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# **Managing applied theatre**

Negotiating tangled webs and navigating murky terrain

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## Abstract

Funding and financial relationships have significant implications for the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre practice. This research addresses concerns about the way in which such relationships constrain and compromise socially committed theatre making. Dependency on external funding can make theatre companies and practitioners more likely to align with the agendas of those who financially support their work. Aesthetic-pedagogic experimentation and radical political aspirations can be limited by the requirement to demonstrate effectiveness in ways that can be measured. Ultimately, accepting funding from the state and other donors is seen to compromise both the aesthetic ideal of artistic autonomy and the social ideal of serving the needs and interests of participants. Looking critically at such concerns with practitioners in applied theatre companies, this research identifies possibilities for negotiating a way through the tangled webs of economic arrangements and the murky terrain of relationships with particular funders.

Following a multi-sited ethnographic approach, fieldwork took place with three theatre companies in different national contexts, New Zealand, Hong Kong and the UK. In each company the research questions were addressed with key practitioners and through participant-observation of their day-to-day work. The three ethnographic narratives at the heart of this thesis provide a practice-based perspective on the ways in which applied theatre practices intersect and interrelate with local and globalised economies. Drawing on feminist economics and performance theory, these narratives examine the nuances and dynamics of particular relationships as they develop over time, making an array of economic practices visible, and revealing the coexistence of a plurality of values. Taking elements of J. K. Gibson-Graham's work on postcapitalist politics, this research proposes that managing diverse economic practices can involve 'resocialising' financial and funding relationships. Theatre companies attend to the political and ethical implications of funding and financial relationships and how they connect their practice into wider networks of interdependencies. In applied settings, then, management is not limited to rational models and practices, driven by profit and efficiency and carried out by designated 'managers'. It can also consist of arts-led, care-based practices, distributed throughout an organisation and sustained by particular kinds of love.

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# Introduction

## Finding a way in

### **...to the midst of practice**

You can tell that the minister has arrived by the sudden fluster of movement as she enters. She is small, fully made up, with loose hair, a long blue cardigan, and heels. I move quickly to the front of the room to sit with Briar and Peter opposite Caitlin and Natano. The guests take their seats. The judge, the minister and the Commissioner for Children are seated in the front row, behind them are representatives from the Department of Child Youth and Family, the police and a few others spread out. Probably 20 people in all. Someone closes the door. Peter makes eye contact with the Commissioner who raises his eyebrows, questioning, a slight nod from Peter confirms that we are ready to start. It is exactly 10:30am. The commissioner makes a brief speech. He carefully welcomes each of the important guests. He describes Everyday Theatre and the It's Not Ok campaign as central to New Zealand's challenge to family violence. He introduces Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd. We start the performance... (Research journal 01-02-2012)

The International Trade Advisor says that the coalition government are committed to pursuing exports. In the West Midlands they are working through the Chamber of Commerce to support regional industries. Paul and I sit opposite the advisor and the arts management consultant who set up the meeting. Paul describes C&T as an applied theatre company, invoking the analogy of applied science, theatre solving problems in the real world. 'We don't look like a theatre company' he says as he explains their use of digital and online media. The consultant points out that C&T's budget for travel indicates a commitment to international work. C&T has a specific budget allocation for developing international work over this financial year. Paul outlines C&T's projects in New York, Kenya, Malawi, Australia... The advisor grills Paul about C&T's turnover, the income they get for this overseas work and how they form international relationships. Paul says the priority is building trusting relationships with partners. After the meeting Paul points out that he had to take on a particular role in the meeting, anticipating what the trade advisor wanted... (Research journal 15-05-2012)

About ten FM Theatre Power members gather on the edge of the crowd of black-clad protestors, forming a loose circle. Bonnie translates for me. Today is the deadline set by the protesters for the Chief Executive and Legislative Council to withdraw the new national education curriculum. It seems unlikely that the demand will be met. Banky says that they need to agree how to respond. If the curriculum changes come in it may not be long before they will be unable to act at all. Banky wants to use the time they have already booked at a theatre venue this month to stage one of their plays that raises issues about education in Hong Kong, to reach an audience who would not come to the protest site. Others are concerned about the lack of time to prepare another show this month, or that the theatre audience is too limited. They want to respond first through street theatre, to stage something every night this week in Hong Kong's busy shopping districts... (Research journal 03-09-2012)

I begin in the midst of practice because that is where this research is based. It addresses questions that formed in practice, through moments such as the ones depicted above. After ten years of running participatory theatre projects in London I found that I needed to know more about the economies of that work. What were the implications of engaging with particular sources of funding, and in different business and management strategies? Undertaking a Masters in Applied Theatre in 2008 helped me to connect my questions to the concerns of the wider field. I found the academic discourse of applied theatre to be pervaded by critiques of the effects of funding relationships and financial conditions on the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of socially committed theatre

practice. However, what I continued to look for were ways to respond to these concerns that were relevant to my work in the field. This work involves creating drama and performance projects that engage with the needs and interests of different groups, institutions and communities, as well as generating the income and/or other resources needed to support that practice. The search for such insights took me back into the midst of practice, into the day-to-day work of three theatre companies: Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd. (ATCo) in New Zealand; C&T in the UK; and FM Theatre Power (好戲量) (FMTP) in Hong Kong. I looked critically with each company for practice-based knowledge about the ways in which funding and financial relationships are experienced and managed.

## **Intentions, questions, terminology, aims and methodology**

The intention of this research is to develop a complex understanding of the relationship between local and global economies and applied theatre practice based on the experiences and practices of people working in applied theatre companies. The research questions are:

What are the economies of applied theatre?

What is the relationship between local and global economies and the pedagogies, aesthetics, politics and ethics of applied theatre practice?

How is this relationship experienced and managed by those working in applied theatre companies?

Applied theatre describes an expansive family of socially committed, participatory drama and performance practices (Nicholson, 2005; Shaughnessy, 2012; Taylor, 2003; Thompson, 2006). Many of these practices take place in settings outside traditional performance venues including schools, hospitals, prisons and private businesses. I also include participatory practices in existing performance spaces that challenge the dominant discourses, activities and material conditions through which those spaces are configured. Typically, practitioners working in this field are committed to the belief that participating in drama or performance can facilitate learning, make a difference to the lives of individuals, build communities and/or contribute to social or political change (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 9). Applied theatre practices, however, do not all share common intentions, principles or techniques. Instead, sustaining an inclusive, informed and critical debate around different ideologies and practices is a key characteristic of this field (Nicholson, 2011a, pp. 242–243). This debate has included whether the terms applied drama, applied theatre and applied performance refer to distinctively different practices. In this thesis I use the term applied ‘theatre’ inclusively, to describe a range of drama, theatre and performance practices, both established and contemporary.

This research examines the economies of applied theatre. Applied theatre’s relationship with local and global economies can be framed within an economic narrative of self-interested, profit-driven, exchange-based competition. Engaging critically with the literature of feminist economic theory and performance

theory, however, has encouraged me to look beyond this narrative for other economies that might be in play (Gibson-Graham, 2006a; Schechner, 2003). It has challenged me to look at how applied theatre practices can both fit into and disrupt existing notions of value, commodification labour and exchange (Hughes, McNamara, & Kidd, 2011, p. 190).

In the title of this thesis I invoke two metaphors used for applied theatre's relationship with broad political-economic arrangements and with specific donors, 'tangled webs' (Balfour, 2009; Thompson, 2009) and 'murky terrain' (O'Connor, 2009). It is widely accepted that the pedagogical and political aims and aesthetic forms of applied theatre practices are inextricably linked to the socio-economic contexts in which they are produced (Balfour, 2009). This raises complex ethical questions for theatre companies as they adapt their organisational and creative practices to survive economic and political changes (Thompson, 2009, 2011). The economies of applied theatre extend beyond the immediate sites of practice, through local and national contexts, into powerful globalising processes (Nicholson, 2011b). This research draws attention to the ways in which applied theatre companies negotiate within this tangled web, developing organisational and creative practices that enable them to survive. In many cases, the relationship between a donor agency or sponsor and applied theatre practitioners is the nexus of the relationship between applied theatre practice and local, national and global economic arrangements. The conditions and dynamics of such relationships have implications for how the aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical values of applied practices are defined, articulated and enacted (S. J. Ahmed, 2002; Mundrawala, 2007). As a process that brings together theatre practitioners with diverse groups of participants there are always multiple interests being invested in applied theatre. While most applied theatre practitioners aspire to work in a way that responds to the interests and concerns of their participants, funding relationships can bring complex, contradictory and competing agendas into play (O'Connor, 2009). This research responds to concerns about the extent to which the agendas of funding agencies shift, "tame" or undermine the social or political strategies of theatre makers in applied settings by looking at how practitioners navigate the 'murky terrain' of their funding relationships (Neelands, 2007).

*Made to measure?*<sup>1</sup>  
Late capitalism  
Policies on social exclusion  
Tied to targets  
Demonstrate the impact  
Evaluate the impact.  
Reifying the radical potential  
of creativity and the imagination,  
What role is being played  
in the drive for profit?

*Fitting the Bill?*  
The free market  
Step in to fill this void  
Efficient service providers  
Cost effective  
Locally rooted  
Devised within the confines of  
Project briefs  
Parameters clearly determined the  
path  
What role is prescribed by  
the donor driven agenda?

*The vultures in the sky*<sup>3</sup>  
Caught up in a net of  
contradictions<sup>4</sup>  
Building up their own empires  
or  
Serving as pseudo-mercenaries  
Subtle manipulation  
Dependent  
Determined  
Domesticated by their donors  
to stage their adverts.<sup>5</sup>

*Commissioning transformation*<sup>6</sup>  
Donors infect  
The delicate process of translating  
aesthetic agendas into non-  
theatrical contexts.  
Governed and defined  
Diluted  
Addicted<sup>7</sup>  
Mercenaries<sup>8</sup>  
Missionaries<sup>9</sup>  
Half car salesman, half ideologue.

Watch out for the  
Agenda trap<sup>10</sup>  
Don't fall  
Prey to the agendas of the  
sponsors<sup>11</sup>  
Funders have  
Dubious ends<sup>12</sup>  
Don't become  
Unwitting dupes<sup>13</sup>

It is possible to work productively  
with donors...<sup>14</sup>  
An optimistic alternative...<sup>15</sup>  
At best... strong partnerships  
where the creativity agenda is  
honoured<sup>16</sup>  
The largest miracle unseen in the  
work<sup>17</sup>

[I assembled this found poem as  
part of my literature review process  
(Prendergast, 2006). The poem is  
comprised from short phrases that  
include some of the metaphors and  
idioms used to describe the  
implications of funding and  
financial relationships for applied  
theatre practice. Apart from the  
words in grey, all of the material in  
the poem is taken directly from the  
texts referenced in the footnotes.]

---

<sup>1</sup> Hughes and Ruding (2009, pp. 217–223)

<sup>2</sup> Mundrawala (2007, pp. 149–160)

<sup>3</sup> S. J. Ahmed (2007, p. 211)

<sup>4</sup> S. J. Ahmed (2002, pp. 214–216)

<sup>5</sup> S. J. Ahmed (2007, p. 211)

<sup>6</sup> Balfour (2009, pp. 347–357)

<sup>7</sup> Kelly (1984, p. 97 as quoted in Balfour, 2009, p. 352)

<sup>8</sup> S. J. Ahmed (2002, p. 214 as quoted in Balfour, 2009, p. 352)

<sup>9</sup> McDonnell (2005, p. 72 as quoted in Balfour 2009, p. 352)

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<sup>10</sup> Haddon (2006, p. 190)

<sup>11</sup> Prentki and Preston (2009, p. 14)

<sup>12</sup> O'Connor (2009, p. 583)

<sup>13</sup> O'Connor (2009, p. 583)

<sup>14</sup> Mundrawala (2007, p. 158)

<sup>15</sup> S. J. Ahmed (2002, p. 215)

<sup>16</sup> Balfour (2009, p. 351)

<sup>17</sup> O'Connor (2009, p. 596)

I use a poetic form to convey a sense of what it felt like when I first reviewed the literature at the start of the PhD process. I was left with a powerful sense of the financial economy as a determining, structuring, driving force in applied theatre. I found little hope or grounds for action. In these readings, economic imperatives seemed to be pervasive, spreading disease-like, infecting even potentially radical practices of creativity and imagination. Donors appeared as sinister characters, often anonymous, manipulative, coercive and sometimes outright exploitative. The practitioner, meanwhile, was an opportunistic vulture, an amoral mercenary, the irrational addict, or the 'dupe' being blindly manipulated. Less-corrupted practitioners found a way to continue to work in a confused and conflicted state. Practice was caught, constrained, compromised, set on a predetermined path, ineffectual. Other possibilities could be glimpsed but seemed rare, the exception to the norm, miraculous. I engage more fully with the nuanced arguments of the sources cited above in Chapter 2. For now I want to highlight how the metaphors and idioms used in these texts affected me as I commenced this research.

One aim of this research then is to do more than offer further evidence of how economic arrangements and funding relationships can constrain and compromise applied theatre practices. I also attempt to highlight positive impacts and other possible relationships. Two further aims are:

To develop a complex understanding of the ways in which applied theatre practices intersect and interrelate with local and globalised economies.

To create rich, detailed insights into the ways in which people working in applied theatre companies negotiate the relationship between their political, aesthetic, pedagogic and ethical values and the demands/constraints of financing the work.

## **Why this research?**

Applied theatre is a growing area of academic study as well as a body of practices that engage with diverse social contexts and sites. This research addresses concerns that have arisen about the implications that financial conditions and funding relationships have for applied theatre practice and for the people it involves. At the time of planning this research there was much speculation about the impact the global economic crisis of 2008 would have on the field (Christopher, 2011; Madden, 2009; O'Connor, 2011). Chapter 6 in particular contributes insights into how political and economic changes made after the crisis were affecting community and education-based theatre practices in the UK. In each of the sites of this research, theatre companies are finding ways to respond to the localised manifestations of neoliberal ideas that rationalised the global expansion of free market capitalism in the latter part of the twentieth century. Over this period

[a]lmost all states, from those newly minted after the collapse of the Soviet Union to old-style social democracies and welfare states such as New Zealand and Sweden, have embraced, sometimes voluntarily and in other instances in response to coercive pressures, some version of neoliberal theory and adjusted at least some policies and practices accordingly. (Harvey, 2005, p. 3)

Neoliberal ideas challenge the left wing politics of many practitioners involved in applied theatre (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). Furthermore, the neoliberalisation of policies in the arts, education and public sectors make many established approaches to educational, political and community theatre unviable (Nicholson, 2011b). At the same time neoliberalisation has presented new creative and financial opportunities for theatre work in educational, community and institutional settings (Mauder, 2013). This research gives an insight into how three theatre companies have responded to such challenges and opportunities.

A key concern in applied theatre is with “whose values the application of theatre-making serves and represents” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 5). Applied theatre practices combine pedagogic and artistic approaches to engage people in the active exploration of important social issues and processes. This work often involves the participation of under-represented and marginalised groups and challenges social injustices and inequalities. What is intended can vary from contributing to reducing the chances of someone reoffending to providing an opportunity for the experience of enjoyment and beauty (Thompson, 2011). Underpinning applied theatre interventions are certain values around what is ‘beneficial’ or ‘good for’ the participants and/or for the wider social context. Participants may be consulted or involved in deciding the aims of a project. In addition, many agencies and organisations may be invested in the project, bringing their different agendas to the work. Critiques suggest that the social intentionality that characterises most applied theatre practices makes them vulnerable to being coopted to serve the agendas of partner agencies or funders (Balfour, 2009). This is a particular concern when a company is dependent on a single source of income. Furthermore, fully discerning how any applied theatre project is situated within wide-reaching social, political and economic processes would seem to be impossible, making questionable the argument that rigorously researched intentions are the basis of ethical practice (Thompson, 2011). However, this research suggests that rather than assuming that applied practices will unwittingly become complicit with outside agendas, close attention should be paid to the precise ways in which theatre companies manage their economic relationships.

‘Economy’ is derived from the Greek “*oikonomikos*” meaning the “management or rule of a house or household” (Waring, 1999, p. 15). ‘What are the economies of applied theatre’ then, is a question about the ways in which its management is understood. This study contributes to the recent reconsideration of what constitutes management in applied theatre companies (Beirne, 2013; Mullen, 2013). The emergence of the arts manager as a distinct role can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century (Chong, 2010, p. 2). Since then arts management has become both a specialised profession and significant area of academic study (Palmer, 1998). The role of the arts manager has been widely critiqued. However, little critical attention has been given to the experiences of managers in applied settings beyond a small number of reflective accounts and critical studies of management in community arts (Beirne & Knight, 2002, 2007; Haddon, 2006; O’Connor, 2011). This study is significant as a focused and sustained enquiry into this area.

Existing analysis of funding relationships tends to conclude that “...the control of the means of production goes a long way towards determining what is produced even when the producers would have it otherwise” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 14). Having engaged closely with the day-to-day work of three theatre companies in three different countries I argue that funding and financial relationships can be ‘managed’. Here I use ‘manage’ carefully, not to refer to objective, technical and rational systems and models that can be transferred into any work setting to improve “efficiency and effectiveness” but to an open-ended process of negotiation and navigation (Beirne & Knight, 2007, p. 592). I argue that management in applied theatre companies is ‘arts led’, drawing on an ‘ethos’ that combines aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical values. This ‘ethos’ emerges through particular networks of relationships. To understand the economies of applied theatre attention needs to be paid to the particular dynamics of such relationships as they change over time.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a significant reconceptualising of research in theatre and performance where the boundaries between research and practice, between researcher and researched, and between the different identities of the researcher, are complex and in flux (Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011). Research practices in applied theatre are expanding beyond qualitative, quantitative and reflective practitioner methodologies, responding to developments in practice as research and other emerging, arts-based and performative methodologies (Hughes et al., 2011). At the same time, arguments have been made that there is not enough research (in drama education in particular) that is ‘useable’, providing ‘reliable’ evidence that can influence policy change or satisfy funding organisations (O’Toole, 2010). There is a persistent tension between calls for research methodologies suited to exploring the ambiguities and instabilities of applied performance practices, and arguments for approaches that effectively demonstrate the importance and impact of applied practices to those outside of the field. This tension has “led to a hybrid methodological domain for applied theatre research” (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 190). This study contributes to the development of research in applied theatre by addressing key methodological and ethical issues involved in researching other people’s practice.

To pursue the aims of this study a ‘practised methodology’ (Hughes et al., 2011) and ethnographic methods were selected to balance a theoretical analysis of the ways local and global economies affect applied theatre practice with the critical, practice-based knowledge of those working in the field. In each company the research questions were explored actively with the people working there as well as through participating in and observing their everyday practices. Writing these experiences and practices in a way that resonates with the complex lived experience of working in an applied theatre company has been a central challenge of this research. I have drawn on forms of Creative Analytic Practice to work playfully with my research texts (journal entries, interview recordings, transcripts, organisational documents, images and video) to create written and visual forms intended to generate different ways of thinking, to present a range of perspectives and to produce new questions (L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005).

## Chapter summaries

### Chapter 1

#### **The shifting shape of applied theatre**

This chapter situates the researcher, research project and practice of the three companies within the field of applied theatre. It introduces key debates within the field that are of relevance to this study. In the final section, I clarify what I mean by the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre, making links to the practices of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power.

### Chapter 2

#### **The economies of applied theatre**

This chapter reviews existing literature that relates to the research topic and questions. In doing so it builds a rationale for the specific scope and approach of my research. I unpack my three research questions showing how each responds to key concerns that emerge in the academic literature of applied theatre. In the first section I explain what I mean by the ‘economies of applied theatre’. I look to feminist economics and performance studies for critical theories that might enable me to develop alternative economic narratives. I then examine existing concerns about the extent to which applied theatre practice is determined by socio-economic arrangements (tangled webs). I argue that to get a fuller understanding of the relationship between applied theatre and local and global economies it is necessary to move between abstracted critiques of policy changes *and* the “messier story” of practice (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 103). In the next section, I identify key concerns about the effects of funding relationships on the aesthetics, politics, pedagogies and ethics of applied theatre (murky terrain). Finally, I critically examine the limited available literature on management and applied theatre and make a case for why further study in this area is important.

### Chapter 3

#### **Researching (other people’s) practice**

This chapter addresses the methodological challenge of researching other people’s practice. Extending slightly Hughes et al.’s notion of a practised methodology, I suggest that applied theatre research needs to engage responsively with both organisational and creative practice. To achieve this, I propose three dimensions of performativity when researching in organisations that apply theatre. My research questions call for a methodological approach that brings together a critical examination of the relationship between local and globalised economies and a practice-based understanding of how this relationship is experienced and managed. For this reason, I take an ethnographic approach, drawing specifically from organisational and multi-sited ethnographic methodologies. The second part of this chapter provides a rationale for the methods used in this study.

### Chapter 4

#### **“Practised” ethics: Reciprocity, trust and criticality**

Discussions of ethics in applied theatre suggest that considerable care should be taken in forming relationships with partners and participants and negotiating these relationships throughout the life of a

project and beyond (Nicholson, 2005). In this chapter I argue that a similar quality of rigour be applied to the formation of research relationships with applied theatre companies by developing a ‘practised ethics’ based in specific conceptions of reciprocity, trust and criticality.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Taking care and playing it safe, managing Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd.**

This chapter addresses concerns about the ways in which funding can determine, constrain and compromise practice. Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd. is a theatre company based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Since 2003 it has received funding from a government department for Everyday Theatre, a programme about family violence and child abuse. This chapter presents an ethnographic narrative about the ways in which ATCo has experienced and managed changes to this funding relationship. Over nine years, tensions have emerged between the artistic and social justice values that informed the creation of Everyday Theatre and the rational management systems that have since been implemented by the funder to manage the contractual relationship. With the company I reflect critically on the effects of these changes. I then draw on theories of management as an ‘arts-led’ and care-based activity to highlight the particular strategies used by the company to navigate the terrain between its artistic and organisational values and the requirements of the funder.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Improvising with the vernacular, managing C&T**

This chapter addresses concerns about the ways in which applied theatre adapts to shifts in political and economic contexts. C&T is a theatre company based in Worcester, UK. The company has developed an integrated business model and form of creative practice that is highly responsive to economic and cultural change. This chapter presents an ethnographic narrative about the ways in which this model enables C&T to negotiate changes to the arts and education landscapes in the UK. Through a series of ‘flashbacks’ I suggest that over a period of time when many other TIE companies closed, C&T survived by maintaining a close relationship between the form of its performance activities and wider economic arrangements. In a series of short ‘scenes’ I then depict the concerns and questions that arose for the company as they adapted their established way of working to changes to arts and education policy in the UK since 2008. C&T’s creative practices respond to the changing vernacular of contemporary youth and digital cultures. Likewise, C&T’s organisational practices work with the vernacular of the changing cultural economy. C&T negotiates drastic changes to the economic and policy context in the UK by skilfully and critically working with this vernacular to generate ‘new’ pedagogic, aesthetic and organisational forms.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Being a difficult fit, managing FM Theatre Power**

This chapter critically examines the ways in which a new funding relationship led FMTP to reconstitute and reimagine themselves<sup>18</sup> as both fitting and not fitting into a political and economic system to which

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<sup>18</sup> FM Theatre Power define themselves as a collective. In writing FM Theatre Power I use ‘they’ and ‘are’ rather than ‘its’ and ‘is’ to better reflect the composition of the company.

they are ideologically opposed. It also returns to some of the methodological and ethical challenges of this research and reflects on how these manifested in the process of writing this ethnographic narrative. FM Theatre Power is a theatre company based in Tai Kok Tsui, Hong Kong. The company attempts to translate the ideals of people's theatre into a multiplicity of performance practices situated in spaces throughout the city. The same ideals inform the way in which they imagine themselves as an inclusive, egalitarian collective. Historically the company has worked outside of the mainstream arts funding system in Hong Kong. They try to work with as few financial demands and constraints as possible. Receiving a grant from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council was widely perceived as an indication that the company were moving closer to the establishment. I look with FM Theatre Power at how they experienced and managed this relationship. In doing so, I explore Gibson-Graham's (2006b) argument for the importance of recognising alternative economies and consider the difficulty of sustaining organisational practices that do not fit with the expectations of funders.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Discussion**

The first part of this chapter returns briefly to aspects of my methodology to consider what might be considered 'findings' when working with a practised methodology. Then I bring each of my three research questions back into focus. Chapters 5–7 address the research questions by zooming in and out of practice in each research site (Nicolini, 2009). This chapter identifies connections that emerge when looking across the three sites, but also where disjuncture exists (Weis, Fine, & Dimitriadis, 2009). In conclusion, I consider whether the findings I have arrived at meet three 'markers of validity': resonance, reflexivity and repercussions.

## **Conclusion**

### **Metaphors for moving forward**

This chapter takes the form of three poems that distil the ethnographic narratives at the heart of this thesis.

# Chapter 1

## The shifting shape of applied theatre

When the nature of things is unknown, or the notion unsettled and indefinite, and various in various minds, the words by which such notions are conveyed, or such things denoted, will be ambiguous and perplexed. And such is the fate of hapless lexicography, that not only darkness, but light, impedes and distresses it; things may be not only too little, but too much known, to be happily illustrated. (S. Johnson, 2003, pp. 45–46)

In writing ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power, one challenge is to describe their practice without making it ‘too little’ or ‘too much known’. For these companies, explaining their work is a daily challenge. Only by experiencing their practice first hand are others likely to ‘get it’.

**Molly Mullen, Researcher:** How would you describe your work to someone who has never seen it... say... to someone who might fund the work....?

**Stephen Dallow, ATCo National Programmes Manger:** The opening line is that they have to come and see it, to understand it... (Stephen 05-03-2012)

**Wong Yee Man, FMTP Chairperson:** I don’t know how to describe it because FMTP is quite different to other companies, it is a kind of different way, in this society it is a different kind of voice. (Yee Man 08-10-2012)

**Max Allsup, C&T Assistant Director:** If people will understand what I say when I say we’re an applied theatre company that is innovative in their use of digital technology, then I’ll use that sentence... (Max 03-07-2012)

**Stephen:** Funders don’t know what applied theatre is, you can lose them if you try to explain it, I have to down play it. (Research journal 10-02-2012)

**Bonnie Chan, FMTP Research Director:** You can say that we don’t really emphasise to other people about that, but we know we’re doing those things. (Bonnie 28-08-2012)

**Paul Sutton, C&T Artistic Director:** ...we’re a theatre company, but we’re not about putting on plays, we’re not about acting... (Paul 21-05-2012)

[CAP. From multiple interviews and research journal entries]

Like these practitioners I make a considered choice about the terminology I use to describe the work of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power. The choice I make has consequences for how this study and the companies are positioned by others. For reasons I will outline below, I describe the myriad participatory and performance practices that these three companies create as ‘applied theatre’.

Conventionally, defining something involves “[t]he setting of bounds or limits ... stating exactly what a thing is, or what a word means” (definition, 2011). For particular reasons applied theatre remains an ‘unsettled and indefinite’ term, its boundaries contested. Partly, this polysemy is due to how the term came into use as “a collective and collecting term whose use has emerged before a strict definition has been agreed” (Thompson, 2006, p. 14).

In the 1990s academics and practitioners in the UK, Australia and the US began to use applied theatre to describe, categorise and analyse drama and performance practices created within or for educational and community contexts. At the time it seemed to be an “inclusive term”, not denoting any particular purpose or technique (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 10). It also lacked the problematic associations that had accumulated around terms such as ‘theatre for development’ and ‘community theatre’ (Thompson, 2006). This non-specificity allowed conceptual and practical connections to be made between seemingly disparate forms of practice, identifying “shared concerns and common principles” (Nicholson, 2011a, p. 241). Critics suggested, however, that the term quickly became too specific, being used to describe only certain “*types of practice*” with specific political intentions [italics in original] (Ackroyd, 2007, p. 7).

Applied theatre emerged in an era when education, the arts and academia were increasingly required to conform to the principles of a free market economy. Adopting the term was part of a continued commitment to the practice and study of social and political theatre forms in the face of this perceived threat (Nicholson, 2011a). At the same time, its apparent utility in social, educational and corporate settings meant applied theatre ‘gained currency’ in higher education contexts increasingly required to demonstrate their contribution to the economy by preparing students for the job market (Ackroyd, 2007, p. 7). These coexisting explanations situate applied theatre in an “ambivalent position” within the academy, which has contributed to the continual unsettling of meanings and boundaries (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 189).

## Intents and purposes

Having decided to stay in Auckland to complete her PhD, Molly and her partner are being interviewed for a room in a flat. It’s 7.30pm. The room is small, bright, warm and painted yellow. It is dark and raining outside. Three housemates sit around a table in the centre of the room, another sits on a sofa. The conversation turns to what people do for a living.

**Rowan:** So, what is your PhD about? [Pause, the housemates look at Molly]

**Molly:** I’m in the Faculty of Education [looks at the housemates, checking whether to say more, they appear interested]. My area is applied theatre... [pause, observes the response of the housemates].

**Xing:** mmmm [smiles politely]...?

**Molly:** That’s drama, where it’s being used in different contexts, schools, communities... for social change... as a learning or development process. Sometimes in schools, but in other settings... it’s educational, in a way, but not always in the classroom... erm...

**Xing:** Aa-ah. [Turns to Molly’s partner] What about you? What do you do?

[CAP. From research journal 09-01-2012]

ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power share a belief in the potential of drama and performance to make a difference to the lives of individuals, to build communities and contribute to societal change. They create theatre with particular social intentions, including creating a safe space in which children and adults can

talk about family violence and child abuse (ATCo); creating globally literate citizens (C&T); and promoting civil participation and freedom of expression (FM Theatre Power). Such intentionality has been proposed as applied theatre's defining characteristic (Ackroyd, 2000, para. 2). In making this proposal, Ackroyd acknowledges that the shaping of theatrical form around particular intentions had taken place across cultures and throughout histories. The term applied theatre, she suggests, appears as a "new label" for such practices (Ackroyd, 2000, para. 4). At no point does applied theatre stop being 'theatre', nor is any form of theatre ever free of intentionality. To avoid reinforcing a binary between theatre that is purely for 'art's sake' and that which serves an instrumental function Ackroyd presents the relationship between 'theatre' and 'applied theatre' as a continuum. She then adds two further distinguishing features of applied theatre, efficacy and participation, which are depicted as intersecting continua onto which different forms of applied theatre can be mapped. Ackroyd suggests that applied theatre practices would be located towards the top right of these axes:

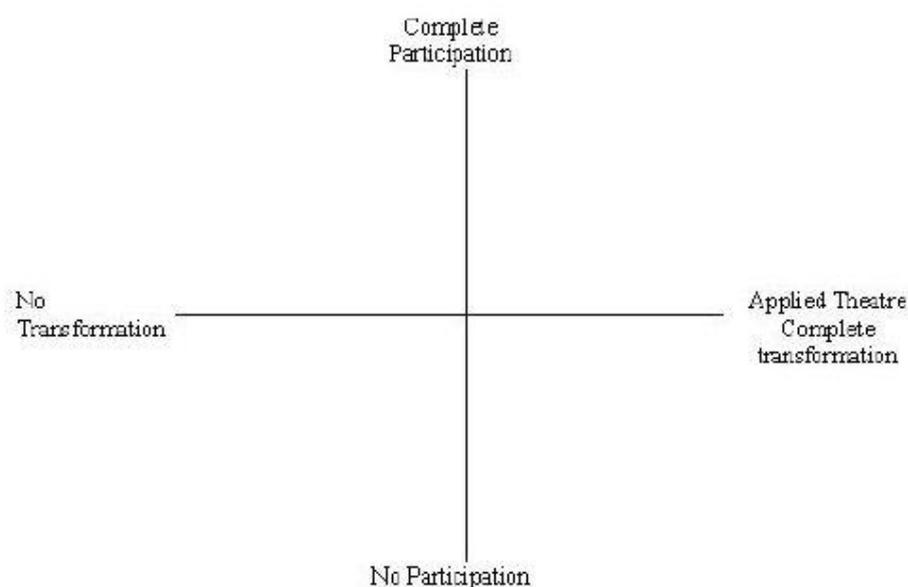


Figure 1. Applied theatre grid.

Reprinted from "Applied theatre: Problems and possibilities", by J. Ackroyd, 2000, *Applied Theatre Researcher / IDEA Journal*, 1. Retrieved from [http://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/81796/Ackroyd.pdf](http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/81796/Ackroyd.pdf). Copyright 2000 by Griffith University. Reprinted with permission.

Ackroyd draws on Schechner (1981) in attributing efficacy to performances created purposefully to change, or transform something through the artistic medium. Taylor (2003) takes up the concept of 'transformation' as a definitive quality of applied theatre. He suggests that theatre can be a "transformative agent", provoking participants to critically reflect on their relationship to their world, shifting ingrained ways of thinking and acting (Taylor, 2003, p. 1). Others are more cautious about whether theatre can (or should) be used to cause significant, permanent change. Nicholson (2005), for example, suggests the

metaphor of ‘transportation’ to indicate that applied theatre is more likely to lead to temporary and unpredictable changes (p. 12). The idea that critical reflection is the basis of change is also questioned. Aesthetic experiences are seen to have political, pedagogical and personal importance in themselves, not just in their social or cognitive effects (Balfour, 2012). Thompson (2011), for example, argues that small joyous performances within inhumane systems and damaged environments might “pick away at the inequitable structure of our felt world” (2011, p. 180). The idea that applied theatre can contribute to change has endured. What is meant by ‘change’ and the process by which it is achieved is continually in question.

## People and places

Molly is discussing a scholarship proposal with her PhD Supervisor. Sitting in his office at the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Education, they look at a one page document on the table.

**Peter:** If the application is assessed at a faculty level you need to be more explicit about the connection between applied theatre and education.

**Molly:** I could add ‘pedagogical’ in here [points with a pen]...

**Peter:** Yes...

**Molly:** I could add schools here: ‘I am using the term applied theatre to describe a range of participatory drama practices that take place in communities and institutions’...?’

**Peter:** Yes. You’ll have to address this whole business of what applied theatre means, but you can do that... [continues looking at the document.]

[CAP. From research journal 09-01-2012]

I describe ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power’s practice as applied theatre because they share an ambition to making theatre that reconfigures relationships with particular people and places, rather than because they use a common set of techniques.

Countering Ackroyd’s focus on intentionality, Rasmussen (2000) argues that what distinguishes applied theatre is the way in which attention to specific contexts shapes the aesthetic process. Applied theatre practices typically take place in locations outside formal performance venues, in schools, refugee camps, corporate offices, museums, hospitals and prisons (Mackey & Whybrow, 2007). The discourses and practices of these contexts are ‘translated’ and ‘adapted’ to create original drama and performance practices (Thompson, 2006, p. 15). At the same time applied practices typically seek to be “responsive to ordinary people and their stories” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 9). Understanding applied theatre as a practice of responding to particular contexts and groups of participants has provoked a number of critical debates. Rasmussen identifies the risk of setting up more mutually exclusive categories:

On the one end of the continuum you will have the dramatic applications, context-related to such an extent that they have lost their aesthetic power and autonomy. On the other end you

will find the high-status theater art where autonomy is mistaken to mean social detachment, contextual insensibility, elitism, protection of canon and profession... (Rasmussen, 2000, para. 3)

Even Rasmussen, however, cannot fully escape the seductiveness of this binary. He goes on to propose that while responding to context ideally leads to the creation of “powerful aesthetic procedures”, over time it inevitably decentres attention to the aesthetic, leading to less powerful or sophisticated artistic experiences (Rasmussen, 2000, para. 5). This alignment of aesthetic power and autonomy is implicit within many of the concerns about the effects of financial and funding relationships on applied theatre practice detailed in the next chapter.

Applied theatre, then, is a term used to describe theatre practices with political and pedagogical intentions, committed to the belief that theatre can effect change in some way, at some level. These practices take place in diverse contexts, often involving groups who have been marginalised or disadvantaged by particular social discourses and systems. Applied theatre is not defined by a single philosophical or practical approach, but is characterised by an informed and critical debate.

## **Rhizomatic imaginings**

I have a nagging concern that the act of locating practices on continua and axes limits the possibilities imaginable for applied theatre. Feminist theorist Barad (2001) argues that while various spatial imagery and metaphors are effectively used in processes of researching, analysing and explaining phenomena they are constrained by a “Euclidean geometric imaginary” (p. 76). Euclidean geometries have shaped how we imagine phenomena within space in time:

The view of space as a container/context for matter in motion—spatial coordinates mapped via projections along axes that set up a metric for tracking the locations of the inhabitants of the container, and time divided up in evenly spaced increments marking and progression of events—pervades much Western epistemology. (Barad, 2001, p. 76)

I recognise that Ackroyd (2000) uses continua to avoid establishing a binary between ‘theatre’ and ‘applied theatre’, illuminating qualities that are shared by all theatre practices to a greater or lesser degree. The categories she proposes and their associated qualities are not mutually exclusive (Ackroyd, 2000). Similarly, the continuum imagined by Rasmussen (2000), is intended to caution against simple binaries. In both cases, however, two polarised concepts become inversely related; an increase in the qualities associated with one end is matched by a decrease in the qualities of the other. The tensions set up by these continua continue to re-emerge in critical analyses of applied theatre practice. The idea that practices claiming a strong functionality, for example, are “aesthetically sparse”, that focusing on the efficacy of a theatre process will take focus away from its aesthetic quality, persists (Thompson, 2011, p. 3).

There is perhaps, a need for a new spatial imaginary for applied theatre. Nicholson (2011a) describes applied theatre as having “emerged haphazardly and spread like a rhizome to fill a gap in the lexicon” (p.

241). A rhizome is a particular kind of plant stem that spreads underground, sending out roots and shoots at intervals. A rhizome provides a geometric imaginary with multiple dimensions and diverse forms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 6–7). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the rhizome is characterised by “principles of connection and heterogeneity” (p. 7). It is different from the root of a tree, which fixes a plant to a certain point, instead, “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). Linguistically, the concept of the rhizome “shatter[s] the linear unity of the word” (p. 6), of knowledge and “ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (p. 7). A rhizome evolves, shifting form and shape like spilt water, like animal burrows, “like a patch of oil” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). Here I apply the concept of the rhizome in a way that is consistent with Deleuze’s invitation to use his theory as a “box of tools” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1972/1977, p. 208). As Massumi (2013) explains in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze wanted artists and politicians, as well as philosophers, to carry momentum from his concepts into their fields or mediums (p. xiii). Likewise, in considering how to work with Deleuze’s concepts, Colombat (1991) proposes that “*A Thousand Plateaus* invents new tools for thinking” (p. 12). I take the concept of the rhizome as a tool for thinking beyond some of the binaries that have limited theorising about funding and management in applied theatre.

Consistent with a rhizomatic imaginary, recent writings test the limits of binary thinking, tangling applied theatre’s complex root system with emerging performance practices (Thompson, 2011). New theoretical perspectives provoke a reconsideration of the relationship between aesthetic, pedagogical, political and ethical imperatives in applied theatre (Balfour, 2012; Thompson, 2011). At the same time the meaning of applied theatre appears to be evolving in different directions as it is increasingly used by practitioners to describe their work (Cohen-Cruz, 2010; Thompson, 2011). This observation is accompanied by a degree of concern. Nicholson (2005) encourages an understanding of applied theatre as a discursive practice, “a way of *conceptualising and interpreting* theatrical and cultural practices that are motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others” [emphasis added] (Nicholson, 2005, p. 16). She is concerned that professional practitioners claim applied theatre as a specific form of practice in which they have expertise (Nicholson, 2011a). As discussed above, I share Nicholson’s (2011a) caution about applied theatre being affixed to any single approach or way of working. Based on this research, however, I would suggest that each of the companies sustains an interrelationship between theorizing, researching and practicing, contributing to the expansion of critical debate rather than its closure.

In working with the three theatre companies presented below I do not claim to represent the diversity of drama and performance practices that could be described as applied theatre. Nor do I suggest that only practice that resembles the work of these companies should be described as applied theatre. It is because each of these three companies continually questions the limits of their practice that they were selected as research participants. Their boundary testing offered a rich and provocative context for my inquiry.

## **Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand**

**Peter:** We're a theatre company that doesn't work in theatre buildings and the kind of theatre we make is participatory... we work with others to make theatre about significant social and political issues. We're motivated to do that because we're still hopeful that the world might be a better place. (Peter 13-03-2012)

ATCo is a small theatre company operating out of an office in the Blockhouse Bay Community Centre in West Auckland. The company creates participatory theatre programmes for schools and community settings. It often works in partnership with government and non-governmental agencies to address social issues. Since 1999, ATCo has created projects with the Ministry of Social Development's Department of Child Youth and Family, the police, The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, Waikato Public Health, and Bio Security New Zealand. Typically these projects are delivered through a network of partnerships with local education and community organisations. At the core of the company are co-directors, Peter and Briar O'Connor, their daughter Caitlin O'Connor, who facilitates and develops projects for ATCo, and National Programmes Manager, Stephen Dallow. ATCo also contracts arts practitioners to work on specific projects. At the time of my research this included Natano Keni, a trained actor who had worked with ATCo for over two years.

## **C&T, Worcester, UK**

**Paul:** ...we use drama and digital media to inspire, educate and empower, even though our roots are in theatre we operate as a network of partnerships across the country, working across the curriculum, in the extended day and with the local community, but more importantly allowing all of those disparate organisations to collaborate in what we call the Network collaborations. (Paul 21-05-2012)

C&T is an independent theatre company working out of two offices at the University of Worcester. The company combines drama with digital and social media to create interactive learning experiences for young people, schools, colleges, universities and other organisations. It describes these hybrid forms as Dramatic Properties (DPs) or, more recently, Applications. C&T works across the UK and internationally. Paul Sutton, C&T's Artistic Director, works full time directing the company's artistic, educational, research and business activities. Sylvia Cahill, part time Finance Manager, is responsible for financial, organisational and business administration. Max Allsup, Assistant Director, supports Paul with research and development, relationship management and running small-scale projects. C&T employs 'animateurs', practitioners who develop and facilitate projects within partner schools. Two animateurs, Fiona J. Burgess and Stephen Burke, allowed me to observe their practice. The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for C&T's operation as a limited company and registered charity. Five board members were interviewed for this study: Trevelyan Wright, Michelle Knight, Kris Darby, Phil Jackson and Richard Allsup. C&T also works with freelance artists, designers and technical experts to develop new projects, technologies and software applications.

## **FM Theatre Power, Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China**

**Bonnie:** ...we are the group that do street performance ... no other theatre companies do street performance regularly in Hong Kong. We do community theatre, workshops and plays in the theatre. We always believe in the principle of people's theatre: theatre for the people, of the people, by the people. (Bonnie 03-10-2012)

FM Theatre Power are a collective of theatre makers and activists. They work from the Drama Factory, their studio theatre in an industrial unit in Tai Kok Tsui, Hong Kong. They produce plays and musicals, devised theatre, street theatre, Playback and Playforward theatre, education and community-based arts projects, films and books. The company has no permanent employees. Typically all members work for the company without pay, making a living in other ways. Members who contribute to the development of FM Theatre Power over a sustained period of time are known as 'core members'. Some core members have job titles that indicate their main area of responsibility. Other members participate in the company on an occasional basis. Eight core members participated in this research: Banky Yeung Ping Kei, Artistic Director; Mo Lai Yan Chi, President; Fung Sai Kuen, Assistant Artistic Director; Bonnie Chan, Research Director; Chan Yu Kwan Yukko, Design Director; Leon Chan, Director of Stage Management; Tsz On Mario Chan and David Lui. In addition, three members of FMTP's board were interviewed: Wong Yee Man, Mok Chiu Yu and Estella Wong Yuen Ping.

### **Aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics**

Central to the argument of this thesis is the assertion that applied theatre brings together:

Aesthetics: the sensory, affective and embodied practices of drama, theatre and performance;

Pedagogy: a praxis of teaching and learning;

Politics: commitment to social justice and/or social change;

Ethics: concern with the responsibilities of artists involved in processes of intervention, collaboration and representation.

My intention is not to offer a definitive model for applied theatre. Nor do I suggest that applied theatre is comprised of just four separable elements. Doing so would close down the rhizomatic imaginary I have just argued for. Rather, I develop a provisional framework that will enable me to attend to the different imperatives of applied theatre practice and the ways in which they relate to local and global economies. I will now briefly expand these four areas, drawing on the academic literature of applied theatre and examples from the practice of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power.

## **Aesthetics**

Applied theatre practices are aesthetic activities, concerned with creating sensory, affective and embodied experiences. Prendergast and Saxton (2009) are careful to point out that applied theatre draws on drama and performance practices that celebrate and affirm the status quo as well as those that challenge or “undermine socio-political norms” (p. 8). They trace the aesthetic lineage of applied theatre into social events, rituals, rites and carnivals, socially sanctioned opportunities for established social roles to be temporarily disrupted (p. 7). At the same time, applied theatre owes much to twentieth century theatre makers, practitioners who broke with established staging conventions, plot structures, actor/character and the relationship between performer and audience to create politically and socially engaged theatre forms. More recently, Shaughnessy (2012) and McAvinchey (2013, 2014), draw attention to affiliations between applied performance in community contexts and contemporary performance practices that explore different forms of audience engagement and social intervention (Shaughnessy, 2012, pp. xv–xvi). What connects these practices is the belief that as aesthetic experiences drama, theatre and performance have an important purpose in the lives of individuals and societies.

For Taylor (2003) the transformative potential of applied theatre is based in the creation of a ‘critical distance’ between the spectator and performance so that the spectator can critically reflect on the performance or their experience in the drama and consider alternative possibilities (Taylor, 2003). This argument demonstrates the influence of Bertolt Brecht’s dialectical aesthetics on applied theatre. Brecht aimed to bring about social change through theatre. He proposed specific aesthetic techniques for estranging audiences from characters and their actions so that they might question their social and historical causes. Brecht wanted to prevent the audience from seeing characters as caught in an inevitable series of events, and instead to see every action as contingent, alterable (Brooker, 2007, p. 221). Brecht’s aesthetic theories have influenced many applied theatre practitioners, including Augusto Boal (1979). However, Boal believed that for theatre to change society it needs to do more than make audiences aware of the contingencies of dominant social systems, it should also involve audiences physically in acting out possibilities for changing those systems. Boal’s vision of theatre as social action informs FM Theatre Power’s reworking of Playback Theatre, described above (Boal, 1979, p. 155). Like Boal, FM Theatre Power seek an aesthetic that connects a critical analysis of unjust social systems, participation in drama or performance, and social or political action (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012).

Applied theatre has a ‘participatory aesthetic’. It involves experimentation with the relationship between performer and spectator, facilitator and participant to create participatory or interactive experiences (Shaughnessy, 2012, p. 40). C&T combines drama and digital technologies to create “interactive audience participation within live and mediated performance” (Carroll, Anderson, & Cameron, 2006, p. 75). Responding to the central place of digital and online technologies in many young people’s lives, C&T looks for the potential in different technologies and media formats to expand interactive and collaborative relationships between young people within and across different settings.

Understanding applied theatre as an ‘aesthetic experience’ challenges the binaries of aesthetic quality versus instrumental function. A. Jackson (2007) suggests that “the aesthetic refers both to that quality of the work that makes its appeal directly to the sense-perceptions of those who read or watch it, and to the response itself” (A. Jackson, 2007, p. 37). He draws on a range of theorists to distinguish between the terms “artistic” and “aesthetic” (p. 37). The former describes objects and practices assigned cultural value, emphasising aesthetic quality as a property inherent in the artwork (p. 37). The latter describes an activity or experience that addresses the emotions through the senses (A. Jackson, 2007, p. 37). An aesthetic experience, then, creates a bodily, sensory and cognitive/intellectual response, but is more than a “means towards a larger end” (A. Jackson, 2007, p. 28):

at its best, theatre that aims to educate or influence can truly do so *only* if it values entertainment, the artistry and craftsmanship that are associated with resonant, powerful theatre, and the aesthetic qualities that - by definition - will appeal to our senses. (A. Jackson, 2007, pp. 27–28)

ATCo’s Everyday Theatre project has been described as a model of critical praxis, consistent with the aesthetic ambitions of Brecht and Boal (Holland, 2009). However, Nicholson (2009), suggests that Everyday Theatre’s power also lies in the opportunity it gives students to experience and explore the “complex and often conflicting emotions” of fear and shame involved in situations of abuse and violence in families (p. 575). Playful interactions, unpredictable felt responses and the experience of powerful emotions are now seen to be crucial to the political and pedagogic possibilities of drama and performance (Shaughnessy, 2012).

### **Pedagogies**

Applied theatre is a pedagogic praxis, concerned with the educational potential of theatre and the ways in which participating in drama and performance facilitates learning. In the most general sense, pedagogy describes the practice of teaching and the beliefs or theories that inform that practice (pedagogy, 2013). In applied theatre, the term ‘praxis’ is used to indicate “a uniting of theory with practice as action” (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 192). Praxis includes the critical interrogation of the “rationale for practice” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 39). Applied theatre is not just concerned with the ‘how’ of putting pedagogical theories into practice, but also with what knowledge and meanings are produced by different drama and performance practices and to what purpose (Nicholson, 2005, p. 38).

