; to affect the audience with a non-signifying, non-musical sound; to entrance or hypnotise the initiate and bring her to the stage; and to summon the Insectoid 'essence' to enter the new hive member, which was reinforced by the conjuring gestures used. This latter idea was communicated by Ocelli behaving as if she was a new being who had been transported into this body, which she had to learn to move. This was something Vickie was keen to do because her main interest in joining Insectoid was concerned with exploring insectoid movement. Whenever a new member joins a group 'primary' and 'secondary' adjustments to a role take place (Goffman, 1968, p. 172), but the nature of the group itself also changes to some extent. This is the difference between simply being many, and being multiple: a quantitative change in a multiplicity is also a qualitative change. The 'actor-network' of the group is performative, and its social space is produced 'through the surprising movements from one association to the next' (Latour, 2005, p. 247), the part and the whole condition each other to some extent. Vickie joining the group meant a greater emphasis on insectoid movement that fed into the group's next performance.

The performance of *we.assimilate* was a decentralised, rhizomatic, multiplicity. No element was essential, and removing any element would not jeopardise the performance, but *would* change it qualitatively. For instance, if the two noise drones positioned at stage left, David and Antonio, were missing or could not get their equipment to work, the performance would have 'felt' different, but would have proceeded nonetheless. They would have been able to make adjustments to suit the circumstances. Another example might be, if the glitch with the infrared triggered audio samples had not been resolved, then Vanessa and I would have continued as before, but maybe our waving gestures over the altar, lacking the audio dimension, would have become more theatrical. The performance would have adapted to accommodate the glitch. The biggest threat to the project would have been if, for whatever reason, Vickie was not able to take her place as 'the initiate,' but even then we may have been able to persuade a genuine audience member to take on that role. Staging a performance of this kind is a collaborative exercise, and the simple act of 'not talking' in Insectoid performances leads to the performers developing a different situational awareness than they would otherwise. One begins to 'read' the movements of other performers, which are not strictly choreographed, in order to coordinate one's own movements and actions. It becomes a rhizomatic performance of the collaborative production of a non-verbal social space that did not pre-exist the performance.

At each stage of the project, from inception, through planning to performance, there were 'slippage' glitches that affected how the project developed. Having to respond to the physical conditions of the space, including the altar from the previous performance and their band placing all of the speakers stage left significantly altered the arrangement of our performance. These were unplanned adjustments that happened before the performance but to which we easily adjusted due to the built-in flexibility of the performance plan, which is designed to be responsive to changes in the conditions of the performance.

The wearing of masks and banning of speech during Insectoid performances is specifically designed to provide the conditions in which glitches will occur. Any 'deliberate' glitches that arise from the immanent conditions of the performance have to be adjusted to in real time and give a genuinely unpredictable dimension to the performance. In the case of the speaker glitch in *we.assimilate*, the fact that we were wearing masks and unable to communicate meant that Vanessa and I simply had to carry on with our part of the performance, rather than being able to discuss what the possible causes were with Alex. This meant that most of the performers had increased situational awareness due to panic adrenalin, meaning we all became even more aware of each other's movements, knowing that we might have to improvise a signal for 'selecting' Vickie. The ripple of panic running through the group was not evident to the audience, but an incident like that serves to provide a collective experience that molecularises the space of the group, and which can be reflected on later, together. The heterogeneity of elements in this type of rhizomatic performance means that they are not dependent on each other for the project to function, it can continue in a mutated form even if part of the performance breaks down. This is the nature of continuous multiplicity, if an element changes, the whole assemblage changes. Every other element adjusts to the change in conditions and potentials. In the case of *we.assimilate*, the audience was not simply watching a performance being played out *for them*, they were watching a group producing a particular social space in the context of a performance. The boundaries between form, content, context, group, and audience are all blurred to some degree.

## 6.2 a.a.s. – ‘KR-36’ - A Rhizomatic Collaboration

### *Collaborating Artists*

Ana Benlloch – The Sleeper  
 Phillip Henderson – The Viking (and Agent Hall)  
 Paul Newman – The Diplomat  
 Richard Peel – The Geek  
 Stuart Tait – The Mule  
 Edward Wakefield – The Mexican  
 Pamela Wells – The Shadow  
 Neil Wiseman – The Philosopher

### *Project Development*

KR-36 took place in Birmingham City Centre between 31<sup>st</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and was preceded by a test weekend on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Ana Benlloch and myself initiated the project, for a.a.s.<sup>65</sup> In an attempt to encourage people to participate in the project, a decision was made to make it as opaque as possible from positions physically outside of it, so the only way to experience any of the content was to sign up as a participant.<sup>66</sup> To some extent this was also a reaction to our perception that dominant art practices are ‘spectacular’ in nature, the principle of the Spectacle being ‘non-intervention’ and consumption (Debord, 1957/2006, p. 40). Some initial decisions were taken about the form of the project in order to have something to present to potential collaborating artists. It was intended to explore a set of collaborative relationships with a group of artists who had worked with each other before to various degrees, but never on the development of a project from the beginning. The idea being that, through developing the project together, we would be producing a new collaborative social space, a new world, which participants would then enter and begin to re-shape.

Previous experience had shown that any form or theme the project had prior to bringing collaborators on board could reduce their sense of ownership. However, due to a relatively short timeline between contacting collaborators and when the project was going to take place, potential collaborators were presented with something more than just an invitation to collaborate. Two things were decided in advance: that the project should be in the form of

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<sup>65</sup> All artists working on an a.a.s. project at any time are part of a.a.s for that period, but Ana and I were making administrative decisions at that time.

<sup>66</sup> Reactor have used a similar strategy in projects such as *The Tetra Phase* (2007) and *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009). This decision did not really solve the problem for us. Those artists in the Birmingham art scene who had previously not participated in one of our projects still did not participate, so they knew even less than usual about what we had been doing.

some kind of role-playing game and that, because of the secrecy we wanted, it would have some kind of conspiracy or spy theme. It was felt that this was the bare minimum of planning, which left considerable room for collaborators to shape the project by entering into its social space and producing new relations.

### ***Rules and protocols***

KR-36 used the form of an urban, multi-player, live-action, role-playing, spy game as a framework for intimate, improvised, performances and collective story writing. Players were given a new spy name to play under so that even friends would not know whom they were going to meet until coming face-to-face.

Two or three people, who referred to them selves as ‘Control’,<sup>67</sup> carried out inductions. They wore badges made from the ‘ctrl’ buttons, off computer keyboards, and took it in turns speaking (

Figure 24). Ctrl was a role performed by all of the collaborating artists at some point during the project. Throughout the project, Ctrl set ‘missions’ for participants, and they were scored based on having completed the mission, and the degree to which they were creative in its execution. Scores were also allocated for any character development, theorising about the game’s story, for field reports, and even creativity ‘off mission’, in short, for any creative game playing.



Figure 24. Ctrl

<sup>67</sup> Standard spy terminology for the person you report back to during operations, but also a reference to the assumed control exerted by the artists over the project



## *Site*

Ctrl were based at Periscope Gallery<sup>68</sup> where they were ‘undercover’ invigilating the exhibition there.<sup>69</sup> If a visitor did not interact with us as Ctrl, we remained simply as invigilators. The gallery was on the second floor of a building of light industrial units, with a good view of the street on one side. The site and immediate context for the project was the art festival called *The Event*, and the locations of the other projects and exhibitions in the festival provided an approximate terrain for *KR-36*: mainly Birmingham city centre with its North Eastern extreme being the Ladywood/Jewellery Quarter area, and its South Western extreme being the Digbeth and Deritend area.<sup>70</sup> The locations that participants actually ended up in significantly depended on how much time they had free to take part, and where they were based. For instance, Agent Khan was based at her place of work in the city centre and was often taking part during her breaks from work, which meant being able to only travel to short-range locations. This rhizomatic responsiveness of the project to the actual day-to-day conditions of the city, and people’s work situations, meant that it was capable of insinuating itself into participants’ daily lives. This even meant led to Agent Hunt dreaming about the project and feeding the dream content back into the project.

## *Props and resources*

In the marketing of the project and throughout the initial stages of the project references to cinema were used in the hope that these would be familiar points of departure from which participants could develop the story. All of the films were concerned with assumed identities, spies, and paranoia, in order to indicate the ‘starting’ position of the project without description needing to be too explicit. A complicated and time-consuming enrolment procedure was used as a filter, to discourage those who would be unlikely to enjoy being involved in the project. There were around ten people who requested the enrolment materials but then did not sign up, two of whom explicitly cited the 341 question ‘personality test’ as the reason. ‘The applicants’<sup>71</sup> were asked to fill in a character generation

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<sup>68</sup> Periscope was run by a committee from Birmingham Artists studio group, but has since closed due to Arts Council funding being cut.

<sup>69</sup> The exhibition was of related works by six artists from Birmingham Artists. Paul Newman (*The Diplomat*) contributed a painting of *The Diplomat*, to which a second artist responded. A third artist responded to the second artist, without seeing the first, and so on.

<sup>70</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>71</sup> A term borrowed from David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (1999)

sheet<sup>72</sup> and the personality test featured yes/no questions from real, internet sourced, personality tests and questions lifted from personality tests in the movies *The Game* (1997) and *Parallax View* (1974)<sup>73</sup>, such as ‘There is something not right with my mind’ and ‘The sight of blood doesn’t make me sick’. These measures also served to give participants a sense of the likely level of commitment they would need, this was done to avoid recruiting people who would feel that too much was being asked of them. We did not want there to be any sense of us ‘forcing’ participation.

After returning their completed forms, participants were given instructions about how to proceed, including a set of ‘challenge-response’ pass phrases to use when they attended induction.<sup>74</sup> For the ‘start-up’ weekend the dialogue was taken from the John Badham movie *War Games* (1983), and for inductions during the festival the dialogue was from the David Cronenberg movie *Existenz* (1999). Both movies were about games that had very serious implications, risks, and paranoia.

Communications during *KR-36* were mostly carried out by mobile phone, but it was not necessary for participants to incur costs as they also had the option of returning to Ctrl after each ‘mission’. Information was also communicated via emails, face-to-face, and by ‘message drops’ such as being stuck behind street signs in adhesive document bags. The main problem with the use of mobile phones to send missions was that it had a tendency to centralise communications, thus reinforcing the (arborescent) hierarchy of Ctrl, NPCs<sup>75</sup>, and participants. However, as the project developed, communications became more decentralised, with participants communicating amongst themselves more and bypassing Ctrl. This meant that the project became more rhizomatic over time as it began to be produced at several points in the city at the same time, more in the way social groups, rather than organisations, develop. The duration of the project was an important factor in this change. Once people have become accustomed to their position in the project (primary role adjustment), they begin to look for ways to make secondary adjustments in order to gain extra benefit for themselves, to make things easier.

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<sup>72</sup> See Appendix 3

<sup>73</sup> *The Game* directed by David Fincher. *Parallax View* directed by Alan Pakula

<sup>74</sup> See Appendix 4

<sup>75</sup> NPC was the name of the fictional organisation running the *KR-36* training programme, and is standard live role playing terminology for Non-Player Character, in this instance collaborating artists.

## *Induction and Aims*

It was explained that KR-36 was an art project, in case that had not been clear from publicity material, but was thereafter referred to as a training programme. Participants were then talked through the information contained within the document 'Player Questionnaire'<sup>76</sup> and asked if there were any questions arising from that. Next, they were given several 'game items': a playing card, an exercise book for field notes, fliers for *KR-36* to recruit new participants, and a leaflet for the festival containing information about the other projects. Then the game mechanisms and story were explained: what the role of Ctrl was, how missions were allocated and scored (including saying that general creativity would be rewarded), who the Twenty Committee (XX) were, their aims, how to use hand signals to show other participants that they wanted to use a 'special ability' from their character generation sheet, and how communications would take place via telephone, email, and face to face. Finally, they were given the questionnaire to sign, which had a disclaimer at the bottom concerning the project's role in my research and the use of documentation.

Initial missions participants were given were as follows: to recruit someone else to the training programme; to gather information about other players and characters; to acquire a map, if needed, from tourist info centre; and one other short mission, from a pre-prepared list, to get them going. Participants were advised that they could refuse any mission at any time and this was explained again if we gave them a mission that we thought was particularly difficult in some way, for example *The Hotel Mission*. This mission involved gaining access, with another participant, to a room on the top floor of a hotel and taking a photograph that showed the room and the view out of the window.

A main aim of the project was to involve the audience-participants to the extent that they would contribute some content or interpretation rather than being spectators of the project. In the early stages, it was assumed that participant contributions would simply involve the ability to influence things within a set of pre-decided parameters. It was considered important that those involved did not feel that it was irrelevant who played their role, but that they personally felt that they had influence.

An implication of menace or intimidation was associated with the authority figure of Ctrl through the choice of wording used at induction. There was a system of points for

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<sup>76</sup> See Appendix 5

completing missions and performing other tasks well, but that was associated with the authority of Ctrl. One thing a.a.s seeks to do is to put people into situations similar to those where they may have been conditioned to habitually not consider their ability to influence circumstances, then gradually make them aware of the influence they have in that situation. Over time, some participants began to realise that, in addition to points and rankings, other forms of reward were available within the project that were more associated with a playful freedom that had nothing to do with the scoring structure organised through Ctrl.

### *Expectations and problems*

At initial development meetings with our collaborators it was clear that they were struggling to grasp or accept the open nature of the project, and wanted a clear exposition of how the project was going to operate and what their position within it would be. A wiki was set up for the project in an attempt to collectively develop content for the project. However, contributions mainly took two forms: either collaborators created new pages in which to add information about their own character/avatar; or they added items to pages with lists on. Neither of these uses took advantage of the most useful features of the wiki format that allow users to collaborate directly on texts, with the ability to compare and revert to earlier versions of pages. In more productive wiki use, content tends to rapidly build up at different parts of the wiki to the point where it becomes unmanageable at which point one of the users will spawn new pages or subcategories. The organisation of pages becomes quite fluid. But in the development of *KR-36*, communication always seemed to take the form of a *discussion* rather than a *conversation*, the distinction between which became apparent from the interview with Freee. The term *conversation* refers to a more open, rhizomatic mode of communication, whereas *discussion* is more closed, structured around a given topic. I describe the face-to-face meetings with collaborators as being *discussions* because they only ever seemed to be responding to what Ana and I were saying, and not instigating new ‘threads’<sup>77</sup> of conversation.

