THE SPACES BETWEEN:

PERFORMANCE, INDIVIDUALISATION,
AND THE POLITICS OF GLOBAL CHANGE

ALEXA TAYLOR
BA (Hons)

THIS THESIS IS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF MURDOCH UNIVERSITY

2015
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

....................................
Alexa Taylor
ABSTRACT

This thesis responds to the difficulty inherent in attempting to address global challenges that require global solutions, such as climate change and extreme poverty, from within an increasingly individualised society. In this context, opening up spaces to engage with the world through alternate frames of reference can be seen to be a powerful political act: inviting response-ability, fostering and deepening connections, and calling the systemic into question. Performance offers one such site of engagement. As a bodied activity that situates the spectator in relation to people, to places, and to the world, performance can expand some of the connections that individualisation and globalisation compress. As such, it can be argued that performance holds the potential to unsettle the globalised and the individualised: to traverse the increasing space between them and to blur, oppose, or look beyond their boundaries. In this thesis I explore that potential, drawing upon cultural theory and performance theory, three case studies of performance works that evoke the global but disrupt the globalised, and a performance-as-research project that shifts the focus to the local and localised connection. Through these creative and theoretical bodies of work I consider the capacity of performance to critically reframe the globalised present, to awaken the cosmopolitan imagination, to invite the spectator to engage and respond, and to suggest the actual possibility of a more equitable and sustainable world. Performance, it becomes evident, can be a productive site for negotiating global change: not by necessarily providing a solution to sustainability concerns or inciting political actions, but rather by creating moments of disruption in the current frames of globalisation and individualisation to act as an opening through which change comes about.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document exists because of the generosity of a number of people, to whom I wish to extend sincere thanks.

First and foremost to Helena – for your persistence, kindness, constructive criticism, and careful supervision. Your passion, dedication, and fierce integrity are an inspiration.

To Allan – for your relaxed confidence in me throughout the process; and your thoughtful, diligent feedback and editing.

To the broader Murdoch University community: the faculty in both the School of Arts and Sustainability, my fellow postgraduate students (especially office-mates Subas, Neville, and Kate), and the keen undergraduate students I have taught – your questions, comments and insights have pushed me to think about the ideas in this thesis from different perspectives.

To all who made Tag. You’re It. a reality: Renee, Hannah, Jeremy, Kit, Ben, Moya, Paul, Bronwyn, and Lenni for your creative input, commitment, and the hours spent rehearsing and performing; the staff and volunteers of Summer Nights, especially Susannah, Kerry, Roger, Sally, and Matt; Bivouac Canteen & Bar and Fi & Co. for letting us inhabit your spaces; and Matty Marino, for being my right-hand superstar from start to finish.

To the independent theatre community of Perth, its epicentre The Blue Room Theatre, and my fellow Renegades – for being a constant source of artistic support and inspiration, and reminding me why all of this is important.

To my friends, for your patience, warmth, and gentle reminders to have fun. Amongst these, extra thanks to: my Glendower house-family Hannah, Liz, and Cait, for the food, love, and hilarity in the final stretch; Cary, Helen, Oliver, Ali,
Keith, Grahame, and Adele for your incredible generosity at such a crucial moment; Demelza, Fatty, Joe, and Paul for bottomless pots of tea; and Georgia, for midnight conversations and your genuine excitement about this undertaking.

To Amy, whose friendship has been with me every step of the way – for your unwavering support, making me laugh impossibly hard, and your courage and commitment in your own life in working towards a more connected and sustainable world.

To Nathalie, the best thesis-buddy a person could wish for – for solidarity and companionship, your outrageous thoughtfulness, and the shaking of pom poms. For Thesis Thursdays, game-changing conversations, careful chapter-edits – and for reminding me in practice just how revolutionary building close, connected communities can be.

To my parents, Charles and Bobbie Taylor, for your life-long support and encouragement. And my sister Pippa, for telling me back when we were children that one day I would end up writing books.

Writing a PhD is a very individual pursuit – it has seemed a little incongruous to spend so much time by myself writing about the need for a more connected society. Looking at this list, that incongruity unravels. There are so many people in my life who reach beyond the parameters of individualism to build deeper connections, creative communities, and moments of possibility, in so many different ways. I dedicate this thesis to all of you.
The origins of this thesis stretch back many years, to when instead of ‘artist’ I would call myself ‘activist’ – long hours and no pay but passion and good friends, and the immense satisfaction of a triumphant campaign. I can still remember the thrill: “Vote Forests” shifting the political landscape of the Western Australian state election; the Jabiluka uranium mine halted; plans for the Pangea nuclear waste dump put on hold. Clear, considered actions to achieve clear, definite goals – and a moment when the battle was clearly lost or won.

Somewhere in the midst of it all I travelled to Melbourne, where the World Trade Organisation was hosting the World Economic Forum. It was the year following the ‘Battle for Seattle’, the height of the anti-globalisation movement; Naomi Klein’s No Logo (2000) had just hit the shelves, and both tensions and hope were running high.

For me, it was a week of many awakenings. My friends and I made a giant monopoly board with countries of the world instead of street names, and played it in the middle of the road outside the Crown Casino. Together we ran the debriefing space, listening to the stories of strangers for hours on end. I saw people being hit with batons. I saw a riot-police-man cry. I saw so many acts of outrageous bravery and futility and passion and hope.

Eighteen years old, marching down Flinders Street with 20 000 other people, holding a banner that read: Another World Is Possible.

Another world is possible.

As I marched down that street, I believed it.
The date was September 11, in the year 2000. Exactly one year later the political landscape shaping my world (and the world of myriad others) would shift: lips growing tighter, borders less welcoming, maps marked with deeper divisions. A world more distrustful of strangers, and less compassionate about their fate.

And somewhere, amidst the excitement, something else had awakened in me: a sense of the ‘bigness’ of it all. That the problems posed by globalisation were all linked together – the social, the political, and the economic inextricably intertwined. That this was not a campaign with a clear, definite goal to be fought for and won; that there was no one entity driving the problems, and no one institution to appeal to for solutions. That I was very small, and the world was very big, and that the fabric of the world was woven of so many threads that I could never hold them all in my hand, or even my in head.

How does one begin to attempt to change the world when one cannot even grasp a sense of it?

And how does one begin to attempt to change the world when the very ideas that drive it are what need changing?

Fifteen years later, I return to these questions. After disappearing into worlds of words and ideas, studying sustainability, learning how to make theatre, building communities of friends and of artists, starting a performance collective called Renegade Productions. I have dusted out the quote by Oscar Wilde that graced my teenage bedroom wall: “It takes a great deal of courage to see the world in all its tainted glory, and still to love it”.

Clear, definite solutions still elude me; in many ways the answers are as unclear as ever. But I am ready, at least, to consider the questions.
INTRODUCTION

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed.

I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
and with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

Adrienne Rich ~ *Natural Resources*

In a globalising world defined by “the intensification and speeding up of time-space compression in economic and social life” (Inda and Rosaldo 2008), the idea of ‘reconstituting the world’ is complex. It is widely known, at the relative dawn of a new millennium, that the world is facing significant social, economic, and ecological challenges: challenges that are global in scale, ‘globalised’ in origin, and that warrant urgent attention.\(^1\) It is also clear that an awareness of these challenges does not necessarily translate into action – that a move towards a more sustainable world will not occur just with education about the issues (Burgess et al. 2003, 270), and that what is required is a focus on broader social and cultural change (Moloney and Strengers 2014, 94).

‘Change’ is a nebulous term, however, and the concept of social transformation in what Zygmunt Bauman terms a ‘liquid modern’ world (2000)

\(^1\) At the time of writing this seems particularly pertinent, with the latest IPCC report confirming the urgency of tackling climate change and the inadequacy of the current level of action being taken to address it (IPCC 2014), while social sustainability concerns are highlighted by the 2015 deadline of the UN Millennium Development Goals (UNDP 2014). While these are perhaps the most pressing global sustainability concerns at present, the argument could extend to all of those that Paul Hawken calls “the most salient issues of our day; climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, and human rights” (Hawken 2007, 1).
invites further interrogation. The social trend in the globalising ‘West,’ as highlighted by Bauman in his concept of liquid modernity, is one of speedy and continual transformation, in which social forms “can no longer (and are not expected to) keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them” (Bauman 2007, 1). It may seem somewhat paradoxical to speak of a need to cultivate social change in a globalising society that is *defined by the very presence of change* (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 95 – 101), particularly when the rates of change have been increasing rather than decreasing over the past few decades (Bauman 2007, 36). The point of difference, I would suggest, lies with how the fast-paced culture of change is enmeshed with the politics of globalisation and individualisation.

In a globalising individualised society (Bauman 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Elliott and Lemert 2009), the trend towards a “wondrous capacity for continual change and instant transformation” (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 97) falls within particular parameters: it involves the constant construction and re-construction of identity, mirroring the shifting cycles of production and consumption that drive the global economy (Bauman 2002). Under this model, the ability for transformation is *individualised* while the overarching sustainability challenges are increasingly global and *globalised*. As a result of this, “the growing awareness of the dangers ahead goes hand in hand with a growing impotence to prevent them or alleviate the gravity of their impact” (Bauman 2001, 86). Through considering Bauman’s concept of liquid modernity alongside the social effects of globalisation and individualisation, it

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2 I am wary of, as Kwame Anthony Appiah phrases it, thinking of the world as “divided between the West and the Rest” (2006, xix). The terms used to describe trends in global development are steeped in problematic histories and constructions of Self and Other, and the use of ‘West’ and ‘East’ or ‘North’ and ‘South’ also do not fit the contemporary moment; geographically based descriptors of the world are less relevant in the global age, and the cultural patterns I am writing of transcend physical borders and are located in pockets of continents all over the world. I use ‘the West’ in this thesis to critique cultural patterns that have emerged from what has traditionally been called ‘the Western development paradigm’ (and to refer to the affluent cities built by those who have reaped economics benefits from them) for want of an alternate term, and with full acknowledgement that a more suitable language for such conversations is needed.
becomes evident that the apparent difficulty of tackling global sustainability challenges is not in spite of a speedily transforming society, but rather is to some degree because of it. To return to Rich’s phrase, in an individualised society we are able to reconstitute ourselves with ease; *reconstituting the world*, however, is another matter.

Approaching social and cultural change with this in mind opens up fertile ground for exploration: ground that involves traversing the space between the globalised and the individualised to address the elements mutually binding practices together (Moloney and Strengers 2014, 107). The seeds of this exploration are evident in academic discourse surrounding art and creativity. Jodi Dean’s provocative challenge to the role of art in social change (2012, 9), for instance, is mitigated if the role of art is seen not as a means of inciting a particular political action or providing a specific solution to global challenges, but rather as a means of engaging with and increasing “the openings by which change comes about” (Holland et al. 2001, 18). In *Arts of the Possible* Rich puts forward the potential of poetry to uncover broader questions of systemic social change which have culturally become “non-questions” (Rich 2002, 147), while Jane Goodall argues through the lens of literature that the core matter underlying sustainability is “beyond the reach of policy-making and serves … as a reminder of why we need literature. Or at least, stories” (Goodall 2009, 42). Art and creativity, it becomes evident, can offer an invitation to respond to sustainability challenges in a way that steps outside of the parameters of change offered by the individualised society, inviting discussion of “what living can mean for future occupants of a world full of potential and in need of repair” (Jackson 2011, 93).

These arguments extend to performance; indeed the physical immediacy and embodied locality of performance mark it as a particularly potent site for
opening up alternative ways of engaging with a globalising world. Following one of Richard Schechner’s definitions of the term, I use ‘performance’ in this thesis to refer to creative work which is contingent upon that which takes place in the bodied space between the action, performer, or place, and the spectator (Schechner 2002, 22–25): an aesthetic-creative practice that includes performance art, theatre, and installation. As Schechner states, “a painting ‘takes place’ in the physical object; a novel takes place in the words. But a performance … takes place only in action, interaction, and relation. Performance isn’t ‘in’ anything, but ‘between’” (Schechner 2002, 23–24).

Given that globalisation is concerned with the compression of time and space (Harvey 1992; Giddens 2002) and individualism with the denial of social connection (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 3), the liminal space that performance inhabits and its very definition as a relational ‘in between’ space (Schechner 2002, 24) positions it as perhaps an ideal site through which to negotiate the space between the globalised and the individualised. Performance has the capacity to open up and expand moments of connection, and as Dolan outlines, its liminality can be a site through which to consider the possibility of another world (2005, 27). In seeking a capacity to respond to global challenges, then, it seems evident that performance has something significant to offer.

The central argument of this thesis is that performance has the potential to increase our capacity for cultural change towards global sustainability, by traversing or unsettling the divide between the globalised and the

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3 This is evident across a broad range of theoretical works, including Jill Dolan’s search for hope at the theatre (2005); Erika Fischer-Lichte’s writings on theatre, performance, and transformational aesthetics (2008); and the responses to Dean’s challenge recently gathered in the 2014 issue of Performance Paradigm Performances of Resistance/Resisting Performance (Grehan 2014).

4 The act of performing in everyday life, which is also covered by Schechner in his broader exploration of the term (Schechner 2002, 22–44), can become entangled in the fascination with performing and reconstituting one’s own identity in the individualised society (Elliott and Lemert 2009) and can therefore reinforce rather than challenge its effects.
individualised. ‘Change’ in this context does not refer to a particular political action sparked by a particular creative event, but rather to the act of opening up or inviting an ability to engage and respond – which in turn becomes a step towards asking bigger, broader questions about sustainability and taking action to address them.

I explore this in the thesis through cultural theory and performance theory, through three case studies of existing creative works, and through a practical component of performance-as-research. With the discussion organised into five chapters, the case studies and creative work each consider a different aspect of performance as a means of looking or moving beyond the parameters of a globalisation/individualisation divide. The ability of performance to unsettle this divide remains the guiding focus of each chapter; my aim is not to provide a comprehensive analysis the performance pieces themselves, but rather to critically consider relevant aspects of them as a means of illustrating and drawing conclusions about the theoretical ideas being explored. Similarly, the performance-as-research component engages with the social and cultural potential of performance rather than aiming to push the boundaries of performance practice, and my discussion of the process fits within this framework. These theoretical and creative explorations demonstrate some ways in which performance can activate a space between the globalised and the individualised, with each example to some extent reframing the world, reengaging with the world, and offering an implicit or explicit invitation to reimagine it.

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5 ‘Our’ and ‘we’ are difficult terms, and in using them here I do not assume a readership only of those within the global West. The world holds many cultures that I do not want to exclude, or to presume to speak for. What I do wish to acknowledge in the language of this thesis, though, is that it is a critique from within: that as a middle-class woman raised in Perth, Western Australia, where the culture of individualism runs rife, I am writing about a society in which I was raised and of which I am a part, as this will have necessarily had an impact on my perspective.

6 It is worth acknowledging that in a project without constraints of time and space, each chapter would contain both a discussion of existing creative works and an exploration of the idea in practice; due to practical constraints, however, each key aspect is illustrated and furthered with one or the other.
I begin in Chapter One by locating the thesis in a broader body of cultural theory: seeking a deeper understanding of individualisation and globalisation, and exploring the impact that these ‘twin forces’ have on our ability to engage with and respond to global concerns. Drawing upon the work of Bauman (see for example, 2002; 2007; 2008a), Beck (2009; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), and Elliot and Lemert (2009), I posit that the widening gap between the globalised and the individualised can lead to fatalism or denial – and that the translation of agency to the individual sphere shifts a focus away from the systemic nature of sustainability problems, enabling inaction at a broader scale. Finally, I suggest that performance – as a bodied in-between space that fosters and relies upon situated connections – can be a site through which to unsettle the parameters of individualisation; and that by creating moments of disruption in the dominant cultural frameworks, performance has the potential to be a productive site for negotiating change.

The next two chapters explore this potential through case studies of creative works that evoke the global but disrupt the globalised. The first of these, Chapter Two, highlights the ability of performance to hold the often invisible systems that shape our responses to the global up for scrutiny. I consider Trust – a physical theatre collaboration between writer/director Falk Richter and dancer/choreographer Anouk Van Dijk (Schaubühne 2014), created in response to the 2009 Global Financial Crisis (Noakes 2011) – as an example of a work that does this in practice. Tracing specific moments in the performance that foreground and highlight the theory outlined in Chapter One, I explore through Trust how the act of reframing the present can create points of disruption in the dominant frameworks of globalisation and individualisation. I also consider the possibilities that these present to the spectator (as an individual spectator and as part of a collective audience) for renegotiating our responses to global systems and to their impacts on our everyday lives.

Chapter Three also considers creative work that evokes the global while unsettling the globalised. Here, though, the focus is on seeking an alternate
understanding the global to that of contemporary globalisation – in this case, the cosmopolitan imagination. The chapter contains two case studies, the first of which is Stan’s Café’s Of All the People in all the World – a performance installation that awakens the cosmopolitan imagination through metaphor, by casting the world’s population as interchangeable grains of rice. I explore how the work provides spectators with an opportunity to engage with and respond to information about the world that can otherwise seem overwhelming or abstract; and the possibilities that are opened up by this ability to respond. I then consider the Women Are Heroes project by French street artist JR as a piece that presents the global through the lens of the particular. Through discussion of my engagement with the Brussels exhibition (2008) both online and in the city, I posit that despite the complexities of the politics of representation, Women Are Heroes unsettles the physical and emotional distance between the individualised spectator and people often constructed as a global ‘Other’ – offering the spectator an opportunity to engage with the world through a cosmopolitan frame.

Continuing the focus on the act of (re)engagement, the next chapter considers localisation, and performance as a site through which to connect to the local, through my performance-as-research work Tag. You’re It. A site-specific one-on-one performance piece that moves through various locations in Northbridge, Western Australia, Tag. You’re It. encourages spectators to respond to places (and people within the places) from outside their normative frames of reference. While it performs a similar function to the case studies (as a means of illustrating and exploring the theoretical ideas put forward in the chapter), the use of practice-as-research in this chapter offers a broader,

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7 There are many approaches to the global that sit in contrast to contemporary globalisation, and cosmopolitanism is used here as one example which has received considerable critical attention. There is an infinite number of possible creative works for case studies that could be explored here with bodies of relevant performance theory to accompany them: from works with a more explicitly ecological focus (Kershaw 2007; Chaudhuri and Enelow 2013), to a focus on place (Pearson 2006; Tompkins and Birch 2012), or a deliberately social perspective (Jackson 2011; Harvie 2013; Thompson 2012). This thesis will I hope form part of a much broader conversation about how performance can unsettle the individualised society, and does not attempt to encompass the myriad ways that performance could do this.
more nuanced exploration of the topic through reflection on the process of putting the work together, and insights through witnessing a variety of spectatorial responses in the performances. The performance piece is in part a response to Kwame Anthony Appiah’s claim that to love the ‘little platoon’ is a stepping stone to a cosmopolitan ethic (Appiah 2006, 152); and in part an exploration in practice of an understanding that building local connections to people and places sits in direct opposition to both the individualised society and the current model of globalisation. Through fostering local connections, I suggest that performance can inhabit spaces between the global and the individual, to create openings for engaging in broader change.

Finally, Chapter Five explores politics of the possible. While the focus in the previous chapters has been on reframing and reengaging with the world, it shifts here towards reimagining it. After highlighting the need for a shared sense of ‘vision’ or ‘hope’ in effecting change (and the difficulty of fostering this in the individualised society), I consider Dolan’s concept of the ‘utopian performative’ (2005) through a political lens, questioning how its affect and effect can extend beyond the utopian performative moment within the performance space to ripple out into the world. Finally, I highlight the importance of situating such moments, exploring how the various performance works already discussed in the thesis awaken both the possibility of a another world, and the prospect of another way of being in or engaging with the world through a different lived experience of the present.

Given that the thesis overall considers the potential effects of performance, it opens up questions about spectatorship. This is an area that resists empirical data and lends itself to speculation (Reason 2010), making discussion of how creative work might affect the spectator inherently difficult (Bennett 2012, 10–12). While the spectators themselves are not the subject of this thesis, my discussion is about what performance might do to (or for, or with) spectators, and what response a given performance piece might evoke – and as such, it is subject to the same complexities. These are only exacerbated by the fact
that I am discussing the less immediate, less palpable, and less quantifiable effects of performance: how a performance might spark off a train of thought, a sense of “radical unsettlement” (Grehan 2009, 20), or open up the possibility of a shift in perspective.

In order to navigate this difficulty when analysing the case studies and creative work, I maintain a focus on what the work may have to offer, explored from my perspective and from those responses available to me to engage with. While not ideal, this contextualised response works within the framework of the overall argument. In arguing that performance can navigate the divide between the individualised and the globalised as a step towards cultural change, I am not trying to put together a formula or blueprint as to how performance should best do this, nor am I attempting to measure exactly how much cultural change a given performance achieved. Rather, I am arguing that performance can offer the possibility to step beyond this divide, citing the case studies and creative work in this thesis (and some spectatorial responses to them) as a few particular examples that form part of the overall discussion.

It is also worth acknowledging that this thesis is one part of a much broader undertaking in seeking a social and cultural paradigm shift toward sustainability. When I describe my research topic I am often asked, somewhat incredulously, ‘so you think that performance will save the world?!’ I do not think that performance will save the world. With the nature of the challenges posed by sustainability being systemic in origin and stretching across sectors including industry, economics, politics, and society, there is no one singular approach which holds the solution – and looking for a singular solution can lead to the fatalism or denial that I detail in Chapter One. In seeking to negotiate the complexities of a shifting global society facing challenges that require a global response, however, I do think that performance has something important to offer. As Simon Tormey states:
We can only hope that the gap Bauman perceives between the potential contained in individual thought and reflection to reimagine other spaces and ways of living, and the desire to bring it about, is less of a chasm than he appears to think.

(Tormey 2003, 245)

With its existence in liminal space and long history of crossing borders (Gómez-Peña 2000), performance is well versed in traversing chasms. And whilst it will not ‘save’ the world, I would suggest that traversing this particular chasm through performance can function as a step in moving towards a more just and sustainable one.
INDIVIDUALISATION, AGENCY, AND PERFORMANCE:

SEEKING CHANGE IN A CONSTANTLY CHANGING WORLD

Consider again that dot. That's here, that's home, that's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives ... on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

Carl Sagan ~ Pale Blue Dot

In considering the global, I begin this chapter with Sagan’s now famous perspective of Earth as a “pale blue dot” (Sagan 1994) partly because the images of a distant Earth taken by Voyagers I and II played a role in spreading a sense of the planet as a fragile entity within a broader system (NASA 2014), and can thus evoke the question of global sustainability. This perspective, however, also offers a productive metaphor for the individualised individual in a globalising world. The challenges posed by sustainability, as global ‘wicked problems’ which resist easy solutions due to the complexity of their contributing factors (Rittel and Webber 1973), are intensified when attempting to respond to them from within the frame of an individualised society. When translated conceptually to the social and cultural sphere, the sense of insignificance evoked by a perspective of our planet as a “mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam” (Sagan 1994) can perhaps capture the perceived insignificance of the individual in a global mediatised age. In some ways this is a false parallel; unlike the forces shaping the universe, the forces
driving globalisation are created by humans and can be re-shaped by humans. However, the cultural construct is that – as with the cosmological – we as individuals are spectators of the global rather than makers of our cultural, political, and economic worlds. Unsettling this construction and offering alternate ways of viewing, engaging with, and responding to the global can therefore be seen to be a powerful political act.

My thesis explores how performance can facilitate this. While the following chapters discuss how some different performance-based works productively unsettle the globalised and the individualised in practice, this chapter provides a theoretical foundation for the broader argument of the thesis by considering why such an act of unsettlement is significant – and, accordingly, why performance might offer an opening through which to disrupt or shift the dominant frame. The first sections of this chapter define individualisation and globalisation as cultural frameworks, and explore how their dynamics affect our capacity to approach and respond to global sustainability concerns. In the second part of the chapter the focus shifts to creative work: I give a brief account of some existing arguments about how art and creativity can invite alternative ways of responding to the global, an overview of some relevant work in this area in the field of performance studies, and outline why I see performance as holding particular potential as a site for traversing the divide between the globalised and the individualised to open up the possibility of engaging in cultural change.

1.1 Individualisation and the Compression of Everyday Life

The concept of globalisation has been explored and interrogated by many theorists over the last twenty years, and been constructed with many different nuances of meaning. Despite its plurality of definition,
however, there is some degree of consensus that globalisation is more than simply “the act of becoming global” (OED, 2002), but rather is the act of becoming global in a particular way: one that involves the compression of the world and the intensification of our understanding of the world as a whole across cultural, political and economic spheres (Robertson 1992, 8). In addition to this, there is a growing recognition that globalisation is also fundamentally concerned with the opposite end of the scale, with individualisation – a concept which similarly moves beyond economies of scale and the act of ‘becoming individual’ to include a specific set of cultural trends and values. These have featured heavily in recent work by sociologists and cultural theorists seeking an understanding of the social fabric of the current globalising world, most notably in Elliott and Lemert’s The New Individualism (2009), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s Individualization: Institutionalised Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences (2002), and Bauman’s body of work on globalisation, individualisation, and ‘liquid modernity’, spanning from 1998 until the present day.

While its presence in academic discourse has come to prominence only in the last decade or so, the concept of individualism was not hatched in our contemporary age. Rather, it can be traced back over 200 years to French political philosophy, where the term was coined by Alexis de Tocqueville to describe an emerging sense of isolation in American society (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 3). According to de Tocqueville individualism, democracy, and capitalism go hand in hand, creating a sense that individuals:

… owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands. Thus not only does [this] make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants, and

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separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.

(de Tocqueville 2004, 370)

This trend is described as being distinct from egotism; while de Tocqueville defines egotism as a “passionate and exaggerated love of the self”, individualism is posed to be a mature and calm feeling, in which the individual’s ties to and concerns for broader society are systematically severed (2004, 370). The individual in this context ‘draws apart’ – sometimes in a small circle with their family or friends, and sometimes alone – and willingly leaves society at large to fend for itself (2004, 369). As Elliott and Lemert outline, the individualist creed was premised on “the assumption that people should leave it to others to deal with their own problems and to get on with the living of life on their own terms” (2009, 4); it can thus be interpreted as a trend which calls the very concept of ‘society’ into question.

The individualism described by de Tocqueville has influenced social and cultural development in Western societies over the past two hundred years, shaping economic and political structures as well as social values. What is particular to the contemporary liquid modern world, however, is individualism’s overwhelming presence; while it has helped shape the Western development paradigm since the industrial revolution, the global age has involved a breakdown of social context to the point where “individuals are expected to produce context for themselves ... as both social norm and cultural obligation” (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 13). It can be seen through the works of Bauman, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, and Elliot and Lemert that individualism is no longer part of society; rather it is changing the existing social fabric to the point where it is replacing society. “To put it in a nutshell – individualization is becoming the social
structure of … society itself" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, xxii; original emphasis).

Given this, it is worth noting that when I refer to individualisation or the individualised society in this thesis I am not speaking of individual autonomy, or of individuals’ rights or abilities to direct their own actions and forge their own identity (what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim call ‘individuation’ to distinguish it from the individualised individual (2002)). Rather, I am speaking of the institutionalisation of de Tocqueville’s individualism – a society in which we are cast as “individuals by decree” rather than “individuals by choice” (Bauman 2011, 101). This is closely linked to economic globalisation and its associated cultural trends. Called the “human consequences” of globalisation by Bauman (1998) and the “emotional costs of globalization” by Elliot and Lemert (2009), individualisation too is about speed, transience, and flows. Like de Tocqueville’s individualism, the contemporary individualised society involves a denial of social connection, in this case through the breakdown of the broader social fabric previously established in the phase of ‘solid’ modernity (Bauman 2007). This does not mean that connection between people has ceased – indeed, as Anna Tsing states, “interconnection is everything in the new globalisms” (2008, 75) – but rather that the shape and nature of these connections are shifting.

Where globalisation involves time-space compression in economic and social life (Inda and Rosaldo 2008), individualisation also involves time-space compression. Its disregard for social cohesion in favour of the construction of shifting identities, and the resultant culture of immediacy and desire for instant gratification, compresses our primary spheres of interaction to the smallest scale possible: our individualised identities and selves.

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2 The disintegration of the very concept of ‘society’ is explored in more detail by Bauman in Society Under Siege (2002) and Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers? (Bauman 2008b).
1.2 The Distance From Here: Growing Gaps in a Shrinking World

This compression is a key factor in shaping responses to the global. Individualisation and globalisation do not simply co-exist; they feed each other, drive each other, and lead to an increasing polarisation in our sense of scale. Under globalisation the world can seem to be simultaneously becoming both larger and smaller.\(^3\) While traversing the globe – either physically or virtually – is faster than ever before, with this comes an increased awareness that we are very small, the world is very big, and that there is much in the world that is well beyond our individual spheres of influence. Instead of being makers of the world we become artists of our own lives (Bauman 2008a); to return to this chapter’s epigraph, the individual becomes a ‘pale blue dot’ in comparison to the global. Coupled with the breakdown of social fabric in the layers between the global and the individual, this heralds the contradiction – first outlined by Beck (1992) then furthered by Bauman (2001; 2002; 2007) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) – of being charged as individuals with finding biographical solutions to systemic contradictions (Beck 1992, 137 original emphasis).

This has many implications for our collective ability to engage with global sustainability challenges. As Peter Singer argues, it is not a lack of caring about the world which keeps sustainability concerns from being adequately addressed in the social sphere (Singer 2010, 59). Rather, as Bauman outlines in Society Under Siege, in the face of global problems that are systemic in origin such as extreme poverty and climate change, ethically motivated and informed global action has no adequately global instruments (2002). According to Bauman:

\(^3\) Again, this is not a matter of actual scale; the globe itself has not changed in size over the past two decades, but rather an awareness of it has. This is documented visually by David Harvey in The Condition of Postmodernity (Harvey 1992).
Unlike in the past, the scale of our awareness of the fate of others and the scope of our ability to influence that fate (whether to damage or repair it) do not overlap. ... Knowledge and action no longer overlap, and the realm of their encounter shrinks steadily by comparison to the rapidly expanding area of their discordance.