In applied theatre meanings are ‘made’, knowledge and identities ‘produced’ through aesthetic experience (Balfour & Woodrow, 2013). This requires a dynamic interrelationship between aesthetics and pedagogy. Ellsworth (2005) defines pedagogy as “the means and conditions, the environments and events of knowledge in the making” (p. 1). While all aesthetic experiences might be understood as learning experiences in this broad sense, Ellsworth argues that not all aesthetic experiences are pedagogic (Ellsworth, 2005). Particular kinds of aesthetic experiences, “events, objects and environments”, are “pedagogically charged” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 22). This requires thinking about pedagogy as:

the artful or banal orchestrations of its materials or ... of forces, sensations, stories, invitations, habits, media, time, space, ideas, languages, objects, images, and sounds intended, precisely, to move the materiality of minds/brains and bodies into relation with other material elements of our world. (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 24)

ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power each work with the material and aesthetic elements of theatre, drama and performance with “pedagogical intent”, to create the means and conditions for knowledge making to occur (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 10).

The pedagogies of applied theatre have been mapped by Nicholson (2005, 2011b). Nicholson (2005) focuses on pedagogies in which learning serves a wider social purpose, be that revolutionary action or more efficient productivity. She connects applied theatre’s commitment to learning processes that are democratic and critical to pedagogical ideas from the Marxist-informed critical literacy work of Brazilian educator Freire (1996), and the neo-Marxist critical pedagogies of American theorists Giroux (2005) and McLaren (2002). She is cautious about the apparent synergies between applied theatre’s pedagogic claims and those of performance management processes designed to empower individuals within workplaces, emphasising creativity, self-motivation and collaboration as qualities needed by workers in contemporary capitalist economies (Nicholson, 2005, pp. 46–51). For Nicholson (2011b), practitioners need to be attentive to the relationship between capitalism and pedagogy. A relationship that is apparent, for example, in the alignment of creativity in schools and the need to prepare children for a twenty-first century global workforce by developing entrepreneurship, the ability to think innovatively, creating new products and services (Nicholson, 2005, pp. 94–95).

The pedagogic potential of drama lies in the experience of its “material elements, of bodies and voices in space and the physical embodiment of knowledge and understanding” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 57). The sensation of physically doing something is central to learning in many drama pedagogies (Nicholson, 2011b). FM Theatre Power describe theatre as a platform on which existing boundaries can be broken down, bringing different people and groups into dialogue (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). In one version of their play *Hi Education* the company addressed the phenomenon of private tutors in Hong Kong acquiring a celebrity-like status. This production was co-created with students from a range of backgrounds and some willing tutors with the aim of exploring what had become a “black and white” debate in a more nuanced way (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). Here dialogue, as a process of learning about and with others, depends for FM Theatre Power on bringing people physically into the same space not just to talk to each other but to play and create together (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012).

The pedagogies of applied theatre tend to be responsive to the cultural contexts in which they are developed. Many of the pedagogical approaches mapped by Nicholson have been reinterpreted in different eras and locations. Everyday Theatre, for example, enacts elements of Freirian critical pedagogy, creating a space for dialogic exchange by shifting the power relationship between the participants and the facilitators (Aitkin, 2009, p. 505). However, ATCo relocates this work in the New Zealand context, drawing on the

Māori concept of 'ako', which describes teaching and learning as a reciprocal exchange to which all participants bring their prior knowledge and contribute to the learning of others (O'Connor, 2008). Ako informs the pedagogic relationship ATCo aims to enact through Everyday Theatre, a relationship that includes children, but also teachers, social workers, other agency representatives, family and community members.

### **Politics**

ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power all create theatre as a form of social intervention with the broad ideals of cultural democracy and social change. Applied theatre's focus on social engagement has been traced back to the ideals of left-wing political movements from the twentieth century (Prentki & Preston, 2009). These ideals informed the aesthetic experiments of radical popular and people's theatre, theatre in education, and the historical and neo avant-garde (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). These theatre movements had explicit political intentions, combining aesthetics, pedagogy and politics to create experimental forms of activism, community engagement, protest and public education. They each explored ways of working collaboratively, of transgressing social and cultural norms with the explicit purpose of transforming the socio-economic conditions of society.

The influence of these movements is evident in the aesthetic-pedagogic practice of each of the three companies involved in this study. At the same time, their practice also has features of what Shaughnessy (2012) describes as "avant-garde 'political' theatre" (p. 21), interventional, politically committed, community-based theatre practices whose work has characteristics more typically associated with postmodern performance: "hybridity, non-realism, use of new technologies" (p. 22).

Applied theatre as a term, and many of the practices it describes (or which describe themselves as applied theatre), emerge from an era of economic, political, cultural and philosophical change. In 1987, performance theorist Auslander (1987) identified a "historical crisis" in political theatre:

brought about by uncertainty as to just how to describe our cultural condition under multi-national capitalism, by the obvious inappropriateness of the political art strategies left over from the historical avant-garde of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and from the 1960s, and by a widespread critical inability to conceive of aesthetic/political *praxis* in terms other than these inherited ones. (Auslander, 1987, p. 21)

For Auslander (1987), liberatory, transgressive and transformative political goals were defunct in the cultural and economic conditions of postmodernism. Drawing on Foster (1983) and Jameson (1991), Auslander proposed a new aesthetic-pedagogic role for political artists, "a role which incorporates the functions of positioning the subject within dominant discourses and of offering strategies of counterhegemonic resistance" (p. 23). Transgressive politics imagines a position outside the dominant structures and discourses, resistant politics envisages a struggle from within (Auslander, 1987; Foster, 1983). Like Auslander, I take on Foster's (1983) conception of postmodernism not as the failure of, or break from 'modernism', but as a series of "uneven developments ... a conflict of new and old modes –

cultural and economic, the one not entirely autonomous, the other not all determinative – and of the interests vested therein” (p. xi). This conflict is very present in the practices of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power. These are practices in which the ideals of modernity – democracy, equality and agency – persist, but are continually reconfigured in response to the local contexts, national politics and global systems in which the companies’ work is entangled.

## **Ethics**

As a practice, applied theatre is essentially engaged in the question of the ethical. (Fisher, 2005, p. 251)

The process of applying theatre engages simultaneously with the felt, embodied experience of ‘identity’, ‘community’, ‘nation’, even globalisation, but also with the politics of their construction and contestation (Balfour & Woodrow, 2013; Thompson, 2011). The ethical issues that arise are multiple and complex. Theatre that intervenes in society, seeking to build communities, raise awareness, celebrate, mobilise or educate, provokes questions about what values inform that intervention, where those values come from and how they are “articulated” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 160). When performance practices aim to contribute towards social change, can practitioners ever know whose interests that change will ultimately serve (Thompson, 2011, p. 6)? If drama processes connect with the values, beliefs, concerns, aspirations and stories of participants, what are the responsibilities of theatre-makers to those people? There are nuanced debates in the academic literature of applied theatre about how to negotiate such issues, drawing on a wide range of philosophical ideas (Nicholson, 2005; Fisher, 2005; Thompson, 2011). These debates make it clear that the ethics of applied theatre practices are inseparable from their aesthetics, pedagogies and politics.

What it means to be ethical is a concern for the three theatre companies involved in this study. Each organisation faces the almost daily challenge of balancing multiple responsibilities, to their participants, to partner organisations, to funders, and to employees, contractors, and volunteers. As will become clear in Chapters 5–7, the shifting and often ambiguous nature of these roles makes negotiating ethical relationships a challenge.

FM Theatre Power values equality. This informs their organisational structure and the way they work with participants. When they collaborate with youth and community groups they aim to treat participants as far as possible, as equals in the creative process. Mo explains:

**Mo:** In FM Theatre Power we always work like that, everyone is the same ... we treat them the same, because the result we want is for other people to treat them the same. (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

Equality is a guiding principle for their practice, but alone it does not resolve all ethical tensions that arise. Nicholson (2005) suggests that finding a balance between “equality and difference” requires both “secure principles” but also allowances for “a plurality of perspectives and multiple ways of living” (p. 157). FM Theatre Power have high expectations of themselves and their creative practice, they work intensively for

long hours focused on the production process. As David Lui, a young Social Worker and FM Theatre Power core member, explains to me, placing these same expectations on young people needs to be balanced with a care for their physical and emotional wellbeing:

**David:** Even if they feel challenged, some of us can take care of their emotions by building working relationships with them, some of us can take care of their workload, providing better management. (David 08-10-2012)

With a membership that shifts in size and composition from project to project, sustaining this level of care and management is an ongoing challenge for FM Theatre Power (David 08-10-2012).

Many of ATCo's projects focus on issues that are controversial in New Zealand society, including youth suicide, child abuse, neglect and family violence. In such projects, caring for the safety of all participants is crucial. Not doing so could have serious implications for their social, psychological and physical wellbeing. For ATCo, process-drama provides a safe way to explore difficult and sensitive issues with groups of participants (O'Connor, O'Connor, & Welsh-Morris, 2006). In Chapter 5, I discuss in more detail how the principle of creating a safe environment for participants directly influences ATCo's aesthetic-pedagogic decisions. This includes their careful consideration of the way complex, controversial social issues are represented to and by the young people. The ethics of representation in ATCo's creative practice has been considered in great depth (Nicholson, 2009, 2011b). I suggest that a concern for the ethics of representation also needs to extend beyond the aesthetic-pedagogic decisions made in the creation of a project or performance. Thompson (2011) has shown how applied theatre projects can become caught up in the 'construction and reception' of meanings at a local, national and global level, in ways that can have serious consequences for participants' safety. O'Connor (2009) describes how, for the Everyday Theatre programme,

The Maori principle of 'whaka iti' (to make small) informed the project so that it always operated below the radar, never trumpeting the government brand but working in a community development process which says 'Not here I am, but I am here (Welsh Morris, interview 2008). (O'Connor, 2009, p. 956)

During my fieldwork, however, it seemed that this strategy had reached its limit when, after attending a launch of the Everyday Theatre programme, the Minister for Social Development wore an Everyday Theatre badge in the New Zealand Parliament (Research journal 20-03-2012). A shift in ethical strategy was needed as the project started to be absorbed into the public "performances" of New Zealand's leading political party (Thompson, 2011, p. 40).

At the very start of this chapter I suggested that applied theatre practices typically aim to benefit groups of people who are exploited, disadvantaged or marginalised within a wider society. C&T was founded with a commitment to working in the interests of children and young people (C&T, 2012a). For Max, this is an ethical commitment:

**Max, C&T Assistant Director:** I think there's always a strong ethical basis in the work we do. There's always a commitment to educate, or empower, or inspire, you know, young people in particular, but anyone, any... we work with various different community groups. (Max 03-07-2012)

Board member Phil Jackson explains how over time it has become clear that C&T is "very skilled" at engaging children who appear disenfranchised within the mainstream schooling system and improving their educational outcomes (Phil 05-07-2012). Phil points out that this does not necessarily mean that the work is in the interests of those students, that it has 'value' for them:

**Phil, C&T Board Member:** I can see there's value there, but again if I am ultra critical of myself as a board member actually what I was happy to take there is my perceptions, that were that the boys in the project appeared to be enjoying themselves and having a great time, whether it gave any more value than that, whether it gave them a voice and all those sorts of things, I don't know. (Phil 05-07-2012)

Discerning the interests, concerns, or values of any group is an impossible task because of "the complex antagonisms inherent in the client group, its community and more significantly its relation with society as a whole" (Fisher, 2005, p. 250). In Chapter 6, I discuss how for C&T, particular aesthetic, pedagogic and political principles orientate the company as it negotiates between conflicting interests and value systems.

By exploring the shifting shapes of applied theatre my aim for this chapter was to move away from some of the "binary logic", which, I argue, can limit possibilities for understanding practice in its complexity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 5). Drawing together academic debate with the practice of the companies participating in this research, my intention has been to construct a provisional framework that is consistent with this rhizomatic imaginary. This reflects the aim of this research: to construct a rich, detailed understanding of the ways in which people working in applied theatre companies negotiate the relationship between their political, aesthetic, pedagogic and ethical values and the demands/constraints of financing the work.

Although I introduce four parts or foci of the framework separately, what I hope has become apparent is that they should always be viewed as interrelated. In the praxis of applying theatre, aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical concerns are multiple and each is embedded within the other with no permanent hierarchical relationship or centre (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). One theory that I develop throughout this thesis is that in each of the three companies concerns with each of these areas combine to create the 'ethos' of an applied practice. This is discussed further in Chapter 8. For now, the next chapter will return to the topic and rationale for this study, considering key concerns that have been raised about the effects of funding relationships on the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre practice.

## Chapter 2

### The economies of applied theatre

**Peter, ATCo Director:** The key for us around the money thing is, we don't have it written down anywhere, but it's right at the heart of what we do, we're a business and so it is about making money, but it's not about making money to make us rich, it's about making money so we can do more of what we want to do. It's the kaupapa, the underlying principles of the thing... Yes it's a business about making money, but the end goal is not making profit, does that make sense? (Peter 13-03-2012)

**Max, C&T Assistant Director:** ...we act like a profit organisation even though we don't make profit... you know, we're constantly expanding into new areas, being innovative is because of our bold business moves... (Max 03-07-2012)

**C&T funding ethics:** Being entrepreneurial is a good thing as long as it respects our other values and our overriding creative ethos. (C&T, 2011, p. 2)

**Mo, FMTP President:** ...we have been doing this because we want to promote this kind of culture, we're not doing this for money, we have never earned anything from this kind of performance and this is hard to do... (Mo 04-10-2012)

[CAP. From multiple interviews and organisational documents]

A primary concern addressed by this research is the extent to which the “rationale and practice” of applied theatre is, as Balfour (2009) persuasively argues, shaped by its “economic base” (p. 347). ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power create forms of participatory theatre that respond to the interests and experiences of participants. In doing so, they act on a wider commitment to creating theatre that contributes in some way to social justice and/or change. Each company also responds to economic imperatives. They must secure the financial resources necessary to sustain the organisation and its creative projects. This need to secure income is thought to put theatre-makers under pressure to adapt their practices to the agendas of specific donors and government policy (S. J. Ahmed, 2007; Balfour, 2009; Neelands, 2007).

Each of my research questions responds to key concerns in the academic literature of applied theatre. The question: ‘What are the economies of applied theatre?’ responds to the argument that applied theatre both fits into and disrupts existing economic narratives (Hughes et al., 2011). I look to feminist economics and performance studies for critical perspectives that enable me to attend not just to the ‘economics’, but to the wider economies of applied theatre. Next I examine key concerns about the extent to which applied theatre practice is determined by socio-economic arrangements and consider the effects of funding relationships on the aesthetics, politics, pedagogies and ethics of applied theatre. I propose that to get a fuller understanding of the relationship between applied theatre and local and global economies it is necessary to move between abstracted critiques of policy contexts and the “messier story” of applied theatre practice (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 103). This means attending closely to the dynamics of particular funding relationships and the ways in which they are experienced and managed. Finally, I examine the limited available literature on management in applied theatre. In conclusion, I consider the challenge of writing the economies of applied theatre in a way that is critical but also retains a sense of hope.

## From feminist economics to the economies of applied theatre

Molly and her supervisor are discussing some writing and diagrams she has produced while trying to clarify her research topic and questions – the papers are spread unevenly across the table.

**Peter:** So, it feels like you're getting closer, doesn't it?

**Molly:** I'm glad you think so; I certainly don't feel like I am getting anywhere... I've been reading as much as I can about management and funding in applied theatre and the arts...

**Peter:** And...

**Molly:** There seems to be a general discomfort with the idea that art makes money. 'Commercial art' is seen as aesthetically or morally 'compromised'. Art making should be free from economic imperatives. Artists are poor but idealistic; managers are corrupt and self-serving or easily manipulated by others [Research journal 07-06-2011]. But, I feel like I still need to get a better understanding of economic theory, I am not even clear on what is meant by 'the economy'.

**Peter:** Have you read Marilyn Waring? A feminist and New Zealand politician in the 1980s, she has written about the value of arts education... see if you can find that perhaps?

Molly writes the name in her notebook to follow up later.

[CAP. From research journal entries May–June 2011]

Applied theatre's relationship with local and global economies can be usefully examined within an economic narrative of self-interested, profit-driven, exchange-based competition. Engaging critically with the literature of feminist economics and performance theory, however, has encouraged me to look beyond this narrative at how applied theatre practices both fit into and disrupt existing notions of value, labour and exchange.

Since the 1980s, feminist economic theorists have critiqued the discipline of economics, revealing the gendered assumptions that underpin it (Nelson, 1995, p. 131). Waring (1999) argues that word 'economy' has been repurposed by the discipline of 'economics', severing its etymological connections to household management and care (p. 15). She argues that economics relentlessly colonises discursive concepts and human activity, treating everything "from the standpoint of price" (p. 17). Value, for example, has come to define what something is worth on the basis of what it can be exchanged for (Waring, 1999, p. 17). This overwrites the meaning of value as "a sense, a feeling" that operates beyond the realm of objective calculation (Waring, 1999, p. 17). Making a distinction between market value and moral value is itself a moral and political act that conceals gendered, cultural and political interests (p. 18). Waring's concern is with what is ignored by market-driven definitions of value and also the kinds of practices it produces.

Waring (1999) and other feminist economists challenge claims that economic concepts and models objectively interpret everyday lived experience, questioning the powerful influence they have over policy

decision making (Donath, 2000; Nelson, 1995). At the centre of “mainstream” economics is “the character of the rational, autonomous, self-interested agent, successfully making optimizing choices subject to exogenously imposed constraints” (Nelson, 1995, p. 136). Feminist economists identify how this conception of human subjectivity and behaviour pervades economic theory, precluding all other explanations of human experience, identity and behaviour (Hewitson, 1999).

I could examine funding relationships in applied theatre from an economic perspective. Rushton (2003a, 2003b) discusses the application of economic theory and method to such issues in his analyses of artistic freedom and artists’ rights. He describes the legal and economic approach, for example, as one that “plays down any consideration of abstract rights (‘nonsense upon stilts’) and instead looks for legal frameworks that maximize aggregate wealth, broadly defined” (Rushton, 2003a, p. 64). While Rushton (2003a) recommends this approach to cultural economists, he points to its limits. Economic modelling always involves value decisions, evaluating the respective interests of artists, private companies, governments and taxpayers, for example (Rushton, 2003a). Striving to sustain apparent neutrality, however, the primary concern of the ‘economic approach’ is to maintain an efficient level of cultural production, maximise wealth accumulation and reduce transaction costs (Rushton, 2003a, pp. 66–67).

In contrast, feminist economists argue for a relational approach to economics. Power (2004), for example, proposes that feminist economic analysis places “interdependent and interconnected human actors ... at the centre of the analysis, rather than the isolated individual” (p. 4). Feminist economic theories, then, emphasise individual agency but also acknowledge the ways in which power relationships affect people’s ability to participate in economic, social and political actions. Key writers in this area do not advocate a neutral stance, but call for ethical judgements to be made about economic practices (Power, 2004, p. 12). As a critical approach, feminist economic theories do not take capitalist institutions and dynamics as natural or given, but as “subjects to be examined and critiqued” (Power, 2004, p. 6). Economic geographers Gibson-Graham (2006a, 2006b, 2008), for example, argue that capitalism’s dominance has been reinforced by representations of all economic activities as capitalist activities. Feminist theorists, then, seek alternative economic narratives, models, practices and metaphors (Donath, 2000, p. 116; Gibson-Graham, 2008).

Molly stares at the computer screen and then at the book in front of her. She frowns. She puts the book back in the cupboard over her desk. She sighs and opens her research proposal document staring at the section entitled: ‘Research question and aims’. She minimises the document, opens the cupboard, stares at the row of books and looks for another source of inspiration.

[CAP. From research journal entries May–June 2011]

Feminist economics is primarily concerned with questions relating to women, their position in the economy and with deconstructing economic theory from a gender perspective (Power, 2004, p. 5).

Feminist economic theories led me to question the ontology of economics, what economics can be, and

the political and ethical values that inform economic theories and practices (Gibson-Graham, 2006a; Nelson, 1995, p. 132). My research is driven by a concern with aspects of the economies of applied theatre that might be dismissed as ‘nonsensical’, including the ethical, political, pedagogic and aesthetic. Feminist economic theories challenged me to look critically at how practices operate both within and beyond capitalist market economies, to pay attention to that which does not easily fit into the mainstream economic narrative (Donath, 2000, p. 117).

The difficulty of fitting applied theatre into existing economic narratives is apparent in Hughes, Kidd and McNamara’s (2011) examination of Williams’ (2011) definition of ‘art’. Williams suggests that from the seventeenth century, terms including ‘Art’, ‘the arts’ and ‘artist’ were used to distinguish specialist skilled practices associated with ‘creativity’ and ‘imagination’ from those associated with industrial and commercial labour (Williams, 2011, p. 33). For Williams this linguistic distinction was a reaction to the spread of capitalism. It claimed a specialised area of practice where “certain forms and general use and intention ... were not determined by immediate exchange” (p. 34). Hughes et al. propose:

The field of applied theatre deliberately and creatively disrupts the binary of ‘use value’ and ‘exchange value’ identified by Williams and to a certain extent renders these terms obsolete, as it adopts an approach to theatre practice that exhibits use value and exists within the productive regimes of the social and cultural economy, broadly conceived, as well as carries the abstract value attributed to ‘pure’ arts. (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 190)

At the start of this chapter, representatives from ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power describe business models that confirm and confound the categories of use, exchange and abstract value. As representatives from each company try to articulate the ethos that informs their business practices, they begin to reveal multiple ways in which the economics of applied theatre practice intersect with less tangible economies. I will develop this idea further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. For now, I want to highlight the argument that in applied theatre seemingly conflicting value systems and meanings coexist. This suggests that it is important to attend to the ways in which the practices of ATCo, C&T, and FM Theatre Power *both* fit into the political and cultural economies in which they operate *and* disrupt the mainstream economic narrative.

Williams (2011) describes how ‘art’ is differentiated from work that produces value in the market. Schechner (2003) makes a similar point about performance. Schechner proposes that “[t]he separation of performance activities from productive work is a most interesting, and unifying factor of play, games, sports, theatre, and ritual” (p. 11). He acknowledges that all performance activities are “enmeshed” in “economic arrangements”, particularly when commercialised (p. 12). What distinguishes performance from the productive work of other industries is that economic arrangements do not determine the “form of the operation” (p. 12). So, while elements surrounding a performance activity are affected by the financial economy, the form of the activity is not. Instead, performance activities are determined by the rules, traditions and conventions that are “designed not only to tell the players how to play but to *defend activity against encroachment from the outside*” [emphasis in original] (Schechner, 2003, p. 13). Unlike productive work, performance activities gain value through being:

something *apart from everyday life*. A special world is created where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure. This “special world” is not gratuitous but a vital part of human life. [Emphasis in original] (Schechner, 2003, p. 13)

In the previous chapter I suggest that the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre all emphasise a connection to everyday experience and ordinary social contexts. Nicholson (2005), for example, suggests that “applied drama is primarily concerned with developing new possibilities for everyday living rather than segregating theatre-going from other aspects of life” (p. 4). Applied theatre draws on the ‘rules, traditions and conventions’ of existing theatre forms, but also on the ‘rules, traditions and conventions’ of other disciplinary and cultural practices. In Chapters 5–8 I consider whether elements described by Schechner as external to performance activities, or “generated *by* these activities” can be separated from the forms of production in the three theatre companies and, if not, what this means for applied theatre’s capacity to provide a vital, performative, lived experience (Schechner, 2003, p. 13).

Recent theorising about labour and performance suggests “that the labour of the performance artist is directly related to the production of artistic subjectivity, which in turn is in correspondence with changing modes of labour in contemporary society” (G. Klein & Kunst, 2012, pp. 1–2). Parker (2013), for example, examines the blurry relationship between the rules that structure ‘work’ and rules that structure an artistic process in a performance piece created by Tim Etchells with staff from Tate Gallery in Liverpool, England. While Schechner (2003) makes a clear distinction between external economic ‘rules’ and the internal rules of performance activities, Parker indicates a more porous relationship between the two. This relationship can be read as problematic, but can also be seen as playful, with the rules and habits of work changing the artistic process and vice versa (Parker, 2013).

This research addresses a key concern about the extent to which applied theatre’s forms of operation are determined by economic arrangements. My aim, however, is to understand practices ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power have developed that enable them to continue working as local and global economies change. To do so, I look critically with them at their day-to-day working practices and how these practices relate to contemporary economic conditions locally and globally.

Molly is at her desk staring at her Ph.D. proposal on the screen of her PC. She writes: ‘What are the economies of applied theatre?’, and then: ‘...the research will also consider the ways in which the economies of applied theatre might be reconceived...’

[CAP. From research journal entries and research proposal draft July 2011]

The literature of feminist economics and the early performance theory of Schechner (2003) convinced me that any examination of the economies of applied theatre must look both at and beyond the economic. An example of such an approach is Nicholson’s (2005) analysis of applied theatre through the lens of gift theory. Nicholson draws on the works of Mauss (1954), Derrida (1992) and Fennell (2002) to consider the ethics of relationships between the different agencies and individuals involved in applied theatre processes.

In doing so, she highlights the paradoxical nature of gift giving, showing how it can be both (simultaneously) an act of economic self-interest and a generous act of care for others (Nicholson, 2005, p. 160). The process of applying theatre can involve practitioners and participants in an exchange relationship based on feelings of indebtedness, responsibility and obligation, but it can also exceed the endless symmetry of reciprocity as a relationship based on care, pleasure and enjoyment.

The creation of applied theatre takes place through a shifting network of relationships. It can involve partner organisations, host institutions, funders (often multiple funders), evaluators, researchers and advisors. Nicholson's analysis of applied theatre's 'economies' is a reminder that ethical practice requires more than the artful negotiation of the relationship between theatre-makers and participants. Multiple, often conflicting, interests and "desires" are at play (Nicholson, 2005, p. 164). Researching the economies of applied theatre, then, means examining practice within a rich texture of multiple and continually evolving relationships.

### **“Tangled webs”: Applied theatre’s relationship with local and global economies**

In applied theatre, prior analysis suggests that political and economic change can impact significantly on the aesthetics, pedagogies and politics of entire fields of practice (Kershaw, 1992, 1999, 2007; Nicholson, 2011b). There are also many specific examples of the localised impacts of national and global-level political and economic processes (S. J. Ahmed, 2002; Maunder, 2013; Mundrawala, 2009). Many of these studies raise ethical questions for theatre companies that adapt their organisational and creative practices to enable them to survive in changing economic landscapes.

The effects of local, national and global economic arrangements on applied theatre practices in the UK have been well examined (Hughes & Ruding, 2009; A. Jackson, 2013; Neelands, 2007). This includes a number of studies that critically assess the impact of changes to UK political economy on applied theatre and/or on the theatrical movements from which applied theatre emerged.

Kershaw's (1992) comprehensive study of alternative theatre in the UK between 1960 and 1990 has influenced thinking about how applied theatre's emergence from earlier political and community theatre movements was, at least partly, economically determined. Kershaw investigates the potential of performance to contribute to social and political change, examining the relationship between counter-cultural theatre movements and changes in the UK political economy. He argues that despite the aesthetic diversity of the alternative theatre movement it had a coherent, oppositional ideological position (p. 10). He examines the extent to which this position "fragmented" as the economic infrastructure on which it had come to depend was dismantled (p. 252).

In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government made major changes to the UK's social and economic policies, cutting public spending in many areas, including the arts (Kershaw, 1992, pp. 168–170). By the mid-1980s, theatre companies were encouraged to become more “entrepreneurial”, to diversify their income through corporate sponsorship, match funding and increased earned revenue (p. 172). Training schemes and funded consultancy opportunities encouraged arts organisations to attend to their management and business practices. Changes to Arts Council grant aid shifted many companies from annual revenue funding onto short-term project grants. Kershaw argues that this caused a decline in long term collaborations with communities. For Kershaw, these changes embedded a “neo-conservative business ethic” into the arts sector; as theatre became increasingly oriented towards market success (p. 172). Even politically oppositional practices were absorbed into the heritage, tourist and cultural industries.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the UK was experiencing political instability and widespread social unrest (Kershaw, 1992). Further restructuring of the Arts Council together with cuts to local authority grants meant theatre companies of all scales were facing closure unless they fundamentally changed their business models (pp. 209–210). At the same time, a plethora of new grant schemes became available, giving theatre companies a wider range of funding sources to draw on, while simultaneously increasing competition between them. In a complex, competitive market companies needed to differentiate their “products”, specialising in work with specific groups, themes or techniques (p. 210). In this context the alternative theatre movement retrenched, re-orientated and fragmented, reforming as “an industrial sector which is most notable for its pluralism, with some companies working for highly specialised constituencies and others aiming to appeal to a range of ‘markets’, simultaneously or in sequence” (p. 89).

Picking up almost where Kershaw's book ends, Neelands (2007) proposes that in the United Kingdom, after 1997, the political values of applied theatre shifted in response to the New Labour government's social inclusion policies (Neelands, 2007, p. 307). New Labour increased spending on the arts. As McAvinchey (2014) identifies, “much of this resource was directed towards practices that explicitly set out to ameliorate the pathways to, and effects of, social exclusion” (p. 5). This enabled a growth in participatory arts practices that engaged groups who were perceived as marginalised and/or communities labelled as deprived (McAvinchey, 2014). Connecting Kershaw's (1992) analysis to that of Neelands (2007), it is possible to conclude that from the fragmented ‘industrial sector’ that was the alternative theatre movement emerges the “sub-field of western theatre and performance” named applied theatre (Neelands, 2007, p. 306).

Under New Labour, publically funded arts organisations were required to justify their value in terms of social benefit (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007; Matarasso, 1997). Neelands argues that this resulted in a shift away from a left wing commitment to a politics of redistribution and towards a more liberal, “pro-social” politics of recognition (pp. 312–314). In doing so, he differentiates between “pro-social theatres that seek to ameliorate the psychological harm caused by social and economic injustices and political theatre seeking to directly challenge the causes and class interests, which underpin those same injustices” (p. 306).

Neelands' argument is that many applied theatre practitioners claimed to take an oppositional political stance, while developing forms of practices that supported the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into the status quo (pp. 313–314). For Neelands, such practices fail to address the social and economic injustices that disadvantage or exclude certain groups within society. Both Neelands and Kershaw (1999) suggest that the political orientation of an entire field of practice can shift as a result of changes in the funding and policy context (Neelands, 2007, p. 313). Offering a slightly different story, McAvinchey (2014) argues more moderately that the language of community performance practice was limited as the “financial linguistic framework” required practitioners to emphasise effective social impact over the realisation of “political or aesthetic ambitions” (p. 6). Here, the orientation of the field does not necessarily change, but the way it articulates itself does. What seems clear, however, is that applied theatre's initial focus on the social benefits of participation in inclusive arts practices is tied to the cultural policy context of this era (Hughes & Ruding, 2009).

Kershaw and Neelands examine the effects of economic and policy changes in the UK on political orientation of alternative or applied theatre practices. Nicholson's (2011b) study of theatre education in the twentieth century, meanwhile, highlights the effects of the globalised economy on the aesthetics and pedagogic approaches of theatre educators. In the mid-1990s, education policy in the UK linked ‘creativity’ to preparedness for work in the twenty-first century. The rationale for developing students' creativity was to foster capacities for entrepreneurship and innovation in the ‘knowledge economy’. A new range of funding sources enabled arts organisations to develop programmes that were long term, lasting three or more years (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 103). Large scale partnerships between artists, arts organisations and schools, such as Creative Partnerships, were founded (and funded) based on this belief in a “relationship between the skills needed to extend globalized economies and creativity in education” (Nicholson, 2011b, pp. 94–95). At this time, Nicholson (2011b) suggests the principles and practices of educational theatre changed in response to what were global economic priorities.

The emphasis on creativity in UK education policy was tied to economic and cultural globalisation (Nicholson, 2011b). Creativity has become a desirable quality in an economy where financial advantage depends on the ability to develop new ideas, products, services, production methods and forms of marketing (Nicholson, 2011b, pp. 91–92). It has come to be seen by many as the key to wealth generation for individuals, corporations and even cities. The economic benefits experienced by a few individuals, corporations and localities however are generated by the exploitation of human and natural resources around the globe, producing “highly differentiated patterns of labour and uneven levels of opportunity” (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 92). Therefore, Nicholson argues, aligning theatre education and global economic priorities has ethical, aesthetic, political and pedagogic implications. If the value of theatre education is based on its long term economic benefits to global elites will practitioners maintain their commitment to achieving artistic and social justice outcomes? When benefits for the individual are emphasised over collective activism, Nicholson suggests that even the imagination will become a “commodified social practice” (p. 99). For Nicholson, theatre educators face critical questions about the implications of

justifying their practice on the basis that it develops skills that are useful in a socially unjust economic order.

Importantly for this study, Nicholson draws attention to some positive aspects of the relationship between educational theatre and economic arrangements. She identifies that, in the UK at least, “the two historical periods in which educational drama and theatre have been most energetic and innovative coincided with periods of significant economic growth and cultural change” (p. 73). The strong emphasis on creativity in UK policy created the conditions in which educational theatre could thrive, fostering collaboration, experimental practice and social engagement (p. 103).

The literature I have drawn on so far focuses largely on the UK context. Each examines the socio-political conditions of a particular era, using examples of practice to analyse of the impact of those conditions on a broader field or movement. While these analyses are rigorous, the complex negotiations that take place ‘behind the scenes’ in these cases is often abstracted or absent. In his conclusion, Kershaw (1992) briefly acknowledges the ways in which organisational, administrative and management practices were important to the alternative theatre movement, that “imaginative constitutional and organisational innovations were an essential foundation for cultural experiment” (p. 243). Nicholson (2011b), meanwhile, is careful to explain that her critique of the relationship between drama education and the globalised economy is “levelled against official policy – the map of educational discourse – rather than the messier story of theatre education practice” (p. 103). This research shifts its focus towards the ‘messy story’ of practice, but with awareness that this story must critically examine that practice in relation to local and global economic and political contexts.

A number of studies examine the impact of global economic shifts on political and community-based theatre practices in countries other than the UK. Mundrawala’s (2007, 2009) research in Pakistan in the 1990s indicates a growth of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) producing theatre for development following the liberalisation of government policy and interventions by international donor organisations since the 1970s (p. 167). Likewise, S. J. Ahmed (2002, 2007) describes how international investment in Bangladesh created a flourishing NGO sector including theatre companies funded to deliver development projects. In New Zealand, Maunder (2013) illustrates how the neoliberalisation of public policy in the 1980s and 1990s dismantled the existing infrastructure of community-based theatre while creating opportunities for theatre companies to deliver community and educational services. In each of these studies the effects of the neoliberalisation of state policy and international development funding are of particular concern. This includes the decentralisation of services away from state control and the proliferation of market relations. However, each study also highlights how neoliberalisation in different geographical contexts created opportunities for particular kinds of applied theatre practices.

A common argument in these studies is that within a neoliberal policy and funding context socially or politically committed theatre becomes ‘commodified’, produced so as to get funded or to generate income.

Mundrawala (2009) argues that political theatre in Pakistan changed from a form of voluntary (self-funded) local activism to paid activism serving the agendas of international donors. S. J. Ahmed describes how larger theatre companies came to behave like empire builders, while smaller groups ended up as “pseudo-mercenaries”, always looking for the next funding opportunity (S. J. Ahmed, 2002, pp. 214–215). Maunder’s analysis indicates that community theatre companies in New Zealand shifted either towards more commercially viable practices or to the delivery of specialist services for the state and other agencies (p. 186). These studies indicate impacts on the organisational structures of theatre companies, the forms of their practice and their relationships with communities.

To some extent, each of these studies makes a moral distinction between theatre practices that have become orientated towards the market and those which operate outside economic exchange relations. Theatre groups who produce work on a voluntary basis or with the support of “disinterested patronage” (Maunder, 2013, p. 20), for example, are generally seen as better able to uphold their ethical and political commitments. This is because the relationship between the theatre makers and a community is less compromised by external interests. The arguments presented are of course more nuanced. S. J. Ahmed, for example, suggests that the scale of organisations plays a part in their capacity to negotiate with powerful international donors. In Maunder’s analysis, adaptation to the neoliberalised policy context in New Zealand does not necessarily preclude theatre companies working in ways that “*support* community practices” [emphasis in original] (Maunder, 2013, pp. 92–93).

Understanding the economies of applied theatre, then, requires considering the multiple, sometimes paradoxical, relationships that constitute applied theatre companies and how these are negotiated within wider political and economic conditions. S. Jackson (2011) conceives of socially engaged art-making as a “supported and supporting apparatus” (p. 27). She identifies the need to look for ways to “respond to art’s heterogeneous mixed economies” rather than trying to reclaim an ideal of art (or community-based theatre) as autonomous from either the state or the market (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 27). Supporting and being supported are not ideal relationships, it can be “inconvenient” and difficult to manage, indeed as will become evident in the next section of this chapter, “sustaining support can simultaneously be felt as constraining” (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 42). It seems clear that the economies of applied theatre extend the relationship of support between donor and recipient into the supportive relationships between practitioners and the communities in which their processes are based.

### **“Murky terrain”: Concerns about funding relationships**

If applied theatre operates in murky terrain (Thompson 2003), then the murkiest area is often the relationship between funders and applied theatre practitioners. It can be a minefield of misconceptions, of competing and occasionally conflicting agendas, and open distrust of motivation – none more so than when the funder is a government agency. (O’Connor, 2009, p. 584)

The relationship between funders and applied theatre practitioners is, in many cases, the nexus of the relationship between applied theatre practice and local and global economic arrangements. Typically, applied theatre projects are undertaken by commission, as a contracted service, or with funding from a contestable grant (Taylor, 2002, 2003). Early critiques of the field characterise it as one in which practitioners are required to compete for scarce resources and demonstrate the value of their work in economic terms (Millett, 2002; Plotkin, 1997; Rasmussen, 2000). The way in which it gets funded has almost become a definitional feature of applied theatre, with Nicholson (2011a) suggesting that it “is often, but not always, funded by charities or the public sector who have particular interests in promoting the well-being of a particular community group, or in encouraging public engagement in specific issues” (p. 241). However, the interests that funders have invested in the applied theatre work do not always align with those of participants or the values of practitioners. With the metaphor of “murky terrain” O’Connor conveys the difficulty of navigating relationships in which these multiple interests intersect and are often impossible to fully discern. In this section, I address this and other key concerns about the effects of funding relationships on the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre. Engaging critically with these concerns, I then make a case for research that focuses not just on the effects of funding relationships, but the ways in which they are experienced and managed.

### **Determining value: Pedagogies and aesthetics**

Historically, applied theatre projects have been funded to make social or educational impacts. When funding is secured on this basis, it is likely that the success of a funded project will be evaluated against prescribed, measurable targets, outputs and/or outcomes (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). There is a strong suggestion in the literature that because of their dependency on external funding applied theatre practices are likely to comply with the demands from donors (Balfour, 2009). More broadly, there is a sense that pedagogic or aesthetic values can be undermined by an economic imperative, the need to generate income from the practice and/or demonstrate value for money (S. J. Ahmed, 2002, 2011; Mundrawala, 2007).

In one of the most sustained analyses of the impact of funding relationships on applied theatre, Balfour (2009) argues that aligning the social intentions of applied theatre with the agendas of funders will lead theatre-makers to focus on social outcomes at the expense of aesthetics (p. 350). Balfour refers to his theatre work in prisons in the UK during the 1990s when funding was predominantly available for arts projects with a clear social agenda. In such situations, application requirements, grant management processes, impact assessment and reporting all have significant effects on the “delicate process of translating aesthetic agendas into non-theatrical contexts” (p. 350). If impact must be demonstrable to funders to justify current funding or to secure future contracts, Balfour argues that practitioners focus on articulating and evaluating the social value of their practice at the expense of considering its aesthetic value (p. 356). Balfour proposes that practitioners should seek an “interdependent” relationship between the aesthetic and social outcomes, although he does not identify what particular funding arrangements might make this possible (p. 356).

S. J. Ahmed (2002) and Mundrawala (2007, 2009) also raise concerns about the impact of funding relationships on the quality of aesthetic-pedagogic experience. Many of the theatre groups they discuss base their practice on ideas from Freire's (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. These groups claim that their theatre programmes create dialogic processes in which the problems addressed and solutions proposed are determined through the participation of ordinary people. A theatre process based on Freirian pedagogy would develop participants' critical consciousness, raising their awareness of the conditions that shape their lives and enable them to collectively identify actions that can change those conditions. This process typically involves rigorous critical dialogue as participants engage in a cyclical process of reflection and action (Mundrawala, 2009, p. 162). In practice however, opportunities for dialogue are limited, as theatre-makers orientate the work towards the agendas of international donors. S. J. Ahmed (2002) suspects that local consultation processes are open to the "subtle manipulation" by NGO representatives, who ensure that issues are chosen that will attract donor interest (p. 215). He asserts that NGOs place more importance on meeting the quantified targets set by donors than on engaging participants in complex, critical social analysis. Mundrawala (2009) meanwhile, identifies how dialogue may be started but is rarely sustained as theatre companies work to the time-limited contract agreements with their donors (p. 189).

In a critique of NGO-funded theatre for development in Malawi, Kerr (2009) observes how the limited briefs given by donors lead African theatre troupes to simplify their performance techniques. He suggests that indigenous performance traditions that engage communities with social concerns in ways that reflect the contextualised "multi-layered" nature of these issues did not fit the NGO project "blueprint" (Kerr, 2009, p. 101). Like S. J. Ahmed and Mundrawala, Kerr is sceptical of the capacity of NGO-funded theatre to facilitate "free and open discussion" or to generate plans for action that acknowledge the complex networks of "politics, kinship systems, economics, class, ethnicity, global communications and local/global ideologies" in which the 'issue' being addressed is embedded (p. 101).

The murky terrain of donor agendas is particularly difficult to navigate because it is a shifting landscape. This is apparent in Wheelock's (2013) account of the funding partnerships of the New York-based Creative Arts Team (CAT). CAT is a large company providing extensive education and outreach programmes for the City University of New York. CAT's practice is based on critical and learner-centred pedagogies, combining performance and participation to "encourage participants to engage critically in the world around them and actively participate in their own learning" (Wheelock, 2013, p. 229). Wheelock identifies how CAT's work adapted to changing economic and educational demands, while trying to stay true to its child-centred ethos. She makes the point that while many changes appeared to be largely pragmatic, for example reducing the number of actor-teachers in a team, they had aesthetic and pedagogical implications. She identifies how strongly outcome-driven funding can lead theatre companies to adopt less complex pedagogic and aesthetic approaches. In particular, she identifies the risk of a decreased attention to the emotional or affective engagement of participants. Wheelock also illustrates how, when social outcomes are the prime basis of a funding contract, the theatre component of a project

becomes “of secondary interest” (p. 245). She observes how CAT gradually started to create projects that, while still consistent with its values, were no longer theatre-based. This tendency is also observed by Mundrawala and S. J. Ahmed. Importantly, Wheelock also identifies some positive effects of funding relationships. She describes how responding to shifts in the priorities of their funders did, at times, cause CAT to experiment with new aesthetic-pedagogic approaches, a point I will return to below.

The studies discussed in this section all raise concerns about the ways in which the demand to demonstrate economic value can affect the aesthetic and pedagogic values of theatre-makers. All identify the multiple ways in which funding shifts the focus of theatre companies to instrumental approaches that focus on the delivery of information or messages, or on developing particular skills, capacities and behaviours. They also all consider the ways in which aesthetic and pedagogic shifts happen in conjunction within wider organisational changes.

### **Invested interests: Politics and ethics**

Funding is allocated with intent, an agenda which may be more or less explicit. A predominant concern in applied theatre is with the extent to which the agendas of funding agencies shift, ‘tame’ and/or undermine politically committed theatre practice (Neelands, 2007). Mundrawala (2007, 2009) argues that the values underpinning relationships between political theatre companies and their donors affect the values of the practice that is created. Her analysis suggests that political theatre companies in Pakistan gradually adopted more “reformist” agendas after receiving funding from international agencies (Mundrawala, 2007, p. 149). As the companies responded to the requirements of the donors, she argues, their work became “depoliticised and seen as a commodity, transforming its role from self-directed activism to donor-driven activism” (Mundrawala, 2009, p. i). The imbalanced power relationship caused by economic dependency between the theatre company and the donor meant that the latter could influence the values of the former, setting the criteria against which funds must be accounted for. Constrained by restricted budgets theatre companies were less able to respond to issues or concerns that emerged once a project had got underway (2009, p. 173). Drawing on wider research into NGO-donor relationships, Mundrawala identifies how “performance assessments” reward compliance and penalise those who push the boundaries of their funding contracts (Ebrahim, 2003, p. 817, cited in Mundrawala, 2009, p. 193). From interviews with key practitioners she identifies how they found themselves with little option but to plan their work around the priorities, application requirements and monitoring criteria of donor agencies (2007, pp. 157–158). An awareness that the priorities of a donor could suddenly change led to feelings of constant insecurity and instability, even for experienced practitioners and those with long term contractual relationships (2009, p. 192).

From her extensive study, Mundrawala (2007, 2009) suggests that theatre that adopts the development agendas of external donors can still play an important role in social change. S. J. Ahmed (2007), however, is more sceptical. Even when practitioners within political theatre companies remain committed to an

oppositional ideology, he argues, accepting funding means the practice will inevitably serve the interests of the donor (p. 209). In many cases, the power dynamics of the donor-recipient relationship enable the funder to determine the focus, structure and form of a theatre programme. In others there is a more “subtle form of manipulation”, played out through every stage of a funding process (S. J. Ahmed, 2007, p. 209). S. J. Ahmed argues that performances created with donor funding will be, at best, “benign acts of theatre and persuasion”, or, at worst, “normalized” and “normalizing” processes serving only the interests of dominant groups (S. J. Ahmed, 2007, p. 210).

Describing the impasse experienced by the political theatre companies she researched, Mundrawala asks:

In a climate such as this, what are the options for theatre groups who wish to remain involved in socially and politically motivated theatre as a tool for change, but find themselves entirely dependent on funding bodies that carry an agenda that differs from their own?  
(Mundrawala, 2007, p. 160)

For politically committed theatre companies it seems like the only options are to compromise and be co-opted in, or to take a stand and opt out of the funding system altogether.

Even where practitioners do not have radical political intentions, the need to sustain income from an external donor can lead to work that is less critical. Balfour (2009), for example, proposes that practitioners who become dependent on external donors may find themselves “too close to the powers it may want to question” (Balfour, 2009, p. 352). Such self-censorship is evident in O’Connor’s (2007) reflections on his work for a government-funded public education programme that aimed to address discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes and behaviours amongst mental health service providers in New Zealand. In retrospect, he questions whether it would have been possible to create a programme that implicated the state in the social injustices experienced by the recipients of mental health services, rather than focusing on changing individual actions and beliefs. Byam (2009), meanwhile, offers an important reminder that practitioners in many countries face direct censorship. In many contexts, taking a critical stance or being seen to align with a particular agenda can have consequences for the personal safety of artists and participants.

This research addresses concerns about the extent to which the social intentions of applied theatre practices are manipulated or constrained within the structural processes and power dynamics of funding relationships. However, for some critics, intentionality itself is part of the problem. Ackroyd (2007), for example, points out that applied theatre’s intentionality, its “promise of change”, makes it an attractive investment for funders who are interested in projects that can demonstrate their value by delivering outcomes (p. 5). By defining itself as a ‘transformative’ process, applied theatre exposes itself to being coerced into the service of problematic social agendas. In his critique of applied theatre’s “politics of intention”, Balfour (2009) argues that its close interrelationship with particular sources of funding has a fundamental impact on “the ways in which applied theatre defines and talks about itself” (p. 347). As

discussed above, the imperative to demonstrate value to donors exacerbates applied theatre's tendency to make grand claims of transformation and "positive social impact" (Balfour, 2009, p. 353). At the same time, the process of translating and adapting the demands and discourses of donors contributes to a conception of social change derived from "donor-based objective-setting practice" rather than the complex, tentative theorising about theatre, performance and change in academic literature (pp. 347–348). For Balfour, this limited conception of change perpetuates a problematic ethic of intervention, "[t]he rationale of the useful artist, making creative interventions into a fixed reality with predictable impacts" (p. 353). Does funding which demands evidence that a problem or 'need' has been addressed, for example, lead to projects in which participants are required to perform their victimhood (Balfour, 2009; Balfour & Woodrow, 2013)? Balfour argues that applied theatre should scale back its ambitions, focusing on creating "a more 'playful' relationship between practitioners and participants" (Balfour, 2009, p. 356).

Applied theatre, like all forms of performance, is always

implicated in the ethical struggles of zones in which it exists. It does not sit above them. Every action performed, game played, question asked, story told and scene witnessed includes the theatre practitioner in an active ethical debate. (Thompson, 2006, p. 194)

Recognising this, Stuart Fisher (2005) argues that each applied theatre intervention should be informed by an ethic that is responsive to the context in which the work takes place. However, in his later writing, Thompson (2011) suggests that even clearly articulated, rigorously researched, highly contextualised intentions cannot guarantee ethical practice. A similar point is made by O'Connor (2007), who reflects that even when the intentions of an applied theatre project are based on thorough research of the context, when care is taken to ensure the process does not lead participants towards prescribed outcomes, the work can still end up becoming "*naively complicit*" with the wider economic and political agenda of the donor (p. 34). This raises questions around where the boundaries of 'context' should be set and in what ways practitioners might best attend to institutional, political, economic and discursive forces beyond the immediate localities in which the work takes place.

While the intentionality of applied theatre has been critiqued, the writers cited above do not ask theatre practitioners to relinquish all political commitment, to quash their aspirations to contribute to a more just society. Rather, in different ways, each highlights the need to continually interrogate how the relationship between theatre and change is being configured. They each express a concern that funding relationships can contribute to the conception of 'change' as a process in which an intentional, preconceived 'cause' leads to a predictable, tangible effect or outcome. They identify the political, ethical, aesthetic and pedagogic tensions that arise when practices uncritically adapt to this model.