We felt that our collaborators would not fully understand the project until it was underway. However, it may simply be that it was unreasonable for us to expect our collaborators to grasp what we were trying to explain about the relations we expected from the project without them first taking part. The test weekend not only provided a chance to test whether

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<sup>77</sup> I am thinking here of threads on an online message board.

the project would work, but also provided an opportunity for our collaborators to experience how relations in the project operated, to get a feel for molecular working. This type of 'public' project is risky because it is not possible to fully test the project beforehand; at best, it can be 'beta-tested' with a smaller group of 'experienced' participants who can draw on previous experience in order to feedback about the project. Benefits of holding a testing weekend for the project were as follows: it enabled us to address difficulties collaborating artists had with the project mechanisms; it made some weaknesses apparent, for instance, the need for a second telephone to manage the volume of communications; and it provided knowledge of how participants experienced the project and managed their time. It also meant that the project was already 'in the middle' when the festival began. Consent was secured from participants at the start of the project for their being photographed and followed by other participants. However, the main ethical problem of consent in relation to a situation like this is that it is hard to ask for consent when it is uncertain how the project will develop, what it will end up being. So, a hand signal was put in place that meant 'stop, I want to talk to you out of character.'

Despite attempts to encourage collaborating artists to exercise more control over the project and to take ownership, they, for the most part, seemed reluctant to help author the project and kept referring back to Ana and me after each instance of action. Nevertheless, the story of the project, some of the game mechanisms, certain missions, and some materials for props were contributed by these other artists and therefore, even before the audience/participants entered the project, there was already a sharing of authorship. What proved to be of great benefit was the length of engagement with the project, which was two weeks, with participants feeling increasingly that they were a part of the project and therefore had a 'right' to take a more active role in its development, including creating new ways of interacting with each other that drew existing game structures and relations into question. Once it was realised that some participants were stretching the parameters of the project, the influence and control exerted by Ctrl was reduced. Some of the participants actually engaged more fully with this collaboration than did some of the artists, which may be because they were simply not so inhibited by any perceived 'etiquette' of authorship. It should be noted that this co-authoring of the work with the audience is not the same as collaboration, which would require conscious knowledge of one's authorship of the project, and in this case, while the co-authorship with participants was alluded to throughout the project it was not specifically discussed in those terms until after the project had ended. This



was done in the belief that overt knowledge of co-authoring introduces a filter through which it happens, i.e. 'I am co-authoring this, so I'd better make sure I get it right', which may be another reason for collaborating artists' reluctance to actively re-configure the parameters of the project. This withholding of knowledge of the co-authoring may raise ethical concerns that seem to contradict the openness suggested by collaboration but, within the context of the project (the world of spies and double agents), secrecy was appropriate and gave a unique opportunity to research this type of relation.

### ***Reflection on project: relation to rhizome and other concepts***

Although framed within the game as missions, the instructions we gave players come from a tradition of performance scores; including Tristan Tzara's instructions for writing a Dada poem (Tzara, 1977, p. 39) or Fluxus performance scores. They were simple, often vague, instructions to an audience/participant for an act to be carried out. It was up to the participant to decide how it would be performed or not performed; it was not prescriptive. In the figure below (Figure 25) examples can be seen of two different responses to the mission to 'make some surveillance equipment using only materials from a pound store'. In the left-hand image, The Mule holds Agent Khan's surveillance equipment (a hat with attached binoculars) and in the other image Agent Hunt models glasses with a rear view mirror. This level of participants responding 'within pre-defined parameters' was what we had been initially intending for participants in the project. In the end, participants played a much greater role in shaping the form the project took.



**Figure 25. Pound Shop Surveillance Equipment**



In *KR-36* the changing of names and the re-framing of the world as a kind of espionage or detective story helped to displace the role of participant, they were immediately re-positioned as active agents in the shaping of the project's universe. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze proposes that a book of philosophy should be both a detective novel and science fiction: Detective novel because concepts 'should intervene to resolve local situations' (Deleuze, 1997, p. xx); the concepts should change along with the situation transformed; and science fiction because philosophy writes 'those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly [...] we write at the frontiers of our knowledge' (Deleuze, 1997, p. xx). The same can be said for of the rhizomatic artwork. Work should seek to intervene in local situations and operate at the frontiers of our knowledge inasmuch as it should be locally productive of new social spaces and relations, which are not based on any pre-existing model or knowledge. There were also certain structural features of detective stories present in *KR-36*: Plot, which was discoverable through empirical actions, and a series of false statements, where the whole structure changes with each false assumption by the participants. This is similar, again, to the way the capacity of a Go piece changes depending on its position in relation to other pieces in the assemblage, as opposed to a chess piece, which has a specific role in the game. Some participants seemed to have complete faith in Ctrl and accepted everything that was presented to them as if it had always been thus, as if they were being led through a maze. Others realized that their actions had consequences or effects within and upon the *KR-36* universe. Understanding this ability to shape circumstances meant they became 'actors', in the sense of actor-networks, rather than simply participants or, in ANT terms, 'intermediaries'.

The form of the project being a live, multi-player, role playing game meant that narratives were developed by the audience/participants during the unfolding of the project; the authoring took place simultaneously from several points within the project. There could be up to five or six different interactions occurring at the same time in different parts of the city, and these heterogeneous elements were all interconnected as one metanarrative. In the initial stages of a project there are planning and organisation, which happen on what Deleuze and Guattari call 'the plane of organisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 267), and many projects seem to remain on this plane and success is measured by how well the project conforms to the plan. What we were aiming at with *KR-36* was a shift of emphasis

from plane of organisation to plane of ‘immanence’<sup>78</sup> where there is a focus on ‘this-ness’, this particular encounter, and this particular assemblage rather than something predecided. The Situationists thought of city planners and developers as busy organising the city in ways that conflicted with people’s behaviour, and created sterile ambiances (Constant, 1959/2006, p. 71). However, the Situationists themselves thought of the city as a space composed of flows, speeds and movements. Their practice that epitomised this attitude was that of the *dérive* where ‘one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement or action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there’ (Debord, 1958/2006, p. 62). This description has clear features in common with the rhizome: movement, responsiveness to terrain, immanence, and not operating to any predefined plan.

In McDonough’s example of the pre-Situationist *dérive*, spurred by intoxication, Debord and Chtcheglov ‘indulged in a paranoid fantasy of the chase that transformed the workaday scene into a scene from an exotic American gangster film’ (McDonough, 2004, p. 64). So, although *KR-36* is not a *dérive*, because movements were more purposeful, rather than ‘drifting’, there is a point of intersection. It could be argued that, as McDonough says, a significant part of the purpose of the *dérive*, inspired by the surrealists’ writing on paranoia, was to develop a ‘a kind of systematization of the practice of disorientation’ (McDonough, 2004, p. 80), and this was certainly one of the areas our project was keen to explore; the way environments and situations inform the identity being experienced and the one being projected outward into the city or world. Behaviour does not simply emerge out of one’s own personal psychology, but also out of the situations we find ourselves in, we know this from, among others, Stanley Milgram’s *Obedience to Authority* (Milgram, 2005) and Philip Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment. The event of you having an encounter in the world will influence the characteristics that come into play. In this example, given by McDonough, a significant role was played by fabulation, or myth-making, in affecting how the *dérive* proceeded and was experienced.

## ***Fabulation***

Bergson describes fabulation, or the myth-making function, in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Bergson, 1935) as being deduced from the basic conditions of human

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<sup>78</sup> See glossary.

existence, and as the faculty of ‘creating personalities whose stories we relate to ourselves’ (Bergson, 1935, p. 166). In fabulation, individuals can acquire a stature that is mythic – ‘all fabulation is the fabrication of giants’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 171). The act of fabulation is an act of resistance to identity and the fabulating character reserves the right to ‘lie, exaggerate, flatter, or trick, where all others are devoted to the truth. Otherwise put, he is the person for whom the act of speech is neither a right nor a duty, but a game or a pleasure’ (Brito, 2009, p. 11). In *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*, O’Sullivan refers the reader to Bergson’s ‘observation that there are two kinds or two functions of art: one of story telling, or fabulation, the other of genuine creativity’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 144) and these two functions a signifying aspect and an asignifying *potential* (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 47).

I am not convinced by the assertion that O’Sullivan makes here. I think, rather, that what Bergson means by the term fabulation *includes* creativity, and is opposed to storytelling which is a simple re-presentation of an established chain of signifiers, an existing tale. Fabulation, on the other hand is a creative myth-making within which ‘giants’ are invented. Leaving this distinction aside, O’Sullivan goes on to state that art is always ‘future-orientated,’ or creative, in that ‘although it might utilise previous form it does so in a new way with an eye to that which has not yet been realised’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 68). In setting forth new worlds, art is said to have what Deleuze, calls a ‘prophetic’ function.

The ‘prophet’ is one who ‘takes the opposite path to that which is ordered by God and thereby realizes God’s commandment better than if he had obeyed. A traitor, he has taken misfortune upon himself’ (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 41). It is essentially a position of undermining authority, not by challenging it head-on, but by creating alternatives. In this sense, as O’Sullivan says, the Situationist International could be thought of as myth-makers too: ‘Here myth-construction is a form of ‘counter-knowledge’ to that propagated by the Spectacle’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 145). The one who fabulates is like a traitor in that he or she escapes the dominant significations of society. In *KR-36*, Ctrl were like the masters whom the agents had to betray in order to get the most out of the project, but Ctrl were fabulating too. Each agent was ‘the traitor who follows his or her own line of flight, makes his or her own myths, and produces his or her own reality’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 150). As with Deleuze and Claire Parnet’s discussion of Anglo-American literature in *Dialogues* (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987), *KR-36* picked up lines of other narratives, from cinema, from

spy and detective fiction, and joined new segments to the broken line. This is a particularly rhizomatic aspect of the project: it had multiple starting points that were all middle points of other narratives, like a set of deterritorialised landmarks, local connectivity without any reference to an overall plan.

### ***Ruptures and other movements***

The most intense moment of instability, or of a character being a 'traitor', during *KR-36* was when Phillip Henderson negotiated transfer of The Viking, his avatar, to the participant who was formerly known as Agent Boyd without reference to the dominant programme of the project. Phil having previously being instructed by Ctrl to meet with agents under the name Hall prefigured this incident, but ultimately this was a 'disruptive secondary adjustment' outside of the aegis of Ctrl. It was a 'deliberate' glitch, but one that made sense within the project's universe, of spies and double agents, and which provoked an adjustment in the other relations of the project.

While the transmogrification of The Viking may have seemed like a malfunctioning, it was in keeping with the nature of the project. Throughout the project, fabulation was used to create myths that had no actual substance in the project's working: there were no XX agents; there was no 'story' to the project except that being written by the participants in the performance of their avatars; we denied people's expectations that we would leave them a 'fair trail of clues' and 'not be deliberately misleading or untruthful' (Symons, 1969, p. 7), even though, as spies, our characters were clearly consistent with lying and secrecy. Rather than having the kind of linear, 'arborescent' structure associated with books (spine, leaves, linearity), the project was instead a rhizomatic narrative production, similar to the form, discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, of *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 6-7), where elements do not relate to each other in any particular sequence.

From the start, this research has been an attempt to use the rhizome to think through the movements and interactions in my practice-as-research. The rhizome was a way of conceptualising how individuals' roles and functions within collaborative projects change, processes of 'deterritorialising' subjects as a means of breaking down the social barriers, and in relation to hierarchies, specifically the idea that the rhizome eludes them. It is crucial to any attempt at developing a rhizomatic art practice that the way unexpected events or glitches operate is understood. An example, from *KR-36*, of an unexpected event performing

a deterritorialising function was when Agent Hunt went to meet The Mule (me) after having met The Diplomat (Paul Newman) in Nostalgia and Comics. He seemed a bit shaken, like it was an intense meeting, and he had a newspaper that he had been given. There was a photo of a shark in the paper with its mouth open, and he was expecting me to 'decipher' it for him. This was unexpected, so I just made up a story on the spot about The Diplomat leaving a psychic imprint on it. I mentioned this incident during an online conversation with Paul on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009, and his reply demonstrates that he valued the experience: 'I didn't think through the process all the way that with my improvised gesture for Hunt that he might bring it back for you to decipher which could potentially throw you and have to make something up on the spot. These unpredictabilities were of great value of the experience' (Online chat log, time code 22:11:43).<sup>79</sup> Although Paul was obviously aware of how these unexpected events could benefit the project, it is still obvious that there is a degree of molarity in his thinking. He hadn't foreseen that his action would have unpredictable consequences, and only appreciated this effect later on, after follow-up discussions.

## *Summary*

*KR-36* was designed so that participants could become co-authors, and they were given new names in order to promote disinhibition, a tactic used by the military and cults, among others. The idea being that if they are marked as being different in the space of the project, then they would feel more able to try alternate behaviours. The focus of the project was on producing new relations and new configurations of the project itself.

It was a molecular project in which no individual element on its own was necessary for the project to continue. The project itself was a heterogeneous assemblage, a continuous multiplicity in which a change to any part or behaviour had a consequent effect on the space of the project as a whole. The project responded to the festival it was part of, the landscape of the city, and to changes within itself instigated by changes in participant behaviour. The authority of Ctrl was almost immediately evaded by the activities of participants; they did not confront that authority, but simply found alternate ways of behaving. This is poststructuralist anarchism as a rhizomatic practice, which responds to local conditions, adapting as it goes, changing those conditions as it changes its own operations. Participants engaged in fabulation to create myths, alternatives to the dominant relations and

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<sup>79</sup> Obvious typographical errors have been corrected for reasons of legibility

significations of the project, and of the city itself. They also introduced 'deliberate' glitches into the project, which opened up new potentials that could not be arrived at by simply following the existing project, transforming the space of the project itself.



## Chapter 7. THE FILMS

### *How the form of the films was arrived at*

One question that arose after *KR-36* was: How do I capture a collaborative project in such a way that it grasps the nature of the event, fairly acknowledges the participation and contributions of others, and is still assessable as my work in the context of PhD research?

Because of the need for work to be produced for assessment in parallel with the thesis, a decision had to be made about what form that assessable work would take. It was obviously important that the work should reflect the collaborative nature of the practice being researched, but still be assessable as my work. One possible option I considered was to devise a collaborative, participatory event within which the examiners would then take part. However, since one of the areas I had been researching was the transition of participants to collaborators or co-authors, it seemed like a high-risk option, and one that would put too much burden on the examiners. This type of work might also make it hard to separate out what elements of the work I was responsible for authoring. Another option was to exhibit some kind of 'trace' of the entire research project, showing all of the projects over the three years and how they connected with each other. Using this option would have devalued the practice, changing the research from practice-based to practice-led. Therefore, I decided to take the most 'successful' of the projects, *KR-36*, and 'extend' it in a manner similar to Peggy Phelan's 'performative writing', which she proposes is a form of writing that is open to multiple interpretation like the performance itself. This form of performative writing attempts to join the same universe as the performance in order to extend it and open it onto an unknown future (Phelan, 1993, pp. 148-50).