(Bauman 2002, 214–215)

The individual in a mediatised age is aware of the limited reach of their action and, as Bauman goes on to argue, in the absence of vehicles of effective action we are “cast in the role of bystanders and bound to carry that role for an unbearably long time to come” (2002, 218). This is evident in Anthony Weston’s article “Is It Too Late?”, in which Weston argues that while our collective knowledge of the existence of social and environmental crises is increasing, this knowledge does not necessarily inspire or effect change (1999). As an example, Weston cites the decreasing sense of agency amongst his university students, stating that every year they demonstrate a deeper awareness of ecological concerns, but that every year they seem more and more fatalistic about the world (1999, 46). This is a manifestation of a broader sense of fatalism (or in the case of climate change, catastrophism (Costello et al. 2011, 1868)) in regards to global sustainability concerns; it demonstrates the effects of the systemically driven idea that the gap between individual actors and global problems is too wide to traverse.

In the absence of adequately global instruments with which to respond to global sustainability problems, the common alternative to fatalism appears to be denial. According to Stanley Cohen, denial emerges when “people, organisations, governments or whole societies are presented with information that is too disturbing, threatening or anomalous to be fully observed or openly acknowledged”; such information is therefore “somehow repressed, disavowed, pushed aside or reinterpreted” (2001, 1). Countless examples of this can be seen in the contemporary globalising world. With climate change, for instance, denial is performed
by many political leaders (Antonio and Brulle 2011), framing the problem as a debate despite relative scientific consensus (IPCC 2014). This reinterpretation of the information obfuscates the facts and shifts the focus away from strategies to address the issue itself.\(^4\) Alternatively, issues such as global poverty are underrepresented in public discourse despite the fact that, as Bauman pointed out in 2002, “in an era of information highways the arguments for ignorance are fast losing their credibility” (2002, 204). These demonstrations of collective denial make denial at the individual level a more socially acceptable response. A sense of being ‘too small to change the world’ combines with the institutionalisation of the values outlined in de Tocqueville’s individualism (which call upon each member of the community “to sever himself from the mass of his fellow-creatures” (de Tocqueville 2004, 369)) – minimising a sense that there is a collective responsibility for the present generation to do something (Williston 2012, 176), and problematising an ability to engage in effective collective action even if the desire to do so is present. These factors combined lead to a situation where either fatalism or denial can become the ‘norm’ as a response to global sustainability concerns (Williston 2012).\(^5\)

An understanding of individualisation as a fascination with the construction and reconstruction of identity is also relevant here. While fatalism and denial do form much of the public collective response to sustainability concerns, further scrutiny reveals that when faced with situations that we seemingly cannot influence, the “unconscious barrier” set up by the mind which “prevents the thought from reaching conscious knowledge” (S. Cohen 2001, 5) does not completely cover up the nagging uncertainties posed by global concerns in a world risk society (Beck 2009). Individualisation, it seems, facilitates the translation or

\(^4\) For example, both the mainstream media and academic journal articles feature titles and headlines such as “Climate Change – Fact or Fiction?” (Randers 2008; Tag 2014, 623).

\(^5\) Williston argues this with regard to climate change, but his arguments are applicable across a broad range of social and ecological issues.
compression of an unacknowledged understanding of global risk to the individual scale. In his book *Liquid Times*, for example, Bauman outlines how the global fear of terrorism trickles down to the point where, “we focus on things we can, or believe we can, or are assured that we can influence” (Bauman 2007, 11). He argues that this applies to any number of everyday concerns: from worries about our bodies (such as cholesterol levels or inhaling someone else’s cigarette smoke) to taking action to ensure personal safety (such as putting new CCTV around the house, or driving big SUV cars packed with safety features) (Bauman 2007, 11). A sense of safety is sought through individualised action despite the global origins of the threat. I would suggest that this is true not only of Bauman’s example, but also with a whole host of unacknowledged fears subject to some degree of collective denial, from the threat of climate change to those affected by global poverty – “a deep, never admitted, hidden fear of the excluded billions ... whom the new order is in the process of eliminating” under corporate globalisation (Berger, in Roy 2002, xvi). Individualisation can thus be seen to drive not only the collective denial of global problems, but also the translation of underlying impulses to address these problems into aspects of everyday living more amenable to our control.

1.3 Translating Denial: the Adaptation of Agency

Under individualisation, a similar translation from the global to the individual can be seen with regard to an impulse to respond actively to the sense of unease evoked by global sustainability concerns. As already outlined, the paradigm of individualisation frames us in the gleaming cities of the West as being products of or consumers of the globalising culture rather than active contributors to it. Within this paradigm one can apparently no longer seriously hope to make the world a better place to live, and so the focus shifts to building a better life
for ourselves. As such, an ability to engage with the world in a hopeful or visionary sense is also translated to our own personal identities. In *Society Under Siege*, Bauman outlines the “(un)happiness of uncertain pleasures”, in which a sense of hope for real ‘happiness’ is superseded by pleasure, and where instead of seeking the happiness of a longer term ‘hard-earned better future’ the goal becomes ‘a better now’ – one which is infinitely on the verge of being realised (Bauman 2002, 121-157). Under this paradigm, consumption becomes an absolute end in itself, and the flickering dance between anticipation and realisation – the expectation of consumption and the act of its fulfilment – is in constant flux (Bauman 2002, 148).

Bauman writes of this in relation to general social trends in liquid modernity, but I would suggest that it also links to questions of agency and cultural change. The translation of global fears to a need for individual security is echoed in a translation of an impulse for agency to individual cycles of consumption in the performance and reconstruction of identity. Just as one may feel ‘safer’ buying CCTV and an SUV to placate unacknowledged global fears in a world risk society, one may feel ‘happier’ with the possibility of consuming a broad variety of products to build newer and ‘better’ identities in quelling an unrealised desire to move towards a better world. This appears to me to be a highly effective reorientation: the lack of broader cultural agency for individuals re-inventing themselves “but not under the conditions of their choice” (Bauman, 2001: 7) is obfuscated by the existence of a thousand daily choices about consumption and identity.

The translation of agency from being a maker of the world to the constant reinvention of individual identity can thus be seen to involve the subconscious translation of global concerns to an individual scale. In attempting to engage in conscious, deliberate, or explicit movements toward sustainability, the parameters for action are also marked by a
globalisation/individualisation divide. The phrase ‘think globally, act locally’, which has been a mainstay of the environmental movement since its first use in 1969, is relevant here: I would suggest that under individualisation it has largely become in practice ‘think globally, act individually’. Without the social fabric and local context from within which to take collective action, the options for engaging in cultural change are individualised, and thinking globally leads either to the fatalism and denial already outlined, or to taking action at the individual scale. The mainstay of the ‘business’ of sustainability is conscience-driven or ethical consumption (Carrier and Luetchford 2012); and even outside of market forces campaigns that target ‘the individual’ are widespread, with behaviour change programs for individual actions held out as what is needed for the world to move towards a sustainable future (Moloney and Strengers 2014).

These initiatives and the actions they encourage – such as replacing an incandescent light bulb with a fluorescent globe, buying organic vegetables, or donating a set amount per month to support the life of a child in a developing country – are deeply important, and they do make a real, tangible difference (Madhavan et al. 2012; Norman 2010; Scott 2012). What I wish to unsettle or interrogate, though, is the sense that individual action is the way to move toward a more sustainable world, and to highlight how the broader questions around what is driving unsustainable practices – questions about the make-up and structure of our political and economic systems, as well as the social structures supporting these – can be rendered invisible by a focus on individualised action. This is another translation of the contradiction outlined by Beck, of being charged with seeking biographical solutions to systemic

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6 This date is contested – it has also been argued that its first use in an environmental context was in 1972 by the United Nations Environment Program in the Stockholm Declaration (UNEP 1972).

7 This is a sweeping generalisation, but it is a deliberate one; I should clarify that I am talking about broader cultural trends driven by the forces of individualisation and globalisation. There are many exceptions to these trends in practice.
problems (Beck 1992: Beck, 2009); and as Bauman further argues, globally originated and globally invigorated problems cannot be solved solely by individual solutions (Bauman 2007, 25-26). It therefore becomes evident that in order to adequately address global sustainability concerns, individual action needs to be coupled with an interrogation of the systemic causes of the problems we are seeking to address – that they need to be considered beyond the values of an individualised society in a globalising world.

1.4 Unsettling the Individualised: Towards the Concept of Change

In light of the theory discussed so far in this chapter, it becomes clear that responding to global sustainability concerns from a social and cultural perspective is more complex than simply raising awareness about the issues, and that the interplay between globalisation and individualisation affects our ability to engage in broader cultural change. The act of unsettling these frameworks thus emerges as a site for negotiating the politics of the possible, and the question of moving towards global sustainability becomes broader than taking measurable action. In this situation, the space of resistance is “a dis-location, rather than an opposition” (Nield 2006, 61) – and while it is not always clearly identifiable as a political act, shifting the parameters through which we as individuals view the global can be as radical as the anti-globalisation movement itself (Veltmeyer 2008, 187). The intangible nature of finding moments of disruption in social frameworks renders this a somewhat slippery approach to change; shifts in perspective are not easily visible, and their effects are difficult to quantify. However, therein also lies their strength: acts of disruption in the social sphere can step beyond the reach of policy-making (Goodall 2009, 42) to function as openings or even leverage points for broader global change (Meadows 1999; Hjorth and Bagheri 2006). The act of unsettling the dominant frame does not
provide a pathway to a full paradigm shift toward sustainability (Burns 2012), but in light of the theory explored in this chapter, it can be seen to be an important part of that shift.

Finding moments of disruption in the dominant frame does not just involve altering the frame through which we view the world; it also relates to the parameters through which we engage with it. In a globalising society driven by the lures and seductions of individualism, opening up alternative spaces of engagement for the individual holds considerable political potential. With both globalisation and individualisation being fundamentally concerned with compression (of time, space, social connection, and economic life) (Giddens 1994; Inda and Rosaldo 2008), it follows that acts of expansion – of deepening and unfolding connections – could also disrupt the fatalism, denial, and relocation of agency that underpins contemporary attitudes towards sustainability challenges. Activating other spaces and other worlds is part of the politics of change (Nield 2006, 61). And while the effects are also difficult to quantify, engaging or reengaging with the spaces between the global and the individual can open up the subversive interstices of thought and action that globalisation and individualisation compress (Harvey 2000a, 555). In light of this, Herbert Rauch’s claim that the core challenge at the heart of shifting social systems toward global sustainability is to come to terms with the question of “how to reframe our societies?” (Rauch 2013, 170) can be expanded. In the context of globalisation and individualisation, I would argue that the core challenge at the heart of shifting social systems toward global sustainability is indeed coming to terms with the question of “how to reframe the world?” – but also of how to reengage with and meaningfully reimagine it.

Such a shift would require action and cooperation across a broad range of sectors including social policy, cultural policy, political policy, and economic policy, as well as “a new ontological framing of change” (Moloney and Strengers 2014).
1.5 At the Intersection of Creativity and Sustainability

There are many possible mediums through which to explore the spaces between the globalised and the individualised in seeking to address this challenge, and performance is just one of them. It is, however, one that holds considerable potential – both as a mode of creative work itself, and as part of the broader category of art and creativity. The body of existing work exploring the intersection of creativity, sustainability, and cultural change is considerable, and locating performance as a form of creative work therefore offers insight into its ability to create openings for change.9

One article that I feel offers particularly pertinent insights here, already mentioned in the introduction, is Goodall's essay ‘Footprints’ (2009). Using footprints as her metaphor and literature as her medium, Goodall begins her discussion by giving a personal account of taking an online ‘eco-footprint’ questionnaire, outlining how attempting to shrink her ecological footprint from an initial honest ‘4.6 planet Earths’ down to the ‘one planet mark’ required promises of actions so extreme that she knew she would not enact them in her real life (2009, 36).10 She uses this experience as a launching pad to argue that “the quest for sustainability has to get outside the dynamic of problem solving if it is to avoid defeating itself in a mess of hustling intentions” (2009, 42) and, using literary texts such as Leo Tolstoy’s short story “How Much Does A Man Need?” to illustrate, puts forward a case for stories as a medium for

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9 There is not the scope here for a comprehensive overview of the intersection between sustainability and creativity, but as examples see Gupta (1992), Kagan (2011), Kagan and Hahn (2011), Rhoten, O'Connor, and Hackett (2009), Smith (2005), and Quinn, Ploof, and Hochtritt (2012).
10 This is a straightforward example of the individual being charged with the task of providing the solution to a complex network of social, ecological and economic systems with a series of choices around their own patterns of consumption (which, again, are still worth addressing; I am simply highlighting in the need to also question the global systems that shape the conditions within which we are making these choices).
asking broader, wider reaching, and systemically engaged questions. She explains that:

Good stories are more like ecologies than technologies. They work through living networks of interdependency and pulse with energies too nervous to resolve themselves into any parcel of messages. Instead, they generate images and associations that cross-flash with uncanny complicity between hemispheres of the globe … as if, through them, we were trying to tell ourselves something.

(Goodall 2009, 46)

The argument about stories made here can extend to a number of creative modes, including performance, and I would suggest that this understanding of communication through creative work as fostering living networks of interdependency is significant in the context of a cultural trend where the ‘social safety-net’ (and thus the ability to depend upon each other) is disintegrating (Bauman 2008b). If, as argued in the previous section, the act of opening up alternative spaces of engagement is key to unsettling the globalisation/individualisation divide, creative work has the potential to play an important role in this.

Also relevant here is the emerging body of work regarding contemporary art and the cosmopolitan imagination, led by Nikos Papastergiadis (2011; 2013a; 2013b) and Marsha Meskimmon (2011), which puts forward the ability of art to prompt an alternative understanding of the global based on the cosmopolitan concept a shared global community (Appiah 2006). This ethic itself advocates living networks of interdependency. While Goodall’s focus is on ecological sustainability, Papastergiadis and Meskimmon focus on social and cultural understandings of the world – however, the underlying challenge they are engaging with is the same. Like Goodall, Meskimmon takes the perspective that art can engage and evoke a response where policy does not, stating that:
Art is not synonymous with legislative force, it cannot oblige us to act, its register is affective and not prescriptive. But … this in no way reduces its power to effect change at the level of the subject and such change is at the core of ethical and political agency in the most profound sense.

(Meskimmon 2011, 8)

As McQuire and Papastergiadis jointly highlight, art (and by extension, performance) can take an active role in forming new social relationships, “providing a matrix for new modes of inclusion and forms of collaboration that might counterpoint the extension of commodity production into the interstices of everyday life” (McQuire and Papastergiadis 2005, 10). The alternative frame offered by art does not simply help us to understand the global society: it shifts, unsettles, and re-constitutes it, becoming a lived renegotiation of the present. In evoking the intangible, then, art and creativity can be seen to engage the spectator in ways that are not necessarily shaped by a focus on individual identity, expanding and deepening connections to awaken the possibility of a broader and more inclusive understanding of the global.¹¹

1.6 Performance and the Political in a Globalising World

Performance, as a form of creative work, can therefore be seen to hold the potential to foster living networks of interdependency, and to expand the parameters of the social by functioning as a site for the negotiation of change. Its definition (outlined in the introduction) as what occurs ‘in between’ also locates it as potentially a particularly effective site for negotiating the spaces between the globalised and the individualised. Performance in this context is liminal, located in time and place – a

¹¹ This is a possibility, not a given effect. A number of creative industries are market-driven, and the act of consuming creative work of any form can link in to cycles of constructing and negotiating individualised identities (Elliott and Lemert 2009) or the ‘consumption of experience’ in the unhappiness of uncertain pleasures (Bauman 2002). The potential, however, is there, and this in itself is significant.
bodied activity that situates the spectator in relation (to other spectators, to the performer/s, to the space, to the world). Indeed, the reliance of performance on the existence of a situated spectator means that, from one perspective, a disruption of the dominant framework has already begun at the commencement of any given performance work. To clarify this further: if globalisation involves time-space compression in social life (Giddens 2002; Inda and Rosaldo 2008) and individualisation the compression of our social concern to our individualised selves (Elliott and Lemert 2009), the act of situating the spectator (in time, space, and in relation to other people) sits in contradiction with this.

This is of course a generalisation. While the act of situating a spectator in a broader context can be read as a political act, the extent to which a performance creates moments of disruption in the frames of individualisation and globalisation is also dependent on the content and context of the work, as well as myriad other contributing factors. I am reminded here of Augusto Boal’s now famous statement that “all theatre is necessarily political theatre” because all activities of humankind involve politics and theatre is one of them (Boal 2000, ix). As with Boal’s claim, stating that all performance disrupts the individualised society because it situates the individual spectator within a broader relational context offers a point of interest and an insight into its potential, but means little without further interrogation and exploration. For example, if a performance work valorises the values of contemporary globalisation and the individualised society in its content, the relational nature of the form itself is rendered irrelevant – and there are indeed performance works, such those dubbed ‘McTheatre’ by Dan Rebellato (2006; 2009), that thrive upon the market-driven values of globalisation. There are also performance works, however, which actively disrupt them; for these, the existence of performance as a liminal, bodied space through which to engage the spectator lays a solid foundation for opening up sites of change.
It is also worth recognising that the act of responding to the particular challenge of unsettling the globalised and individualised through performance sits outside the oeuvre of what has often historically been defined as political performance or political theatre. A rousing call to action, such as that sought by Boal (2000), becomes problematic when what is required is a *transformation of a global society* rather than a clearly identifiable political act; and raising awareness about a given issue, cause, or situation (Boon and Plastow 2004; Gómez-Peña 2000) loses its impact when “the list of cataclysms, past and possible, is no longer a surprise” (Weston 1999, 2). Dani Snyder-Young illustrates this in her book *Theatre of Good Intentions: Challenges and Hopes for Theatre and Social Change*, which considers the political efficacy of applied theatre in a globalising world. Amongst other examples, Snyder-Young discusses the difficulty of applying Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* to the problem of global poverty, because there is not an identifiable human agent of the oppression – rather, the problem is the system as a whole (Snyder-Young 2013). It therefore becomes evident that just as the challenge of engaging with global concerns as individualised individuals requires an approach that is particular to the contemporary moment, performance work that answers this challenge must also be responding to contemporary social trends.

A shift towards this is evident in contemporary performance theory and performance criticism. The emerging body of scholarly work on socially engaged art – exemplified by Harvie (2013), Jackson (2011), and Thompson (2011) – highlights a growing understanding of the unique social function performance can play in an increasingly fragmented and mediatised of society, and demonstrates the importance of considering both the social conditions within which performance is produced and the social impacts of its practice. Within the realms of ‘aesthetically turned’ performance (Bishop 2006a), a scholarly focus on ‘spectatorship’
recognises the complexity of navigating the effect of a given performance on the spectator, whether through an ethical frame (see Grehan (2009) and Ridout (2009)), a focus on affect and the ability to respond (Dolan 2005), or considering questions of intimacy, participation, and engagement (see Freshwater (2009), Read (2009), and Ridout (2006)). Similarly, books such as The Local Meets the Global in Performance (Koski and Sihra 2010), and Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research (McKenzie, Roms, and Wee 2010) show how the global affects and manifests within local or regional performance practice, while Rebellato explores the globalisation of performance practice itself (2009).

The insights about performance offered by these texts are particular to the contemporary political moment, and reflect the particularity of performance practice to the changing society in which we live. Considering performance in the specific context of the increasing distance between the globalised and the individualised offers another layer to these understandings; conversely, considering the changing face of the political in a globalising world offers new insights into what it means to make political performance. In disrupting the frameworks of globalisation and individualisation, performance works that are not immediately identifiable as political or as having political content become politicised in the context of global change. The task of unfolding new ways of being in and responding to the global is mirrored in the task of unfolding new ways of responding to each other in performance, whether the response is formed in a black box theatre – for as Rancière outlines, even in the darkness the spectator is active (Rancière 2007) – or out in the public city streets.
1.7 Conclusion

In a world shaped by globalisation and individualisation, it is evident that the alternative spaces of engagement fostered by performance can have broader implications for effecting cultural change. The individualised society, as a counterpart to contemporary globalisation, can affect the ability of individuals to engage with and respond to global sustainability concerns: through the breakdown of broader moral responsibility that individualisation encourages, and through the disintegration of social fabric from within which to form collective responses or take collective action. The individualisation of agency – involving the translation of both global hopes and global fears to the individual sphere – casts those of us in the individualised society as artists of our own lives rather than artists of the world in which we live. In the absence of effectively global instruments, the attempt to engage with global challenges such as climate change and extreme poverty can therefore lead to fatalism, catastrophism, and denial.

Finding a different frame of reference through which to respond to global concerns emerges as a political act, and art and creativity – and specifically performance – can have much to offer in this. The spectator in the context of performance becomes not a metaphorical “pale blue dot” dwarfed by the magnitude of the global, but rather a situated spectator engaged in relation, as part of a temporary living network of interdependency. The potential of performance to be a space for finding moments of disruption in the dominant frameworks of globalisation and individualisation is therefore considerable – and, in the act of engaging the spaces between these two forces, performance emerges as a productive site for negotiating the possibility of change.
REFRAMING THE INDIVIDUALISED SOCIETY:

STAGING THE SYSTEMIC IN TRUST

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?"

David Foster Wallace ~ *This Is Water*

In attempting to respond to global challenges in a world where the systemic is presented as the personal and the culture of globalisation as individual choice, examining the cultural conditions within which we are operating becomes a political act. As Foster Wallace argues, observing the patterns and paradigms that surround us, recognising the influence they have in our lives, and attempting to choose our own response, requires a conscious effort to engage: “we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over: ‘This is water. This is water’” (Foster Wallace 2009, 5). Performance, with its ability to re-frame the present, can function as one such reminder. In this chapter I explore that potential through the example of Richter and Van Dijk’s *Trust*.¹ I begin by critically

¹ *Trust* was originally staged at the Schaubühne in Berlin in 2009 (Schaubühne 2014). The performance I saw was its presentation at the *Perth International Arts Festival* in 2011; a lapse of time which Alison Croggon suggests lends the piece even more layers of meaning (Croggon 2011).
discussing *Trust* in relation to the cultural theory about globalisation and individualisation outlined in Chapter One, tracing specific moments in the piece where the core values and impacts of individualisation are laid out on stage for the viewer to respond to. I then consider the significance of this act of engagement in the broader context of the globalisation/individualisation divide, using *Trust* as a case study to argue that re-framing the systemic in performance can open up possibilities for moving towards change.

### 2.1 Tracing Cycles of Collapse in Liquid Modern Life

As Edward Goldsmith states, “it is an astounding thing to watch a civilization destroy itself because it is unable to re-examine the validity ... of an economic ideology” (in Goldsmith and Mander 2001, 11). Richter and Van Dijk’s *Trust* re-examines the validity of the economic ideologies driving contemporary global capitalism by exploring their effects on the individuals operating within its frame. In *Trust* we can see Bauman’s ‘liquid modernity’ live on stage, alongside Elliot and Lemert’s four dimensions of the new individualism – “a relentless emphasis on self-reinvention; an endless hunger for instant change; a preoccupation with short-termism and episodicity; and a fascination with speed and dynamism” (Elliott and Lemert 2009, xi; original emphases) – and the cultural trends outlined in Chapter One are presented and represented in the creative work in a variety of ways.

As a whole, *Trust* is a masterful act of balance and transformation, and the work itself is ‘liquid’ as it negotiates the space between the universal and the particular; the institutional and the individual; the fictional and factual; frenzied motion and the moment of stillness before collapse. Like liquid modern life, the form of *Trust* is fragmented as it shifts between text and movement (and also within this between dance, physical
theatre, narrative, poetry, personal confession, and satire), and the work overall not only presents the globalisation/individualisation divide to the audience but also explores some of the implications of this divide for attitudes towards change. As such, the piece functions as an excellent site for exploring the impact of globalisation and individualisation in more detail, and for considering how theatre and performance can invite us to critically re-evaluate the cultural paradigms within which we are operating.

Figure 1. Cycles of collapse in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)

The relationship between the individualised and the globalised is established in Trust’s opening scene ‘The Searchers’. The work opens to a sparse, industrial set; it is populated with performers but each occupies their own space – like the global system it critiques, the stage appears to dwarf the individuals who seek to inhabit it. The scene which unfolds fluctuates between text spoken into a microphone and movement cycles of collapse: “restless, swirling movement that seems to have its impulse
from internal disarray, forcing itself to the surface of the performers and propelling them, often explosively, across the space or into one another” (Jones 2011, 17). Repetition is rife, in both the spoken text and the physical expression. While at times different performers perform the same series of movements or speak the same cycle of text, this is not done with a sense of unity; rather, with the timing of each performer’s cycle placed out of sync with the others, the effect is of a series of individuals caught in the same rut – or running in the same hamster wheel – but each doing so on their own.

To mix my metaphors somewhat, this is an embodiment of Bauman’s ‘swarm’ in which the members “assemble, disperse, and come together again from one occasion to another, each time guided by different, invariably shifting relevancies, and attracted by changing and moving targets” (Bauman 2008b, 16). Bauman likens the members of the ‘swarm’ to Andy Warhol’s slightly varied yet endlessly copied images of celebrities (ibid., 15); Trust embodies this in this opening scene through the slightly varied (yet endlessly copied) movement and text. The collapsing performers are often paired, but the connection is fragile; the pairs shift from one partner to the next, and the moment of collapse is often also the moment of separation. The close of the scene highlights this separation; after such constant motion there is stillness, with two people counter-balanced in the centre of the stage, toes touching – their arms slowly slip apart until, letting go, they collapse away from each other to the ground. It is clear that, as in Bauman’s swarm, “liberated from their institutional frame (now censured and represented as a “cage” or “prison”), human bonds have become tenuous and frail, easily breakable and more often than not short-lived” (Bauman 2008b, 17). This is a poignant illustration in practice of the disintegration of the broader social fabric under the paradigm of individualisation.
Alongside cycles of collapse with the fragility of human bonds, ‘The Searchers’ also illustrates another collapse linked to this fragility: the collapse of a sense of agency in changing the conditions in which we live. The text in the opening sequence could initially appear to counter the constantly changing frenzy of physical motion – “And if I left you it wouldn’t change anything/And if I stayed it wouldn’t change anything/And if you looked at me it wouldn’t change anything/And if you just sat there it wouldn’t change anything” (2).² However, it becomes evident that this, too, is a cycle; the text, passed from one performer to the next, moves slowly to “I can’t do this/You know/I can’t do this anymore/I just can’t fucking do this anymore” (2) then through to “Err err err/Too complicated/Let’s just leave things the way they are/.../I’m so sorry/Forget what I said” (3), and then back to a variation of the beginning of the cycle again. It is a cycle that shows the contradictions of individualisation outlined in Chapter One: that how one lives involves seeking biographical solutions to systemic contradictions, and that while individualisation appears to offer boundless choice, this choice is actually limited (Elliott and Lemert 2009). Changing the relationship that the performer is in is “too complicated” and “exhausting” (7), despite an evident desire for change. The performer on the one hand apparently has agency – the freedom to leave, to pack their bags, to stay, stand by the window, kiss, fuck, fall asleep, whatever they choose (2-7) – but this agency falls within certain parameters, and from a different perspective each of these actions “also does not change anything” (6). The situation presented is individual, but there is a nod to the systemic; with different performers performing the same cycle, it is clear that this is not one person’s individual problem but rather an individualised one – an effect of the individualised society within broader cycles of collapse.

² The script of Trust that I use for citations in this thesis is from Falk Richter’s website, where it is available for free download (Richter 2009). The page numbers correspond to the page numbers of the document in my version of Microsoft Word as opposed to a formally published text, so there is scope for slight variation across other programs or downloads.
2.2 From Fatalism to Denial: ‘The Fourth Generation’ and ‘The Great Bark’

The relationship between the individualised and the globalised that is implicit in the first scene of *Trust* is made explicit in the scene that follows. ‘The Fourth Generation’ embodies a distinct shift in style, form and pace: a solo performer stands centre stage and delivers a comically lengthy monologue, occasionally illustrated visually by the people sprawled on armchairs around him. While void of repetition, the monologue, too, is ‘liquid’; its meandering form loosely follows a taxi ride to the airport, but its long, winding narrative verges on stream of consciousness as the focus shifts to snatches of memory, description, and conversations with the taxi driver, with barely time to pause for breath.

Kay, it is slowly revealed, is on his way to Shanghai to attend a meeting about a book called *Collapsing Systems* (to which every significant philosopher, ecologist, sociologist and systems analyst in the world has been invited). On the way, however, he joins an art installation of a tangle of bodies in armchairs with books about globalisation, consumerism and capitalism on their chests – “his body wants to become part of this landscape of bodies” (9) – and does not make it to Shanghai. The journey is continued by ‘us’ (the narrator and the audience) until we finally reach the airport in a taxi, but there we too abandon ship:

But we are now going to leave this setting, we're not going to read Atsushi Lyngursvōtsson’s book COLLAPSING SYSTEMS together, that would go too far, and we might not even understand his book, and even if we did we wouldn’t know what to do with all that knowledge. ... what would we do with this information? Agree on a new system? How would we do that? ...
Let’s just leave things the way they are
It’s too complicated to change it now
...
It was so so
Exhausting

Let’s turn up the radio and listen to Judith singing.

What is particularly pertinent here is the reprise of text from the first scene – ‘let’s just leave things the way they are’ – reframed to be a direct response to global political and economic concerns. The same text which in the first scene demonstrates the fragility of individual human relationships (alongside the idea that despite their shifting shape they do not fundamentally change), becomes instead an embodiment of Cohen’s ‘denial’ (both in the sense that “I did not know” and “I could not do” (S. Cohen 2001)) as apparently the only feasible response to global systems of collapse.

Figure 2. The Fourth Generation, in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)
If as Cohen suggests, “the lower you are in the hierarchy, the easier it is to deny responsibility” (2001, 89), when matters of scale come into play the individualised individual in a global context can be seen as “the most passive recipient possible, at the end of a long chain of command” (ibid.). As individuals (cast as spectators and bystanders), what else could we do with more detailed information about the collapse of consumer capitalism? The performer asks: “would we all sit down together and talk about what we really need or not and what a happy, fulfilling life could look like which also takes into account people on other continents who are far from being sick of luxury?” (10) It is a rhetorical question; the naivety and unlikelihood of a ‘yes’ is implied even before the decision to leave things as they are is stated. Here we see that “in the face of the (seemingly) inevitable … a crocodile skin of indifference is developed against the cruel news” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 193) at the intersection of fatalism and denial: the volume is turned up on Judith’s loungey Bossa Nova as she soothingly croons “you need more, you need more, you need more, you need more” (10).