This research consciously focuses on three theatre companies whose practice is guided by particular social intentions. A key part of this research is developing a complex understanding of the relationship between these intentions and the economies of their practice, considering the ways in which any tensions are

experienced and managed. In part then this research takes up Mundrawala's (2007) question, asking what options have been found by theatre companies whose practice is committed to social justice and social change, but who must also find ways to generate financial resources to sustain that practice.

## **Managing applied theatre**

The logic and practices of 'management' are typically placed in opposition to those of 'the arts' (Beirne, 2013; Beirne & Knight, 2002). Likewise, in applied theatre imperatives associated with 'management' are thought to contradict or undermine aesthetic, pedagogical, political and ethical commitments. Nicholson (2005), for example, carefully differentiates performance management practices that are orientated towards efficiency and profit from the performative pedagogies of applied theatre that are orientated towards increased democracy and equity. 'Management' in applied theatre, then, is typically thought of negatively, as models and philosophies imported from the corporate sector.

This 'importing' is evident in Beirne and Knight's (2002) study of management in three arts organisations involved in making community-based work. The study was based on a concern about the extent to which 'managerialism' was limiting the way in which management was understood and practiced in such contexts. 'Managerialism' is an ideology underpinned by the logic of economic efficiency and the rationalist view that "there are fundamental principles and established skills of management which apply independently of context" (Beirne & Knight, 2002, pp. 75–76). In all three organisations, funders and funded consultants encouraged the use of 'generic' management models developed for business contexts (pp. 79–80). However, the research found that these models were rarely taken up, and that practitioners saw them as having only limited relevance to their work. Instead, from their interviews and observations, Beirne and Knight propose the concept of 'arts-led' management. Arts-led management is characterised by "the willingness to draw directly upon artistic traditions and principles and to conceptualise effectiveness in terms of the collective identity that brings multiple stakeholders together in distinctive organisational communities" (p. 88). Beirne and Knight conclude that in community-based arts organisations it is important to see art-making and management as integrated, principled and highly contextualised practices. They call for further research into what arts-led management involves in practice.

The integration of art making and management is apparent in accounts written by managers of applied theatre companies (Haddon, 2006; O'Connor, 2009, 2011). O'Connor and Haddon write openly and critically about the way in which their companies create practice. In this process they describe the dynamic interplay between their artistic and social values, the interests of participants, the agendas of their funders, and other contextual factors. Even though O'Connor (2009) argues that intentions, pedagogies and aesthetics of a project are determined by the demands of a funder, his writing conveys a sense that the creative process can benefit from an active engagement with funder agendas. Haddon (2006) indicates that his theatre company were well aware of the extent to which their practice was shaped around the requirements of youth and education services. The company found ways of "making the youth work

agenda our own”, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. Over time, however, funding in the youth sector became increasingly targeted. The Theatre Company Blah Blah Blah fell into “the agenda trap” (Haddon, 2006, p. 190). Funding was only available for theatre that addressed specific issues and by initially responding uncritically to this change the company experienced “a temporary loss of artistic vision and direction” (Haddon, 2006, p. 190). This vision was reconsolidated later when the company received long term funding to work closely with primary school teachers in a relationship based on aesthetic and pedagogic experimentation (Haddon, 2006, p. 190).

These accounts reflect many of the concerns identified above, but they also give a humanised insight into the experiences of practitioners. In doing so they offer some possibilities for action. O’Connor and Haddon articulate a kind of constricted agency, which resonates with the overarching metaphors of this study discussed above and the aims of feminist economics. They identify the constraints they experienced and compromises made, but also describe ways of engaging critically and creatively in different financial and funding relationships.

### **Mind your metaphors: Writing the economies of applied theatre**

As outlined in the previous chapter, applied theatre is conceived by some as a discursive practice (Nicholson, 2005). This does not mean that it operates in a separate realm to practice. For many feminist economists, for example, discursive activity does not only effect how economy is understood, but also shapes the kinds of socio-economic practices that take place (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Gibson-Graham, 2008). In the next chapter I discuss further the notion that discursive activity is performative; that it has political and material consequences. For now, I am suggesting that sustaining a critical analysis of applied theatre’s relationship with local and global economies is important, but so is attending carefully to the effects of this discursive activity.

O’Connor (2009, 2011) and Haddon’s (2006) accounts of organisational, management practices could be read as “hero narratives”, “evangelised reports of personal victories in making miracles happen against all odds” (Neelands, 2004, p. 47). This phrase was originally used to describe unreflexive, anecdotal accounts of transformative moments in drama classrooms that are generalised as evidence of drama’s social and educational efficacy (Neelands, 2004). Hero narratives might play an important role in inspiring and motivating other practitioners facing adverse conditions to creating practice. Indeed, the accounts outlined above start to reveal possibilities for negotiating funding relationships through both imaginative artistic strategies, but also imaginative, ‘arts-led’ management practice. Furthermore, O’Connor and Haddon’s accounts are not straightforward hero narratives; they are closer to anti-hero narratives. The protagonists are flawed; they do the ‘wrong’ thing and have skeletons in the closet. The accounts are reflexive, making visible the part that financial and funding relationships play in the production of applied practices. Ultimately, however, both companies survive ‘the agenda trap’ with a strengthened commitment to their social and creative values; amidst a minefield of manipulative funders or constraining relationships, both

find a 'miraculous' funding partnership (O'Connor, 2009, p. 596). In both accounts the integrity of the practice is threatened, even compromised, but ultimately recovered or preserved. There is a risk that such resolutions erase the possibilities for action they promise, either by perpetuating an ideal of 'pure' practice or locating hope only in the possibility of a miracle. This raises questions about how to write the economies of applied theatre in a way that captures the ambiguities of practice; to offer possibilities for hope and action without promising a miraculous solution. Such a challenge underpins the aim to develop a more complex understanding of the ways in which applied theatre practices intersect and interrelate with local and global economies.

In the introductory chapter I shared a poem constructed from some of the metaphors and imagery used in the literature on applied theatre and funding. In a challenge to the field of critical management studies, Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) identify a "taste" amongst critical management researchers "for 'darker' metaphors that draw out the dastardly and exploitative aspects of organizations" (p. 547). As with hero narratives, dark metaphors are a powerful way to draw attention to negative experiences and problematic aspects of practice. The danger is that such metaphors limit interpretive possibilities as they "lead to foregone conclusions" (Spicer et al., 2009, p. 547). Instead, Spicer et al. suggest looking for "mixed or ambiguous metaphors" that "open up space for a more ambivalent exploration of managerial practice" (p. 547). If metaphors strengthen and perpetuate particular economic theories and practices, it seems important to question the language used to describe applied theatre's relationship with local and global economies and to look in the midst of practice for ambiguous metaphors that might open up possibilities for action.

In the title of this thesis and the subheadings of this chapter I invoke two metaphors: 'tangled webs', a metaphor for applied theatre's relationship with broad political-economic arrangements, and 'murky terrain' a metaphor for relationships with specific donors. The web metaphor is used repeatedly in the writing of Thompson (2006, 2009, 2011), but also by Balfour (2009) and O'Connor (2009). In his early writing, Thompson (2006) engages Geertz's (1973) conceptualisation of culture as webs of meaning. Thompson uses this concept to explore the possible ways in which performance activities might have lasting effects for participants, by creating connections, maintaining and reforming webs of meaning (Thompson, 2006, pp. 70, 96). Later, he recycles the web metaphor, describing applied theatre initiatives as "caught into a web of powerful strategic performances" (Thompson, 2009, p. 122). Thompson argues that such webs need to be "acknowledged, revealed and questioned" by practitioners (Thompson, 2011, p. 40). He also considers the ways in which applied practices might engage with the webs in which they are caught through particular forms of performance (Thompson, 2011).

Balfour (2009) also evokes the image of applied theatre caught "within a complex political and social web", referring to the adaptation of practice to political structures and social discourses (p. 347). Balfour suggests that practitioners should be aware of the web, their position within it and "the implications of inertia or struggle" (p. 347). O'Connor (2009) describes a particular funding relationship as a "tangled web", creating

a powerful image of an applied theatre project as entirely determined by that relationship (O'Connor, 2009, p. 583). As cited above, he also describes the relationship between donors and applied theatre companies as “murky terrain”, a dangerous landscape in which even the most vigilant practitioner cannot see all of the traps, pitfalls and mines.

These two metaphors certainly have a ‘dark’ side, portraying applied theatre as an object trapped within powerful, constraining and determining forces or wandering in a dangerous, gloomy landscape. I suggest, however, that they have a degree of ambiguity that makes them open to expansion and reinterpretation (Spicer et al., 2009, p. 547). Webs come in many forms: orbs, tangles, funnels, tubes, sheets. Webs can be sinister, but they can also be beautiful, supportive. Some webs seem miraculous in their regularity, others like an impossible mess. Webs are part of their environment, affected by the conditions around them; they are under continuous construction, sometimes co-construction. It might be difficult to get orientated in murky terrain, but a wanderer might find that their senses are heightened. Familiar territory might be experienced anew with a greater sense of the self in relation to the environment. Accepting these above metaphors, ‘managing applied theatre’ might be understood as a process of *negotiating* tangled webs and *navigating* murky terrain.

In writing the economies of applied theatre my aim is to capture the ambiguities of practice, avoiding not just the over use of ‘dark metaphors’ but also the reproduction of hero narratives with easily identifiable ‘goodies and baddies’. Into this writing I weave feminist economic and performance theories that disrupt established economic narratives and concepts.

## Chapter 3

### Researching (other people's) practice

In the previous chapter, I identified three interrelated foci for this research: how theatre companies negotiate their relationship with shifting political and economic arrangements; how they navigate specific financial and funding relationships; and how this plays out in the 'economy', or management, of everyday organisational and creative activities. Thus equipped, I embark on nine months of fieldwork with the intention to develop a complex understanding of the relationship between applied theatre practices and local and globalised economies. My aim is to develop rich, critical accounts of the ways in which people working in applied theatre companies experience and manage the relationship between their political, aesthetic, pedagogic and ethical values and the demands of financing the work. I take a multi-sited ethnographic approach, working with three theatre companies in different national contexts: New Zealand, Hong Kong and the UK. With each company, I address the research questions by working closely with practitioners, participating in and observing their day-to-day work and reflecting critically with them on emerging issues of concern. At each step of this process, however, I confront the challenge of researching other people's practice. In this chapter, I detail my response to these challenges, drawing on theoretical and methodological ideas from applied theatre research and ethnography.

#### A "practised methodology"

Practised research<sup>19</sup>

A performed and performative process

Artistry, improvisation and decomposition

Creative cross overs and confluences

between discursive research methods and creative practices.

Ongoing, layered and sometimes unpredictable...

interweaving practices of research, theory and practice.

[Found poem from literature]

The 'practised methodology' proposed by Hughes and colleagues (2011) reflects the aims of this research. It is an approach to research in which "different methods of research and practice combine to develop and strengthen ongoing critical revisions of the value of applying theatre in complex and unpredictable contexts" (p. 191). Thinking about research as 'practised' is a challenge to "notions of method and methodology as epistemologically secure, finite, discrete sets of procedures fit for the purpose of discovering certain, measurable findings about the impact of applied theatre practice" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 188). Envisaging a very different epistemological relationship, a practised methodology is "responsive" to practice and supportive of "the creative social and political aims of projects" (Hughes et al., 2011, p.

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<sup>19</sup> Hughes et al. (2011, pp. 206–207)

188). The three principles that underpin a practised methodology are artistry, improvisation and decomposition:

The term ‘artistry’ refers to a crafted process of research that occurs as part of or alongside creative practice. ‘Improvisation’ refers to actions that take place during a research process that are spontaneous responses to unpredictable events and venture beyond the confines of predetermined design. ‘Decomposition’ refers to moments when designed and improvised research processes deteriorate in confrontation with experiences that confound expectations of an orderly, rule-bound, habitable universe. (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 188)

A practised methodology involves a relationship between research and applied theatre practice in which each is part of the other (Hughes et al., 2011). It is practice-based. Theorising and practice are not seen to be discrete activities, rather practice is valued as “a means of generating theoretical knowledge, and theoretical endeavour as a practised form of knowledge that has critical and affective force when brought into relation with practice” (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 193). The notion of a practised methodology causes me to consider how my research might engage in a responsive relationship with the practice of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power to generate practice-based knowledge about the economies of applied theatre. Together with the questions and aims of the research, this consideration informs my choice of methods. Extending slightly on the focus of Hughes et al.’s work, I am suggesting that applied theatre research needs to engage responsively with both organisational and creative practice. To achieve this, I propose three dimensions of performativity for a practised methodology.

### **Three dimensions of performativity**

Hughes et al. (2011) suggest that “the research of applied theatre is a performed and performative process intimately connected to questions of power and identity” (p. 206). This indicates an appreciation of practice *as* research, but also the need to accept the responsibilities that come when research does not just represent particular realities, but is also implicated in producing them. In this section, then, I propose that a performative epistemology and relational ontology might be a useful basis for a responsive relationship between research, theory and organisational practice in applied theatre research.

In the 1950s, the British philosopher of language Austin (1975) developed a theory of ‘speech acts’, using ‘performative’ as a noun to describe an utterance that, given the right conditions, will make a difference in the world (Loxley, 2007, p. 1). In his reading of Austin’s theory, theatre and literary theorist Loxley (2007) suggests that performative utterances do more than describe actions or generate consequences, they are actions in themselves and through being performed “it could be said that they produce a different world” (p. 2). Austin’s speech act theory was developed in different ways by Searle (1969, 1989) and Derrida (1978). Derrida (1978) expands on Austin’s conception of performatives as ‘iterative’; as utterances that have become ‘conventional’ through their repetition. He questions the existence of an ‘original’ meaning or intention behind performative speech acts, from which the meaning of all repetitions is derived (Loxley, 2007, p. 79). Moving beyond the linguistic, Butler (1997) brought Derrida’s theory together with

anthropological ideas about ritual events in society to rethink the way in which identities and bodies are gendered through a performative process (Loxley, 2007, p. 119). For Butler (2011), bodies, identities and practices are performed, meaning they are constituted through ongoing, everyday repetitive processes that regulate, but do not determine, what acts are possible. Performativity is a central concept in the ‘anti-disciplinary’ academic field of performance studies where it is used to indicate the quality of being like a (theatrical) performance (Schechner, 2006; Shepherd & Wallis, 2004). While this use of performativity to mean ‘performance-like’ is distinct from the concept of discursive performativity, cross-fertilisation between them has driven forward thinking about ontology, epistemology, and politics in performance studies (Loxley, 2007). Denzin (2003), for example, considers the political and epistemological potential of performed research to be based on the “tension” between linguistic performativity and “the act of performing” (pp. 9–10).

Performativity has been used in a range of academic fields where there has been a movement to blur or break down the boundaries constructed between theory, research and practice. My understanding of a practised methodology has been informed by thinking in three fields, the creative arts (Haseman, 2006), science and technology studies (Barad, 2003; J. Law & Urry, 2004), and feminist, practice-based organisational research (Keevers & Treleaven, 2008). In each field, the concept of performativity is being mobilised to address specific concerns about the relationship between research, practice and wider socio-political processes. Relating my fieldwork experiences to these different uses of performativity throughout my research, I developed three ‘dimensions of performativity’ for my practised methodology.

In the creative arts, Haseman (2006) draws directly on Austin’s speech act theory to propose a performative paradigm for practice-led research. Haseman argues that when practice is the central research activity, data works ‘performatively’, performing an action that is integral to the creative process. He uses the notion of performativity to differentiate *practice-led* research from the research of practice and methodologies in which data are performed. In performative research, practice is more than the subject of research or a means to represent data; as a form of “symbolic data” the ‘doing’ of practice *is* the research (Haseman, 2006, p. 5). In this instance, Haseman uses the concept of performativity to make a strong case for creative arts practice to be recognised as legitimate research in the academy and beyond. Performative inquiry, meanwhile, has emerged as a term to describe research where drama and performance are mobilised “as a mode of inquiry that addresses social issues with goals of change” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 136). Dimension one, then, includes being open to the potential of creative practice to generate knowledge about the research topic. In the case of this study this meant working within each company’s particular aesthetic vocabulary to address the concerns of this research.

Dimension two involves being critically attentive to the ways in which research methods are implicated in the production of particular realities. Thinking more broadly about research in the social sciences, J. Law and Urry (2004) use the concept of performativity to different ends. They argue that *all* research methods can be understood as performative because “they have effects; they make differences; they enact realities;

and they can help bring into being what they also discover” (J. Law & Urry, 2004, pp. 392–393). J. Law and Urry argue that even seemingly non-interventional research processes, such as observation, are always-already intervening and constructing, describing “into being” particular realities (p. 392). ‘Reality’, for J. Law and Urry, should not be understood as something that pre-exists the methods of social science, and which may be affected by these methods. Rather, “certain kinds of social realities are performed into being in social science” (p. 397). For J. Law and Urry, this means that all researchers need to be more mindful of the realities they create through their research (p. 403). Thinking about research methods as performative means that with each decision I take as I plan, enact and write my research, I am accountable for that which I “bring into being” (J. Law & Urry, 2004, p. 393).

Finally, dimension three involves paying attention to the ways in which organisational realities are produced through entangled relationships between human and other-than-human actors (Keevers, Treleaven, Sykes, & Darcy, 2012). Keevers and Treleaven (2008, 2012) propose a performative lens for practice-based organisational research. This lens is based on the new-materialist theory of Barad (2003, 2007). Barad proposes a post human conception of performativity:

Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. (Barad, 2003, p. 802)

Barad questions scientific realism’s privileging of matter and independent reality but also the postmodern and poststructural positioning of materiality as the “effect of discursive practices” (Hekman, 2008, p. 103). She rejects an individualised metaphysics that assumes the existence of individual ‘things’ possessing inherent properties that can be observed and measured (Barad, 2007, p. 55). Practices, including research, performatively produce ‘reality’, objects, subjects, matter and meaning, by “*intra-acting* from within and as part of the phenomena produced” [emphasis in original] (Barad, 2007, p. 56). Here the term ‘intra-acting’ is used to indicate that there are no ontologically separable ‘things’ or ‘entities’ that exist prior to this relationship (Barad, 2003, p. 815). The practitioner/researcher and their ways of “knowing, thinking, measuring, theorizing, and observing” are always “intra-acting within and as part of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 90). Knowledge practices, then, “are *specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world*” [emphasis in original] (Barad, 2007, p. 91). Knowledge does not come from standing at a distance and representing, but from direct material engagements. What Barad is proposing is an ‘agential realism’ in which ‘agency’ describes the dynamic, ongoing reconfiguring of the world. Boundaries are produced by ‘agential cuts’, specific, local distinctions made within a particular material-discursive practice that “produce different phenomena” (Barad, 2007, p. 175). This includes, for example, the ‘cuts’ between human and nonhuman, subject and object. When cuts are made “the boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena become determinate and ... particular concepts (that is particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful” (Barad, 2007, p. 139). The ‘entanglement’ of knowledge practice and material becoming makes practitioners accountable for the cuts they make.

Importantly, from Barad's posthuman perspective, humans do not produce phenomena, they "participate in bringing forth the world in its specificity, including ourselves" (Barad, 2007, p. 353). Keevers et al. (2008, 2012), then, draw attention to the ways in which organisational practices involve 'intra-actions' between human and non-human actors. This indicates a specific way of understanding organisations as involved in an ongoing process of becoming through the intra-action of matter and language. From the perspective of Barad's post-human performativity, the focus of organisational research "changes from the components of practice (actors, experience, tools, and activity) to the complex entanglements and relationalities binding them together in complex communities" (Keevers & Treleaven, 2008, p. 11). Following Keevers and Treleaven, I am interested in how Barad's ontoepistemological framework might usefully shift the focus of organisational research in applied theatre in a way that is consistent with Hughes et al.'s notion of a practised methodology. This dimension of performativity led me to reconsider the roles played by ATCo's funding contract, C&T's business plan and FM Theatre Power's marketing materials within the companies' practice as participative and co-productive of particular realities.

## **An ethnographic approach**

We call, then, for research that, at once, digs deep and theorizes wide. (Weis et al., 2009, p. 438)

My research questions call for a methodological approach that brings together a critical examination of the relationship between local and globalised economies and a practice-based understanding of how this relationship is experienced and managed. For this reason, I take an ethnographic approach, drawing specifically from organisational and multi-sited ethnographic methodologies. With its origins in anthropology, ethnographic research, particularly within the 'Malinowskian paradigm', takes the form of a "focused, sustained, intensive life in communities of distinctive difference" (Marcus, 2009, p. 182). Both multi-sited and organisational ethnographies, however, challenge some of the central ideas of ethnography in this tradition. First they shift away from researching what is considered 'different', towards an ethnography of what is "already known" (Marcus, 2009, p. 184). Secondly, while ethnography in the Malinowskian tradition typically involved the study of culture in a single bounded site, multi-sited ethnography involves an opening up of the ethnographic imaginary to the interconnectedness of cultures across multiple sites (Marcus, 2007, 2009). By working within and across three theatre companies in three different geographic contexts, this study combines the focus of organisational ethnography on everyday organisational practices with the global imaginary of multi-sited research.

## **Organisational ethnography**

...the study of practice requires immersing oneself and being there. Only in this way is one capable of appreciating, understanding and translating the situated, temporal, creative, interpretive and, above all, moral and committed nature of the actual work. (Nicolini, 2009, pp. 134–135)

To generate a practice-based understanding of the ways in which theatre companies experience and manage their financial and funding relationships, I worked within three theatre companies, each for a 2–3 month period. Over this time, I attempted to build collegiate relationships with the practitioners involved with each company by working alongside them in a supportive capacity and engaging with them in critical discussions about their practice. Hirsch and Gellner (2001) define ethnographic fieldwork as “fieldwork in which the researcher engages with the people being studied, shares their life as far as possible, and converses with them in their own terms” (p. 1). Organisational ethnographers are interested in the complexity to be found in seemingly commonplace day-to-day work (Ybema, Kamsteeg, Yanow, & Wels, 2009, p. 1). They question the value of organisational research that is written “as if organizations are not inhabited and embodied by individuals who go to work” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 1). Rather than filtering out the messy, seemingly mundane aspects of organisational life, an ethnographic approach sees everyday organisational practices as a crucial part of the “lived experience of organizing” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 1). Consistent with the principles of a practised methodology, organisational ethnography strives to be grounded in practice. Apparently ordinary activities are considered to be knowledge practices. These practices are contingent upon, but not necessarily determined by, wider social, political and economic contexts (Nicolini, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). Ethnographic study of organisations, therefore, “combines an orientation toward subjective experience and individual agency in everyday life with sensitivity to the broader social settings and the historical and institutional dynamics in which these emerge or are embedded” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 7). Following the tradition of organisational ethnography, this research attempts to foreground administrative and management practices and their relation to artistic and aesthetic processes, attending to the detail of everyday organisational practices as well as the wider social, political and economic context.

## **Multi-sited design**

Where would we draw the line around “the grounded reality of the everyday”? (Massey, 2004, p. 29)

Rather than focusing on everyday practices as ‘localised’, produced in a particular place, Massey (2004) calls for a spatial imaginary that attends to the ways in which practice and identities are also produced through wider-reaching relationships. This research is multi-sited, involving three theatre companies in New Zealand, Hong Kong and then the UK. This design is a response to concerns about the ways applied theatre practices become interconnected with global political and economic processes through the nexus of particular funding and financial relationships (Thompson, 2009).

Multi-sited ethnographic research involves a relational research imaginary. Weis, Fine and Dimitiadis (2009) draw on Appadurai (1996), to argue that research design is the “work of the imagination” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4 as quoted in Weis et al., 2009, p. 442). They call for researchers to rethink their “research imaginary” through “a kind of self-reflexivity about how particular ethnographic sites are imagined and linked empirically, as well as how objects are, in the more traditional social science sense,

delimited” (Weis et al., 2009, p. 442). Multi-sited ethnography involves an opening up of the ethnographic imaginary to the interconnectedness of cultures across multiple sites:

We are interested here in research designs that take seriously and concurrently the deep, local and historic conditions within which cultures and movements grow and change and *at the same time* seek evidence of the ways in which global winds carry across sites, bodies, capital, privilege, culture, critique, and despair. (Weis et al., 2009, p. 439)

For Weis et al. (2009), connecting across sites “allows us to understand both the specific ways globalization is playing out “on the ground” as well as how broader, globally linked processes are unfolding across site[s]” (p. 442). Through a multi-sited design this research attends to the relationship between globalisation as a “political and economic *project*” that produces particular measures of value, modes of labour and systems of exchange and the applied theatre’s aesthetic-pedagogic and organisational forms (Massey, 2004, p. 293).

While there is no agreed model for multi-sited research, it generally involves movement through time and space, physically, virtually or imaginatively (Falzon, 2009, p. 31). The impetus for this movement is usually the need or desire to follow a person, organisation, process or network as it travels across multiple sites (Marcus, 2009, p. 187). The impetus of this research, however, is less coherent. Drawing on Marcus’s (1998) earlier writings about this methodology, Weis et al. (2009) describe multi-sited ethnography as involving the juxtaposition of two or more ethnographically conceived sites and the tracing of connections, “both intuitively and empirically”, between them (p. 441). This research, then, does not ‘follow’ a coherent path. It does not involve “matched samples”, where there is a precise linking or networking of people between different sites (Horst, 2009, p. 120). Instead, I chose to work with three theatre companies that appear to be un-connected. In doing so, my aim was to juxtapose three differently located perspectives on the research topic, allowing for the possibility of connections between their experiences, but also for dissonance and discontinuity.

The three theatre companies involved in this research were identified through a process of purposive sampling guided by the research question and aims (van der Waal, 2009). The research questions focus the inquiry on the relationship between creative and business practice in applied theatre. With this in mind, I provisionally defined an ‘applied theatre company’ as: an independent company where applying theatre is the main purpose and activity of the organisation. Working with this provisional definition, I conducted an internet and literature survey of theatre companies in New Zealand, the UK and Hong Kong. I then consulted with applied theatre academics in each country, drawing on their knowledge to identify companies whose creative and business practices were in some way distinctive. The intention behind this selection process was not to achieve holistic representation, but to try and productively juxtapose the contextualised study of different ‘parts’ (Falzon, 2009, p. 2). Finally, I contacted a small number of theatre companies directly. It was important to me that the relationship I formed with each company was a

collaboration around a common concern (Marcus, 2007). The final three companies, then, were chosen because a mutual interest in the research topic emerged through initial discussions and correspondence.

**Familiar unfamiliarity**

The familiarity challenge.

Getting orientated.

Navigating a city.

Navigating research.

Navigating myself.

Blockhouse Bay,

the same, but different, to

Worcester,

the same, but different, to

Hong Kong.

In each place:

a new currency,

a new mode of transport,

a new Google-map,

a new climate,

a new culture,

and a new language.

[CAP. From research journal 06-08-2012)

One of the criticisms of a multi-sited approach is that moving between sites, or “moving around and ‘following’ horizontally”, leaves less time for “following vertically”, resulting in studies that do not achieve the rich depth associated with ethnographies (Falzon, 2009, p. 7). Appadurai (2009), for example, argues that multi-sited ethnography does not give the researcher enough time to develop linguistic and contextual expertise. Horst’s (2009) response to such criticisms is that multi-sited ethnographies can be self-consciously partial. This means that they are highly focused on specific issues and practices in a particular geographical location based on an interest in the transnational connections between them (Horst, 2009, p. 127). This research has included the ongoing study of the histories, cultures, politics and economics of New Zealand, Hong Kong and the UK, and of basic spoken Cantonese. This has been focused by the specific aim to develop the ‘cultural competency’ and contextual knowledge necessary to understand the applied practices of the three theatre companies involved in this research and their financial and funding relationships. I have tried to account for the inevitable limitations of this process both in the approach to writing the research and (see below) and the markers of validity (discussed in Chapter 4).

Even with such measures, cross-cultural research can sustain colonial models of understanding by privileging ways of knowing that silence local and indigenous knowledge (L. T. Smith, 1999). My research does not directly involve groups who would typically be defined as indigenous peoples. It does, however, involve working in three countries with contested colonial histories (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 6). As a white, English researcher I am conscious of the implications of researching in the post-colonial contexts of New Zealand and Hong Kong. But neither can I take for granted that researching in the UK will negate cross-cultural research issues. In each research site seemingly practical decisions about methods are also ethical

decisions. Underpinning the methods for collecting, analysing and interpreting data, therefore, is a respect for the perspectives, self-determination, and ways of knowing of the research participants (Liamputtong, 2010; L. T. Smith, 1999). As well as looking for ways to establish respectful, mutually beneficial research partnerships with each company, I have worked with advisers in each country to ensure that research methods are culturally appropriate.

Hong Kong is a trilingual context. All FM Theatre Power members speak Cantonese as their first language. Many also speak English and some speak Mandarin/Putonghua. I received tuition in Cantonese in preparation for, and during the fieldwork in Hong Kong. This enabled me to communicate at a very basic level day to day. I did not employ an outside translator for my participant-observation of the day-to-day work of FM Theatre Power. Due to the small size of the company and the specialist nature of their practice, the company suggested that an outside translator would be obtrusive and that their practice might be misinterpreted. Self-translation was their preferred option; company members were nominated to translate and answer questions during my fieldwork observations. Translated versions of key research documents were available to participants and all interviewees could request to have a translator present.

### **The constraints of connoisseurship for ‘seeing’ other people’s practice**

Regardless of the methodological approach, understanding practice requires time, so that we can be aware of contingencies and how one thing unfolds into another (Eisner, 1998, p. 70). Eisner (1998) reminds researchers that to understand the “complexities, nuances, and subtleties of aspects of the world” also requires a degree of skill built up through practice (p. 68). Writing about qualitative research in education, Eisner proposes that connoisseurship can be understood as a form of “epistemic seeing” (p. 68). ‘Epistemic seeing’ does not privilege observation as the means of gaining knowledge. It involves multiple senses that may or may not include sight (Eisner, 1998, p. 68). The connoisseur’s prior knowledge and experience enables them to sense the subtleties and nuances of complex phenomena. While connoisseurship might be associated with the appreciation of wine or art, Eisner argues that it is a process that can apply “in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects, situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice” (Eisner, 1998, p. 63). Connoisseurship can be understood as a discerning consciousness of the qualities and multiple dimensions of phenomena as well as the relationship between them:

I come in, find somewhere to put my bags, put my lunch and milk in the fridge and get my laptop, pencil case and notebook out. I look at the available work spaces and, after checking with her, sit at Caitlin’s desk so I can easily plug my (now working) laptop in. I check my emails and start to write notes for today. Stephen wants to spend some time today working on the application to the Todd Foundation. While he is checking emails he asks me to look through the form. I also look at the funding proposals I have from ASB and Mobil and try to identify text that can be reused. This feels like a familiar process, but the working with a funding application form and the recycling of text that has been well written for something else... (Research journal 14-02-2012)

I bring my prior knowledge and experience to this research. I have worked for theatres and theatre companies for twelve years, ten of which have been in management roles. As a researcher, I need to work hard to develop contextual knowledge and cultural competency, but I am also able to 'see' ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power with a degree of practice-based knowledge. I can quickly understand a lot of what is going on, build relationships and sense what roles I might take. Still, many aspects of each company's work were initially difficult to understand. With ATCo, my prior relationship with the company enabled me to quickly discern the organisation's patterns and practices. Without the same prior experience, it took nearly three solid days of Paul explaining C&T's practice to me before I was anywhere near the same level of understanding:

The rest of the afternoon passes in a blur as Paul talks me through the remaining DPs and then presents a long to-do list, in an excel spread sheet, that one of the consultants has given him. Many of the tasks have been assigned to me. I realise that because he has invested this time in telling me everything about the company I can now work pretty autonomously on these tasks. (Research journal 10-05-2012)

With FM Theatre Power it felt like it took weeks before I started to see the company in more than tiny fragments. This was partly due to the language difference. Also, the organisational structure and practices of FMTP were different to any I had previously experienced. This experience brought to light the assumptions and expectations that shaped my research perspective and approach. My attempt to form a research relationship with each company had been based on implicitly-held ideas about what an applied theatre company would be like, particularly how they would manage and organise their work:

**Molly:** And do you get paid?

**Yukko:** Oh no, no no.

**Molly:** You just do it voluntarily...? The money just goes to the company?

**Yukko:** You could say something like that. But we always say that we're not volunteers.

**Molly:** Yes, I should remember that sorry.

**Yukko:** That is OK.

**Molly:** So, you're not, you're not taking the payment...

**Yukko:** Yes...

**Molly:** But the money goes to the company, to your organisation...

**Yukko:** Yes for the...

**Molly:** For your productions...?

**Yukko:** ...for FM Theatre Power, yes.

(Yukko 18-09-2012)

To identify and differentiate a connoisseur draws on categories and labels which are inevitably based on established expectations and norms. I draw on feminist economic theories to take a critical perspective on the economies of applied theatre and to be able to see diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Even so, I find that often a more ‘economic’ way of seeing pervades my attempts to make sense of the three companies and their practice. The example of trying to find the right way to describe the work of FM Theatre Power was one example of how the categories available to the researcher from their prior experience can sometimes exclude important aspects of other people’s practice. Our perceptions and responses to what we experience are always shaped by what we already know, or think we know, and so it is important to recognise that “a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” (Eisner, 1998, p. 67). I have tried to make the inevitable partiality of my understanding of the three companies evident in my writing, an approach I discuss further below.

### How to see a theatre company

The first thing I see...

I see

an ever-shifting entity.  
 Every time I think I have worked out the coordinates  
 It disappears and  
 (if I am lucky)  
 re-emerges somewhere else,  
 in another form.

Theatre companies,  
 applied or otherwise,  
 appear one way to the outside world:  
 a coherent  
 organisational face,  
 and then,

~~like the Wizard of Oz,  
 exist as something else  
 behind the performance.~~

~~20 volunteers~~ not volunteers?,  
 Five[?] regularly involved core members.  
~~A part time paid administrator~~ no paid staff.  
 A board, a series of articles, a website, social media posts...  
 I am not even sure  
 If there is an office,  
 but there ~~is~~ was a shop...

My first challenge:  
 To try and comprehend  
 The dynamics of this organisation:  
 Who knows what?  
 Who is where and when?  
 What does each person do?  
 Know?  
 Want?  
 How I can fit in?

[CAP. From research journal entries August 2012]

With each of the three companies, I experienced a ‘Wizard of Oz’ effect. My first encounter with each organisation was with its website, publically available reports and documents, published articles and, with ATCo, observing workshops and performances. In each instance, this left me with the impression that the companies were large, well resourced, and coherent. Together with my prior knowledge and assumptions, these first impressions shaped what I expected to ‘see’ in each company. It was only over time that I started to ‘see’ the subtleties and nuances of each organisation behind their polished public-facing presentations. Unlike the ‘Wizard of Oz’ image, though, these public organisational faces are not deliberately contrived disguises intended to give a misleading impression, curtains that when pulled back revealed the ‘real’ company. They are an important part of those organisations’ practice. But, as another window through which to ‘see’ organisations they only give a particular view and limited understanding.

Hughes et al. (2011) propose that “[s]ituations of practice are inherently unstable, messy, interconnected, conflictual, uncertain, complex, and there is a need for usable knowledge practices ... to respond to the unpredictable situations of practice” (p. 193). This applies as much to those aspects of theatre companies’ work that would be described as organisational practices, as to those that would be understood as creative or applied practices. Researching in a way that is responsive to practice (artistic and organisational) means finding a way to ‘see’ the messiness and complexity of practice that is based on, but not limited by, prior theoretical and experiential knowledge. Through the practice of method I found that my ‘epistemic seeing’ evolved over time as I worked closely with the companies. Methodologically, I needed their practice to challenge my way of seeing, and sometimes vice versa, if existing frames of reference for understanding the economies of applied theatre were to be challenged:

**Molly:** Yes, yes, I know you’re not volunteers. I’m just trying to find, trying to find another word.

[Yukko laughs]

**Yukko:** It’s not easy [laughs].

**Molly:** It’s not. Is there a word in Chinese?

**Yukko:** Actually no, because people always say that I’m a volunteer in Chinese and I say that I’m not but I can’t find another way to say it!

**Molly:** I don’t think it’s the same as, like typical amateur theatre, I don’t think it’s the same as that.

**Yukko:** No, no we’re not.

**Molly:** So it’s hard to describe.

**Yukko:** Yes. So were doing something new. [She laughs]

(Yukko 18-09-2012)

## Methods for ‘zooming in and zooming out’

Even though the organisational structure and practices of FMTP in Hong Kong were significantly ‘different’ to what I had experienced before, I still experienced a sense of familiarity, when sorting and distributing marketing materials, making and moving scenery, and sitting in the wings during long technical rehearsals, for example. In organisational ethnography, familiarity is understood to be both an advantage and disadvantage (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). Traditionally ethnographers aim to make the strange familiar by “developing an intimate familiarity [that] enables them to grasp the import of that which they are seeing and/or experiencing” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 11). For organisational ethnographers, however, over-familiarity with everyday work contexts can mean that details are overlooked or dismissed as “commonplace”, making it important to make the “familiar strange” (Ybema et al., 2009, pp. 11–12).

In organisational ethnography both closeness/familiarity and distance/strangeness are seen as crucial for understanding organisational practices. Recognising this, Nicolini (2009) proposes a dynamic, recursive process for researching practice that moves from immersion in the midst of activity outwards, following “trails of connections” in the immediate and wider context (p. 121). Based on an understanding of practice as interdependent, agential, material-historical processes that produce effects, Nicolini’s approach is consistent with a performative epistemology and relational ontology (p. 122). ‘Zooming in and zooming out’ does not involve a pre-planned cycle (p. 133). It involves responding to practice as interdependent and interconnected by ‘improvising’ with multiple methods in an ongoing and always incomplete process. The aim of Nicolini’s approach is to sensitise the researcher to the details and the relational “texture” of practice (p. 128). I have adapted this approach to craft a methodology that moves between closeness to and distance from practice, a dynamic that involves both researcher and participants.

## ‘Zooming in’: Methods for getting up close

### Participant observation

Only through immersing oneself and being there is one capable of appreciating, understanding, and translating the situated, creative, interpretive and moral nature of the actual practices of organising. (Nicolini, 2009, p. 120)

Researching practice requires a sustained, multi-sensory engagement, even, and perhaps especially, with practices that might be dismissed as banal, such as day-to-day administration. Participant observation is the primary ethnographic method; it involves the researcher becoming an integral part of the field site for a specified time (van der Waal, 2009). I spent an average of three days per week working with each theatre company for between two and three months. My aim was to become as closely involved in the day-to-day work of each company as possible. Nicolini (2009) argues that the closeness of an ethnographic approach is the only way to understand organisation as a social and material process. He emphasises the epistemic importance of an affective, cognitive and aesthetic engagement which, he suggests, can only be gained

through becoming involved with the “hurly-burly” of practice (p. 135). I sought a rich understanding of organisational life by working with and alongside practitioners in the midst of practice.

In each company I was invited to participate in a range of activities, working alongside practitioners at different levels of the organisation. As well as observing and participating, I looked for areas of the company’s work that I could directly contribute to. I assisted with editing documents such as funding applications (ATCo); conducting research tasks (C&T); distributing marketing materials (FMTP); facilitating drama workshops (ATCo & C&T); and documenting projects (FMTP).

### **Non-participation/observation**

In organisational ethnography participant observation can be fragmented; it has to take place “wherever this seems viable” (van der Waal, 2009, p. 34). In some situations it was clear that my participation was not appropriate, during rehearsals or performances, for example, and in some meeting and workshop situations. Other situations were more ambiguous. When my ‘participation’ involved documenting a project with members of FM Theatre Power, for example, I was uncertain whether it was appropriate to accompany them to the first rehearsal with a group of migrant families. In instances such as this, I sought advice from my key contact about the degree of participation that would be appropriate. In nine months, there were three occasions when I was unable to either observe or participate. Two instances were closed meetings where the number of attendees was restricted; in one instance a social worker involved in a project did not give consent for me to attend the workshops.

### **Research journal**

One way to zoom in on practice is to write as a way of “bringing activity to the centre stage” (Nicolini, 2009, p. 125). I kept a research journal throughout the research process. During my fieldwork, I explored journal writing as a way of attending to details of practice:

First we complete the form in Word, Stephen copies and pastes the text from their online form.

...

The first questions are around the vision and the activities of the company.

Stephen types. A 50 word statement is compiled over a few attempts.

...

Stephen checks each short phrase with me. After each sentence we go back and adjust a word or two. We discuss taking out the ‘Ltd’ after Applied Theatre Consultants in this early section but including an explanation further on in the form about the organisation’s status and the funding umbrella. This funder does not usually support private companies and there is a risk they might rule out the application before reading the entire proposal.

...

We look through information from the funder for ‘key words’, words that sell: “we must get National into the application, for example, this is a focus of the funder”.

...

As we are writing we get stuck over one point. We keep making suggestions but neither of us is satisfied. Stephen types and deletes, types and deletes...

**Stephen:** ‘Just let me get a sentence out...: We bring agencies together, that’s what we do’. He quickly types the sentence, his hand hovers over the delete button, then he clicks ‘save’.

I start to think about the economy of words...

**Stephen:** ‘How can we sell a programme like this in words? Funders need to see the programme, to experience it or at least to see the video... it is the bane of my life’

(Research journal 14-02-2012)

By foregrounding the material process of practice, theorising started to emerge from a writing practice that attended to “the local ‘whats’ and ‘hows’ of the production of organizational effects” (Nicolini, 2009, p. 127).

### **Documents ‘in practice’**

In organisational ethnography documents provide valuable data (van der Waal, 2009). With the permission of each company documents were collected throughout the fieldwork. These included marketing materials, websites, business plans, accounts, minutes from meetings, funding applications, project reports, contracts, job descriptions, and published articles. Where necessary, details about the purpose, function and context of specific documents were sought and recorded in my research journal or during interviews.

These are produced through and used to accomplish practices. They provide information about the three companies. Over the course of the research, I also became interested in the ways documents, texts and technologies participate within practice, materially and discursively, to produce particular organisational realities, as with ATCo’s funding contract and C&T’s business plan (Keevers et al., 2012). For FM Theatre Power, publicity materials are involved in multiple performances, simultaneously part of aesthetic, social and economic practices. Over the course of the fieldwork, then, I ‘zoomed in’ on the content of documents, but also on documents *in relation* and *in practice*.

### **Interviewing**

For this research I am interested in human actors and the value systems that informed their practice. This interest diverges from Nicolini’s (2009) ethnomethodological approach. Interviewing practitioners involved in the day-to-day running of each company was an important method for zooming in on individual and organisational histories, on the principles and values that inform the company’s practice, and on issues of concern relating to management and funding. In ATCo and C&T I interviewed all employees and regularly contracted freelance practitioners who volunteered to be part of the research, totalling ten participants. In FM Theatre Power, I interviewed nine company members. Each interview covered the interviewee’s background, their experience with the company and their perceptions of the company’s work. A second part was tailored to the interviewee, focused on their perspective on current activities in the company, an aspect of the companies work into which they had particular insight, or taking the form of a more open discussion about issues that had emerged during the fieldwork. I recorded multiple discussions with my main contact person at each company: Stephen Dallow, National Programmes Manager, ATCo; Paul

Sutton, Artistic Director, C&T; and Bonnie Chan, Research Director and Mo Lai Yan Chi, President, FM Theatre Power.

In the cases of Peter O'Connor, Briar O'Connor, Paul Sutton, Bonnie Chan and Mok Chiu Yu, I cite both research data (interviews and journal entry references) and academic writing they have published. Where I am drawing on research data I refer to these participants by their first names. When I cite from published material I use their surnames and the date of publication as with all other references.

### **'Zooming out': Methods for distancing**

Blinded, or even bored by too-familiar practices, the researcher can lose any sense of surprise at what they encounter. Ybema et al. (2009) warn that "when researchers get caught up in 'everydayness', organizational life may become as normal and 'infra-ordinary' (Perec, 1989) to them – and thus unworthy of observation – as water is to fish" (p. 103). They suggest that working to sustain or regain a sense of strangeness in the everyday is as important as working to gain a sense of familiarity. Part of the rationale for 'zooming out' then, is to find a reflexive distance or help re-sensitise the researcher's critical faculties when immersed in fieldwork (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). However, for Nicolini (2009), 'zooming out' is not a 'distancing technique', but specifically a process of exploring the "texture of practices", meaning the relationships that connect practices across a wider context (p. 128). 'Zooming out' is consistent with a relational spatial imaginary, drawing attention to the ways in which apparently localised practices are at least partially produced by wider-reaching "flows and motilities" (Nicolini, 2009, p. 129). It is a process of following the webs of relationships that connect each company's practice to their immediate and wider contexts.

### **Interviewing - 'following relationships'**

At times, interviewing company employees/members was a method for zooming out, an opportunity to contextualise their practice and reflect critically on issues in the wider field. I also interviewed key individuals who were not directly involved in the day-to-day work of the organisation, but had an important perspective on the economies of their practice, including funders, board members, representatives from partner organisations, advisors, advocates, and other researchers.

### **Creative Analytic Practice**

Creative Analytic Practice was the main method of analysis in this research. I used a range of writing forms and other creative tasks to 'play' with the various texts collected and generated throughout the fieldwork.

L. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) propose,

Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling" about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis. (L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005, p. 923)

L. Richardson's notion of writing as a way of knowing challenges the idea that methodology and method are distinct from the writing up of research (L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005, p. 923). Writing and

other creative processes are accepted as “valid and desirable” methods of analysis, representation and knowledge production (p. 930).

### **Buying a chair**

I drive Caitlin to Lincoln Road Warehouse Stationary to buy an office chair. This seems to be something important, as it has been on the agenda since I started. Caitlin, however, comments that she does not care about the chair; she wants to be in the classroom, not on a chair.

To buy an office chair  
Something that is considered important  
On the agenda  
She does not care about the chair  
She wants to be in the classroom

Office chair  
On the agenda  
Care  
Chair  
Classroom

Chair

Classroom

Care-classroom

[At the time the incident with buying the chair seemed unimportant. I recorded the story to experiment with ‘zooming in’ on everyday practice – routines, activities and relationships with other-than-human participants. Later, rewriting this story into a poetic form, I found a critical distance from the incident, connecting it to the company’s apparent need to separate out management ‘work’ from creative classroom practice.]

[CAP. From research journal 07-02-2012]

L. Richardson uses ‘Creative Analytic Practice’ (CAP) as collective term for a range of ethnographic forms, including autoethnography, fiction, drama, poetry, visual presentations. I use Creative Analytic Practice to describe my approach to working playfully with my research texts (journal entries, interview recordings, transcripts, organisational documents, images and video) through activities that were simultaneously creative and analytic. Differing from other forms of arts-based enquiry, the purpose of CAP in this research is not to produce a finished ‘art-work’ but to generate different ways of thinking, to explore a range of perspectives and to produce new questions.

This Creative Analytic Practice was emergent and ongoing. It started with experimental writing tasks using journal entries made before the formal start of the fieldwork with ATCo. I then continued to devise and experiment with a range of creative tasks throughout my fieldwork, over the six months of transcription and focused analysis time that followed, and throughout the process of writing this thesis. These tasks included:

CAP tasks:

Write the settings and character descriptions as if for the opening of a play

Create a poem using only text from a journal entry, interview or document

Write with a focus on the other-than-human actors, write 100-500 words bringing them to the fore not the people

Write reflexively about an interview, focusing on the experience of doing the interview

Create a dialogue combining multiple research texts and/or theoretical material, to put different perspectives into conversation

Start writing with the body, focus on sensations of time, movement, sound, light, other bodies, temperature, hunger etc. Let the world of the research in.

In three minutes write an immediate poetic response to the data

Write up data as a short play scene

Try using different fonts, font sizes and textual placement

Rewrite a journal entry to include multiple subject positions

[The final three tasks are taken from L. Richardson and Adams St. Pierre (2005)]

I also experimented with tasks that were not writing-based in the obvious sense. I experimented with cutting up digital images of written texts, drawings and photographs to create composite, layered images (see Chapters 5 and 6).

A large amount of research texts were accumulated during this study. I used NVivo software to store, manage and organise data. Some of the functions of NVivo were also used in conjunction with my CAP. In no specified order, my analytic process involved:

Reading the full text for overall impression, then immediately writing a brief summary.

Using coding functions of NVivo to attend closely to the content of the text, annotating, identifying quotes, narratives and themes that relate to the research questions.

Using CAP tasks to play with the text in different literary forms.

With each company I explored the potential of drama as a form of Creative Analytic Practice. At the end of the fieldwork period, I invited each company to respond to an aspect of the research using methods from their vocabulary of applied drama and performance forms. My intention was to involve the company in an analytic process using drama to address the research process and/or questions creatively and symbolically (Gallagher, 2011). There is a growing body of literature on applied theatre *as* research (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013). Drama and theatre can provide powerful ways to address a research topic or question, generating new knowledge in different forms. Gallagher (2011) suggests that using theatre can re-position the researcher as “do-er” rather than observer (p. 327). Shifting the dynamic of interactions between researcher and participants, drama can make different “modes of communication, conduct and embodiment” available (p. 328). Likewise, Fels (2011) suggests that working through symbol and metaphor in drama can create a relationship between researcher and participants that is both more playful and more

ethical (p. 342). In this study, I experimented with using drama to involve the research participants as critical epistemic partners in a Creative Analytic Practice.