I have produced for examination an 'in character' documentary film about *KR-36* which consists mainly of characters and non-player characters (NPCs - collaborating artists) being interviewed about interactions that took place during the project.<sup>80</sup> If the project as a whole is thought of as a territorial assemblage, then the film can be considered a line of flight that deterritorialises the project into a new formation. The film making process was discussed with participants so they were aware of the purpose and intentions of the work. It also

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<sup>80</sup> All of the interview footage, except mine, is of a second set of interviews. I made a decision to re-film because of poor quality audio on the original interviews and took the opportunity to draw upon answers from the first round of interviews and ask new questions of all participants drawn from answers in the first recordings.

afforded them the opportunity to re-edit their own character's history to some extent, which means that the work remains true to the collaborative nature of the original project, while giving me a level of editorial control necessary for it to be assessable as my work for PhD research. Even after the project has 'ended', its narrative can be entered at any point and connections made in any direction, which is why the film(s) on the enclosed DVD are presented as 'chapters' that can be viewed in any order.

Documentation of a performance (the trace) will only ever be a 'representation' of the performance (rhizome), it cannot grasp its meaning because documentation can only ever capture partial accounts. This highlights Deleuze and Guattari's sixth, and probably most overlooked, characteristic of the rhizome, 'decalcomania', which involves laying the trace back onto the territory, to see what has been omitted. With the *KR-36* films, I have incorporated them into the universe of the project, which has been extended through, and beyond, the films. The films are in the middle of the rhizome of the project, they reflect back onto *KR-36* and *DY-66*<sup>81</sup>, but also forward into the future of the project, as well as projecting the past back onto the future, and vice versa.

One of the film elements takes the form of a piece of 'machinima'<sup>82</sup> as a recreation of an encounter between two of the characters, scripted by me, based upon their notebooks and 'field reports'. This raises other problematics associated with this strategy in the context of the research presentation in that it closes off the collaborative nature of the project and starts up a new set of ethical concerns about what rights artists have over material produced by other people taking part in their projects.

Rather than simply giving a description of the contents of the films, which would be superfluous given the DVD accompanying this thesis, I would like to provide some explanation based on four factors. First, I will discuss the rhizomatics of how certain ideas or themes that feature in the films relate to concepts or practices drawn from elsewhere in the study, tracing connections between ideas arising from different sources. Second, I will relate the films to the main concern of this research study, that of collaboration, and show how I have navigated the need for the work I present for examination to be mine while still maintaining a collaborative dimension to the work. Third, I will discuss the way in which

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<sup>81</sup> *DY-66* was the second project in the series that began with *KR-36* and took place in East London on 15 September 2007

<sup>82</sup> Machinima is a contraction of the words 'machine' and 'cinema' and is used to describe films made using video game software rather than software specifically designed for making animations.

the participant interviews extend the projects *KR-36* and *DY-66* and keep them open for further development. Fourth, I will consider what problems or glitches there were in the film making process and how they were incorporated.

### *Schizo-productive Connection*

Much of the project content described in the films' interviews was drawn into the work in the manner that The Bughouse described, in my interview with them, as the 'paranoid-critical method'. This process could equally be described as 'connective synthesis' – the first of Deleuze and Guattari's 'three syntheses of production' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984) – or 'schizo-productive' because, for Deleuze and Guattari, the term schizophrenia designates 'freedom, ingenuity, permanent revolution' (Holland, 2003, p.3) and the process is productive of new connections rather than just cataloguing those that are pre-existent. For instance, the PBX case was used as a Hitchcockian 'MacGuffin'<sup>83</sup>, during *KR-36*, to prompt meetings between participants. In the film *The PBX Case and The Ribbonface Cult*, there is an animated sequence that shows the contents of the case changing before being passed on to another person. During the *KR-36* project period, there happened to be a season of programmes about spies on BBC Four. One of the documentaries included an animation illustrating how the British Secret Service used a double agent to alter stolen Concorde blueprints before passing them to Soviet agents. I copied the sequence as closely for style as I could from memory. Another example is the idea of 'city shock' that was developed from an article in a copy of *Readers Digest*, which I read at my parent's house during the planning stages of *DY-66*. The development of both projects was a rhizomatic, drifting, connective process that involved keeping the project in mind when going about our daily lives and seeking to produce new connections between disparate elements. There are always instances of these 'schizo-productive' processes to be found in a.a.s projects, but for *KR-36* and *DY-66* their 'universe' was developed over a longer period than our earlier projects. I will give an example of how one series of connections developed through *KR-36* and *DY-66*, and how a process of 'fabulation' (myth-making) was used to pull the connections together. This will give an indication of how some of the material came to be in the films.

In April 2007, The Viking had the character goal 'to disprove the existence of Birmingham' and during *KR-36* he kept asking other participants how long they had been here in

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<sup>83</sup> A plot element that catches the viewers' attention or drives the plot of a work of fiction

Skegness. Time travel became central to the ‘universe’ that developed from KR-36, and especially in *DY-66*, the second project in the series, but neither Ana nor I can remember how that was decided upon. The idea of *DY-66* concerning time travel appears in research notes from 11 August 2007. It may be that it was drawn from Agent Szabo’s ability to time travel, which we made use of only once during *KR-36*, instructing her to meet the Viking as if she had met him before. So a link was made between The Viking’s layering of cities and Szabo’s time travel ability. Then, on 25 August 2007, Ana and I made a research trip to East London in advance of *DY-66* and on the journey I bought a copy of that week’s *New Scientist* magazine. In the magazine was an article about the new ‘large hadron collider’ at CERN in Switzerland claiming that it might make time travel possible by the formation of ‘wormholes’ through space. On the bus from Marylebone to Dalston, we began noticing pairs of people walking next to the road who were dressed the same as one another, or at least very similarly. We joked that the nearer we got to the area where the project was going to take place, the more of these similar couples there were. We referred to the phenomenon as ‘twinning’, and participants and NPCs being teamed with a ‘bit buddy’ reflected the pairing in the structure of the project to some extent. We had also been watching *Big Brother* on Channel Four that summer, which featured a pair of twins. When they got excited about something those twins gave each other a ‘high five’ and simultaneously shouted ‘whoo!’ On 15 September 2007, the performed ‘mission’ phase of *DY-66* took place, and the ‘bit buddy’ structure ended up being irrelevant during the unfolding of the event because the group moved through the project as a single group, contrary to our expectations. Twinning was mythologised in the project as an effect of the ‘edge zones’ or ‘rifts’ and participants had to wear ‘border suits’ (coloured bulldog clips) for protection, and give each other a high five and ‘whoo!’ if they saw any twinning. This was done to encourage a heightened state of situational awareness in participants. The cause of the twinning was a ‘closed, time-like curve’ (wormhole) between London and the earlier *KR-36* in Birmingham. At around the time of the invention of ‘twinning’ I had been reading *Logic of Sense* (Deleuze, 2004c) and, although the idea of twinning came from observations on our research trip, there is a similarity to concepts found within the book. I mean that twinning has more than a passing resemblance to the ‘doubling’ of time in Deleuze, at the ‘surface’ (edge zone) between a ‘virtual’ time called Aion and an ‘actual’ time called Chronos (Deleuze, 2004c, pp. 186-193). This was not a conscious appropriation, and the concepts are not of specific use to this study, but may have unconsciously predisposed me to make

connections and formations of a similar 'shape' in the manner of the paranoid-critical (schizo-productive) method. The Viking's layering of one city over another was re-presented in *DY-66* in the form of maps of East London (actual, present) with street names and areas changed to locations in Birmingham from *KR-36* (virtual, past). On 28 September 2007, I interviewed The Bughouse at a café in Broadway Market, East London. The location was just around the corner from where Ana, Alex Marzeta, and I were installing the documentation of *DY-66* at Five Years gallery. During the interview, The Bughouse talked about how their practice involved going on walks looking for 'portals', which I connected to the idea of wormholes making closed time-like curves. I explained to them that earlier that day I had thought of a connection between the ritual performed at the end of *DY-66* and that performed by Plastique Fantastique at The Event festival,<sup>84</sup> which two of the *KR-36* participants had taken part in. Since then a.a.s have referred to portals as passages from one zone to another as well as rifts, which are lines to be crossed, and these terms were carried over into the interview questions for the films as well as the continuing development of the *KR-36* and *DY-66* 'universe' into *The Other Place*. In Agent Boyd's interview, when asked what he knew about portals, his description was of two ventilation shafts for the Anchor Exchange tunnels underneath Birmingham. He reterritorialised the concept of portals onto something actual. An image of one of these shafts features in the film *Time Travel, Rifts, & Twinning*. Agent Khan, Angie Reynolds, referred to the same tunnel network when asked about 'the city beneath the city', which I thought I had introduced during *KR-36* because I had been recently reading about the Situationist International and the slogan 'beneath the cobbles, the beach' had come to mind. However, discussions with Ana revealed that in fact it was her who had introduced the 'city beneath'. She had introduced the idea after finding a postcard with a view of Birmingham's Gas Street Basin, with the skyline reflected in the canal waters, a city beneath. This combined with the idea of cities layered on top of each other introduced by The Viking and The Bughouse's *Project Valis* which Ana and I attended in 2002. It can be seen from this description of the connective nature of the practice that, every time a new event occurs in the project, its effects are carried forward in the project. These effects are also carried back in time through the project to change how earlier actions and events are understood or interpreted. This process of moving back and forward in time is reflected in the themes or motifs of the project that are then taken up and modified by different participants, continuing the process. This extended rhizomatic 'fabulation' is

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<sup>84</sup> Plastique Fantastique Ribbon Dance Ritual to call forth the Pre-Industrial Modern (2007)

productive in terms of the narratives produced and it also produces the space of the group itself.

In another example of connectivity, the film titled *The Viking* was made during a period of the study when I was considering the issue of how much the work presented for examination needed to be mine, and how much a collaboration. The tale of *The Viking* in the film was drawn from my knowledge of The Viking's actions and participant accounts of meetings during *KR-36*. Even though the style of the film is different from the others, I decided to include it with the other films because its computer game generated form reflected the game-like nature of the project, and the use of a Viking 'avatar' mirrored the use of avatars (characters) by artists and other participants.<sup>85</sup> The phrasing of the second half of *The Viking* is lifted directly from Jean-François Lyotard's *The Post Modern Condition* in which he describes the fixed formula used by Cashinahua storytellers (Lyotard, 1984, p. 20),<sup>86</sup> which seemed to fit with the mythic nature of the characters in the project.

### ***The Problem of Paul***

After filming for the *KR-36* films at Paul Newman's house, we discussed briefly what the films were and why I was making them. I said it was because of the collaboration being the focus of my research and that I had a desire for the work for assessment to retain the collaborative nature of the original project. His reaction surprised me. He said that the image he had in his head of *KR-36* was of a project where we (Ana and I) were in control and had a very clear structure and image of how we intended the project to be. Like everything was planned. I explained to him how the co-authoring had taken place, but he still felt that any creative freedom the other participants had was limited to 'little bubbles' that took place within a rigid structure. I was very surprised, since Paul had been involved right from the early discussion stages, through to taking part in the subsequent project, *DY-66*. I went on to say that, in my opinion, just because something was systematised in some way, or axiomatic, did not mean that it had structure as such. I described the project as being more

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<sup>85</sup> The use of avatars in participatory art projects is a central part of Ana Benlloch's current PhD study

<sup>86</sup> 'I do not mean to say that a given society institutionally assigns the role of narrator to certain categories on the basis of age, sex, or family or professional group. What I am getting at is a pragmatics of popular narratives that is, so to speak, intrinsic to them. For example, a Cashinahua storyteller always begins his narration with a fixed formula: "Here is the story of — as I've always heard it told. I will tell it to you in my turn. Listen." And he brings it to a close with another, also invariable, formula: "Here ends the story of —. The man who has told it to you is (Cashinahua name), or to the Whites (Spanish or Portuguese name).'" LYOTARD, J. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.



like a machine than a structure, and conceded that although it was not perfect because of the centralised communications, it was definitely co-authored.

Paul's comments, during an online chat to discuss his position, indicate the distance between what Ana and I consider as collaboration and Paul's position. He described himself as being 'wrapped up' in his own 'thing' so that working on a project like *KR-36* is not central to his own concerns and he stated that: 'I come in with the mind set that I'll be joining in on somebody else's project' (Skype chat, time code 21:31:35). However, he did acknowledge that the project was open to being flexible and mutating, which he saw as being part of the design, rather than being left 'undesigned', although he did not feel that he had changed the project in any way personally. The only real instruction we gave to Paul during the project was who to meet and where, the rest was up to him, but when I gave him the example of his interaction with Hunt, in which he gave Hunt a newspaper with a shark image in it, and how that had an effect further down the line, he still insisted that authorship was with us, because we had designed the project to be open in that way. Paul seemed unable to get out of the habit of molar thinking. He was unable to see that he was co-authoring the project, but that does not mean he was not. This is a fundamental problem of this kind of practice, how participants and audiences 'read' or 'write' the work. Roland Barthes dealt with this question in relation to literature in his text *S/Z* (Barthes, 1990).

For Barthes, there is a distinction between classic, or 'readerly' texts and 'writerly' texts. Whereas the readerly text is simply a product to be consumed, our only choice being to accept or reject it, the writerly text is a 'productive' model. In an 'ideal' writerly text 'the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminate' (Barthes, 1990, pp. 4-5). The similarity between descriptions of the rhizome and the writerly text are striking: unstructured, starting from the middle, having multiple entrances, and mobile. Barthes acknowledges, as we have with *KR-36* and other projects, that no text is 'ideal,' but is a mixture that we should interpret to ascertain to what extent it is writerly, to what extent it 'mobilises,' to understand its plurality (Barthes, 1990, p. 4).