A different angle of Coen’s ‘denial’ is presented with a comedic edge in “The Great Bark” – an exchange between a row of people sitting on chairs in an unspecified setting (it could easily be read as a workshop, class, audition, or group therapy session) and a leader who is encouraging them to ‘bark’ (12 - 13). The scene begins with a participant who answers with a timid meow (“Go ahead and bark ... really loud, angry, aggressive” “Meow” (12)) and eventually manages a very soft yap. When the leader opens up the challenge to the group (“aggressive, loud, angry ... YOU’VE HAD ENOUGH, go ahead and bark, now bark, BARK!” (12)), the individuals huff and puff and strain themselves in a comical fashion but the best that any of them can manage is “a quiet, feeble bark that partly turns into an uncertain cough” (12). As spectators we can see two aspects of the effect of individualisation here, through a failed attempt to pull together collective action that steps outside of
purely individual autonomy, and a failed attempt to grasp what it might mean to act, resist, or even simply engage with the current situation.

The exchange between the leader and the participants reminds me of an interview with political and literary theorist Michael Hardt in Astrid Taylor’s film *Examined Life*, in which Hardt recalls – upon being told by revolutionaries in Nicaragua that the most useful thing the volunteers from the USA could do to help would be to go home to start a revolution *there* – his complete lack of a sense of what it might mean to do that. (“It is easy’ the revolutionaries replied. ‘First, you construct an armed cell in the mountains…” (A. Taylor 2009)). Hardt emphasises that it was not that he ‘did not know’ in terms of the physical actions (how to construct an armed cell, where to find a gun), but rather that a sense of what it might *mean* to start a revolution in the USA seemed impossible to grasp; “the whole idea of what it involved was lacking” (Hardt, in A. Taylor 2009). With ‘revolution’ placed in the context of a now globalising economic, social, and political system, this sentiment resonates strongly in “The Great Bark”. Here we see individuals who are unable to practice resistance, but it is not due to an identifiable restraint or oppression; there is no discernible sense amongst those attempting to ‘bark’ of being worried about the consequences that an expression of retaliation could bring. What is missing, though, is the *concept* of retaliation: this is evident in the comically blank faces as the leader shouts “no, imagine you’re angry, you’ve had it, you’ve HAD ENOUGH say NOW I’VE HAD ENOUGH” (12), the smiling self-satisfaction of the participants at the achievement of a feeble yap, and the sense of being bemused and amused as the instructor grows increasingly vehement in his attempts to elicit a response that steps outside of polite acquiescence. The enthusiasm and willingness to *attempt* to bark and the unquestioning acceptance of the leader’s instructions makes this all the more marked, showing the absence of a sense of agency with regard to the systemic in an individualised society.
While the apparent absence of an ability to respond is played out to great comedic effect by the enthusiastic participants in ‘The Great Bark’, the critique in this scene does not rest solely with the group as they attempt to raise their voices above a *sotto voce* yap. The leader, shouting with increasing volume while the group looks on in a mildly puzzled fashion, also embodies a lack of agency. As an individualised entity seeking some sense of collective action, the character comically loses his perspective and restraint when greeted by the group’s incomprehension, until at the close of the scene he has lost control and is shouting ineffectually to no one in particular:

BARK, GO ON, BARK, YOU’VE HAD ENOUGH, YOU DON’T WANT THIS ANYMORE, YOU WON’T BE PUSHED AROUND ANYMORE you’re about to beat everything and everyone to a pulp, you’re going into this bank and you’re going to grab the first banker you see and whack his fucking mug onto the in-tray on his fucking counter and make him eat those fucking worthless fund papers and hit his head against the fucking ad poster that
promises endless returns hanging on the wall next to him … and
then you leave that piece of shit there and move on to the next
one, keep following the hierarchy, higher and higher…

Here we see that, as Bauman outlines, “periodic outbursts of protest …
seem to be the only, sorely inadequate, alternative to a meek
acceptance of the state of affairs” and also that “all in all, though full of
sound and fury, they signify little real change in the balance of power”
(Bauman 2002, 218).

This also links to the interview with Hardt; the idea of having an effect on
global financial systems by punching a series of bankers in the head can
parallel the idea of building an armed cell in the mountains as the
catalyst for political change in the USA (A. Taylor 2009). The pre-existing
tools for ‘resistance’ available to those wishing to engage in change do
not match the tools needed for a shifting contemporary world (Beck and
Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 160).³ It is clear that the leader’s desire for
change in ‘The Great Bark’ is coupled with an absence of somewhere to
direct it: there is not an identifiable person or party of people who can be
held accountable for global crises, but rather a complex web of
interdependencies which span sectors, countries, and economies of
scale, marked by “a vast group of fracture lines, cracks and gaps among
which no one any longer knows the way” (Sichtermann, in Beck and
Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 160). The leader is calling for a response, but
how this response would play out is undetermined, and the somewhat
hysterical journey of fantasised violence which ‘follow[s] the hierarchy,

³ Perhaps the closest movement to having an impact at a systemic level in the recent
history of the globalising west was the ‘Occupy’ movement, which Hardt himself was
involved in and has written about (Hardt and Negri 2011). The diffused focus of Occupy
and its attempt to be accessible across interests, constituencies and cultures marks it
as a standout movement in responding to the complexities of globalisation. However,
while as a past movement it has undoubtedly planted seeds of change for individuals
and communities, on the systemic level the movement has unfortunately remained
within what Slavoj Žižek calls The Year of Dreaming Dangerously (Žižek 2012b). The
reasons for this are explored in detail by Dean in her book The Communist Horizon
(2012).
higher and higher’ (13) holds no promise of change beyond a reactionary expression of anger. Through both sides of the interaction, then, we as spectators are faced with the difficulty of how to engage in change in a world where ethically motivated action has no global tools (Bauman 2002); there is no party to clearly identify with as spectators in ‘The Great Bark,’ as the role of ‘fighting back’ or responding in this scene is as comical and ineffective as the role of meek acceptance.

2.3 ‘Trust Me’: the Precarious Nature of Uncertain Pleasures

Themes of fatalism, denial, and the absence of adequately global instruments (both conceptual and practical) through which to effect global change, recur throughout the performance of Trust. Also evident is the translation of agency and an impulse for broader change to consumption, short-term ‘pleasure’, and identity. In ‘Trust Me’ – another sprawling monologue marked by a lack of pause or even space for breath – we see the globalised become the individualised through a lounge-room scene in which a spectacularly unfaithful lover who simultaneously embodies the personal, the political, and the economic confesses all to her partner. What Judith confesses is the epitome of a life lived for episodes of pleasure without thought for later consequences, shifting from the construction of a better tomorrow to the feverish chase of a different today (Bauman 2002, 21). She begins with sexual infidelity,4 moves to financial infidelity5 which grows to the national and

4 “Yes, I know I’ve cheated on you…but sex with you was just so dull these past few years and Fred … had so much time and when he didn’t there was always Alfredo or Dominik or Francesco” (11).
5 “…and they all wanted cars so I gave them yours, I mean three of the four, one is still left, was left, on the way over here today I forgot it, err, somewhere or sold it, I can’t remember” (11).
even global scale,⁶ and closes with her heading off on holiday ‘to get away from it all’, advising her lover Kay to learn to speak Chinese as quickly as possible (12).

The performer’s glib carelessness mixed with charm shows the sparkle and allure of the pleasures promised by individualism, and her repeated plea of “TRUST ME” alongside assurances that from now on (or “by Monday afternoon in three weeks’ time at the latest” (11)) it will all be different and she won’t do it again, hark back to the text of the first scene; “and if I … it wouldn’t change anything”. Judith will clearly not change, and she is clearly not worthy of trust; again, this is Bauman’s ‘liquid modern’ world in which all depth is treacherous, where consumer life is a never-ending series of new beginnings, and where “the surface is the sole space that promises relative safety; not the absence of danger, but at least the hope that the danger can be fled before it strikes” (Bauman 2002, 152–154). While the character here is comically shallow she is not stupid; the deftness with which she weaves from one mistake to the next dodging catastrophe before it strikes (for herself, at least) shows considerable skill and daring. Denial becomes the performance of a relentless pursuit of pleasure without acknowledgement of the causes or consequences.

Judith can be seen here to embody Bauman’s ‘(un)happiness of uncertain pleasures’, in which the trick is to catch each fleeting moment of pleasure, consume it on the spot and be ready for the next (Bauman 2002, 156). Judith catches them with dexterity. As these are traits of individualisation, though, it is particularly notable that she can also be read as embodying the banks of Germany, the Governments of the European Union, the corporate CEOs, even the global financial system

⁶ “Oh, and if you go out, err, don’t be surprised, the tram and the hospital and the, err, water supply company, I’ve done a very clever cross-border leasing deal or whatever it’s called and lent them to Shanghai via Poland and the Ukraine … your bank advisor can explain all of it if he’s still there, i.e. it’s still there, the bank, because it’s in on the deal and if it crashes then it’ll be gone too” (12).
itself. In her monologue the repeated requests for money grow alongside the careless loss of it:

huh, now I've, shit, fuck, I put the four billion in my jeans by mistake and they're, oh shit, in the washing machine and oh dear, well, err, I mean, sorry, could you help me out again … five, six billion, that should be enough, that'll see me through to next week, great, thanks, you're an absolute angel, this time I won't leave the money in the taxi by mistake or tip it down the incinerator by mistake ... sorry, won't happen again.

(11)

In addition to this we see Kay’s private assets sold off to other countries or other owners; “if you want to take the train you have to err buy it back first and then buy a ticket, I hope that's okay” (12).

Figure 4. Judith and Kay in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)

This is deliciously entertaining satire, though the parallels with broader systems of finance and governance in response to the Global Financial Crisis ring almost painfully real. In an interview with Richard Sennett, for
example, Richter describes the German government finding 500 – 600 billion euro for a rescue package for the Financial Services Industry after years of saying there was no money for education (Richter and Sennett 2010, 4), and Sennett speaks of bosses of car makers in the USA flying to Washington in their private jets to ask for financial assistance (Richter and Sennett 2010, 6). With Judith as individual pleasure seeker and financial institution, we again see the globalised and individualised as mirrors of each other; they follow the same cycles of collapse, embody the same contradiction of constant change alongside an inability to change at a broader level, and engage with the same patterns of character. Thus it becomes clear that if the individualised is shaped by the globalised it is shaped in its own image; whether it is the bright, perky Judith who speaks with dizzying speed, or the dumbstruck Kay, cast as a bystander unable to speak or respond as all that he trusted crumbles before him, leaning forward on his armchair with eyes wide and mouth hanging open in shock.

2.4 Che Guevara in Style: ‘I’m Like Money’ and the Shifting Nature of Agency

The translation of agency to the parameters of individual identities in a liquid modern world is made explicit in ‘I’m Like Money’. If Judith in ‘Trust Me’ is the pleasure-seeker skimming the surface in denial of causes or consequences, the performer in ‘I’m Like Money’ can be read as the individual aware of the situation and upset at the lack of tools available to her through which to respond differently: “I can’t just buy myself a Che Guevara t-shirt at Prada every time I’m angry and strut down the Ku Damm in it” (16). Here we can see discontent with the growing gap between “individuality as fate” and “individuality as capacity for self-assertion” (Bauman 2001, 47), as the performer directly addresses the

7 The performance in Perth used ‘King Street’ (the city’s premier shopping precinct for luxury goods) for ‘Ku Damm’, lending the line local relevance.
audience with her anger growing until it is almost comical as she shouts “YESTERDAY I BOUGHT THIS BLOUSE AT ESCADA it’s very pretty, isn’t it? BUT MY LIFE HASN’T CHANGED BECAUSE OF IT, I’M STILL THE SAME” (16).

Figure 5. The Escada blouse in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)

While the concerns expressed here can perhaps sound like trivial ‘first world problems’, the critique goes deeper – the apparent self-obsession with identity cuts to the core of individualisation’s casting of people as consumers rather than makers of the world and culture within which they operate. The purchase of a Che Guevara t-shirt (from Prada, no less) in order to express dissent – an image which is repeated in later sections as the form of the work itself breaks down into shorter, less coherent fragments – is a fitting image for demonstrating the use of individual consumption as the tool through which to challenge consumerism in a
Claire Bishop’s response to Antony Gormley’s ‘One And Another’ is relevant here; as Bishop outlines, it is acceptable to perform one’s dissent in an individualised society, but “in a world where everyone can air their views to everyone, we are faced not with mass empowerment but with an endless stream of egos levelled to banality” (Bishop 2012, 277). Opinions and ideas lose their broader impact in their delegation to the realm of the individual; in an individualised society it appears that, as the performer sums up the in one pithy sentence: “all I can do is change my style, that’s all I can change” (16).

The global perspective enters into this scene too, as the parallel between the individualised identity and the flow of global markets again becomes blurred in metaphor. The performer in “I’m Like Money” states that “every day you have to check if I’m still worth something because it changes every day, my worth, my relationship to other people, and I’m in constant danger of becoming worthless overnight, I’m in constant danger of collapsing” (17). The performer could be speaking here of the individual in a liquid modern world where one’s job is uncertain, one’s relationship is uncertain, and one continually performs on social media to their friends to demonstrate that their lives are interesting and they are worth being friends with (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 8–11). On the other hand, she could embody Beck’s ‘world at risk’, where according to the global media everything – whether it is the economy, ecology, or national security – is constantly on the brink of collapse (Beck 2009). Again, the individual becomes the global and the global individual; and in light of the danger of imminent collapse, the sense of outrage at the beginning of the scene slowly ebbs to acceptance.

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8 This can be read as the social translation of purchasing a ‘green’ product as activism for ecological sustainability; while some ‘green products have a lighter footprint, there are also ‘greenwashed’ products which have a similar environmental impact to their mainstream counterparts but simply give the illusion of being green (Carrier and Luetchford 2012).

9 One and Another was a participatory performance piece which featured a public platform in Trafalgar Square for 100 consecutive days, upon which individuals could express their viewpoints and ideas (Gormley 2010).
The blurring of the line between the individual and the global is particularly pertinent as here an expression of a desire for agency becomes the performance of acceptance, and by the end of *Trust* this performer too is practicing denial through comfort and safety; “everything has become so safe/I am guided by an electronic navigating system that tells me exactly where to go/Guides me from outer space to absolute precision … I always arrive” (40). As Tsing states:

> To invoke the global is to call attention to the speed and density of interconnections among people and places. In this imagery, the planet overwhelms us in its rush toward the future; we must either sit on top of it or be swamped and overcome.

(Tsing 2008, 70)

*Trust* shows people swamped and overcome, but with one character at the close of the piece successfully sitting ‘on top’ of the world, devoid of human connection, in quiet acceptance:

> If I need something I get it, and if I take a wrong turn then I’m corrected only a few seconds later, and if I throw you out the window by mistake I just say sorry and then you forgive me, and when I’ve burned 500 billion euro then I just make a call and then someone reprints them and just gives them back and then I can burn them again and again and again and I always get them back.

(45)

In the context of global change toward sustainability, this shift is significant: even the character controlling the global markets has, in one sense, a complete lack of agency in the apparent inability of the individual to affect the systemic.
2.5 Reframing the Everyday

It can clearly be seen from the few examples outlined here that as a performance work *Trust* can act as a critical frame through which to view the individualised society. This is deeply important in the context of sustainability concerns, as providing a critical framework through which to respond to the paradigms and patterns within which we are living opens up opportunities to respond to the global in different ways. In considering questions of sustainability there is a need for a broader, more systemically-focused re-evaluation of the global which moves beyond individual action and beyond policy and modelling: “models can lead to imposition, and humanity has a poor track record when it comes to imposing mandatory forms of equity and economic limitation” (Goodall 2009, 45). Instead of imposing different patterns of behaviour upon the spectator, as Goodall makes clear with regard to stories, creative work ‘calls’ to viewer – “and it’s the calling that counts” (*ibid.*).

Similarly, McQuire and Papastergiadis argue that “to consider the place of art today is not a matter of imagining alternative places that exist outside capitalism” but rather to find a practice that “interrogates from within … allow[ing] a space for ethical relations and the appropriate language that can make sense of specific situations” (McQuire and Papastergiadis 2005, 7). *Trust*, through all its seeming chaos, fragmentation, and cycles of collapse, ‘calls’ to the audience through carefully constructed images, scenes, and passages of text. As such, it utilises performance as an appropriate language to ‘make sense’ of a seemingly senseless world. The act of presenting the human consequences of globalisation on stage, while not a political call to action, is therefore political in its recognition of the commonly unseen ‘water’ (to return to the epigraph by Foster Wallace (2009)) in which we operate. As Rich outlines, “where languages and images help us name and recognise ourselves and our condition … there is a complementarity
as necessary as the circulation of blood” (Rich 2002, 154), and recognising and naming the broader systems driving our responses to the global through a work such as *Trust* is the first step towards questioning and reimagining them.

The impact of this act of recognition is strengthened in *Trust* in the blurring of the line between the political and the personal. Hybrid and fragmented in both form and content, *Trust* is perhaps the most overtly ‘political’ of my case studies, as on the surface it appears to be wearing its politics on its sleeve: a critical engagement with consumer capitalism through movement and theatrical text. What sets this piece apart from many other works that criticise corporate globalisation, however, is the interplay between the personal and political in its critique. While dealing with a broad economic system, *Trust* does not offer an easily identifiable message, and neither is it a rousing call to arms. It does not fall into the trap of citing tropes or even well-worn truths of an established anti-capitalist movement, and the only ‘slogans’ or catch-phrases are those satirically placed in an art gallery as Kay moves through them in ‘The Fourth Generation’: “there is more to life than laundry, … the simple truth about dishwashing, … the fine art of snacking” (2009, 8).

Rather, *Trust* places its focus on human relationships (the effect of the collapsing economic systems on the individual people living in and through it) but it continually, almost relentlessly, locates these relationships within a broader cultural critique. *Trust* is not a performance of politics – indeed, as Alan Read highlights, politics and performance perform distinctly different functions (2009, 25–26) – but it is politically inflected. *Trust* presents global problems without attempting to educate the audience about them – instead it presents the global in conversation with the audience. It assumes their understanding of global financial collapse, presents moments of the personal everyday for the individual to connect to, and, importantly, leaves gaps for the audience to fill in the
creation of meaning. In the merging of the global and the individual alongside the blurring of the personal and the political, Trust invites each member of the audience to see themselves in the context of broader cultural influences and the broader economic markets, not as an individual but as one of many individuals similarly affected by systemic global cycles of collapse.

Figure 6. The ‘island of unused, unloved bodies’ in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)

This is furthered in the performance by another act of stepping outside of clearly defined categories: the blurring of the line between what is fact and what is fiction. While the content of Trust shifts from poignant and poetic to disjointed and fragmented, it also shifts between the real and the imagined. This ambiguity is present with reference to the global scale: for example, as already outlined in the discussion of the segment ‘Trust Me’, the quantities of money carelessly mislaid or misappropriated by Judith echo the factual quantities lost by the European banks in the Global Financial Crisis (Richter and Sennett 2010, 4–6). It is also present at the individual scale through the performers themselves: for
example when Van Dijk, a performance-maker and the co-creator of *Trust*, speaks in a monologue about the stress of a looming deadline for a grant application for a show, it could be Anouk-the-performance-maker or Anouk-the-performer speaking. Another example is performer Stefan’s discussion of social media and the need to constantly perform his identity:

Most people on Facebook are simply better than me: they have funnier, funkier, more original lines, cooler pictures and ... some of them are even cross-linked to Quentin Tarantino and I only know 20% of the people who are my friends and they’re all just unemployed actors, drama students or my parents.

*(Richter 2011, 34)*

It is unclear in both of these examples, among others, whether the actor is speaking for themself or speaking a part; while moments appear to be personal there are other moments that are clearly fictional – such as the landscape of shifting gold courses that Stefan moves on to – so the performances are also not easily identifiable as biographical. There are also no ‘character’ names to differentiate characters from actors, and it is not specified whether the characters played by the same actor shift in different scenes. For example, we as spectators do not know if the pleasure-seeking Judith in ‘Trust Me’, played by Judith Rosmair, is the same Judith who sings “you need more, you need more” to distract us from an attempt to question global economic structures (10); or whether the Kay (played by Kay Bartholomäus Schulze) who got lost to an island of bodies in “The Fourth Generation” is the same Kay who has spent three weeks over fourteen years with his lover as they argue about how the time was divided up (14).

This not only highlights the fractured and shifting nature of the individualised society but also, with threads that move from performer to performer and sections that recur, broadens the seemingly individual
Bauman maintains that hearing the stories of other individuals does little to challenge the individualised society at its core – that at most there is a recognition that an individual elsewhere is struggling with the same things that you are struggling with, but that both of you are still struggling on your own, individually (Bauman 2008b, 121). This links to Sennett’s critique of the “sharing of intimacies” as a proxy for real community (Sennett 1996) – an imagined, transitory community which is as fluid and shifting as liquid modern life.

This critique could potentially be applied to Trust, as performance work is shifting and transitory. However, with the disruption of the individual in the intimacies shared on stage in Trust – through shifting, hybrid characters who traverse the real and the imagined, and change their function within each scene or movement piece without changing their names – I would suggest that there is also a disruption of the

10 At its most personal, from feelings about Facebook to struggles in relationships to seeking a sense of value and worth in a world on the constant brink of collapse.
individualised. While the characters and situations in Trust are not ‘universal’, neither are they clearly unique, distinct, or autonomous. The intimate is inflected with the global, and the characters’ seemingly distinctly personal struggles are shown to be driven by broader cycles of collapse, transferrable between characters, between ‘real’ life and the fictional, and located within the political. This, again, is an example in practice of how performance can bring the seemingly invisible ‘water’ of globalisation and the individualised society back into the frame.

2.6 The Act of Collective Viewing

In responding to a performance work that takes the ‘individual’ and reveals it to be part of a broader culture of individualisation, the act of engaging with it as part of a body of spectators is also significant. As Grehan highlights, the individual spectator within a performance space becomes both an individual and part of a collective: “in this context each spectator negotiates between his or her own individual responses to a work and the responses, when discernible, of those others who are also in attendance” (2009, 4). According to Heather Lilley, the space of forming responses in relation to other spectators can lead to “temporary interpretive communities that resonate with our wider sense of social belonging” (2010, 36), while Jen Harvie argues that the sense of community that can be fostered in theatre audiences offers opportunities for positive social change (2009, 74–75). The act of collective experiencing, it becomes evident, is fundamentally at odds with the individualist creed.

Even if the communities (as warned of by Bauman and Sennett) are temporary, their existence impacts the experience of engaging with the work, and the disruption of individualisation that takes place within the text and movement of Trust, for example, is further politicised by the act
of responding to it simultaneously with an audience of fellow spectators. At the risk of drawing too heavily on the personal here, an example of this can be seen in a conversation I had with a friend of mine after a performance of *Trust* in Perth. The friend spoke of how she had been moved by the section in which a performer, moving around a series of armchairs in failed resistance, speaks of how he “used to want to change the world”. My friend was wondering how the writer had ‘seen inside her head’ to her feelings when she had stopped being politically active – something she apparently felt was unique and particular to her. The scene was an expression of what she felt was inexpressible, perhaps what Read speaks of when he posits that in performance “the inexplicable becomes palpable” (2009, 163). The conversation that ensued within our broader group of friends after the performance revealed similar feelings amongst other spectators – bringing the seemingly individual into a broader cultural frame. The personal, in this context, was thus revealed to have its roots in the systemic. This is, of course, one very particular example – but it is an example of how, in opening up what appears to be individual into the realms of collective cultural engagement, the broader influences that shape these responses can be interrogated.

This act of collective experiencing is enhanced by a sense of global continuity in the spectatorial responses to *Trust*. The success of the work across cities such as Berlin, Madrid, Avignon, Amsterdam, and Montreal (disparate cities, but which still all fit within the “polished, expensive, globally networked cities of the West” (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 3)) shows that spectators from different local cultures and with different languages can respond similarly to the work (Schaubühne 2014). Indeed, the night that I saw *Trust* in Perth, Western Australia, the post-show ‘Artist Q&A’ centred around the surprisingly effective translation of a work that was originally created in response to a particular situation of
European economic collapse to an economically stable, geographically isolated city in Australia in the midst of a mining boom.\footnote{There was no record taken of the post-show artist talk, however evidence of the event itself can be found at the Perth Festival website (PIAF 2011), and key reviews of the production reflect its relevance to contemporary Australia (Croggon 2011; Jones 2011; Noakes 2011).}

I do not mean to infer that the work is therefore somehow ‘universal’, but rather to highlight that the political nature of the act of collective experiencing extends from the local to the global; the ‘imagined community’ involving the spectator and the broader local audience (Lilley 2010) can become an imagined ‘global community’ too. Just as the individual spectator reads the work differently in the context of being part of an audience (fostering in this case a sense that the values and struggles presented in the work embody collective cultural patterns rather than purely individual identities), the production in a particular city or country can be read differently in a global context. Again, then, the systemic is brought clearly into the frame, and broader cultural questions that are often obfuscated by political rhetoric (Rich 2002) are raised implicitly by the context in which the work is experienced. As Nicholas Ridout states, “there is something that takes place in the theatre that seems capable of activating in an audience a feeling of our compromised, alienated participation in the political and economic relations that make us appear to be who we are” (Ridout 2006, 93–94). \textit{Trust} presents an example of how performance can embody this, as both forms of collective experiencing disrupt the frame of the individualised society.

\textbf{2.7 Questioning the Frame}

\textit{Trust} offers the audience an opportunity to interrogate the fatalism, denial, and lack of agency with regard to broader cultural change that the
globalisation/individualisation divide evokes. In the context of encouraging or creating opportunities for movement toward sustainability, I should recognise that there is also the potential for the piece to work the other way. There is the possibility that Trust could function as a presentation of the global which further invites fatalism in its communication of familiar political concerns (similar to the well-worn lists of looming ecological catastrophes with which Weston begins his article about catastrophism and hope (Weston 1999)), or that sparks denial as the spectator gains an understanding of the systemic nature of the seemingly individual responses to collapsing global systems. There is also the possibility that a work such as Trust falls prey to the fact that “it has become fashionable to critique our society in the vain hope to save it, in the theatre and through art more generally” (Ostermeier and Boenisch 2014, 19), losing its political impact by the expectation that it will challenge the status quo (Dean 2012, 21). These remain possibilities; interpretation is not fixed and each spectator will respond through their own frame of reference.

I would suggest, however, that the subtlety and complexity of the critique within Trust which unsettles the globalisation/individualisation divide moves beyond a simple challenge to the status quo – and that rather than inviting fatalism or denial, the act of viewing the global through the lens of performance, as an overall function of the work, offers the possibility of a different response. This is amplified in the final scene, where a suggestion of this different response is evident. The world of Trust is not a comfortable or comforting one, but as Croggon describes, the work ends with a fragile and moving vision of the possibility of co-operation:

One dancer begins a beautiful succession of sweeping movement which promises collapse but which instead flows into an undulating dance, which is picked up by one performer, then
by another, until the whole company is dancing in unison. It suggests another kind of relationship, another kind of trust.

(Croggon, 2011)

This nod to the possibility of looking outside the frame is significant, and it positions the spectator to leave the theatre with a sense that the cultural patterns they have just observed are mutable rather than fixed.

This identifiable suggestion of hope, however, is not the only point of possibility within the work. For the most part Trust is not ‘hopeful’ in its tone or inflection, but I would argue that in spite of this – indeed perhaps even because of this – the act of engaging with it as spectators can be read as a hopeful act. Bauman argues that individualisation is “here to stay” and that “all who think about the means to deal with its impact … must start from acknowledging this fact” (Bauman 2001, 50). While I would question whether we must accept that it is ‘here to stay’ (as cultural trends are mutable and change with the passage of time), individualisation is here now, and seeking a response to the global challenges the world faces requires an acknowledgement of the conditions within which the responses are formed. As the work of Bauman, Beck, and Elliot and Lemert shows, the difficulty of engaging with the global when cast as an individualised individual is considerable; performance, through forms of representation that step outside of the globalised media, has the potential to be a tool opening it up for critical engagement. Trust can be seen as an example of a performance piece that rejects both the culture of denial (S. Cohen 2001, 101) and, particularly in light of its final movement piece, the culture of fatalism (Weston 1999). A recognition and re-evaluation of the globalisation/individualisation divide is the first step towards seeking a collective response outside of it, with the question of global sustainability therefore becoming “not simply opposition, but an expression of the impulse to create the new, an expanding sense of what is humanly

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12 Bauman’s comment, to me, also rings of fatalism in the sense discussed in Chapter One; any construct can be deconstructed, and no cultural construct is immutable.
possible” (Rich 2002, 154). Providing the possibility of responding to the present by recognising that the frame exists, whether or not it leads directly to political action, becomes in this context a political act.

![Figure 8. Anouk Van Dijk and Jack Gallagher in Trust, Schaubühne, Berlin, 2009. (Photo: Dieter Hartwig)](image)

### 2.8 Conclusion

*Trust* presents the globalised and the individualised as interrelated and at times interchangeable, and reveals the seemingly individual to be rooted in the systemic. The piece is sensitive and compelling: the focus on human relationships, the interconnection of the political and the personal, the playful blurring of the factual and the fictional, and representation the individualised in a broader performative context, collectively offer the audience an opportunity to move beyond the fatalism, denial, and lack of agency fostered by the individualised society. *Trust* is one example of performance as a means of highlighting the cultural ‘water’ within which we in the globalising West operate. From
an examination of the effects of the work it can be extrapolated that performance can shift the frame of contemporary globalisation to offer its spectators an opportunity to form a different response to the global. While *Trust* is not a rousing call to action, it does leave the spectator with a sense that global collapsing systems and their effects on individuals are constructs, and that the possibility to move beyond these constructs exists. Awakening a sense of this in a society where the forces of globalisation and individualisation shift the location of agency away from the systemic is a highly significant act in creating openings for change.
SHIFTING THE GLOBAL FRAME:

OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN ALL THE WORLD, WOMEN ARE HEROS, AND THE COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINATION

I turned to go home. Street lights winked down the street all the way to town. I had never seen our neighbourhood from this angle. ... Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.