This method made use of my professional experience as a drama workshop facilitator. The focus was on how the theatre companies would use creative practice to explore and interrogate issues emerging from the research. With ATCo, I worked with Peter, Briar, Stephen and Caitlin to explore the concepts of value, managing and economy through image theatre, ultimately creating a web depicting the interconnected 'texture' of just one moment of seemingly mundane organisational practice – having a team lunch after a project launch event. With C&T I adapted Dorothy Heathcote's commission model to ask Paul and Max how I could use one of their Dramatic Properties to address my question about applied theatre's relationship with local and global economies. At the end of my research with FM Theatre Power, they used Playforward Theatre to perform back my account of the research fieldwork, followed by a brief exploration of some emerging questions about the research relationship through sound and movement, with the input of a public audience.

I include CAP as a method for zooming out because the predominant reason for using creative practice as a method for analysis is to enact a process of 'defamiliarisation'. Methodologically, this connects with the concept from organisational ethnography of 'making the familiar strange' (Ybema et al., 2009). Theatrically, it connects to Brecht's (2001a, 2001b) *Verfremdungseffekt*, the use of particular aesthetic techniques to make events in a play and the actions of characters appear remarkable to the audience, not just 'natural' or inevitable (Brooker, 2007). The political intent of *Verfremdungseffekt* is to make the audience aware of these actions and events as produced by a particular historical and social context, and therefore revealing the potential for things to be otherwise (Brooker, 2007). Also relevant is Brecht's later thinking about the importance of 'naivety', introduced supposedly in reaction to what he saw as a misinterpretation of his theories of estrangement in theatre (Brooker, 2007; Schoeps, 1989). From the German *Naiiv*, naivety indicates a "directness, intuitiveness, naturalness, freshness and vitality" (Schoeps, 1989, p. 190). The critical distance achieved through *Verfremdungseffekt* is not achieved at the expense of enjoyment, but with a playful aesthetic. Brecht's concept of naivety in theatre reconnects the pleasurable experience of finding wonderment in the everyday to the political technique of *Verfremdungseffekt* (Schoeps, 1989, p. 191). Re-framing a question or problem in a fictional, playful, or symbolic form, my aim was create a different perspective on practice through practice. In each instance, forms of Creative Analytic Practice conducted during my fieldwork generated new questions for the next phase of the research. The dramatic processes with ATCo and C&T generated different perspectives on questions about how specific instances of practice interconnect within local and global contexts (Brooker, 2007, p. 216). With FM Theatre Power, the discomforts and concerns I had with the ethics of my research relationship in this site were presented back to me by the company in a ridiculous, teasing, playful form that enabled me to experience the relationship anew.

## Chapter 4

### “Practised” ethics: reciprocity, trust and criticality

When creating applied theatre considerable care should be taken in forming relationships with those involved and in negotiating these relationships throughout the life of a project and beyond. Similar rigour needs to be applied to the formation of research relationships with applied theatre companies. In addition to the formal ethics process, a ‘practised ethics’ was enacted throughout this study based in specific conceptions of reciprocity, trust and criticality.

#### Rethinking reciprocity

Organisational researchers warn that: “we potentially harm our organizational hosts by taking time, focus and energy from their pursuits to suit our own purposes” (Fine & Shulman, 2009, p. 178). It was with such cautions in mind that I developed a research agreement with each company. The agreement was intended as a framework for negotiating a more reciprocal relationship. In much organisational research reciprocity is conceived as a ‘transactional’ relationship between the researcher(s) and participating organisation(s) (Denis & Lehoux, 2009, pp. 376–377). This means that the tangible outcomes or benefits for each party are defined, agreed and should correspond to, or ideally exceed, the contribution each has made to the research. The research agreement made clear what each company could expect from the research and what was expected of them. Their contribution to the research was formally recognised. Consideration of what the researcher or research process more broadly might contribute to the organisation was invited. These negotiations gave me a sense of the roles I could take within each company. Finding a sense of shared purpose made it easier to work in an unfamiliar context. However, as the fieldwork got underway I realised the limits of the agreement. In the messiness of day-to-day work I quickly lost any sense of what was being given and received, let alone whether the two corresponded. This confusion can be seen in this early research journal entry from my fieldwork with C&T:

I get to the office at 8am, early. I want to use the time to get ahead on some of the tasks that I have been given ... Perhaps I am making up for yesterday, wanting to clearly show that I do want to give back to the company, perhaps I am making up for leaving early today...  
(Research journal 11-05-2012)

The neat exchange imagined in the agreement became complicated by feelings of obligation and doubt. I continuously questioned whether my role within each company was ‘useful’ enough:

...again I am worried, I should be with the company as much as possible, but I am not sure whether I am useful in this situation or a source of concern and extra work... (Research journal 13-08-2012)

The research agreement set the terms for a reciprocal exchange, but I found myself caught in cycles of reciprocity that complicated and exceeded them. C. Johnson (1993) suggests that in Derrida’s writing “[t]he

logic of the double bind is the paradoxical conjunction of both structure (binding, restriction) and the transgression of structure (expenditure, dissipation) in a given system” (p. 131). What started as a clearly-defined transactional exchange became complicated by feelings that transgressed my self-imposed structure. Nicholson (2005) questions whether reciprocity as a stable cycle of exchange can be the basis of ethical relationships, even when “[c]ycles of giving and counter-giving ... are based on common principles of value, where the codes are shared and understood” (p. 162). Within a ‘transactional’ model of reciprocity, ethical tensions appear to be comfortably balanced out once the transaction is closed. Nicholson’s analysis, however, suggests that reciprocity can generate more emotional and ethical loose ends than it is possible to tie up. I struggle to re-negotiate my relationship with each company, to balance my research aims with the aims of their practice.

Trying to make sense of the tangle I find myself in, I talk to the companies. ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power are all actively engaged in research and regularly work with outside researchers. I ask each company about why this is important:

**Peter, ATCo Director:** We have had numerous students join us as a company service. (P. O’Connor, personal communication, June 19, 2012)

**Paul, C&T Artistic Director:** Yes, and it’s partly about distributing the knowledge and learning so that it has value beyond our company... so I think that’s kind of really where it can have benefit. (Paul 18-06-2012)

**Stephen, ATCo National Programmes Manager:** Also, having an outside eye on our work can only ultimately improve how we operate. We work so hard on a day-to-day basis that we often don’t stop and take a breather and look back at our own work and work protocols. (S. Dallow, personal communication, June 29, 2012)

**Peter:** Yes, outside researchers ... have added ways for us to understand our work. We have used them to develop the company’s praxis. (P. O’Connor, personal communication, June 19, 2012)

**Bonnie, FMTP Research Director:** We also do work quite a lot with people outside our company ... we think research is important, that it helps us to have a clearer vision of what we are doing and what can be done further. (B. Chan, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

**Paul:** Yes, and in a really small organisation I value that. I hope, while I have a particular way of thinking about things, I don’t have a closed mind about how to do things, and so staying fresh and open to those things is important. (Paul 18-06-2012)

**Molly:** And do you think about potential risks or costs to the company?

**Peter:** Risks usually are around the desire to have someone who can work without disturbing the work itself. (P. O’Connor, personal communication, June 19, 2012)

**Stephen:** And, I guess, the risk is that research can often feel like you are being checked on your role or quality of work, we always take these things personally. (S. Dallow, personal communication, June 29, 2012)

**Peter:** But we are open to critique and use it in a way to further develop and push our praxis. (P. O’Connor, personal communication, June 19, 2012)

**Bonnie:** Like developing Playforward Theatre, we are still working hard to ‘theorize’ our practical experience so other people’s research can help us to further develop the form, and it also creates a record or reference for us and maybe other interested parties. (B. Chan, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

**Paul:** Letting other people work out why that’s good thinking or rubbish thinking is a good thing really... I mean in general it’s a field that’s very supportive, people aren’t out to get other people, and... they want to build people up and improve things in the world, don’t they? (Paul 18-06-2012)

[CAP. From multiple personal communications and interviews June–July 2012]

Their comments indicate reciprocities being imagined that extend beyond the benefits of any single research relationship. They see working with outside researchers, including students, as important to their work and to the wider field. Their participation in my research, then, was not based on the expectation of any immediate, tangible return. At the same time, it was important to them that the research engaged with and supported the development of their practice. They valued this engagement as a potentially generative, creative exchange of ideas, practices and perspectives. Educational researcher MacLure (2003) uses the image of the double bind to illustrate the way people simultaneously hold multiple, sometimes contradictory goals at the same time. Both researcher and participants have multiple intentions, only some of which are shared. Negotiating the ongoing complexities of my research relationship became easier after recognising that many different, overlapping purposes can usefully coexist.

As I let go of trying to sustain a balanced transactional exchange with each company, I focused instead on moments when something new was generated through the research relationship. This happened when our knowledge and skills combined with a shared purpose, as with the example of spending two hours completing a funding application form with Stephen at ATCo detailed in the previous chapter. On other occasions, new understandings developed when our different perspectives collided unexpectedly. During a community film project, FM Theatre Power decided to go ahead and shoot a key scene without permission from the landowners. The company were aware that this put its partner organisation, which had funded the project, in a difficult position because of the possible risk to participants. Initially, I was unable to understand the rationale for this decision. My perception of how FM Theatre Power were managing the situation challenged me to rethink how my own professional values had been shaped. I was unsettled by an apparent privileging of the artistic vision for the film over the safety of the participants:

It makes me wonder what is more important ethically and politically in a process like this. Here the film is being made with the interests of the local area as its focus, to present a new perspective and promote better understanding, reducing prejudice. But at the immediate level of the project’s organisation it sometimes appears to work against those interests and create conflicts of interest between services. They will jeopardise the centre and the women if there is any trouble during Sunday’s filming. I need to talk more to Mo, who is directing the film, about why this shot is so important to the film that they’d take this risk. (Research journal 24-08-2012)

Moving away from the security of fixed guidelines, I needed to find a way to continuously negotiate my role within unpredictable and ever-changing research contexts. Being able to respond, or ‘improvise’, spontaneously is important (Hughes et al., 2011). In each of the above examples, however, being able to slow down was also crucial. I needed to take the time to be ‘in the moment’ with Stephen to see and feel the complexities of this everyday organisational practice, completing a funding application form. In the second example, I needed time for my immediate reaction to the apparent conflict to settle before I went back to look at the situation with those involved. Mo Lai Yan Chi, the director of the film, explained the extensive discussions that preceded their decision, the significance of the location, the steps they took to minimise the risk to their partner and participants. Rather than a hierarchy in which artistic vision was placed above responsibilities to partners and participants, a negotiation between different layers of value and responsibility started to emerge (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012; Mo 13-12-2013).

Ethnographic relationships are often described as reciprocal, but the terms of the exchange are usually determined by the researcher (Marcus, 2007). Marcus (2007) proposes an alternative form of collaborative relationship that involves combining the knowledge practices of researcher and participants (p. 5). He calls this an ‘epistemic partnership’. In this research relationship “epistemic partners, ally complicitly in mutual awareness of a motivated interest in a ‘third’ elsewhere – an object of curiosity, fear, anxiety ... that is elsewhere but always present in important ways in the scene of the fieldwork” (p. 7). In the most mundane and most conflicting moments of my fieldwork, thinking about the research relationship as an epistemic partnership shifted my role from one that was about adhering to shared ‘aims and objectives’ to one that was focused on our shared concerns with issues of funding in applied theatre. The notion of an epistemic partnership moves reciprocity from a ‘transactional’ to an ‘analytic exchange’ (Marcus & Holmes, 2008, p. 596). In the latter, it becomes impossible to predetermine what each partner will contribute to the exchange or what they will take from it. This requires a high degree of trust between the epistemic partners.

## **Trust**

In organisational ethnography establishing research relationships, gaining access to figures in powerful roles and occupying anything other than a marginal role are key challenges and take a great deal of time (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 12). My prior knowledge and experience together with the companies’ familiarity with hosting researchers made accessing and integrating into each company relatively easy. Establishing a trusting relationship was also crucial. ‘Trust’ is an ambiguous term. There is more to it than the friendly ‘rapport’ between ethnographer and informant. It requires more than being honest and making a good impression (Fine & Shulman, 2009, p. 181). In the context of this research, I suggest that the willingness of each company to allow me to get close to their practice and to subsequently write and present on it in the public sphere is dependent on their trusting my intentions and abilities as a researcher, but also my interest in and care for their practice. Demonstrating a willingness to be involved in the companies’ work was central to establishing trust in each context. Equally important was not taking trust for granted. Even when

I felt that mutual trust had been established, I questioned whether it was appropriate to observe, participate, or to write about something if I was had any doubt.

Issues of trust between researcher and participants were further complicated during my fieldwork with ATCo where Peter O'Connor was both Director of the company and my PhD Supervisor. This meant that there was a potential conflict of interest that needed to be managed. I needed to remain alert to this power relationship, sensitive to its effect on myself, participants and the research process. Initial contact with ATCo was made through Stephen Dallow and my access to the company was, at all times, based on his authority. Throughout the fieldwork it was Stephen whom I met with to discuss the direction of the research as it shifted in response to ATCo's practice. At the time of the fieldwork, Peter was no longer involved in the day-to-day running of the company. However, each potential participant needed to be made aware of Peter's dual relationship, as company director and research supervisor, before they consented to participate and be assured that their decision to participate or not participate in the research would not affect their relationship with the company. Full journal entries and interview transcripts from this section of the fieldwork were not accessible to Peter, just as they were not available to the directors or board members in the two other companies. Like all research participants, Peter had the opportunity to read and edit the chapter relating to his practice. However, in his supervisory role he potentially had more power to influence how ATCo was represented and the critical perspective taken. For this reason my second supervisor, who had no prior relationship with the company, took a lead role during this phase of the fieldwork and in providing feedback on all related writing.

## **Criticality**

What it means to be critical in applied theatre research is ethically bound to the agreements we make with research participants. This includes agreements made explicitly in research documents and those formed implicitly as the study develops. In this study, criticality was bound to the agreement that the identities of each company and participant would be revealed. It was also based on the stated intention of the research to focus with the companies on issues of common concern, rather than for the researcher to make evaluative judgements about the companies' practices.

Most of the literature on applied theatre and funding relationships is written by people who have experience of practice in the field. Even so, particularly when talking about the work of other companies or practitioners, it frequently slips into "a position of critical judgement" (Spicer et al., 2009, p. 542). Writing from a critical management studies perspective, Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) argue that such a position occupies a "destructive footing" focused on what is wrong with organisations without suggesting an alternative (p. 542). Such disengaged, destructive critique does not reflect the terms of the research agreement I formed with each company, nor the suggestion by Hughes et al. (2011) that practised research involves "methods that support the creative, social and political aims of projects" (p. 188). Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman question whether a critical stance necessarily needs to be oppositional. Instead

they suggest taking an affirmative and caring stance when researching in organisations (pp. 545–547). In practice, this means seeking a close engagement with the practices under study and involving participants in a process of shared critical-constructive questioning of those practices and their experiences (p. 546). They propose that organisational researchers recognise “the right of participants to speak as rational, reflexive individuals”, take responsibility to both care for and challenge the views of participants, and are reflexive about their position and the theories they use to interpret what is occurring and what is at stake (p. 548).

As stated above, the three companies involved in this research already engage in a range of critical practices. They regularly reflect on their work individually and collectively. They publish analyses of their work and invite outside researchers to conduct critiques. My aim was to connect with these practices focusing on concerns about funding and management, and in doing so bring different perspectives on these issues into dialogue. By looking critically *with*, not at, each company this research intervenes in the existing discourse around funding and management in applied theatre to present possibilities for moving forward.

## **Markers of validity**

A practised methodology involves the “making of something – a performance or research report” that will provide a momentary and partial look at practice, and in doing so contribute to an ongoing process of questioning and critique in applied theatre (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 207). The writing, performing or presenting of research, then, is part of practised research not adjunct to it. If writing is part of a practised methodology then the purpose of writing the research is not to straighten out the messiness of methodology. The purpose is to write as an extension of the responsive relationship between method, theory and practice, to other people’s practice, and therefore as something that should be undertaken with considerable care. Consistent with the three dimensions of performativity outlined in Chapter 3, writing this thesis has been a process that has incorporated forms of Creative Analytic Practice as a means to generate knowledge that resonates with the complex lived experience of working in a theatre company that applies theatre. It has involved paying attention to the “fine details” of the material-discursive practices involved in the reconfiguration of organisational realities in each theatre company (Barad, 2007, p. 92). Finally, writing C&T, ATCo and FMTP is a representational practice, with all the responsibilities that involves, but also a performative practice participating in the ongoing production of reality, with all the accountabilities that entails (Keevers & Treleaven, 2011). It is with these responsibilities and accountabilities in mind, I set the following markers of ‘validity’ for this research:

Resonance: “does the research resonate with the context itself, with other research in the area, with what is already known?” (O’Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 156).

Repercussions: is the research affecting? “Emotionally? Intellectually? Does it generate new questions? Move [the reader] to write? Move [the reader] to try new ... practices? Move [the reader] to action?” (L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005, p. 937).

Reflexivity: Does the research account for the process of knowledge production? Does it make visible the effects of the researcher, their values, methods and relationships with participants, as well as the theories used to interpret and the language used to create the worlds and subjects of research?

## Chapter 5

### Taking care and playing it safe, managing Applied Theatre Consultants Ltd.

#### Where we are now

I enter the community centre through open double doors. In a large hall a group of older people move energetically to loud disco music. It smells of sunscreen and something I can't pin down, a typical community centre smell. The office is up a small flight of stairs. The door is ajar. I enter and take a seat. The space has been reorganised, there are no papers on the desks, the white board is wiped clean and the floor is clear.

Stephen leads the meeting. It is fast and focused. He outlines the changing roles in ATCo, my research, his health situation (he is waiting for an operation on his back; the pain killers only giving him 2 hours relief at a time meaning he may work at odd hours). Moving on, Stephen asks:

Stephen: How did we get to where we are now?

It's a rhetorical question, but I glean answers from the talk of the meeting: Priorities. Focus. Income. Long term goals. The possibility of merging. Delivery of applied theatre. Funding the office and overheads. Relate. Doing schools bookings ... going to ... take over ... working with ... sharing the costs. Run a business. Remember to double lock both doors. Discussion ... touch base. Urgent business meeting ... funding umbrella ... coming to the end. Really push the project ... lobby the funders ... recruit and train up ... investment ... winning them over. Things happening behind the scenes ... tour, tour, funding, tour. Strengthening Families. Negotiate, say no, addressing family violence. Budget. Downscaling. Reapply, can't reapply, raise money, match fund, put in ... ground work ... 120% heart.

[CAP. From research journal 01-02-2012]

Briar and Peter O'Connor established ATCo as a limited liability company in 1999. At the time Peter was working for the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, but was also being asked to run drama-based training programmes as an independent practitioner. Setting up an incorporated company provided Peter with a secure structure in which to develop that work (Briar 28-02-2012). Briar managed the company accounts and administration, drawing on her prior professional experience in accountancy. The company quickly began to secure larger contracts and recruited teams of actors and teachers to tour applied theatre programmes to schools and other community settings.

ATCo was set up as a limited company, rather than a nonprofit or charitable trust. Its 'for-profit' status makes ATCo distinctive in the field of applied theatre (O'Connor, 2011)<sup>20</sup>. This status means that Peter and Briar own and run the company and can make all key artistic and business decisions. It also means that ATCo is not eligible to apply for most charitable grants. Until recently, ATCo generated the majority of its

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<sup>20</sup> In New Zealand the Charities Commission was established in 2005 with the registration process opening in 2007 (Charities Services, n.d.). Being a registered charity is not always a requirement for receiving charitable grants, but being not-for-profit always is. Community and socially focused groups in New Zealand typically form an incorporated society or charitable trust (Rodger 27-02-2012). Both require profits to be used to run the organisation, they cannot be distributed to members or trustees (Companies Office: Societies and Trusts Online, n.d.).

income through contract work for government departments. Early on these were contracts for training programmes run by Peter. Over time, the company secured contracts to develop larger scale and longer term projects. By 2012 approximately 85% of the company's income came from a single contract with the Ministry of Social Development's Department of Child Youth and Family (CYF) for a programme called Everyday Theatre.

## Everyday Theatre

Everyday Theatre has played a central role in ATCo's development. It was securing the Everyday Theatre contract that transformed ATCo from a two-person family business, into a fully-fledged theatre company. In 2003, CYF asked Peter to create a 45-minute play for young people about child abuse. The commission was not accepted immediately, however, as Briar remembers:

**Briar:** They had approached him and said could he arrange for a performance to tour schools? And he'd said no, and when he said it to me we both sort of giggled and said: how can you actually perform family violence in a safe way? (Briar 28-02-2012)

ATCo negotiated with CYF to develop a participatory process drama, rather than a play. This was based on the belief that this approach would create a safe space in which children and young people could talk about very sensitive issues (O'Connor & O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2006). Everyday Theatre is presented to its young participants as a computer game. The actors are Games Masters, desperately trying to complete the hardest game of all, The Family Game. To succeed they need to help the characters in the game, a family experiencing violence, abuse and neglect. The young people are invited to help the Games Masters to complete the game, in doing so they explore the complexities of the family's situation and try and identify possibilities for change.

In 2012, Everyday Theatre has been running for nine years with continued funding from CYF. Over 50,000 children and adults have participated in the project. Over the years, Peter speculates, Everyday Theatre has generated roughly 70% of the money coming in to the company (Peter 13-03-2012). As well as the CYF contract, ATCo increasingly works in partnership with charitable organisations to access other grants for Everyday Theatre. Acting as the 'funding umbrella', the charity is the recipient of the grant and is accountable to the funder. The charity pays ATCo upon completion of the programme. Lisa, a former Child Advocate for CYF, describes how she formed such a partnership with ATCo:

**Lisa:** ...so I talked to MSD Wellington, to FACS, which is Family and Child Services... I learnt that they had funding, so I asked one of the people down there what we needed to apply for funding for a campaign and they said to fill out the application forms and basically the sooner the better. And so I got back to Stephen and I said: Right, well I'm going to run this HUGE family violence campaign and we're going to kick start it with Everyday Theatre. And so I made Everyday Theatre an initial step into a five step campaign. (Lisa 07-03-2012)

Through such partnerships, ATCo can access sources of funding for Everyday Theatre that it could not apply to directly as a for-profit company. Stephen has developed relationships with a range of local and national charities that support Everyday Theatre and are willing to act as funding umbrellas for ATCo (Stephen 05-03-2012).

ATCo regularly commissions independent evaluations of Everyday Theatre. It also works closely with applied theatre and drama education academics to research, develop and critique the programme (Peter 19-06-2012). Two evaluation reports conclude that Everyday Theatre has a significant and at times profound impact on participants (Holland, 2007, p. 6). Holland (2007, 2009b) found that the programme created a safe forum for discussing significant issues without simplifying them. This is achieved through the aesthetic of 'double framing'; the fictional tasks of playing a computer game and helping the family inside it create a safe distance between the participants and the issues (O'Connor & O'Connor, 2009). Accompanying ATCo's Everyday Theatre team on tour in Auckland and Wellington I observed and participated in the programme multiple times. The following episode, based on my observation of Briar working with an intermediate school class, gives a brief insight into Everyday Theatre in action:

We are running Everyday Theatre with students at an intermediate school in Lower Hutt, near Wellington, New Zealand. To get through the first level of The Family Game the class have to find out as much information about the family as they can. They have been questioning Briar, in role as T, the teenager in the family who is being hit by his dad. Putting down T's 'games piece', his school bag, she asks them to think of the hardest question for T. They all discuss this in small groups.

**Boy 1:** If you could reverse time what would you do to keep your mum and dad together?  
**Boy 2:** Your dad says it's punishment what did you do wrong?  
**Girl 1:** Does your mum know that your dad's hitting you?  
**Boy 2:** Your dad hits you and says it's discipline, does he think you're weak?  
**Girl 2:** Does your mum ever hit you?

Briar chooses the question that she thinks T would find hardest to answer:

**Briar as T:** I think if mum knew, wouldn't she do something to stop him?  
**Class:** Yes (the class' response is unanimous)  
**Boy 3:** Why don't you tell her?  
**Briar as T:** If she knew and didn't do anything that'd be terrible... wouldn't it?  
**Boy 3:** If we were his real friends, T might tell us more, he needs to talk to someone he trusts. (Research journal 23-03-2012)

The young people draw on their knowledge and experience to find out information and give advice to T. The double framing technique allows them to make connections between their everyday lives and the fictional family in a way that is not explicit to others participating in the workshop. In some instances, making this connection between the fictional/dramatic and everyday world gives some young people the means to safely disclose their own experience of family violence or abuse (Stephen 05-03-2012). That the programme creates a space in which children feel safe or able to disclose is clear from the increase in disclosures that is typical in the days or weeks after the theatre company's visit (Holland, 2009a). ATCo works closely with school staff and local social workers before, during and after the programme visits a

school or community. In fact, Everyday Theatre will only run if this wider support system is in place to support any young people who need assistance. Holland (2007, 2009b) also found that the programme raised awareness amongst participating children and families of the services available to them and how they might act to help themselves or others. Similar conclusions are made in a more recent analysis of the programme by Nicholson (2011b). Furthermore, Nicholson (2011b) suggests that Everyday Theatre takes a worthwhile risk in presenting ‘the family’ and ‘home’ in ways that unsettle simplistic notions of right and wrong, guilt and shame, public and private, “failure and success” (p. 121).

Starting my research with the company in February 2012, I am already curious about how it has sustained the contractual relationship with CYF for nearly ten years. In many ways the relationship with CYF seems to have become integral to the company. It is a relationship that has changed over time, reflecting wider shifts in policy and public sector management in New Zealand. Managing these changes has been essential to the survival of ATCo, the continuation of Everyday Theatre and the livelihoods that depend on it. It has involved negotiating tensions between the management and evaluative systems of CYF and the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics that inform Everyday Theatre. Exploring these tensions opened up a question that would underpin my research with ATCo around the way management is practised in applied theatre contexts.

## **Management in Applied Theatre Consultants: “Satisficing” the demand to perform?**

One month into my fieldwork with ATCo, Stephen finds a gap in his formidable schedule for our first interview. We sit in his living room (away from the continual demands of the office). Stephen describes his typical working day as the company’s National Programmes Manager:

**Stephen, ATCo National Programmes Manager:** ... a typical day is: emailing potential funders, emailing groups we’re working with, emailing schools, booking them in, answering enquiry after enquiry from people that need more information in order to have us come to their schools... erm... . Looking ahead, booking accommodation, booking travel, booking flights, researching other funding opportunities ... things like today - a rehearsal ... always firefighting, looking ahead, what might happen in the future that we need to sort. However, that’s probably only half a day, half a day is relationship building... . I spend a lot of my time emailing people just telling them about us. Has absolutely nothing to do with what we’re doing right now, but I’m wanting them to know because future work could link in with them somewhere. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

Stephen describes a rare ‘office day’ (Stephen 05-03-2012). A more typical day involves a mixture of office-based work, meetings, and performing and facilitating in schools. He also plays a central role in devising and directing ATCo’s programmes. In my second meeting with Stephen, he outlines his changing role within ATCo now that Caitlin is starting full time, Briar is returning to work part time and Peter is becoming less involved in the day-to-day running of the company. It seems like there is an intention to take this opportunity to give Stephen more time for management and fundraising. I am curious about the rationale for this decision. There is a persistent view in the arts management literature that management

should be kept separate from art-making, that the manager's role should be focused on administrative and financial responsibility (Kuesters, 2010, p. 44). Yet, as Beirne and Knight (2002) have observed, such separation is neither sustainable nor desirable in community-orientated arts organisations (p. 76). It certainly does not seem to reflect the realities of working in a small, applied theatre company like ATCo. When Stephen describes his work, keeping the different aspects of his role neatly separated seems like an impossible task. In practice his roles overlap, shifting from moment to moment:

Roles shift  
From one moment to the next  
From one person to the next  
Facilitation, management, finance  
Roles are reorganised  
From one side to another  
An open space in the middle  
Everything has been moved around  
Negotiated  
Making arrangements  
Form trust, reassure, put at ease  
Sharing ideas, time, food and hugs  
Responses are anticipated  
Performances are given value  
Generating feelings of importance and success

[CAP. From research journal 13-01-2012]

Beirne and Knight (2002) suggest that managerialism has contributed to the “rigid differentiation between work and management” across most sectors, including the arts (p. 76). Managerialism describes a “specific set of ideas and practices”, widely understood to have been taken from the business sector and applied in public and voluntary organisations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, in the guise of ‘New Public Management’ (Ward, 2012, p. 46). These ideas and practices are based on “a belief that all organisations regardless of purpose or functioning, can only work properly and efficiently if power and control and decision making are centralized in some manner in the hands of professionally trained and ‘objective’ managers” (Ward, 2012, p. 48). From this perspective, managers are conceived as a neutral, dispassionate professional, focused on efficiency and productivity. This limited view of management contributes to the widely-held belief, outlined above, that the art manager's role can and should somehow be separated from the art-making process. As Kuesters (2010) observes when artist and managers' roles are combined, it is typically judged as an “act of infiltration, as an intrusion of an economic disposition into the arts” (Kuesters, 2010, p. 44).

The intention to relieve Stephen of some of his commitments to facilitating ATCo's programmes in schools so that he could focus more on ‘management’ might suggest an underlying belief that these two roles needed to be separated from each other. Listening to Stephen describe his day-to-day work, however, and observing him first hand, it seemed that the reasoning was that each aspect demanded the same high level of energy, thought, time and care:

He is animated, excited after a successful meeting the previous day. He flew all the way to Napier to meet with the local workers who are collaborating to raise the funds to bring Everyday Theatre back to their region. Negotiating local politics can be demanding. He needed to go there for a couple of days because, he tells me, hanging out, hugging, eating and drinking tea are as important to these negotiations as the formal one-hour scheduled meeting. (Research journal 13-01-2012)

The problem was not that financial or ‘management’ dispositions were contaminating the creative work, but that it felt increasingly difficult to conduct all aspects of his role well (Stephen 05-03-2012). In part, as I outline below, this was due to changes in the way in which ATCo’s ‘performance’ as contractor was being managed by its government funder (McKenzie, 2006). McKenzie (2001) uses the term “satisficing” to describe the sacrifices, or “trade-offs”, involved in trying to satisfy multiple, often contradictory, measures of effective performance (p. 115). Changing Stephen’s role was in part an attempt to address the impossibility of meeting the different demands and expectations that came with each aspect of his work. At the same time, the change itself might be understood as a trade-off, a response necessitated by the performance management system and administrative expectations of CYF.

Adopting too narrow a conception of management in arts organisations can mean that valuable forms of managerial knowledge that exist within art-making processes go unrecognised (Beirne & Knight, 2002, p. 75). Furthermore, separating management from art-making can be problematic, particularly when social engagement and participation are central to the practice (Beirne, 2013; Beirne & Knight, 2002). In applied arts practices, art-making involves negotiating relationships with both specific settings (schools, communities), with participants, and with wider social, political and economic systems. In such instances a “dislocation between a reflective and principled artistic practice and mechanical and passive management practice has serious consequences” (Beirne & Knight, 2002, p. 88). Beirne (2013) argues that the distinctive ways in which applied arts practices connect art-making and management, principles and practice should be valued in their diversity, rather than reduced to a single method or model (Beirne, 2013, p. 155). Beirne and Knight’s theory makes it possible to look at management in applied arts contexts as an important part of a participatory art-making practice rather than an imported or contaminating factor. This does not mean that management ideas and practices in ATCo are not intimately connected with the administrative and performative demands of the company’s core funding relationship. As this chapter progresses, however, I argue that even within a strongly ‘managerialist’, output-focused context, there are ambiguities that allow both theatre company and funder to work together in ways that are ‘arts led’.

## Managing funding relationships

**Caitlin, ATCo employee:** It’s always been a huge thing, even before I was, before I came to full time working. I know we’ve always had people coming in to watch, we’ve had funders ... we’ve had applications for funding, we’re always waiting on funding, you know...? Sometimes we’re worried about whether or not we’re going to have future jobs because of funding... (Caitlin 14-02-2012)

Managing a company that applies theatre, it can feel like the majority of your time and energy is consumed by tasks that relate to funding: seeking grants, making applications, monitoring and evaluation, reporting. Where arguments are made for separating art-making and management, financial activities including fundraising and negotiating of funding relationships are likely to be designated management activities (Kuesters, 2010). As Kuesters (2010) observes, “[a]rts managers are perceived as financial caretakers in the realm of the arts and as dutiful, but artistically uninvolved, enablers of artists and the arts” (p. 43). In contrast, Kuesters’ (2010) research with arts managers found that in most instances “their activities are simultaneously artistic and financial – with a distinct tendency towards a mixture of both” (p. 46). In applied theatre settings, then, the activities of managers might be understood as simultaneously artistic, financial, pedagogic, political and ethical (Beirne, 2013; Haddon, 2006; O’Connor, 2011). In the conclusion of his critical analysis of the relationship between donor agendas and the intentions of applied theatre, Balfour (2009) argues that “[t]he negotiation between donor and practitioner are *part of* the performative process of applied theatre” [emphasis added] (p. 357). He suggests that practitioners advocate for aesthetic quality to be valued as they negotiate with donors (Balfour, 2009, p. 357). From my research with ATCo, I would suggest that managing funding relationships, as part of applied theatre practice, requires a simultaneous concern with aesthetic, pedagogic, political ethical *and* financial value.

Caitlin’s comment at the start of this section conveys the way that issues relating to funding can pervade the company’s work. The effects of funding relationships are far reaching, felt even by staff and freelance practitioners who are not directly involved in managing funding relationships:

(As well as the researcher and members of ATCo introduced in Chapter 1, this dialogue includes Adele, an intermediate school drama teacher, and Julie, an Educator for the Human Rights Commission, who have both previously been facilitators in the Everyday Theatre team.)

**Molly:** What strikes me is how often funding has been mentioned, even before 9am...  
(Research journal 20-02-2012)

**Teacher:** Are you working in many schools at the moment?

**Caitlin:** This tour is funded by The Trusts, so just for West Auckland Schools. (Research journal 24-02-2012)

**Adele:** [The tour] was going to be for terms one and two... But because of funding, because of funding things... it was only down to five weeks... (Adele 27-02-2012)

**Briar:** So why do you think we came here to work with you?

**Boy:** To help us to learn about families.

**Briar:** Exactly, the government fund us to be here...

**Girl:** Oh, don’t you do it for fun?

**Briar:** Of course, but we get paid too, I gave up being a teacher to do this.

**Girl:** You would do it if you didn’t get paid?

**Briar:** Yes, I love to work like this with children.

**Girl:** Good. (Research journal 23-03-2012)

**Natano, ATCo Practitioner:** I’ve not done any funding runs, you know, but I’ve heard about when they go: watch out there’s funders, so we need a, you know, they’re important people... (Natano 28-03-2012)

**Julie:** And we've had joyous times when the funding came through and anxious times when it was in question... (Julie 07-03-2012)

**Stephen:** And at the end of the day if we don't get the contract renewed my job ends in June and my contract's that clear. So, you know, there is, there is a stark reality there, that... if we don't get a big contract my job comes to an end, simple. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

[CAP. From multiple interviews and research journal entries]

The practitioners are aware that their work is contingent on the funding contracts secured by ATCo. They are also aware that the future of those funding contracts is contingent on their work, on their performance. Beirne (2013) describes all applied theatre practitioners as “de facto managers” (p. 154). His argument is not that these practices are ‘managed’, in the rational or managerialist sense, but that the practice of practitioners performing and facilitating with different groups in a range of settings involves the enactment of management knowledge. In ATCo, the management of funding relationships is something that all members of the company, as well as sometimes participants and partner organisations like schools, participate in.

Accepting that negotiating funding relationships is part of applied theatre practice means that, for theatre companies like ATCo, paying close critical attention to the way such negotiations pervade all aspects of its practice is of paramount importance. Sustaining a critical perspective can be difficult, however, when the future of the company, key projects, your own employment and the jobs of your colleagues depends on securing and sustaining particular contracts (Mundrawala, 2007). In the rest of this chapter, then, I will consider how ATCo's practice has been affected by its relationship with CYF, but also the ways in which the company has attempted to critically and creatively manage this relationship over nearly ten years.

## **Negotiating shared intentions**

Thompson (2011) suggests that to begin to understand the implications of an applied theatre project practitioners must consider “why things are done”, why a project is created and with what intentions (p. 6). For Thompson, being clear about both the purpose and limits of projects is crucial if theatre companies are to avoid serving agendas that do not support the interests of participants. Peter and Briar O'Connor have written in detail about the creation of Everyday Theatre (O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor & O'Connor, 2009). Together with the reflections made by other company members during my research interviews, these publications suggest that the initial intentions of the project were the outcome of careful negotiations with CYF.

In 2001, following a number of high-profile child abuse cases in New Zealand, CYF launched a community-based initiative called ‘Everyday Communities’. The programme was based on a strengths-based model of community development. It aimed to engage communities as equal partners with shared responsibility for the issues being addressed (O'Connor, 2009, p. 287). An evaluation of the programme

carried out in 2003, however, found that Everyday Communities was failing to engage children and young people. The evaluators suggested that drama might be one way to do this and so, as described above, CYF approached Peter, asking him to create a play about child abuse (O'Connor, 2009, p. 585).

Concerns about applied theatre being manipulated, wittingly or unwittingly, to serve outside agendas, assume a power relationship that is structured in favour of the donor. S. J. Ahmed (2002) has suggested, however, that the dynamic of power relationships between donors and recipients are contingent, depending, for example, on the scale and structure of the organisation being funded. It is therefore important to acknowledge the specific dynamics of ATCo's early relationship with CYF. In 2003 Peter and Briar, as ATCo, held two of the main Ministry of Education contracts for drama education and Peter was known nationally and internationally for creating pioneering applied theatre projects (Peter 13-03-2012; Briar 28-02-2012). While ATCo was still very small in scale, consisting of just the two directors, the company's reputation, status and experience gave Peter and Briar the ability to negotiate the intentions and form of Everyday Theatre with CYF, and to set a limit on what the project would be expected to achieve:

As partners we negotiated and agreed on the goals for the programme together. We created a contract that, rather than talking about tightly prescribed outcomes, talked instead about creating spaces for dialogue, of opening up ways in which *Everyday Theatre* could organically shift and change to meet the communities it worked with. (O'Connor, 2009, p. 586)

The contractual negotiations took nine months (Briar 28-02-2012). This time was needed to carefully create a programme that would not only meet the needs of the funder, but also the interests of the participants and the artistic and social values of the theatre company (O'Connor, 2009, p. 586). Addressing issues of social justice and working democratically to support social change are central values in ATCo's work. These values resonated with the community development ideals held by their first contract manager (O'Connor, 2009, pp. 585–586). This approach reflected the wider shift in values in the public sector in New Zealand that was taking place at this time.

In the late 1980s and 1990s New Zealand implemented extensive 'liberalising' economic reforms, cutting government spending, welfare provisions and deregulating the market (Evans, Grimes, Wilkinson, & Teece, 1996). Legislative changes, the State Sector Act of 1988 and Public Finance Act of 1989, transformed the public sector and their relationship with the voluntary and private sectors by rigorously embedding market and managerialist principles (Barnes, 2006). In his history of community-based theatre in New Zealand, Maunder (2013) identifies how New Zealand's neoliberal reforms created particular opportunities for community arts work. As the public sector was cut back in the name of efficiency, private and voluntary organisations were called on to step in and compete for contracts to deliver public services (Larner & Craig, 2005; Maunder, 2013). These reforms were unpopular with public sector workers and the public alike (Grey & Sedgwick, 2013; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). In the late 1990s, then, the ideal of a "unified, ethically committed public service" gained currency, and there was a move towards public

service design and delivery based in meaningful community involvement and strength-based models (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 300).

ATCo's early relationship with CYF, then, was formed in a policy moment when the ideals of trust, reciprocity and collaboration guided the formation of relationships between public agencies, private/voluntary sector organisations and local communities (Larner & Craig, 2005; O'Connor, 2009). The initial contract for Everyday Theatre was based on a set of non-quantifiable shared values about how to work with children and communities (O'Connor, 2009). Donor and theatre company also shared the belief that the safety of the young participants in Everyday Theatre was of paramount importance:

**Briar:** ...our guiding principle was: How can you create a safe environment for children to talk about these issues? And so that has really always been underlying: How can we do this in a safe way? How can we engage children? How can we let them speak, encourage them to speak about things, if they are happening at home, but in a way that is distanced, that's safe for them? (Briar 28-02-2012)

As a result of the company's particular organisational attributes, and within a specific policy moment, CYF and ATCo formed a partnership around carefully negotiated shared values. They agreed that the project must be accountable to the communities it worked with and create a safe experience for all involved.

When a theatre company accepts funds that are dependent on achieving particular social outcomes, the extrinsic, instrumental value of the practice takes precedence over the less tangible intrinsic value of aesthetic and affective experience (Balfour, 2009). This view appears to assume that there is an oppositional relationship between aesthetic and instrumental value and that this tension will be exacerbated by the financial dependency of the theatre company on a donor. In contrast, Froggett (2012) argues that the instrumental/intrinsic binary is well overdrawn, that in socially engaged art neither works without the other, "they flow together". This 'flowing together' seems evident in the devising process for Everyday Theatre. O'Connor (2009) suggests that ATCo's "expertise in applied theatre meant that we shaped the aesthetics of the work alongside the department's expertise in areas around child abuse in an open and trusting manner" (p. 586). While Everyday Theatre needed to be efficacious, this was not conceived as a simple cause and effect model of change. The purpose of the project was not to transmit a message to young audiences. Neither CYF nor ATCo wanted the complex issues of family violence and child abuse to be simplified into an easily resolvable scenario (O'Connor, 2009; O'Connor & O'Connor, 2009). Briar describes CYF's input into the early part of the devising process:

**Briar:** The social worker was there ... and they talked to us about the sorts of issues that could be raised and that was sort of an eye opener for all of us, we were all a little bit surprised at the... you know, it wasn't what we were all expecting at the beginning of the devising week. They told us that absolutely categorically we cannot say that we are going to fix anything, not fixing the family and the family problems, we're only... there's no way that we can fix any of these things. (Briar 28-02-2012)

The intention around which Everyday Theatre was formed, an intention that was carefully agreed by both CYF and ATCo, was to “provide a forum for active and safe discussion of the issues of child abuse” (O’Connor, 2009, p. 588). Involving CYF in the devising process, ATCo was able to demonstrate how process drama could create an aesthetic experience that provoked dialogue, through generating affective and critical engagement with the complexities of the issues being presented.

## **Emerging tensions: From shared values to value for money**

Over nine years the dollar value of the Everyday Theatre contract has not changed significantly. Nor has the overall quantity of work the company are expected to deliver. As the contract changed in other ways, however, ATCo started to experience tensions in its relationship with CYF:

**Peter, ATCo Director:** Our contract at the moment is really very, very tight in terms of where we go and all the rest of it, and we’re measured by outputs and the outputs are in numbers of shows, numbers, numbers, numbers... that’s pretty much what they’re interested in. (Peter 13-03-2012)

In their study of funding relationships in New Zealand’s nonprofit sector, Shaw and Allen (2006) consider the impact of “rational management” ideas that took hold in New Zealand from the 1980s onwards (p. 211). Echoing the above definition of managerialism, Shaw and Allen describe ‘rational management’ as a philosophy that “suggests that the apparently rational and transparent nature of the commercial sector can transfer into and improve the management of nonprofit organizations and their delivery of services” (pp. 211–212). Shaw and Allen identify the effects of this philosophy on the relationships between donors and recipients. In particular, an “unforgiving” focus on quantifiable, “measurable outputs” has led to tensions between funders and the community organisations they support (p. 212). The output-driven system they describe is the legacy of the aforementioned public management reforms and the managerialist principles that informed it. In their study of local partnerships in New Zealand, Larner and Craig (2005) suggest that even though the ethos of the public sector shifted in the late 1990s and early 2000s, refocusing on partnership and collaboration, these changes were undermined by the Public Finance Act and its “continued emphasis on contractualism and a narrow, market-contested output accountability regime” (p. 420). The tensions that ATCo started to experience in its relationship with CYF, then, reflect a tension within the wider public sector where “discourses of ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social investment’ sat awkwardly alongside more obviously neoliberal elements such as economic globalisation, market activation and contractualism (Larner 2003)” (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 407).

The Everyday Communities project ended in 2005, but Everyday Theatre continued to be funded by CYF, fulfilling the departments’ statutory obligation to provide an education programme (O’Connor 13-03-2012). Amidst ongoing policy and personnel changes within the department, ATCo’s contract was rewritten in 2008, the year the National government were elected. The new contract was based on quantifiable deliverables: the projects, products, services and obligations that the company would have to ‘deliver’ over two years (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). ATCo was now defined as a “service

provider” (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, p. 4). The contract specified that the service provider must deliver a minimum of five and up to 10 projects a year, a project being the delivery of Everyday Theatre in a specified region. The different aspects of a project were broken down into numbers of days or hours so that each could be accounted for. ATCo would report to CYF four times during each project with details of overall developments, number of presentations (of Everyday Theatre), numbers of participants, costs and also more qualitative evidence of capacity building and raising awareness (Ministry of Social Development, 2010, pp. 19–20). The company understood that the original Everyday Theatre contract had to be changed to reflect the performance management systems of CYF and the Ministry of Social Development (Peter 13-03-2012; Stephen 05-03-2012). In spite of the changes, ATCo still felt like it was working in partnership with CYF managers and social workers to deliver Everyday Theatre according to the agreed values and intentions of Everyday Theatre. Over time, however, tensions started to emerge between these values and the accountability measures of the new contract.

I want to turn the analysis briefly towards the second dimension of performativity that I outlined in Chapter 3. Keevers et al. (2012) draw on Barad’s (2007) concept of ‘intra-activity’, to look at performance management systems as material-discursive practices that configure “relations of accountability” (p. 116). They propose that these systems ‘intra-act’ with the situated practices of social justice in community organisations by “iteratively reconfiguring that which is included and excluded from mattering” (Keevers et al., 2012, p. 113). The terms and requirements of the new Everyday Theatre contract reconfigured the relationship between CYF, ATCo and participating communities. The initial value-centred agreement produced a relationship in which ATCo could work alongside CYF and a particular community. This relationship was experienced as “open and trusting” (O’Connor, 2009, p. 586). The outputs-based contract reconfigured the boundaries of this relationship, distinguishing the roles of client, contractor and community. ATCo was now working for CYF to deliver a prescribed service to a given, geographically determined community. Initially both CYF and ATCo had seen themselves as accountable to the local communities Everyday Theatre visited, committed to work organically and democratically with participants. Now ATCo experienced a tension between this commitment, and its contractual accountability to CYF to deliver value for money:

**Peter:** ...we’re actually good value for money. So, I think, yeah, they probably value that the most. You know? We say we’re going to do 10,000 people in a year we do 10,000 and we do that year after year after year after year, you know? (Peter 13-03-2012)

As its relationship with CYF became increasingly systematised, ATCo experienced a decline in the funder’s understanding of and trust in its work. Shaw and Allen (2006) suggest that an overreliance on quantitative information amongst funders has led to a lack of understanding of the distinctiveness and intangible values of the work they fund (pp. 213–214). This is perpetuated by the use of generic applications, contracts, reporting and monitoring systems which remove the need for managers to understand the complexities of the work being funded. The primary concern becomes whether the outputs defined in the contract have been achieved, rather than the shared pursuit of common social goals. Over time, as the public sector was

restructured and cut back, communication between CYF and ATCo became more formalised. Here Stephen describes the impact of cuts to Community Social Workers on the company's relationship with CYF:

**Stephen:** ...then two years ago the National government, three years ago, came in and wiped out Community Social Workers. Which was -, so we lost her, and overnight our relationship with CYF changed. We have to call a call centre now with a disclosure, I have to explain who we are, what's happening, that we're a CYF funded programme and why we need help. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

There was less direct involvement of CYF staff in the creation and delivery of Everyday Theatre. The company provided evidence of the project's effectiveness mainly through standardised written reports. I started my research with ATCo in February 2012. By then Stephen had come to feel like he was continually having to justify the work:

**Stephen:** Justify is when somebody constantly says: well what do you do? Why do we need it? Why is it like that? Isn't that advertising campaign working? Why do we need...? You know? So I'm justifying why our programme will deal with these issues better than why other programmes will. I feel like I am justifying us versus a printed book or flyer. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

As well as the reports produced by ATCo for CYF, there have been two independent evaluations of Everyday Theatre and numerous peer reviewed research articles by leading academics (Aitken, 2009; Holland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Miller & Saxton, 2009; Nicholson, 2009; O'Toole, 2009). In an outputs-driven performance management system however, this 'evidence', which suggests that Everyday Theatre is a socially just, aesthetically complex, pedagogically effective and safe programme, appears to count for little, it is rendered unintelligible (Barad, 2007, p. 170; Keevers et al., 2012, p. 115). Falling into a familiar metaphor, Keevers et al. suggest that by demanding evidence in a stable, measurable, comparable form, performance management systems "tame" socially just "aspects of knowing and practising" (Keevers et al., 2012, p. 115). The boundaries between funder, theatre company and community, and the "properties" associated with each of these categories are not pre-given, they are produced through specific material discursive intra-actions (Barad, 2007, p. 153). For Barad (2007), such intra-actions are causal, but not deterministic (Barad, 2007, p. 170). The boundaries produced constrain possibilities for acting, potentially 'taming' those practices (Keevers et al., 2012). What seems absent in Keevers et al.'s (2012) analysis, however, is a sense of the dynamic nature of intra-active relationships. For Barad (2007), boundaries can always be iteratively remade (p. 178).