In a supervisory session with my Director of Studies, during which we were discussing *KR-36*, he gave the example of how in his collaboration, *Plastique Fantastique*, they write the story of the performance, which is then ‘actively read’ by the audience and participants in the manner described by Barthes. He suggested that it was the same in the case of *KR-36*. However, in *KR-36*, we created a starting point that only ‘seemed’ like there was a story. The story of the project was written in the various acts of the project happening. All of the participants were writers of the project as it unfolded. All we did was say, ‘It is a spy story. Our character is Ctrl (or The Mule, or other NPC name), and yours is Agent \_\_\_\_\_. Let’s go!’ This is supported by the fact that we considered employing a ‘Games Master’ with experience of live role playing, but then rejected that as being too structured, not allowing the project to be ‘written’ by the participants sufficiently. In life, you have to negotiate how to exist with other people, subjectivity is socially constructed, and likewise, in *KR-36* players had a character generation sheet, but people inevitably reacted to the people and situations around them regardless of what they had said their character was. The participants constantly negotiated their behaviour and character with other co-participants and the process was extended in the making of the films by those who took part in its production. The rhizomatic fabulation that was collaboratively produced in the project also served to produce a new set of relations, it drew the co-participants together in a shared experience.

### ***Collaborative Dimensions***

None of the accounts of collaboration that I encountered during this study gave a sense of how complex, and multiple, collaboration really can be. In the multiplicity of a collaboration, when there is a change in membership or roles, the whole assemblage changes. Taking the *KR-36* and *DY-66* projects and films as an example of the different degrees of collaboration, participants developed their own characters, in a partly competitive collaboration, and in fact simply being ‘in character’ meant engaging with a collaborative process in relation to other characters. There was the initial collective decision by Ana and myself to explore this type of project. There was collaborative development of the starting point for the project with the eight collaborating artists. There was collaboration on the development of the themes and motifs of the project with all participants, and knowledge of the future use of the films created a desire to cooperate in mutual production. Then there were also acts that directly challenged the structure of the project. Some *KR-36* participants behaved competitively, some cooperatively with the projects’ universe, and some formed

teams within the project that then acted competitively. So, it is obvious that within a live, participatory project of this type, there is not simply one form of collaboration taking place and that, when given the space and time, participants easily choose for their selves what type of collaboration they will enter into and to what extent. In *KR-36*, these decisions about how to participate came out of a complex set of relations that was constantly being produced, scrambled, and reconfigured as the project developed.

As with *KR-36* itself, during the filming process participants had an opportunity to develop their own character and how it related to the project as a whole, and I have kept as much of these re-authored contributions as possible in the films. The locations for filming were either specifically chosen by the interviewees, i.e. on their territory, or at least negotiated with them. This was done to help them feel as relaxed as possible in the filming process. I will give some specific examples of collaboration in the film, before writing in more general terms.

Despite Paul Newman's protestations during my discussion with him, during which he said that he felt that he had very little creative freedom, his development of his character during the film is unmistakable. That all of the participants in the films were collaborating in the process simply by being 'in character' is obvious, but the extent to which Paul in particular did this is notable, using what he felt was 'diplomatic' language<sup>87</sup> and evading the questions like a politician. Another clear example of re-authoring in the film was Vanessa Page who developed her character's time travelling ability from her *KR-36* 'character generation sheet'. Some of her time travel comments were lost in editing decisions, but can be heard in her description of the time machine, which draws upon the 2004 Shane Carruth movie *Primer*. In addition to this level of collaboration in the film, there was also collaboration on the level of the motifs that developed through the project. For instance, I asked all of the interviewees if they had heard about people jumping from hotel windows. To this Angie Reynolds said that she had heard rumours of people jumping but had not heard of any of them landing. I then drew a connection between the idea of people using 'portals' to travel in time and the disappearance of jumpers. A third type of collaboration in the film was the more formal use of other people to perform voice over material. The only instances of this remaining in the film are those of Peter Lloyd Lewis on the first half of *The Viking*, and Matt Lewis in the introduction to the films. This is the weakest form of collaboration of the three

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<sup>87</sup> Paul was The Diplomat

because it maintains a hierarchy between different people, whereas the collaborative development of concepts or themes is, in my opinion, the best form of collaboration. Having said what specific instances there are of collaboration within the film making process, there is beyond that the knowledge of the future use of the films being made. These films have been made in the context of the ongoing development of *The Other Place*, which is itself a collaborative project, and at all times I have been in discussion with the other people in a.a.s to ensure that I have not produced a film at odds with their wishes.

### *The Other Place*

The development of *KR-36* and *DY-66* into *The Other Place* has been a collaborative project, but the development of the idea of 'The Other Place' as a concept has also been a collaborative exercise. The first time I used the phrase was when writing the script for the second part of *The Viking*, which read, 'When The Viking came from the other place, and stranded his ship on the island, the battle was already in its seventh day and many lesser warriors had already fallen, some in their first skirmish.' At that time, I was simply using the term to avoid referring specifically to Nottingham and Birmingham, but I was also aware that it had a mythical connotation that I wanted. I specifically had in mind the Zen Buddhist reference to Bodhidharma 'coming from the west'. This has a literal meaning of arriving in China from India, but also a metaphorical meaning because 'going west' means dying, like the sun, and therefore the implication is that Bodhidharma<sup>88</sup> was returning from death in order to ease the suffering of others, fulfilling the bodhisattva ideal. However, at the same time, Ana and I were using the term interchangeably to refer to the doubling of the city (The Viking referred to Birmingham as Skegness, and the map of East London had Birmingham street names), the realm of pookahs<sup>89</sup>, the unconscious, hallucination and it also suggests Foucault's 'heterotopias' (Foucault, 1998, pp. 237-244) a term usually translated as 'other spaces' rather than places because it does not refer specifically to physical locations. During *SCIENCIFIC*, the a.a.s project for Arena festival<sup>90</sup>, we referred specifically to 'The Other Place' as being dream sleep.

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<sup>88</sup> Bodhidharma was a 5th century, buddhist monk from Southern India credited as introducing Buddhism to China.

<sup>89</sup> Creatures from Irish folklore, most famously referred to in the Henry Koster movie *Harvey* (1950), who whisk people off on strange adventures. Pookahs are the imaginary guides for a.a.s in the group's mythology.

<sup>90</sup> November 2008, Leicester.

This process of the development of the notion of 'The Other Place' is in itself a rhizomatic, 'schizo-productive' process. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that they wrote the book together, and that since each of them was 'several' it made 'quite a crowd' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 3), and in the introduction to *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* (Guattari, 2006), editor Stéphane Nadaud writes that Deleuze and Guattari are each 'a "temporary point of subjectivation" in a machine that is capable of generating a type of enunciation that can only be collective' (Nadaud, 2006, p. 11). This is a description of a collaborative process that is 'extra' to the individuals that act within it. The work is an assemblage in which neither 'enunciation' of the work, nor the individuals that produce it, comes first, 'since both are co-extensive in an imminent process of production through assemblage' (Nadaud, 2006, p. 13). The emphasis there is on the phrase 'production *through* assemblage'. The production of the space and the work which takes place in that space are imminent to each other, or put another way, 'plane of content and plane of expression are inseparable' (Nadaud, 2006, p. 13). For Deleuze and Guattari, machines function because of the interruptions, or breaks in flow, between component machines (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, pp. 5-6), they are always coupled together in production, so that assemblages are productive of themselves and their products. It is in this way that we have come to think of *KR-36* and *DY-66*, collectively, as a machine for making the concept of The Other Place, which is both a collective enunciation referring to the space of thought or dreams, or the space of the future or potential, as well as the collaborative process or assemblage that produces those ideas.

## Chapter 8. CONCLUSIONS

### *The rhizome reconsidered*

I began this study by thinking of the rhizome as simply a form of connective practice that developed by linking things up as it went, much in the manner of what the Bughouse refer to as the paranoid-critical method, including making connections between individuals. As the research progressed, the rhizome was considered in relation to the aesthetic, social, and individual aspects of collaborative practice, thinking of it in terms of ‘deterritorialising’ or destabilising the subject, as a means of breaking down the social barriers and identities between individuals. The concept was also tested in relation to the capture of physical and theoretical territories and in relation to hierarchies, specifically the idea that the rhizome ‘undoes’ them through de-structuring movements.

The rhizome as a concept was used during all stages of the research, including during the making of the film, as a tool for considering collaborative art practice in general, specifically in relation to processes of change in collaborative groups, the relationships between various forms of movement and stasis/structure, and in relation to narratives. From the start this research has attempted to use the rhizome in the following ways: first, to think through the movements and interactions in my practice-as-research; second, as a way of conceptualising how individual roles and functions within collaborative projects change and break down habits of behaviour; third, as a way of undoing or avoiding hierarchical structures; and finally, as a mode of production for assemblages such as artworks, collaborative groups, and other social spaces, specifically those of an anarchistic organisation.

### *Three movements of the rhizome*

According to Deleuze and Parnet, whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines: molar lines of rigid segmentarity, supple lines of segmentarity made from molecular fluxes, and lines of flight that cut right across things and launch us into the unknown (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, pp. 124-5). The same is said of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus* where it is described as being composed of lines of segmentarity and lines of flight in an oscillation between stability and ruptures where neither condition is privileged (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 9).



The three 'lines' associated with the rhizome correspond to three types of movement which are *molecular* movement or 'becoming' (particle flows, sedimentation), *nomadic* movement (a body moving through space, thought moving/changing, or mutating concepts), and *rupture* (Glitching, unexpected events). The way each of these movements is taken up and used in the rhizome is always an immanent response to local conditions.

### **Molar Movement in Collaboration**

Molarity is concerned with order, structure, form, and control, and three movements are associated with it. The first is the movement of forces that construct the territory of the group itself. This is a 'molarising' movement that usually constructs and defines the molar formation, which can be a theme, a style, an identity or a 'program'. It forms the familiar mode of perception that enables description of characteristics that define and clearly delimit a group, so it can be grasped in its entirety. The second is when individuals move from one 'segment' or 'space of enclosure' to the next, where each stage in the series has its own 'laws' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3) such as the movement from student to graduate, or accused to prisoner, a movement from one molar state to another. An example of this second type of movement is the tabard transition in Reactor's *Geodecity* project, where one makes a transition from being outside of the project to being a co-participant within it. The final movement could be described as a nomadic movement of whole bodies through space, and is more of a smooth progression than the first, but the boundaries of the body are not challenged in any way. An example of this is when an artist travels to an institution in another city or country to take part in a residency programme.

### **Molecular Movement in Collaboration**

Rather than the structure and form of molarity, molecularity is primarily concerned with flows and other movements composed of thresholds that are crossed, which do not necessarily coincide with the edges traced by the molar segments. The molecular fluxes slip between the more rigid structures of our lives. Deleuze and Parnet describe these molecular fluxes as the attractions, repulsions, and 'forms of madness that are secret' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125). Examples of molecular practices that destabilise structure and problematise molar forms are the paranoid-critical method described by The Bughouse, the 'informal discussion' described by Freee (as opposed to structured discussion), and fabulation, a storytelling or myth-making, which constantly throws the idea of truth into

doubt, destabilising dominant significations and opening up potentials (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 41).

### **Line of Flight in Collaboration**

A line of flight is a movement of deterritorialisation that causes an assemblage to open up towards an unknown future, or to mutate into a new form. These lines are often completely unexpected, but can also be provoked or sought out through rhizomatics. The form and structure of the molar formation does not mean it is not vulnerable to glitches or ruptures. One form of glitch that relates closely to a molar consideration of an assemblage is the 'deliberate' glitch, which is inserted into or allowed by a system or project in the knowledge that it will provoke unexpected changes. A third party is often responsible for introducing this kind of rupturing of the molar on purpose. For instance, during *KR-36*, The Viking introduced glitches into the project by challenging the structure of the project and the 'identities' of participants. This is a kind of planned line of flight, one cannot say where it will lead, but can dictate when it will occur. The outcomes are unpredictable, but the intention is to provoke a change in the molar form, which is analogous to Goffman's 'disruptive secondary adjustments'. The deliberate glitch can be thought of in similar terms as those used to describe Bacon's 'diagram'. It is inserted into a pre-existing space in order to 'molecularise' that space, to prepare it for a line of flight to occur, to prompt a change in conditions. Molecular flows within the practice are more likely to create the circumstances for glitches and other ruptures to occur because confluences can have unexpected outcomes.

Deliberate and slippage glitches are often actively sought or encouraged in art practice, as was confirmed in the research interviews, because they produce the conditions for new, unexpected, lines of flight that in turn produce new potentials. Fatal glitches are usually avoided because the results can be destructive, like if someone stole a piece of equipment that was vital to the project, and can result in large amounts of time and effort having been wasted. The fatal glitches are undervalued because they seem so destructive, but the insights they can provide may be overlooked. For instance, during *DY-66*, participants did not behave how we had expected, which meant it was not possible to do many of the things we had been planning. However, we did gain some valuable, first hand, experience of factors influencing group behaviour for use when planning future projects.

## ***Participation and Hierarchy Problems***

I have acknowledged that as long as the separation in terms of artist and participants remains then there is obviously a hierarchy, at least in terms of authorship (Beech, 2009, p. 9), and I have stated that so long as this distinction remains there is the question of whether the artist is patronizing the participants. Conversely, the accusation that the artists and participants are always in a hierarchical relationship, and that this relationship is exploitative, is also problematic because it ignores the fact that participants can affirm their own ability to affect the project whenever they choose. Participants can also patronise artists. The role transition from participant to collaborator cannot be forced, it is an event; a becoming. This is the biggest challenge for participatory practice that is focused on consent. We cannot ask people to consent to something when we do not know what it will end up being, but we can ask them to consent to a process. The 'event' of the project moves between artists and audience such that there is a 'becoming co-participant' of both and so development of the assemblage, its set of relations, is an ongoing process and not a one time only occurrence.

## ***Being and Becoming***

There is a similarity between the split in the SI and the schism in 'The First International'<sup>91</sup> between the Communist and Anarchist factions, a split between a tendency to organise and a tendency toward freedom from central organisation (May, 1994, p. 46-47). These tendencies of an analytic drive towards organisation/programmes and a ludic drive towards freedom/openness can be mapped onto the distinction I have been making between dialectical/critical practices and rhizomatics. The same split can be seen in Dada between the more political Berlin Dada and Paris Dada, which evolved into Surrealism, and also in the Political/Aesthetic split in Fluxus that led to it becoming ever more decentred, especially after Maciunas' death.

For Caillois, secret societies introduce turbulence (molecular fluxes) into 'encrusted' (molar) society, and this is one argument for molecularising our collaborative practice. The molecular flows between group regions can lead to unpredictable encounters between practices or people that can send the project off on a line of flight towards an unknowable future. The molecular sets up the conditions for the novel line of flight. The organisation of *KR-36* has allowed it to develop into an open-ended collaboration called *The Other Place*,

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<sup>91</sup> Officially, The International Workingmen's Association (1864 – 1876)

the name of which represents the idea of a space of potential, a space of thought, and a space of the future. We have a concern not with abolishing the state and creating a new, model society of equals, which would be a mammoth if not impossible task, but of non-hierarchical, molecular, anarchist societies 'within' society, refusing society at large as much as possible, not playing the same competitive games as everyone else, preferring not to. We do not need a blueprint, we do not need a structure, what we need is the potential of the 'diagram'. The diagram 'molecularises' a field or practice, 'scrambling' it, resulting in unexpected connections, which in turn open new potentials, which the rhizome then explores.