Harper Lee ~ To Kill a Mockingbird

Shifting the frame through which an object, idea, or situation is viewed can open up a world of possibility. The capacity of performance to reframe the global, as well as holding its cultural patterns up for scrutiny and re-evaluation (as demonstrated in Trust), can orient us to look beyond these cultural patterns towards a different way of understanding and responding to the world. While the ability of performance to invite other ways of engaging with the world may be familiar ground, it is nonetheless significant in the context of cultural change towards sustainability – particularly if, as Jacques Rancière claims, “interpreting the world’ is already a means of transforming it” (2007, 10). In this chapter I continue to explore how the act of reframing the global through performance can create moments of disruption in the dominant frame of globalisation/individualisation. This time, however, the focus is on how shifting or repositioning the frame through which the global is viewed –
metaphorically standing on a different porch – can open up alternate pathways of engagement for the spectator in the globalising West.

As an example of an altered frame, I draw here upon cosmopolitanism: a concept that, as Paul Rae argues, is “one of very few available that matches the scope and complexity of the global” (Rae 2006, 10), and which has ‘mushroomed’ in its popularity as a response to globalisation over the past two decades (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2005, 181). I begin with a brief outline of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan imagination, then explore two case studies of performance works (or more precisely, site-specific artworks that engage elements of performance) which evoke the global yet disrupt the globalised.

The first of these, Stan’s Café’s Of All the People in All the World, represents statistics about the world visually through a metaphor of “one grain of rice = one person”.1 The piece is somewhat ‘coolly empirical’ (Rebellato 2009, 74), offering a means of grasping the magnitude of the global, of locating ourselves within and in relation to it, and of responding to facts about it that might otherwise be passed over as too difficult, irrelevant, or overly familiar. JR’s Women Are Heroes project, on the other hand, is unashamedly personal; it places the faces of people who are often constructed as the ‘Other’ through the frame of contemporary globalisation into both literal and cultural landscapes in the West, relocating those often rendered invisible on the globalised stage to the centre of cities worldwide. Despite having different approaches, both works shift the frame through which the world is viewed to expand a

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1 The first iteration of the show was staged with the population of the UK in Coventry in 2003, while the first ‘whole world’ version took place in Stuttgart in 2005 (Yarker 2008). The Stuttgart performance featured just over 100 tonnes of rice (6.2 billion grains at the time (Yarker 2005)), but would now need to be expanded by another billion grains to reflect population growth. The work therefore is still expanding. It also still touring; the particular performance I draw the majority my specific examples from in this chapter was presented as a part of the Perth International Arts Festival in 2013, and was staged with 30 tonnes of rice to represent the time-zone of GMT+8 in which the city is located (PIAF 2013a).
sense of a “planetary, situated and accountable being-together-in-the-world” (Braidotti, Hanafin, and Blaagaard 2013, 7); an understanding of the global based not in the values and drivers of individualism but rather in the cosmopolitan imagination. This, in turn, becomes in itself an opening for the possibility of change.

3.1 Cosmopolitanism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination

In seeking alternate frames through which to view ‘the global’ in an age of global communication and exchange, the concept of cosmopolitanism has been the subject of much recent critical inquiry – and, as is likely with any moral, cultural, or political framework attempting to encompass the global, is complex and contested (Harvey 2000a, 529). A term originally coined by Cynics and Stoics in the late classical period to “contrast local political membership with membership of the world … as a whole” (Vernon 2010, 3), cosmopolitanism has been explored as an alternative to globalisation from a moral perspective (Appiah 2006; Nussbaum 1998; Nussbaum 2011), a cultural perspective (Delanty 2006; Papastergiadis 2013b; Meskimmon 2011), and a political one (Brock and Brighouse 2005; Beck 2006; Harvey 2013). It has a long tradition and takes many forms (Delanty 2006), but at the heart of its various iterations is a fairly simple understanding: that all human beings share a common human identity and are on some level members of a global community, with each individual being worthy of moral regard (Rebellato 2009, 60; Appiah 2006; Hill 2011, 132).

Much of the negative criticism that has been aimed at cosmopolitanism stems from its historical use in perpetuating culturally imperialist ideas (Chaney 2002, 160): conflating a sense of sharing a common human identity with a move to create a common global culture – with the West as the cultural benchmark (Martell 2011, 619). For the most part,
however, the body of contemporary cosmopolitan theory sparked by the work of Martha Nussbaum in the mid-1990s (1996a; 1996b; 1998) resists tendencies towards cultural imperialism by placing its focus on fostering a culture of conversation and exchange (Harvey 2000a; Appiah 2006). How this ‘culture of conversation’ might occur and be fostered requires careful consideration, for given the world’s colonial history and the current complexities of globalisation it is unfortunately the case that a mix of cultures does not usually take place on perfectly equal ground (Rothenberg and Pryor 2005, xvi). A cosmopolitan ethic which entails mutual respect and a willingness to engage (Appiah 2006, 128–135), however, is far more likely to foster productive, thoughtful conversation than the “easy and sudden mixing of styles, images, aesthetics, colors, people, and ideas” present in the culture of globalisation (Rothenberg and Pryor 2005, xv–xvi). Distinct from “other triumphantalist forms of cosmopolitical coexistence,” this understanding of cosmopolitanism leans away from being an abstract idea (Pollock et al. 2000, 588), and towards acting as a respectful and considered vehicle for of viewing, understanding, and responding to the world in which we collectively live.

In his overview of various discourses on cosmopolitanism, Gerard Delanty calls this the cosmopolitan imagination. A “post-universalistic cosmopolitanism” located in critical cultural theory and relevant to a contemporary globally-networked world (Delanty 2006), the cosmopolitan imagination, like globalisation, is not a goal or fixed ideal (Harvey 2000b, 54); according to Delanty it is an act of negotiation and exchange which “occurs when and wherever new relations between self, other and world develop in moments of openness” (Delanty 2006, 27). The sense of the imaginary sits in the space between what exists and

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2 Delanty also highlights, in a later essay on the cosmopolitan imagination, how this differs from the simple transnationalism or surface multiculturalism offered by globalisation, arguing that “critical cosmopolitanism is distinguished from superficial or pseudo ‘cosmopolitanism’ which focuses only on the use of the life style of other cultures to enrich one's material life without normative engagement” (Delanty 2008, 220).
what is possible: between the world we have experienced and the world outside the borders of the familiar. It expands the imagination beyond the realm of the individual – for as Elliott argues there are imaginary dimensions to the self-constitution and self-revision in individualisation too (Elliott 2012, 350) – and places the individual into the context of a global moral and cultural landscape (Nussbaum 1996a), unsettling the lack of broader responsibility that the individualised society fosters. The cosmopolitan imagination can therefore be seen to offer a valuable alternative perspective of the global that sits fundamentally in contrast to globalisation and individualisation, while generating conversations which function as “embodied processes of interrogation, critique and dialogue that can enable us to think of our homes and ourselves as open to change and alterity” (Meskimon 2011, 8). In doing this, the cosmopolitan imagination in action can also be seen to indicate the possibility of a more socially equitable and sustainable world.

**Mapping the Cosmopolitan in *Of All the People in All the World***

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.  

*William Blake ~ Auguries of Innocence*

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3 This links to the imagined sense of anticipation in Bauman’s unhappiness of uncertain pleasures (Bauman 2002) as well as the ‘reimagining’ of the self in the constant renegotiation of identity (Elliott and Lemert 2009).

4 Also relevant here is Appadurai’s work regarding the need for an emerging form of imagination that, in the age of globalisation, is no longer an individual project (1996; 1999, 231; 2000, 6).
For I have known them all already, known them all–
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life in coffee spoons.

T. S. Eliot ~ *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock*

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3.2 To See a World in a Pile of Grain

In considering creative works that present the global through a different or altered frame, UK theatre company Stan’s Café’s *Of All the People in All the World* seems a clear-cut example; it literally re-frames the world to present it in a physical (and metaphorical) landscape, using grains of rice to represent the people in [all] the world.5 The work does not

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5 ‘The world’ in this context is an anthropocentric one rather than a representation of the physical and natural world. There are a number of installation works which place their focus on physical landscapes, such as Andy Goldsworthy’s reframing of the natural world itself as a work art (Goldsworthy 1990) or on the human being’s place within physical landscapes (such as Olafur Eliasson’s relocations of ‘weather’ into gallery spaces (Eliasson 2003)). In a project with a broader scope I would consider...
attempt to sort each person currently living in the world into a category, but rather depicts carefully selected moments and statistics (both historical and contemporary) using grains of rice as ‘actors’ in what Artistic Director James Yarker classifies as a type of theatre. Depending on the scope of the particular performance of the show, the overall number of grains of rice in the room add up to either the world’s total population or to a clearly delineated section of it, though even the smaller iterations of the work are globally inflected. This act of measuring out the world in rice might – like measuring out a life in coffee spoons – seem to be somewhat banal, but the visual effect of it is not: stepping into an inhabited, shifting landscape where abstract numbers become palpable offers what Nicola Shaughnessy describes as “an embodied perceptual experience in which we are both critically and creatively engaged” (Shaughnessy 2013, 128). The work is affecting and effective, functioning as an act of both compression and expansion: while human beings themselves are compressed to the scale of a rice kernel, the work opens up a sense of the scope of the world and the individual’s place within it.

To locate Of All the People in All the World within the cosmopolitan imagination is not a difficult task; according to Barbara Hudson, the very phrase ‘all the people in all the world’ is a translation of the word ‘cosmopolitan’ from Ancient Greek (2011, 119). The premise of this piece by Stan’s Café is singular in its simplicity, and although it is not so concerned with the divine as the opening verse of William Blake’s Auguries of Innocence it poses a similar challenge: to see a humanity in a grain of rice. There is a careful juxtaposing here of commonality and difference; the ‘world’ into which the spectator enters on the one hand embraces difference (which is clearly delineated in the separate piles of

these works too; again, the case studies in this thesis are examples chosen from a broad range of possibilities.

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6 He states: “the rice tells stories. There are beginnings, middles, and ends; there are set-ups and punch-lines; there’s tension and release. It’s a dramatic form, albeit being very slow moving in rice” (Yarker, at the PIAF 2013b).
grain), but with each mound consisting of the same substance the nature of the difference is not immediately visible. This initial anonymity, while drawing in the spectator to discover and consider each individual pile with an element of mystery, also highlights an underlying commonality: that despite potentially infinite differences, all the people in all the world at some level share a common human identity (Appiah 2006) and can be ‘cast’ as interchangeable grains of rice. ‘The Rice Show’ thus provides a metaphor for the cosmopolitan imagination, representing not just human beings in the transient piles of grain, but likewise a sense of humanity that transcends national borders or other markers of difference and extends to the global scale.

Figure 10. ‘Military and Civilian Deaths as a direct result of Conflict in World War II’, Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)

7 These piles can represent any number of categories, including piles specific to gender, race, geographical location, language, age, and wealth, amongst countless others.
By tackling the magnitude of the global, *Of All the People in All the World* takes the seemingly ‘impossible to grasp’ and renders it graspable. As Rebellato highlights, it addresses a concern commonly raised in response to cosmopolitanism: that we cannot meaningfully imagine the population of the world, “because our imaginations don’t work at a high enough resolution to be able to hold the individual and the whole at the same time” (Rebellato 2009, 74). The work’s conceptual origins spring from this very challenge. In his essay “Making Of All the People in All the World”, Yarker writes of a burgeoning understanding of the vast scope of the global when he began to tour internationally as an artist, flying from place to place “watching real cities become model cities and model cities become real cities,” and starting to wonder if he “would ever be able to understand how many people he shared the planet with” (Yarker 2005). With ‘the global’ being a difficult concept to comprehend, the exercise also proved no small feat in practice; as illustrated in his tale of gaining a sense of the “ludicrous enormity” of what would physically be required to represent the world (2005).

Yarker recounts that despite having the figures at his fingertips, the moment of converting them to the physical realm prompted a realisation that “the world was far bigger than the far bigger [he had] imagined”; translating a number into a tangible substance shifted it from the abstract to the actual, even if the translation was still a representation (2005). In *Of All the People in All the World*, the shifting landscape of grain expands the imagination to extend to the global; like Yarker’s image of model cities becoming real cities, the statistics presented in ‘The Rice Show’ spring to life in their physical representation on a sheet of paper. As Simon Parry outlines, it is an act of mapping – a “reterritorialisation and rematerialisation of abstract statistics” (2010, 327) that

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8 Yarker details the moment of settling on rice as substance which was small, cheap, and uniformly-sized enough to potentially be workable, and of doing the calculations of how much rice would be required: “I hit the equals sign and groan, the bad news had been brewing and now it broke – 100 odd tons. It was pointless costing it up. That was a hell of a lot of rice. No chance!” (Yarker 2005).
encompasses not only the world as a whole but also other points of magnitude contained within it. Various spectrums of ‘big’ to ‘very big’ are similarly shifted from the abstract to being part of the world – both the world of the situated performance space, and the spectator’s understanding of the broader world beyond its borders. This was particularly effective for piles of rice representing some of the more sobering statistics – such “People Living with H.I.V. in Sub-Saharan Africa,” or “Children Who Die in the World Each Year from Diseases for which a Vaccine Exists”. One of the more touching experiences I had during the Perth iteration of the show was witnessing a man staring, transfixed, at the large pile labelled “Military and Civilian Deaths as a direct result of Conflict in World War II”, with tears in his eyes. The man gestured to the pile as I made eye contact with him, and said with a crack in his voice: “if you blur your eyes it’s almost like looking at a pile of bodies in a mass grave”. The ‘globalised’ becomes less of a large, complex, and abstract entity, and the work answers the need highlighted by Lull and Hinerman of finding ways of narrating the global to which the locally-situated individual can respond (2000, 172–174).

Figure 11. Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)
The complexities of this act of translation are further evident in Parry’s analysis of the piece from the perspective of cosmopolitanism and cultural geography. Drawing upon Nussbaum’s body of theory on cosmopolitanism, David Harvey’s writings about the ‘banality of geographical evils’ (Harvey 2000a), and Baz Kershaw’s theorisation of the spectacle, Parry argues that Stan’s Café forges a sense of the global whilst managing to “resist or at least reflect on the tendency towards banality in the geographical groundings of its spectacles,” practicing instead a practical form of active cosmopolitan citizenship in an act of cultural mapping (2010, 320–323).

According to Parry, by grounding the global subject within a spatialised frame Of All the People in All the World successfully harnesses “the power of spectacle” whilst avoiding the “disappearance of the human” that the spectacle can sometimes entail (2010, 335). He states that it “uses spectacle to critique spectacle” and therefore disrupts the dominant frame (2010, 333). Parry builds a convincing argument for ‘the human’ as being undeniably present in the landscape of the show despite the work’s ‘spectacular’ aesthetic, stating that “the impact of human social relationships is enhanced through its representation in inanimate physical form” (2010, 326). I have outlined already that the global becomes less of an abstract concept in its translation to a spatialised frame in the work; likewise, as Parry highlights, the cosmopolitan imaginary loses its abstraction in the act of physical translation. It becomes instead a living act of negotiation between the spectator, the locally embedded nature of the work, and the broader global concepts contained within it.
3.3 To See a Grain of Rice in a World

As well as capturing the immensity of the global and placing it into a form that the spectator can respond to, Of All the People in All the World also locates the individual spectator within its frame: “as you enter, you are handed a grain of rice. That grain of rice is you” (PIAF 2013a). In an individualised society dependent on the disappearance of context, this too becomes a politically charged act. There are questions to be considered here about the polarisation between globalisation and individualisation; the sense of insignificance in the contrast in scale observed by Parry (2010, 328) could potentially parallel that of the ‘pale blue dot’ analogy drawn in Chapter One, with the individual spectator – holding a tiny representation of themself in their hand – contemplating the collective magnitude of the other grains of rice.

The show itself is more nuanced than a single grain of rice placed in contrast to one distinct representation of the global, however, and the interplay between different economies of scale within the performance mitigates and in many ways actively disrupts its potential to embody the globalisation/individualisation divide. The spectator is not the only individual represented as a single grain in the performance, and despite the vast number of overall grains of rice in the space other individual grains still hold sway; in Perth, for example, while a mountain of rice twice my height loomed over the space as “The Population of the World in 1770”, “Anthony Hopkins” and “Jodi Foster” also sat facing each other on opposite sides of a glass wall, and “Condoleeza Rice” was placed in a prime position at the weighing table.

The single grains are placed alongside piles of grain of varying sizes, which map the spaces between the global and the individual. As Rebellato observes, with their blank uniformity as a canvas we invest each pile with personality and significance (Rebellato 2009, 74). Just as
the larger numbers ‘spring to life’ with their translation into a tangible form, so do the smaller statistics. Even stray grains, as Parry writes of observing students at a performance of *Plague Nation*, can take on a human quality in the context of the piece:

I saw several occasions where students carefully picked up stray grains and restored the spatial order by returning them to their proper place: demonstrating concern both for the rigour of the representation and for the human that the grain represented.

(Parry 2010, 328)

The individual grain that the spectator holds is situated in relation to these other grains, and a sense of the individualised individual in the space is therefore disrupted; it is difficult to conceptually sever oneself from one’s fellow human creatures (de Tocqueville 2004, 369) whilst actively tracing, recognising, and responding to the histories and the representations of them laid out at one’s feet. Rather than being positioned in opposition to the global, then, the spectator is placed in relation; to the global, to the other individuals, and to the spaces in between them.

Alongside the existence of varying economies of scale to compare oneself to in *Of All the People in All the World*, there also seems to be a distinct pull amongst spectators to identify themselves as existing within the piles of grain. This was a trend I noticed amongst spectators in Perth (“Look, it’s me!” “Ha, you’re in that one…”), but can be seen to extend across audiences in general; Kerrie Reading writes in her account of performing in Salisbury that the show “found itself host to a diverse mix

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9 Parry’s discussion shifts between *Of All the People in All the World* and its educational counterpart *Plague Nation*, a smaller-scale version of the show developed by Stan’s Cafe for schools which focuses on statistics around health (Stan’s Cafe 2014; Parry 2010).

10 Another example – a somewhat whimsical one – of stray grains of rice being imbued with significance emerged during the Perth show. One morning, upon arriving early to set up for the day, we found a note from one of the building’s cleaners on the front desk. It read: *Found these two hanging around the doorway. Suspect attempted elopement.* Sitting on the note were two dusty grains of rice.
of people from all over the world, each looking for themselves in the piles” (Reading 2010), and the “Audience Comments” sections of show pages on Stan’s Café’s website are brimming with tales of recognition (Stan’s Cafe 2014). Given that each iteration of the work is tailored to its specific location to ensure its local relevance (Parry 2010, 332), the individual spectator is likely to ‘belong’ to at least one (and probably many) of the piles of rice.

![Image: Sequence tucked beneath a CCTV camera in Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)](image)

This is particularly significant in identifying the work as potentially fostering a sense of critical cosmopolitanism. Meskimmon writes of both art and the cosmopolitan imagination as involving an understanding of ourselves as being embedded in the world, through which “we can imagine people and things beyond our immediate experience and develop our ability to respond to very different spaces, meanings and others” (2011, 8). If Of All the People in All the World challenges us to see the world in a pile of grain, the act of physically seeing ourselves in
that pile (or in many piles amongst the others) firmly embeds us in the
global. The spectator is therefore not just contemplating the world; the
spectator is placing him/herself as part of the world – an act which sits in
direct contrast to the conceptual separation facilitated by globalisation
and individualisation.

This is also significant in the context of sustainability. Of All the People in
All the World contains statistics relevant to global sustainability
challenges, and the spectator finds themself either placed within or
placed outside of but in relation to piles of rice that represent those
affected by a given issue. For example, in considering piles such as
“People Living on Less than A Dollar per Day” or “People Already
Displaced by the Effects of Climate Change”, the spectator is not just
reminded of the existence of the issue, but also of their own privilege in
not being directly affected by it. This recognition is underpinned by a
reminder that those who are affected by it are fellow human beings (or
fellow grains of rice). Conversely, if the spectator is affected directly by
the problem this is turned on its head, and the work then becomes about
visibility, recognition, and knowing that other spectators are engaging
conceptually with the issue. In an online clip about the show before it
had come to Perth, for example, I saw a pile of rice from a production in
Canada that read “The Population of Perth, Western Australia – the City
Most Affected by Climate Change” (Stan’s Cafe 2014). While I had not
personally noticed the effects of climate change in Perth at that time,
recognising that the issue was affecting my hometown (with myself and
my friends and family as the grains of rice presented) prompted me to
learn more about the global distribution of the effects of climate change,
and subtly shifted the way in which I was engaging with the issue.

Similarly, the spectator is placed either within or in relation to piles of rice
that contribute to global problems, such as statistics about the number of
people eating at McDonalds each day, or the people in a given city
required to emit a certain amount of carbon. The spectator’s recognition of themselves within these piles unsettles the ease with which denial can be performed, and they are thus encouraged to consider questions of accountability and their place within the global. The interplay between these various acts of recognition therefore can be seen to embed the spectator in the world, potentially moving them towards “a transformation in self-understanding and not merely a better awareness of the perspective of the other” (Delanty 2008, 227): a core tenet of critical cosmopolitanism.

The act of locating the individual spectator metaphorically in the piles of grain is complemented by the physical location of the spectator within the space. This aspect of the performance is explored in detail by Shaughnessy, who argues in relation to the work of Miwon Kwon that Of All the People in All the World activates ‘place’ as well as space, employing “a mobilized site specificity which … is not location bound” (2013, 117). Shaughnessy recounts a story of taking her father to a
performance of the show in Birmingham, and of how his experience of engaging with the overall content of the work was heightened by memories related to the empty factory in which it was installed. Local history that is embedded in place, Shaughnessy concludes, “is a lens through which the contents of the installation are seen and felt” (2013, 124), and herein, I would suggest, lies another of the work’s strengths. As with the use of local statistics to facilitate a recognition that draws the spectator in to engage more closely with the global dimension of the piece, the activation of either familiar or historically significant local places draws the spectator in, enabling them to place the abstract concept of the global into the physical realm through a familiar frame of reference.

Again, economies of scale come into play here; the quietly spectacular aesthetic of the show, with vast, impressive piles of rice placed in relation to vast, impressive performance sites, is coupled with tiny moments of playful engagement with particular aspects of the place (in Perth, for example, George Orwell was placed below the CCTV camera, and the Ned Kelly gang in the open empty safe in the wall. Or as Reading recounts from Salisbury Cathedral, “a flat tomb provided a good platform … and ‘The Population of Surprise' hid behind a pillar” (Reading 2010)). The resulting interplay between these economies of scale within the performance, I would suggest, mirrors the interplay between the individual, local, and global that the spectator is concurrently navigating. With the tendency of globalisation towards ‘placelessness’ (Casey 1997, xiii–xv), the act of ‘placing’ a representation of the world and the individual spectator within it in further unsettles the dominant frame. And

11 While it can take place anywhere, and has on occasion even been performed in a festival tent, the work most often is performed in large buildings of historical or cultural significance, ranging from cathedrals to empty factories to even an old palace (Stan’s Cafe 2014); indeed the scale of the larger versions of the work necessitates the use of such spaces. The Perth performance took place in the stately old GPO, located next to the new post office, which had stood empty in the city centre for years. After day three a piece of paper was added to the exhibition for “People Who Have Asked Us If We Sell Stamps”.
as already outlined in relation to Parry’s discussion of the piece, this placing navigates a route through the ‘banalities of geographical knowledge’ towards a grounded cosmopolitan understanding of the world (Parry 2010, 335). The shifted frame therefore becomes not an ‘angle’ from which to view the world, but rather a process of negotiation and conversation which involves being embedded within the world, that deepens the spectator’s understanding of and ability to respond to it.

3.4 Politics, Participation, and Agency

_of All the People in All the World_, it can therefore be seen, disrupts the culture of individualism by shifting the frame through which the world is presented towards one of cosmopolitanism by embedding the individual in the global, and by placing the global and the individual in relation to each other within a physical space. This is complemented by the tiny moments of agency offered by the interchange between politics and participation in the piece. The content of ‘The Rice Show’ is unavoidably

![Figure 14. A growing pile, Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)](image)
political despite its empirical and often seemingly impartial content: statistics are selected by someone, framed by someone, and placed in relation to other selected data points – and can therefore never be ‘value-free’ (Ostrofsky 2005, 125). While politics are present, however, Yarker explains that the work seeks to avoid being prescriptive; the show is “not designed to tell audiences what the correct answer is, just to provoke them into asking the interesting questions” (Yarker 2008). In this sense I would suggest that the politics (and success) of the piece lies as much in the act of creating meaning performed by the spectators as it does in the statistics themselves, with space (both the physical space and the spaces between the facts) facilitating the meaning-making process (McAuley 1999, 92).

An example of this can be drawn from a series of statistics in the Perth show that ran:

- Refugees in the World
- Millionaires in the World
- Billionaires in the World
- Unmarried Male Billionaires in the World
- People who Bought a Copy of the Beatles’ Single “Can’t Buy Me Love” in the Year of its Release

This series – as well as demonstrating humour, timing, and a sense of the poetic – shows a thoughtful combination of facts that are distinct from each other but that hold a possibility for links to be drawn between them. Much of the impact of the sequence lies in what is not provided for the spectator: the final statistic would often elicit a laugh, for example, because of its placement next to the unmarried male billionaires, but the relation between the two piles and the politics held within that relationship are up to the spectator to decide. Similarly, the first two piles (‘Millionaires in the World’ and ‘Refugees in the World’) are strikingly similar in size, and their juxtaposing prompts an emotional and intellectual response that the spectator is required to navigate. There is no immediately obvious link between these two statistics, no sense of
causality or inherent correlation, and no hidden, easily packaged message for the spectator to find and digest. The spectator creates their own stories to fill in the gaps and decides on their own points and pathways of engagement.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{world_reflected_world.jpg}
\caption{‘The World’ reflected in the world. \textit{Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8}, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)}
\end{figure}

This is perhaps what Yarker refers to when he states that Stan’s Café asks a lot of its audiences (2001). In his essay “Audience as Collaborators” Yarker explains that:

\begin{quote}
When I’m in the audience I want my collaborative role to be acknowledged, I hate being taken for granted or being given nothing to do. I don’t want to sing or dance-a-long, I don’t want to be invited up on stage, I don’t want people to come and pick
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} It is worth highlighting that while this an \textit{individual} response for the spectator (unless the meaning is collectively made within groups of spectators visiting the show together), it is not based in \textit{individualism}. The spectator is invited to actively expand their field of immediate concern beyond the parameters of individualism and consider causes, effects, and ideas that pertain to wider human interests – again, a world presented through the lens of cosmopolitanism as opposed to the values of the individualised society.
on me, I don't want to be patronised by the notion that pressing a button to make something happen is a meaningful act of collaboration; I want to be given provocative material to work with and space in which to do that work.

(Yarker 2001)

In light of this, Yarker defines the work of the company as a whole as ‘participatory’, and while Of All the People in All the World is not participatory in the traditional sense (the piece does not rely upon tangible actions performed by spectators (Bishop 2006b)) there is a distinct element of delegation to the spectator in the physical navigation of the space and in the creation of meaning (Harvie 2013, 29–30).

A recognition of spectatorship as already active – that spectatorship “is not a passivity that must be turned into activity” (Rancière 2007, 8) – lends another language to this which bypasses the somewhat sticky question of participation (Bishop 2006b), and recognises that the impact of a work of art or performance piece can be found in the internal processes of the spectator rather than just their externally performed actions. Whichever language is used, however, the underlying concept remains: Of All the People in All the World invites the spectator to engage in the creation of “personal poetic links between passages, motifs and ideas” (Yarker 2001). In doing so it enables the spectator to respond to facts which might otherwise seem banal or irrelevant, disrupts the individualist trend towards disengagement or the practice of denial, and unsettles a sense of the individual spectator as a consumer of the world (Bauman 2008a) by placing them as an active partner in the making of meaning.

It becomes evident, then, that as with Trust, Of All the People in All the World involves a reframing of the world that awakens an ability to engage with the patterns that shape it, and to consider the possibility of a world beyond its conceptual parameters. The frame of cosmopolitanism adds another dimension to this, and the imagination
evoked in the creation of meaning in the work itself intermingles with the cosmopolitan imaginary. This does not only apply to the sequences where the spectator invents the links between piles or points of reflection (as outlined in the example of the world’s millionaires and refugees), but also to the sequences where the correlations between piles of rice are based in an assumed pre-existing understanding.

An evocative section of the Perth performance containing statistics that traced Australia’s colonial history illustrates this well. The section began with three piles of rice that respectively read:

~The Aboriginal Population of Australia in 1770
~The Crew of the HMAS Endeavour
~The Aboriginal Population of Australia in 1800

This sequence was deeply moving,¹³ and while imagination is not required to create the links here (as, for most Australians attending the exhibition at least, they exist in our understanding of history), imagination comes into play in identifying, picturing, and expanding upon them. The contrast in size between the larger first pile and smaller third pile was substantial (punctuated by a small handful of grains for the European settlers), and unfolding the stories in the gaps between the piles was a sobering and affecting experience. The affective nature of the show lies in the navigation of these links, and mirrors Appiah’s description of cosmopolitanism as “connection not through identity but despite difference” – a connection which is “made in the imagination” (Appiah 2006, 135 original emphases). The presence of the cosmopolitan imagination in the aesthetic of the show – with each sequence performed by uniform grains – permeates the meaning-making process of the individual; the stories made in the spectator’s imagination are implicitly stories of fellow-human-beings-despite-difference rather than stories of difference, through a subtle but effective shifting of the frame.

¹³ For me, at least, and it appeared to also be the case for many spectators whose responses I witnessed, or whom I engaged in conversation.
The act of creating or imagining stories about the world, as well as awakening a sense of the cosmopolitan, also awakens the possibility of other stories and other worlds. The fact that the world of ‘The Rice Show’ is not static and fixed adds to this awakening; the shape of the performance-world is shifting and mutable, and there are piles of rice within the show that change every day (for example, in Perth there was a pile depicting the population growth since the start of the exhibition).\textsuperscript{14} As Harvey argues of globalisation, “the political point is not only to change our understanding of the world … but to remake the world’s geography in emancipatory and practical ways” (Harvey 2000a, 560). \textit{Of All the People in All the World} grounds this geographical remaking in a physical metaphor that the spectator can then respond to.