A distanced relationship between funder and artistic practice might be perceived as a good thing, affording the company greater autonomy. Indeed, as long as their 'deliverables' were met ATCo was able to make most decisions about the form and content of Everyday Theatre (Peter 13-03-2012; Stephen 05-03-2012). From the outset, however, CYF's participation in the development and delivery of Everyday Theatre had been important to both the ethics and the aesthetics of Everyday Theatre (O'Connor, 2009). Both the

theatre company and funder invested their time and expertise to ensure that Everyday Theatre would be a safe, effective and powerful experience for participants. CYF's close involvement meant that the funder understood why and how theatre and drama techniques were being used. With CYF less involved, Stephen found that he had to work much harder to sustain the funder's understanding of the complex aesthetics and pedagogic process of Everyday Theatre, increasingly having to emphasise its instrumental value as an educative tool.

For Shaw and Allen (2006), a confident funding relationship requires "balance between trust and control, and communication" (p. 216). High levels of control from funders can communicate a basic mistrust in the funding recipient. In ATCo's case, the now seemingly 'arms-length' relationship with CYF indicated a kind of trust. It felt like CYF trusted the company to deliver the project as specified in the contract. The continual demand for 'evidence', however, made it feel like the funder no longer trusted this particular way of working. For Stephen, establishing trust in the practice is fundamental to building relationships with participants, schools, partner agencies and funders:

**Stephen:** I think that's the big thing creatively and for everything, is building that trust in the process. We trust what we're doing, but it's hard for a funder... to get them to trust us. We've got to know it works, so I think everything ATCo does, we trust our own process and if we don't we don't do it. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

Involving CYF in the day-to-day development and delivery of Everyday Theatre had helped sustain a shared trust in the value of working through drama to explore this sensitive issue with young people. A sense that this trust was waning, amidst wider economic and political changes, meant that ATCo felt increasingly insecure about the future of the relationship.

### **Managing being managed: 'Staying true to the game'**

Within the academic literature of applied theatre there is a strong argument that adapting to the agendas of donors requires practitioners to compromise their values and intentions. Complying with reductive application and evaluation systems can constrain and limit practice. Based on my fieldwork with ATCo, I argue that it is also important to recognise that practitioners in applied theatre companies engage critically and creatively with the agendas and requirements of their funders. This is apparent in ATCo's attempts to manage the tensions it experienced as its relationship with CYF changed, to sustain the original values of Everyday Theatre and re-establish a more balanced partnership with its key funder.

**Stephen:** That's been a huge change, from day one to now, is how our relationship with CYF has changed and that it went from good to really good to really bad to borderline now, but I think we're sneaking back up again, but we're sneaking up because I'm making relationships that work at a local level. (Stephen 05-03-2012).

Over time, ATCo felt that it no longer had any input into decisions about the regions that Everyday Theatre would visit. ATCo would always comply with CYF's decisions, recognising the right of the funder

to direct the programme to areas where there was an identified need. At the same time there was a sense that the knowledge and relationships the company had built up over years of working with local communities was being overlooked. Experience and independent evaluations have shown ATCo that the project has the greatest impact in a community when there is a high level of local involvement (Holland, 2007, 2009b). It was frustrating to not be able to return regularly to communities where the company had established effective, long term collaborations. ATCo also found that its capacity to respond to new requests was limited. A Family Violence Response Team observes Everyday Theatre for a day in a West Auckland School:

The police say how much they would like to get Everyday Theatre into another part of Auckland where they have the most cases of family violence that involve children. Stephen talks about how he wants to use the CYF money to go where communities request, rather than having to go to certain areas. Then they could more easily get to areas where the police wanted to work with them. (Research journal 28-02-2012)

Delivering Everyday Theatre in ten prescribed regions each year left little time for building “open, transparent and equal partnerships” with communities (O’Connor, 2009, p. 586). The new contract included a certain number of consultation days, but did not allow ATCo the flexibility to take more time, if needed, or to explore a different approach in a particular area. Earlier in the chapter, I suggested that the new contract had displaced the community in the funding relationship. From talking to ATCo and observing its practice, however, it was clear that the company still dedicate resources, financial and human, to building strong local partnerships with the communities Everyday Theatre visited, whether a single school or an entire region:

**Stephen:** So I see a lot of my role as relationship building. Who else do I need to network, talk to, go and have a coffee with, to bring in to Everyday Theatre? (Stephen 05-03-2012)

In areas where there is a strong local interest, but CYF funding is not available, Stephen collaborates directly with local agencies:

Stephen is working flat out at his computer; a partner in Hawkes Bay has sprung a 9am Monday meeting on him. He can’t attend but needs to get the video of Everyday Theatre on You Tube so that they can show it to 32 organisations, all involved in work related to family violence and child abuse in that region. He also needs to get booklets ready to send to the group to take away from the meeting. Stephen’s aim is to get these organisations to form a trust, contributing around \$1,000 each towards bringing Everyday Theatre back to this area. This strategy circumvents the need to apply for outside funding this time, but will also make future collective applications easier... (Research journal 13-01-2012)

Working with local schools and services, like the Family Violence Response Team mentioned above, is essential because ATCo and CYF need to know that there is a robust system in place for supporting any participants who are affected by family violence or abuse. Beyond this, Stephen’s relationship building work is also a way of ensuring Everyday Theatre is shaped around locally defined outcomes and goals, as well as those defined in the contract with CYF.

Originally CYF and ATCo had agreed that the purpose of the Everyday Theatre was not to transmit a fixed message to young people, but to involve them in a dialogue from which they were typically excluded (O'Connor, 2009). When the Everyday Theatre contract was rewritten in 2008, however, it made ATCo accountable to the efficient delivery of measurable outputs. This change took place as the centre-right National Party was re-elected, after three terms of Labour Party rule. The New Zealand economy was in recession and government departments like CYF were under pressure to show that the services they commissioned had a strong 'evidence base' and offered 'value for money' (National Party, 2011). Stephen described the difficulty ATCo now experienced in justifying the value of Everyday Theatre to funders, including CYF:

**Stephen:** So, perhaps sometimes we had to, because we felt the presence of the funder on the road with us, we've had to ram that bit home more, because we know if we don't they don't get that the kids already got it, even though we know that they have. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

Such instances, however, were occasional and the changes made temporary. Over nine years ATCo has made many more changes to Everyday Theatre. These range from small modifications made to the performance and workshop activities on a daily basis, to the creation of a new family and narrative. From ATCo's perspective, these developments are driven by the company's internal reflective practice, the responses of the children it works with, feedback from teachers and social workers, and the critical research of evaluators and academics (Briar 28-02-2012; Peter 13-03-2012; Stephen 05-03-2012). Rather than simplifying Everyday Theatre, the new version presents an even more complex and ambiguous family situation. During a rehearsal, Caitlin explains to me:

**Caitlin:** ...it is important that no one character can be blamed for what is happening. Each character has to have a balance so the children make up their own minds. With Dave, the dad, it is important that they don't just blame his violence on his upbringing, but also consider current circumstances, external factors, stress and so on. (Research journal 05-03-2012)

Over the four weeks I spent on tour with Caitlin, Briar and Stephen, they were continually experimenting in the classroom, developing and exchanging new ways of working, making small changes to established activities to deepen and extend the children's engagement.

There is a strong argument for applied theatre makers to keep a critical distance from the external agencies that fund their work. Getting 'too close' is associated with an increased risk of practice being ethically or politically compromised. Stephen and the other company members, however, were trying to re-establish a close relationship with CYF, to regain a sense of mutual understanding and shared investment. ATCo members know that direct experience of the company's practice is the best way to enable people to understand its work, for them to really 'get it' (Stephen 05-03-2012). As well as completing the many mandatory report forms, Stephen persistently invites representatives from CYF and the Ministry of Social

Development to join the company in the classroom. Through creating such opportunities for the direct, face-to-face and informal interactions, Stephen tries to build relationships that are more than financial transactions:

**Stephen:** We've had to make them our friends so that they, they trust us... by being a mate they understand what it's like to come out and deliver for a whole day and how knackered we are at the end, and they want to be a part of that, they understand that. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

Everyday Theatre's 'ethic of intervention' is not dependent on an arms-length relationship between CYF and ATCo, but on a partnership in which theatre company, government department and local community representatives work interdependently. This long term, close relationship with CYF exposes Everyday Theatre to criticism. It may be dismissed by some as drama that has been instrumentalised in service of the heteronomous demands of the state (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 69). However, S. Jackson questions such "anti-institutionalism", exploring visual arts practices that manifest "forms of interdependent support", confusing the boundary between the "governing" institution and "governed" art (p. 14). ATCo was not seeking aesthetic or political autonomy from CYF, but a way to work with them to meet the interests of particular communities.

Even when funding relationships were demanding and constraining, some community organisations find ways to both 'tick boxes' and sustain their "commitment to social justice aims" (Shaw & Allen, 2009, p. 94). The dominance of rigid and output-led accountability systems caused tensions in the relationship between ATCo and CYF. The struggle to work within these systems affected the company's creative and organisational practices at many levels and yet ATCo maintains that it has always 'stayed true to the game' (Stephen 05-03-2012). This has meant working within the structures of management that were entrenched in New Zealand's public sector, while simultaneously trying to reconfigure the boundaries established by those structures. Where possible ATCo continues to work with communities in a way that reflects the values on which the project had been founded. Furthermore, the ambiguity and complexity that underpins Everyday Theatre's power as an aesthetic and pedagogic experience has been retained. Finally, the company persistently looks for ways to re-establish a close working partnership with CYF, based on mutual trust and understanding.

### **Taking care...**

ATCo has become less confident in its relationship with CYF, more uncertain about its future. This is most keenly felt when the contract comes up for renewal. With the National-led government entering a second term at the end of 2011, wider changes to public funding and policy have contributed to the company's sense of insecurity (O'Connor, 2011). As we wait in a school staffroom for the rest of the team to arrive, Stephen tells me that the company are no longer certain that Everyday Theatre reflects CYF's priorities (Research journal 17-02-2012). This is a busy time, the beginning of the academic year in New Zealand, a tour of Auckland schools has already started, and three other tours need to be arranged before

the end of June, in Wellington, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay. Aware that its current dependence on CYF puts ATCo in a risky position, Stephen is building relationships with local and national charities, trying to establish 'funding umbrellas' that will enable the company to secure a wider range of income sources for Everyday Theatre. There are also two large-scale projects being negotiated with new partners. New phone lines, office furniture and systems need to be set up. On top of all of this, Stephen's long-awaited back operation is confirmed for the start of March, coinciding with the Wellington tour. Wellington is where CYF are based and the tour is funded through the CYF contract. Stephen tells me that he sees the Wellington tour as: "the most important two weeks of delivery ever ... getting key supporters to see Everyday Theatre in schools and to attend the launch event at the start of the tour, will be the key to winning future support..." (Research journal 01-02-2012). He sees this as an opportunity to push Everyday Theatre with CYF and to lobby other funders. He is inviting a number of high profile figures to a special launch event, including the Minister of Social Development, the Children's Commissioner and the Family and Youth Court Judges.

This situation is not unfamiliar. In 2009, ATCo only received confirmation that the Everyday Theatre contract would be renewed the day before the previous agreement came to an end. From this experience, ATCo has developed strategies for defending the project and ensuring the survival of the company (O'Connor, 2011). Just as it did three years before, ATCo starts mobilising the support of influential public figures, getting evidence that there is demand for the project from teachers and community workers, compiling research and evaluation material (O'Connor, 2011). At the start of March, ATCo has a meeting scheduled with the Minister of Social Development. The hope had been that with the Everyday Theatre contract confirmed the company would be able to discuss possible new projects, or new models for Everyday Theatre. Without the contract confirmed, ATCo aims to use the meeting to confirm the Minister's ongoing support for Everyday Theatre in the hope that this will add weight to the case for contract renewal. Driving to the meeting Stephen is still checking his phone for messages from CYF:

**Stephen:** Nothing

**Molly:** What do you hope will be the outcome of this meeting?

**Peter:** I hope that we get support for a funding increase, I think that's reasonable, Stephen?

**Stephen:** I hope that we can find out why we are back again asking for funding. We are back in the same situation we were in three years ago.

**Peter:** We are CYF's education programme...

**Stephen:** We are the ambulance at the top of the cliff...

**Peter:** Our funding is just a drop in the ocean to them.

**Stephen:** They need to understand the work we do.

**Peter:** I hate these meetings. We don't know what she knows from the CYF people in Wellington. I wish we had heard from them.

**Stephen:** I'll check my messages one more time. Nope, just more emails from Wellington Schools, at least we can show we are in demand.

(Research journal 24-02-2012)

From high profile meetings to informal email exchanges, from the launch at the offices of the Children's Commissioner to each performance and workshop at a local school, every aspect of the company's work is channelled into what feels like a fight for survival. It is clearly not just the agenda of a funder that can shape the development of an applied theatre project, the particular ways in which funding systems are structured and administrated are also important factors. The security that comes with a substantial funding contract is brief. Mundrawala (2009) proposes that short funding cycles can be a form of control, causing companies to structure their work around timelines imposed by funders. She suggests that the insecurity generated by impersonal, short term funding relationships discourages innovation and risk taking. Building on her findings, I think it is important to acknowledge the affective dimension to this process. Theatre companies and practitioners are often deeply invested in their projects. The experience that this work is under threat provokes strongly felt responses. Briar, for example, describes the 'terror' they experienced during the contract renewal process in 2009/10:

**Briar:** ...and we could just see the way things were going, we were just terrified, we knew that we were running a really strong risk of the whole company just imploding. So, the funding was supposed to have been confirmed by the end of June, that's always the date, you know, the 30th June, the government date and it was looking bleaker and bleaker... (Briar 28-02-2012)

Stephen, meanwhile, describes the 'passion' that drives him to persist in his efforts to sustain the project, even in the seemingly mundane task of persuading people to attend the launch:

**Stephen:** That is back to your question, it's the change and trust in the process that excites me and you know... getting the right people to the launch, that's what excites me, that's what I'm passionate about. (Stephen 05-03-2012)

Of course, these brief statements do not capture the complexity of the ongoing flow of 'feelings' experienced when working in such contexts (Fineman, 1999, p. 293). Nor do I want to imply a straightforward relationship between emotion, cognition and management/organisational/artistic practices (Fineman, 1999) What I want to highlight is that management in applied arts contexts is not neutral, but driven by a strongly-felt commitment to participants, to creative practice and to organisational values. Fearing imminent threat, this sense of commitment drove the company's energies and resources towards developing survival strategies. From my discussions with the company, what also became apparent was that in the unpredictable economic and political context this 'survival work' was starting to feel almost endless. Managing Everyday Theatre, fulfilling demanding funding requirements, striving to sustain artistic and social values and regularly fighting for ATCo's future survival placed high demands on employees' time, energy and emotional resources. This suggestion that management in applied arts contexts is based

on a felt commitment, I want to consider the importance of care in the process of managing funding relationships, but also some possible limitations.

## Arts-led management

**Adele:** I just love the care for it. I know the background of applying for grants and things like that and just how much they all love the, they love the whole... it's really hard to explain, love the... the effects that come from it, you know, the good and the bad. But they just keep going because they realise that New Zealand needs it as a society, New Zealand really, really needs it and those children really need it... (Adele 27-02-2012)

At the start of her book on applying performance, Shaughnessy (2012) gives the etymology of the word 'applying', "derived from the Latin *applicare*" (p. xiv). She suggests that "[i]mplicit in this terminology is the concept of 'care': practitioners of applied theatre and performance care about and/or care for the communities they are working with" (Shaughnessy, 2012, p. xiv). Resonating with this notion of applying theatre as an act of care is Kirchberg and Zembylas' reflection on arts management:

In its original etymological sense, "management" means "taking care of something" (see Martin Heidegger's "Besorgen," i.e., the notion of solicitude, actively caring for someone who needs help). Similarly, "economy" means "taking care of a household". Associating these meanings with the arts, we can interpret arts management as caring for the goods, activities, and aims of the field. (Kirchberg & Zembylas, 2010, p. 2)

The more time I spend working alongside Stephen and the other members of ATCo it is increasingly clear that 'management' is more than a discreet, describable set of tasks or processes; it cannot easily be separated from those tasks and responsibilities that might typically be designated as 'artistic' (Beirne, 2013). Furthermore, all activity in the company is conducted with a felt commitment to particular geographic communities and groups of participants. I suggest, then, that ATCo's management of Everyday Theatre, including its relationship with CYF, has been arts led: led by a deep care for the people it works with and for the company's social and artistic values (Beirne, 2013; Beirne & Knight, 2002). This contrasts with theories that conceive of economic and management practices as the actions of individual, rational, independent actors. Instead, in ATCo, these practices might be understood as care-based.

An ethic of care is based on the belief that all humans, at some point in their lives, experience caring practices and feelings and that such practices and feelings can act as a moral guide at a personal and political level (Held, 2006; Noddings, 2003). 'Caring' becomes an ethic of care when a response to a particular 'other' is based on moral responsibility rather than 'natural' responsibility (the 'natural' responsibility of parent to child for example) (Noddings, 2003, p. 83). An ethic of care is not abstracted or rational; emotions arising from a sense of responsibility to the other "enable morally concerned persons in actual interpersonal contexts to understand what would be best" (Held, 2006, pp. 10–11). This does not mean emotions are the only guide of behaviour. As Held (2006) is careful to point out, all "aspects and expressions of care and caring relations need to be subjected to moral scrutiny and *evaluated*, not just observed and described" (p. 11). An ethic of care, then, does not idealise 'natural' or 'intuitive' responses;

acts of caring require effort and commitment (Noddings, 2003, p. 81). Noddings (2003) retrospectively situates her ethic of care within a relational ontology (p. xiii). In her review of various theories of the ethics of care, Held (2006) expands on this idea, suggesting that an ethic of care starts with a conception of the individual as always in relation, always interdependent with others, rather than isolated and autonomous (p. 13). For Held, “the autonomy sought within the ethics of care is a capacity to reshape and cultivate new relations, not to ever more closely resemble the unencumbered abstract rational self of liberal political and moral theories” (Held, 2006, p. 14).

About half-way through my time researching with the company a conversation with Peter made me reflect on why caring for Everyday Theatre, for ATCo’s relationships with participants and communities in the face of continual uncertainty and constraint, was causing the company to ‘play it safe’:

**Peter:** One missed step is all it would take and we would be finished. We don’t [he hesitates] you know? And that I kind of think actually does have an enormous shaping of what it is that we’re actually doing. So we don’t risk much in the work, we don’t shift much. (Peter 13-03-2012)

If I accepted the ideal of artistic autonomy, in the sense of freedom from heteronomous demands, I might suggest that ATCo had sustained some ‘autonomy’ from its funder, finding ways to preserve the integrity of Everyday Theatre’s original values as its relationship with CYF changed. In doing so, ATCo had acted on a sense of responsibility to the participants and communities it worked with. However, within an uncertain funding relationship and unstable economic and political context, ATCo felt unable to risk making radical changes to Everyday Theatre without CYF’s full involvement and committed investment. Thinking about autonomy from a relational perspective, the ideal is a movement towards more caring relations. ATCo needed to find a way to reshape and cultivate its relationship with CYF to allow for greater risk taking and experimentation based on mutual care for and trust in the practice.

## **Where things are going**

It is unlikely that ATCo’s relationship with CYF will ever be neatly resolved. It continues to shift and ATCo continues to navigate these changes. While Stephen was in hospital recovering from his back operation, he receives the long-awaited phone:

**Molly:** How are you? How did it go?

**Steven:** It feels fine, like I have been hit by a bus, but in my head I’m fine. I thought you would allow one work call...

**Molly:** Uh huh?

**Stephen:** I just had a call from CYF to say that our funding has been confirmed and will be continued well beyond 2012.

**Molly:** Oh Stephen that’s fantastic news, that’s so great.

**Stephen:** I got this really friendly call, our manager still needs to work out the final details, which could take a week or 10 days, but we have the funding well beyond 2012.

**Molly:** So no more work while you're in hospital?

**Stephen:** I'm going to turn my phone off now... just checking messages once a day.

(Research journal 07-03-2012)

Even before he is out of hospital Stephen has started negotiating with CYF for the contract to be rewritten. To his surprise CYF immediately agrees:

**Stephen:** I said: We need to talk around that because the existing contract is dreadful, and she said: Oh I know, I've actually just read it, it is absolutely appalling, who did this? It's dreadful. I said: We don't want to be touching the surface of New Zealand, making them want more and then not be able to deliver. And she said, straight away, she said: Absolutely, we don't need fifty seven pages, we need a small, tight contract with the flexibility line of, as long as you email me there's room for negotiation. So, you know, I've every confidence that we can work with CYF on this. (Stephen 12-03-2012)

The optimism for the new contract is tempered with the knowledge that it will bring a new set of tensions to negotiate:

**Peter:** Yeah, so they're now going to rip up that contract and start again from scratch. Now that's going to be interesting because if we're not going to be outputs driven, but outcomes driven that might, that might make a huge kind of difference to how many, where... . That contract and the amount of monies will shift the pedagogy and will shift the aesthetics enormously. (Peter 13-03-2012)

Peter suggests that ATCo must now consider the implications of being publically supported by the current Minister of Social Development, particularly when the next contract renewal will coincide with the next parliamentary election. Furthermore, looking at the wider context, the change in ATCo's relationship with CYF takes place amidst wider policy changes. ATCo needs to evaluate these changes and the implications for its relationship with CYF and local communities.

## **Afterword: 'It feels like research'**

The room we are in is small with a low ceiling. Not too small, there's plenty of room for the five of us to work in. There is a covered pool table at the end of the room and photos of the Society of Oddfellows on the wall. We set out a circle of chairs, which makes it feel like a self-help meeting. I give a brief introduction, then we clear the chairs and start moving around. Everyone seems to be in good spirits. I feel a weight though; even just asking people to shake off the feelings of the past hour brings up strong feelings. Stephen violently shakes his arms over his head, 'how about shaking off the past year?' he jokes. I suggest that we work with three concepts: value, managing and economics. We create a still image that responds to each concept, adding ourselves in one at a time. I had planned to use image theatre techniques to work symbolically, but each abstract creation seems to invoke feelings connected to real experiences. I think about Michael Anderson's comment last year during another research project. In the middle of a moment when everything felt very far from our initial plan he said: 'this feels like research', I think, yes, 'this feels like research'. Researching

concepts and researching through concepts. Making sense of them through our personal experience and making sense of our personal experience through them. Feelings are close. The company's feelings for each other and about the work are very present. In their images, embodied and in their words, the stories they tell and the meanings they make. (Research journal 13-04-2012)



Figure 2. CAP. Collage of images and text created with ATCo around the concept of 'managing'.

## Chapter 6

### Improvising with the vernacular, managing C&T

#### Navigating a 'sea change'

I am huddled over my laptop in the corridor of the drama and music block at a secondary school in East London. Fiona (the C&T amateur I am shadowing) is looking for a key to the drama studio where any minute her Drama Tech group will start rehearsing. Tomorrow they will stream their LipSync live over the internet. They are exchanging performances with a group of students in New York where Max (C&T's Assistant Director) and Paul (C&T's Artistic Director) are currently working. I kneel on the grey vinyl floor. I lean towards the computer so I can hear Michelle Knight, C&T board member, talk about how Paul has navigated recent changes to the arts funding context in the UK:

**Michelle:** Paul is an incredibly canny and strategic thinker. I think he's an opportunist in the best sense of the word and he's always looking to capitalise on the... on the context of the contemporary cultural landscape and think about what C&T's place is and role is in that. He always wants C&T to be ahead of the game and to be a leader and to be a pioneer. So, I think he's always very deliberate about sensing where the winds changed and might be blowing and trying to get ahead of the game... understanding when there's a risk that a model that has worked really well in the past might become outdated because of the way the landscape changes. There's a survival instinct about making sure that that doesn't catch up with us; that we lead when that happens. (Michelle 22-06-2012)

Michelle describes how under Paul's guidance C&T has charted a course through a 'sea change' in the UK. My fieldwork involved looking with C&T at how it was adapting to a 'new normality', making sense of and responding to changes in the organisation and the wider context. This experience provoked me to question some deeply-held assumptions. My initial narrative, then, reproduces a much-told story of the commodification and marketisation of the arts as they absorb the discourse of the creative industries (Kershaw, 1992, 1999). In doing so I address concerns about the ways in which applied theatre practices adopt the language of particular policy, disciplinary or funding contexts to make itself intelligible (McAvinchey, 2014, p. 6). The need to secure funds or generate income by other means is seen as a predominant driver in what is typically depicted as a process of incorporation. Central to arguments of many feminist economic theorists, however, is the idea that the discipline of economics, and particularly neo-classical economics, has colonised concepts, practices and imaginaries (Gibson-Graham, 2006b; Waring, 1999, p. 17). This led me to question whether the practices of C&T and its relationships with schools and other agencies can be entirely reduced into conceptions of 'commodity' and 'market'. I propose an alternative narrative about C&T's relationship with local and global economies as managed through a process of 'cultural improvisation' (Hallam & Ingold, 2007) and 'vernacularisation' (Saal, 2007a, 2007b).

#### 'A continuing process'

**Trevelyan, C&T Chairperson:** I am presenting it to you as a kind of era basis, you know, as if there were eras of work and that one ended and another began. It is never as simple as that you know, the work changes continuously and the business model changes continuously and what you find is that some things are more interesting and lucrative and affective and lead

you in one direction, and some things become harder in whatever way and they lead you, you know, away from that direction. So, yes, it's a continuous process. (Trevelyan 06-07-2012)

The purpose of this next section is to give a sense of C&T's history. I do this through a series of flashbacks, written to bring into light key shifts in C&T's development. Each flashback is presented as a distinguishable era in C&T's history, but as Trevelyan highlights, they should be read as selected glimpses into a more fluid process. The flashbacks are constructed from published and unpublished academic writing about C&T and about the emergence and development of 'applied theatre' in the UK. They present shifts in practice that are inseparable from the changing cultural, political and economic landscape of the time. Globally, this era is seen to mark the end of "the Fordist–Keynesian period of ... 'material expansion', the end of long-term and large-scale investment in mass production and productive labour" (McClanahan, 2013, p. 80). The emergence of 'applied theatre', then, is broadly associated with "the emergence of an ostensibly 'new economy' of creative labour and rentier capitalism" (McClanahan, 2013, p. 79). In the UK specifically, the Conservative government elected in 1979 set in motion a process of neoliberalisation that has largely been sustained by subsequent New Labour governments and by the current Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition. This process included a move away from the welfare model established after the Second World War, in which cultural, social, health and educational services were publically administered and supported (Sinfield, 2004, pp. 55–56). There has also been a widespread shift in forms of labour, from material to immaterial, and from permanent employment to casualisation or self-employed entrepreneurship (McRobbie, 2002). C&T emerges from this context and has negotiated through the opportunities and tensions it has produced for applied theatre-makers.

## 1988

**Trevelyan:** Because a lot of that TIE work depended on local authority core funding and that local authority core funding disappeared in the 1980s and early 1990s, almost completely, for theatre in education. So the idea that a local authority would fund a TIE company to offer a range of free services to schools in its district, has disappeared. And so, for someone like C&T, that meant that [hesitates], that their work had to be increasingly funded through individual sales to individual schools. (Trevelyan 06-07-2012)

In 1988 four practitioners, including Paul Sutton, set up a theatre company called Collar and Tie in Worcester, west England. Their aim is "to become a classic TIE company working within a local authority area and centrally funded to provide a free service" to the region's schools (Cochrane, 2000, p. 191). This takes place at the end of a decade that A. Jackson (2013) describes as an era of "crisis and change" for Theatre in Education (TIE) (p. 29). TIE is widely understood as a theatre movement emerging in the UK in the 1960s based predominantly on a political, pedagogic and aesthetic commitment to Marxist ideals (Kershaw, 1992). A. Jackson (2013) suggests that ideally a TIE programme would involve a tailor-made programme of activities created through a long term engagement with a school enabling a deep, open-ended exploration of a relevant topic (p. 6). Realistically, this model was only possible in regions where long term funding was available from the local authority, Local Education Authority (LEAs), or Arts Council (A. Jackson, 2013, pp. 22–25). Declining public funding and rising inflation under Thatcher's Conservative government put pressure on already limited resources. By the late 1980s companies found

that half- or full-day programmes that could tour multiple schools were more economically viable (p. 29). Furthermore, the Education Reform Act of 1988, which introduced the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools, presented further challenges to established approaches. From the outset, C&T had “to engage with the culture of the free market and such government-sponsored, small-business strategies as the Enterprise Allowance Scheme” (Cochrane, 2000, p. 188).

The founders of Collar and Tie knew that sustained local authority support would not be forthcoming in the conservative constituency of Hereford and Worcester. They followed in the footsteps of seven failed attempts to establish a TIE company in this region (Cochrane, 2000, p. 188). Initially they received a weekly income from the Enterprise Allowance Scheme that supported unemployed people to start their own businesses (Cochrane, 2000). Also key was the non-financial support received from the local arts education sector:

...there was a kind of panel that used to meet once a term of people who were interested in theatre and drama and we went along and there were lots of teachers and people there who got very excited about C&T... and were very supportive actually and really helped us to get going. (Paul 21-05-2012)

Over the first few years, both the company’s “distinctive artistic interests” and the lack of any specific policy or funding for arts education in the area meant that C&T quickly developed a way of working that diverged from the standard TIE model (Cochrane, 2000, p. 191; Sutton, 2005). Its early work included long-term partnerships with primary and secondary schools that wanted to develop their drama provision. C&T also established a youth theatre programme and theatre-making projects with people with learning disabilities (Cochrane, 2000).

## 1992

**Paul:** ...as I always say, I only had one good idea and that was The Dark Theatre... (Paul 21-05-2012)

In 1992 C&T develops the concept for a project that heralds a new direction for its practice (Sutton, 2005). The Dark Theatre was C&T’s first ‘Dramatic Property’. The idea is founded on C&T’s ambition to develop new ways of working with children, young people and educators by combining drama with other forms of media (Sutton, 2005). The Dark Theatre is a murder mystery investigation that takes place over four episodes of a comic book. From the synergy between the comic book form and process drama techniques a new approach to working creatively with young people in school contexts emerges. The first episode sets the scene: the murder of a playwright and the disappearance of his final play. The playwright’s son starts to investigate, looking for clues around the theatre where the play was to be produced. The young participants, enrolled as detectives, use drama to carry out their own investigation. The theories and conclusions generated by each class are shared with other schools to feed into their investigations. Ideas from across all participating groups are then digested by one of C&T’s youth theatres and feed into the next issue of the comic. This methodology is informed by Barthes’ (1977) *The Death of the Author* (Sutton,

2005). Through their dramatic participation the young people become authors of the narrative. The project develops in such a way that conflicting and contradictory contributions from different young people and different schools are able to coexist, deepening the mystery. C&T's commitment to working with young people as active participants to generate and deconstruct content and meanings, then, is based on a rejection of the idea of the audience/reader as a passive recipient of fixed messages. It is an example of how, from early on, the pedagogic and aesthetic forms of C&T's practice are inspired by postmodern philosophy and politics.

This experimentation with theories and forms of theatre practice can also be related to changes in the economic and policy context at this time. By 1992 C&T has secured grants from West Midlands Arts, the Local Education Authority and the Arts Council (Cochrane, 2000, 2011). However, the impacts of the 1988 Education Reform Act are now playing out. Funding that used to be allocated by Local Education Authorities has been decentralised, giving greater budgetary control to individual schools. As a result, C&T experiences a 20% drop in its income (Cochrane, 2000, p. 189). Meanwhile, the Arts Council is continuing to promote 'market' relations within the arts, reducing funding and supporting the development of more business-like models and practices (Hughson & Inglis, 2001). In a 2000 interview with theatre academic Claire Cochrane, Paul remembers his frustration with these changes:

We were increasingly being pressured to engage with the educational market-place: better marketing, more focused projects on the National Curriculum, helping schools to do better in the league tables, and we increasingly recognised that it didn't work. (Cochrane, 2000, p. 191)

The vision of forming a 'classic TIE company' fades as the chance of finding subsidy for a company of actors to work in sustained relationships with schools becomes ever smaller (Paul 21-05-2012). It is an era in which many long-running TIE and alternative theatre companies are closing down (A. Jackson, 2013). For C&T, however, The Dark Theatre generates new possible relationships with schools. Schools pay a termly subscription for the comic, which also 'buys them in' to the overall project. For the subscription fee they receive copies of the comics, workshops, performances and teacher training. Over two years more than fifty schools are involved. The pedagogic and aesthetic strategies and business model are interdependent. The creative practice needs to engage the participants in both a powerful drama and effective learning process so that the schools renew their subscription. For Sutton (2005) the paradigm established through The Dark Theatre marks a decisive shift away from the models and politics of the established theatre in education movement. Consequently this development is seen by many as 'selling out' to the marketisation of education and culture (Sutton, 2005, p. 12). Paul remains adamant that the shift was as much about pursuing artistic, social and philosophical experiments as adapting to the economic and political situation:

'The budget is the aesthetic'  
It's not my saying - it was a quote from a big name Hollywood film producer who was being interviewed in a Sunday supplement... can't remember who it was, but back in the early days

of the company it struck a chord with me. At the time it just summed up to me that in professional theatre budgetary constraints limit your palette.

However, The Dark Theatre subverted that notion. In a comic book (or a Website) you CAN have a cast of 100s, vast sets, etc., Like a process drama (or a novel - Barthesian undertones here) comic books are partially written in the reader/players imagination. That seemed a powerful way to create (what seemed to me) to be vast, ambitious dramas on little resource. (P. Sutton, personal communication, June 17, 2013)

Developing a model in which multiple projects, with different groups, in different contexts all worked on “a single unified artistic project”, the company avoided the reductive tick box demands of any single funder (Cochrane, 2000, p. 193). This simultaneous dispersal of practice and unification of purpose provided the flexibility C&T needed to be both more artistically experimental and selective about the funders it engaged with.

## 2006

The Dark Theatre is C&T’s first experiment with the creative possibilities of combining applied theatre practices and different ‘dramatising media’<sup>21</sup>. This experimentation continues throughout the 1990s, engaging with the creative, social and educational possibilities of new digital technologies as they became available. Dramatic Properties (DPs) created over this time co-exist across a range of platforms: live, digitalised and online. C&T starts to think about the possibilities for creating collaborative relationships between schools in different geographical locations. The wider availability of broadband makes regular creative exchanges between schools nationally and internationally more viable (Sutton, 2012). Technological developments radically change C&T’s creative *and* business practice. In an earlier attempt, C&T had been unsuccessful in licencing individual DPs and selling them to schools. Sutton (2012) attributes this to a gap between the technological innovations of the DPs and teacher confidence and skills (p. 605). Shifting tack in 2006, C&T undergoes a radical re-invention, “[t]he resulting model of practice – a collision of pedagogy, technology, aesthetics, drama practice and business – subsequently became known within the company as Networked Theatre” (pp. 605–606). C&T creates an online network of schools that collaborate on short and long term projects, uploading and sharing digital content created through their simultaneous work on the same DP. To facilitate this process, C&T employs amateurs to work regularly, on a long term basis in each partner school. The role of the amateur is to support and motivate teachers to use the DPs and to develop other projects that respond to their specific school context. The relationship with each network partner school is based on a negotiated three-year plan.

**Paul:** And so in the first... there was only one school in the Network. But once we had road-tested that, we knew that it worked, we worked hard at making it scalable and we started expanding it out from there... (Paul 21-05-2012)

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<sup>21</sup> In his PhD Thesis, Sutton (2005) draws on Raymond William’s 1974 essay ‘Drama in the Dramatised Society’ to suggest that multiple forms of media and texts can be understood as dramatic performances. He also highlights how this ‘dramatisation’ has become a key business strategy within a ‘globalized media culture’ (Sutton, 2005, p. 20). Sutton conceives of the Dramatic Property as ‘original media texts’ that engage with the digital cultures of young people in ways that deconstruct the consumer-driven ‘dramatised media’ of global corporations (p. 24).

The first school in the Network had just received specialist performing arts status (Paul 21-05-2012). The specialist schools programme developed from the 1988 Education Reform Act. Under the Conservative government a limited number of specialist technology colleges were created, receiving match funding from the government if they raised £100,000 in private sponsorship. In the mid-1990s specialisms in languages, the arts and sport were added. The programme was extended by the New Labour government from 1997 as one of many schemes intended to encourage public-private partnerships in education. The stated aim was to increase diversity and choice in the education ‘market place’, to drive up standards by increasing competition (Paterson, 2003). C&T asked schools to invest a significant proportion of the restricted budget they received for their specialism in joining the C&T Network.

By 2006 C&T is one of the Arts Council’s Regularly Funded Organisations, receiving a small but significant regular annual grant. The direct income from Network schools means that the company is never dependent on this subsidy. The generated income from schools covers employee and running costs, which enables C&T to redirect its Arts Council grant into researching and developing new DPs. In many ways, C&T’s creative and business models align with New Labour’s cultural policy. Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has a vision of a “cultural democracy” in which people would have access to arts that had “relevance and meaning” for them (Hughson & Inglis, 2001, p. 459). Smith’s cultural policy brings together the interests of social inclusion, education, the arts and economy (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007; Neelands, Freakley, & Lindsay, 2006). While the political and artistic implications of this policy have been widely critiqued, this social and economic alignment in cultural policy creates a context in which education and community-based theatre can flourish (McAvinchey, 2014; Neelands, 2007; Neelands et al., 2006). The policy context creates support, economic and infrastructural, for sustained engagements between theatres and schools and for arts projects that engage specific communities. Within this context C&T develops a distinctive mixed-economy business model and ground-breaking theatre practice that combines drama, digital technologies and popular cultural forms to support educational attainment and inclusion. C&T’s Arts Council Relationship Manager, Peta Murphy-Burke describes the company as: “an exemplar organisation, they are at the forefront of digital theatre; they have always worked at that very top level in education” (Peta 14-06-2012).

## **2010/11**

And for most of my period as chair that’s been the business model that we’ve explored with some success and, you know, some frustration. I think where we are now is that with the continued changes in school budgets, not for the better, that model is becoming increasingly difficult. It’s very difficult to find new schools to join the Network and it’s becoming increasingly difficult to retain schools. (Trevelyan 06-07-2012)

In 2010 the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government announce the largest cuts to public spending and most far-reaching public sector restructuring since the Second World War (Taylor-Gooby, 2012). The UK is now in a period of slow economic growth after a long period of recession that followed the global financial crisis. The coalition government’s plan for economic recovery is focused on reducing the national debt by cutting spending in the public sector (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). The 2010 spending

review includes a cut of nearly 30% to Arts Council England's (ACE) budget, requesting that ACE cut its administrative costs by 50% and cut the Creative Partnerships programme entirely (Arts Council's budget cut by 30%, 2010). The review promises to protect school spending, however rising inflation means that for many schools small increases in school budgets are cancelled out (H. Richardson, 2011). Local authority support also seems likely to diminish (H. Richardson, 2011). Together with a number of other schemes, the specialist school initiative is cut and the £325 million allocated to the programme is absorbed back into the general budget for secondary schools.

Following a long period of expansion, at the end of 2011 the C&T Network is contracting (Paul 21-05-2012). Each animateur's job depends on the income from a school contract. As schools leave the Network many positions are cut. Together with further restructuring in the office-based team, the company goes from a staff of twenty to seven. Paul is the only remaining full time staff member. It would be simplistic to say that these changes are caused exclusively by the cuts described above. As Trevelyan indicates in the above quote, the Network model has already shown weaknesses. There are ongoing challenges in managing the complex relationship between C&T, school and animateur. The administration and management of the Network is starting to dominate all other aspects of the organisation and there is a feeling that the time has come to refocus energies and resources on developing DPs and exploring new models (Paul 21-05-2012; Trevelyan 06-07-2012).

In 2010 *Achieving Great Art for Everyone: A Strategic Framework for the Arts* is launched (Arts Council England, 2010a). The strategy is based around five goals that will guide funding and activities: Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated; More people experience and are inspired by the arts; The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative; The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled; Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts (Arts Council England, 2010a, p. 12). In the same year it is announced that the system for regularly funded organisations (RFO) will be replaced by a new National Portfolio funding programme (NPO) (Arts Council England, 2010b). Unlike the RFO process, the NPO programme is intended to be transparent and open to all eligible applicants. In their applications and accompanying business plans organisations need to show how they will contribute towards at least two of the five goals stated above (Arts Council England, 2010c). Budgets need to show income generated from a range of sources (Arts Council England, 2010c). With the Arts Council's reduced budget the process will be highly competitive. The results of the process are announced in March 2011. Of the former RFOs, 206 lose 100% of their Arts Council funding (Rogers, 2011). C&T receives a grant at roughly the same level as under the RFO system (Paul 12-06-2012). This follows months of intensive work by the board, Paul and the Finance Manager, with support from the company's Arts Council Relationship Manager, Peta, to create a new business plan that reflects Arts Council England's new priorities:

**Peta, C&T's ACE Relationship Manager:** Yes, so you can see that their business plan, funding agreement, our strategy, the goals and priorities are all synced so it just flows. (Peta 14-06-2012)

## Determinism, collusion or “cultural improvisation”?

The relationship between modes of practice in applied theatre and wider political and economic arrangements can be viewed as almost entirely deterministic (Kershaw, 1992, p. 251). Some analyses present the capitalist system as having a dominant rather than contingent relationship with theatre movements or sectors (S. J. Ahmed, 2002, 2007; Mundrawala, 2007). This can undermine claims for the social or political efficacy of theatre because “the movement/sector is cast as an object always, as it were, at the beck and call of the dominant order” (Kershaw, 1992, p. 251). Kershaw suggests that the alternative perspective is also limited, attributing agency to companies/practitioners who engage in “dialectical relationships” with funders in ways that enable them to sustain oppositional practices in some form (Kershaw, 1992, p. 252). Kershaw highlights the difficulty of analysing the ways in which theatre makers respond to social and economic conditions without presenting a view that is either idealistic or “fundamentally debilitating” (p. 251).

A critique of C&T’s practice over the past three decades might conclude that its development of a model of creative and business practice based on the notion of intellectual property indicates its incorporation into a cultural policy agenda in the UK which subsumes the arts within the economic logic of the creative industries (Hughson & Inglis, 2001; Neelands et al., 2006). This analysis, however, ignores important aspects of C&T’s practice and provides only a ‘debilitating’ narrative. Consistent with the aims and ethics of this thesis, this chapter looks *with*, not *at*, C&T to find a more generative (and generous) narrative of the relationship between political and economic arrangements and organisational and creative practice.

Nicholson (2011b) offers a subtly different perspective on the way applied theatre practices adapt and respond to social and economic conditions to those outlined above. She suggests that: “theatre education has always been responsive to contemporary social circumstances, and it has often led the way in developing new educational practices” (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 88). She describes a relationship in which theatre responds to social, political and economic shifts in ways that can be pedagogically and aesthetically “productive and inventive” (p. 73). Balfour (2009) and A. Jackson (2007) both draw attention to the ways in which engagement with outcome-based funding can cause practitioners/companies to be less aesthetically and pedagogically experimental. Nicholson shifts the focus to show how new, sometimes ground-breaking, forms of practice can emerge when theatre actively engages with the social and educational outcomes envisaged in policy:

New social circumstances bring new forms of theatrical expression and, in this respect; theatre-makers who work in the twenty-first century theatre education are following their predecessors by bringing together cutting edge contemporary theatre and new educational ideas. (Nicholson, 2011b, p. 86)

‘New’, as used here, does not necessarily involve a radical break with the past, but a process of ‘recycling’ and regenerating established practices and ideas for different times and spaces. Here Nicholson draws on

Hallam and Ingold's (2007) concept of 'cultural improvisation' which challenges definitions of creativity as a capacity of individuals to generate novel ideas/actions/products. Instead, creativity is conceived as the improvisatory dynamic by which "cultural forms are produced and reproduced, rather than merely replicated and transmitted, through active and experimental engagement over time" (Hallam & Ingold, 2007, p. 19). Nicholson does not overlook the fact that different responses and adaptations have different political and ethical implications. What I infer from her analysis, however, is the possibility of a relationship in which theatre makers are neither entirely dominated nor incorporated by the 'dominant order' nor autonomously acting agents. The concept of 'creativity as cultural improvisation' opens up the possibility for a relationship with material conditions that involves the ongoing, active regeneration of past experiences into 'new' imaginings.

## **Back to a 'new normal': 2012**

In 2012, economists and politicians around the world start to describe the ongoing impacts of the 2007/8 banking crisis on US and European economies as an economic 'new normal' (El- Erian, 2012; Sentance, 2012a, 2012b). This 'new normality' is characterised by slow or stagnated economic growth, increasing unemployment, rising levels of poverty and growing inequalities between an economically well-off minority and an increasingly worse-off majority (El- Erian, 2012; Sanders, 2013; Sentance, 2012a, 2012b). In the UK there are speculations that there is no 'going back' from the cuts to public spending made under the coalition government's austerity programme (Taylor-Gooby, 2012, p. 77). Individuals, families, communities, organisations, local councils and entire sectors are adjusting to this new normality. Independent research bodies report rising poverty and inequality (Cribb, Price, & Philip, 2012). The impact of cuts to public spending is felt across the public sector (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012). Local council budget cuts require a "fundamental change" to the way local services are delivered (Local Government Association, 2012, p. 2). Local Authorities across England and Wales decrease spending on arts and leisure. Somerset, Gloucester, Chichester and Newcastle cut their arts budgets by 100% and more are predicted to follow suit (Arts Development UK, 2011). With these policy reforms comes the promise to communities and local authorities of increased control over local services (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012, p. 37).

I arrive at C&T at the start of May 2012. The company is in the midst of what Paul describes as:

**Paul:** ...an exercise in fine tuning of what C&T does and how we engage with schools in these new circumstances. I think it's a robust model and I think people get excited about the work and excited about the possibilities of what the work can do and the vision the company has and all we are wrestling with is the formal mechanisms for how you make that work.  
(Paul 12-06-2012)

To survive the economic and policy changes since 2010, but also to address the creative and organisational limitations of the current Network model, C&T is reworking its model of practice. It is this 'fine tuning' process that I am to work on during my fieldwork. I work alongside Paul as he critically interrogates the new model and how it will be manifested in practice. I am disconcerted; it seems that even as it is being

implemented it is also being deconstructed and reconstructed. When I tell Paul this, he responds: “I have to pursue this to its logical conclusion” (Research journal 15-05-2012). What I hope will become apparent below, is that implementing the model, which appears as targets, bullet points, objectives, outputs, tables and budgets in the business plan and marketing strategy, is not a straightforward process by means of which Arts Council England and coalition government priorities are incorporated into the company, translated unquestioningly into practice (C&T, 2012a). It is a reflexive process shaped by multiple factors, a diverse range of people and a range of technologies. It is this process that I explore in the following scenes.

### **Scene 1: The task**

Paul never stops moving. His knee jiggles constantly when he is seated ... he never stays in one spot for more than five minutes. He talks quickly, there is no way I will remember all of what is said ... . Paul is interested in taking business models and concepts that have been used effectively by global corporations to generate profit, but to use them creatively to raise ‘literacy’ of young people to ‘read’ and ‘author’ in the changing world. (Research journal 09-05-2012)

Paul can see that I am uncomfortable with the idea of using business models and language to inform applied theatre practice. He recognises that this suspicion is common in the academic discourse of applied theatre, but he has a clear rationale. In his thesis he explains how the Dramatic Property paradigm “is well placed to exploit the techniques and methods commonly used by the producers of other cultural properties in our post-modern, globalised, consumer age” (Sutton, 2005, p. 55). The business strategy of ‘vertical integration’, for example, is widely used by global media corporations to maximise the market potential of a piece of intellectual property (IP). ‘Vertical integration’ involves redistributing a single piece of IP across a range of media: computer games, movies, toys, merchandise, books, cartoons and so on. The success of vertical integration depends on the strength of the concept at the core of the IP, its ability to powerfully engage potential ‘consumers’. Taking the aspects of this concept that are relevant to C&T, Sutton describes DPs as “vertically integrated drama experiences that resonate with the popular cultural forms that help shape the rhythm of [young people’s] daily lives” (p. 58). C&T’s Dramatic Properties are created to exist simultaneously across different media as a means to engage young people. They ‘exploit’ the strategy of vertical integration to engage young people, not as “passive cultural consumers, but as dynamic, creative producers in their own right” (Sutton, 2005, p. 32). What is clear, however, is that when Sutton uses the term ‘consumer’, he does not envisage a straightforward customer-business relationship aimed ultimately towards the satisfaction of needs/wants/desires on the one hand and private profit on the other.

He says that what ‘they’ have realised is that the value of the work is ‘embodied’ in the Dramatic Properties’ ... as IP, as well as the realisation that with increasing cuts to education few schools can afford to buy into their Network at the current set rate ... The problem is that he is still bemused by the idea of selling licences to the individual DPs. There is no precedence for how to price these, for example. There are two consultants helping Paul with this process. (Research journal 09-05-2012)

The tasks I am given at the end of my first week with C&T have been set by one of the consultants, an e-marketing specialist. Most of these are research based, directed at addressing the challenge of turning the DPs into saleable product packages, marketing and selling them to schools.