What Stewart Home calls the 'heroic' phase (Home, 1991, pp. 31 & 50) of groups, when they are at their most developmental and active, is their process of 'becoming'. Once they have a fixed identity or ideology (being), their capacity to be productive and creative is constrained. If they then cannot adapt to changing conditions, they end. If a collaboration is to be sustainable, it needs a process by which it can remain 'heroic', or maintain a processual 'becoming'.

### ***Molecular Collaboration***

While I have considered briefly the five types of collaboration discussed by Beech et al., which are: 1] Individual artists working with specialists from other disciplines, 2] artist-run organizations such as studio groups, 3] 'double acts', 4] large chaotic 'gangs', and 5] collectives (2006, pp. 16-18). For Beech et al, collectivity is the ultimate form of collaboration that 'produces a transcendent subjectivity – the collective becomes a subject in its own right' (2006, p. 32), where 'the point and practice of the collective can become the health of the collective itself, rather than the production of things' (2006, p. 39). Like Beech et al. I have chosen to focus on collaborations for which collaborative processes are, in themselves, part of what constitutes their practice. However, I have come to different conclusions about how focusing on collaborative processes themselves affects collaborative relations.

In their essay *Inconsequential Bayonets?* Beech and Hutchinson propose that artists should oppose the model of 'professionalism, competence, skill and so on' with what they call 'anti-art', that artists' practices should problematise existing practices and beliefs about what constitutes art practice (2007, p. 57). This is in accord with Benjamin's call to change the conditions of artistic production in order to encourage more consumers to become producers

(Benjamin, 1982, p. 216). I believe that these two positions are contradictory; artists joining together in the manner of Beech et al, forming a 'collective subject', do not fully problematise or transform the conditions of art practice and authorship. The group is just simply grasped as a unity, the same as an individual.

### **Scales of magnitude**

When I previously discussed what made collaboration distinct from solo practice, I stated that, within groups, individuals' practices and styles relate to each other in the manner of radio frequencies, producing negative, neutral, or positive interference. However, a similar process can happen on the level of individuals: different conceptual frameworks can be encountered which cause 'dissonance' between conflicting ideas. Any points of agreement confirm both theories, and the individual produces a new theory to resolve the conflicts between the original theories, forming a synthesis. The same process happens at the next scale of magnitude up from groups too. In molecular collaboration, the groups might be thought of as regions pertaining to particular potential capacities, these regions overlap and 'interfere' with each other in the same way as individuals in a group or theories/practices in an individual. This is one of the characteristics of DeLanda's assemblage theory, the same processes of production happen at different scales of magnitude. The cyclical, or spiroid, movement discussed in relation to the 'diagram' whereby a molar space is 'scrambled' or molecularised, in order to encourage a line of flight, has appeared at various points in the thesis. The action research cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which operates at the level of practice in groups, can be seen at the level of the individual in David Kolb's learning cycle (Dixon, 2000, p. 40): concrete experience, observation of and reflection on that experience, formation of abstract concepts based upon the reflection, and testing the new concepts. This cycle can also be seen in the actions of secret societies, which introduce turbulence (molecular fluxes) into 'encrusted' (molar) society, prompting a change in conditions. It can also be seen in the movement of the rhizome, which responds directly to local, prevailing conditions (Characteristics of the rhizome numbers 1 and 5, which are connection and mapping/cartography), but also a decalcomania (placing the tracing back onto the map – Characteristic 6) which is a reflecting and observing process to see what has been lost or missed. Even fabulation can be thought of as a process of molecularising dominant significations, it starts with what is, and develops what could be, towards an unknowable future.

## *Summary*

The study has sought to address perceived weaknesses in the dominant forms of critical/dialectical practice in relation to art by exploring alternative, more anarchist approaches to relations, roles and types of group organisation. DeLanda's 'assemblage theory' and Goffman's concept of 'role adjustments' have been combined with Deleuze and Guattari's 'diagrammatics' to develop the new concept of 'molecular collaboration'.

Molecular collaboration frees collaborative working from the burden of individual and group identity by allowing creativity to be expressed immanently within a network of relations rather than in relation to any specific ideal or structure. Such networks are not evenly distributed (like a fishing net or grid), but clustered in nodes around interests or geographical locations. Neither are these networks fixed structures, but rather performative, networking movements in which the social space of the network is produced anew and modified with each interaction (Latour, 2005). The concept of molecular collaboration provides a better way to understand the forces and interactions in connected clusters of participants within any social network. For example, a special interest group in a social network such as on Facebook<sup>92</sup> may have a more or less coherent 'region' of social phenomena in which it is interested, but individual members will be 'friends' with people or groups outside of that group. This type of interconnection between groups and individuals displays many of the same conditions as the network of collaborative practices I have been describing, and I believe is applicable to other social networks.

Although a group might become fixed under certain conditions of habit or ideology, and therefore too rigid to adjust to new conditions around it, adopting the mind set of molecular collaboration means that groups frequently 'scramble' or molecularise each other, provoking new spirals of change. This can be the case where groups intersect each other, or when a group is composed of artists who have multiple practices. There are spirals of change happening at all levels from the individual, to the group, to the overall molecular collaboration with each affecting the conditions of the scales of magnitude above and below it simultaneously, producing new becomings, new relations, and new practices. Focusing on states of 'being' instead of processes of 'becoming' would severely limit this revolutionary process, but it is dangerous to give up 'states' all together since, as Deleuze and Parnet warn,

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<sup>92</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/>



the danger of the line of flight is that it can run away with itself and become a line of abolition or destruction (1987, p. 142). Freee emphasise states rather than processes, and as a result their work is constrained by its criticality, too concerned with moving from one molar state to another. They limit their openness to ideas, not relations. On the other hand, the Bughouse try to avoid states wherever possible, and the work becomes almost completely rhizomatic and impossible to disseminate without compromising the work itself. Either extreme has its dangers. As in Stewart Home's description of the 'heroic phase' of groups such as the SI and Fluxus, when they were active and productive, what molecular collaboration offers is a way of holding molar and molecular, or analytic and ludic tendencies in tension without collapsing into one or the other; an effort at remaining 'heroic'.

As with the shift described in *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (Deleuze, 1992) from disciplinary to control societies, what I am suggesting in this study is that a change is taking place, at least among some of the groups that are central to this research: a.a.s, the Zero Point Collaboration, Insectoid, Reactor, and Parfyme. Rather than contemporary collaboration being exclusively concerned with operating as molar art groups with fixed, non-permeable boundaries, there is a movement toward a more multiple, molecular type of collaboration, with members of different art groups working in several different groups: The Zero Point group has members who are also in Reactor and a.a.s; Members of Reactor collaborated on the a.a.s project *Re:Flux* (2008); members of Insectoid come from a.a.s, and the Gallery of Owls; and that is not to mention all of the artists who have a solo practice in addition to being involved in these collaborations. Just as it is supposed in disciplinary societies that movement is from one molar 'space of enclosure' to the next, standard descriptions of collaboration treat groups as if they were bodies or 'collective subjects', even when they consider group members as individuals. Just as Rogers proposes a performative practice predicated on Deleuze's 'dividual', where that marks relations as spaces of potential (Rogers, 2000, p. 15), I am proposing that in molecular collaboration subjects themselves enter into practices composed of molecular becomings where they and the situation develop together. This is the definition of poststructuralist anarchism proposed by Todd May, which is based upon experimentation in contact with local conditions, and which affirms liberty from dominant systems (May, 1994). As Mark Seem writes about collectivity in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, 'Once we forget about our egos a non-neurotic form of politics

becomes possible, where singularity and collectivity are no longer at odds with each other, and where collective expressions of desire are possible' (Seem, 1984, p. xxi).

As with disciplinary and control societies, it is not that molar or molecular collaboration are better or worse than each other in themselves, each of them has 'liberating and enslaving forces' that confront each other. As well as the molar lines of rigid segmentarity, and the molecular fluxes of the less rigid lines of segmentation that compose our 'becomings', groups are also made up of lines of flight. These are 'even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent.' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 125) These ruptures can erupt from any part of the rhizome. The function of each artist, or co-participant, within a molecular collaboration is not fixed in the same way as it might be considered within more molar conceptions of collaboration, but is in a state of flux and is able to enter into temporary alliance with other parts of the group, and other collaborative groups. Each artist, or co-participant, has different capacities actualised in each different group.

In collaboration the distinctions between artist, collaborators, and participants may not be clear-cut lines, but 'regions' where the 'intensity of involvement' gradually changes from one definition to another; an individual may move from participant to collaborator and back several times. The subjectivities of participants and collaborators are not fixed. Whereas Goffman describes the split in performance between front region and back region, the situation in participatory projects is that there will often be multiple, overlapping regions, which are mapped 'in real time' whenever participants make new role adjustments, and the situation in molecular collaboration is that groups themselves are not fixed unities either. Group names are no longer proper names, but as in the case of *The Bughouse*, are adjectives that connote shifting regions whose territories overlap with other regions. What I am proposing with the notion of molecular collaboration is that the 'region' of each group's practice/region can overlap or connect with other regions and thereby form new configurations, which have the potential to produce new relations and new worlds. In the same way that a Go piece plays a particular role, has particular capacities, depending on its position within the assemblage of the whole game, artists and groups have different capacities activated in different assemblages. These capacities and assemblages (expression and content) condition each other and are imminent to each other.

In molecular collaboration, we choose to follow Caillois' notion of a secret society and evade 'necessity', choosing not to act against control, preferring not to, but to produce a general change to our own conditions of existence (Caillois, 1938/1988, p. 154). We will use a schizo-productive, fabulating *dérive* to produce alternatives to society's dominant significations, by making new connections, even nonsense ones. We choose to produce The Other Place as a space of potential, a space of the future. It is a space that is being constantly reconfigured by molecular flows and diagrammatic spirals, but above all, it is a collective space. The Other Place must be built.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Paraphrasing 'You'll never see the hacienda. It doesn't exist. *The hacienda must be built*' from CHTCHEGLOV, I. (1953/2006) *Formulary for a New Urbanism*. In KNABB, K. (Ed.) *Situationist International Anthology: Revised and Expanded Edition*. Berkeley, Bureau of Public Secrets. The phrase refers to the paradox of attempting to build something that always lies in the future and the desire to engage with work that can never be complete.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Sample Interview Transcript – Freee Art Collective**

1 *Stuart My name is Stuart Tait and I'm conducting this research as part of my PhD Research*  
2 *for UCE, Birmingham*

3 *Andy Andy Hewitt, one of the members of the Free art collective*

4 *Mel Mel Jordan, one of the members of the Free art collective*

5 *Dave Dave Beech, ditto*

6 **Stuart So, you're familiar with the themes I sent you by email. The first section to do**  
7 **with hierarchies, and the way your group is organised; could you just describe, in**  
8 **very basic terms how it's structured and how that came about?**

9 *Mel Yeah, it's funny. When I read that question I was sort of thinking what that meant, and*  
10 *what that meant to us and I sort of didn't know if there was any formal structure of our*  
11 *collaboration, and that seemed sort of connected to most of the content of our*  
12 *practice... in a funny way. Like there was no structure of our, no hierarchy of our*  
13 *collaboration because we all absolutely believe, uhm, have the same sort of position in*  
14 *the first place which is sort of part of the content of our work and somehow, that the*  
15 *hierarchy, things just sort of happen because of our personalities and because of the*  
16 *respect we have for each other, in certain ways.*

17 *Andy It's interesting that the collective is really important to me. It feels really important to*  
18 *me. I never thought something could actually in terms of doing art practice.*

19 *Mel (obviously joking) Oh, right. I was worried about our marriage then*

20 *Andy (Also obviously joking) Well, I do love Dave... (Laughter)*

21 *Dave When I saw that question, I was a bit concerned that it might have presupposed an*  
22 *administrative idea about the collective or about collaboration. I know about some*  
23 *collaborations that are administrative in tone, y'know, that the members feel that they*  
24 *can only know where they stand in relation to each another if they've got clear roles*  
25 *and clear rules that they can all abide by and that's an administrative relationship and*  
26 *we don't have that. Y'know, we didn't decide what the rules were before we did it and*  
27 *I don't think that either, any of us, are aware of any rules at the moment either. So, if*  
28 *we have any implied rules it's only because that would follow from what we do*  
29 *together. It doesn't exist separately, and it's only when those rules and regulations*  
30 *exist separately that they then become a power over the individuals in the group, and*  
31 *so we don't have them.*

32 **Stuart** Do you think there's a *tacit* understanding about what you are and aren't doing?

33 **Dave** Well, that's just a kind of cryptic way of talking about administration again, I think.  
 34 We don't even have a tacit understanding of what we are doing in relation to each  
 35 other. We don't even think about that, we just think about what we're working on.  
 36 And at no point has any of us said to any of the others that that's not how we work  
 37 together or you're not allowed to say that, or you're not allowed to do that, or I wanted  
 38 to say this, but I didn't think I was allowed. We don't have any of that, we just all do  
 39 what we can do in order to make the work and in order to get the work out. And, it's  
 40 not an issue, and so in that sense it's much more like a family...

41 **Mel** Mmm.

42 **Dave** ...Than it is an organisation. It's like a bunch of friends doing things together rather  
 43 than uhm, a political party...

44 **Mel** And we know each other well, I think.

45 **Dave** Mmm.

46 **Mel** For instance, I said to Dave, I rang you last night and I looked at my phone and  
 47 realised it was at nine minutes past seven and you didn't answer and I thought "Oh  
 48 yeah, Dave'll be bathing Presley. Oh, right I'll just get on with it then" d'you know  
 49 what I mean, so because we know each other, we know "Oh, Dave will be at Chelsea  
 50 today, or..."

51 **Dave** And we trust each other as well, so if, y'know, as happened last week, when we had a  
 52 kind of deadline for something that had to be in, and we're all in different places and  
 53 we can't talk to each other thoroughly. We don't say, "well, I don't want it going out  
 54 til I've checked it" you say "Well, just send it. I'm sure it's fine". It's not about those  
 55 sorts of checks and balances, it's about trusting each other, and believing in each  
 56 other, and realising that you're in it together.