\textsuperscript{14} There is the potential that this could be read as embodying liquid modernity, as the world changes before the spectators’ very eyes; however the shifts here are not the constant frenzy of motion that Bauman describes. Rather, they are slow, deliberate, and carefully considered acts of representation and re-placement. They also involve the broader ‘world’ rather than the shifts taking place primarily within the politics of identity.
In this context it is significant that the work is a *performance* installation; the space is populated with performers who literally re-organise and re-constitute the world-as-presented-in-rice. These performers are not acting on the global stage (the grains of rice are the actors who ‘play’ the various people in the world) and neither are they godlike in their representation. Clothed in brown dust-jackets and ties; with clipboards, balance-scales, and a polite and serious air; the performers appear to be classifiers or cartographers who are quietly and efficiently going about their business of changing the fabric of the world. Their characters do not connote ‘power’, but they do possess an unassuming agency, and I am reminded again of the verse from Rich’s poem that opened this thesis (Rich 1993, 60). The representation of the performance-world as a changing, inhabited space awakens a sense of possibility that the broader world *can*, both practically and conceptually, be reconstituted, and this has considerable impacts for disrupting the individualisation of agency in the context of the global.

The performative act of reorganising and reconstituting the world of the performance can also extend through to the spectator in their own engagement with the space. For the most part, the spectator’s interaction with *Of All the People in All the World* is through conceptual engagement – but the rice is tactile, and an urge to change the world-of-the-space can translate into external action whilst still engaging the imagination. One spectator in Perth, for example, while reflecting on the sequence containing refugees, picked up a stray grain of rice that had fallen from the pile of refugees and placed it instead with the millionaires, making a joke to me as he did so about enacting ‘poetic justice’.\footnote{He also seemed to be daring me with his eyes to stop him while he did so. In the interest of accurate data representation I moved a grain back after the spectator had left; but even here cosmopolitanism came into play, as I reflected on how there was no way I could know which grain ‘belonged’ in the other pile.} This was a light-hearted act, and a very small one, but it demonstrates a tiny rupture in the frame of individualism through a playful performance of
agency. Papastergiadis speaks of the capacity of art “not only to capture a cosmopolitan vision of the world but also to initiate situations in which the artists and the public participants are engaged in the mediation of new forms of cosmopolitan agency” (Papastergiadis, 2013). The world of this performance piece is blurred between the real and the performed, and any new forms of agency that exist here take place primarily within the imagination. As Bassok demonstrates, however, social imaginaries eventually have very real impacts (2012). When viewed as moments of disruption or as openings of agency, it can be argued that tiny acts – such as a pull to redistribute a grain of rice, engaging emotionally and reflectively with abstract statistics, or embedding oneself conceptually in a shifting world – are still acts of change, and that in using performance to shift the frame to one of cosmopolitanism the broader fabric of the world shifts too, just a little, in small but nonetheless significant ways.

Figure 17. Patricia Wood (L), Tony Slater, and Chris Dugrenier at work. Of All the People in All the World: GMT+8, Perth International Arts Festival, 2013. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)
I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

Maya Angelou ~ Human Family

And my eyes would say: "Thank you. I see you."
And their eyes would say: "Nobody ever sees me. Thank you."

Amanda Palmer ~ The Art of Asking
3.5 Acts of Seeing/Acts of Being Seen

As evident in the discussion of Of All the People in All the World, performance can expand a sense of the cosmopolitan imagination by giving us new ways of grasping the enormity of the world” (Rebellato 2009, 74) and locating ourselves within it. It can also engage the cosmopolitan imagination by looking past the enormity of the world to moments of particular, situated connection that give ‘the global’ a human face. An example of a work that I think can do this in practice is the Women Are Heroes project by French street artist JR – a series of installations that give the global an actual ‘human face’ through the pasting of large-scale photographs of the faces of human beings who are often rendered invisible (both within their communities and on the global stage) onto urban landscapes worldwide.

The work began as a collaboration between the artist and Médecins Sans Frontières in Africa “to honour women, both strong and vulnerable, who display extraordinary strength” (MSF 2008). It then expanded beyond the scope of the collaboration with MSF to take place in its primary form in seven countries between 2008 and 2010, involving interviews with and images of women from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Kenya, Brazil, India, and Cambodia (JR 2012b). In the broader documentation of the work, the installation of the photographs on the cityscapes is the main focus (JR 2014a). There are many other layers to the project’s existence, however: the book Women Are Heroes contains stories of the participants’ experiences alongside their images (2012b), the film of the same name contains sections of interviews and information about the participants’ lives (JR 2010), and the website contains a changing catalogue of information which shapes the spectator’s interpretation (2014a, also accessed in 2008).
The primary focus and intention of the project appears to be to empower the women depicted in the images by increasing their visibility within their local communities (JR 2010; JR 2012a), however the photographs were also taken out of their original contexts to be installed and exhibited across various cities of the world (JR 2012b). This shift in location likewise shifts the focus, impact, and function of the work; *Women Are Heroes* is a multi-layered project that holds different potentialities depending on the physical place of its installation and the cultural context of its spectators.

While it has many thought-provoking aspects and warrants scholarly attention in its entirety, in the interest of the scope and focus of this thesis I turn my attention here to the exhibitions held outside of the women’s home communities, and the implications for the spectator engaging with these in the globalising West. In this context, the heart of the project lies in the spaces in between its various components: in the spectator’s experience of the work negotiated between the images themselves; the placement of both image and spectator in the city; and online elements that shape, extend and unsettle the spectator’s response. Each of these components contributes to the project’s ability to shift the frame through which the global ‘Other’ is viewed, placing a focus on connection “in and through difference” (Meskimmon 2011, 93) and evoking the cosmopolitan imagination.

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16 My discussion responds primarily to the first broader exhibition of the photographs in Brussels in 2008 (JR 2014b), as that was my first encounter with the work and is therefore the context in which I formed my initial response. I was also deeply affected by the accompanying online resources about the project at that time (also at www.jr-art.net) which have since changed. For the next two sections of this chapter I discuss the resources as they were, and consider the implications of the shift in online representation in section 3.8.
When viewed from the position of the Western spectator, *Women Are Heroes* moves towards being a project centred around the act of ‘seeing’: seeing what is present in ubiquitous media images but can easily go unnoticed or be pushed aside, and seeing humanity in those often constructed as the Other.\(^{17}\) This provides a possible platform for connection across cultures: while the works are not *inter* cultural (they do not deliberately “invoke concomitant larger cultural discourses where cultural exchange can effectively occur and new hybrid identities can emerge” (Knowles 2010, 4)), they do engage human beings across cultures in an exchange that can point towards a cosmopolitan understanding of the global.

This is not a straightforward task; given that *Women Are Heroes* portrays the global Other through the camera lens of an artist from the West, it is important to acknowledge that there are many questions to be considered about the political and ethical implications of this exchange. There are risks and complexities in any conversation between or across cultures in performance, as the world’s colonial histories and present day inequalities do not set a blank stage for the conversation to take place upon. When the cross-cultural conversation involves an artist who operates within the dominant frame representing ‘the Other’ as an artist who operates within the dominant frame there are extra layers of complexity to be considered, including questions of cultural appropriation, of the fetishisation of difference, and of flattening and packaging a culture (Bennett 1997; Goodall 1999; Holledge and Tompkins 2002).

\(^{17}\) I speak of the women represented as the Other because in the exhibitions in the West the women become predominantly a global Other outside of the boundaries of the city or country where the exhibition is held. This is reflecting a majority; in global cities (Hopkins and Solga 2013, 8) such as London, New York, and Paris, it cannot be assumed that the spectator necessarily has a different cultural background to the women presented in the photographs, as the cities hold a diverse mix of cultures.
As Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo explore in their book *Performance and Cosmopolitics*, the intersection of cross-cultural performance and cosmopolitanism requires careful navigation to avoid reinforcing patterns of cultural imperialism (2009, 21–46) or acting as a “thin cosmopolitanism” staged for political and economic gains (208). I would suggest, though, that the dangers of flattening or packaging a culture in its presentation from an outside perspective are mitigated somewhat by the fact that JR is not presenting ‘a culture’; while his subjects are chosen from particular demographics the focus is not on the category of difference, but rather on the common humanity underneath it (JR 2012a). Gilbert and Lo conclude, and I agree, that despite its complexities the intersection of performance and cosmopolitanism offers “a rare opportunity to instantiate an ethical and politicized cultural dialogue that destabilizes the shrinking borders of our imagined community” (2009, 208–209). Similarly, it can be argued that despite its complexities, the translation of *Women Are Heroes* to the cityscapes of the West offers an opportunity for dialogue that destabilises the social imaginary of individualism, broadening its borders by presenting the face of the Other through a shifted frame.

### 3.6 Regarding the Faces of Others

As a globally staged project in a globalising world, *Women Are Heroes* facilitates acts of reframing and reengaging: it employs the ability in the globally-networked age to communicate despite distance (what Robertson terms ‘globality’ to differentiate it from ‘globalisation as a consequence of modernity’ (Robertson in Featherstone, Lash, and Robertson 1995, 27)), but with a view to inviting, expanding, and deepening connections rather than compressing them. Acting as

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18 See also Bharucha (2003); Fusco (1994); Knowles (2010); and Holledge and Tompkins (2002).
another example of a creative work that utilises aspects of contemporary
globalisation to critique itself, the project uses images to engage with a
conceptual world in which there are “images aplenty” (Bauman 2002, 210). As Dominic Moïsi writes:

In spite of the fact that we live in an information age, we do not understand the Other any better than we did in the past, in fact just the opposite: we are inundated by images … that are obscuring rather than illuminating our vision of the world.

(Moïsi 2009, 157)

Depictions of people living in poverty or affected by violent conflict appear on television and computer screens as suffering “distant others” (Tester 2001, 11): different, homogenous, and “somehow less than us” (Crawford 2009, 147).

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19 Bauman writes of the ubiquitous presence of the ‘suffering Other’ in our living rooms on television (Bauman 2002, 208–211), but I wonder if this is perhaps a shifting or fading trend in a world where news is increasingly hand-picked through social media. Regardless of whether images are as frequent as at the time of Bauman’s writing, however, these representations are still present in the media and affect our broader ability to respond to the situation of the Other.
JR’s representation of the women of *Women Are Heroes* unsettles this representation. The portrait subjects, chosen because they have lived in poverty and been affected by violence (JR 2012b), are women who have suffered, but they are not depicted as ‘suffering’ (Young 2011, 68). Rather, the women were invited to pull silly faces for the camera, transforming in a matter of seconds, as JR recalls, “from quiet sadness to uncontrollable laughter” (JR 2012a, 9). The images that result disrupt the common or expected picture of the global Other; they are portraits that catch women in the midst of pulling outrageous faces, with eyes popping, noses scrunched, or laughing mouths wide open (Young 2011, 68). Neta Crawford asks: “how can we see … distant others if our difference from them blinds us to our commonality?” (Crawford 2009, 153). In *Women Are Heroes*, the humanity of the subjects, rather than their suffering, is placed at the centre of the frame. Whilst I am wary of making claims related to universality, I would suggest that the laughter and playfulness offers a possible point of commonality between both spectator and subject, suspending the markers of difference even if just for a brief moment. By capturing that moment, and enlarging it for all to see, JR’s work invites the spectator to view the world through a cosmopolitan frame.

As well as allowing both difference and commonality to exist alongside each other, the portraits in *Women Are Heroes* enable a sense of the individual to coexist with the collective, finding moments of engagement in the spaces in between their boundaries. On the one hand, the faces pulled by the women in the portraits highlight each woman’s individuality, distancing them from stereotypes such as ‘the suffering poor’ in which “individual subjects become indiscernible from their collective identities”
(Balibar 2005, 34). The images are installed in disparate locations around the city and the spectator therefore encounters them separately (JR 2014a), initially engaging with each image as a unique artwork that depicts a unique woman. Despite the disruption of the concept of the ‘collective faceless Other’, however, a sense of the collective is still present. Although the images are encountered separately, they also comprise a series of portraits stretched across the city that portray a group of women as ‘heroes’: while each portrait is of an individual woman who has endured significant hardships, therefore, each portrait simultaneously represents women who have survived, existed, and resisted (JR 2012a, 9).

This effectively unsettles a constructed inability to see the collective as being made up of individual human beings: a collective made up of what Susan Sontag describes as representations of people who are, "even if named, unlikely to be known to 'us'" (Sontag 2003, 61). The playful individuality of the women displayed in JR’s portraits renders them recognisably ‘human’ and, even if not named, able to be ‘known’ to the spectator. The spectator therefore becomes not ‘us’ (viewing ‘them’), but rather simply a human being viewing the face of another, or viewing a series of other faces. This interplay between the individual and the collective can function as a microcosm of the global, disrupting the construction of the globalised and the individualised as distinct entities. It can therefore be argued that Women Are Heroes offers a means through which to navigate the space between the globalised and the individualised, as well as navigating the possibility of sameness alongside difference at the individual and the global scale.

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20 It also warrants a mention that while the majority of the women in the images are pulling silly faces, not all the portrait subjects chose to do so: “some preferred simply to be, silently, in front of the camera, allowing one to read the past in their eyes” (JR 2012b, 9). These women’s portraits are included in the exhibitions, contributing to the sense that the portrait subjects in the exhibitions are distinct, individual women.
JR’s treatment of the portrait subjects evidently disrupts the expected or commonly encountered image of a global Other, offering the spectator an opportunity to view ‘the global’ through a shifted frame. As Peggy Phelan outlines in her landmark book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, however, the politics of representation are deeply complex (1996) – and given that *Women Are Heroes* involves a spectator in the West viewing a portrait subject from the global South it seems particularly important to acknowledge Phelan’s argument that the relationship between the spectator and subject is unequal and can mirror the relationship between Self and Other (Phelan 1996, 3). The viewing of an image is not an adequate substitute for an active “culture of conversation” (Appiah 2006), either for the spectator or for the portrait subject – regardless of the women of *Women Are Heroes*’ enthusiasm to be represented.21

21 According to JR, the women took pleasure in the knowledge that their images would travel (“as if a part of them was also travelling, hidden behind the ink and paper” (JR 2012a, 9)) and felt empowered by it (“they knew their playful faces … would be understood in Europe, America and in their own villages” (*ibid.*)).
What I am seeking in this chapter, however, is not a sense of how to best navigate an exchange between a particular spectator and particular portrait subject, but rather an example of how the performance of the particular can unsettle the ‘homogenisation’ of the global under globalisation (Papastergiadis 2011, 88) and therefore disrupt the learned ability in the individualised society to disengage from global Others (Bauman 2008b, 23). In this sense, representation becomes not an end in itself, but rather a part of a move towards engaging with the Other by using the imagination as a social force to open up the cosmopolitan imagination (Appadurai 1999, 231). The relationship between the ‘real’ and the ‘conceptual’ or ‘imaginary’ becomes blurred in the portraits, and as Joe Kelleher argues in Theatre & Politics:

“Although [a] photograph by its very nature is removed from the events it represents, it still carries about it some grain of that absent reality. It retains some sort of connection or access to the ‘truth’ that continues to speak through the image – or the play or the performance – even as the image turns its back on this truth.”

(Kelleher 2009, 24–25)

With the focus on the humanity of the subject, the images in Women Are Heroes present the global by drawing upon a cosmopolitan approach to the world as the grain of ‘truth’ at their core, offering the spectator a view of the global through the lens of the particular.

For the spectator in the globalising West, this has considerable implications. Representations of people living in poverty as a ‘faceless collective Other’ not only flatten the perceived humanity of the people depicted, but also minimise the spectator’s ability to engage with and respond to them.²² Ryszard Kapuściński, for example, describes how the “superficial and fragmentary” treatment of the Other in the mainstream

²² In this context, ‘them’ can mean both the human subjects of the images, and also the social and economic inequities that their images represent.
media broadens the gap between ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’, and between ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding’ (Kapuściński 1998, 26) – whilst Keith Tester (amongst others) highlights how recurring images of suffering can desensitise the spectator, leading to ‘compassion fatigue’ and limiting the spectator’s ability to morally, emotionally, or intellectually engage (1997; 2001). Even when not presented as ‘suffering’, the representations can be problematic; the depiction of a ‘happy global Other’ (such as those featured in advertisements for ‘The United Colors of Benetton’) can depend upon a cultural essentialism that distances the spectator from productive and active engagement (Lury 2006, 262).

Unlike the images of the global Other found in mainstream media, however, the nature of the response invited by JR’s images is open to interpretation. There is not a clearly evident attempt to evoke pity, compassion, or sympathy, and affect is not used to prompt consumption or a donation: instead there is space for the spectator to form their own response. As Frank Möller outlines in his critical consideration of JR’s work, meaning-making here is “an ongoing and open-ended process of democratic negotiation between the spectator and (the image of) the subject” (Möller 2013, 36). As with Of All the People in All the World, then, it can be argued that the political impact of Women Are Heroes lies not in an underlying message or ‘ideal’ response, but rather in the political nature of the act of engaging. The simplicity of a portrait of a laughing face opens up a new space for the viewer to engage with the viewed, and the lack of an immediately apparent roadmap with which to navigate this space enables the audience to construct their own meaning. Despite the static nature of the image and the lack of dialogue between subject and spectator, then, the spectator is identifiably positioned as a producer of meaning rather than a consumer, and gently encouraged to rewrite preconceived notions of the Other in their mind.

23 In his essay “Consuming Social Change”, Henry A. Giroux explores in detail how such representations contribute to the increasing fragmentation of individuals in daily life, reappropriating politics to drive consumption (Giroux 2011, 5–32).
Women Are Heroes can therefore be seen as an example of how performance can foster an understanding of the world as a site for engagement and exchange, which in turn contributes to a budding sense of the cosmopolitan imagination.

3.7 Placing the Other

The potential of the images in Women Are Heroes to unsettle dominant media representations of the Other is furthered by their positioning in public space, and the placement of the portraits in the city heightens and broadens their impact. Stepping outside more traditional approaches to public art, JR’s portraits are installed in unusual places and unusual ways: eyes peer over the tops of canals; laughter erupts from behind a chain-link fence; patchwork faces fit together as eyes pasted to the sides of a train meet noses and smiles on a railway bridge (JR 2014a). The playful nature of the portraits is emphasised by careful and considered placement, and the spectator engages with both the portraits themselves and their setting in their initial encounter with the work. This links to the performative aspects of the piece; as Meskimmon states, contemporary art and the cosmopolitan imagination can generate “conversations in a field of flesh” (2011, 8), and the sense of playful embodied engagement in Women Are Heroes potentially awakens a sense that those represented in the images are bodied entities too, despite being geographically distant.
The placement of the work also shifts the pace and style of engagement; engaging with the images in the context of the city differs, for example, from seeing images on a news report where they “sink into oblivion a few days or hours later to make room for other images” (Bauman 2002, 211), and where the channel can be easily changed or a different website loaded. On the streets of the city, *Women Are Heroes* allows the spectator the time to sit with, absorb, and respond to depictions of the Other. The significance of this continues across the lifecycle of the work; like media images, the installed portraits of *Women Are Heroes* eventually dissolve, but unlike media images the process of dissolution is a slow one. As the face of the Other disintegrates into the landscape of the city over time with weathering and wear (sometimes through physical engagement with the spectator; in the exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, for example, as depicted in Fig. 22, a giant face was slowly scraped away from a staircase by the spectators’ feet (JR 2014a)) the spectator is not distracted by a replacement image, but rather is invited to reflect on the gradual disappearance of the image – conversely also
reflecting on its presence. The relationship fostered between spectator, image, and city can thus be seen to offer a space for a slower and more considered engagement with the global Other, opening up possibilities for further engagement.

While the experience of viewing Women Are Heroes in the city differs from viewing images of the Other on a screen it also differs from viewing images in a gallery or performance space – even though these too are bodied activities. In spaces already delineated as sites of creativity, the spectator has to some degree consciously chosen to consider the subject matter, and is therefore more likely to be able to categorise it – both morally and emotionally – into a discrete experience.\(^{24}\) In Women Are Heroes, the spectator encounters the portraits through chance: a moment of ‘surprise’ in which they are responding to the portrait but still situated in the context of the city. This resonates with Snyder-Young’s statement that through encountering ‘the unexpected’ in performance spectators can recognise themselves as global citizens who spectate the world through the media in their everyday lives, by becoming aware of themselves as spectators of global subjects in performance (2013, 92–94). While Snyder-Young draws her example from a more conventionally theatrical work, I feel her argument that unexpected moments in performance can ‘jolt’ the spectator into looking beyond existing conceptual distances and create “an organic reaction to the moment of new understanding” (2013, 88) can extend to other productions and other styles of performance. To follow her logic, the chance encounter in Women Are Heroes shifts the frame through which the Other is viewed and offers a space in which new understandings have the potential to emerge.

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\(^{24}\) I am not suggesting that containing work within a gallery, theatre, or performance space automatically facilitates an ability to dismiss it; I am simply highlighting that the lack of a contained and deliberate space for the experience of engaging with Women Are Heroes is one way in which the spectator’s response to this particular work is shaped.
This links to Ridout’s argument in *Theatre and Ethics* that taking the spectator by surprise can help facilitate an ethical encounter, and that “work that would provoke a truly ethical encounter … would be that work which appeared, at least, to have no ethical ambition whatsoever” (2009, 67). *Women Are Heroes* does not wear its ethics on its sleeve, but creating embodied moments of exchange and understanding in the physical context of the city can be seen as particularly pertinent in an ethical context. As Bauman claims, physical distance and emotional distance can go hand in hand with regard to poverty:

> The poor of today are not only banished from the streets and other public places used by normal people. They are out of sight and out of heart: physical isolation is reinforced with mental separation, resulting in the banishment of the useless, “iniquitous” poor from the universe of moral empathy, the community of human beings, and the world of ethical duty.

(Bauman 1999a, 165)

*Women Are Heroes* effectively uses physical presence to unsettle this conceptual absence. Its location inscribes the presence of people affected by global economic inequality into the moral, cultural, and literal landscapes of the city.26 The public placement of the portraits places the spectator as unavoidably compelled to engage – with the images the faces, and with the social, political, and economic realities that they represent.

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25 Bauman’s argument rings true of ‘the poor’ who live within the city and are ‘moved along’ out of sight; it also rings true on the global scale, with regard to people living in poverty in countries far from the globalising West who display extra characteristics of difference (such as culture, skin colour, and language). These extra markers distance and difference only add to the moral separation fostered by individualisation.

26 It is worth noting again that, as Phelan also highlights, increased visibility does not necessarily equal empowerment (as Phelan states: “if representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture. The ubiquity of their image, however, has hardly brought them political or economic power” (Phelan 1996, 10)). In the context of the city as a built environment, however, the question of what is being represented (and by whom, and to what purpose) is also relevant; my focus is not so much whether or not the images empower the portrait subjects themselves, but rather on exploring how their images bring alternative narratives of ‘the global’ into the city and into the spectator’s field of concern.
Figure 22. Escaliers, Quelques Jours Plus Tard, 28 Millimeters, Women Are Heroes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 2008. (http://www.jr-art.net/projects/women-are-heroes-brazil)

The work is not ‘unavoidable’ once the spectator is aware of its presence; routes through the city can be changed, or the spectator can choose to look away. The initial encounter, however, is one of unplanned engagement and therefore not easily avoided.
‘Seeing’ becomes entangled here with the act of recognition – and as I have already outlined, the images and their placement position the spectator towards recognising the subject as another human being through a cosmopolitan frame. The wide and indiscriminate audience spontaneously encountering and recognising faces of Others within the broader context of the city embeds the presence of people represented by the images into the spectator’s world of everyday engagement (also unsettling the potential of political performance to ‘preach to the converted’ (Miller and Román 1995)). This in turn extends a sense of the ‘public’ beyond the parameters of de Tocqueville’s individualised ‘inner circle’ and beyond the borders of the city, towards a more cosmopolitan view of the world.

As well as shifting the way the images are viewed and awakening a sense of moral responsibility, the physical placement of the portraits in *Women Are Heroes* offers a different way of being in and responding to the city itself. This is highlighted by Bertie Ferdman, who states that she is drawn to JR’s portraits by their ability to “perform alternative narratives of city spaces” (2012, 13). The work offers a dual act of disruption here. The dominant narrative of the gleaming cities of the West is, as I have outlined, one in which those living in poverty are absent; it is also a narrative based around individualisation, prompting the continual construction and reconstruction of identity. While depictions of the ‘suffering poor’ in the mainstream media demand a response of pity, the images that make up the semiotic landscapes of public spaces in the West – predominantly advertisements (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010, 8–32) – demand participation in cycles of desire and consumption.28 In light of this, shifting the art of the public environment away from prompts for

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28 For the most part these are distinct constructions, though there places where the two overlap – where consumption and compassion can become conflated by their representation in the media (as an example, see Cohen and Manzpeiser’s book chapter “The Accidental Tourist: NGOs, Photography, and the Idea of Africa” (B. Cohen and Manzpeiser 2009, 79–94)).
the spectator to consume becomes a deeply political act. Functioning as the canvas for portraits of a carefully and playfully presented Other, the city of *Women Are Heroes* becomes not a site for consumption but instead a site for connection, opening up possibilities for understanding the city as a place for the personal alongside a more playful, bodied, and direct engagement with the city’s public space. JR’s body of work as a whole can be read through this frame (JR 2014a); the layers of distance and difference that are ruptured by *Women Are Heroes*, however, add a global dimension to the disruption. *Women Are Heroes*, I would argue, is particularly effective in casting the city as a visibly cosmopolitan space, and functions as a radical reimagining of the function of the city. In doing this, it also contradicts the placelessness fostered by globalisation (Casey 1997; Beatley 2005), embedding the ‘global’ in the ‘local’ and offering a means through which to navigate the distance between the two.

### 3.8 Moving Beyond the City

The ability of *Women Are Heroes* to open up space in the West for a cosmopolitan understanding of the world is fostered not only by the work’s exhibition in the cityscape gallery (what JR calls “the biggest art gallery in the world” (JR 2012a, 1)), but also its extension to online resources that ground the installations in their cultural, political, and personal contexts. These online components have changed over time—but my analysis primarily responds to their form when I first encountered the project (the first international exhibition of *Women Are Heroes* in Brussels), as my discovery of the online components then have shaped my response to the piece as a whole.
At this time in 2008, the installations were framed by a series of pages on JR’s website about the individual women depicted in the project (JR 2008). Each woman had her own page, laid out simply: one side of the screen displayed portraits in black and white (three to five images of her silly/laughing/smiling/staring face) and the other contained video footage of her recounting her experiences (presumably taken from JR’s interviews for the project (JR 2012b, 9)). This presented a stark contrast between the hardship spoken of in the woman’s story (apparently raw and unedited, including moments where the subject wandered; where the women showed flashes of anger or fell silent while searching for words; or where, as JR also recalls, “sometimes, there were no words, just tears” (JR 2012a, 9)) and her vibrant face in the images (the broad smiles; the outrageousness of the silly faces being pulled; the mouths open wide with spontaneous laughter). The contrast here unsettles the ability of the spectator to easily categorise the women: a stereotype of the “suffering distant Other” (Tester 2001, 12) (possibly evoked by the stories of suffering) does not sit comfortably with a scrunched up laughing face, whilst the telling of the women’s stories sidesteps the potential danger of glossing over harsh realities of the global situation by
depicting the Other as happy and laughing. The online component of *Women Are Heroes* thus moves beyond documenting the work: in its original form it can be read as an important part of the project, strengthening the impact of the installations and offering layers of meaning and spaces of deeper engagement for any spectators interested enough to come looking for it.

The contrast presented on this version of the *Women Are Heroes* website, as well as unsettling existing stereotypes, is another means of increasing the ability of the spectator to respond to the Other. Encountering the webpage through an already established recognition of the face of the Other (as presumably the discovery of the webpage is prompted by seeing the work in the context of the city) offers an entry point for hearing the women’s experiences through a different frame to that of the mainstream media. The presence of the images on the other side of the screen furthers this; again, the spectator is invited to form their own response in moving towards understanding. I am reminded here of Sontag’s statement that:
Harrowing photographs do not inevitably lose their power to shock. But they are not much help if the task is to understand. Narratives can make us understand. (Sontag 2003, 89)

In *Women Are Heroes*, JR’s photographs are not harrowing or designed to shock, and the pain of Others is mostly absent from the images. The pain of the Other, however, *is* contained within the narrative frame of the woman telling her story. The apparently unfiltered nature of the interviews presents the content not as a package designed to elicit a particular response, but as existing within the narrative imagination of the spectator – which according to Jason Hill (in response to the work of Nussbaum (1996, 1998)) gives one the ability to imagine “what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself”, increasing a capacity for empathy and compassion (Hill 2011, 134). In listening to the experiences of the women while considering their playfully photographed faces, the narrative imagination mingles with the cosmopolitan imagination, and the spectator is offered the opportunity to look beyond the frame of globalisation to a more responsive and connected way of viewing the world, and to respond to the suffering of the Other.

As a spectator viewing the project from a Western perspective, I found this to be the case. I was deeply moved by the story of one particular woman featured on the website; her experiences were not markedly different from the others – she spoke of experiencing sexual violence,

29 Hill’s statement links back to the metaphor drawn in the chapter’s epigraph, and also resonates strongly with my own experience of the project. In listening to the stories of women in African countries – for at the time of my initial engagement with the project, these were the countries represented online so far – whose experiences were so different from my own privileged life story, I felt a little like Scout Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* standing on the Radley porch and re-evaluating her perspective.

30 This story is personal and I do not think it is universal: by giving the spectator space to form their own response there is a broader range of potential responses to *Women Are Heroes*, and the section that touched me would not be likely to speak so strongly everyone. I feel that reflecting on my experience here, however, provides a way in to the potential of the project to evoke a response. How this response plays out is open to interpretation.
physical violence, and a life lived in poverty (JR 2008) – but a comment that she made at the close of the interview managed to ‘catch’ me emotionally and evoke a response so strong that I can still feel the ripples of it six years later. Near the end of the interviews, JR would ask the women about their hopes and dreams; this woman paused, smiled somewhat shyly, and said that what she really wanted was to one day own an orange dress – a bright, beautiful dress that she could feel bright and beautiful in when she wore it (JR 2008). Something in this comment cut through the physical and conceptual distance, and suddenly I was deeply moved.