## Scene 2: The plan

The C&T business plan for the period 2012–2015 is a 17-page document, written by Paul with support from the board and their Arts Council Relationship Manager (C&T, 2012a). The plan sets out a new model of business and creative practice and builds a rationale for this new model. It will, in theory, guide Paul and the board's decisions about the future direction of the company. The central concept is to 'sell' individual licences for the DPs to schools and other users (you might recognise this idea recycled from the flashback to 1992). Recently, this model has been working to a limited extent; the company has started to sell 2nd Folio directly to schools via their website (2nd Folio is a DP that uses a card game linked to a website to actively engage young people in interpreting and performing Shakespeare quotations). The new model hinges on a marketing strategy through which the DPs can be promoted, packaged and sold to schools. This requires a new website and a new marketing and sales post.

The plan was produced specifically to support C&T's application to become an Arts Council England NPO. It consciously reflects the strategy and systems described in *Achieving Great Arts for Everyone: A Strategic Framework for the Arts*; each objective aligns with the Arts Council England's Key Performance Indicators (Paul 12-06-2012). Eventually the plan will be transposed into ACE's risk management system that will notify the Arts Council if an objective is not met (Peta 14-06-2012). The system holds the company accountable to ACE and its investment of tax payer's money (Peta 14-06-2012). Unsurprisingly for the conditions in which it was created, the document is infused with the language of the coalition government and *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*:

### **C&T Language**

Collision of applied theatre and digital media  
The Dramatic Property  
The hallmarks of our brand and the values we embrace.  
Children and young people  
The emergent landscape of digital culture  
Quality  
Intelligence  
Innovation  
Efficacy  
For those with whom we work.  
Franchise-like.  
Scalable.  
Digitally driven.  
Strength through intelligence.  
Advocacy and debate.  
Localised  
Building scale  
Impact  
Achieving change.  
Reaching new markets.  
Democratic opportunities for all<sup>22</sup>.

[CAP. From the C&T business plan 2012–2015]

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<sup>22</sup> C&T (2012a)

Within the discourse of applied theatre there is an emphasis on the everyday, the popular and the local. Suspicion is aroused when the language and ideals of what McKenzie (2001) calls “performance management” creep in to this discourse (pp. 59–64). Performance management is concerned with improving organisational efficiency not through external control, but by promoting worker self-management and creativity (McKenzie, 2001, p. 63). Nicholson (2005) draws on McKenzie to dispel any idealised understanding of applied theatre as a radically oppositional practice, highlighting its porous relationship with contemporary management ideologies and practices. She suggests that the ideals and language of performance management have infiltrated applied theatre as practitioners and theatre companies adapt to the expectations and performance measures set by funding agencies. The concern is that through this process of adaptation, pedagogic approaches become driven by an economic logic rather than the needs and interests of ‘ordinary people’ or ‘local settings’. At the start of my fieldwork, the language of C&T’s business plan both invoked this suspicion and challenged the assumptions it was based on.

If I read the business plan simply as a source of information about C&T I might use it as “evidence for grounding claims about the sort of social structures produced by and constraining organizational and individual action” (Linstead, 1993, p. 3, quoted in D. E. Smith, 2001, p. 170). Doing so, I might well conclude C&T is complicit with the “neoliberal capitalist ideological agenda” of the UK government (Harvie, 2011, p. 114). Putting this critical response into dialogue with C&T’s considered rationale and practice I look for an alternative narrative:

We want to use our expertise to create a theatre and drama practice that uses the emergent digital technologies of the 21st century to bring creative, learning and democratic opportunities for all. (C&T, 2012a, section 1.0, para. 6)

...neoliberal ideology, with its predisposition to widen inequality, might be dangerously embedded in the kinds of apparently democratic, equalizing artistic and cultural contexts and practices where one might most expect and hope to find it criticized and resisted. (Harvie, 2011, p. 114)

...there are nuances, there are differences between what each school wants. I think one of the reasons why C&T is adopting this business model, that kind of lends itself to franchising, creating these very self-contained DPs that kind of can be taken and adapted... making it a lot more bespoke... I think that is why they’re being pragmatic in that sense and looking at that model really. (Kris 14-06-2012)

...we might see those ‘pragmatics’ alternatively, as the constraining conditions of the neoliberal capitalist ‘free market’. (Harvie, 2011, p. 120)

People judge this as empire building, Paul says, as commercial behaviour; they see him as using the ‘black arts’ of business. The licencing will enable C&T to get away from the grants based model and have more freedom with partners who have shared values. (Research journal 15-05-2012)

Whilst critics might question the political efficacy of forms of theatre which employ forms and methods associated with consumerism, Saal suggests we reconsider our criteria for assessing the political value of performance... (Shaughnessy, 2012, p. 19)

'If we were chasing money' Paul says, 'we'd be rolling in it rather than having a 21,000 loss!' (Research journal 15-05-2012)

[CAP. From multiple interviews, organisational documents, research journal entries and published material]

While the business plan was written within constraining conditions, Paul's approach to deconstructing it involves a critical examination of the potential differences it will make to how C&T and its network are articulated and configured.

### Scene 3: The price

After explaining and demonstrating each project he shows me the pricing structure that they are proposing for when the products are licenced. (Research journal 10-05-2012)

Paul shares an early draft of the Licensing Marketing Plan (C&T, 2012b), a document that will eventually outline in detail how the DPs are to be packaged, priced, marketed and sold. Paul's initial concept is inspired by mobile phone plans:

#### Licences

We will build a portfolio of online products and services based on our DPs. These will typically be tiered into three levels, each at different price points, offering incremental rises in services and benefits.

Generically these can be characterised as follows:

<b>Level 1</b>	Access to online resources and tutorials			'Bolt-on' Animateur days for staff and students available
<b>Level 2</b>	Access to online resources and tutorials	Ability to participate online		'Bolt-on' Animateur days for staff and students available
<b>Level 3</b>	Access to online resources and tutorials	Ability to participate online	National/International collaboration  Case study of your work on C&T website	'Bolt-on' Animateur days for staff and students available

Figure 3. Extract from C&T's Licensing Marketing Plan - Work in Progress.

Reprinted from "Licensing and Marketing Plan - Work in Progress", by C&T, 2012b. Copyright 2012 by C&T. Reprinted with permission.

In the old model the amount that a school pays to join the C&T Network was based on the cost of employing an animateur for 2–3 days a week. In the new model the C&T animateur has become a ‘bolt on’, an optional extra. Each level is priced differently with the aim of giving schools an option to fit their budget. What schools pay for in the new model, then, is access to the IP and material resources that constitute a DP. The more expensive packages give access to the C&T Network and the ability to collaborate nationally and internationally. This raises questions for C&T about what the different components of its practice are ‘worth’ and whether these components retain their ‘value’ in isolation.

The C&T animateurs play a key role in supporting teachers to become confident in using drama and digital technologies in their different subject areas (Fiona 01-06-2012, Stephen 25-06-2012). They promote and model the DPs and set up online collaborative projects through the C&T Network (Sutton, 2012). For Sutton (2012), a key part of the animateur’s role is to ‘localise’ global issues and ‘humanise’ abstract concepts and technologies (p. 608). A key question for Paul is whether the DPs have the same value without the animateur to activate, mediate and locate the process?

Central to the new marketing plan is ‘scalability’: how DPs will be replicated from one context to the next by different teachers. Does the potential for misinterpretation undermine their aesthetic and pedagogic value? Paul reasons that even if they are interpreted and delivered differently, this is similar to the way a script can be interpreted differently, many versions are possible, it can be performed again and again. (Research journal 14-05-2012)

Over the past three to four decades, theatre in the UK, including applied theatre practices, has been moved towards the ‘market’ (Kershaw, 1992, 1999, 2007). This means that artistic or ‘cultural’ products are conceived of as (or as ‘like’) ‘commodities’; any ‘product’, goods, services, ideas, “provided through, and/or represented in terms of, a market transaction” (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2008, p. 268). A DP might become a ‘commodity’ when its IP is licensed to the school or practitioner, its ‘value’ located in the price the school/practitioner is willing to pay (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2008, p. 268). Jameson (1991) vividly depicts the “frantic economic urgency” with which cultural production became absorbed into “commodity production” in the late capitalist era (p. 3). For Jameson (1991) the aesthetic elements of postmodern cultural products invite consumption, rather than resisting commodification. In Jameson’s vision this process is an alienating one, excluding the individual from “potential control or mastery over processes, oneself, and nature and collective destiny” (p. 146). Commodification in the applied arts is associated both with the loss of artistic autonomy described by Jameson, and a loss of social or political commitment, as argued by Mundrawala (2009).

Over the past two decades, cultural policy in the UK has increasingly designated the arts as creative industries (Harvie, 2013). Arts organisations are described as enterprises and arts workers as entrepreneurs. This shift situates creativity primarily as an economic resource. The creative industries’ emphasis on knowledge and innovation challenges established ideas about where the value of commodities comes from. In neoclassical economics, commodities get their value from their utility to the consumer (Albelda, 1997). The Marxist view is that value is derived from the amount of labour that was needed to produce them, this

'labour time' is 'embodied' in the commodity (Albelda, 1997, p. 130). In the creative industries it is the concept of intellectual property rights that "add[s] the greatest amount of value to the product" (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 136). In a creative economy value is situated in a concept or idea; consequently both goods and labour become 'immaterial' (Lash & Urry, 1994; McClanahan, 2013).

**Peta:** But Paul, because he is working in a commercial environment, understands what we need. So everything relates that to these, his Dramatic Properties. (Peta 14-06-2012)

Making creativity into an economic resource has had profound effects on education and on the role of arts organisations in education contexts (Nicholson, 2011b). Under the New Labour government, the arts in education were seen to serve two instrumental functions, social inclusion and preparing young people to work in the 'twenty-first century knowledge economy' which demands a creative and flexible workforce (Nicholson, 2011b). Arts policy under the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government has shifted away from a 'social inclusion' agenda to one that emphasises 'excellence' and 'access' (Arts Council England, 2010a). Justified by public spending cuts, current policy further pushes arts organisations away from a reliance on state funding, calling on the arts sector to "deepen the links between the arts and the wider creative economy" (Arts Council England, 2010a, p. 18). In terms of the role of the arts in education, or with young people more generally, there is a call on the arts to respond to the "next creative generation" who "are equipped and skilled to make and debate their own art" (Arts Council England, 2010a, p. 20). Arts organisations are encouraged to be more experimental with digital technologies to both extend access to the arts and support young people as creative individuals (Arts Council England, 2010a, p. 20). C&T's model of business and creative practice that appears to situate the value of the DPs in intellectual property places it in a strong position within the new policy context:

**Paul:** I feel it's there for the taking, I think that's the position. ...and I think our company is probably one of the best placed companies to see through what the potential of those business opportunities are in what's going to be a very challenging times for theatre companies and arts organisations. (Paul 12-06-2012).

Paul's earlier 'script' analogy suggests a relationship that fits but also challenges the alienated exchange relations of capitalism and a typical economy of scale. DPs are designed to activate learning that is embodied, affective, collaborative and efficacious (Shaughnessy, 2012). They are informed by theories of knowledge and power that position the individual not as a passive, alienated consumer but as authors "encoding their values and cultures into the fabric of the drama" (Sutton, 2012, p. 609). Unlike the 'McTheatre' described by Rebellato (2009), the individual licencing of DPs is not aimed towards standardisation. The idea is that every DP will still be activated differently in each new context. The design of each DP means that the control of the 'means of [creative] production' are shared, or transferred from company to teacher and students. DPs catalyse an interactive relationship between the school and C&T; between teacher, student and C&T animateur; and between participants in the C&T Network. The DP as a 'product' cannot be separated from the interactive relationship developed with participants and the multiple meanings, effects and further 'cultural products' they generate. Nor does the 'sale' of DPs

generate profit for investors or shareholders:

**Michelle:** the value that is implicit within that phrase is about ownership and positive exploitation of a product, by which I mean... really valuing the experience of theatre as much as a thing as how that thing can be used to the good, how it can achieve value for the company but also for the people engaged in it... I guess the idea that people's creativity is something of value that can be traded... not in this sense for financial gain, but for a gain of change and impact through young people's vision and understanding of the world, I guess. (Michelle 22-06-2012)

#### Scene 4: The Consultant

We meet the consultant in the 'posh' café, a franchise of Costa just inside the University reception. Paul and I, by coincidence, both wear navy blue and grey with brown shoes. We sit in a corner, concealed from the main entrance. The furniture is black fake leather. The consultant texts Paul: there in 5 minutes... then: see you in ten minutes. Eventually, Paul goes to the reception to meet her. She is striking, bright yellow trousers and handbag and bright blue nails. She is immediately friendly and chatty and offers us both coffees. She sits between us. (Research journal 15-05-2012)

During the meeting I see Paul's thinking start to diverge from the model and rationale set out in the draft marketing plan and business plan. So far, I have interpreted the model as sales-focused, positioning the schools as consumer-like, purchasing DP licences as they might any other educational resource. Now, Paul seems to have an alternative view:

They move on to discussing the job description for the new Marketing Assistant who would market and sell licences to the DPs. Taken from another organisation by the other consultant, the job description needs bringing into line with what C&T does. Throughout this conversation Paul seems to move away from the idea of 'selling'. C&T needs someone who can broker *relationships* with schools, partnerships, "schools don't want to buy anything", he says. (Research journal 14-05-2012)

The new model needs to create a more flexible way for schools and partners from other sectors to engage with C&T. The previous model was based around a 'one-size-fits-all' cost to join the Network. Now schools will be able to choose a level on a flexible pricing scale. However, what Paul recognises is that the new model may affect the degree to which the relationship between C&T and schools is perceived as a partnership. Collaboration is one of C&T's core values (C&T, 2012a, section 3.3, para. 1). For C&T, collaboration specifically means a relationship in which there are "shared aspirations and outcomes that benefit all parties" (C&T, 2011, p. 2). The C&T Network is most successful in schools where a strong partnership is formed (Paul 21-05-2012). Paul, Sylvia, and the C&T amateurs all take time and care to negotiate and sustain a sense of shared purpose with each partner school, but not at any cost. The company's primary focus is always on the participants and how they will benefit artistically, educationally and socially. C&T evaluates all of its financial relationships; this includes its relationships with schools:

Educational institutions are often our partners but in terms of funding are most readily characterised as C&T's paying customers. This should inform the nature of relations. As customers they are a crucial source of revenue for C&T and often reflect the market we seek to serve. However it should be remembered that schools are often driven by the government

or local authority priorities, which C&T might not always perceive as being in the best interests of our children and young people. (C&T, 2011, p. 3)

While C&T acknowledges the rights of schools as ‘paying customers’ the company always considers its responsibility to the students. A further risk with the concept of selling licences to schools is that C&T loses much of its ability to evaluate each relationship. Paul continues to look for a way to implement the new model so that it gives C&T an even stronger base from which to form partnerships with schools around an agreed focus on the interests of students.

### Scene 6: The Board

Holding the company to account  
its commitment to the charity  
its commitments to the arts council  
its fulfilment and of the business plan  
but it's more than that  
the extent to which the companies work continues to meet the broad aspirations and vision  
we maintain an ethical position.

[CAP. From interview with Phil 05-07-2012]

In the UK the most accepted “model of creative business practice” for theatre companies is that of the not-for-profit company that is also a registered charity, overseen by a board of directors (Cochrane, 2011, p. 173). This model is required by most public funding agencies. Radbourne (2003) suggests that there are two aspects to board governance, relating to the external context (including accountability) and internal control of the company (pp. 213–214). There is an assumption that this form of governance makes companies more accountable for public investment. In the NPO system, poor governance (lack of internal control and external accountability) is seen as a major risk to ACE’s investment (Peta 14-06-2012). For ACE, C&T’s board must have a demonstrable capacity “to step in and support Paul in a new and answerable way” (Peta 14-06-2012).

It’s the day of the board meeting. Sylvia is busy getting all of the paperwork ready ... she is packing things into boxes and a bag, bottles of water, a kettle, cups, tea, coffee, milk, biscuits and agendas, the ingredients for a board meeting.

...

About two thirds of the way through the agenda the marketing plan is discussed. I know that Paul particularly wants the board to have a discussion about this, about the direction to take, how to implement the business plan, what the new position should be. He asks:

...

**Paul:** before, C&T were trying to engage schools in the Network as a long term relationship. Are we now about selling individual projects? Are we promoting the theatre or the play?  
(Research journal 21-05-2012)

The next day, Paul feels that the board were clear that they didn’t think that ‘selling’ the DPs as products to schools was the right way to go, or for the new role to be a sales role. Furthermore, he was uncomfortable when he heard Max describing how LipSync could be ‘packaged as a product for Modern Foreign Languages’, it didn’t feel right. (Research journal 22-05-2012)

The C&T board members that I interview all identify accountability and financial responsibility as central to their role. No one described their role as being to ‘control’ the company’s internal operation. The board members see themselves as ‘supporting’ Paul in various ways, many used the image of a ‘sounding board’, for example (Kris 14-06-2012; Michelle 22-06-2012; Trevelyan 06-07-2012). The sounding board role involves listening to Paul’s ideas and then critically evaluating them, drawing on the board member’s expertise and experience. While the board acknowledge their responsibility to funders and the Charity Commission, they also describe themselves as accountable to the company values or ‘ethos’ (Kris 14-06-2012; Michelle 22-06-2012; Phil 05-07-2012; Trevelyan 06-07-2012). Phil, head teacher at a local primary school and incoming Chair of the C&T board, describes the need to counter the board’s existing focus on achieving economic value with questions about whether the work has value for the young people:

**Phil:** Because that is the truest measure isn’t it... actually what has been the value to them? (Phil 05-07-2012).

Likewise, for new board member and former C&T youth theatre participant Kris, understanding C&T’s ethos (‘getting it’) and then keeping ‘one eye’ on that ethos is as important as understanding and closely monitoring the company’s financial activity (Kris 14-06-2012). Here ‘ethos’ seems to refer to an evolving understanding of what C&T is ‘for’ or ‘about’, aesthetically, pedagogically, politically and ethically. For the board, the strongly sales-focused model, derived from the business plan, did not reflect what they understood to be C&T’s ‘ethos’; in turn, this caused Paul to reflect again on the suitability of this model.

### **Scene 7: The ethos**

Last night, in the pub after the board meeting, we talked about the role being an online community manager with a sales target. Now, he doesn’t think a role that is primarily about selling the DPs will work.

I am fascinated by how Paul’s thinking changes as he tries to take the idea of licencing and selling the DPs as far as it will go... I wonder whether he has now found a limit.

Our conversation carries on for the rest of the day, fuelled by caffeine.

It feels like Paul is trying to resolve a tension in the business plan, between the model in the marketing plan for licencing and selling the DPs, and C&T’s overall values and vision (Ethos?). (Research journal 22-05-2012)

Texts are more than discursive structures that “precede and constrain member interactions” but one of many human and non-human participants in the “daily production and reproduction” of organisations (Putnam & Cooren, 2004, p. 326). Texts contribute to emerging organisational practice in multiple ways (Keevers et al., 2012). The business plan, as it operates in relationship with the risk management system of the Arts Council England, could be seen as deterministic in its unequivocal demand for compliance:

...with these terms and conditions, we’re really going to pull the rug on you if our risk assessment is constantly coming back as red you will know this and there will be a system, it’ll get escalated to senior management and then it’ll go to the national and then you’ll be deleted. (Peta 14-06-2012)

But this is not the only way in which the plan participates in C&T. As it brings C&T's 'ethos' into relation with the board and other reflexive human actors in the company, the business plan also generates possibilities for negotiating constraints.

### **Scene 8: The pragmatics**

When I ask Paul whether his re-thinking of the new model is prompted by C&T's 'ethos', Paul's response takes me by surprise:

He argues that his decisions are being made on a purely pragmatic basis. He can't rest everything on selling licences to schools. Only a tiny percentage of the predicted cuts to education have gone through, when further cuts are implemented schools will have even more limited budgets. Furthermore, when the Arts Council England's budget gets cut further, everyone will be going for whatever funding is out there. He needs to be ahead of the game. (Research journal 23-05-2012)

For Paul, his reworking of the model has been a pragmatic response to the effects of recent cuts on schools and the funding context. He is concerned with sustaining C&T's income through a challenging economic context. I feel like I am back where I started. Then,

Paul talks about wanting the financial freedom to create the artistic projects that he is passionate about. He feels that through licencing the DPs he is staying true to his artistic vision. It's like buying a ticket for a play, it is focused on market forces, need/cash, but not funding-led, led by his ideas and what the teachers want to do. (Research journal 23-05-2012)

Paul suggests that C&T has more artistic freedom within the 'market'. S. Jackson (2011) sees questions of autonomy and heteronomy as central to debates about the value of socially engaged art. She defines autonomy as "self-governing" and heteronomy as "governed by external rules" (p. 15). Bourdieu (1983) identifies how the 'autonomy' principle operates in the artistic field with most symbolic capital attributed to those artists who are most resistant to external demands. S. Jackson adds that autonomy is also equated with the ability "to take a properly critical or interrogative stance" (p. 29). Heteronomous art, therefore, is symbolically devalued and critically compromised. This is problematic for applied theatre, which, like the socially engaged art described by S. Jackson, is "nearly by definition, to be beholden to the 'external rules' of the social" (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 29). For Bourdieu (1983), social art is "ambiguous"; it is heteronomous in that "it relates artistic ... production to external functions", but at the same time rejects dominant (Bourgeois) cultural hierarchies (p. 321). C&T's practice is more ambiguous still. Paul does seem to align artistic freedom with financial independence (where independence is conceived of as not being dependent on any single source of income). The company has an economic interest but this is not an interest in generating profit. There is a desire to be financially independent, rather than independent of the financial economy altogether. The licencing model is, in part, about generating unrestricted income, not tied to any target or budget area, to support the research and development of new DPs. There is also a desire to be more directly responsive to teachers. Autonomy, then, is not about being free from all external demands, but being able to negotiate amongst heteronomous demands and critically evaluate how C&T responds to them.

My analysis thus far has been based on my assumption that there is inevitably a tension between C&T's business model and C&T's 'ethos'. I saw Paul's deliberation as a process of resolving the former with the latter. This encounter with Paul challenges this assumption, suggesting a different, more generative relationship between business model and aesthetic-pedagogic practice (Hallam & Ingold, 2007).

### Scene 9: The vernacular

I join Paul and the consultant mid-conversation. Paul has now significantly shifted his thinking about how the DPs will be packaged. He is using the analogy of mobile phone tariffs. Each 'tariff' will involve different levels of support and involvement with the Network.

**Paul:** We're trying to pretend our projects are science resources and it's not strictly true. While I understand the logic of the tick box model, it just doesn't feel right; I can't put my hand on my heart and do it. I didn't feel like I owned it or understood it. The model is too complicated, too fragmented and too commercial. It forces the company to narrow down and commodify... I think we've moved away from the pile them high sell them low strategy. (Research journal 19-06-2012)

C&T's DPs draw on forms and ideas from popular consumer culture. Shaughnessy (2012) argues that this does not necessarily weaken the political efficacy of the practice. She draws on Saal (2007b) to question the criteria by which the value of political performance is judged. Saal describes how political theatre in the US has tended to draw on the vernacular of the "culture industry" rather than rejecting it (p. 109). He describes this as the "*vernacularization* of political issues, that is, their translation into a language commensurate with the cultural experience of a broad public steeped in consumer culture" (p. 102). Vernacularisation can be used to describe the way C&T makes its work relevant to young people, taking inspiration from popular cultural forms and emerging uses of digital technologies. This is apparent in projects like LipSync, which is inspired by the internet phenomena of young people posting videos in which they lip sync enthusiastically along to a song. C&T takes this form and use it as a way to get young people to explore the themes in song lyrics and create personal and social statements by dramatising their interpretations. In East London, for example, C&T animator Fiona created a play with her Drama-Tech group based on a series of LipSyncs that combined exploration of the young men's personal experiences of online gaming with a wider social critique of the social and environmental impacts of the gaming industry.

Shaughnessy (2012) uses Saal's idea of vernacularisation to show that theatre practices that incorporate established cultural forms and language can have political efficacy. She does not directly consider the way C&T's business practice draws on the vernacular of the creative industries. I would suggest that in the case of C&T the two are inseparable. If anything, this makes Saal's (2007b) argument more pertinent. He describes the way that political theatre in the US in the 1930s was "using the commodity structure as an effective means for selling a political agenda to a mass audience" (p. 102). Rather than concluding that C&T's new model is complicit with capitalist interests, a different narrative emerges from the process of "[s]hifting the emphasis from the critique of the commodity to the analysis of the various intricate ways in which cultural practices interact with and within relations of power" (Saal, 2007b, p. 116).

**Paul:** Your tariff is what you want to do with your phone... what do you want to do? So I think really it's about efficacy... about what effect do you want to have. The DP is the thing with the buttons and gadgets and the whizzy things ... the tools for doing things, but actually what you decide to do with it is dependent on what your 'tariff' allows you to do. So I think the tariffs might be... like Engage, because what you want to do is engage people in learning in meaningful and exciting ways... Connect might be one, because you want people to talk to people and exchange in different kinds of ways. ...now, it's just about deciding what they are. I think that's clear now, I think that makes sense. (Paul 18-06-2012)

C&T does not have the explicit left-wing political agenda of the theatre companies Saal refers to. The company is also working within a very different kind of culture industry that has its own commodity structure. It is still possible to see C&T's hybrid business-creative model as a "deliberate deployment of the commodity form as a vehicle for mobilizing a broad audience" (Saal, 2007b, p. 109). C&T creates socially committed and aesthetically ground-breaking educational theatre that 'speaks the language' of the creative industries. The company's conceptualisation of the DP as IP is central to the pedagogic-aesthetic form of C&T's practice, meaning that "[t]hey are consciously shaped and organised to exploit the drivers of our increasingly knowledge-based society" (Sutton, 2005, p. 40). There is a risk that this argument reproduces the 'optimistic' view, questioned by Kershaw (1992), of theatre companies 'strategically engaging' with funders and subverting the dominant system by continuing to produce politically committed theatre. I am not suggesting this is the case with C&T. Saal (2007b) shows how a typical critical reading (informed by the ideas of the Frankfurt School) of the 1930s US theatre practices he describes would expose these practices' "complicity with a capitalist culture industry" (p. 115). This echoes my earlier reading of C&T's business plan. For Saal (2007b), however, this critical reading overlooks the way that such theatre practices "can provide opportunities for creative forms of individual and collective decoding" (p. 115). This idea of theatre in which the audiences/participants decode and reconstruct meanings resonates closely with the postmodern politics that inform C&T's practice (Sutton, 2005). C&T seeks to produce hybrid drama-technology practices that turn the elements of consumer culture into resources that can be used by participants for other purposes. With their roots in theatre in education and process drama, the DPs challenge young people to analyse their worlds (Sutton, 2005). The aim may not be radical political transformation, but many of the Dramatic Properties challenge participants to scrutinise the way media and corporate strategies operate and their own relationship to these processes.

I spend the last week of my fieldwork working with Max, C&T's Assistant Director. He has been involved with C&T since he joined its youth theatre as a teenager, progressing through work experience placements into paid employment. He has been completing his theatre degree and so has not been closely involved in the development of C&T's new model:

**Molly:** I'm interested in what you think about the new business model and the new business plan and the ideas that Paul has been having most lately about...

**Max:** The various tariffs?

**Molly:** Yes, what do you think of that?

**Max:** Well, I'm really; I'm really genuinely very excited about the idea... I think the real strength is in the Dramatic Properties. Once teachers or practitioners get them, which can happen very quickly, we find, they make it very easy for the students themselves to understand and sort of get the idea of the DP, and I think the students really run with the DPs themselves... students are creative, intelligent people that want to be pushed and given creative opportunities and a lot of the time that might not happen so much in traditional education, but given the opportunity to be a director or be an actor to a global audience and say: 'here's a world class project, you can stand on your own two feet and interact with the rest of the world on an equal footing on this project.' They jump at it and raise their game.

(Max 03-07-2012)

C&T works experimentally with the language and forms of popular and digital culture to engage young people in learning. In doing so, informed by the ideals of theatre in education and process drama, they are committed to creating democratic spaces where young people are put in control as co-creators through drama and technology. Likewise, many corporations are increasingly using the compelling desire for online connectivity to engage individuals in creating and generating content. The roles of producer and consumer have become integrated into that of the 'prosumer', a creative and intelligent individual who finds opportunities online to become actors and directors of content that will reach a global audience (Pybus, 2013). A concern with this trend is that corporations exploit prosumers, using the content they create to generate profit (Pybus, 2013, p. 138). As the marketing strategies of global corporations more and more closely overlap with the pedagogical and aesthetic strategies of C&T, the company needs more than ever to stay 'ahead of the game', to find new ways of exploiting these tactics. The new business model can potentially give C&T a greater capacity to engage with the newest "techniques, strategies and forms of ... the cultural industries" and to find new ways to "interrogate" these forms (Sutton, 2005, p. 38).

## Just a moment

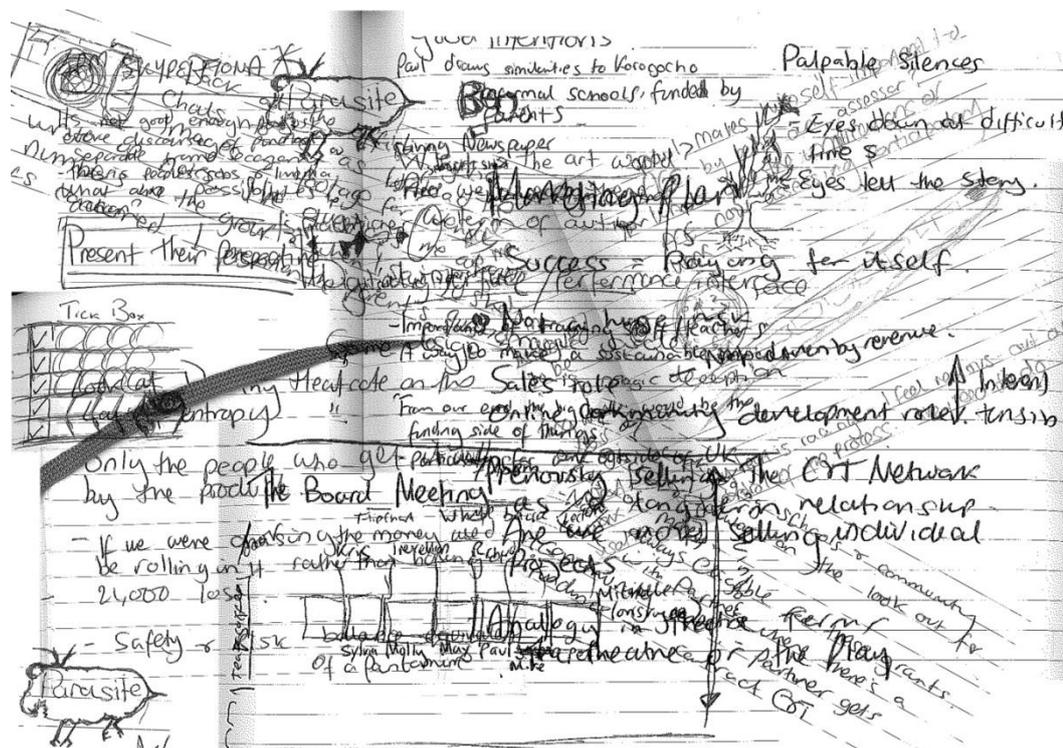


Figure 4. CAP. From research journal entries May – July 2012.

The above image was produced when I began to write this chapter, to craft a narrative out of 13 interviews, 31 research journal entries, 13 pages of meeting notes, 90 organisational documents, six published articles, a small collection of photographs, and 76 screen shot images of a now deactivated website. It represents the challenge of trying to ‘make something’ that communicates the experience of being in the midst of practice, the challenge of only being able to “hold the practice still for a moment so that we can look at its parts” (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 207). Writing applied theatre does not pin it down like a butterfly on a board, forever inert, labelled and classified ready for inspection. Instead, as with this image and the narrative in this chapter, it involves creating a ‘fabricated text’. MacLure (2003) suggests that fabricated “[t]exts are always incomplete and fragmentary because they are part of the unceasing fabrication of the world, which involves both making and unmaking” (p. 128). Writing as a process of fabrication produces layered texts through juxtaposition, disrupting explanations before they settle, allowing ambiguity, forgoing closure, fraying the edges as they start to form (MacLure, 2003, pp. 128–129). The challenge of writing applied theatre practice is to hold it still for a moment, but also conveying that there is always something that exceeds what can be presented on the page.

After reading this chapter, Paul suggests that during my fieldwork C&T was in a period of ‘release’ (P. Sutton, personal communication, January 3, 2014). Here he refers to the four phase adaptive cycle of organisations developed by Robinson (2010, p. 18). According to Robinson the ‘release’ phase can be triggered when there is a change, or series of changes, within an organisation or to its environment (Robinson, 2010, p. 18). Established ways of working become unfixed and resources need to be redirected

to new purposes. At the time of my fieldwork, C&T was certainly experiencing the sense of urgency and uncertainty that can characterise this phase. Since then, the company has experienced a renewed growth in its work with schools and other partners at a national and international level. Inevitably, the narrative above only depicts a limited period of time, yet a number of useful points emerge from C&T's negotiations with the contextual changes it experienced.

Initially overwhelmed by the language of 'performance management' that infused C&T's business and marketing plans, all I could see was a tension between an apparent economic interest and the company's 'ethos', the evolving understanding of what C&T is 'for' or 'about', aesthetically, pedagogically, politically and ethically. For me 'navigating the sea change', was a process of steering the new business model into closer alignment with this ethos. About three quarters of the way through this chapter, however, I realise that Paul did not see this relationship as a tension but as a creative, (re)generative relationship, remaking organisational and creative practice in response to contextual changes.

A prime concern about the effect of funding and financial relationships on applied theatre is that practice becomes 'commodified', produced for, or as if for, a market transaction, designated a monetary or measurable value. Commodification is seen to undermine the radical or critical potential of theatre and performance, reforming the relationship between theatre and audience as that of business–consumer or service provider–client (Kershaw, 1999; Mundrawala, 2009). Redefining the arts as part of the creative industries potentially signals the extension of commodification with implications for both artists and educators (Nicholson, 2011b). I question whether C&T's DPs, created with attention to their aesthetic, pedagogic, social and economic value, are examples of commodified theatre. Feminist economists Folbre and Nelson (2000) explore the contingency of commodification, highlighting the need to examine specific relationships rather than making generalised assumptions. Transactions in applied theatre are rarely made as if between "self-interested autonomous agents" (Folbre & Nelson, 2000, p. 133). C&T's funding ethics document and the functioning of the board are both ways in which the ethos of the company is enacted to centralise the interests of participants, however partially conceived, in the negotiation of economic transactions. In the next chapter, I will draw on the ideas of Gibson-Graham (2006b, 2008) to further explore the potential to 'socialise' economic relationships.

Negotiating the changing economic and policy context in the UK meant enacting an ethos of practice; skilfully and critically working with and within the vernacular of the changing times to generate 'new' pedagogic, aesthetic *and* organisational forms (Nicholson, 2011b). C&T adapts vernacular models and concepts from global corporations and the creative industries in its business practices, just as it adapts the vernacular of popular digital and youth cultures in its artistic and social practice. The company's development of models of creative practice, the DPs and the C&T Network, is inseparable from the evolution of C&T's business model. In C&T's practice, creative and organisational activities are intertwined; they are co-produced through a responsive relationship to social and economic circumstances.

## Chapter 7

### Being a difficult fit, managing FM Theatre Power



Figure 5. Banner for FM Theatre Power's Cantonese translation of Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*.

(Personal photograph).

I first encounter FM Theatre Power unexpectedly, just when I am thinking I might never understand what they are doing, where they are working. The first thing I see as I step off the bus outside the University of Hong Kong is a large banner for their recent production of Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. I am suffering in the August heat and humidity. I am desperate for the relief of air conditioning, but I make myself pause amidst the flow of students to photograph the banner. It makes me feel closer to the company when they feel just out of reach. I walk through the cool, quiet corridors of the University, following the directions of a helpful student. I feel out of place. I feel conscious of myself in this place. Conscious of being white (pink and red), I feel my body expand, larger here. Conscious of how I can't navigate social spaces, bus queues, lifts, corridors. Conscious of appearing conservative in my calf-length black dress and flat shoes. Finally I find Bonnie in her office in the Faculty of Education. We hug. What feelings do I unwittingly convey as our bodies touch? I am tense, awkward and uncertain, I want to be warm, confident and at ease. I am spending some time at the University over the next two months as a visiting student. This arrangement enabled me to secure a scholarship to subsidise my living costs during my fieldwork. Bonnie is a part time research assistant here so we meet here on my first full day in Hong Kong. I feel like I have bothered her with texts since I arrived, trying to arrange a dinner with the rest of the company, a chance to discuss and plan my research with them. She is friendly, welcoming, but I sense that things are not easy for the company right now. She tells me that they are shooting a film this week, but she does not suggest I go along. The others want to meet me, to have a dinner, but everyone is busy. I ask when the next Playforward session at the shop will be. I am told they are not doing that anymore and... oh, the shop is closing this month. Bonnie invites me to the closing party on Friday, possibly a chance to meet the others? She will prepare a schedule of what I can see while I am here. Mostly she mentions performances, a rerun of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and two solo shows. I wonder whether they have any 'applied' work going on. I am curious about this seeming change in direction. I wonder what drives it, or whether it is a change at all. Have I completely misinterpreted what is going on with the limited information I have? (Research journal 06-08-2012)

As I write the first draft of this chapter this same question comes back to me. Have I misinterpreted what is going on with the limited information I have? I go back through interview transcripts, photographs, journal entries, articles. Still I find it difficult to write FM Theatre Power. How do I start to put their practice into words? Describing FM Theatre Power is a formidable task even for members of the theatre company. Leon Chan, Director of Stage Management, tells me how he would describe FM Theatre Power to someone who did not know the company:

**Leon:** Basically, I would say that it is a theatre group doing drama, but also we will do more than dramas, for example: we have a shop selling message t shirts, and we were doing performances outside of the theatre, on the street, just voicing out what we feel about the society, what we're thinking, yes just voicing our attitude towards the society. Actually, it's hard to explain to people from outside of here because it's not a trend, it's not popular in this society, we are doing some abnormal things... (Leon 03-10-2012)

What FM Theatre Power do is neither normal nor popular in Hong Kong. When I ask about how FM Theatre Power fits in to the Hong Kong theatre scene, board members Mok Chiu Yu and Estella Wong Yuen Ping tell me:

**Mok:** They don't fit in! [Laughs] How they do or do not fit in!

**Estella:** I think it's... we can't describe them as in the mainstream can we?

**Mok:** No, not in the mainstream, definitely not.

(Mok and Estella 18-09-2012)

How to write what is abnormal, does not fit, is outside when I have been acculturated with an education in postmodern performance theories that question the binaries of mainstream/alternative, inside/outside, either here/or there. I have trouble explaining FM Theatre Power through the categories of practice and conceptual frameworks I am most familiar with. I am not alone in this challenge of writing Hong Kong phenomena. Chinese writer Chan Koon Chung (2004) describes the "impossibility to narrate Hong Kong straightforwardly" (p. 209). In part, this impossibility exists because "Hong Kong develops a kind of localness indescribable with established theories, a special species of hybrid globalism, a localism without borders" (K. C. Chan, 2004, pp. 209–210). The futility of trying to fit Hong Kong into established paradigms is also discussed by Lilley (1998) in her ethnography of Hong Kong theatre company Zuni Icosahedron:

My own view is that the polarised thinking encouraged by a modernism-postmodernism problematic is not particularly helpful in understanding cultural production in contemporary Hong Kong. The preconditions for the uses of theatrical imagery and techniques which could be attributed to either 'moment' are quite different from those in the later capitalist West. (Lilley, 1998, p. 38)

Meanwhile, Abbas (2000) describes Hong Kong as a paradoxical space, not a “nation”, but a “*hyphenation*”, not a “site” but a “*para-site*”, “a mutant political entity and a living demonstration of how the relative autonomy that comes from economic success could be based on dependency” (p. 777). The country’s particular geographies, histories and economies mean that dominant narratives about transitions from modernism to postmodernism, colonialism to post- and then de-colonialism, or oppositions between Western and Chinese culture, public and private, localism, globalisation and cosmopolitanism, can’t be easily applied. No wonder then that as I write FM Theatre Power I find meanings slip beyond the grasp of the written text.

In different ways, because they do not fit “hegemonic criteria” in Hong Kong, FM Theatre Power have experienced what it is to be produced as non-existent, unintelligible (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 16). As I write FM Theatre Power, to make them intelligible through particular theories and narratives, I will try to call them into existence but inevitably produce absences:

**Call and response**

You call and  
I respond (in my language)  
I call and  
You respond (in my language)  
The call creates the conditions for the response<sup>23</sup>  
Or the relationship breaks down  
You call  
You call  
You call  
I look blankly back at you  
I call  
You apologise  
I pass the phone over to someone else

[CAP. From research journal 19-09-2012]

The challenge of writing FM Theatre Power is heightened by my position as a British researcher in Hong Kong. Nozaki (2009) proposes that the conceptual, methodological, and practical issues of cross-cultural research are most difficult when “Western scholarship examines non-Western experiences” (p. 482). Nozaki highlights two main risks. First, there is the risk of taking an orientalist perspective, understanding, explaining and representing the “Orient” in a way that normalises a dominant, central position for the “West” (Nozaki, 2009; Said, 1979). Second is the risk of reproducing the constructed binary of “West”/“non-West” that forms “a critical part of the discourse of Othering” (Nozaki, 2009, pp. 483–484). The epistemic seeing of the connoisseur involves informed categorisation, but with an awareness that all categories are constructed and value laden (Eisner, 1998, p. 66). Nozaki’s critique of cross-cultural research makes me suspect that my epistemic seeing and not seeing may be permeated with Orientalist binaries and ‘Othering’ discourses. Categories are formed through a complex process of acculturation, as we develop language we form the norms that enable us to negotiate our worlds (Eisner, 1998, p. 66). If I do possess

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<sup>23</sup> Cohen-Cruz (2010, pp. 1–3)

any degree of connoisseurship it will have been honed through a euro-centric acculturation in practices and theories of theatre and performance.

To see, understand and describe are not neutral processes. My ability to do so in all three sites will inevitably be limited. Unlike New Zealand and the UK, however, I was told by some people not to research in Hong Kong because the cultural and language differences and the colonial history would make it too difficult. I don't need a visa to enter Hong Kong with a British passport; I can converse with most of my research participants in English, get by with only basic Cantonese. These things made conducting my research in Hong Kong relatively easy, but they make writing it difficult. I write the first draft of this chapter on a return trip to Hong Kong. Literally and metaphorically, I write *FM Theatre Power* "in a space which is radically in question" (Lee, 2006, p. 348). Trying to explain the colonial space of Hong Kong, Abbas (2000) uses the metaphor of the double bind: "Hong Kong, culturally speaking, was caught in the double bind of divided loyalties. It was politically ambivalent about both Britain and China; ambivalent about what language, English or Chinese, it should master; and confident only about capital" (p. 777). In Lilley's (1998) ethnography she uses the same metaphor to describe the performing arts in Hong Kong. Lilley (1998) borrows the term from Chakrabarty (1992) to describe "the structure of domination and subordination" (p. 51) that make up the 'double bind' "through which Hong Kong's performing arts are articulated" (p. 84). For Lilley (1998), "[t]he threads that make up this binding are the 'West' (Europe/America) and 'China', both constructed entities being treated as possessing established performing traditions which are part of 'civilised' society" (p. 84). Here I am, A British Citizen researching in a former British colony, now a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, trying to research the practice of a Cantonese speaking theatre company:

As I write  
I pull the threads  
tight

MacLure (2003) envisages the 'double bind' of the researcher as an entanglement. She suggests that rather than using method as a way to escape the "knots, weaves and tissues" in which researchers are caught, research should involve working creatively with the "productive dilemma" these entanglements produce (MacLure, 2003, p. 127). Taking MacLure's advice, in writing *FM Theatre Power* I have tried to make my 'productive dilemmas' visible as I develop (mis)understandings of *FM Theatre Power* and the economies of their practice.

## **'Playing on different levels': People's theatre and professional theatre in Hong Kong**

**Mo Lai Yan Chi, FM Theatre Power President:** *FM Theatre Power* is not only a theatre group it's like a school, it's like a community centre and now we're trying to make it like a film production company maybe? So it's like a mix of all these things that are based on one concept: it's people's theatre, it's based on the people, of the people, of us, or by us or for us... (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

FM Theatre Power are committed to the ideal of people's theatre, "theatre of the people, by the people, for the people" (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). For FM Theatre Power this is a political and artistic challenge to the status quo in Hong Kong. Bradby and McCormick (1978) describe people's theatre as a movement that pursued aesthetic and social reform through the democratising the spaces, structures and practices of theatre. People's Theatre movements have emerged in different countries throughout the twentieth century in response particular socioeconomic, cultural, and political circumstances (Prentki & Selman, 2000; Van Erven, 2001). As described by Mok (2007) and Tsoi (2007), people's theatre in Hong Kong is rooted in the youth activism of the late 1960s. At this time, radical youth groups incorporated public performance into their protest activities focused on anti-colonial, pro-democracy issues in Hong Kong and international socio-political issues (Mok, 2007; Tsoi, 2007). Some activists started theatre workshops for worker and community groups. Later, the Asian People's Theatre Festival was established, involving many of these local groups in international collaborations and tours (Mok, 2007, p. 174). Historically, people's theatre in Hong Kong has been internationally connected, rooted in radical activism, focused on local and international social justice issues and committed to engaging ordinary people in theatre making to 'voice out'<sup>24</sup> in civic society locally and internationally.

The people's theatre movement in Hong Kong emerged around the same time that drama education, theatre in education, youth and community theatre practices were consolidating (Cheung, 2007; Wong & Chan, 2007). These practices shared an aspiration to create locally-based spaces for drama and performance. In part, this was a challenge to what was perceived by many to be an elitist arts sector, a sector offering mainly Western-influenced, depoliticised productions to upper and middle class, educated audiences, and Cantonese translations of European classics to 'local' audiences (Mok, 2007). Both Mok (2007) and Tsoi (2007) identify a dichotomy in educational and community-based theatre in Hong Kong between practices that are "promotional", with the broad aim of widening participation in theatre, and those that are "transformational", aimed directly at contributing to social change (Mok, 2007, p. 174). FM Theatre Power's practice disrupts this divide. For Mok (2007), their work challenges the assumptions that underpin the fragmentation of theatre in Hong Kong into different, competing categories. Their practice is never just one thing or the other:

**Mok:** ...they play on different levels, you know? (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012)

Nicholson (2012) suggests that the ideals of people's theatre live on in contemporary applied practices but have been 'recast' by practitioners who "are aware of the new political, ethical and educational challenges posed by undertaking practice in contemporary and postcolonial settings" (p. 319). FM Theatre Power attempt to 'recast' the ideals of people's theatre in response to the aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical challenges of making performance in twenty-first century Hong Kong. They work in a range of public and

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<sup>24</sup> 'Voice out' is the English phrase used by FM Theatre Power members meaning to voice, speak out, speak up, voice one's views or opinions.

private spaces, using different forms of performance as political and pedagogic platforms: devised and scripted plays staged in conventional theatre spaces, interactive performances and workshops in schools; street theatre performed in the busy pedestrianised shopping streets; they also publish books, design and print t-shirts and produce films. Not all of their work is explicitly political, but Banky Yeung Ping Kei, FM Theatre Power's Artistic Director, makes it clear that:

**Mo [translating for Banky]:** ...every production is actually an action. (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

Banky started FMTP because he wanted to create new forms of theatre and performance by combining what he had learnt in his training at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts with the People's Theatre practices he had learnt from Mok Chiu Yu. FM Theatre Power combines Playback Theatre, Forum Theatre and image theatre with classic and contemporary performance. They are relentlessly experimental, continuously developing hybrid practices that challenge the expectations of audiences who are unfamiliar with their work. Social work academic Bottle Shiu Ka Chun and his research assistant Sonia Wong have also researched FM Theatre Power; they explain:

**Sonia [translating for Bottle]:** FMTP are an alternative case in Hong Kong...

**Bottle:** [Continues in Cantonese...]

**Sonia [translating for Bottle]:** Yes, you shouldn't be expecting some very mainstream theatre when you are going to a FMTP play...

**Bottle:** [Continues in Cantonese...]

**Sonia:** So people that are very used to going to plays wouldn't be very comfortable or happy when they go to FMTP plays so you shouldn't be expecting the same thing.