57 **Stuart** *So, it's kind of about understanding each other's lives, as well as, uhm, as part of the*  
 58 *process of working together rather than the collaboration being separate from the rest*  
 59 *of your lives. Because if it's...*

60 **Dave** Well, I mean..

61 **Stuart** Well, OK...



62 Dave Certainly, y'know... with some forms of social organisation, your private lives  
 63 wouldn't ever be a kind of alibi. You know, these are the rules of the club and you've  
 64 got to abide by them. Like with the Socialist Worker Party, every Saturday you've got  
 65 to go out and sell papers in the morning, and if you said, "I can't do it this week" then  
 66 there's a black mark against your name because that's what the party requires of you.  
 67 So, in that sense our personal lives are... We don't have to worry about it. It's not  
 68 something we've got a policy about, but our personal lives are never asked, y'know  
 69 we never ask each other to not be who we are or not do what we do in order to get  
 70 Free things done. We work around the individuals in the group. But in a natural way,  
 71 in an easy way.

72 Mel I suppose our collaboration comes out of knowing each other and agreeing... I don't  
 73 know, it's like, why would I want to work with Dave and Andy if I was just going to  
 74 worry about what they weren't? I mean, I know what they are, and I commit to them  
 75 as they are, and I think that's really important. I don't know if it's our age, because  
 76 we're older, so we've known each other a long time, and maybe in my twenties I'd  
 77 have had a different set of collaborations, or had a different feeling about it. It was  
 78 interesting when Dave was talking about administration, and I was thinking about the  
 79 bureaucracy of the institution, and I suppose I'm talking mainly about the art  
 80 institution for us lot, because that's the sort of institution we know, and we were  
 81 thinking about how you could reconsider an institution so that it didn't get so heavily  
 82 fed with this bureaucracy that it absolutely affected the content... so it seemed to me  
 83 that a lot of these things are bureaucracy and policy driven rather than content driven.  
 84 And we were talking about having a cultural policy, and how a lot of cities in the UK  
 85 have a cultural policy, and that being...

86 Andy That was really interesting...

87 Mel And that being a document, and that's what the cultural policy is rather than,  
 88 everyone's got a cultural policy... it might not be a document, but there's still things  
 89 going on culturally, and there's a policy for it and there's people being allowed to do  
 90 things within it...

91 Andy All these cities around the UK develop their cultural policies as a way of seemingly  
 92 doing something democratic because of the number of people they discuss as part of  
 93 the process, and then they get shelved. Nobody reads it.

94 Dave And you can also bet your arse that the public policies are all written based on other  
 95 policies that they find. Rather than, say, starting with research, because that's  
 96 expensive

97 Andy Yeah

98 Dave So you're not going to start off by saying 'right what's going on in our area let's base  
 99 our policy on that' they say 'right, what's the best practice in terms of writing the  
 100 policy'...

101 Andy Yeah

102 Dave '...let's start with that and then try and make our area fit in with this policy that we've  
 103 written'

104 Andy Yeah. I think that's why Hal (sic) Landry was so popular 'cos he had one...

105 Dave Cos he provided the template shelf...

106 Mel Yeah, so I, yeah...

107 Dave So what we're saying about our collaboration also applies to the people that we work  
 108 with, in terms of, like we recently did a piece for the IPS show which is a project we  
 109 did with three students, and we worked with these students on issues to do with  
 110 protest, and we talked with them about these issues, then we made some banners, and  
 111 then we did some protest. Our relationship with them as collaborators with Freee was  
 112 based on the fact that we knew them already; like Mel was saying, we've known each  
 113 other for a long time, and our collaboration was already based on already having that  
 114 trust, already knowing them, already knowing that they would be able to do the kind  
 115 of things that we were asking, that they'd be interested in the kind of things that we  
 116 were interested in. So, because we're doing collaborations with people that we know,  
 117 most of the time, or people that we get to know in order to work with them, it means  
 118 that we don't need to administrate those people either. We don't need to sit down and  
 119 say 'right, these are the rules. These are the conditions under which we will work with  
 120 you, or any of those things. We just say 'we like you, you like us, let's make some  
 121 work together', you make some work together and that's that. And you might work  
 122 with them on another project.

123 Stuart *We've had a recent difficulty with a project I was working on where we were working*  
 124 *with people we knew, maybe not for a huge amount of time, but we were familiar*

125 *enough with them to know they would be interested in working with us, and our*  
 126 *understanding was that that was the basis we were working with them under, so it was*  
 127 *quite a surprise for one of them to turn around and say 'But this is your project,*  
 128 *you're in charge'. So, how do you get around the fact that some people might be*  
 129 *self-hierarchising, if I can make up a stupid word.*

130 Dave But those hierarchies do exist. Y'know, if we invite someone to work with us on a  
 131 Freee project, and we are Freee, not them. They don't even become members of Freee  
 132 while they're working with us either, so there is already a hierarchy. It's our work that  
 133 we're working on, there's no question about that, but we try to establish a kind of  
 134 experience that allows them to contribute in a full way, and to not constantly need to  
 135 ask permission in order to do something. And the way we do that is by behaving very  
 136 casually to people, y'know, they just feel like we're sat around having a chat, and the  
 137 next thing you know, we're halfway towards making a work.

138 Stuart *Yeah, yeah.*

139 Dave So, we don't set it up in a really formal way, we don't front it by saying 'right, let's  
 140 just get a few ground rules sorted out first' or anything like that, because that just puts  
 141 people on edge. So, we're really interested in discussing things with people, so we  
 142 have this discussion and then say 'Oh look, we've got this conclusion now, let's make  
 143 a work out of that'.

144 (Silence for a moment)

145 Mel Yeah, I was just, sort of, thinking about those three students again, and I was thinking  
 146 that two of them are your current students, and one of them's...

147 Dave Ex

148 Mel ...an ex-student. And their personalities are quite, sort of, it's almost, we've, because  
 149 we've been in contact with them as teachers, maybe their personalities are quite  
 150 straight forward, aren't they? They're not sort of worried about us, they know that  
 151 we'll talk straight to them, and they talk back... and we expect them to be as straight as  
 152 they can be back to us, and that that was always a transaction with the support we gave  
 153 them as teachers, if you know what I mean. We were never telling them what to do,  
 154 we were just working something out between us. It was always *their* thing, it was *their*

155 responsibility for their work, and it seems to me that the ex-students that work with us  
156 seem to have that very clearly.

157 Dave Mmm

158 Mel They're very clear about it

159 **Stuart** **Uhm, you collaborated together before becoming Freee. What was it that made**  
160 **you want to formalise that collaboration into a group?**

161 Andy Well, I think it was because we realised that we had so much in common, and having  
162 worked with Dave on a few things, like the *Futurology* project, it was brilliant  
163 working where we were sort of curating a show, at that point, and (to Dave) I think it  
164 was just getting more and more contact with you wasn't it?... around that period

165 *Stuart Was this the one at Walsall?*

166 Dave Yeah

167 Andy Well, you guys were working together too weren't you?

168 Mel/Dave Yeah, we were teaching together

169 Mel That was, but I think there was something, yeah, we just started thinking, well what  
170 happened was that we were making these Beech, Hewitt, and Jordan works and we  
171 started to think, when is it a Hewitt & Jordan work, when is it a Beech work, and if  
172 someone asks us to do something, do we respond, I might y'know, if they ask Hewitt  
173 & Jordan to do something, do we keep that as a Hewitt & Jordan thing or do we make  
174 it a Hewitt & Jordan and Beech thing? And then like, why would we keep...? and it's  
175 just become 'why would it be a Hewitt & Jordan thing? because we want to work with  
176 Dave. So it was sort of like...

177 Dave But there was also, there were other kind of, it was like a kind of, there wasn't any  
178 ceremony or anything but it was like there was a moment when we said 'Well, maybe  
179 we should commit to this.' As opposed to, sometimes we're together, sometimes we  
180 work alone, du du du du dur... which is kind of like dating

181 *Stuart So is it kind of like...*

182 Dave Sometimes I date you, sometimes I date other people, and then it was like 'no this is  
183 it', this is, this is...

184 *Stuart* *So it's like an exclusive relationship*

185 *Dave* *So, this is an exclusive relationship*

186 *Stuart* *Nice*

187 *Mel* *Yeah*

188 *Dave* *Yeah... and one where, even when you do stuff on your own, you're still representing*  
 189 *Freee, or you're still tagged as Freee, when you're doing those other things. Even*  
 190 *when, in inverted commas, you're doing something on your own you're actually just*  
 191 *drawing a line from Freee outwards anyway, because that's where we shape ourselves*  
 192 *and our opinions, and so it's all Freee anyway, and that's what we realised.* When I  
 193 was doing solo works, I was doing solo works based on our conversations, and that  
 194 just didn't seem right, it didn't seem fair. Why would I get the credit for that work,  
 195 when they were just as involved in it as I was, but as Mel said, I was *invited*, but I get  
 196 invited to do a show individually and I do a show and the work didn't really belong to  
 197 me, so it just didn't feel right.

198 *Andy* (To Mel) *Yeah, I mean we felt the same, didn't we? We felt, 'hang on, that's a*  
 199 *conversation we had with Dave yesterday'*

200 *Mel* *Yeah, it's Dave, I want to speak to Dave if we're going to do this, as Hewitt &*  
 201 *Jordan...*

202 *Andy* *We're going to have to...*

203 *Mel* *Got to talk to Dave about that*

204 *Andy* *Yeah, so we were basically making the same work for a while before we actually said*  
 205 *we were Freee.*

206 *Dave* *Yeah*

207 *Mel* *Yeah. That's right.*

208 **Stuart** **I mean, do you ever get instances where you'll be having a conversation with**  
 209 **someone else outside of this group, and through that discussion, you come up**  
 210 **with an idea, do you then go and talk with them about working together on that**  
 211 **or does that become... I'm just thinking about, in terms of, and I'm kind of hating**  
 212 **myself for saying this, but kind of ownership of ideas, because I've had a lot of**  
 213 **conflict with other people that I've collaborated with to do with that... you know,**

214           **one of you will think of something, then the other one will enter into a discussion,**  
 215           **you develop the idea together, so it becomes a shared idea, and then suddenly**  
 216           **there's an argument about 'no, that was my idea'. I just wondered if that sort of**  
 217           **situation ever occurs with you.**

218 Mel      None of us have any ideas (Everyone laughs). No I think that, no, I think that because  
 219           we agreed ages ago that, maybe it's through the process that we just described.  
 220           Y'know, me and Andy were thinking 'Oh no, because we talked to Dave about that'  
 221           so it didn't feel like it was ours to do what we want with it, but then, it's not Dave's.  
 222           So, who's is it? It's sort of, actually it's sort of Freee's. It doesn't ever feel like, well  
 223           between... I know you said *other* people, but I think just to say, within us, it doesn't  
 224           feel like anyone's particular idea. It always comes out of conversation, doesn't it?

225 Dave     Mmm

226 Andy     Mmm

227 Mel      Obviously you get... I suppose you've got a backlog of work as well, that you're all  
 228           talking around, so you say 'remember when we did that piece, I wonder if we should  
 229           have done it like that.' Or, I dunno...

230 Stuart   *Yeah, so you get more of a developmental process, it's not necessarily coming from an*  
 231           *original idea, like a bolt of lightening, stuff sort of develops out of your common*  
 232           *interests and...*

233 Mel      ...and rethinking about things we've done already, and thinking 'I wonder if we should  
 234           have done that bit differently'

235 Andy     Yeah, there's some continuity now isn't there in terms of what our interests are and  
 236           framing what the work is

237 Dave     And because of that...

238 Andy     We're not searching around for ideas as such or forms. We're a lot clearer about what  
 239           we're still trying to do

240 Dave     So the ideas are quite deep and detailed now, so there's very little chance of us talking  
 241           to someone outside of Freee and coming up with an idea because you'd have to be  
 242           quite far in in order to be able to add to it. Do you know what I mean?

243 Stuart   *Well, that all sounds very systematic...*

244 Dave No it's not systematic

245 **Stuart** Well, in terms of there being a process there that you're all familiar with, and  
 246 you kind of embedded in that process, which brings me to the next theme that I  
 247 wanted to talk about which is the idea of unexpected events happening, where  
 248 maybe you're involved in a project when something goes either unexpectedly  
 249 well, or unexpectedly disastrous. How do you deal with that and what's your  
 250 relationship, as a group, with events like that? How do you engage with those?

251 **Andy** I'm trying to imagine what sort of events you might mean...

252 **Dave** Well, if you take the beginning of that though, that what we've just described sounds  
 253 systematic, then that would be something that's outside of that system, but I would say  
 254 that our collaborative practice is all about *not* knowing and of experimenting and  
 255 trying things out, and never being sure of what we are going to do, of constantly trying  
 256 to put a different slant on what we are doing, and never guaranteeing what that  
 257 outcome is going to be like, and so there isn't a kind of systematic thing to be broken  
 258 down by the unexpected event. Our practice is about creating unexpected situations for  
 259 ourselves, which we then have to deal with on the hoof. So, there's no stability or  
 260 guarantee in any part of what we are doing. Nothing stands still, nothing stays the  
 261 same, so there is no opposite of the unexpected event, that the unexpected event might  
 262 be different from.

263 **Stuart** *Yeah, but I like that because it's like you're talking there about creating unexpected*  
 264 *events...*

265 **Mel** Mmm

266 **Stuart** ...as your practice, so that sounds like your relationship to the unexpected event is a  
 267 positive relationship, because it's something you're trying to encourage

268 **Mel** Mmm. Yeah because we...

269 **Stuart** *If you leave aside the idea of it being a system.*

270 **Mel** Well, I was just sort of thinking about, for the IPS show we talked a lot about the  
 271 *Function* works that we did, our oldest works together, and we were talking to Andy  
 272 Hunt about the fact that we wanted to move away from those *Function* works, and that  
 273 we were really keen on using ourselves and words together, embodying them, and then  
 274 (laughs) a few weeks ago we said, shall we make another *Function* work? So all of the



275 reasoning that we really believed in at that moment of moving away from them, we  
 276 challenged again by thinking ‘well, what if we did write another one, what would it be  
 277 like?’ and ‘why have we got to stop doing that, so we can do this? Why can’t we do  
 278 this and go back to the *Function* works and look at them again, so in a way, I don’t  
 279 know if that’s an unexpected thing, you know. I think it was unexpected for us,  
 280 because we all three went ‘right, we’re not going to make any of them again’ and then  
 281 we all three decided to make another one. So there’s *that* unexpected stuff within  
 282 rethinking and re-looking at what you’re doing, and then I think there’s what Dave  
 283 was saying is that when we meet those three students that we work with, we’re not  
 284 really sure what’s going to happen.