It is perhaps telling that this was the comment that evoked a strong response; I had just heard the woman tell a story filled with hardships far more harsh than a lack of colourful dresses, and it could reflect the pervasive nature of consumer culture in the individualised society that the moment I could identify with was one concerning consumption and the performance of identity. Her wish also came across to me, though, as a performance of survival, dignity, and an almost defiant embracing of life. It was a moment of personal, unscripted conversation between the woman and JR, but it managed to traverse distance and difference to connect with me directly – a rupture in the frame of individualism in which I was able to feel a deep sense of compassion and empathy. In being moved by the woman’s resilience and optimism in a moment of response-ability and recognition, her other experiences of suffering (which were so far from my own experience that I had been unable to imagine them in a meaningful way) became something I could more readily respond to too; this expanded to include the other women in the project whose stories I had already viewed, and increased my ability to engage with the project as a whole at a deeper level (the foundations for this were laid with the laughing faces in the city; the women’s stories online build upon an already stirring sense of recognition). This can be read as a performative version of what Nussbaum outlines with regard to
literature; that the use of a creative frame can expand the moral imagination of the spectator (Nussbaum 1992, 148–167), increasing their ability to respond to the call of the Other.

In the context of the global, I think my response here, alongside compassion, became one of ‘ambivalence’ as explained by Grehan; “a form of radical unsettlement, an experience of disruption and interruption in which the anodyne is challenged” (2009, 22). My ability to respond to the woman’s wish for an orange dress was due in part to a pull to take action (keenly aware of my own closet with many dresses, I found myself filled with a burning desire to find the woman and give her an orange dress). This was yet another rupture in the frame of individualism; the ‘solution’ to this particular problem was one that I, an individual spectator, could imagine that I could have to the capacity to provide. Most women in the interviews had wished for things such as security, education, the health of their remaining family, or a lifetime of peace – and while I would like to have granted their wishes I did not feel a sense of responsibility to do so as I did not have a sense that I could stop conflicts, or ensure a stable political future in their country, or provide education and health for their children. I did feel, however, a pull to do a simple thing to help enable a woman who had endured unimaginable hardships to feel ‘beautiful and bright’ – while being simultaneously aware of the utter absurdity of this impulse. Even if tracking one particular woman across the world to give her a dress were possible and practical, the broader frame of the project highlighted the economic, social, and political origins of poverty; and alongside my desire to take action sat the knowledge that the ‘problem’ could not be solved with an individualised response based in consumption (Bauman 2002, 214).

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31 This is a construction: as Peter Singer clearly outlines in his book The Life You Can Save, it is possible for individuals in the affluent West to assist with life necessities such as education, employment, housing, and even political security worldwide (Singer 2010). Under the twin forces of globalisation and individualisation, however, as I outlined in Chapter One, a sense of this is minimised.
As I have outlined in Chapter One, the tools available for action in an individualised society do not match the global scale of the problem (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 160); this was highlighted in my attempt to negotiate a response to the interview. The attempt to do so called the systemic into question – and between the personal and the political, and the global and the individual, I could not resolve my response into an easy solution. A budding sense that it was unacceptable that there was
no evident solution, however, is highly significant in considering questions of agency, and in looking toward a more sustainable, equitable, and cosmopolitan world. The sense of ambivalence here can thus be read as what Grehan calls an “unsettling and productive space” (2009, 35); it shows how the layering of Women Are Heroes from the initial encounter in a city street through to reflective online engagement can call the frames of globalisation and individualisation into question, and highlight the need for alternate ways of navigating them.

3.9 Spectating the Global

Given the impact of the online component of Women Are Heroes on my response to the project overall, I feel it is important to note that it has since changed. JR has risen in profile after winning the 2011 TED Prize and the consequent Inside Out project (TED 2011; JR 2014a), and his website has therefore become more polished and professional. This polish extends to Women Are Heroes. The page for each country’s project now consists of a series of photographs of the faces installed in public space (not the portrait shots pre-installation), and a film clip segment in a style similar to the Women Are Heroes feature-length film (JR 2010; JR 2014a). The clips are pastiches of sections of interviews (there are voices speaking over images; footage of the places where the women live; time lapse film of the installation and exhibition of the photographs in public space, and of people’s responses to them) – beautifully shot, well edited, and carefully underscored with an appropriate and emotive soundtrack (JR 2014a).

The films are skilfully made and engaging to watch. As a spectator, however, my feeling upon discovering this change was one of loss; the act of delving more deeply into each woman’s story had been an integral part of experiencing the work for me, and the significance of seeing a
woman’s face pasted large-scale across the city was heightened by returning to the city-placed portrait knowing her story. The films as are they are currently presented on the website have artistic integrity, but the sense of the personal – the moment of connection that bypasses the interviewer to give a sense of the spectator engaging directly with the woman’s story – is lost in the layers of crafting present in the film, and the curated brevity of the interviews that it contains. They are clearly fashioned for public consumption, and the spectator becomes part of a collective ‘we’ (as ‘us’ responding to the stories of the ‘them’ of those who live in poverty). The response of the spectator is artistically guided (through swelling music, soft lighting, and carefully chosen snippets of conversation) rather than compelled through an act of ‘seeing’; the newer films are emotive, but the act of responding to them emotionally carries less moral and conceptual weight. There are questions to be considered about the broader impact of this – as Sontag cogently argues: “no ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is other people’s pain” (Sontag 2003, 7) – and while the newer films are far more sensitive than the ‘suffering poor’ of the media stereotypes, I feel a unique aspect of the project has perhaps been lost in the careful crafting of these films.

Whilst the shift in online content for *Women Are Heroes* affects the work’s function and meaning, however, the films also add to the project’s documentation, and I am aware that I may be somewhat prejudiced against the change: perhaps due to a longing for the ‘authenticity’ that Jörg Rekittke and Philip Paar claim is present in JR’s images due to their unfiltered nature (2010), or a nostalgia for the project as I first encountered it (despite my understanding of the ephemeral nature of performance (Reason 2006, 3)). Alison Young, for example, speaks

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32 Indeed, the act of going away, researching the women, finding their stories, and returning to the city portraits with a heightened sense of engagement and more particular frame is what marked the piece to me as performance; the ‘work’ of the piece, to draw again upon Schechner, lay in my engagement as a spectator between the various components of the project.
highly of Women Are Heroes’ current documentation in her study of the project in Rio de Janeiro:

The film conveys the tension between a sense of the beautiful, in the voices which narrate love for the favela as a space of community and happiness, and the experience of violence, written on the faces whose camera-accelerated jitters seem to bespeak the pain they have undoubtedly suffered, and the favela as a site of loss. It is therefore about witnessing violence, and about the capacity of art to make visible those who would otherwise be overlooked or ignored.

(Young 2011, 73)

Young puts forward a compelling argument, and the feature length film that she refers to, and from which some of the clips are taken, was part of the Official Selection of Cannes Film Festival in 2010 (JR 2012a, 53). The polished nature of the updated website also means that the project may reach a much broader audience. While I feel that with the change in online content the overall project is not as conceptually strong as before (particularly in relation to globalisation, ethics, and cosmopolitanism), then, the movie and current online clips can nonetheless be seen to hold considerable merits of their own.

The Women Are Heroes project officially ended in 2012,\(^{33}\) and in this context perhaps the change in the website reflects an archival practice (Roms 2013, 36), becoming a presentation of a body of work that existed instead of comprising part of a project in action. In any case, the work as it exists now online continues to make visible those who would otherwise be overlooked and, as Young goes on to argue, “the film ends, but there is no ‘end’ to what we have seen” (Young 2011, 73). In both of its forms, at its core, the website uses images in what Berger calls their primary sense (being able to “conjure up the appearances of something that was absent” (Berger 2008, 3)) to ‘conjure’ up the appearances of the Other,

\(^{33}\) Although one final installation – on the side of a shipping unit which took the women’s stories literally around the world – was installed in 2014 (JR 2014a).
and offer a frame through which to engage more deeply with the installations in the city streets (or the imagined installations as presented through images, films, and books). In doing so it also conjures up a sense of the *humanity* of the Other, shifting the frame away from the compression of contemporary globalisation and towards a cosmopolitan understanding of the world.

Figure 26. 28 Millimeters, *Women Are Heroes*, Brussels, Belgium. 2008. (www.jr-art.net/exhibitions/brussels-belgium)
3.10 Conclusion

As well as inviting moments of unsettlement in the dominant frameworks of globalisation and individualisation, performance has the potential to provide openings through which the spectator can explore alternate ways of being in and responding to the world. Both of the installation works discussed in this chapter, Stan’s Café’s Of All the People in All the World and JR’s Women Are Heroes, use elements of performance to evoke a sense of the cosmopolitan imagination – a critical, cultural form of cosmopolitanism based in fostering a culture of conversation and exchange. In doing this, both works engage matters of scale and shift between the metaphorical and the real, as:

One way to manage the emotional and cognitive distance that creates borders and moral bystanders is to slow down enough that one is able to make small what is large, to make close what is distant, and to make real what is abstract.

(Crawford 2009, 154)

Of All the People in All the World engages with magnitude; it makes the global small enough to fit into one room through a tangible metaphor – giving the spectator a visual language through which to consider the ‘unfathomable’ global and to locate themselves both within and in response to it. Women Are Heroes, on the other hand, places its focus on the particular; it traverses the literal and conceptual distance that separates us in the West from global Others, and inscribes them into our cultural, physical and moral landscapes – inviting the spectator to respond to the Other as a fellow human being instead of an abstract idea.

Papastergiadis argues that “artists do not deliver documents which reveal the condition of cosmopolitanism, but, rather … take an active role in the mediation of its emergence” (Papastergiadis 2012, 193). Despite employing different economies of scale to evoke a sense of the cosmopolitan global, both Of All the People in All the World and Women
*Are Heroes* do this in similar ways. Both works invite the spectator to craft their own response (acting deliberately as producers rather than consumers of meaning), and to engage with the world through a different frame. They also both place a focus on situating the spectator in relation to the global through mapping it in a physical place, translating the cosmopolitan into a tangible, imaginable world. Through these case studies, it therefore becomes evident that performance can create openings for change by creating space for the spectator to consider and practice other ways of being in the world, shifting the parameters through which the individual engages with the global toward a cosmopolitan frame.
ENGAGING THE IN-BETWEEN:

LOCALISATION AND *TAG. YOU’RE IT.*

For me you’re only a little boy just like a hundred thousand little boys. And I have no need of you. And you have no need of me, either. For you I’m only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we’ll need each other. You’ll be the only boy in the world for me. I’ll be the only fox in the world for you.

Antoine Saint-Exupery ~ *The Little Prince*

The act of opening, building, and deepening connections (with people and with places) is a political one in an individualised society shaped by globalisation’s compression of time and space. The previous chapter explored how performance can offer alternate ways to view the ‘global’ and thus increase the individual’s ability to connect with and respond to it. There is also much to be gained, however, by fostering connections that are ‘local’, in the smaller spaces between the globalised and the individualised. As Pirkko Koski and Melissa Sihra argue, “the concepts ‘local’ and ‘global’ are not always in opposition with one another, but rather, are entangled” (Koski and Sihra 2010), and while small-scale relationships (such as the taming of a fox by a golden-haired boy (Saint-Exupéry 2000, 59–63)) may seem inconsequential in the context of issues such as climate change and extreme poverty, they can have broader ripples in unsettling the frames of globalisation and
individualisation.\textsuperscript{1} Such ripples or ruptures, as argued in Chapter One, are in themselves an important part of cultivating a broader ability to move towards a more sustainable world.

In this chapter I consider how performance can engage the space between the globalised and the individualised to foster localised connections through performance-as-research project Tag. You’re It. I begin by briefly defining and considering the ‘local’, before moving to documentation of the creative work itself in the form of a script with images. This is followed by a discussion of some of the core aims, intentions, and ideas behind Tag. You’re It., locating the creative choices in a theoretical context. Finally, I reflect on the outcomes and insights offered by the season of the production, as an example of how performance – an in-between space that is “bound up with a non-reproducible liveness and an intractable localness” (Harvie and Rebellato 2006, 4\textsuperscript{2}) – can foster ‘living networks of interdependency’ in local spaces between the global and the individual.

4.1 Locating the Local

As outlined in Chapter One, expanding and deepening relationships in a globalising world can productively unsettle some of the social influences that prevent us from responding to the global sustainability challenges the world faces. While cosmopolitanism offers an alternate framework through which to engage with the global, a possible complementary

\textsuperscript{1} The relationship between the little prince and the fox, for example, has ripples beyond that particular friendship. Through the act of ‘taming’, the fox grows to care about the wheat fields because they are the colour of the little prince’s hair (60); the little prince realises the value of the time he spent caring for the tiny planet from which he came, and for the rose that lives upon it (62-63); in the forging of the relationship, the broader categories of ‘little boys’ and ‘foxes’ come alive because of learning to care about one little boy and one fox. And the narrator, upon hearing and responding to the story (“I’m glad, you agree with my fox” (68)), finds his capacity to care about the world around him expanding as well.

\textsuperscript{2} Harvie and Rebellato are writing about theatre, but I feel the argument can extend to performance in general.
framework through which to consider some of smaller-scale connections is ‘localisation’, or the act of ‘becoming local’. Of course, like ‘globalisation’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’, these words bring with them a broad array of meanings and associations – not all of which are encouraging. Rebellato, for example, equates localisation with a cultural relativism under which, as he rather playfully puts it, “the English would be happy to subsist on a diet of Lancashire hotpot and Morris dancing” (Rebellato, 2009, 55), while Appiah’s hesitations about cosmopolitanism extend to images of the local: "you imagine a Comme des Garçons-clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-faced farmer in workman’s overalls. And you wince" (Appiah 2006, 15). Despite potential associations with caricatures of the provincial or the parochial, however, I would suggest that the possibilities held within the concept of becoming local are worth unfolding – particularly if it is viewed as a process of building relationships rather than one of limiting them on the basis of scale.\(^3\)

Appadurai considers ‘the local’ to be based in a relational, contextual process linked to ‘place’, rather than being scalar or spatial (Appadurai 1996, 176); this view is further expounded by Heather Voisey and Tim O’Riordan (2001, 37). Given Casey’s argument that “implacement entails embodiment, and vice versa” (Casey 1997, 340), localisation can thus be seen as an act of building embodied relationships – “particular sets of social relations that interlock and interact at particular points in space and time” (Voisey and O’Riodran 2001, 39). This seems clear when considering what makes one local to, say, a community, city, or street (whereas one is not local to the hotel one stays in on holiday or the place of an airport stopover): the sense of ‘localness’ emerges from the depth

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\(^3\) Such a view seems reasonable: Rebellato’s argument that cultural relativism often accompanies arguments for localisation (Rebellato 2009, 54) is not accompanied by examples, and the theorists of economic localisation whose work he draws upon – Walden Bello and Colin Hines (Rebellato 2009, 51–53) – both argue the need for new, pluralistic, cooperative, global systems (Bello 2005, 114–115; Hines 2000, 5) that fit well with a cosmopolitan world based on conversation and exchange between different localities.
of the relationships forged between people and/in ‘place’, with a sense that the time it takes to build such relationships has some value (this, again, is echoed in the little prince’s exchange with the fox: “it is the time I have wasted on my rose that makes it so important” (Saint-Exupéry 2000, 62)). In the face of globalisation’s time-space compression (Robertson 1992), then, localisation can be seen as time-space expansion, with a focus on building effective, embodied connections rather than efficient ones.

Fostering the ‘local’ can thus be read as an act of resistance in a globalising world – an act that sits in clear contrast to the social impacts of globalisation. I mean this not in the sense of “looking back, either as a return to roots or a resistance to ‘progress’” (Brennan 1997, 2), but rather as a different way of looking forward: of developing forms of community which “no longer leave the individual stripped of particular ties to others, but which are compatible with the sense of individual autonomy and the richness of needs that the disintegration of older identities also produced” (O’Neill 1993, 42–43).

Some of the effects of localisation, as Richard Munton outlines, are direct and discernable:

At the local level, protest groups are sometimes able to harness the sense of powerlessness that individual citizens feel in the face of global or even national forces for change, the local acting as the one arena where they can see the consequences of their protest.

(Munton 2003, 117)

My particular interest here, however, lies before the moment of tangible political action, in fostering the relationships that make such actions

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4 Local actions can also be a platform for engaging in global change; an example of this is the Transition Towns movement (Transition Network 2015) which “engages with the particularities of local communities but has a global reach” (Holdsworth 2010, 25). For other examples see Berkhout, Leach and Scoones (2003), Burns (2012), Hawken (2007), and Swenson (2011).
possible. This, too, is an important site of resistance, and one that can extend beyond its immediately apparent impact. In a global age where “locales are haunted ... by that which is absent” (Inda and Rosaldo 2008), building deep, continuing connections to place can increase our capacity to care about sustaining that place, and about sustaining the broader ecosystems that support it (Beatley 2005; Massey 1991; Kennedy 2010). Similarly, building situated connections to other people and strengthening local networks and communities can disrupt individualisation’s “demise of social context” (Elliott and Lemert 2009, 13), potentially expanding our field of moral concern from the individual, to the local, to the general (Nussbaum 2013, 261). Localisation, cosmopolitanism, and sustainability thus emerge as natural allies: it follows logically that the global ‘culture of conversation’ between cultures that Appiah describes (2006, xi – xxi) could more easily flourish if a capacity for conversation is fostered within our culture. This sense of reflexivity between cultures of conversation, in turn, is relevant to global cooperation in tackling sustainability concerns. If the local is seen as situated in the global – as an ability to engage, connect, and respond to people and/in places – I would therefore suggest that even the smallest of connections within its frame can be seen to be significant.

The remainder of this chapter considers, through practical exploration, how some of these ‘smallest of connections’ might be forged, fostered, or expanded in performance. *Tag. You’re It.*, the site of my exploration, is a site-specific, one-on-one performance journey that takes place

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5 Rebellato argues that localisation and cosmopolitanism sit in opposition to each other (2009). I think, however, that this is due to defining localisation differently as opposed to a deeper conceptual difference. He writes of globalisation that the matter is more complex than one of scale: “the reasons to dislike McDonald’s are somewhat different from the reasons to dislike drawing world maps” (Rebellato 2009, 12). I feel that localisation is similarly complex: reasons to like shopping at a local farmer’s market, for example, are somewhat different from the reasons to like living in a closed, gated community.

6 Heike Roms also proposes the term ‘microcosmopolitanism’ to refer to a more relational local, considering the “tension between global transmissions and local adaptations” (Roms 2010, 77–78).
around various locations in Northbridge, the northern side of the city centre in Perth, Western Australia. Given the nature of my research focus, I should highlight here that it is an exploration of how performance might encourage localised connections through one particular form (and in one particular place), amongst many possibilities. As collections of writings from around the world such as *The Local Meets the Global in Performance* (Koski and Sihra 2010) and *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research* (McKenzie, Roms, and Wee 2010) highlight, the “power of the local in terms of the mutually dependent embodied actions which take place between performer and spectator” (Koski and Sihra 2010, xiii) sits within an intricate web of diverse localities and diverse performance practices.7 Denise Varney, Peter Eckersall, Chris Hudson, and Barbara Hatley demonstrate this beautifully in their analysis of theatre in the Asia-Pacific region (2013). In writing of two transcultural works, they write that they:

… each include a focus on individuals connected with the global sphere even when this is posed as a challenge to subjectivity and freedom. The singular moment intertwined with the complexity of the global … of these worlds make a case for a return to avant-garde performance that is also fundamentally a localized expression of modernity.

(Varney et al. 2013, 216)

The complexities of the situated relationships discussed in all of these works match the complexity of the global systems they are engaging with, and the possibilities for unfolding localised connections in performance can consequently be countless.

The form and frame that I use in this particular project should thus be seen as an example rather than an exemplar. As McKenzie, Wee, and Roms state of the local:

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7 See also Grehan (2009), Harvie and Rebellato (2006), Hopkins and Solga (2013), and Varney et al. (2013).
To foreground the local … is not to argue that the local is more ‘real’; or privileged than other contexts, but rather to emphasize the local as a distinct context within which the globalization of Western power and knowledge is mediated, resisted, or appropriated.

(McKenzie, Wee, and Roms 2010, 2)

Similarly, to foreground a site-specific, one-on-one, participatory form of performance in this project is not to argue that it is more ‘real’ or privileged than others, but rather to emphasise the situated, embodied, and place-based nature of performance as a site for inviting and unfolding connections in the face of globalisation. Through it, I would suggest, the rise of the “highly individualized common language for experiencing” and “culture of self-limitation” (Elliot and Lemert 2006, 12) can be intentionally and effectively unsettled, creating tiny moments of disruption that in turn and in time can affect the broader frame.
TAG. YOU’RE IT.

BY ALEXA TAYLOR

Figure 27. Promotional image for *Tag. You’re It.* Perth, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
4.2 A Framing Statement

Tag. You’re It. is a performance work for an audience of one. Starting in a theatre building, the spectator follows a circuit around various streets and locations in Northbridge, Perth (Western Australia). The spectator leaves their belongings at the theatre, except for a mobile phone with a number to call in case of getting lost. There is no map or guide; each step of the journey unfolds from encounter to encounter.

The piece invites external participation in some sections, but it was a key aim when creating the work that a spectator who preferred to stay silent and simply watch and listen could have just as full and satisfying an experience as that of a spectator who preferred to jump in and actively take the lead. As such, the performance piece itself changed significantly from spectator to spectator, and I have resisted sending in video footage because I do not wish to ‘fix’ the documentation of the work’s existence to one particular performance of it.

The script that follows attempts to capture the scope of the situations and interactions offered in Tag. You’re It.. I should also highlight that while the concept for each of the sections was mine, some of the specific encounters were then devised or co-created with their performer – particularly those involving personal stories. I have acknowledged in the script wherever the performer had significant input into the content of their piece.

The images accompanying the script here were not staged; they were taken during a performance whilst a consenting spectator (Joe Lui) experienced it for the first time. This means that they are occasionally a little blurry, but also that they offer glimpses into one participant’s
genuine response to the performance (while not limiting the work to that response).

*Tag. You’re It.* was presented by The Blue Room Theatre in association with the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), as part of their *Summer Nights* program for the *Fringe World* festival in January – February 2014. It ran for a sold-out two-week season, and 186 spectators experienced the performance across the course of the run.

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8 It was also short-listed for ‘Best Performance’ at the 2014 *Fringe World* awards.
#1: Not-So-Trivial Pursuit

By Alexa Taylor. Performed by Matthew Marino.

The spectators arrive at the theatre to collect their tickets.\(^9\) They are shown into a dark room containing a poker table, three empty chairs, and a brass lamp that shines its light on two piles of cards crossed by a red flower in the centre of the table. From the spill of light from the lamp, a shadowy figure is visible at the head of the table. He wears a blue velvet jacket with a red flower in the pocket, and greets the spectators as they enter.

Despite the shadowy setup, the games-master (who is also the stage manager, and does not hide this fact) is friendly and conversational, and attempts to put the spectators at ease. He invites them to sit down;

\(^9\) In the season at The Blue Room Theatre three tickets were sold per session, and the spectators entered the space together but left on their journey one by one. While this was done for logistical reasons, the act of waiting and choosing was incorporated into the performance.
introduces himself; and makes sure they are aware that it is a one-on-one work, and that they are required to move from place to place between performances. He asks the spectators to enter his mobile number into their phones, assuring them that they can call him if they get lost. Finally, he tells them that the order in which they will depart for the piece will be determined by a game of ‘Trivial or Not-So-Trivial Pursuit’.

The two piles of cards in front of the games-master form the basis of the game. One is a deck of Trivial Pursuit cards. The other deck (custom-made) is Not-So-Trivial Pursuit: it is modelled on the style of Trivial Pursuit but the questions are less ‘trivial’ and have subjective answers (examples include: ‘Who is the best Prime Minister this country has had?’, ‘What is the biggest challenge facing the world at present?’, and ‘What is your biggest fear?’).

The game begins, with the games-master using his discretion to draw cards from both piles. The Not-So-Trivial Pursuit cards are played like the trivia cards, and the subjective answer is always ‘right’ (for example: ‘Who is person you love the most deeply?’ ‘My mother.’ ‘Correct!’).
If a spectator answers a question correctly the card is placed in front of them.

When the timer goes off, the games-master hands an envelope to the spectator who has the highest number of cards in front of them, saying:

Congratulations - You’re It.

The game then resumes with the remaining spectators.
The participant leaves the room and opens their envelope. Inside it is a red carnation and a note that reads:

Hello. I am looking for something, and I hope that you can help me.

Inside this envelope is a flower. I am waiting outside the theatre for you to bring it to me. If you walk outside, you will see me leaning against the brick wall opposite the glass doors of The Blue Room Theatre.

You will know me by my bright red hat, and the pot of grass at my feet.

I answer to the name of the city.

Figure 30. The spectator opens their envelope. Tag. You’re It., The Blue Room Theatre, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
#2: City of Sand
By Alexa Taylor. Performed by Renee Paterniti.

Against the wall opposite the theatre stands a young woman in a black dress with a red hat, and a pot of grass which over the course of the night becomes filled with the red flowers given to her by participants. As the spectator walks over to her she smiles, takes their flower, and begins to speak.

![Figure 31. Renee Paterniti in Tag. You’re It., Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), 2014. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)](image)

Hello. Welcome. Thank you for coming out. I can already see that you’re set for a night of adventure – an intrepid traveller up for trying a different kind of performance. How are you feeling?

The question is a casual one, to check in with the spectator and to give them a chance to voice any concerns. The performer interacts and responds accordingly, with the aim of putting the spectator at ease.
Well, welcome to *Tag. You’re It*. This *is* a different kind of performance. It’s a performance – and not a performance. It is a game and not exactly a game. Each part of the journey is separate, and yet each fits with the other parts somehow. *(She gives them a wry smile).* Sounds a bit ambiguous, I know. One thing is certain, though: this piece is for you. What follows our conversation is a series of invitations. But for this hour the city is yours, and you can make of those invitations what you will – and respond to them as much or as little as you like.

*Figure 32. ‘This piece is for you’. Tag. You’re It., PICA, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)*

*The performer shifts her attention to the hustle and bustle around them.*

Don’t you just love the city in the summertime? I do. Warm, balmy nights; the lights of the festivals; people coming out of their houses to hang out in public spaces. *(She looks up to people gathered on The Blue Room Theatre’s balcony).* Ha, look at all those people on the balcony – it would have given the headmaster of Perth Boys’ School a shock to know that a classroom of theirs would one day be a bustling theatre bar. Did you know that both of these buildings *(gesturing to The Blue Room*
Theatre and PICA) were built to be part of the town’s biggest school, a hundred and seventeen years ago?

It’s funny how much is hidden beneath the surface of a city. Like, the physical surface – it’s strange to think that if we took away these bits of concrete and brick, what you’d be left with could pass for a desert. The city beneath the sand, and the sand beneath the city. But also, the other kind of surface – the not-so-physical surface. The little stories and histories and possibilities that make a place what it is.

*She motions again to the people in the cultural centre around them.*

Look, you can see it happening right before your eyes. A city being made up of moments. *(There is space here to ad-lib for a bit, pointing out specific people or groups of people sharing moments around them).*

Speaking of making moments – would you like to play a game? It’s kind of about looking beneath the surface too. Like hide and seek, but what you are seeking isn’t me.

First you need to take a good long look at me *(she waits for them to do this)* – and now close your eyes. Do you remember what I’m wearing on my head?

When this game ends, another begins. I want you to count to ten out loud – slowly – and when you open your eyes, the first thing you are looking for is my hat.

Got it? *(If they look confused, she clarifies: Count to ten, on the count of ten open your eyes, and find my hat).*

Are you ready? Alright, then …GO!
Figure 33. The performer and spectator contemplate the city in *Tag, You’re It.*, PICA, 2014.

(Photo: Cary Wintle)
#3: Not Without My Hats
By Alexa Taylor and Hannah Morgaine. Performed by Hannah Morgaine.

Across the courtyard where they are standing, a large white van is parked outside the theatre. As the spectator counts to ten, the performer places her hat on the end of the vent pipe at the front of the van, then runs out of sight.

As the spectator moves over to the hat and reaches for it, the performer from the next encounter pops out from the side of van, calling out:

Hey! You found the hat! Well done.

Figure 34. The spectator finds the hat. Tag. You’re It., outside The Blue Room Theatre, 2014.
(Photo: Cary Wintle)
No no, leave the hat here… I’ve got heaps. Many, many hats. Want to come see?

*The performer gestures the audience member over to the side of the van, where the open door reveals her to be a traveller: inside is a cosy den of cushions, with colourful scarves, fairy lights around a large mirror, and a ridiculous number of hats hung on the walls and piled on floor.*

*She motions to the spectator to come in, saying with a sense of humour: I know this is Northbridge, and a van, but it’s not dodgy – I swear I’m legit.*

Are you ok with spaces this small?  *(If they are not ok coming into small spaces, she seats them on a cushion on the step at the edge of the open door).*

Come in. Pull up a cushion. Make yourself comfortable.

Would you like a cup of tea?

*She pours them a small cup of tea from her thermos if they accept.*

*The performer nestles back into her den of cushions.*

Do you like my van?

I do, even though it’s small. I *used* to live in a huge house on a farm. Big family. There were five of us – all girls – and I was the youngest. It was fun – a bit noisy, though. There were always people to play with, but I never quite got a sense of having my own space or being my own person.

*She takes a sip of her tea.*
One day, when I was seventeen – *just* got my license – I got in my van and I just drove and drove.

When you grow up in an isolated place, everyone tends to leave for the city. But I didn’t. I left for the country – for the quiet.

And somehow, after a couple of years, I ended up here.

*They sit in silence for a moment, with the pumping sounds of Northbridge and Fringe World in the background.*

Ha, not so quiet, is it? But when I’m in my van now I feel I’m in my own little world – so I don’t mind it so much.
It feels like home here now. I don’t have that much stuff – I actually took most of my stuff with me, but I tend to leave it around the place and I’ve lost pretty much of all of it at this point.