(Bottle and Sonia 04-10-2012)

Banky wanted to challenge the criteria by which certain practices were designated as people's theatre and others as 'professional' theatre:

**Banky:** I find that both people's theatre and traditional theatre misunderstand each other, because traditional theatre always thinks they're unprofessional and people's theatre is against professional. (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

FM Theatre Power challenge established notions of people's theatre in Hong Kong because they insist on working within the so called professional theatre sector. They sell highly-priced tickets to shows presented in Hong Kong's mainstream performance venues. At the same time, their work challenges the norms of professional theatre because they are committed to working with practitioners who are not professionally trained. No one gets paid, but they also reject the descriptor 'amateur' and never publicise their work as people's or community theatre. FM Theatre Power experience a tension between wanting to challenge the

established conception of 'professional' in Hong Kong's theatre sector and wanting to be recognised as professional:

**Mo [translating for Banky]:** ...so called professionalism is just a set of criteria set up by certain people, a little bunch of people, but it should be in a broad sense... (Banky and Mo 29-09-2012)

**David:** A lot of people think that a profession is those on the high ground, who are well paid, with a good life. (David 08-10-2012)

**Bonnie Chan, FMTP Research Director:** He's got a motto: to concentrate is to be professional, so he always says: "We are all professional!" Why are we not? (Bonnie 03-10-2012)

**Mo [translating for Banky]:** What he means is... because, as he said, APA is emphasising professional, which means a certificate, but what *he* means is concentration actually. (Banky and Mo 29-09-2012)

**Mo:** ...we are saying that, OK, if you want to spend 8 hours here then 8 hours is totally concentrating on doing this project... with your heart. (Mo 04-10-2012)

**Fung Sai Kuen, FMTP Assistant Artistic Director:** ...the young people... they are doing things not because of their age, you have seen some of the very young people they can do a lot of things, because FMTP is a, a space to let them explore. (Kuen 19-09-2012)

**Mo:** No matter what different forms or what arts we're trying to merge into this company we always base it on that concept, to train others or invite non-professional actors because we think it is more powerful. (Banky and Mo 29-09-2012)

**Bonnie:** But that challenged them, because the people in the Academy of Performing Arts are well trained so they think that it is not professional for people like you to work doing the same thing as them. (Bonnie 03-10-2012)

[CAP. From multiple interviews]

From my first conversation with Bonnie I had the (mis)understanding that FM Theatre Power were producing more staged plays at the expense of their 'applied' community and education-based work. I wondered whether this apparent change was the result of receiving a one-year grant from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 2011. Were they having to cut some areas of work because of the demands of the grant or had this always been their aim? Had the other work just been a means of generating income or raising grants from non-arts funders? Trying to understand their practice as one thing or the other, I was not seeing the way that they were working "within and against" these categories and the systems that constructed them (Lather, 1991, p. 27). It would take at least a month before I could see another perspective. I needed to 'zoom in' to see the company's day-to-day activities, 'zoom out' to see the wider context, to look not just at the 'what' but pay attention to the 'where' of their practice. After all this, I would more fully understand the ways in which they were 'playing at different levels' (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012).

## The 'FMTP way'

Drawing on the ideals of people's theatre, FM Theatre Power has their own economy for making theatre. By this I mean the particular ways in which resources are conceived and managed. FM Theatre Power's work has been sustained for 10 years by a resourcefulness that developed partly through necessity and partly through choice:

**Mo:** Because I have been working for other theatre companies and they would just give you a certain budget and then you would just count what kind of thing you could do within that budget and so your possibility is less, but if you don't have the budget... . Of course, I don't want to say just give them no budget, but I think this is a very good training ... just thinking of more possibilities to finish a certain work and to make miracles. (Mo 04-10-2012)

Like C&T, FM Theatre Power subvert the notion that 'the budget is the aesthetic'. Rather than learning to work to a budget, FM Theatre Power members must learn to draw on non-financial resources to stage the shows with ambitious aesthetic requirements. Almost everything used in each production will be donated, borrowed, reused or recycled (Mo 04-10-2012):

'This is the FMTP way: donation, if not borrow, if not hire, if not buy'  
'We are all in the self-management department'  
Work over night,  
24 hours?  
=  
12 hours FMTP work,  
12 hours other lives -  
as students, working, family.  
FMTP members have:  
Self determination,  
Self management,  
Responsibility.  
We do everything.  
We avoid alienation of working in fixed roles.  
We must be responsible for ourselves.  
We are all in the self-management team.  
Making theatre is a risk.  
This is the FMTP way.  
Not eating not sleeping not going to the toilet, this is also the FMTP way.  
No one has eaten or slept for two days.  
'You'll have to put that in your research', says Mario.

[CAP. From research journal 22-09-2012]

When I arrive, FM Theatre Power are preparing for a rerun of their Cantonese translation of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*; devising a new collaborative production with a local actress; supporting two members to create solo shows; and running a film project with a Family Services Centre in the north-western part of the New Territories. Later I find out that they are also about to start two school-based projects. Other performances and projects are created almost weekly in response to personal, political and social events. These include street theatre performances created for the rallies against the introduction of a new 'moral and national education' programme, which was seen by many Hong Kong residents as too pro-China. In

response to the same issue, the company stage a new version of their show *Hi Education*. The production is rewritten and rehearsed over just two weeks to engage their members and wider audiences with the debate. The immediate and apparently self-organising nature of this work is disorientating. I realise how acculturated I am to prefixed project timelines and three-year strategies. FM Theatre Power's schedules, call lists and plans are worked out some time between midnight and 3am each night. I can never predict ahead of time who will be where on any given day, myself included. Roles and responsibilities shift and change depending on who is available and able to commit to a particular project. The fast pace of the company's work is made possible by the seemingly endless dedication of the members. Most members have full-time jobs (teachers, social workers, restaurant workers, engineers, radiologists), or study full time. Members fit FM Theatre Power work around their other responsibilities. This may mean coming for just two hours between 7am and 9am to help set up for a day's filming or to load the van before a get-in. It may mean arriving at a venue at 6pm for the technical rehearsal and leaving at 4am the next morning after a long late-night planning meeting. There is no typical working day.

The experiences and feelings of participating members are the raw material of FM Theatre Power's performances (David 08-10-2012; Mario 03-10-2012). Louis Yu Kwok Lit, Executive Director, Performing Arts for the West Kowloon Cultural District, suggests that Banky:

**Louis Yu:** ...uses a lot of the raw energy of the young people, so in his plays, in the two plays that I've seen, those players have some episodes or some parts of them that use the raw energy of those young people, trying to express their emotions on the issues that they're concerned about... (Louis Yu 26-09-2012)

Bottle and Sonia's narrative research also suggest that emotion is a powerful force in FM Theatre Power's performances but also "the affective ability to drive organisational success" (Bottle and Sonia 04-10-2012). For FM Theatre Power it is important that members' motivations to work are not financial:

**Mo:** So we don't want to value your efforts, or we don't want to value your, your concentration by the amount of money, but it's just by your attitude maybe? So concentration is also relating to your attitude and also relating to your passion. (Mo 04-10-2012)

'Passion' refers to an emotional drive and commitment, the capacity to concentrate thought and effort on a specific task because of wider creative and political aspirations (Mo 04-10-2012). The strong emotional commitment of FM Theatre Power members makes their demanding work ethic possible.

**Mario:** I would say that I grew up here... from the time when I was still a teenager to when I became an adult, so this is... well... part of my family in a sense, so that's why I would participate here... I would help them no matter what or no matter where I am, as far as I can. And so it's a kind of intimate relationship, can I say that? (Mario 03-10-2012)

Of course there are many overlapping reasons why people dedicate their time and energy to the company. Mario is passionate about FMTP's ideals, but he also has a familial sense of responsibility to the group. While the emphasis on self-determination of workload is strong, there is an indirect pressure to work as

much as you can; if you 'choose' to work less you could be seen to be letting yourself and others down (Bonnie 03-10-2012). Hard work is revered, as are long hours, little sleep and few breaks, at times even I found it hard to go against this norm, to set my own boundaries. But it is certainly not an exploitative system. FM Theatre Power have been described as a 'cult' in which young people are manipulated to work for no pay (Louis Yu 26-09-2012; Mo 04-10-2012). While there is a subtle hierarchy, in which more experienced 'core members' have some symbolic status over, and responsibility for, newer/younger members, care is taken to foster a sense of equity (David 08-10-2012). No one profits financially from the company. Furthermore, FM Theatre Power offer opportunities to perform and/or develop experience in theatre making to those with no prior experience or ability, who might be excluded from other contexts (Mario 03-10-2012).

Sustaining the number of passionate members needed to produce their busy programme is one of FM Theatre Power's biggest challenges. It is built into their model of practice:

**Louis Yu Kwok Lit:** After they do a performance they recruit people from the audience and after they do a workshop they recruit people from the audience so the audience of this performance can be the performer in the next run... (Louis Yu 26-09-2012)

However, as many older members deal with increased financial and family responsibilities, achieving a balance between new and experienced members has become difficult (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012; David 08-10-2012).

**Banky:** Yes. It is difficult for Kuen and some other people, members, to give the same focus, it is really difficult but I understand, have empathy, there is life. (Banky and Mo 04-10-2012)

One reason that there were fewer street, community and education-based events during my research was that fewer experienced members were available who could give newer members the support they needed on these projects (David 08-10-2012). As their ability to commit time physically to the company changed, technology became a critical resource. The company uses social media to inform their audiences and supporters of opportunities to get involved. Internally, they use a cross-platform messaging app to ensure all members, both in Hong Kong and overseas, can participate in planning and decision making.

The 'FMTP Way' might be understood as arts-led management in practice. The company aim to connect the "principles driving the art" and "the principles by which the organisation functions" (Beirne & Knight, 2002, p. 88). The ideal of people's theatre is a driving principle in both art-making and the organisational practices that support it. Another ideal is to not focus on financial gain or be limited by financial constraint. What I explore in the next section is how establishing a relationship with a state funder disrupted the sense of economic independence that has become core to FM Theatre Power's organisational identity. This relationship placed further constraint on the company's capacity to link artistic and organisational principles. Using Gibson-Graham's (2006b) language of economic diversity I consider

how FM Theatre Power might still enact a form of ‘postcapitalist’ politics when engaging in multiple economic practices.

## **‘They just don’t fit in’: FM Theatre Power’s relationship with the Hong Kong arts funding system**

They don’t fit in [he laughs], they just don’t fit in.  
They have been...  
working kind of on their own,  
in their own way  
in the last 10 years.

### **alien**

...how do they run?  
How could they do so many productions?  
How could they have so many people working for them?  
How could they perform so many, many times?  
How could they maintain...?  
What is the whole structure in there?  
Who funded them?

They just do things a lot of theatre people have never done.

Rumours  
**Black sheep**  
**Outsider**  
**cult?**  
They don’t care

Until  
two to three years ago  
accepted into the system,  
the funding system  
the public funding system  
the whole theatre environment  
moving  
closer to the establishment.

[CAP. From interview with Louis Yu 26-09-2012]

Partway through my fieldwork, Banky suggests I talk to Mr Louis Yu Kwok Lit, Executive Director, Performing Arts at the West Kowloon Cultural District, formally CEO at the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. He is unclear about why. By this time I have ‘zoomed in’ on FM Theatre Power’s practice. On my way to the interview I write “I now struggle to extract myself, to find opportunities to reflect” (Research journal 26-09-2012). Whatever Banky’s intentions, interviewing Louis Yu is a chance to ‘zoom out’, get a sense of the wider context:

Louis Yu’s office is in another world, Tsim Sha Tsui, amongst Prada, Louis Vuitton and Gucci, near 1881 Heritage, which used to be the headquarters of the marine police and is now an expensive shopping area, hotel, exhibition hall and wedding venue. The office of the

West Kowloon Cultural District is in The Gateway, a series of tall towers overlooking the harbour. The walls of the large office are lined with books about culture, theatre and creative industry. (Research journal 26-09-2012)

Louis Yu does not have a close relationship with FM Theatre Power. He knows of them through his extensive work in arts policy, administration and funding in Hong Kong. He has seen some of their productions. But he has a detailed understanding of:

**Louis Yu:** ...the big picture of the theatre scene in Hong Kong and the funding environment and the market environment, and the business environment and the business operations in the private and the public sector of the theatre operation in Hong Kong. And FM Theatre Power, FM Theatre Power just has never, kind of say, fitted in the system. (Louis Yu 26-09-2012)

Writing in the late 1990s, Lilley (1998) describes a funding system in Hong Kong that had generated fragmentation, competition and inequality in the theatre sector:

In Hong Kong there is a persistent opposition between cultural workers who feel themselves excluded from 'the establishment' and those larger companies and organisations they perceive as blocking their path. This opposition is a contest for larger allocations of money and cultural power. The division is not simply between 'the government' and 'cultural dissidents', although superficially it appears to be. The arguments are also between sections of a cultural elite, differently empowered by a system which requires and supports the performing arts while allowing influence to only some of its practitioners. (Lilley, 1998, p. 57)

The decade spanning this transfer of government from Britain to China brought significant changes to the arts sector. In its final years, the British colonial government, under Chris Patten, replaced the Council for the Performing Arts, a government-appointed group with largely an advisory role, with the Arts Development Council (ADC), a statutory body with a semi-democratic constitution and greater administrative autonomy (Yuen, 2006a, p. 8). The ADC provides grants to arts organisations and strategic support to the sector and connects the government to the arts community (Yuen, 2006b). Until the handover, the Municipal Councils controlled the majority of spending on arts and culture. Tung Che Hwa, the first Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, dissolved the municipal councils and centralised responsibility for the arts and cultural sector under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) (Yuen, 2006a, p. 15). The LCSD finances and manages most performance venues in Hong Kong. In spite of these changes, independent reports from the time showed that unevenness, fairness and transparency of resource allocation remained key issues in Hong Kong's arts funding system (Yuen, 2006a). As a result, in the mid- to late-2000s measures were taken to make the grant application assessment process more credible. This included appointing independent grant assessors and creating more funding opportunities for groups and artists whose work had been marginalised (Yuen, 2006b).

Louis Yu describes the Hong Kong theatre sector in 2012 as structured around a "hierarchy of funding" (Louis Yu 26-09-2012). He sketches a diagram of the funding system to illustrate this:

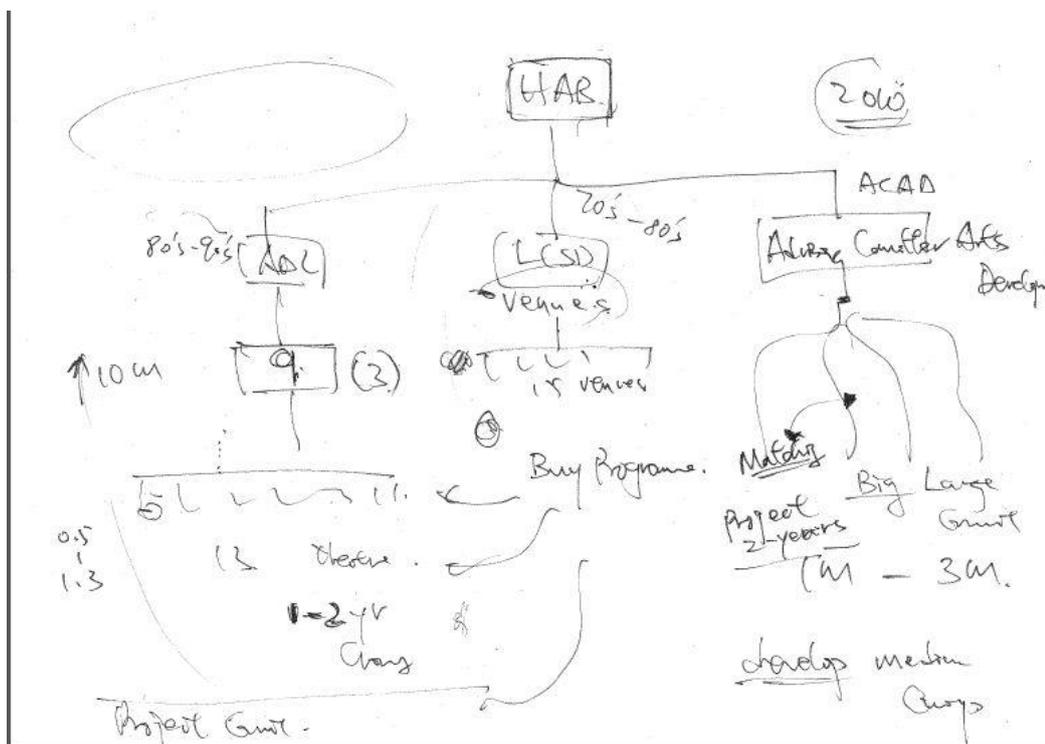


Figure 6. Sketch of Hong Kong arts funding system by Mr Louis Yu Kwok Lit, 26-09-2012.

Reproduced with permission.

At the top of this hierarchy (the right side of the diagram) are nine major performing arts groups, including three theatre companies: Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, the Chung Ying Theatre Company and Zuni Icosahedron. These nine groups are directly funded by the Home Affairs Bureau, receiving around \$10–30 million Hong Kong Dollars per year in three-year cycles (Positive Solutions & GHK, 2012). On the second tier are around 40 organisations, including approximately 10–15 theatre companies that receive one- or two-year grants of between \$200,000 and \$1 million, largely for administrative purposes (Hong Kong Arts Development Council, 2012). Finally, individual artists and informal groups can apply for project grants of between \$10,000 and \$300,000. Louis Yu outlines a recent funding initiative aimed at closing the almost incommensurable gap between the companies on one- or two-year grants and the nine major performing arts groups (see the left hand side of the diagram). The Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme is administered by the Advisory Committee on Arts Development (advising the Home Affairs Bureau). It was set up following a \$1.5 billion ‘injection’ of funding for the arts in 2010. It includes match funded Springboard Grants and Project Grants aimed broadly at building the capacity of mid-scale arts organisations (Advisory Committee on Arts Development, 2012).

Early government intervention in arts development, via policy and funding, is understood to have been a response to increasing economic growth and political unrest in Hong Kong during the late 1960s (Khoo, 2006). Creating widespread access to the arts was, in part, a means to divert the anti-colonial, left wing sentiments that flared up in the riots of 1966–7, a means of managing everyday life through leisure and

cultural activities intended to promote “a sense of belonging” and develop more “civilised communities” (Lilley, 1998, pp. 53–54). Creating a respectable arts sector with national ballet, opera, and orchestra and theatre companies was also considered important for Hong Kong as it competed with other international economic centres to attract top workers and corporations. From the 1980s onwards, there was a shift in policy and funding towards the development of ‘Hong Kong’ culture and to foster the creative industries. This shift is seen as a response to the anticipated handover and then the economic downturn of 1997 (E. Chan, 2006). It also reflects a global focus on developing “creative cities”, stimulating economic prosperity through improved infrastructure for commercial creative activity (Nicholson, 2011b, pp. 90–91).

Over a similar period, community- and education-based arts were funded predominantly as a form of audience building, but also to encourage participation, foster life-long learning and more recently to develop creativity (P. Chan & Shu, 2006). P. Chan and Shu (2006) describe a number of programmes put in place by the ADC and LCSD to support the growth of arts work in education and community settings. They identify a general trend amongst companies working in this field towards structuring their work around government schemes and funding. Apart from the ADC and LCSD, the other major source of funding available to arts organisations is the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the largest private charitable donor in the region. Arts education and community work also get some funding from other government departments and small charitable trusts. There remains very limited corporate support for the arts in Hong Kong (Positive Solutions & GHK, 2012). As a whole, the theatre sector in Hong Kong is regarded as dependent on government funding (Positive Solutions & GHK, 2012).

FM Theatre Power remained outside of this arts-funding system for their first eight years. At least two explanations for this coexist, each of which probably has an element of truth. In part it has been a choice. After graduating from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Banky set up FM Theatre Power because he wanted to work independently. This included not being dependent on financial income. As explained above, this was possible because no one got paid. FM Theatre Power generated enough income by charging for education workshops and securing short project contracts to rent a studio and cover running costs. They also experimented with other ways to generate income, creating and selling t-shirts and books for example. Everything else was achieved through non-financial resources. A second explanation is that FM Theatre Power were refused funding because they did not fit the ADC’s designated categories of practice or meet the grant assessors’ expectations (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). Many individual members have successfully applied for the ADC’s Emerging Artist Grants to develop solo performances (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012). But the more substantial applications from FM Theatre Power as a company were not successful (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012). FM Theatre Power believes this was because their practice did not reflect the dominant/hegemonic discourse, which implicitly defined ‘professional’ practice on the basis of payment and training. Not fitting, whether resulting from choice or from the exclusionary practices of the Hong Kong arts funding system, reinforced FM Theatre Power’s identity as independent artistically and politically:

**Mario:** In the past I would say they are a drama group, which is not funded by the government, they are independent... (Mario 03-10-2012)

For FM Theatre Power, not receiving ADC funding enabled them to retain the freedom to work in their own way (according to their 'ethos'), to engage a wide range of people in theatre, to make work that comes from the lives of these people, and to challenge dominant political and artistic ideas.

## **Navigating the demands of a new funding relationship**

We are independent,  
We can survive by ourselves,  
But now  
We have to depend on you.  
Still  
We will do the same thing that we did before  
Using your money, but working our own way.  
We will not change a bit.  
We are still fighting,  
I think.

[CAP. From interview with Banky and Mo 28-09-2012]

In 2011 FM Theatre Power received a one-year grant from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. The ADC's one- and two-year grants are aimed at providing strategic support that will nurture the professional development of Hong Kong arts organisations (Hong Kong Arts Development Council, 2012). The grants can be used broadly for the purpose of enhancing artistic output and improving arts administration (Hong Kong Arts Development Council, 2012). I was interested in the effects of this new relationship with a government agency that, for FM Theatre Power, represented the political and theatrical status quo that they are committed to challenging. Would receiving this funding lead them to focus on developing aesthetic practice that met the existing standard of 'professional', to privilege audience numbers over social impact and inclusivity? Would becoming more dependent on the state, even with the ADC's commitment to preserving freedom of expression, cause FM Theatre Power to become less politically radical?

FM Theatre Power discuss everything thoroughly, this is part of the reason no one gets any sleep. While it tends to be the core members who manage funding relationships, through the use of mobile technology discussions are made more inclusive of other members. Over the two months I spent with the company, they regularly discussed the value of the ADC grant. The stance they took at this time was that they were prepared to lose the funding rather than shift their political stance:

**Mo:** Even if next year the government is saying: "You are too political or you are too rebellious or" I don't know what they will say, maybe they will just stop the funding, but we are prepared because we can just continue on our own running system and even we can regain our freedom. (Mo 04-10-2012)

If anything, their practice was becoming more, not less radical, partly because the members had become more politically informed over time (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012). There was also a desire to ‘perform’ their political freedom:

**Mo:** ...we have to fight against ADC to show that: “OK, we’re using your money but we’re still working our own way”. We are still doing *Hi Education* which is very critical, and also the *Anarchist* show of course... which is totally against the government... (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

This refutes the idea that theatre companies produce work that is less overtly oppositional or critical to sustain income from external donors (S. J. Ahmed, 2007; Mundrawala, 2007, 2009). At the time of writing I can find only informally published material that suggests the freedom of expression of Hong Kong artists is being threatened, but it is a concern for artists and other cultural workers (Cultural Revolution elements in Hong Kong Ballet’s latest performance was ordered to be deleted, 2013). There is some indication of increasing police intolerance towards those involved in political demonstrations and a lack of governmental action to protect or extend press freedoms (Bale, Mak, Lai, & Leung, 2013). Indeed, at the end of 2013 a small group of FM Theatre Power members were arrested during a celebratory Christmas street performance and questioned about whether they were a political organisation. This may be an area for further study. What can be concluded from my fieldwork is that FM Theatre Power perceived that their politically provocative performances were risky and may jeopardise their chances of receiving further funding from the ADC. They were willing to take the risk and put the limits of the new funding relationship to the test.

At the start of my fieldwork I speculated that the demands of the ADC grant was putting pressure on FM Theatre Power to produce more ‘professional’ stage-based productions, taking time and resources away from their education and community-based work. In fact, Bonnie tells me later that the ADC has asked them to perform less (Research journal 08-09-2012). They are exceeding the conditions of the grant:

**Mok:** ...but what Banky has done, or what FM Theatre Power has done, is that they have done a lot more than they have promised to the ADC, so they don’t even have to record it, just say we have done these things extra, they are well received. (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012)

I suspect that if they could get access to the venues, FM Theatre Power would perform even more than they do. My early hypothesis was based on a misunderstanding. The established distinction between ‘professional’ and ‘community’ or ‘applied’ theatre is one that FM Theatre Power sets out to challenge. Looking with, not at FM Theatre Power I started to understand what the grant meant to them and why they experienced receiving the grant as a significant achievement:

**Mo:** Yes, we have been fighting for eight years to try to, as you said, as Louis Yu said, we are not in the arts industry, but this is [the ADC grant], as we say, a ‘certificate’. Because actually we are already saying that we are trying to be against this sort of... what is called ‘professionalism’. So what we’re trying to do is to be more local... I think it’s amazing that we

tried to, to concentrate on what we are doing but still have the certificate of professionalism, it feels like we won awards or something like that. (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

Applying for the grant was not driven by financial need, but this desire for recognition (Bonnie 28-08-2012; Mok and Estella 18-09-2012). It was a struggle to get past assessors who questioned their way of working with ‘non-professionals’ (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). This might be interpreted as a process of incorporation. Alternatively, as suggested in Chapter 5, funding systems and funding relationships are ‘boundary making practices’ that constrain without causally determining what is possible (Barad, 2007; Keevers et al., 2012). Fighting to ‘fit into’ the ADC system to some extent reconfigured those boundaries, the particular way in which meaning and value were designated.

**Mo:** Oh yes, I remember, actually the objective, or the point for which we try to apply for this funding is not because of the money, actually the money is totally not enough, and actually it adds a lot to our workloads, to our administrative work, as I told you before... but why we still want to apply for this is it’s like we want to let the others know, other so called professional theatre groups know, we are at the same banding as you, you don’t have, or you can’t judge us anymore, as so called non-professional. So now we are a ‘professional’ theatre group, but still we will do the same that we did before, so we will not change a bit. (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

For FM Theatre Power the process of applying for and receiving the grant was itself a political act, challenging the categories of difference enacted by the funding system, revealing the contingent meaning of professional and, in doing so, perhaps “*reconfiguring the material-discursive field of possibilities*” [emphasis in original] (Barad, 2003, p. 823).

From my fieldwork and discussions with FM Theatre Power it became clear that the effects of the grant that were most difficult to manage were on the company’s organisational practices (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012; Kuen 19-09-2012; Yee Man 08-10-2012). Part of the ADC’s vision for a sustainable arts sector in Hong Kong is that groups of artists establish formal organisations:

**Louis Yu:** The philosophy behind the one year grant and two year grants, it’s to force them, or encourage them to a more long term and sustainable kind of development of artistic, of the artistic path, by forming a group... . So, they have to go through this kind of formality and have to establish themselves in a more formal kind of organisation and then they can receive the grant. (Louis Yu 26-09-2012)

Before applying for the grant FM Theatre Power were required to register as a nonprofit organisation. This meant establishing a new management structure, assembling a board to which the Artistic Director and a manager would report. This challenged the company’s struggle to enact an egalitarian, inclusive, democratic organisational model. It meant that the existing members, some of whom had been part of FM Theatre Power for ten years, suddenly had no recognised role in their own company. They were told that they could not become board members, nor were they able to apply for the temporary paid positions that were being funded:

**Mo [translating for Banky]:** ...we are not the staff, and we are not the board members, so we cannot make true decisions, we have to ask our board members. So after this funding it seems like we are nothing, we cannot have a salary, and we cannot decide, we can only work... (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012)

While receiving the grant potentially reconfigured the dominant conception of professional theatre practice, the company were simultaneously required to reconfigure their organisational practice according to established norms for arts administration and governance. This is not untypical. Mundrawala (2007, 2009) and S. J. Ahmed (2002) have both identified the effects of donor requirements and performance management systems on organisational structures and practices in politically committed theatre companies. Likewise, Beirne and Knight (2002) observe how arts funders in the UK often encouraged theatre companies to adopt or at least “reproduce” business models and management practices derived from the corporate sector (p. 79). Unlike Mundrawala and S. J. Ahmed, Beirne and Knight do not conclude that companies ultimately comply with such demands. Instead they suggest that staff “were grappling with the daily challenge of making art in an effective and principled fashion” (Beirne & Knight, 2002, p. 83). FM Theatre Power were ‘grappling’ with such a challenge, looking for ways to enact the new organisational model in a way that connected with their ethos. For example, FM Theatre Power grappled with how a board could operate ‘the FMTP way’:

**Wong Yee Man, FMTP Chairperson:** The main reason we have a board is because [she laughs] we get the funding. But we don’t want the board to be only for administrative purposes... . Actually, besides being the chairperson I am no different from the other members... (Yee Man 08-10-2012)

As might be expected, FM Theatre Power’s board includes experts from different sectors including theatre, people’s theatre, film, photography and education. Former FM Theatre Power member, Wong Yee Man, the Chairperson, meanwhile, says she has been appointed because of her ‘expertise’ in the company itself:

**Wong Yee Man:** ...because of my experience I can understand them, so if people ask me I can be like a channel, explain why they are doing this and what belief is behind their work... (Yee Man 08-10-2012)

The company are also grappling with how to manage the administrative aspects of the grant (Bonnie 03-10-2012; Yee Man 08-10-2012). While the explicit requirements of the grant do not seem to be affecting the direction of the company’s work, increased administrative workload is (Yee Man 08-10-2012). Banky suggests that the additional administration is one reason they have stopped their monthly Playforward sessions (Research journal 06-10-2012). While ‘management’ is typically distributed, the company simply does not have the resources, time, expertise or ‘passion’, within the current membership and there is a sense that a full time ‘manager’ is needed. However, finding someone with the necessary skills but whom also understands the ethos of the company and will be willing to work for no pay, is not easy:

**Mo:** We have to find a passionate administrative worker, and this is very difficult I find, you have passions about maybe creating things or on performance or other different things but

we want to find a person who is really passionate on doing administrative work and this is very difficult. (Mo 04-10-2012)

Negotiating their relationship with the ADC, FM Theatre Power attempts to respond to the requirements of the ADC in a way that reflects their ethos. This is not a process orientated towards a preconceived outcome, but an engagement in an ongoing process of trial and error, experimentation and evaluation. FM Theatre Power's relationship with the ADC might be understood as similar to Lather's (1991) description of the relationship between feminist research and "established traditions for doing social science" (Lather, 1991, p. 27). FM Theatre Power are no longer 'outside' the arts funding system, but working "within and against" it, fitting in to established ways of doing while also "call[ing] them into question" (Lather, 1991, p. 27).

### **Performing other economies?**

At this point, I might well propose that FM Theatre Power are at least partially enacting a nonmarket, noncapitalist economy. Informed by post-structural theory and feminist economic analysis, Gibson-Graham (2008) argue that recognising marginal and non-capitalist economic practices is an important step in creating new economies, undermining the assumed dominance and inevitable expansion of capitalist relations (pp. 616–617). To make the diversity of economic practices evident, Gibson-Graham (2006b, 2008) propose a "language of economic diversity", identifying multiple forms of transactions, labour and organisation within the categories of nonmarket/unpaid/noncapitalist, market/wage/capitalist and alternative market/wage/capitalist (pp. 53-78). It is easy to question the applicability of these categories or to highlight the extension of the logic and relations of the market into practices that Gibson-Graham suggest are alternatives to capitalism, or even noncapitalist (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2008). But this is precisely the argument that Gibson-Graham address, that all economic practices are "fuel for capitalist development" (2008, p. 617). In contrast, they suggest that "a politics of possibility rests on an enlarged space of decision and a vision that the world is not governed by some abstract, commanding force or global form of sovereignty" (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxxiii). Within this framework, FM Theatre Power have enacted a noncapitalist economy by creating an organisational model in which members decide how surplus will be distributed; in which labour is unpaid; and where possible resources are procured through transactions outside the financial market, for example, reusing, borrowing, making from free materials. Receiving the grant has put constraints on these practices. The creation of the board technically shifted the "appropriation of surplus" out of the members' control (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 65). The grant also came with the implicit expectation that the company would work towards having paid staff. As Louis Yu Kwok Lit suggests above, FM Theatre Power are certainly being moved towards a preconceived idea of what an effective arts organisation should look like. Rather than assuming this will inevitably lead to a 'taming' of their political ambitions, aesthetic and organisational experimentation, Beirne and Knight's (2002) examination of arts-led management opens up the field of possibilities, suggesting FM Theatre Power might work both within and against the constraints of their new funding relationship.

This is only part of the picture. While FM Theatre Power assert their financial independence, they engage in many economic practices that are capitalist-like. They generate income by ‘selling’ workshops and from contracts with education and community providers. They also sell t-shirts, books, and tickets to their stage-based productions. Largely, this income is used cover running costs, but a large proportion is also directed into marketing. Rather than operating outside or independently of the financial economy, FM Theatre Power participate in “intricate interdependencies” with local and global economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 68). A more full examination of the economies of FM Theatre Power’s practice, then, requires following Gibson-Graham’s (2006b) attempt to examine how political and ethical (and potentially aesthetic and pedagogic) decisions can be made around such relationships of interdependency. In the next section, then, I examine the multiple locations within which FM Theatre Power participate in Hong Kong’s complex and often paradoxical economy.

## **Locating FM Theatre Power**

It takes two weeks to even partially understand where FM Theatre Power work. I know they are not ‘typical’ in their operations. I still expected there to be some consistent workplace, even if it was someone’s front room. I arrive at a hard time. FM Theatre Power is in the midst of relocating physically as well as adapting to the new funding relationship and the reduced availability of experienced members. 2 Goods, the t-shirt shop they set up in 2008, is closing. The company cannot keep up with rapidly escalating commercial rents (Mo 04-10-2012). Rent increases are pushing out businesses across Hong Kong, clearing space for those able and willing to pay more than twice as much for the same location and square-footage (McMillan & Kok, 2012). Just as I work out that 2 Goods is the base for FM Theatre Power’s work, it disappears.

I arrive on Sai Yeung Choi South Street in Mong Kok just before 8pm and the street is brightly floodlit. There are shops four or more stories high on either side of the road. I negotiate the crowds and sales stands that fill the middle of this temporarily pedestrianised street. The humid air buzzes with noise and light. 2 Goods sits above the Adidas store. I turn into the doorway, edging past a woman and her small sales stand. 2 Goods is on the second floor. The stairwell and small landing are plastered with flyers and posters from FM Theatre Power’s many shows. The long, narrow shop is full, 20–30 young people sit on the floor and a small band are starting on a low platform in front of the window. After the band Yukko, who designed most of the t-shirts and ran the shop, gets up on stage and does an emotional speech. Mo explains in English: there are many memories in the shop, they often rehearsed here or would be here before or after productions, they did everything to fit it out, decorate and run it. Setting it up in 2008 was one of the hardest times for the company and now deciding to close it is also the hardest. (Research journal 10-08-2012)

2 Goods was set up in another hard time, when public criticism of the company’s street performance and rumours circulating about them in a popular online chat forum meant morale was low and contracts for workshops and projects were hard to secure. They needed a new focus and new source of income, so they opened a shop:

**Fung Sai Kuen:** And then 2008 to 2009 nearly all the outside jobs for FMTP stop. So it's a very hard time. We start 2 Goods because that is the best moment to build something up, because we have no workshops to teach and no money to do the performances at the theatre. (Kuen 19-09-2012)

2 Goods was more than a retail outlet. The shop was the base for their street theatre work, a rehearsal space, a venue for public performances and events, useful storage and a social hub. Furthermore, as Wong Yee Man explains, the t-shirts are not just produced to generate income:

**Wong Yee Man:** ...they use the message shown on the t-shirts; it is another kind of... A way to join arts and life; another way to, to express their feelings, to express their ideas. (Yee Man 08-10-2012)

In my second week, I help wrap endless boxes of t-shirts in plastic, carry them down to the street, into a van and up a narrow concrete staircase. In a day and a night almost everything is moved to FM Theatre Power's studio theatre, the Drama Factory. Situated in an industrial building in Tai Kok Shui, the Drama Factory is surrounded by metal workshops. The rent in this area is just affordable. It used to be a very cheap neighbourhood, popular with artists. On my second visit to the studio with Bonnie, she points out the smart new blocks sprouting up amongst the low, grey factory buildings:

She grimaces. The government became aware that there were many artists based in the area and have started a development plan supposed to support them, but actually the new buildings will be too expensive for most of those already here, many find their rents are going up as the area gets developed. This also has an impact on small traditional businesses in the area. (Research journal 26-09-2012)

Fitted out by company members, the Drama Factory is a multi-purpose space: a venue for music and theatre performances; a space for rehearsals, storage and office work. It is sometimes home to members of FM Theatre Power in the ongoing struggle to balance personal economic needs with the desire to keep the company going. It accommodates visiting theatre companies with whom FMTP collaborate, including the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Drama Factory supports and sustains FM Theatre Power. It is an important asset but it must also be sustained, covering the rent is probably FM Theatre Power's primary economic concern.

During the two months that I was visiting, members of FM Theatre Power could be found creating performances in busy shopping streets, universities, a Family Services Centre, the roof of a 58 floor private tower block, in a family's apartment on the 38<sup>th</sup> floor of a public housing block, on trains and stations, on YouTube, in Civic Centres, in school classrooms, in halls and libraries, in an artist's village in Taipei and on stage in the City Hall. Other kinds of performance were taking place online, on t-shirts, billboards and banners across the city. All of this was organised from laptop computers and over mobile phones, in cars, under umbrellas during a cyclone, in apartments, in the studio, in cafes, from auditoriums and dressing rooms.

Schechner (2003) analyses the qualities of spaces built to house performance, particularly ritual, sport and theatre, that differentiate them from the everyday spaces of offices, factories and homes. He suggests that performance spaces are not used continuously but are opened to the public only for special events and occasions. Such spaces are “often economically non-self-supporting” (Schechner, 2003, p. 14). In Schechner’s (2003) analysis of the structural elements of a performance activity, the built spaces it takes place in, “the money, services, and products” it generates, are not part of that performance (p. 13). For Schechner the spaces constructed for performance structurally enhance the separation of performance from everyday life. In doing so, such spaces can enhance “social function” of performance to affirm or unify, but inhibit the potential for more critical engagements (Schechner, 2003, p. 14).

The performance spaces created by FM Theatre Power are anomalous and multi-functional. They are spaces through which the company participate in the relentless, globalised capitalist economy of the city. They are spaces that are continually reinvented as material conditions change – 2 Goods is now an online shop. They are spaces that are layered and porous, confusing any real or symbolic separation of performance from everyday activity and economic imperatives. From Gibson-Graham’s postcapitalist perspective, looking at where FM Theatre Power perform makes visible their multiple economic relationships and “hybrid identities” (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 74). Rather than seeing organisations and practices as produced by “mechanistic [economic] logics”, then, it is possible to “locate the ethical [political, pedagogical and aesthetic] decisions that are made within the organization” around each relationship (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 74). With this in mind, I now want to examine FM Theatre Power’s relationships with two different kinds of performance spaces in Hong Kong, bringing to the fore how these relationships are negotiated.

Somewhat unusually for applied theatre and people’s theatre, FM Theatre Power regularly perform in formal theatre spaces:

**Mok:** It may be referred to as a kind of people’s theatre group that does a lot of theatre in, inside, you know, the regular theatres, the proscenium theatres... (Mok and Estella 18-09-2012).

Space for performance has been a longstanding issue for theatre makers in Hong Kong. This is apparent in many narratives of Hong Kong’s cultural development, which centralise the creation of built spaces for performance. Lilley (1998) observes, for example, how “[g]enerally, the construction of the Urban Council’s City Hall in 1962 is posited as the beginning of Hong Kong’s cultural life” (p. 57). Although performance spaces exist prior to this, including Yau Ma Tei Theatre built in 1930, narratives tend to focus on an era of state-driven development of cultural centres and arts spaces from the 1960s onwards (Abbas, 1997; Wong & Chan, 2007). The building of Cultural Centre in 1989 is seen to mark the endpoint of this era, leaving Hong Kong with a “surplus of venues” (Lilley, 1998, p. 58). However, development continued throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s with the opening and refurbishment of arts spaces throughout the city and in the Northern Territories (Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2013). With the

exception of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Academy of Performing Arts, Hong Kong's cultural venues are all managed by civil servants in the LCSD (Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2013). In 2013 construction work started on the West Kowloon Cultural District. This multi-billion dollar, government subsidised project will create a new "cultural quarter for the city" located on the waterfront in Yau Ma Tei with 17 new arts and cultural venues (West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, 2012). The cost of land/rent in Hong Kong makes it almost impossible to run a commercially viable independent art space (Chin & Yun, 2013).

After an intense get-in at the Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre, I go for lunch with Banky and Yukko:

Banky talks about how the theatre in Hong Kong has a thin history because of the colonial government just wanting to manage the people. The oldest theatre here is just a few decades old. He is critical of the way the government positioned theatres in the civic centres alongside food markets, to him this does not seem to value theatre. It feels just like a utilitarian offering made to occupy and pacify the community. (Research journal 24-09-2012)

In Hong Kong performance venues are in no way neutral spaces cut off from everyday life. They are contested sites in fraught debates about cultural identity in Hong Kong (Chin & Yun, 2013). For Banky, these spaces evoke a 'thin history', and are written through with a complex cultural and political economy. This reflects Abbas's (1997), theory about the relationship between Hong Kong's cultural forms, including its architecture, and the city's changing cultural space, which he describes as "a more complex kind of colonial space produced by the unclear breaks and unclear connections between imperialism and globalism" (p. 3). Abbas (1997) proposes that such spaces are a "concrete abstraction" of this complex and changing arrangement (p. 10). From this perspective, Hong Kong's performance spaces are part of the "material support" of political and economic imaginaries (Abbas, 1997, p. 65). From my research experience and interviews, many artists perceive the entire state-controlled arts infrastructure as the 'material support' of the colonial imaginary (Louis Yu 26-09-2012). For Louis Yu, then, the West Kowloon Cultural District is a deliberate break with the Hong Kong theatre sector's colonial past:

**Louis Yu:** So we are not creating civic centres, we're not creating community centres for a very wide range of activities, we are creating cultural venues for artists, for arts organisations, we have a more narrow artistic definition. (Louis Yu 26-09-2012)

For many, however, this 'break' is in fact a rewiring of the arts infrastructure around the imaginary of global cultural profile and economic growth (Chin & Yun, 2013; Davis, 2013). Hong Kong theatre-maker, manager and researcher Lynn Yau (2012) adds a cautionary note to Yu's optimistic vision. She suggests that Hong Kong "is on the cusp of a positive crisis in the arts", clarifying that in Chinese the "term for "crisis" comprises two words – "danger" (危 wei) and "opportunity" (機 ji)" (p. 69). With the financial and symbolic investment being made in the West Kowloon Cultural District development, Yau wonders whether Hong Kong will take this opportunity to maximise theatre's potential to "locate other knowledges" or just create a cultural district that reproduces economic knowledge fitting only the pursuit of monetary gain (p. 2).

During my fieldwork FM Theatre Power staged three plays in state-managed venues, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* at City Hall, and *Call Me Princess* and *Hi Education* at Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre. Based on their ethos and particular way of working, these productions could be understood as politically and pedagogically charged aesthetic engagements with the imaginaries materialised by these formal theatre spaces. They still served an economic purpose. Based on the positive response to the first run of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, it is hoped that some profit can be generated from ticket sales at the larger venue of City Hall. The production is also 'an action', deliberately programmed in the lead up to the elections to present its dystopian vision of Hong Kong in 2017.

**Wong Yee Man:** The last show, the Anarchist's Death, this is related to the society and... directly about the government, how we think about the government... (Yee Man 08-10-2012)

The production is FM Theatre Power's response to this important local issue and invites critique. The spatial organisation of the theatre may well function to 'separate' the audience from everyday life and affirm the status quo (Schechner, 2003). The critical potential of FM Theatre Power's production, however, is based on creating the experience of an extended connection between the performance and the governmental status quo that this separated space materialises, with the infrastructure which financially and physically supports the audience and the production (S. Jackson, 2011).

I help paint and construct many large wooden frames that comprise the scenery for the show:

Yukko asks whether I am good at carefully cutting things out. She needs to cut large card and carefully stick two parts together to make squares of 43x43 inches. These will be painted/drawn on each night by the Art Teacher who plays one of the policemen, and sold after each performance, so they have to be 'perfect'. (Research journal 10-09-2012)

This moment in the show confuses me. It happens in the second act when the journalist is describing the trajectory of the anarchist's fall from the window. As she speaks directly to the audience, the policeman removes his hat and starts to draw on the framed canvas. The drawing is different each night; an improvised response to the same scripted speech. The drawing is then auctioned to the audience. Still confused a few months after the end of my research, I ask Banky to explain:

**Banky:** White paper can be changed to anything. It represents possibility. The white paper is an empty space... pure. Everything starts from this. Anybody can become an artist even a policeman. We sell it because it is the only one thing that is unique, not repeated, in each show. We sell the painting not only because of fundraising; we also want people to think about the 'value' of life. (Banky 09-04-2013)

Banky likens the blank page to the modernist empty space, a pure space of possibility (Brook, 1990). Perhaps ironically, this space is filled and sold to the highest bidder. This gesture is intended 'not only' to raise funds but to raise questions about the value of life (the death of the Anarchist) and art.

Space in Hong Kong has been described as disappearing (Abbas, 1997). L. Law (2002) challenges this theory, highlighting the “dynamic potential” of public space in Hong Kong to become a site of democratic politics through processes of “appropriation” and redefinition (p. 1629). This reflects the aims of much of FMTP’s street performance:

**Mo:** So, doing street performance is about trying to regain the public space for the citizens and we are, as artists, trying to create spaces for performance, yes. (Mo 04-10-2012)

No street performance took place while I was researching with the company. Instead, I had hands on experience of another form of intervention. About a week after my first sighting of FM Theatre Power’s banner outside the university campus I find myself being shown how to replace it:

We walk down a spiralling roadway to the East Gate and find a low metal fence along the road, opposite the bus stop, to hang the banner on. Bonnie tells me that some of this space is reserved for the election banners, and indeed these take up most of the space. I smile at the juxtaposition of the election banners, with their smiling, suited candidates, and the banner for *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* with Mok and Banky scowling and Mo standing proudly behind them. (Research journal 14-08-2012)

As well as being famous (and infamous) for their street performance, FM Theatre Power are known for being the first company in Hong Kong to make use of commercial advertising. They were the first company to use advertising space in bus stops and the MTR (Hong Kong’s rail network) and large billboards in busy shopping centres (Louis Yu 26-09-2012; Mok and Estella 18-09-2012). As well as pioneering commercial marketing practices, FM Theatre Power also engage in what Bonnie describes as guerrilla marketing (Bonnie 28-09-2012). They relentlessly hang large banners around the city, negotiating permission when they can or just accepting the fines.

Many forms of FM Theatre Power’s practice would be recognised as applied theatre, including their forum theatre, Playback and Playforward theatre, community-based projects and theatre education performances. From my fieldwork and discussions with the company, I question whether other elements of their practice, the t-shirts, books and other items they produce to promote or sell their work, might be forms of applied performance. For Phelan (1993) documentation and other reproducible material elements threaten the ontology of performance, commodifying and drawing it into economic cycles. Subsequent theorists, including Schneider (2008), Forsythe (2011) and Longley (2011) contest this view, suggesting that some kinds of documentation are ‘performative’, coexisting with the live moment of performance. FM Theatre Power consider their use of performative objects, including their marketing materials, as part of their performance practice. This is reflected in the time, energy, critical and creative attention that goes into producing these objects and the functions they play in the life of the company. They cannot be reduced to commodities. Rather than transgressing or resisting economic determinants and cycles of reproduction, however, these objects operate in ambiguous ways, potentially calling into question Hong Kong’s political and cultural economies.

Banky and Mo describe FM Theatre Power as a 'platform' (Banky and Mo 28-9-2012, Mo 04-10-2012). To a certain extent this platform, like the blank canvas, is conceived of as an 'empty space', drawing aesthetic ideas from Peter Brook (1990), Augusto Boal (1995), Playback Theatre and Chinese art (Banky and Mo 28-09-2012). This 'platform' is also a relational space, it is contingent on "a network of systems that both support and constrain human activity" (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 104). S. Jackson (2011) compares art practices described as 'institutional critique' and Brechtian aesthetics, suggesting that both involve exposing the structures that 'support' an artwork or performance (pp. 105–106). In both staged productions and other performative interventions FM Theatre Power make Brechtian "theatrical gestures" that expose their institutional and economic conditions of support (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 105). Like some of the practices of institutional critique described by S. Jackson, FM Theatre Power's performances enact a desire to fit in, to be recognised within existing institutional structures, but also a refusal to fit that defamiliarises those structures (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 120). Through other performative interventions FM Theatre Power potentially "trouble" how particular spaces are constructed and used (Mackey & Whybrow, 2007, p. 5). Difficult to place, these interventions generate a sense of play with the visual surface of the city, enjoyment through visual humour and surprising juxtaposition, also curiosity, anger, dialogue and critique.

## **Occupying multiple sites in a diverse economy**

Mundrawala (2007) asks about the opportunities available to artists who become dependent on funders whose agendas conflict with their own political values. We might extend this question to include the options for artists who find themselves participating in a capitalist economy that conflicts with their political and aesthetic values. As suggested in Chapter 2, the limited options on offer seem to be opt out, or be incorporated in. Based on FM Theatre Power's practices, I draw on Gibson-Graham's (2006b) concept of a 'community economy', "[m]ovements that are resocializing economic relations" (p. 81). By 'resocialising', Gibson-Graham means attending to the political and ethical implications of economic relationships, relationships that connect into wider network of interdependencies. In this conception of 'community economy', community is not idealised or premised on the notion of a group of fully constituted individuals that hold in common a particular identity or place. Nor does it limit its definition to localised, 'alternative' economic practices. Instead, building a community economy is about "making explicit the sociality that is always present, and thus constituting the various forms and practices of interdependence as matters for reflection, discussion, negotiation, and action" (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 88). In this chapter, I have highlighted FM Theatre Power's diverse economic relationships and how these relationships are experienced and managed (navigated/negotiated/grappled with). These relationships do not necessarily compromise the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics or ethics of their practice; rather it is through the extension of the company's ethos into these relationships that they are negotiated and navigated. In highlighting their diverse economies, my intention is not to undermine FM Theatre Power's claim to be independent from the financial economy, but to look at how the company are negotiating ways of being interdependent. For FM Theatre Power, there was a value in being a difficult fit. In appearing to, but not quite, fitting into existing systems and explanatory frames they are sometimes effective in calling those systems and frames into question.