285 Dave We don’t even know whether it’s going to come off. You might meet up with them,  
 286 discuss the issues that you want to make the work about and then they say no. Then  
 287 you’re left with nothing, and we talked openly with them about that possibility. We  
 288 wanted to make that a very real possibility, and we told them ‘you are under no  
 289 obligation to do anything, you can just walk away now. Let’s stop for tea. Give  
 290 yourselves time to think about whether you want to carry on’ and then we stopped and  
 291 had a cup of tea, and at the end of the cup of tea, we sat there and waited to see what  
 292 they said. And, it’s like, if you’re working with other people then you have to be  
 293 completely prepared for those people to vote with their feet and just walk away.  
 294 Because otherwise you’ve got a very odd relationship to them if there’s no way they  
 295 can leave.

296 *Stuart* *Has that happened?*

297 Dave Not yet. (everyone laughs) But you have to build a relationship with them on that  
 298 basis. But also, for instance, when we did the *Protest is Beautiful* piece, we came up  
 299 with two dozen slogans, narrowed it down to that one, and then said ‘right, what are  
 300 we going to do?’ and then you come up with two dozen scenarios for using that text,  
 301 and then you narrow it down to something, and we narrowed it down to we were going  
 302 to use these funeral letters and that meant sending off for them and having them  
 303 delivered. We didn’t have a clue what they were going to look like, what size they  
 304 were going to be, so we’re constantly negotiating with the real world in that sense. So  
 305 they arrive, and we think ‘right, where are we going to take them?’ and we take them  
 306 to various places, and we photograph them in all sorts of different ways, and when

307 we've got the camera there we photograph them in ways we wouldn't even think of,  
 308 like in your head, or on a page or something. You get there and you think, 'oh, that  
 309 looks good against the tree, let's do that', and then, 'turn it upside down, let's see what  
 310 that looks like... What happens is, and this happens all the time in collaborations I  
 311 think, is that you almost get into a situation where you're entertaining each other  
 312 during the process of making the work, because otherwise it would be boring, so you  
 313 say things to each other, not because you think that this is a good idea, but because  
 314 you think that this is going to get you through the day better, so you say 'why don't we  
 315 do this one standing on our head?' and then, that'll be fun, so then we do that, and  
 316 that's rubbish, so we don't use that one, so then we do another one, and it's actually  
 317 just part of having a relationship with someone as you just try and make the day run  
 318 better by saying funny things and sometimes those funny things turn out to be the best  
 319 ideas you've ever had... (long pause) like the name Freee.

320 Mel Yeah

321 Andy Yeah

322 Dave Which came in exactly that way didn't it?

323 Mel Yeah, totally.

324 *Stuart* *No, I think it's really interesting that you say that part of the process is like being open*  
 325 *to trying things just because they occur to you and not because you think they might*  
 326 *work, because that's leaving enough space for something you've thought might be a*  
 327 *terrible idea to turn out to be the best idea, through an element of chance entering in,*  
 328 *but it's like, you've made the decision to do that, so it's not entirely random because*  
 329 *you've, uhm, driven it.*

330 Andy Hmm. It's been a fantastic couple of years hasn't it?

331 Dave Mmm

332 Andy It's been so exciting, so fast and furious, the pace of making the work, and I think  
 333 there's a lack of pressure within the group in terms of who owns what. The ideas are  
 334 moving so quickly, it's breath-takingly fast. I think that's why the feeling of  
 335 ownership of stuff is never an issue because it's so fluid, the coming up with works

336 Mel Yeah, I think Dave's right, you wouldn't be able to talk to anyone outside of us and  
 337 have the same, to be able to talk to them about general things, but you'd never be able

338 to say 'you know when we did that picture, I wonder if we should've done it like that'  
 339 you wouldn't have that sort of... what's going on for us with these two bodies of work  
 340 that are coming out.

341 *Stuart Uhm, I've recently been involved in two separate projects that I've got a sort of*  
 342 *ambiguous opinion about, whether they were successful or not, because from one*  
 343 *point of view they were unmitigated disasters, but from the point of view of a learning*  
 344 *experience it was really useful, and therefore successful from that point of view. I was*  
 345 *wondering if any of the projects you've been involved in, where there's this kind of*  
 346 *ambiguity, where you couldn't decide if it measured up to your criteria for being*  
 347 *successful or not, and how you make those decisions?*

348 *Mel I don't think we'd look at it like that really. I think we'd commit to what we did and*  
 349 *think 'well we did that. We made that set of decisions. We responded to that set of*  
 350 *circumstances. That's just where we were.' I don't think we'd regret anything. We did*  
 351 *that and that and that, and we know why we did something, and we were doing it to*  
 352 *see something. Maybe we didn't get that thing absolutely right, but the decisions we*  
 353 *made about it were discussed between the three of us and they were rational at the*  
 354 *time and we look at them again and you might re-think it*

355 *Andy You might have been being self-deprecating when you said it was an absolutely total*  
 356 *disaster, because there's something comes out of the experience most of the time*  
 357 *which, like you said, you might learn from*

358 *Stuart Yeah, that's why I say...*

359 *Andy Because something's happened, and I can't think of a time when we've, sort of, felt*  
 360 *like we've not delivered, in terms of the project. You know, we'll often do works and*  
 361 *then, later on, we think back, but then, it's too late at that point isn't it? But we're*  
 362 *usually thinking about previous work in order to sort of...*

363 *Mel Yeah, affect the next bit*

364 *Andy affect the next, the next work, so, uh, no we're not really regretful about stuff*

365 *Dave Maybe there's something about us not being object makers that means you don't get*  
 366 *that regretful, because even if the image isn't so cool, the process that you went*  
 367 *through is really what it's all about. So, when we were in Hull and we did 'How to*  
 368 *talk to buildings', it's kind of irrelevant to look at the videos. We could have made*

369 that whole piece and never made it public, because we generally have a series of  
 370 publics; so the first public is the people we meet in the gallery and we talk to them  
 371 about the project and we ask them about their memories of the town and so on and so  
 372 forth and one version of the work could be to stop there

373 Andy Mmm

374 Mel Mmm

375 Dave You know, that you've done one part of the work already and that's already  
 376 successful; and then, you video that, and then you edit that, y'know, and so then  
 377 you've got another version of it, but you could do without the second version, so if the  
 378 video was a total mess it wouldn't matter

379 Stuart Mmm

380 Dave Because one part of what we do is to have discussions with people directly, face to  
 381 face, and then we document that, represent that, reconfigure that, and present that in a  
 382 different form, so sometimes, and this does happen, that second version of it isn't so  
 383 attractive or something or maybe the information isn't in it that we expected and then  
 384 you become critical of that image, but that doesn't mean you become critical of the  
 385 whole project

386 Stuart Mmm mmm

387 Mel Mmm

388 Andy Mmm. And then, because it's experimental, we know there's risks in it, and because  
 389 it's often quite tight in terms of turn around to get things out, I think if we worried too  
 390 much about failing at any point, I think it would take a bit of the pleasure away from  
 391 it. I think it's exciting trying to do all of these different process parts of the project, but  
 392 if we started getting too anxious about a set of qualities in things, I think Dave's  
 393 excellent at saying what is possible within a certain time frame, and it's been...

394 Dave I've just got low standards.

395 Andy (Laughs) well, I enjoy that (Dave laughs). I really like the fact that it is what it is, and  
 396 'Can we go and have a cup of tea now?' (All laugh)

397 Dave The calibration is all about drinking tea

398 Andy Yeah. Oh yeah.

399 Dave We should have called ourselves Typhoo really

400 Mel Teee (All laugh)

401 Dave Or Typhoo with three 'o's

402 Andy And various desserts and puddings too

403 Mel I wondered if that was to do with, I don't know, I don't want to be... a bit of our age.

404 It's almost like we know we're going to be making art, we're going to carry on  
405 making art, it's what we do, there's a sort of, certainly in my early thirties and late  
406 twenties, was worried about was are you going to be this artist, are you going to carry  
407 on being this artist, or whatever and thinking that you couldn't stop being an artist,  
408 because that would be a failure or something, or that something was going to go  
409 wrong at some time, and I think maybe we just feel like we're just doing what we do.

410 Dave Also, one of the things that changes, which I notice is a contrast between us and our  
411 students is that when a student in their early twenties is making work, they're making  
412 that to find out what they believe, and it's like the process of the work, um, there's a  
413 lot hinging on it which is why they get so fretful about whether their work's any good  
414 or not, because it's really about whether they've formed their beliefs well enough,  
415 about art, and the world, and everything else. And we don't get fretful about our work  
416 because we know what we believe. We know what we believe about art, and we know  
417 what we believe about the world, and when we make work it's... that can't threaten  
418 those fundamental beliefs. We can get it right or get it wrong, but because we're not  
419 forming those beliefs, because we've done that a long time ago, there isn't that kind of  
420 anxiety about the work being good or bad

421 Andy Mmm

422 Mel Mmm. Yeah. It's almost like, I always feel about it, 'This is just what we do', because  
423 that's what we believe in, and it's just what we do, and we're not going to do anything  
424 else really, because that's sort of what we do. (They all laugh slightly)

425 Dave It's like the difference between a teenager worrying about whether they're wearing the  
426 right clothes "Are these the right clothes, is this the right T-shirt?" and then, when you  
427 get to our age, you're just, like, your cupboard's just full of the stuff you wear, and  
428 you can't get it wrong because the stuff that's in your cupboard is the stuff that you  
429 wear, so you just grab whatever's there and you just put it on and that's fine, and you

430 don't worry about it, and I think we make art in that same kind of way. We know what  
431 we do; we're constantly asking ourselves questions, but that's because that's what we  
432 do. Y'know?

433 *Stuart I think one of the things that I found most upsetting about the last project, the one I'm*  
434 *currently involved in, is that, uhm, is the other people involved (laughs slightly). It*  
435 *involved working with other people as, kind of, participants, and just the kind of, uh, I*  
436 *just get baffled by the lack of engagement with it, with the project, it's like "If you're*  
437 *not interested in engaging with the project, why have you signed up?"*

438 *Andy Is it other artists?*

439 *Stuart Some artists, some non-artists, in fact the non-artists are more likely to get involved...*

440 *Dave But then...*

441 *Stuart ...and participate, whereas the artists can stand back*

442 *Dave But there are lots of ways of getting involved*

443 And, it sounds like you had a kind of paradigm of what you thought engagement  
444 should have been, and when people get involved in a different way, you feel like  
445 they're not getting involved, but they might be getting involved in a way that you  
446 didn't predict; in a way that you didn't feel fits with the meanings of the work and the  
447 authorship...

448 *Stuart Yeah, I think you're probably right*

449 *Dave Because we, this is kind of part of our chaotic practice, is we try not to imagine what*  
450 *the other people are going to do and we try and go in there with an open mind,*  
451 *thinking "Well, what are we going to do if they don't do this, or they don't do that, or*  
452 *we're not interested in this, or how are we going to get around that?" and the answer*  
453 *to how we are going to get around it isn't to force them to do it the way that we want*  
454 *them to.*

455 *Stuart Ah, well, you see this was like, uhm, "We've set up this scenario and these*  
456 *parameters, and here's a load of information" and then it was up to people to kind*  
457 *of... so this is why I said about being a kind of ambiguous relationship with it, because*  
458 *on the one hand I couldn't understand why they weren't getting involved, if they'd*  
459 *signed up; but then on the other hand, just the fact that they didn't get involved is*

- 460           *really interesting, because it meant we learnt something about, uhm, that set-up*  
 461           *compared with the set-up we used earlier on this year. One of the people involved in*  
 462           *the project was, uh, had had some training in sociology and he said "That's a classic*  
 463           *example of 'Group Sloth'"*
- 464   Andy   Mmm
- 465   Mel     Mmm
- 466   Stuart   *In that, there were one or two people in the group who said "Oh, I just can't be*  
 467           *bothered" and everyone else came down to that level. So, on one hand it was really*  
 468           *informative, on the other hand it was like "Why are you letting this person influence*  
 469           *you in that way?". It was more, being distressed by the psychology of the other people*  
 470           *involved, y'know? But that's my problem, I guess.*
- 471   Dave    Yeah, we never have to face those problems because we work with people we already  
 472           care about.
- 473   Mel     Yeah.
- 474   Dave    And who already care about us, y'know. We have done a few projects where we're  
 475           working with strangers, but what we do is build into the project some sort of process  
 476           where we can (audio indistinct - "get on"?) with each other, so that, by the end of that  
 477           day, you're all friends
- 478   Mel     We're friends with Pam, we went out for lunch with her.
- 479   Dave    So, it's...
- 480   Stuart   *Well, one of these people is someone I was working with on another project anyway,*  
 481           *and in the context of that project it was fine. I think I was just baffled...*
- 482   Dave    We've not had any problems yet from...
- 483   Andy    No, can't think of any
- 484   Mel     No...
- 485   Dave    ... from participants, or collaborators, or anything
- 486   Andy    So much so, that we want to do more. We've got a project in Poland coming up where  
 487           we're working with people. So...
- 488   Stuart   *You're probably just better at people management than I am (laughing)*



489 Dave Well, we do try and keep the numbers down as well, and that's quite important.

490 Andy Yeah.

491 Dave (Looking out of window) Hold on, our workers have fucked off.

492 Mel Where are they going

493 Andy Off to the bun shop

494 Dave Maybe they're done

495 Andy They were looking for a drink here I think they've gone for (Interviewer coughing  
496 obscures audio)

497 Dave How many more questions are there Stuart?

498 Stuart *I was just going to, uhm, ask you about this bit at the end (pointing to text)*

499 Dave OK

500 **Stuart About how you felt your theoretical concerns, which, from what little I know, are**  
501 **mostly kind of Post-Marxist? Is it? Kind of Adorno,...**

502 Dave It's just Marxist really

503 Stuart *Is it? Right...*

504 Mel Just Marxist

505 Stuart *So, how do you, how does that theory relate to the work? I mean, obviously, some of*  
506 *it is visible in the content, uhm, I just wonder if you could talk around that a little bit.*

507 Mel (To the others) Do you want to talk about Habermas? (Very long pause)

508 Andy Uhm, well, we've got various sort of interests in Critical Theory, and I think in the  
509 projects there's various sort of strands of ideas that we're developing. I think we're  
510 quite interested in Habermas at the moment as one of those issue because of  
511 Habermas' idea, what he gave us in terms of his idea of the Public Sphere. His  
512 description gave us a view of how so much of our democracy, our institutions were  
513 formed, and I guess post-Habermasian thinking has been deconstructing, well,  
514 extending some of Habermas' ideas about how one can... Well Habermas was really  
515 interested in sort of reviving democracy, and I guess our interest in what art is and  
516 does in terms of its functions, the institutions of art, ideas about public good, connect

517 Dave But we're interested in... in a way Habermas is interested in sort of 'official'  
 518 democracy, and we're interested in a kind of 'black economy' of democracy, which is  
 519 the sort of very low level kind of encounter and exchange of debate and opinion; in an  
 520 unorganised way. Which is where we come back to the, sort of, no administration, no  
 521 rules, no regulations kind of thing. So, the classical model in Habermas of what we're  
 522 doing is people talking in a coffee shop, which is actually what we do quite a lot of the  
 523 time.