Well – except my hats. I take good care of my hats: don’t tend to lose ‘em.

*She looks around at her hat collection and starts showing it off.*

I like hats. They’re pretty fun to dress up in – and, I dunno, I feel a bit like I’m someone else when I put a hat on. Like – I can be a little bit braver (*she demonstrates with an army hat or pirate hat*), or a little bit smarter (*a mortarboard or Sherlock Holmes deerstalker hat*), or … maybe better at driving go-karts? (*She has a Super Mario hat for this*).

I mean, didn’t you totally want to dress up in that hat outside? All the flowers and the felt – kind of like Beatrix Potter meets Agatha Christie, in a garden bed.

Hey – do you want to try on any of these?

*The next section is negotiated between the performer and spectator. If the spectator is up for it, it becomes a game of dress-ups with the spectator trying hats on in the mirror with the performer (‘Soooooo… what have you always wanted to be a little more of? Ooh what about this one, I can see you as a viking…’ etc).*

Ok, take a look at yourself – ta da! (*She points them to the mirror, and if it’s appropriate she poses with them as a sidekick*).

*It the spectator is not keen to try hats on, the performer dons a few more herself and talks about who and what she is pretending to be and why.*
Now, it's probably time to send you on your way – but don't worry, we're not going to send you out into Northbridge decked out like this! Yeah, sorry, you don't get to keep my hats: they stay with me. But I DO have these – they're almost as good as a hat.

The performer pulls a thick strip of aqua-coloured fabric from a bag – it has eye-holes cut in it to potentially be a mask. She demonstrates some different ways to wear it.

See it can kind of be a hat – you can put it on your head like this – or you can wear it as a mask if you're feeling like a ninja turtle. Or ‘round your neck like a cowboy – or a distinguished lady – a mourning band if you're not having a great day! – or, if you don’t want to wear it you can just tie it round your wrist like this. Just make sure you have it on you for the next hour, though, so that the people you encounter next know who you are.
The game of dress-ups can continue here while they decide how to wear the aqua fabric – ‘hey good ninja look!’ ‘oooh, very distinguished’ ‘ah, the ol’ faithful ‘round the wrist’ trick’, etc.

Now, for your next encounter, your task is to meet a man at a café who is waiting for you with a carnation in his buttonhole. So let’s head out of the van... (they head outside). Do you know where Bivouac is? No? Ok, see that street corner there? Walk down to it and turn left, and you’ll see a restaurant with tables and chairs on the sidewalk. On one of the tables is a red candle, and sitting there is a man with a red carnation in his front pocket. He’ll be waiting for you.

She waves the spectator on their way.
Figure 37. The spectator dons their fabric. Tag. You’re It., a van outside The Blue Room Theatre, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
#4: Truth, Dare, or Conversation

The spectator leaves the van, walks around the street corner, and sees a man with a red candle and a carnation waiting at one of the sidewalk tables at Bivouac, a busy restaurant nearby.

![Figure 38. A rendezvous with a stranger. Tag. You’re It., Bivouac Canteen and Bar, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)](image)

As the spectator sits, the performer asks ‘water, or wine?’ and pours them a glass of either sparkling water or red wine from the bottles on the table. He is attentive, and his manner is friendly and accommodating. He hands the spectator a menu bound in a black leather folder, which reads as follows:
Menu

Truth
A crisp, bright starter for the discerning palette, with a cool, lingering finish and a hint of mystique. What you ask, and how much you reveal, is up to you.

Dare
For the adventurous diner, 'Dare' features a bouquet of silliness with spicy undertones of the real. A bold and full-bodied experience. Dare you to give it a go.

Conversation
The perfect complement to any meal, 'conversation' has notes of the unexpected, with delicate blend of verbal and visual cues. Ask anything. And ask well.

Optional sides to conversation: awkward pause, and companionable silence
Some choice suggestions from our secret cellars. A broad range of truths that extends beyond those listed is also available on request.

Tell me about a place that is special to you.

What’s something that you’re afraid of?

Tell me about your first love or lover.

Have you ever written a creative piece/play/story?

What is the worst piece of theatre you’ve ever seen?

Have you ever spied on someone?

Do you have any addictions? (Even as simple as Facebook)?

Tell me about a scary experience you’ve had in your life.

What food did you refuse to eat as a kid? Do you eat it/them now as an adult?

Have you ever broken the law?

What would you secretly like to do if you could change your career in an instant?

What’s something naughty that you did as a kid that you haven’t owned up to?

Do you have any secret pleasures?

When in your life do you think you were the happiest?

What’s an embarrassing/silly movie that you have cried in?

What kind of role did you play at school – were you a 'nerd' or a trouble maker or something else?

Any unusual places you’ve had sex or made out with someone?

Have you ever started a fight?

Who would you most like to say 'I’m sorry' to right now?

To whom would you most like to say ‘I love you’?
From the chef’s ‘premium adventure’ range, a list of recommendations from the ridiculous to the all-too-real.

Stand up and pretend to be a teapot/a roaring fire/a volcano

Make up a story about a rabbit and an elephant.

Try to beat me at a thumb war.

Say “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn” with your tongue stuck out.

Don’t smile for the next 30 seconds, but keep staring at me no matter what I do.

Make the noise of three different jungle animals.

Play air guitar to your favourite guitar riff.

Give us your best Scottish/Irish/French/South African accent

Explain how to make a cake without using any words.

Say a line of Hamlet’s soliloquy dramatically, as loud as you can.

Take a sip of your water with your hands behind your back

Pick your nose. In a most extravagant fashion.

Make a sentence that starts with the letters of the word “beans” or “wine”

Stand up and give me your best ‘Smoke on the Water’ air guitar

Hold your breath until I give you the signal by tapping my nose.

See if you can stare me down.

Pretend you are Kate Bush dancing in 'Wuthering Heights'

Pull three silly faces.

Say “peter piper picked a peck of pickled peppers” five times really fast.

Act as though you and I are smoking cigars in a Parisian café, and pretend to flick ash from your pretend cigar on the next person who walks past.

Kiss my cheek.
Conversation

Tasting Notes

Best enjoyed spontaneously.
Optional sides: a hearty dose of contented silence.

Little can be said to describe the chef’s finest conversation, as it is brought to table by the participants as much as the chef herself. Advice from the house is: sit back, relax, and enjoy. It is very difficult to get this one wrong.
After giving the spectator a few moments to look over the menu, the performer asks: So, what will it be tonight – truth, dare, or conversation?

This section is difficult to document, as it unfolds in the moment between the performer and the spectator. A timer is set for seven minutes, and until the timer goes off the performer seeks to connect with the spectator by following their lead – to play dares cheekily; to exchange honest and open truths; to have a spontaneous relaxed conversation; to sit in companionable silence while they sip their water or wine.

Figure 39. The spectator and performer engaged in play. Tag. You’re It., Bivouac Canteen and Bar, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
Figures 40, 41, and 42. The spectator takes a dare – here he is channelling Kate Bush in ‘Wuthering Heights’. Tag, You’re It., Bivouac Canteen and Bar, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
Figure 43. Performer Jeremy Mitchell is offered a dare. *Tag. You’re It.*, Bivouac Canteen and Bar, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

Figure 44. The dare is entertaining. *Tag. You’re It.*, Bivouac Canteen and Bar, 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
#5: Choose Your Own Adventure
By Kit Sparrow and Alexa Taylor. Performed by Kit Sparrow.

_When the timer has signified the end of the encounter at the restaurant, the spectator is instructed to go back to the street corner and wait for a man with a flower in his waistcoat pocket who will come and shake their hand. The performer initiates a handshake, and does not let go. He begins to narrate the situation, saying:_

Our hero perhaps regrets identifying him/herself to this strange man shaking their hand. And with hopes of quickly ending this now increasingly awkward handshake, our hero introduces him/herself.

_After perhaps another, more pointed prompt of ‘our hero introduces him/herself’, the participant likely says their name. The performer continues narrating their actions._

_‘I’m …’ …they say, finally. (The performer ends the handshake). Unsure and unsettled, the two decide to set out. Do they walk closest to the road, open and carefree? Or opt for the safety of the shopfronts?_

_The spectator indicates which side of the pavement they will walk on, and they set off. For most of this encounter the two are walking quite swiftly down the pavement of a busy road together._
Figure 45. Handshake on the corner. *Tag. You’re It.*, William St, Northbridge. 2014.  
(Photo: Cary Wintle)
This isn’t so bad, they think. Maybe they can just stay quiet, hope no one notices them. Perhaps the other sections are a little less interactive, with a nice sit down and a cup of tea. *(This statement is timed to be said as they walk past a tea-house, and they half-pause before speeding back up again with the walk).* But they know they are only fooling themselves, life doesn’t quite work that way.

It dawns on our hero that, besides the obvious narration, the strange man isn’t actually talking to them. They don’t even know his name.

*If the spectator does not respond, there they share some silence. If they do ask the performer’s name the performer, instead of giving it, continues narrating:*

Taking chances was always something our hero was proud of – something that defined an adventurous spirit, not to be outdone by the pitfalls of life.

Nevertheless, as they approach the traffic lights, our hero realises that sooner or later this game will end. An uneasy dread encroaches, as any step could be their last …
Figure 46. The spectator and performer approach the traffic lights. Tag. You’re It., William St, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
(When the pedestrian light goes green): But their adventure presses on, together. As they walk, they step away from the streets of Perth, and the whole world becomes their playground. Where are they now – another city? Another country? A different version of Perth, one crafted by their own imagination?

_Here, the encounter again becomes negotiated between the performer and the spectator, building a story of the two of them walking down the streets of a place of the spectator’s choosing. The performer offers narration in response to the spectator’s choices, and the act of choosing which direction the adventure goes in is offered to the spectator. For example:_

**Performer:** They are walking down the streets of…?
**Spectator:** Paris.
**Performer:** Ah! Gay Paree! The narrow stone streets; the Seine flowing past; cafes on every corner. Paris is lovely in the Spring. What smell fills the air?
**Spectator:** Uh – croissants?
**Performer:** The air is filled with the delicate aroma of pastry in the oven; it seems as though every shop they pass must be baking croissants. What do they see?
**Spectator:** A shop selling croissants…

_The performer continues to ad lib a story and/or description in response to the spectator’s choices, gesturing to the world around the two of them as walk, as if the street they are walking down was the street of the story._
If the spectator offers more narration than a simple choice of story-direction the narration can shift over the course of this section, with the spectator imagining and narrating the latter part of the tale. If the spectator does not wish to make choices about the location and story, the performer continues to narrate their joint journey in real-time, describing and pointing out features of the night-time streets of Northbridge and their progress in walking down them.
When they reach the next set of traffic lights, the performer stops.

Across the road is your next adventure – and I’m sorry, but I cannot go with you. Ah, the sadness of a story ending – we had a great time, while it lasted. Our hero must now walk into the sunset, which lies just across this road.

So, cross the road, stand next to the yellow pole, and look up to the light in the window. The next adventure lies behind the closed door. Safe journey.
#6: Do Nothing ’Til You Hear From Me
By Alexa Taylor. Performed by Ben Ainslie.

The spectator stands on the street corner, following their instructions to ‘look up to the light in the window.’ As they look, a light comes on in a second-storey window in the dark block of shopfronts opposite. In the window, a man in old-fashioned dress is holding a lamp up to the window-still and waving to the spectator. He beckons them across the road.
The spectator crosses the road to see a sign on the front door directly below the illuminated window that reads ‘Knock for Tag. You’re It.’. When they knock, the door is opened for them and they are silently ushered in and toward the stairs by volunteer Nathalie Latter.

The shop (called Fi & Co.) sells kitsch, vintage, designer, and retro clothing and homewares; it is dark but for the display lights. A light, however, is shining from the top of the stairs, and music wafts down from above.

The spectator walks up the narrow staircase to see a room full of vintage bric-a-brac, records, and clothing. Amidst these, the man from the window is standing, holding a sign that says ‘Hello’.
Figure 52. The door is opened. *Tag. You’re It.*, Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

Figure 53. Hello. *Tag. You’re It.*, Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
This encounter is negotiated in silence, as the performer does not speak. Billie Holiday sings ‘Do Nothing Til You Hear From Me’ from the record player in the corner, and the performer has a stack of signs that he draws upon to keep the conversation going. His first three signs read:

Hello.

Please come in.

Would you like a seat?

Figure 54. Ben Ainslie makes silent conversation with the spectator. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
Figure 55. ‘Please feel free to have a look around’. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

Figure 56. Billie Holiday sings ‘Do Nothing ’Til You Hear From Me’. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
There is a little ‘conversation’ through signs and visual cues to give the spectator a chance to settle in (‘Do you like what I’ve done with the place?’ ‘I like to watch the world down there’). Once some rapport has been established, the performer somewhat shyly holds up a sign asking:

Would you like to dance?

Figure 57. ‘Would you like to dance?’. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
What follows is a three-to-five-minute dance in silence, while Billie Holiday finishes singing ‘Do Nothing ‘Til You Hear From Me’. The performer and spectator negotiate the style and intimacy of the encounter, ranging from an arms-length shuffle to a head laid intimately on a shoulder.

Figure 58. The performer and spectator dance. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

10 There are enough signs to keep a connection and conversation going if the spectator declines. In practice, 95% of spectators in the season in Perth chose to dance.
When the song finishes and the record is running static on its turntable, the dancers pull apart and the performer produces his final series of signs:

Thank you.

It is time for you to be on your way.

Go back to the corner where you first saw me.

Behind it is an alleyway that runs behind the shops. Your next destination lies there.

Goodbye.

Figure 59. ‘Goodbye’. Tag. You’re It., Fi & Co., Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
The spectator leaves Fi & Co., and heads to the alleyway by the corner.

The setting is the Wild West. Against the backdrop of the Perth City skyscrapers (featuring ‘Bank West’, ‘Western Power’, and ‘Westpac’ in glowing lights), halfway down the alleyway, a performer in a cowboy hat and bandana is lounging at the foot of a staircase and kicking a tin can. At their feet also lie a toy cactus and a battery-powered cd player – scratchy pianola music fills the summer air.

The performer is waiting for someone to play with. He/she is not pretending to be a child, though, but rather is an adult performer who is ‘playing’ in a somewhat childlike manner in an alleyway.

As the spectator approaches, the performer leaps up to intercept them, speaking with a terrible fake American ‘cowboy’ accent:

Oh no, you can’t go down there! There’s a baddie lives down that way.

He’s awful bad. He done shot the sheriff and everything, and now no one can walk down this here alley and the whole darn town is cut off.

We don’t know what we’re gonna do! Unless – unless we had a new sheriff. You could be new sheriff!? Could you do that for us? You’d be mighty fine! Here –
The performer offers the spectator a shiny tin-foil-and-cardboard ‘sheriff’ star and, if they accept it, hangs the star around their neck, also placing the cowboy hat on their head. The performer then gives the spectator a nerf gun, shows them how to fire it, and talks them through the protocol of a Wild West shoot-out: to stand behind the line, face their opponent with gun at the ready, and wait until the alarm-clock goes off at high noon.

When the spectator is ready, the performer says they will go see if the baddie is around. They switch the track on the cd to ‘shoot out’ music (the theme from ‘The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly’) before running into the bushes.
The same performer emerges a moment later pretending to be the ‘baddie’, wearing a black ten-gallon hat and an over-the-top fake bushy beard held on with obvious elastic. They are holding a nerf gun too.

What follows is negotiated play. The most common scenario is that the performer and the spectator have a shoot-out, standing opposite each other in the alleyway staring each other down until the alarm clock goes off to signify ‘high noon’ (the tension builds with the soundtrack, and with the performer and spectator staring at and playing off each other in character while they wait). When the alarm goes off both parties run around the alleyway shooting at each other with foam bullets, ducking behind parked cars and bushes, until the spectator eventually wins. The baddie reforms on her/his death-bed, and sends the sheriff down the alleyway ‘towards the light’.

Figure 61. The Wild West. Tag. You’re It., alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
Figures 62, 63, and 64 The shoot-out at high noon. *Tag. You’re It.*, alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
Other styles of play work here too, however – there were many spectators, for example, who did not wish to shoot the ‘baddie’. At this point the baddie would be touched – ‘No one has ever shown me kindness before’ – and promptly reform, renouncing their evil ways as a result of the new-found friendship. (This then becomes the focus of the play. One participant-led interaction, for example, then involved them having an imaginary tea party as new-found friends; another involved the performer and the spectator riding imaginary horses up and down the alleyway. The goal is not a particular storyline, but to play and respond based on the spectator’s response).

Whatever the scenario, however, the spectator has saved the town – the performer changes the cd one last time, and the spectator walks away to a triumphant ‘riding into the sunset’ theme down the alleyway towards the light.
Figure 65. Paul Grabovac thanks the new sheriff for saving the town. *Tag. You're It.*, alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Gary Wintle)
#8: Beatrice
By Alexa Taylor. Performed by Bronwyn Richards.

‘The light’ at the end of the alleyway is held by a woman dressed in white. She stands in the centre of the path, the light shining upwards from her folded hands, illuminating her face. She does not walk forward to meet the spectator, but rather waits in stillness for them to reach her.

Once they arrive, she softly speaks a line from Danté’s ‘Inferno’:

“It is best, as I think and understand, for you to follow me, and I will be your guide, and lead you from here through an eternal space.”

The performer holds out her upturned palm, and leads the spectator across the street in silence. Once they have safely crossed the street and are at the start of the next alleyway she stops, turns to face them, and motions to them to close their eyes, again quoting Danté:

“Blessed are they whose sins are covered over. Shield your eyes and look not back.”

This is another section negotiated in silence – the performer uses to touch to guide the spectator through the next section of the journey.
Figure 66. ‘I will be your guide’. Tag. You’re It., alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

Figure 67. ‘..and lead you from here through an internal space’. Tag. You’re It., alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
The performer walks the temporarily sightless spectator down the next alleyway; there are pungent smells from a row of bins, and the back doors to a couple of nightclubs give out pumping music. Halfway down the alleyway they enter stairwell of a multi-storey car park.

Figure 68. Bronwyn Richards leads the spectator into the multi-storey car park Tag. You’re It., alleyway, Northbridge. 2014. (Photo: Alexa Taylor)

The staircase goes downwards, and the performer leads the spectator to the top step. The hot air from the underground level of the car park is almost hellish, but up the stairs comes the sound of someone singing below. The performer leaves the spectator with one last line:

Open your eyes. Listen and turn your steps towards the music – let it be a light unto your feet.

11 Again, this is an invitation rather than a requirement, however in practice all of the participants were willing to be guided blind.
As the spectator walks down the stairs the sound of singing becomes louder. They walk out into the bottom storey of a concrete car park. It is the least popular floor, and there are only a few cars parked around. A woman is standing against the wall, holding a carnation and singing.

The car park is hot and stuffy, but the sound echoing off the walls is beautiful. The performer is singing a lilting, haunting song in Spanish, then stops short when she sees the spectator at the foot of the stairwell.

She says something in Spanish, catches herself (Oh – sorry – of course, you don’t speak Spanish…?) and speaks again in English:

Hey, don’t mind me – I, er, just like singing in car parks. (She laughs a little self-consciously).

It’s not very scenic – but it does sound amazing down here. Listen…

The performer sings a line of the song to demonstrate the acoustics, leaving a note hanging in the air that echoes throughout the space.

My dad used to sing that song to me. It’s funny how a song can take you back to such a specific moment. The first time I remember hearing it was in our house in North Fremantle. It was a tiny little duplex – though I thought it was a mansion because it was two storeys high. My dad kept his keyboard in this little alcove next to the stairs, and one day he was going through his music and he just turned to me, started playing, and said:
“Esta canción es para ti.”

That's “This song is for you.”

![Image](image-url)

Figure 69. ‘This song is for you’. Tag. You’re It., City of Perth Car Park, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

The lyrics are amazing – they sound a bit funny translated into English, but the images are still there. If you like, I could translate?

The performer sings the song in full, in Spanish, pausing between sung lines to translate the words into English for the spectator.

Mira ninita
Te voy a llevar
A ver la luna
Brillando en el mar
~Look little girl, I'll take you to look at the moon’s reflection in the sea.
Mira hacia el cielo
Y olvida ese lúgubre temor
Que fue permanente emoción
Ay, fue permanente emoción
~Look to the sky, and forget the languid pain that became permanent emotion.

Para la hija de un hombre
Con ojos de cristal
Y papel sellado en la piel
~For the daughter of a man with crystal reflected in his eyes and paper sealed to his skin. How great is that image – ‘paper sealed to his skin’.

Florecerón
Tu pelito y tus ojos de miel
La ternura tendrás para ti, para ti
Florecerón
Tu pelito
Pero ya en tu pecho florecerón colores de amor.
~Your hair and your eyes are of honey, but in your chest is born the colours of love.

I love that: ‘in your chest is born the colours of love.’ And there with my dad when we listened to it in that plain, kind of beige-y room, the space came alive – suddenly there were colours everywhere.
Figure 70. Arlensiu Cornejo sings the song her father taught her. *Tag. You’re It.*, City of Perth Car Park, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

Figure 71. ‘And in your chest is born the colours of love’. *Tag. You’re It.*, City of Perth Car Park, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
For a few years I couldn’t listen to it, when things were tough with my family. But still I’d go back this song and that memory and – (she trails off).

It’s the first song that I played by ear on the piano. It’s kind of followed me through different moments in my life – been part of my journey from childhood to being an adult – you know, one of those songs that makes you who you are.

And – now sometimes I just stop what I’m doing and go sing it in an empty car park. (She laughs a little at herself again, then looks up to the spectator.)

Is there a piece of music in your life that’s followed you?
Do you want to try singing a bit of it here? Car parks are pretty great – seriously, the worst singer in the world sounds amazing in them…

Again, the next part is variable depending on the spectator’s response. The spectator can sing a song, or the performer and spectator can sing it together. If the spectator has a song but does not wish to sing it, the performer can offer to sing it for them – or if they can’t think of a song but wish to sing the performer can teach them a couple of lines of Mira Ninita in Spanish. Or the performer can simply serenade the spectator as they walk to their next destination.

Once the singing is done the performer thanks the spectator, says she will look out for them in car parks after this (‘there are a lot of empty car parks around here, if you ever feel the urge…’), and directs them to the elevator across the way, telling them to push the button for the top floor. As the spectator walks toward the elevator, the performer begins to sing to herself again.
#10: Another Begins
Written and performed by Alexa Taylor.

The elevator comes out at the roof of the car park – although the space is in the centre of Northbridge it is fairly deserted. At the top of the elevator, a woman holding a red flower is waiting for the spectator.

Hello! You made it! Welcome to ... well, what kind feels like my own private courtyard above the city. Seriously, no one seems to know it’s here. There’s a great spot for a sunset picnic on the grass there – see, there with the city as the backdrop. But my favourite ... can I show you my favourite spot, over here?

Figure 74. Alexa Taylor takes the spectator through the space. Tag. You’re It., State Library Courtyard, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
The performer leads the spectator through the garden bed, to the railing that looks out over the Perth Cultural Centre. The courtyard is opposite the entrance to the theatre where the show began, and directly below is a thoroughfare from the CBD to Northbridge, with a steady stream of people walking up and down. The two of them pause in silence to watch the scene stretching out before them.

(After a few moments, the performer speaks). I love it here. It sounds funny, but – it actually reminds me of a poem that I studied in high school. I know, I know – I don’t usually stand in scenic spots spouting poems I learned in Lit class! But this one – and the moment when I heard it – was special.
It was the last period of the day on a Friday in February – stinking hot, and we were all tired and melting and desperate to go home and our Lit teacher was like ‘no, you’re not going home until I’ve read you this poem’ and we were all like ‘oh god not a poem’, but then she started. And the room went silent, and everyone grew still, with her voice kind of falling over the room and filling it. She had one of those voices that made you want to stop whatever you were doing and just listen once it caught you. And I remember sitting there, totally caught, on this heavy golden summer afternoon, falling in love with words.

The poem was by Gwen Harwood – do you know her? No, not that many people do unless they studied her at school. (Or, Oh, did you study her too?!) Anyway (she shifts her gaze from the spectator back to the people walking up and down below), I think of it here because the poem is set on the banks of a river. I know there’s no actual river here, but it feels kind of river-ish with the people going up and down… (she gestures out to the steady stream of people flowing through the concourse).

So, it’s about a guy from Germany, and he’s moved to this tiny town in Queensland – sticks out like a sore thumb, he’s this big, intense, blustering musical genius – and even though he’s been living there for years he still doesn’t feel quite like it’s his place.
It’s late afternoon and he’s by the river (she motions to the ‘river’ below them), and he’s people-watching like us. He’s sitting on the bank, looking out – there are some young lovers (she points to some below ‘like those guys’), some drunks (she gestures to one of the inevitable drunk people in the cultural centre) – people everywhere, all around him – but, in spite of that, he feels completely alone.

Figure 76. The spectator contemplates the city. Tag. You’re It., State Library Courtyard, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

And it’s sunset. The light catches the river – and as he watches, the colour of the water in front of him becomes the exact same shade of yellow as the river in the place where he grew up. All these memories come flooding back. He has a little ‘moment’. And – something shifts, in that golden evening light. When the colour fades, he looks at the people around him on the riverbank – and while they’re all pretty much the same, they just don’t seem quite so much like strangers.
The last line – the one that really got me back in high-school – was that he:

“… knew he must find, in his soul’s night, alone,
What more the city held than brick and stone.”  

And, I like that. ‘What more the city held than brick and stone.’ I particularly like it here because – well, it’s Northbridge – so you see all sorts of different things. Not just the pretty bits: if you’re looking under the surface you get the ugly bits too. But … I think I’d rather see it all.

They share another moment in silence watching the people go by below.

![Image](image_url)  

Figure 77. ‘What more the city held than brick and stone’. Tag, You're It., State Library Courtyard, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)

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13 While Northbridge is rapidly becoming gentrified, it has long had a reputation as the less-than-savoury part of the city.
Now – our time’s nearly up here, and I’m afraid that I’m the last performer you’ll encounter in this show. But before it all ends, would you like to play one last game?

Let’s look out to our ‘river of people’ here, and the city around it. Now close your eyes. It’s a little tricky, but I want you to imagine, if you can, that the city actually is yours. Actually. What you would do to it? How you would be in it? I don’t mean that you’re a wizard who can add mountains or something – but more that the rules, the guidelines, the social codes, the things shape the way you usually are in your city are gone. And you can be however you want to be, and create whatever kind of world you like around you.

*She gives the spectator some time to imagine.*

Okay, open your eyes, but keep that picture in your mind.

The theatre you’re heading back to to collect your belongings is just down there, and it’s time to send you on your way. But – this game can keep going until you get there.

See, to reach the theatre you follow that path along the library, walk around that circus tent, and then down those steps across the amphitheatre. We could *keep* playing, as you’re walking back through that space, that the city actually was yours – to do in whatever you want to do, and to be in however you want to be. The last performer in the show could even be *you*, if you like, with me cheering you on from up here as audience? It’s pretty hard to get this one wrong – this isn’t about me trying to get you to do some particular outrageous thing – if the game is that the city is yours and you can do whatever you like in it and what you would really like to do is just walk straight back to the theatre for a drink, then that’s perfect. But – the invitation is there.
She smiles at the spectator and walks with them to the edge of the library.

Thank you so much for playing tonight.

Are you ready?

When this game ends, another begins.

Okay (she taps them on the shoulder as they turn to go) – TAG. You're it.

The spectator heads off on the final leg of their journey, and the performer waves them on their way.

Figure 78. 'When this game ends, another begins'. Tag. You're It., State Library Courtyard, Perth Cultural Centre. 2014. (Photo: Cary Wintle)
#11: You're It.

In the final section of the performance, the spectator makes their way back to the theatre. As whatever is going on inside the spectator’s head is particular to them, the content (and success) of this section is difficult to gauge to an outsider. As the performer in #10, I did witness some of the spectators’ externally performed responses – though I also missed some because of the arrival of the next spectator, or because the spectator preferred to not have an audience. Those I witnessed, however, included a man who stood on the amphitheatre steps and recited his own favourite poems to the world around him; a woman who climbed a tree; a young man who started an actual game of ‘tag’ with his friends. A few people sang, and someone danced flamboyantly down the steps of the amphitheatre singing show-tunes at the top of her lungs. A couple of people struck up conversations with strangers; some offered a hug or handshake; one kissed a passer-by on the cheek (friend or stranger? Who knows). Many people simply walked back to the theatre; some walked quite slowly, appearing to look closely at the world around them. Some sat down on a bench or step nearby and watched the passers by. Some people ran, and a surprising number of people skipped. And many paused at the foot of the stairs to wave a goodbye up to the performer at the railing before disappearing into the night.
Figure 79. ‘For this hour, the city is yours’. Tag. You’re It., Perth Cultural Centre. 2014.
(Photo: Cary Wintle)
4.3 Cultivating Conversation: Aims and Intentions of *Tag. You’re It.*

As a practice-based exploration of some of the theoretical ideas put forward in this thesis and particularly in this chapter, *Tag. You’re It.* seeks to create openings for conversation and connection in the ‘local’ space between the globalised and the individualised. Although it is a series of distinct encounters (each with its own images, framing, and conceptual significance), my intention is that the encounters also work together to explore this common theme — acting as a site for forging localised connection, and opening up possibilities for agency and engagement with people and with place.

One way in which the work aims to do this is through its form as a one-on-one performance — highlighting the performance situation as a two-way exchange between performer and spectator (Goodall 1999, 138) and “the consequent live(d)ness of the performance moment” (Machon 2013, 43). Of course, I realise that a one-on-one work might seem a counter-intuitive choice for a performance piece that seeks to disrupt individualism — that a solo spectator following a series of brief encounters could potentially mirror the individualised individual seeking short-lived, fragile moments of intimacy as a proxy for community (Bauman 1999b, xviii). While the spectator’s journey in *Tag. You’re It.* is an individual one, however, it is not individualised; the spectator is deliberately situated in relation to each of the ten performers and to each of the places that they encounter on their journey. As such, the work sits at the nexus of the ‘social’ and the ‘aesthetic’, and “proposes no autonomous artwork; the artwork includes the audience and its relations”
The spectator’s relation to the performers is therefore centralised, emphasising what Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as the bodily co-presence of the performer and the spectator as the basis for community (2008, 60).