## Chapter 8 Discussion

When I leave,

I leave with more questions.

Briar hugs me and heads to meet Caitlin, leaving me in the lounge at Wellington airport. I feel like this end has come suddenly. I have more questions than I started with. I want to call Stephen and ask:

Why is applied theatre funding such an emotional process? Is it just to do with job insecurity? Can small companies ever really choose which funders to start relationships with? How much do they take possible conflicts of interest into account? What trade-offs does he think are acceptable?

My original research questions are fuzzy, faded. I have no clarity. (Research journal 30-03-2012)

When I leave,

I leave with a different perspective.

I sit on the floor of the drama studio feeling more confused than ever after an hour of talking through the research questions with Paul and Max. Is this the end? From the discussion I am left with eight pieces of paper with marker pen words on them. “Is this what you expected?” Max asks. “No”, I am honest, “it is somewhere off to the side of what I expected”. We talk about why. “Focusing on individual companies”, Paul says, “is too localised”. In Kenya, poverty means the challenges of funding will not be at all the same as for a company in New York – what are the essential issues that transcend or cut across? To them, the research needs the multi-sited-ness. But has working with them led my thinking in another direction? It feels like the end of a supervision meeting – in a way it has been – using their expertise to think through this ‘third thing’. (Research journal 25-07-2012)

When I leave,

I leave with a new name.

At the end of the night saying good bye is an extended process. Mario says it is a Chinese tradition to walk with the person who is leaving as far as possible, parents will walk with their departing children to the edge of the village. We get to Banky’s car (a bright pink Mini), he should go now, but in the end he keeps walking with us. Mo suddenly asks whether I have been given a Chinese name yet. I say no. They discuss giving me a name. They agree on the Chinese word for jasmine flowers, which sounds phonetically a little like ‘Molly’. They joke that I will now have to start a revolution. Mario draws the characters for me and signs the piece of paper. Mo, Kuen and Bonnie help me catch a red minibus, instructing the driver where I need to get off. I watch them continue talking together as the bus pulls away.

(Research journal 06-10-2012)

[CAP. From multiple research journal entries]

The three episodes above are endings but also beginnings. Endings that were followed by thirteen months of transcription, analysis, reading, writing, sending writing to supervisors and participants, receiving feedback, re-reading, and rewriting. Now, I start this chapter aiming to reach another end, to confidently articulate the significant findings of this study. Yet, just as I have written the six chapters that precede it, writing is itself a process of finding, of coming to know something new, or in a new way (L. Richardson, 2001, p. 35). The first part of this chapter, then, returns briefly to aspects of my methodology to consider the meaning of ‘finding’ when working with a practised methodology. I then bring each of the three

research questions back into focus. So far the structure of this thesis has followed the ‘step-wise’ manner in which the fieldwork was conducted, juxtaposing three ethnographic narratives about seemingly unrelated theatre companies (Horst, 2009). In these narratives I address the research questions by zooming in and out of the practice taking place in each research site and my looking critically with research participants at issues of mutual concern (Marcus, 2007; Nicolini, 2009). The aim of this chapter is to identify connections that emerge from looking across the three narratives, but also to highlight where disjuncture exists (Weis et al., 2009). In conclusion, I consider whether the findings I suggest here meet the three markers of validity outlined in Chapter 3: resonance, reflexivity and repercussions.

## On finding

A few weeks ago at the International Symposium on Applied Theatre someone asked me ‘So, what have you found out?’ ‘Well... I have written some narratives about...’ His look suggested that this was not the answer he was looking for. I changed the subject. What was this moment telling me as a researcher? That I should be able to produce significant nuggets of knowledge on demand? What notion of ‘finding’ is appropriate for this study; I need to write about that. I need to know what ‘findings’ are, before I can discuss my findings. (Research journal 02-02-2013)

The reflective process implicit in applied theatre produces and uses ‘knowledge’ in the everyday motion of practice, and may or may not necessarily be identifiable by research methods that are discursively constructed... (Hughes et al., 2011, pp. 193–194)

Practised research produces knowledge through a responsive interrelationship between “research, theory and practice” while making explicit the limits of all knowledge claims (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 207). ‘Finding’, then, does not mean discovering something about practice that was already there waiting to be known, it involves “making something” (p. 207). In the case of this research, what has been made are three ethnographic narratives “that may (or may not) open up new perspectives and questions of relevance to the people and contexts it works with and in” (p. 207). In making something, a practised methodology proceeds with awareness that the messiness and “multiplicities of practice” cannot be ‘fixed or framed’ (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 207). This study argues that this applies as much to organisational practices as to activities that might more typically be recognised as applied theatre. In this study, I have used different forms of Creative Analytic Practice to create multi-vocal narratives conveying some sense of the day-to-day messiness of practice. I also use Creative Analytic Practice to make the construction of those narratives visible. These narratives do not claim to represent the ‘truth’ of the research sites, participants or practice, but to present multiple, critical perspectives on topics of concern to the participants and researcher.

Returning to my thinking in Chapter 1, this research argues that while companies such as ATCo and C&T identify as ‘applied theatre companies’, this does not necessarily indicate that the term is being fixed to a particular way of working. This study has found that they engage in an ongoing, practice-based process of making and remaking, testing and questioning the boundaries of their own work. The three theatre companies are “epistemic communities – in which ‘research’, broadly conceived, is integral to the function of these communities” (Holmes & Marcus, 2008, p. 82). The research participants are already engaged in

knowledge practices. Therefore, this study approached them as “epistemic partners” and they have played a key role in shaping the focus and imaginary of the three ethnographic narratives (Holmes & Marcus, 2008, pp. 82–83). While the findings discussed in this chapter are drawn from those chapters, I do not claim that they represent the companies’ perspectives. The purpose of this discussion chapter is not to make consensual, conclusive statements about the practices of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power, but to continue a dialogue with them. So, I share the new perspectives and questions I have about the economies of applied theatre following my critical engagement with their practice.

## **The economies of applied theatre**

### **A question of ontology**

I started with a question. I approached three theatre companies asking: ‘What are the economies of applied theatre?’ In looking for answers to this question, I have found a better understanding of what my question is asking. First, it is a question that invites a critical examination of the economics of applied theatre practice: how work gets funded and financed and the effects this has on what gets produced (in terms of both the practice and the subjectivities of practitioners and participants). Subsequent to this study, I suggest that such an examination cannot take place without explicitly considering the ontology of ‘the economy’.

The approach of this research has been informed by the ideas and analyses of feminist economists. Feminist economics is a distinct area of economic inquiry, but includes a range of theoretical approaches (Hewitson, 1999). Running through this diverse body of work is the critique of assumptions and values implicit within the discipline of economics and within specific economic theories. Much of this critique operates at the ontological level. For example, feminist economists challenge the assumption that economic models and theories are objectively abstracted from everyday lived experience. They argue that different economic theories produce particular subject positions and certain kinds of economic practices. Furthermore, many feminist economists question the taken-for-granted reality of ‘the economy’, the belief that it exists as a natural phenomenon and that economic practices are best governed by certain natural laws.

Theorising about the economies of applied theatre in relation to ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power’s practice led me to the work of Gibson-Graham (2006b), an academic partnership, whose body of work has been concerned with political and economic transformation. Their research intervenes in the way the economy is represented and practised, including

the tendency to theorize economy as a stable and self-reproducing structure impervious to the proliferative and desultory wanderings of everyday politics; the tendency to constitute “the” economy as a singular capitalist system or space rather than as a zone of cohabitation and contestation among multiple economic forms. (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxi)

They argue that there is an ethical imperative to find an “ontology of a politics of possibility” when researching economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxvii). Such an ontology opens up the possibility of finding not just further evidence of how applied theatre practices are produced or determined by funding relationships and wider economic arrangements, but also possibilities for action.

For Gibson-Graham, transforming capitalism requires more than the strategy of ‘the emperor’s new clothes’, humiliating the capitalist economy by exposing it as a discursive construct will not in itself bring about the downfall of socially unjust economic structures and practices:

This economy is not simply an ideological concept susceptible to intellectual debunking, but a materialization that participates in organizing the practices and processes that surround it, while at the same time being formatted and maintained by them. (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxxiv)

The anti-essentialist ontology of a ‘politics of possibility’ offers the grounds for “un-thinking economic determinism”, making it possible to recognise the diverse economic identities, dynamics and practices of theatre companies that apply theatre (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxx; 2008). It would be very possible to conduct a critical analysis of how the practices of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power are re-producing or are unwittingly contaminated by (neoliberal) capitalist relations of production. However, this does not recognise the multiple ways in which these three companies relate to local and global economies and the ways in which they manage these relationships through both creative and organisational practices.

### **A question of agency**

A question about the economies of applied theatre is, then, always a question about agency. Throughout this study I argue that not all economic activity can be reduced to the actions of the individualised ‘rational economic man’ or *homo economicus* (Hewitson, 1999; Nelson, 1995). Feminist economics have shown how neoclassical economics is based on the conception of a universalised, individualised agent. This economic agent is self-interested, making calculated engagements with the world with the intent to create maximum utility and profit. This notion of the economic agent as self-interested, motivated primarily by monetary gain, is implicit in descriptions of theatre groups as ‘empire builders’ or ‘pseudo-mercenaries’, and in accounts of theatre companies ‘commodifying’ their practice as they compete against each for scarce funding or a share of ‘the market’ (S. J. Ahmed, 2002). From this study, I argue that this conception of the economic agent does not explain why ATCo, a for-profit company, often behaves like a not-for-profit; why, if C&T’s business model was driven solely by the need to generate income, they do not direct their work to social and institutional contexts where they could more easily generate income; why FM Theatre Power continue to spend most excess income on publicity when they know that it does not translate into increased ticket sales. Furthermore, each of the companies in this study tends to enter into financial and funding relationships with the expectation that such relationships can be negotiated, rather than assuming that they must be submitted to, or subverted. I am not suggesting that *homo economicus* be replaced with a similarly individualised, humanistic hero figure acting only in the coherent interests of others, in the pursuit of social and environmental justice. In this thesis, I draw on the work of Barad (2003, 2007) and Keevers et

al. (2008, 2012) to explore the idea that organisational agency is distributed between human and non-human actors, drawing attention to the role played by nonhuman participants in the production of organisational practices and realities. As discussed below, I also suggest that multiple motivations can coexist within economic relationships, meaning that their implications and effects cannot be assumed.

### **A question of value, labour and exchange: ambiguous economic narratives**

Finally, asking about the economies of applied theatre means looking not only at the economics of applied theatre but also beyond the 'economic'. I am not suggesting that a space exists that is outside of the economy. Another way of saying this might be that there is a need to pay critical attention to the aspects of applied theatre that do not fit dominant economic narratives and to what those aspects reveal about its economies. Throughout this thesis, then, I have drawn attention to the ways in which value, labour and exchange in applied theatre both fit into and exceed economic explanations (Hughes et al., 2011).

The question of how value is defined and designated is central to understanding the economies of applied theatre. Generating income is one imperative experienced by ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power. The purpose of this study was to explore the complex ways in which each theatre company negotiated between their aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical values and this demand to finance their work. With each company I examined how the need to demonstrate economic value affected the dynamic of the relationship between aesthetic and social value in their practice. A prime concern is that one will suffer at the expense of the other depending on the economic base of the work (Balfour, 2009; Mundrawala, 2009). This research suggests that such a 'trade-off' is not inevitable, that applied theatre companies find ways to manage multiple demands, allowing different value systems to coexist.

In all three narratives it is apparent that managing applied theatre involves finding ways to respond simultaneously to multiple demands. Applied theatre companies, then, might be understood as sites where competing 'performative challenges' converge (McKenzie, 2001). For McKenzie (2001), the twentieth century is characterised by the nomadic power of performance, which operates through multiple, overlapping evaluative grids or matrices that produce multiple, competing demands to perform (pp. 187–189). He suggests that trade-offs, or compromises, between different values are necessitated to satisfice these shifting, conflicting demands. In Chapter 5 I suggested that managing applied theatre amidst these competing performative demands might be understood as the process of making compromises, deciding which value gets traded off against the other. Certainly practitioners in ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power experience the challenge of responding to competing demands. But, following my fieldwork, I question whether the result is always a compromise.

McKenzie acknowledges that the values demanded by the different grids/matrices (effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy) are "incommensurable" (p. 115). However, he suggests the result of negotiations between these demands is a 'trade-off', or compromise. In contrast, feminist researchers have drawn on the theory of Radin (1996) to argue that in decision-making situations, incommensurable values might

coexist (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Differing from McKenzie, Radin suggests that ‘trading off’ involves an assumption of ‘commensurability’ (p. 11). Radin argues that if values are not commensurable, then we cannot conclude that in responding to competing demands one value is chosen over the other, that a compromise is made (pp. 11–12):

from the fact of choice nothing about the commensurability of values can be inferred. The nature of an action, its meaning, is simply the conventional understanding of it, and people in our culture do not conceive of these kinds of choices as “trades”. (Radin, 1996, p. 12)

Subsequent to this study, I agree in part with McKenzie. The three companies experience financial and funding relationships as processes through which different values must be brought into negotiation. Sometimes a compromise is made, sometimes conflicting values coexist and sometimes a generative interrelationship is produced, but a trade-off is not inevitable. Following with Gibson-Graham (2006b, 2008) and other feminist economists, I suggest that there is a risk that the narrative of compromise or ‘trade-off’ will become the only understanding of financial and funding relationships, limiting the critical attention given to other kinds of negotiations.

In Chapter 5, for example, I suggest that social/instrumental and aesthetic value can ‘flow together’ (Froggett, 2012). ATCo’s negotiations with CYF did not involve trading one off against the other, but working closely with the funder so that they understood how the two are always interdependent. With C&T, a key question the company were addressing was where the ‘value’ of its DPs is located. The conception of the DPs as intellectual property that can be individually licenced might well be dismissed as commodified practice, produced for/as if to be exchanged for money (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2008). For C&T, however, the value of the DPs cannot be reduced to exchange value. C&T operates simultaneously within multiple ‘evaluative grids’. However, rather than ‘satisficing’, C&T exploits the means to generate value in one ‘grid’, that of organisational performance, to generate greater value in another, that of cultural performance (McKenzie, 2001). In other instances, such as the painting auction within FM Theatre Power’s production of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, the valuation process is “disavowed” in a moment of performed critique (S. Jackson, 2011). Testing the limits of how different arts practices are valued within societal and bureaucratic norms is almost in built into FM Theatre Power’s way of working.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that these negotiations do not take place on an even terrain. What each company brings to the relationship, their history, status, networks of support (board members, advocates), were important factors that effected the negotiations of each company. Furthermore, as the landscape changes, the dynamics of that relationship changes and a renegotiation take place. But, rather than assuming a particular relational dynamic, such as a trade-off between aesthetic quality and social utility, it is necessary to attend to the differences made by particular negotiations as relationships are reconfigured over time (Barad, 2007; Keevers et al., 2012).

Looking at the practices of companies that apply theatre, such as ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power, it can be difficult to make a clear distinction between ‘performance activity’ and ‘productive work’ (McAvinchey, 2013; Schechner, 2003). In Chapter 2, I discuss how Schechner (2003) makes this distinction by arguing that the “forms of operation” of performance are separate from the dominant economic conditions that determine modes of production in other industries. The power of performance as a “vital part of human life” comes from its separation from everyday life (Schechner, 2003, p. 13). In Chapters 2 and 7, I question whether this is the case for the performance activities of theatre companies that apply theatre where, typically, the ‘form of operation’ develops through deliberate interrelationship with everyday settings. This study suggests that in different ways, the creative and organisational forms of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power develop as they participate in particular educational, community and institutional contexts, and also with funders and other economic relationships. A central argument, developed over the three ethnographic narratives, is that these relationships are ‘part of’ the performance practice, shaping, although not determining, its forms of operation.

Drawing on S. Jackson’s (2011) examination of socially engaged arts practices, I suggest that ATCo’s contractual relationship with CYF is part of the supportive ‘infrastructure’ of Everyday Theatre. The ‘form’ of Everyday Theatre emerges through this interdependent, mutually supportive relationship (S. Jackson, 2011). C&T’s operation as a business is entwined with the participatory performance practice it creates; the two mutually inform each other. I draw on Saal (2007a, 2007b) to suggest that C&T works creatively with the vernacular of the creative industries and a dramatised society to create interdependent pedagogic-aesthetic and organisational forms. In Chapter 7, I draw on debates about the ontology of performance to suggest that many of the materials produced by FM Theatre Power, t-shirts, books, even marketing materials, are not simply commodities *generated by* their performance practice, but part of that performance practice (Longley, 2011; Phelan, 1993). These materials produce income as they participate in economic exchange, but they also produce meanings and effects that exceed this cycle, intervening critically in social, political and economic systems in Hong Kong. This study suggests that sometimes, the ‘power’ of applied drama and performance practices might emerge from, or be contingent on interdependent relationships with funders and wider economic arrangements.

The ‘work’ of the three companies cannot be understood strictly as ‘productive’ work/labour in that it is not *driven* by the demand to produce economic value. This is most obvious for C&T and FM Theatre Power. As nonprofits, any financial surplus generated is redistributed within the company. Even in ATCo, a for-profit company, Peter and Briar, the company directors, suggest that they currently reinvest most surplus income back into the company and its employees. The prevailing view, however, is that any economic imperative, even if not profit driven, will affect the aesthetic-pedagogic forms, political possibility and ethics of intervention in applied theatre (S. J. Ahmed, 2002, pp. 214–215; Hughes & Ruding, 2009). Generating income is a demand experienced by each company, but it is one of many imperatives. This study questions whether this demand necessarily dominates all others. In their examination of paid caregiving, Nelson and Folbre (2000) question the dichotomy of work for money (self

interest) and work for 'love' (altruism). They suggest that financial motivations can coexist with concern for others and for the quality of care. If this view is accepted, the focus of analysis shifts to specific factors within economic relationships that affect practice and to the immediate and wider effects of these changes.

McAvinchey's (2013) conception of the work of practitioners involved in community-based performance as "unusual labour" is also useful here (p. 366). She highlights how, like other artistic practices, applied performance involves 'immaterial labour'. As mentioned in Chapter 6, immaterial labour produces something other than material goods, for example: processes, ideas, experiences or services. Drawing on Rideout (2008) and Bishop (2008), McAvinchey examines the way in which community-based arts projects depend on the immaterial labour of artists, their ability, for example, to create "social relations and communication between themselves and the participants" (p. 376). She highlights the interweaving of productive labour and creative practice in applied settings, and the commitments of time and emotion given by artists who invest much of themselves, their subjectivities, into the work (p. 368). Like Nelson and Folbre, McAvinchey reveals the complex values and motivations that coexist in the work of practitioners that apply theatre. For McAvinchey, immaterial labour, as the production of relationships and communication, is integral to the success of applied theatre as an affective, relational experience for participants and practitioners. Also, within contemporary relations of production, the immaterial labour of artists also contributes to the economic value of such practice (p. 372). As Nicholson (2011b) highlights, the aims of applied theatre practices now seem to converge with those of an economy that depends on the production of creative, reflexive, self-managing worker subjectivities. This applies to participants, but also to those employed, or more often contracted to work in this area. While theories of caring work and immaterial labour make it possible to acknowledge that applied theatre work is not necessarily motivated by monetary gain, arguments that the cultivation of aesthetic and affective motivations to work are part of the condition of contemporary capitalism cannot be ignored (Finlayson, 2011; McRobbie, 2002). I return to this point again below. For now I want to highlight how ambiguities that emerge from the analyses of Folbre and Nelson and McAvinchey offer a critical perspective on caring and performance practices without closing down a space of possibility.

The above discussions of value and work/labour support the existing proposal that relationships in applied theatre can both reproduce and exceed economic cycles of exchange (Nicholson, 2005). In applied theatre there has been much critical attention paid to the nature of the "theatrical transactions" between practitioners and participants, to issues of power and participation in different forms of practice (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p. 10). This research addressed concerns about the effects that economic transaction between donor/sponsor/contractor and applied theatre company have on the theatrical transactions between participants and practitioners. Relationships with participants and communities can be instrumentalised by the need to demonstrate to a donor or client 'value' that is commensurable with their investment. Above, I argued that this situation does not necessarily lead to a compromise being made, to instrumentalisation. Instead, I suggest that theatre companies pay attention to the effects of different relationships and look for ways to reconfigure transactions with participants, funders/contractors as they

change over time. In the case of ATCo, I suggest that managing with commitment to a set of values that placed the interests of vulnerable young people and disadvantaged communities at the heart of its work enabled the company to sustain the complexity of its aesthetic-pedagogic practice. This approach respected the wisdom and expertise of young people and communities, creating a space in which multiple perspectives could be explored and multiple possibilities considered. The effort (care and investment of the self) needed to sustain this approach within an increasingly constraining contractual relationship, however, meant that little time, energy or money was left for experimenting with other possible theatrical forms and relationships. The challenge for ATCo was to find a way to reconfigure its contractual relationship so that the communities, schools, and classes the company visited could be involved in more meaningful ways than as recipients of a generic service designated as ‘good for them’ by the state. C&T is committed to creating inclusive, democratic spaces where young people are put in control as co-creators through drama and technology. However, as highlighted in Chapter 6, the marketing tactics of global brands now converge in many ways with C&T’s approach to applied theatre. Both make use of the participatory possibilities of Web 2.0 to actively involve young people in creating meanings, imagery and ‘products’. The challenge for C&T is to find new ways of exploiting the techniques and methods of commercial cultural production through drama and performance, to create a space for critique. For FM Theatre Power the effects of the grant from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council were most apparent in their organisational structures and practices. The group is committed to creating a non-hierarchical collective in which, ideally, there was no structural differentiation between paid ‘professionals’ and unpaid ‘participants’. As discussed in Chapter 7 there were always limitations to enacting this ideal. However, the grant from the HKADC required FM Theatre Power to comply with established norms for organisational status, governance and administration. In many ways this challenged established ways of relating and forms of engagement within the company. FM Theatre Power were grappling with how to make the new organisational mode work ‘the FMTP way’.

This study argues for the political and ethical importance of finding ways to write the economies of applied theatre that do not deny the structural forces or material realities of the socio-economic contexts in which practices take place, but presents viable possibilities for finding the “*freedom to act*” (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xxvi). Political and aesthetic freedom in art-making is typically associated with ‘autonomy’ from external demands, whether that be the demands of the market, the state or the pull of social commitment (S. Jackson, 2011). The freedom envisaged by Gibson-Graham, however, is not a freedom from, but within heteronomous relations. Moving on to the second question of this study, then, I consider how examining the relationship between applied theatre practices and local and global economies requires rethinking artistic autonomy and heteronomy.

## **The relationship between local and global economies and the pedagogies, aesthetics, politics and ethics of applied theatre practice**

### **Rethinking artistic autonomy and heteronomy**

Many of the concerns about applied theatre's relationship with local and global economies position economic arrangements and individual donors as external to the process of aesthetic-pedagogic creation, constraining, determining, or contaminating the values and forms of practice from the outside. I suggest that this is implicit in images of applied theatre as "donor driven" (S. J. Ahmed, 2011, p. 6; Mundrawala, 2009, p. 84), or as 'infected' by the social rationale for the arts inherent in the agendas of funders (Balfour, 2009, p. 347). In their critical discussion of the social benefit of the arts, Belfiore and Bennett (2007) identify a tradition in Western/European thought that "the value and importance of the work of art resides firmly in the aesthetic sphere" (p. 145). This is the basis of the argument of 'art for art's sake', which advocates for the autonomy of art from any purpose in the social and economic spheres. From this tradition, two possible relationships emerge, one in which the arts are autonomous or "self-governing", and a second in which the arts are heteronomous or "governed by external rules" (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 15). S. Jackson (2011) highlights how the concept of artistic autonomy is also conceived as a necessary condition for art to be truly critical (p. 50). For theorists including Adorno, any commitment to a social agenda involves a submission to external demands that instrumentalises the aesthetic, blunting its capacity to raise questions about society (S. Jackson, 2011, pp. 49–50). Such ideas contribute to the concern that economic dependency, or even interdependency will compromise the aesthetic freedom and critical capacity of applied theatre.

This study restates the argument that applied theatre does not fit well into a conceptual model, or geometric imaginary, that makes a binary distinction between autonomy and heteronomy. As stated above, the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of applied theatre emphasise the importance of connection with and responsibility to the places and people it works in/with. The 'hybrid' drama and performance practices of applied theatre emerge from interrelationships with the discourses and practices of educational, community and institutional contexts (Nicholson, 2005, p. 2; Thompson, 2006, p. 15). There is a general acceptance, then, of applied theatre's heteronomy, its contingency and interdependency (Nicholson, 2005, p. 167). In spite of the concerns of Rasmussen (2000) discussed in Chapter 1, applied theatre's relationship with social contexts and participants is part of its aesthetic, not external to it. Yet the ideal of autonomy as the necessary condition for critical and aesthetic freedom still tends to be invoked in debates about the effects of funding and financial relationships.

The discourse of artistic autonomy operates in the realm of art criticism, but also in the way theatre companies that apply theatre think about their practice. To some degree, when practitioners in each company talk about managing financial and funding relationships, they suggest some need for autonomy. Peter and Briar set up ATCo as a limited liability company, not a charity, because they did not want to have to defer to the demands of a board. Reflecting on how the company survived the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis, O'Connor (2011) suggests that being able to make quick decisions, rather than

having to continually consult a board, was a key factor. Paul suggests that C&T experiences greater artistic freedom because the majority of its income is generated directly from schools, rather than from grants. This model means that a greater proportion of income is unrestricted, not allocated to specific budget areas (Sylvia 25-05-2012). After evaluating the limitations of the established network model, the new business plan was, in part, designed to generate income that could be more easily directed to researching and developing new DPs, and creating experimental collaborations with schools and other partners. FM Theatre Power suggest that independence from the arts funding system gave them the freedom to follow their own artistic and political ambitions, to challenge dominant political and artistic ideas, to work in ways that challenged social norms and audience expectations. However, this research suggests that a close, critical examination of the day-to-day practice of each company challenges a categorical distinction between autonomy and heteronomy, and the moral and aesthetic assumptions that follow on from this distinction. Even in the examples above, what is expressed is an experience or sense of autonomy or independence, within a wider network of heteronomous relationships. Looking at the economies of applied theatre, its financial, funding and also non-financial supports, as part of the infrastructure of practice moves the critical focus away from the autonomy/heteronomy binary, directing critical attention to the ways in which heteronomous relationships might be managed.

### **Participating in neoliberalism's life support systems**

We spent the weekend at the Fluid States conference. Somewhere between the start of your presentation and the end of Sara Jane Pell's, I started thinking about how it can feel like neoliberalism in the air, everywhere, in everything, rather than an often faltering process in need of life support systems. (Personal communication, email to A. Longley, November 25, 2013)

In the introductory chapter I suggested that this thesis would give some insight into the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis on applied theatre, a crisis seen by many at the time as signalling neoliberalism's fall (N. Klein, 2008). As I researched the political and economic contexts in New Zealand, the UK and Hong Kong, neoliberalism seemed to emerge as a pervasive force. In New Zealand successive reforms of the public sector since the early 1980s are understood as part of a wider aggressive process of neoliberalisation (Maunder, 2013). In the UK, Harvie (2011) suggests, a neoliberal agenda has also become entrenched since the late 1970s. Meanwhile, Hong Kong with the "world's freest economy" is understood by many as neoliberalism in its most "authentic" manifestation (Peck, 2010; Ren, 2010, p. 20). Furthermore, there are common concerns in New Zealand, the UK and Hong Kong with the uneven benefits of neoliberal policy and economics. In each country the gap between rich and poor is seen to be widening, accompanied by increasingly unequal income, health, educational and social outcomes. It started to feel like neoliberalism was in the air, within and across the research sites, pervading everything.

The risk with imagining neoliberalism as 'in the air', is that this imagery reinforces the conception of neoliberalism as an abstract irresistible force, or "ideological atmosphere" (Peck, 2010, p. xi). Academics like Peck (2010) are concerned about conceptions of 'neoliberalism' as either "a global regulatory architecture, imposed from above, or as a metaphor for the ideological air that we all (must) breathe" (p.

xii). Rather than a transcendent system or set of ideas, Peck proposes ‘neoliberalisation’ as a term to describe the contingent, uneven “open-ended and contradictory process of politically assisted market rule” (p. xii). For Peck, approaching neoliberalisation as a ‘project’ constructed and reconstructed by particular individuals and institutions exposes it as fallible, an often faltering, failing compromised process. Gibson-Graham also question neoliberalism’s ascendancy to grand narrative or meta theory. For them, this forecloses the space of possibility by suggesting all economic practices “are likely to be dismissed as capitalism in another guise or as always already coopted” (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 618). These arguments suggest that asking about applied theatre’s relationship to neoliberalism is too generalised and even politically problematic. In contrast, critics such as Hall (2011) argue that giving neoliberalism a “*provisional* conceptual identity”, even an approximated one, is necessary for any kind of opposition to be articulated [emphasis in original] (p. 706). Peck, Gibson-Graham and Hall all acknowledge the ‘hegemony’ of neoliberalism; this does not mean that it is a fixed, dominant world view, but rather that it is a ‘project’ struggling to define the way things are (Hall, 2011, p. 728). This project finds different means of sustaining itself as it adapts to different contexts and times. Such life support systems can be hybrids of contradictory ideas of approaches, rather than the implementation of ‘pure’ neoliberal ideas (Larner & Craig, 2005; Peck, 2010).

Asking about applied theatre’s relationship with neoliberalism, then, is asking about the multiple ways in which applied practices relate to neoliberalism’s life support systems, the material and discursive practices by which projects of neoliberalisation are sustained (Larner & Craig, 2005). This question does not assume that such practices are necessarily ‘unwittingly aligned’ with or ‘always already coopted’ into a neoliberal agenda.

### **Shifting scales of attention: topological engagements within and beyond local contexts**

Attending to the relationship between local and global economies and the politics and ethics of applied theatre is a matter of maintaining critical engagement that shifts between different scales. In Chapter 2 I consider the politics of intention, politics of place and ethics of intervention in applied theatre. I identify O’Connor (2007) and Thompson’s (2011) concern about the risk of applied theatre practices becoming complicit with political agendas that extend well beyond the locality of a particular project. Thompson argues for the political and ethical necessity of having an awareness of the wider context. He suggests that practitioners may need to find ways to engage more critically with institutional, political, economic and discursive practices that extend well beyond the particular sites in which their work takes place (Thompson, 2011, pp. 40–42). From observing the day-to-day organisational practices of ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power, I would add to this the ethical and political necessity of attending to seemingly minor, material and mundane aspects of applied theatre work.

Calls for applied theatre to be aware of its orientation in a complex web raise questions of how applied theatre practices are positioned within specific localities and wider contexts. Thinking about applied theatre’s relationship with local and global economies, conceptions of scale become important. Even in the

analysis above, I fall into the ingrained habit of imagining the ‘smaller’, more ‘localised’, materialisations of practice (filling in a funding application, a meeting with a funder, a workshop) nested in turn within a local, national and then global contexts. However, more relational conceptions of space consider how the local and global are “produced through one another” (Barad, 2001, p. 102). Barad (2001) argues that scale is a geometric concept that focuses analysis on “positionality, standpoint ... contextuality” (p. 75). Instead, she proposes that analysis focus on topological dynamics, on “[q]uestions of connectivity, boundary formation, and exclusion” (p. 98). Such an analytic perspective might involve a critical engagement with the ever-changing dynamics of mutually productive economic relations, the boundaries that are made in the formation of such relationships, and what possibilities are constrained and enabled in and beyond particular localities.

Each of the three companies attends carefully to relationships with participants, partner organisations and donors/sponsors/contractors. What constitutes acceptable terms of engagement differs between the companies. But for all of the companies relationships are formed through a process that involves a critical focus that shifts between different scales, and attends to topological dynamics. By this I mean each company pays close attention to the effects (and affects) of participating in, for example, writing practice into the boxes of a funding application form, the dynamics of interpersonal relationships with a donor/partner, local and national policy changes, and international political and economic issues.

Thompson (2011) suggests that the often private acts of applied theatre projects become “caught in a web of strategic performances” that are beyond the control of the practitioner (p. 40). To avoid “the strategic manipulations of others”, Thompson suggests that “there could be a place for public acts that reveal how those discursive and institutional performances operated” (p. 41). His proposal has resonances with S. Jackson’s (2011) exploration of forms of institutional critique in contemporary art practices, “theatrical gestures to expose institutional structures” (p. 105). FM Theatre Power’s street performance, public debates, performative actions during protests and moments within staged performances like the auctioning of the painting in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, might be examples of the kinds of “public critical acts” envisaged by Thompson (2011, p. 41). This study also suggests that other critical acts take place through close engagements with institutional infrastructures. ATCo works hard to ensure agencies like the police and social services are closely involved with Everyday Theatre, ideally in the classroom. Such close encounters can disrupt assumptions about, and ingrained ways of working with, children and families. These ongoing ‘institutionalised’ engagements are, perhaps, just as important as public events such as the launch of the Wellington tour (where verbatim material from children, teachers, other partner organisations and researchers was performed for the Minister of Social Development, Children’s Commissioner, senior figures in the Police and social services). Finally, underpinning C&T’s practice is a political commitment to challenging young people to analyse their worlds, including online and digital technologies that have become an important part of the “contingent systems that support the management of life” (S. Jackson, 2011, p. 29).

## Negotiating and navigating

One intention of this study was to examine the ways in which management is conceived and practiced in each of the three companies. I suggest that discussions of management in the academic discourse of applied theatre are often limited to considering the effects of externally imposed managerialist ideas and performance management systems. A central argument of this thesis is that rather than viewing management as something alien to applied theatre, it is important to understand how management in applied contexts can be arts led (Beirne, 2013; Beirne & Knight, 2002). Suggesting that management is arts led does not promote a specific approach to management in the arts. Rather, it describes how management knowledge and practices emerge from the day-to-day work of practitioners in (applied) arts settings. This means management is not seen as separate from art-making, but as an integral component, informed by common principles and values. Drawing on the theory of Beirne and Knight (2002), this study suggests that in ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power there is an “intimate connection between accomplished art and responsive, context-sensitive management” (Beirne, 2013, p. 155). Such an “intimate connection” of art-making and managing is apparent in the day to day work of the three companies. From this perspective it is possible to see that ‘management’ is not just carried out by particular individuals designated as managers, but is distributed across participants in the organisation, including human and non-human actors (Keevers et al., 2012). Managing relationships with local and global economies is not necessarily something that happens consciously at discreet times but is often an integrated part of practice across each of the organisations.

In this thesis, I use the metaphor of ‘negotiating tangled webs’ to highlight the ways in which each company manages its relationship with wider economic arrangements. I also use the metaphor of ‘navigating murky terrain’ to describe the process of managing specific funding or financial relationships. This study suggests that for each of the three companies negotiating and navigating a complex network of economic relationships is always part of the process of applying theatre. In Chapter 7, I draw on Gibson-Graham to suggest that managing diverse economic relationships might be conceived as ‘resocialising’ those relationships. Resocialising is a process of forming and maintaining economic relations, a ‘praxis’ of political and ethical decision making (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, pp. 87–88). Economic relations are not disembodied, instrumental transactions, but involve participants in social and environmental interdependencies. Gibson-Graham suggest that resocialising the economy involves:

cultivating an awareness of what is *necessary* to personal and social survival; how social surplus is appropriated and distributed; whether and how social *surplus* is to be produced and *consumed*; and how a *commons* is produced and sustained. (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 88)

These points might be usefully applied to analyse the political and ethical dimensions of economic decisions being made day to day in theatre companies that apply theatre. However, what this study specifically suggests is that the praxis of negotiating and navigating economic relationships for ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power involves the enactment of an ‘ethos’, an evolving understanding of what the company is ‘for’ or ‘about’, aesthetically, pedagogically, politically and ethically; combined with a

commitment to the people and places that participate in an applied process and to the quality of the aesthetic-pedagogic experiences created; and an “affective undercurrent” of ‘love’ (Bradway, 2012; Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1999).

### **Ethos**

I suggest the management of relationships with local and global economies is arts led, informed by an organisational ‘ethos’. Ethos is not a straight-forward concept and I use it hesitantly. In anthropology, ethos refers to “the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements,” or put more simply, “the values a people holds” (Geertz, 1957, pp. 421–422). Geertz highlights how a particular ethos is accepted as reasonable when it exists in synthesis with a cultural ‘world view’, “their picture of the way things, in sheer actuality are” (p. 421). This conception seems to reflect that of Adorno (2000), who saw ethos as collective values and norms (Butler, 2005, pp. 3–4). According to Butler, Adorno views ethos as the basis of conservative nationalism that violently asserts itself as, over time, its values and norms lose their claim to being universal truths. Morality, then, is not based in ‘ethos’, but in the questioning that occurs when an ethos is called into question. Butler highlights how, for Adorno, an ethos is only acceptable if people can live by its values or rules in the current social conditions (Butler, 2005, pp. 5–6). The problem, then, is not within the ethos itself, but occurs when that ethos “fails to be responsive” to the social and cultural conditions to which it is applied (Butler, 2005, p. 6).

In Chapter 6, I suggest that C&T’s ‘ethos’ is an evolving understanding of what the company is ‘for’ or ‘about’, aesthetically, pedagogically, politically and ethically. I then apply the term in Chapter 7 as I consider how FM Theatre Power navigate their relationship with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. I now want to consider how this concept might apply across the three companies. First, the ethos of each company is not articulated autonomously from the wider material and discursive context. It emerges from relationships with specific settings (schools, communities, institutions), with wider social, cultural political and economic conditions and recycles ideas and practices from the rhizomatic root system of applied theatre (Hallam & Ingold, 2007; Nicholson, 2011b). Secondly, the ethos might be expressed as a specific list of values, as in ATCo’s original contract with CYF, C&T’s business plan or the ideal of people’s theatre for FM Theatre Power. But it does not only exist as a set of articulable aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical principles that guide practice, it also develops through practice. For each company, for example, it was important that people experienced their work firsthand for them to be able to ‘get it’. Furthermore, the ethos is not just enacted by the human participants in each company, but also by nonhuman actors, such as plans and contracts/agreements. Finally, the ethos is not fixed. As heteronomous relationships are formed and change the ethos and its ‘liveability’ in practice is brought into question.

Drawing the concept of ethos together with Gibson-Graham’s conception of resocialisation, I suggest that each company brings its ethos into play in the management of relationships with local and global economies. Aesthetic, pedagogic, political and ethical values play a part in the negotiation and navigation of financial and funding relationships; they are not necessarily determined or compromised by them.

## Commitment

Throughout this thesis I talk about applied theatre as a committed practice. In her exploration of the word ‘applying’, Shaughnessy (2012) finds “its etymological sense being ‘to bring things into contact with one another’ to ‘join’ to ‘connect’ and, figuratively to ‘devote (oneself) to’, ‘give attention’” (p. xiv). Ultimately, Shaughnessy does not shy away from describing the applied theatre as work that has “commitment” (p. xiv). I suggest that such commitment can be found in the ways the practitioners involved in this study talk about the practice of the theatre companies they work for. Commitment is a word that I think is important for understanding how applied theatre companies manage their relationships with funders and the wider socio-economic context. By this I mean in negotiating and navigating such relationships each company sustains a commitment to the people and communities involved and the quality of the aesthetic-pedagogic experiences created with them.

Committed practice, I suggest, involves an ethic of care. In Chapter 4 I propose that to act with care is not an act out of obligation, nor is it necessarily to act on a ‘natural’ impulse, rather it is acting with a concerted commitment to considering the interests of the one cared for (Noddings, 2003, p. 81). Consistent with Gibson-Graham’s concept of resocialisation, an ethic of care starts with the conception of the self/organisation as always in relation with others (Held, 2006, p. 14). I also suggest that commitment is not a dogmatic process of compliance or constraint, but a process that involves ongoing creative improvisation within heteronomous relations (Hallam & Ingold, 2007). Finally, I suggest that commitment involves passion. This connects to the concept of ‘love’ discussed below. Bonnie Chan, FMTP’s Research Director, explains that in Cantonese, combining the character for love (愛) with the character for hot (熱) creates the character for the verb passion (熱愛). In Cantonese, saying you have ‘fire’ towards something means having a passion for it. Passion should not be read as a ‘blind’ commitment, but as a powerful sense that the work and the people and communities that work is made by, with and for have importance. It is part of the affective force that sustains the careful, creative negotiation of economic relationships.

## Love

erm... It’s called... Love... What?  
just how much they all love the,  
they love the whole...  
You know, they, you know, you watch, you watch them,  
which is what I really love,  
I love doing that, mmm...  
you know I watch them at work, I love...  
it’s really hard to explain, love the way that they...  
I’ve forgotten the English name.  
[“I need your love...” the band sings on]

[CAP. From multiple interview transcripts]

I want to write about love as part of the “affective undercurrents” of the committed practice that informs this thesis (Bradway, 2012, p. 79). Love is the beginning at the end. I am only just coming to

theories that will help me pick up this idea, hold it to the light and examine the patterns that appear. What does it mean to talk about management in applied contexts as a practice of love? Love is a word thrown in at the end of an email, dropped casually into conversation, used strategically in an organisational document. Love as a word is readable but slippery in its meanings.

Maunder (2013) suggests that younger practitioners involved in community based theatre in New Zealand have chosen that area of work over what he calls “commodity theatre” not for political reasons but for ‘love’ (p. 213). He wonders whether somewhere in the partially articulated motivations expressed by these young practitioners is a way forward for this area of practice. But, with the arguments I have made above, I am cautious about seeing an easy opposition between a decision to work based on a felt “love for the other” and a decision to work for money, “fame and glory” in commercial theatre (Maunder, 2013, p. 213).

Is it possible to write about love not as the absence of a political motivation, but as political? Is it possible to write about love without over-sentimentalising, idealising practitioners who work in applied theatre? Can I talk about love without simply reinforcing the argument that practitioners in this area love their work because ‘doing good’ makes them ‘feel good’ (S. Jackson, 2011)? Can I talk about love without reinforcing the idea I have already contested that it is ‘better’ to work for the love of it than money (Folbre & Nelson, 2000)? Can I talk about love without acknowledging that the labour of artists in the creative industries is often unstable, precarious, sometimes exploitative, but it feels good, we love what we do (Finlayson, 2011; McRobbie, 2002). Can I talk about love without acknowledging that love is not always a ‘good thing’? S. Ahmed’s (2004) analysis of racial hatred suggests it is rooted not in “ungrounded reasoning” but in a “deep and real” love (p. 25). This is an academic thesis; can I talk about love at all?

Bradway (2012) addresses the challenge of expressing the “wordless current” of affect in Eve Sedgwick’s writing (p. 86). Is love something that can only be felt between the lines, not in direct references like those cited in the poem above? Is love a ‘wordless undercurrent’ when the practitioners I interview talk about the collective, fun and sometimes critical spaces they create in sometimes unlikely settings, about why they continue to work through exhaustion, illness and loss, or about the care, creativity and passion they bring to their practice. In *A Dialogue on Love*, Bradway suggests Sedgwick (1999) redefines love within a “queer relationality”, meaning that it is “premised on an expansive network of relations that precede and exceed the self without a definable limit” (Bradway, 2012, p. 90). This invokes a particular economy of love that is, I suggest, relevant to the work of practitioners in applied theatre. Seeing love within a network of ‘permeable’ relations:

undermines the self’s narcissistic desire for infinite reciprocity. The self cannot calculate a return on its investment, nor can it “*know*,” finally whether the system is open or closed; yet this knowledge is irrelevant to “valuing all the transformations,” the dynamic movements within and among subjects and beyond them. (Bradway, 2012, p. 91)

In line with the ethos of this study, I suggest that this is a more affirmative way to understand the love practitioners bring to the caring, creative and passionate work of applying theatre. It is a love that does not depend on what is returned, materially, but is the affect experienced from the mutual participation in a relational network.

## **Resonance, reflexivity and repercussions**

One of the ethical parameters of this research was to look critically with ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power at issues of common concern, rather than to be critical of their practice. I formulated three markers of ‘validity’ for this study that were consistent with this ethical principle: resonance, repercussions and reflexivity. These are not markers of validity that I can judge alone, they are each contingent on the responses of those who read this thesis, including the participants in this research. Feedback on my writing from participants, therefore, has been central to establishing the validity of the claims made by this thesis. Members of each company have read and provided critical responses to drafts of the chapters that focus on their practice. Their responses speak to the markers above:

**Briar, ATCo:** Reading about the contract negotiations made my blood go cold, knowing it’s not even a year since it was all finalised and now knowing it all has to start again at the beginning of next year. What a rollercoaster. (B. O’Connor, personal communication, September 18, 2013)

**Bonnie, FMTP:** By zooming into our daily operations you really got what others don’t always notice and that’s very true about us (that theatre “applied” came in the form of message tees). This is very important and it’s like a window for others to see what’s actually happening here and what our vision is! (B. Chan, personal communication, October 22, 2013)

**Peter, ATCo:** I’ve lived this for many years and so it resonates so very deeply. I’m struggling to be the supervisor in this but I’m reminded of Denzin and the truth resonating deeply in my body. You have caught the story so well for someone who has lived it. Alys will need to tell us what it’s meant for her. (P. O’Connor, personal communication, September 7, 2013)

**Bonnie, FMTP:** Everyone of FMTP should read this. This paper is not like any other boring academic writings. It’s also a good way for us to reflect what we are doing. (B. Chan, personal communication, October 22, 2013)

**Paul, C&T:** Ok – I’ve read it! I like it! Nothing contentious to say, but love to talk with you about it if you fancy a Skype chat... (P. Sutton, personal communication, November 12, 2013)

[CAP. From personal communications]

## **Conclusion**

### **Metaphors for moving forward**

From looking critically with ATCo, C&T and FM Theatre Power at concerns about the effects of financial and funding relationships on applied theatre, possibilities for moving forward start to emerge. These possibilities challenge some of the persistent 'dark' metaphors that pervade much existing academic analysis. Dark metaphors offer a powerful cautionary message to practitioners about the effects of financial and funding relationships on the aesthetics, pedagogies, politics and ethics of their practice. They can also be paralysing, reinforcing an image of the economy as a dominant, abstract force. I found alternative economic narratives in the day-to-day work of practitioners who manage the application of theatre in diverse educational, community and institutional settings. Here 'management' is not limited to rational, profit- and efficiency-driven models or practices carried out by designated 'managers'. Instead it describes arts-led, care-based practices that are distributed throughout an organisation and sustained by particular kinds of love. Rather than assuming that an economic rationale will dominate in funding and financial relationships in applied theatre, these narratives show the importance of examining the nuances and dynamics of particular relationships. Such an approach can make diverse economic practices visible, and within each economic relationship reveal the coexistence of a plurality of values.

The three poems below distil the ethnographic narratives at the heart of this thesis. These narratives depict the practices of each theatre company as they negotiate tangled webs and murky terrain. I use poetry here in an attempt to disrupt the attachment of the ethnographic narrative to the specific and particular. Through ambiguous poetic representations my aim is to invite wider resonances that might create a sense of possibility (however tentative and risky).

*Taking care*

Carefully unfurling

A funding umbrella

Held up

by

Mutual supports<sup>25</sup>

Sheltering

Relationships of trust and care

and complicated moments of bureaucratic re-imagining<sup>26</sup>

at the edge of what is

contractually constituted

the possibility for

reconfiguration<sup>27</sup>

[CAP. From Chapter 5]

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<sup>25</sup> S. Jackson (2011)

<sup>26</sup> S. Jackson (2011, p. 73)

<sup>27</sup> Barad (2007)

*Navigating*

s a c h a e

e s n g

Cultural improvisation<sup>28</sup>, adjustment and response to ... a world in formation<sup>29</sup>

Generative, active regeneration in the work of survival<sup>30</sup>

Relational, attuned responsive<sup>31</sup>

Imagine...

New forms of theatrical expression<sup>32</sup>

Recycling and regenerating<sup>33</sup> the vernacular<sup>34</sup>

Of participants' culture

And the

The cultural economy

into

somethingrichandstrange

[CAP. From Chapter 6]

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<sup>28</sup> Hallam and Ingold (2007)

<sup>29</sup> Hallam and Ingold (2007, p. 3)

<sup>30</sup> Hallam and Ingold (2007, pp. 3–6)

<sup>31</sup> Hallam and Ingold (2007, p. 1)

<sup>32</sup> Nicholson (2011b, p. 86)

<sup>33</sup> Nicholson (2011b)

<sup>34</sup> Saal (2007a); (Saal, 2007b)

*A difficult fit*

“they play

on different

levels,

you know?”<sup>35</sup>

They play

**The FMTP Way**

Concentrating “with your heart”<sup>36</sup>

With passion

In

the empty space

of

a community economy<sup>37</sup>

Filled up by collective action<sup>38</sup>

Pouring ‘surplus’ into

Performative interventions

In the fabric of the city

Playful engagements

Within and against<sup>39</sup>

Inconvenienced by

And inconveniencing<sup>40</sup>

its economies.

[CAP. From Chapter 7]

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<sup>35</sup> Mok and Estella (18-09-2012)

<sup>36</sup> Mo (04-10-2012)

<sup>37</sup> Gibson-Graham (2006b, p. 166)

<sup>38</sup> Gibson-Graham (2006b, p. 166)

<sup>39</sup> Lather (2007)

<sup>40</sup> S. Jackson (2011, p. 42)

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