524 Mel It's what we're doing now.

525 Dave So, we're interested in those sort of unofficial, maybe off the radar, kind of  
 526 encounters. Now, in terms of us collaborating, and the values that that relates to in  
 527 terms of collaboration, you could quite easily be a solo artist and be involved in these  
 528 ideas and make work on the basis of these ideas without having to be a collaboration,  
 529 without having to be collective, but even if you did that and you were interested in it  
 530 in a literal way, like we are, then you would have to work with other people. You can't  
 531 have a Counter Public Sphere on your own, in your bedroom. That's not a public  
 532 sphere. You have to talk to other people in order for that to work, or you have to start  
 533 taking into account the other people involved such as viewers, or publics, or whatever.  
 534 So, even as a solo artist you would be working with others, so, y'know, our being a  
 535 collective is kind of related to that, in so far as we are already a counter public sphere  
 536 even before we do any work

537 Mel Mmm. Yeah...

538 Dave We are the Tollpuddle Martyrs (chuckles) without having to go to Australia... which is  
 539 quite nice.

540 Mel And we're sort of interested in contesting culture as well, so therefore, some of the  
 541 content of some of the works we make are about, for example, the function works are  
 542 about contesting art's function. So, we're involved with the... yeah, sort of questioning  
 543 art itself, questioning culture itself and we're interested in how you change culture to  
 544 affect other social change, really, so it's really rooted in art as well, so it's not a sort of  
 545 theoretical depiction of Habermas' theory, we're working within the structures of art  
 546 so we might therefore choose to use a text so that it can be read so that goes along with  
 547 what we're thinking about with Habermas, so because we're thinking about the viewer

548 in art and so on and how it's... how publics are engaged with art. So the form of things  
 549 always comes out of, uhm...

550 Andy And in practice, some of our biggest...

551 Mel Art

552 Andy ... Uhm, what we're doing is negotiating space in order to do that with some of the  
 553 institutions of art and that's where the friction is often, not necessarily somewhere like  
 554 here, with Andy Hunt, because he's uhm, agreeable...

555 **Stuart** Yeah, but more like a public gallery or something?

556 Andy Yeah, we've had our...

557 Dave You have to contest culture in order to get some of this stuff out, or get it in more  
 558 often. It's not that difficult to get this stuff out on the street, it's getting it in the  
 559 gallery, because it seems to belong on the street in their taxonomy, so it involves the  
 560 contestation of culture just to get them to imagine it being in a gallery. So as well as  
 561 contesting culture in the content of the work, we're having to contest culture in the  
 562 way that we negotiate art, and actually contesting culture in the way that, like, you  
 563 invite people off the street to come into a gallery in Hull to talk about buildings and  
 564 then they kind of shift from being what they think they're going to be, which is  
 565 visitors to a gallery, into having some of the role, and then that becomes a sort of  
 566 contestation of the artist, the gallery space, the viewer, the artwork, and so on and so  
 567 forth. So, you're sort of actively, physically contesting things, just in the way that  
 568 you're treating people... I need to go. I'm going to run out of time.

569 Mel OK. I think we're nearly done...

570 *Stuart* I think that's enough for today anyway. If I wanted to talk to you again at some point  
 571 *in the future, when would be a good time to do that, for you?*

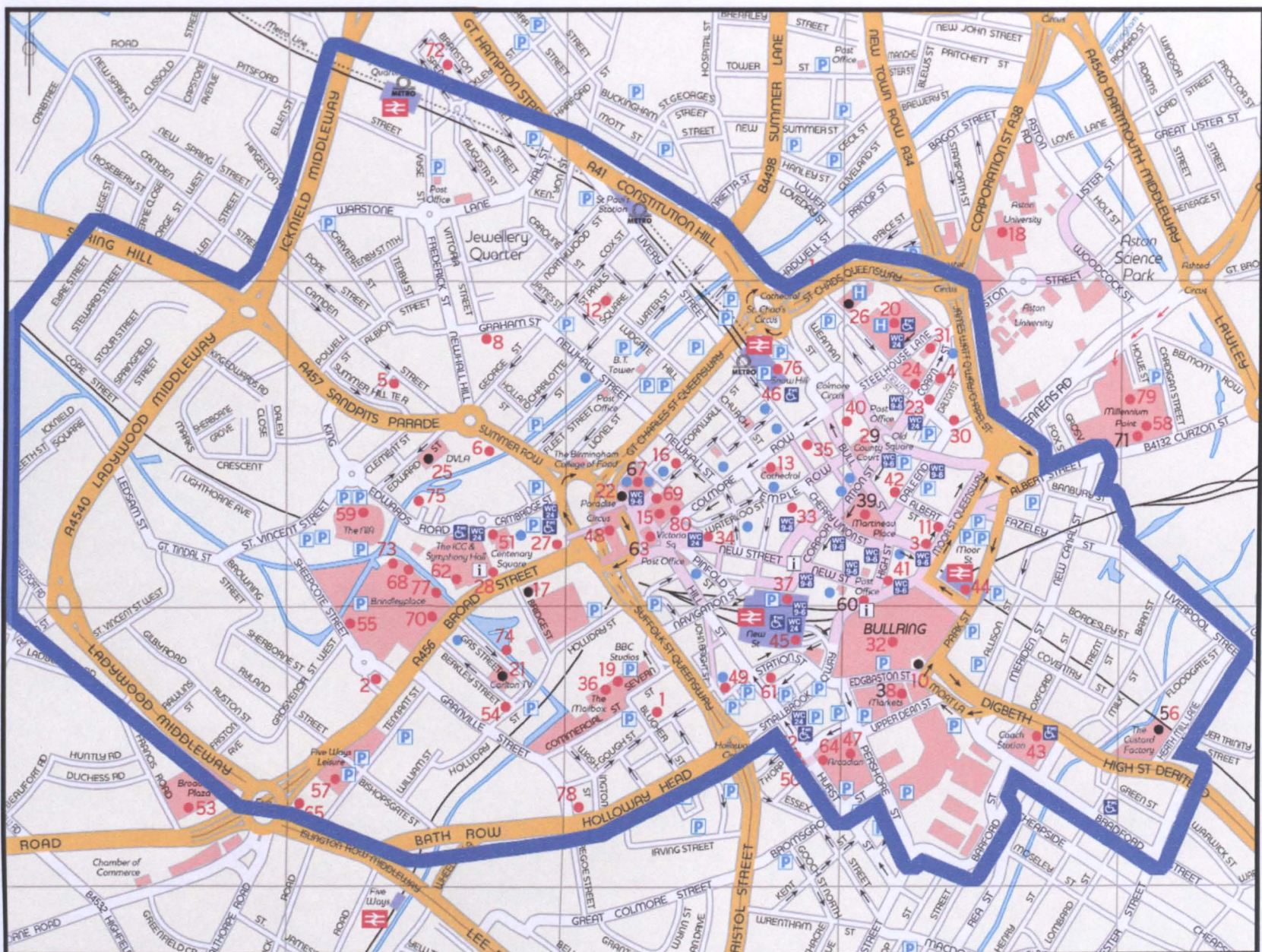
572 Andy Well, it's always tricky to get the three of us together [...] email would be best I think

573 Dave It's either going to be a studio day, or catching us up in Edinburgh or Poland or  
 574 wherever

**Appendix 2**

**Map of KR-36 Physical Space**





**Appendix 3**  
**Character Generation Sheet**





## Character Generation Sheet

Each Player should define the following factors about the character (*Leave Character Name Blank as this will be provided*)

Your Name	<b>[REDACTED]</b>	Character Name	Hunt
Character Concept	Example: Strong Jawed Hero <b>evil scientist</b>	Primary Ability	Example: Ex-Royal Navy Captain <b>military weapons development</b>
Secondary Ability No. 1	Example: Good with his fists <b>gadget expert</b>	Secondary Ability No. 2	Example: Speaks fluent Chinese (Served in Far East) <b>master of disguise</b>
Character Weakness	Example: Acts as 'An officer and a gentleman' at all times <b>homicidal tendencies</b>	Character Secret	Example: Has an illegitimate Chinese daughter in UK <b>alcoholic/drug addict</b>
Character Goal	Example: To serve Queen and Country <b>to gain enough wealth to fund private illegal research experiments</b>		



**Appendix 4**  
**Challenge/Response**

On 02/04/07, NPC <npc@404corporate.net> wrote:

Tomorrow at 5pm it is then.

You should come to  
Periscope  
Unit 19  
2nd Floor  
Lee Bank Business Centre  
55 Holloway Head  
Birmingham  
B1 1HP

Security status has been stepped up to 'Bikini Black Special'

When you come to Control, you will need to use the challenge/response pass phrase exchange outlined below:

Applicant: "I want The Special"

Control: "The Special is for special occasions. I cannot give you the special"

Applicant: "But today is a special occasion, it's my Birthday"

Control: "A Birthday is a special occasion"

Induction will last for between 20 and 30 minutes

We will be disguised as invigilators

Control  
07806 50 27 26

**Appendix 5**  
**Player Questionnaire**

KR-36 Player Questionnaire



Participant Name..... Hunt 90 (11 11 1)  
 email contact..... [redacted]@hotmail.com  
 Phone number..... [redacted]

	Yes	No
Do you have a camera phone? _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do you have bluetooth on your phone? _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How long will you be playing? <u>several hours/day 24 hrs</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How well do you know Birmingham? <u>Very well</u>		
Are you from out of town? <u>(Jewellery Quarter) no</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you mind being followed, photographed, or recorded by other players? _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
**Can we use the images or recordings at a later date for the purposes of documenting the project for dissemination and/or academic purposes? _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Info:**

All passwords and pass phrases are lowercase and typed as one word, no matter how long.  
 Check your email regularly; daily, at the very least.

**Checklist:**

Exercise book \_\_\_\_\_ ☒  
 Playing card \_\_\_\_\_ ☒  
 Paperclip \_\_\_\_\_ ☒

**Disclaimer:**

Since much of the game will be carried out in 'public' spaces, I understand that I am responsible for my own health and safety whilst playing the game \_\_\_\_\_ ☒

Player signature \_\_\_\_\_ [redacted]

Has Control explained the game to you, and answered any of your questions? \_\_\_\_\_ ☒

Control signature \_\_\_\_\_ [redacted]

**\*\* Documentation from this game/performance event is likely to be included in a research project. If you would like more information, please contact Stuart Tait, UCE, Birmingham Institute of Art & Design, Margaret Street, Birmingham. B3 3BX**

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## Glossary

### Antagonism

Antagonism is a state of active opposition or hostility. Laclau and Mouffe define antagonism as a force that prevents one from fully being one's self and this is the result of the presence of an 'Other'. Antagonism arises from social difference, and can be employed in negation of a given order, e.g. as a means for challenging hegemony.

### Becoming

Becoming can be thought of, in one sense, as being opposed to 'being'. While 'being' is a fixed state associated with stable identity, 'becomings' can be thought of as more fluid, dynamic processes of change. Rather than being *in* the world, we become *with* the world: as the world changes, we change and *vice versa*.

### Deterritorialisation

Deterritorialisation is the creative potential of an assemblage. The term is often used together with the terms 'territorialisation' and/or 'reterritorialisation'. While territorialising forces tend to compose, define and limit a territory, practice, or individual, deterritorialising forces 'undo' bonds, scramble a territory, or move beyond established limits. The two types of force are not opposed to each other but tend to operate in mutual flux.

### Dialectic

Dialectic is the art of problems and questions. The Platonic dialectic method fundamentally relies on a procedure of division into categories, and the Hegelian dialectic relies on negation. In general, the dialectic method operates through propositions, which, as Aristotle states, are readily transformed into problems of the type 'A or not A', placing them under the power of the negative. The Hegelian dialectic relies on producing an opposition between two ideas or forces (thesis and antithesis) and then absorbing them into a new phenomenon (synthesis). The procedure is limited by one's ability to define terms through a process of division.

### Difference

Difference is usually used to indicate something's difference from something else, or of itself over time. In both cases it is a measure of sameness or comparison where each thing is measured

in relation to some other. For Derrida, this sense of the term 'différence', which says that language's meaning lies in the difference between 'signs', is not adequate to discussing how meaning operates in language. He introduces the term 'différance', which is used to emphasise the notion of 'deferral' in the etymology of difference. For Derrida, *différance* stresses that there is never any complete correspondence between signifier and signified; meaning is always deferred. Deleuze's conception of difference is of 'difference-in-itself' and a shift in focus onto the particularity of things and moments in a way that undermines identity based on comparison to a category. In the case of Dada discussed in this thesis, language is used to emphasise difference-in-itself by freeing language from reference to 'sense', which means Dada poems resist resolution and remain open to interpretation indefinitely.

## **Immanence**

Immanence stands in contrast to transcendence. Transcendent forms of thought consist of relations of hierarchy from one thing 'to' another, as in the relationship of God to world or mind to body. On the other hand, immanence consists of relations 'in' a network of relations and forces, not between individual identities since identity relies on some external principle to ground it.

## **Smooth Space**

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth space stands in contrast to what they call striated space or State formation. A good example of striated space is the House of Commons in which individuals have clearly defined roles and positions, the Speaker of the House sits at the head of the chamber and the opposing parties sit on opposite sides with their leaders at the front. Striated space is structured by rules and functions so that, for example, it is impossible for the Speaker of the House to speak on behalf of the Prime Minister. On the other hand, smooth space is organised by the activity that takes place there so that the space and its occupants shape each other in immanent relation. A good example of smooth space is a house party during which relations are in flux. As groupings of people move about, break up, or re-form the qualities of those relations change too. In this last example, it can be seen how smooth space can actually occupy a space that is otherwise striated, with each room having a regular use that is more or less ignored during party use.

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## **KR-36 DVD**

Note: If the enclosed DVD is damaged or missing, a replacement can be ordered from:

[stuart@stuarttait.com](mailto:stuart@stuarttait.com)