These moments of ‘community’ are short-lived, and are somewhat ‘liquid’ as the spectator moves through time and place between encounters. Through these moments, however, performance can occupy an important intersection between a sense of shifting global exchange and interconnectedness, and a sense of being situated. According to Varney et al.:

Parallel to the many ambivalent representations of the social and personal impact of liquid modernity, theatre and performance have developed a flexibility in form and deep connection to place that makes the art form, ironically, one of the abiding, more solid, constants of social and cultural life.

(Varney et al. 2013, 217)

The short-lived connections in Tag. You’re It. are placed in a context that looks beyond the politics of individualised identity; as Ridout argues, what appears to be a straightforward social transaction between people in performance can be imbued with a broader significance by its performative frame (Ridout 2013, 145). The spectator here can therefore be seen as an individual who is deliberately located within “a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey 1994, 151) – not moving through the places as an individualised entity but instead situated as part of the ‘city of people’ itself.

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I draw here upon Bishop’s terminology (2006a; 2012), and the insight added to it by Jackson (2011) and Harvie (2013) – both of whom argue that the social and the aesthetic can coexist, in what Harvie calls “aesthetically turned” socially turned art and performance” (Harvie 2013, 20). This is particularly pertinent considering Schechner’s definition of performance as what occurs in the space between the performer and spectator (Schechner 2002, 24); in this case a well-negotiated interaction becomes the artwork itself, in which the social and the aesthetic intertwine.
Similarly, a sense of conversation and connection is also invited through the overall form of *Tag. You’re It.* in its ‘participatory’ nature. Over the course of the performance the spectator has varying degrees of influence over the encounters (Harvie 2013, 33), but as Papastergiadis states:

Dialogue does not depend on an ever-increasing range of choices, but in the slow process of learning to read the meaning of differences, ... in the flowing moments of exchange and the small gestures of conviviality.

(2006, 469)

Moments of exchange and gestures of conviviality are invited through literal conversations with the performers – whether it is the focus of the encounter (such as in ‘Truth, Dare, or Conversation’), an incidental exchange in the encounter’s setup and framing (such as the exchange of telephone numbers with the stage manager in ‘Not-So-Trivial Pursuit’), the simple act of listening to a performer tell a personal story in a conversational manner (such as in ‘Not Without My Hats’), or having time to stand together in companionable silence (as in part of ‘Another Begins’). They are also fostered through invitations to participate externally, with gestures of performed conviviality (such as sharing a glass of wine with a stranger, or dancing in a different stranger’s arms) comprising a different type of conversation.

It is worth recognising, however, that participation is more complex than externally performed actions, and while the work can be classed as ‘participatory’ in the sense of inviting a physical response from the spectator (Bishop 2006b) my aim is not to privilege one form of response over another.15 Rather, my intention is that the invited moments of

15 Indeed, I use the phrase ‘external participation’ instead of ‘active participation’ because I, like Rancière (2007), Grehan (2009), and Bishop (2006, 2012), feel that with regard to spectatorship, the binary of active/passive is reductive and unproductive. Spectatorship is active and ‘participatory’ to some degree regardless of form: a spectator can be actively engaged with their mind and emotions without leaping out of their chair, whilst a spectator up on stage choosing a card from a magician’s deck, for example, is not necessarily experiencing a new and emancipatory form of audiencing.
participation broaden the spectrum of interactions through which conversation and connection can potentially be fostered. Types of conversation that are not so immediately apparent are encouraged alongside moments of explicit exchange; the lack of speech from the performer in ‘Do Nothing ’Til You Hear From Me’, for example, pushes the conversation beyond verbal communication regardless of whether or not the spectator chooses to dance, and in doing so it shifts the medium for and markers of connection. Whether the invitations to engage are explicit (to sing, to dance, to dare and be dared, to put on hats, to tell a story of a different place, to play that a city alleyway is the ‘Wild West’) or implicit (to pause, to listen, to respond emotionally, to reflect, to share a moment of silent companionship), the motivation underpinning them is the same: to converse and connect, and thus to momentarily look beyond the parameters of engagement offered by the individualised society.

These moments of connection and participatory engagement are further fostered by the presence of ‘play’ and playfulness in the performance. Play (like so many concepts discussed in this thesis) is a contested term, and to consider its nuances comprehensively is again beyond the scope of this chapter.\(^\text{16}\) As a working definition, however, play can be seen as “spontaneous behaviour whose only purpose is to please its participants and keep them playing” (Meeker 1997, 18). As such, it is engagement for the sake of engagement itself, with considerable potential as a site for opening up and expanding relationships between people and/in places. My use of play as a frame for the encounters in Tag. You’re It. is located in this potential. Play is bodied, experiential, tactile, and rooted in place (Garner 1994, 29) – for example ‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ engages with the sensory features of an imagined place alongside the

\(^{16}\) Schechner has written extensively about this in his early work. He returns to it in Performance Studies: An Introduction (69–92), outlining a variety of different types of play and approaches to play, ranging from “a mood, an activity, an eruption of liberty” to “rule-bound [or] very free” (Schechner 2002, 79).
bodied experience of the night-time street in Perth; and ‘High Noon’ involves direct engagement with the site through running around corners, hiding behind bushes, and dodging cars as ‘herds of buffalo’. Play also opens up possibilities for stepping outside everyday modes of engagement by giving the spectator ‘permission’ to respond in a different way (Schechner 2002, 93) – evident in the response of the reviewer in *The West Australian* who particularly enjoyed being given permission to play with “bad-boy Paul Grabovac” in a child-like manner (Zampatti 2014, 86). Its apparent lack of seriousness (Schechner and Schuman 1976, 50) can draw the spectator in to then respond – as Harvie argues, “pleasurable fun can constructively engage audiences” (2013, 10) – and its active, situated nature has the potential to open up a sense of agency that looks beyond the sphere of influence offered by the individualised society.17

It becomes evident, therefore, that “although it may be somewhat child-like, a play ethic is anything but trivial” (Meeker 1997, 117). This is established in the very first encounter in *Tag. You’re It.*: ‘Not-So-Trivial Pursuit’ can be read as a metaphor for the ‘pursuit’ that the spectator is undertaking around the city – ‘trivial’ (light, whimsical, playful, and fun) and yet also ‘not-so-trivial’ (having socially-engaged motivations and implications). The ambiguity as to the wider significance of each act of play continues throughout the work: for example, the spectator being sent off as a hide-and-seek seeker in ‘City of Sand’ could signify an invitation to the spectator to ‘look beneath the surface’ across the duration of the piece; and playing dress-ups in ‘Not Without My Hats’ turns the constant reinvention of an individualised identity into a game (giving the spectator permission to ‘step outside of themselves’)

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17 This is perhaps the most evident in the final encounter, when the spectator is invited to play that the city actually is theirs, blurring the line between a performative fiction and genuine possibility. Fostering a sense of agency (and the idea of the individual as an active ‘maker’ of their world) was a core aim of the work overall, and with play as a performative act through which a different way of being in the world emerges as a possibility through the lived experience of it (Auslander 2003, 37). This is explored further in Chapter Five.
somewhat, to act and respond in ways that differ from the habitual and the familiar). The recurring line “when this game ends, another begins” suggests that this extends beyond the duration of the performance; it implicitly places the overall game (or ‘play’) of Tag. You’re It. in a broader context. The meaning of this can shift between spectators; all play can “mean something”, and “in play there is something ‘at play’ which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action” (Huizinga 1971, 1). Beyond particular meanings, however, I would suggest that their primary significance lies in the simple act of engaging: engaging for the sake of engagement, and playing for the sake of play.

The moments of engagement for the sake of engagement (conversation, conviviality, and play) invited in Tag. You’re It. occupy in-between spaces, sitting somewhere between the realms of the public and the private. If, as Fischer-Lichte also highlights, “theatre represents a public medium while physical contact belongs to the sphere of intimacy” (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 60), encounters featuring touch (such as ‘Beatrice’ and ‘Do Nothing ‘Til You Hear From Me’) can be seen to unsettle these boundaries. The sense of trust invited by small acts such as these also extends to others that are not quite so visibly intimate – such as the moment of sitting down at a restaurant table with a stranger, shaking an unfamiliar hand on a street corner, being guided with one’s eyes closed, as a translation in performance of a common ‘trust-building’ exercise. The sense that ‘the trust is gone’ that was discussed in Chapter Two is unsettled here through small acts of trust in performance.

Such acts of trust can also have implications beyond the relationship between the spectator and the performer, too, extending to connection

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18 The aqua fabric also extends this invitation explicitly to the remainder of the performance – and if worn as a mask, can draw upon Punchdrunk’s use of masks to enable spectator to respond “in ways that might surprise themselves” (White, in Oddey and White 2009, 219).
with and within to the broader population of the city. The spectator does not know when the next performer will appear or who they will be, for example, and so the passers-by become potential-performers as they appear through a different frame. As Loren Kruger outlines in her discussion of art, performance, and public places in South Africa, such interactions can change the shape of an individual’s relationship with their city in general:

> The practice of acknowledging a stranger as though she were familiar enough to greet … might be translated as the performance of civility or as the transformation of ways of ‘belonging and becoming’ in [the city].

(Kruger, in Hopkins and Solga 2013, 36)

Another example of where this takes place in Tag. You’re It. is in the framing encounters of ‘City of Sand’ and ‘Another Begins’. Drawing inspiration from performance works such Back to Back Theatre’s Small Metal Objects (Harvie 2009, 1–5; Grehan and Eckersall 2013), the spectator is invited to ‘connect’ to some degree with inhabitants of the city as a whole, with passers-by unwittingly cast as performers. These encounters place the ‘moments’ the performer and spectator are sharing in the context of a network of other moments and relationships being formed within city (“the little stories and histories and possibilities that make a place what it is”). The moments of connection in Tag. You’re It. can be seen to sit within a network of in-between spaces that move the spectator toward a sense of ‘belonging and becoming’: between the public and the private; the intimate and the outward-facing; the particular and the general; and the individual and the many types of ‘local’ held within the city’s streets.

As well as being placed in conversation with the performers (and the population of the city as potential-performers or fellow-human-beings), the spectator in Tag. You’re It. is invited to physically situate themself within the city, in conversation with (and in) place. The site-specific form of the performance encourages “the cultural mediation of broader social,
economic, and political processes that organize urban life and urban space” (Kwon 2004, 3), and as with cultivating conversation and connection between people, connecting with place can be seen to be politicised even if its content does not appear to be political. As Harvey argues, “the way life gets lived in spaces, places, and environments is … the beginning and the end of political action” (2000a, 560); this ties in with an argument made in relation to Women Are Heroes – that approaching the city as a site for connection (as opposed to a site for consumption) is radical in its reimagining of places that are increasingly marked by individualism’s preoccupation with identity. It also links explicitly to Harvie’s argument in Theatre & the City that “theatre actually does more than demonstrate urban processes, therefore: theatre is a part of urban process, producing urban experience and thereby producing the city itself” (2009, 7).

The focus in Tag. You’re It. is on forming connections in place (rather than, as JR’s work does, transforming physical features of the place itself), with the various encounters over the course of the performance being bodied, located, and contextualised. Playing ‘truth or dare’ or ‘hide and go seek’ in a public place, for example, offers different opportunities, questions, and challenges than those that would arise in a private performance space. The significance of forming connections in place is not limited to the challenges raised by interacting in public, however: in ‘Not Without My Hats’, for example, the performer’s story creates an intimate moment in a place that is a home with a history for its inhabitant, but is also moveable (and therefore to some degree ‘liquid’) – and similarly, in ‘Do Nothing ‘Til You Hear From Me’, the performer’s longing for connection through touch is framed by his disconnection from the world that lies below his old-world, vintage room.

These connections in place sit alongside invitations to engage differently with places: from invitations to find beauty in unexpected locations (the
acoustics of a car-park; or looking up above the usual sight-line to find a light and a welcoming hand in a window), to physically engaging with places (walking sightless down the street in tactile engagement; or playing in an alleyway with the city as the backdrop), to shifting the frame through which place is viewed to reflect the importance of the spectator's connection to it (“for this hour, the city is yours”). Through interactions that occur both with and in local places, Tag. You’re It. aims to imagine “a liveability that revels in human encounter with space and place” (Bennett 2014, 33) as a platform for opening up possibilities for localised connection and exchange.

With its close and deliberate interaction with place, the world of Tag. You’re It. is a local world. The performer in ‘City of Sand,’ for example, looks to the stories and histories of the place where she is situated; through touch and silence, ‘Beatrice’ draws attention to the sounds, smells, and physical attributes of the place; the performer and spectator in ‘Another Begins’ jointly watch and reflect on the unique and particular city that stretches out in front of them. In addition to its situatedness in the physical place of Northbridge, though, the ‘local’ in Tag. You’re It. is placed in conversation with other places and other worlds. The traveller’s van holds a history and homeliness that transcends the location where it is parked, the concrete car-park is beautified by a song and story drawn from the performer’s Chilean heritage, and the character in Harwood’s poem in ‘Another Begins’ moves towards a sense of belonging in Australia through the colours and memories of a distant place.19 ‘What more the city holds than brick and stone’ emerges as a complex network of relationships that are embodied and situated in place, and yet extend to cultures and places beyond the immediate geographical moment. The local thus becomes part of the cosmopolitan, engaging with or moving

19 The poem itself talks of how “discords of fading light find and restore/ the colours of a day that comes no more” (Harwood 2001, 49). From what I could gauge as performer, spectators who were travellers or migrants seemed to find this section of the poem/story particularly poignant.
toward what Doreen Massey calls a ‘global sense of place’ (Massey 1991; Massey 1994). As Massey and John Allen state:

If we wish to understand the local character of our lives, the changing nature of the places in which we live, we have to grasp both the wider, global context of which we are part, and what it is that makes us distinctively local. ... We are part of more than one world. We live in local versions of the world and in doing so we have to locate ourselves within the wider global context.

(Allen and Massey 1995, 1 original emphasis).

While Tag. You’re It. does not attempt to communicate or capture ‘the global’, it is situated as part of it – a part that plays key role in bringing the spectator back into the frame.

### 4.4 Reflections on Tag. You’re It. in Practice

Tag. You’re It., it can therefore be seen, seeks to open up possibilities for local, embodied connection through performance, creating moments of disruption in the frames of individualisation and globalisation. Critically considering its success in doing this is somewhat tricky from the perspective of the performance-maker, however, for as Bree Hadley, Genevieve Trace, and Sarah Winter argue:

Theorisation of live performance’s potential to deconstruct dominant ideologies and discourses becomes difficult, because the deconstructive agency – the efficacy – lies outside the work itself in the moment of exchange with spectators.

(Hadley, Trace, and Winter 2010, 137)

When discussing case-studies in previous chapters I could at the very least reflect on what a work ‘did’ from my perspective of engaging with it as a spectator; as a creator, however, I do not wish to make assumptions as to the spectators’ responses, particularly in light of
Rancière’s argument that “the common power of spectators is the power of the equality of intelligences” (Rancière 2007, 10).

Despite my potential bias, though, I feel there is still value in reflecting on the process of having engaged with these ideas in practice. One key insight for me from the process of producing and mounting Tag. You’re It., for example, was the opportunity to engage one-on-one with 186 spectators over the course of the two weeks, and therefore to witness first-hand the effects of an attempt to foster localisation in performance—an attempt that I felt achieved some degree of success. In comparison to other works that I have performed in, I felt the ‘presence’ (Giannachi, Kaye, and Shanks 2012, 10) of and connection with the spectator particularly strongly in this piece, and throughout the season of Tag. You’re It. I was humbled by the attentiveness and depth with which spectators listened, looked, reflected, and engaged.

In addition to this, while the roles of ‘performer’ and ‘spectator’ remained clear, a sense of the performance being a two-way exchange (Goodall 1999) emerged for me over the course of the run, and in many of the moments of shared silence I myself felt the stirrings of a growing sense of place and the opening up of possibility. Similar sentiments were echoed by other performers from the piece. The performer from ‘Do Nothing ‘Til You Hear From Me’, for example, spoke of how rewarding the negotiation of the silent dance was in practice, and of how delighted he was by the number of men coming through who said they had ‘never danced with a man before’ and then proceeded to gently circle the room with him. Similarly, the performer in ‘Truth, Dare, or Conversation’, who said at the outset that he felt uncomfortable with improvisation and would prefer a more scripted piece, spoke to me at the close of the show of the satisfaction he felt in building brief but genuine connections every night. Experiences such as these took place across the cast; in creating a space for conversation and exchange, a ‘reciprocal relationship’ was
formed (Nicholson 2011, 31), with the act of ‘becoming local’ permeating both participant and performer. I did not anticipate this when creating the performance, but on reflection it follows quite logically; if part of localisation is taking the time to build connections with both people and places, the strongest connections at the end of a season would likely be held by the people who had spent the greatest amount of time situated in the place and looking to connect.

In terms of spectatorial responses outside of the final encounter, my insight is limited (and as with any participatory work, the actual impact of the performance on the spectator is impossible to accurately or comprehensively gauge). The reviewers spoke of enjoyment; Zampatti, after taking charge in many encounters and engaging in the act of play, found by the close of the show that the ‘mean streets’ of Northbridge “weren’t so mean after all” (2014, 88). And while Zoe Barron found the lack of storyline and clear characterisation to be awkward and uncomfortable (or perhaps unsettling?), she thought that overall the piece was: “truly magical in its concept and execution – I found myself interacting with Northbridge differently, noticing details and the people around me in a way I haven’t before” (Barron 2014).

My key interest, however, is the extent to which the moments of disruption, unsettlement, connection, and agency extended beyond frame of the performance – effects which are even more difficult to reliably gather or gauge. There are a couple of particular responses that I have encountered, though, that do show ripples beyond the frame of the performance for individual spectators. One friend, for example, spoke to me about sitting at Bivouac (the restaurant setting for ‘Truth, Dare, or Conversation’) a week or so after seeing Tag. You’re It., noticing the social codes that kept her from playing more spontaneously
in public places, and questioning their validity. An anonymous couple sent a message to the stage manager’s phone after the preview night that read:

I wanted to say thank you for an incredible experience last night. We are both entirely exhilarated still! Please pass on our thanks to all involved – I felt so brave!

And a friend-of-a-friend turned the aqua fabric from ‘Not Without My Hats’ into what she now calls ‘adventure headband’, wearing it on occasions where she wishes to feel braver or more adventurous (I first became aware of this through photographs on Facebook of her traveling in North America with aqua blue tied around her hair).

These are of course particular, individual, subjective responses, and cannot be assumed to be indicative of the general impact of the work in a research context. I do, however, find these moments of a lingering sense of bravery, agency, or a shifted perspective to be encouraging: they indicate that the performance succeeded in unsettling at least a handful of spectators’ habitual ways of engaging with other people and with place, and challenged them to step outside of these in ways that lingered beyond the duration of the performance itself. I am also encouraged by the possible further implications of such moments, for as Varney argues:

Where meaning in theatre is negotiated and contested by performers and spectators in local situations under local conditions it is also capable of meta-theatrical and other frame-breaking moves across time and space.

(Varney 2010, 112)

The small, local actions and responses invited by Tag. You’re It. (a shift in perspective; a renewed sense of agency; the ‘residual smile’ that

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20 She had played ‘dares’ in the performance, and said that she was reflecting on how she had hopped down the street on one leg during the performance without questioning whether or not it was acceptable to do so (as the frame of the performance deemed it acceptable), and was now noticing how unacceptable the same action would seem if she was simply doing it for fun with her friends.
Phelan identifies as “the place of play within performance and within theory” (1996, 165) can be seen to hold ‘frame-breaking’ potential, and to invite “a sharing of a fresh experience [in which] old frames of reference topple over as the new structure (growth) pushes its way upwards” (Spolin 1999, 24). It therefore emerges that the act of becoming local can have ripples beyond the time and place of the initial encounter, extending towards (or even creating cracks or fissures in) the broader frame.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter my gaze has shifted from the global to the local, exploring the importance of smaller-scale connections located in place, and arguing that fostering localisation is part of moving towards a more sustainable and more cosmopolitan world (as increasing a capacity for conversation and exchange within the globalising West can be an important step towards fostering the culture of conversation between cultures that cosmopolitanism entails). Performance emerges as a productive site through which to ‘play’ with the local, and the site-specific, one-on-one performance-as-research project Tag. You’re It. opens up a variety of opportunities for the spectator to engage in localisation in practice – ranging from raucous play to an intimate dance to a poignant song sung in a car park. While each encounter is distinct, they work together to construct common themes to do with connection between people, relationships with place, ‘play’ as way of increasing a sense of agency, and fostering a cosmopolitan perspective from within a local context.

I began this chapter with a quote from a section of The Little Prince in which a fox convinces the little prince to tame him; at the point of meeting the fox, the prince was weeping from the discovery that the rose
he had cared for so diligently was not unique in the universe. Once the fox has been tamed he imparts two pieces of wisdom: “it is the time you have wasted on your rose that makes it so important”, and “one becomes responsible … for what one has tamed” (Saint-Exupéry 2000, 64). Both of these thoughts are relevant to a globalising world, and both to some degree embody the essence of localisation. Taking time to form connections (even unproductive connections, such as playing for the sake of playing) with people and places deepens their value, and opens up an ability to care about, respond to, and be responsible for them. Tag. You’re It. shows in practice that performance can be a vehicle for establishing or encouraging these relationships, as an in-between bodied space that can invite the spectator to view, engage with, and respond to the world through a shifted frame.
The idea of moving towards ‘another world’ in order to effect the systemic change required to adequately address global sustainability concerns is, as I have already outlined, problematised in the globalising West by the social impacts of globalisation and individualisation. In the past three chapters I have explored how four creative works of differing forms use performance to create potential moments of disruption in these frameworks – opening up spaces between or beyond the globalised and the individualised, and offering spectators alternate pathways through which to engage with the world. In this chapter I draw together some insights that these moments, openings, and disruptions can offer the broader question of moving towards change in relation to the politics of the possible – with the possibility of systemic change politicised in a world where, as Žižek describes, “it seems easier to
imagine the ‘end of the world’ than a far more modest change in the methods of production” (Žižek 2012a, 1).

The chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of concepts relating to the idea that another world is possible (such as ‘vision’, ‘utopia’, and ‘hope’), arguing that the “flattening and devaluing of language” (Rich 2002, 149) around such discourses does not detract from their importance. I then discuss hope and the possible in performance through Dolan’s concept of the ‘utopian performative’, critically considering the implications (for both ethics and efficacy) of its potential use as a driver of cultural change. Finally, I draw upon the creative works that I have already discussed (and the theoretical ideas that they illustrate) to explore and unfold a situated sense of possibility – arguing through this that, amidst its other potentialities in unsettling globalisation and individualisation, performance can offer a space through which to productively reimagine the world.

5.1 Perspectives on the Possible

As argued by a number of theorists working for change towards global sustainability,¹ reconstituting the world also requires an ability to reimagine it. Duane Elgin, amongst others, declares that “we cannot build a future we cannot imagine” (1991, 77), while Donella Meadows puts forward the perspective that “there may be motivation in escaping doom, but there is even more in creating a better world” (1996, 2).² Evidence for these arguments can be seen in tracing significant

¹ See, for example, Elgin (1991); Hill (2011); Meadows (1994; 1999); Tilbury and Wortman (2004); and Weston (2013).
² Meadows’ argument also moves the conversation away from the use of terror-driven urgency to drive change in a world at ‘risk’, as described in detail by Beck (1999; 2009). In his article “Environmentalism – Long Live the Politics of Fear”, Alex Gourevitch makes a strong case as to why this use of fear to drive necessary environmental change is still counter-productive (Gourevitch 2010, 411–424).
historical turning points in social and systemic change. Weston, for example, questions the momentum that the civil rights movement in the USA would have gained through Martin Luther King, Jr.’s iconic ‘I Have A Dream’ speech, had King’s focus been instead on the consequences of change not occurring: “‘I have a nightmare that the children of former slave-owners and the children of former slaves will never sit down together at the table of brotherhood...’” (2013, 10, original emphasis). Using this example, Weston argues that while fear and anger can push for change, “visions pull us” – and that hopeful visions of the future are demonstrably effective (2013, 9; original emphasis).

Similarly, Jason Hill deconstructs criticisms aimed at Nussbaum’s writings on cosmopolitanism (in particular, the opinion that whilst cosmopolitanism is a nice enough idea, it is unrealistic in today’s society) by drawing comparisons with historical moments of systemic change:

Imagine slaveholders saying to the abolitionist: ‘Slaves may one day be seen as creatures equal to the rest of humanity. They are not today.’ Or, imagine the British colonialist attempting to convince Gandhi that ‘India may one day be allowed to rule itself and recapture the glories of its past traditions. Not today.’

(Hill 2011, 134)

Hill’s example, like Weston’s, is put forward to illustrate an argument that vision is needed as a catalyst for change:

My point is that moral strides are not made by allowing our moral imaginations to be to be shackled by current realities. New realities are formed when brave new souls dare to dream and dare to inspire a change by the strength of their visions.

(Hill 2011, 134–135)

While many different pathways to change are possible, it becomes evident that an ability to imagine another world can play a powerful role in fostering an ability to move towards sustainability.
As I outlined in Chapter One, however, agency and change are problematised in the individualised society by the disintegration of collectivity, which can lead to fatalism and denial. This appears to be relevant to our capacity to collectively imagine: John Robinson, for example, argues that “our failure to address environmental issues is not a failure of information but a failure of imagination” (Robinson, in Zammit-Lucia 2013), while Richard Rorty posits that a growing “loss of faith in cosmopolitan and universalist notions, [is] a result of the increasing inability to believe that things could ever get much better than they are now” (Rorty 1999, 230).

A lack of collective hope or vision (through the individualisation of both imagination and agency) pushes ideas about the kind of world we as a global society might want to work towards into the realms of the ‘utopian’. And Bauman argues that there is little ability or inclination to move towards utopias in a liquid modern world:

To be born, the utopian dream needed [particular] conditions: … the confidence in human potency to rise to the task, a belief that ‘we, humans, can do it’, armed as we are with reason to spy out what is wrong with the world … as well as an ability to construct the tools and weapons required for grafting such designs onto human reality.

(Bauman 2007, 98)

This confidence, he explains, is disintegrating in liquid modernity, belonging instead to the early-modern societies in which Thomas More’s *Utopia* gained popularity (Bauman 2005a, 305–309; Bauman 2007, 99–103). In a contemporary individualised society, therefore, it could be argued that in order to foster an ability to imagine another world, there is also a need to foster an ability to imagine that a *shared vision* could exist.
— that moving towards something as a global society falls within the realms of the possible.³

Relevant to this, I would suggest, is Rich’s essay *Arts of the Possible*. Like Bauman, Rich traces a decline in agency to the latest shift in modernity; when making a case for interrogating the systemic (despite the practical failure of the alternatives explored in the twentieth century) she warns that “we will be told these are childish, naive, ‘prepostmodern’ questions” (2002, 167) not suited to a fragmented postmodern world. Unlike Bauman, however, Rich maintains that we can (and should) keep asking these questions, to find new frames of reference through which to answer them which reflect our own times (2002, 164). The challenge that she outlines instead is finding a language though which to do this. Seeking hope or a sense of the possible in a society where individuals are cast as bystanders to the global (already a complex challenge (Bauman 2002, 215)), becomes even more difficult given the ‘flattening’ and ‘devaluing’ of the language of change – both through its use in driving consumption (where “in the interests of marketing, distinctions fade and subtleties vanish … [and] language itself collapses into shallowness” (Rich 2002, 149)), and through political rhetoric (Rich cites the Bush administration’s use of the word ‘freedom’ (2002, 147), while Beck and Beck-Gernsheim add that “we live in language. And who [in the context of the contemporary West] would want to live in the utterances of politicians?” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 168)).

I have noticed myself in the writing of this thesis that the language of change is difficult; I find myself using phrases such as ‘change which moves us towards sustainability and a more equitable society’ rather than ‘positive change’, and when the nature of the analysis requires

³ It is worth clarifying that by arguing for the importance of an ability to collectively imagine I do not mean blind adherence to an ideology – similar to what Doppelt calls ‘groupthink’ (Doppelt 2012, 172–173); the collectivity offered by sustainability is a more complex, reflexive, and collaborative form of imagining, from a social systems thinking perspective (Doppelt 2012, 170–171) or a social imaginary (C. Taylor 2002).
terms such as ‘vision’ or ‘hope’ I feel a pull to keep placing them in inverted commas to mitigate their potentially trite or cheesy associations. Words such as these hold the connotations of impossibility similar to ‘utopia’ – which despite its original use as the name of More’s imagined ‘other place’, came to mean “an impossibly ideal scheme, esp for social improvement” as early as 1734 (OED 1989, my emphasis) – watered down in their impact through generations of use as bumper stickers, Hallmark cards, motivational fridge magnets: as slogans without visible depth. The language of change appears to be littered with words that once signified a real sense of hope, now ‘flattened’ or ‘devalued’ to be used as adjectives for what is unattainable.

Rich proposes a platform for engaging with the possible in the gaps and silences between words in poetry (2002, 150); I would add (as I have explored to some degree already in this thesis) that the gaps and silences between words, images, places, and bodies in performance also offer a language for envisaging, articulating, and negotiating change that reinvigorates these ‘flattened’ ideas. Performance is affective and affecting: from differing conceptual frameworks it can be read as poiesis (Sha and Plotnitsky 2013; Threadgold 1997); as spatial or relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002; Papastergiadis 2010; Fischer-Lichte 2008); or as an embodiment of social imaginaries (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998): all of which are spaces of transformation and potentially of belonging, becoming, and imagining. To use the term I keep returning to, performance offers a space ‘in between’ the spoken and the unspoken, between the actual and the imagined. And therefore, it seems that it too can be powerful medium through which to negotiate the ‘politics of the possible’ as part of a move towards sustainability.
5.2 Politics and the Utopian Performative

The ability of performance to expand a sense of what is possible is perhaps epitomised in Dolan’s concept of the ‘utopian performative’ (2001; 2004; 2005). Through this work, performance can be seen to directly answer the challenge outlined in the previous section:

Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present. … In their doings, [they] make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better.

(Dolan 2005, 5–6)

‘Vision’ in this context is not a fixed image of a future utopia; rather, Dolan draws upon feminist theorist Angelika Bammer’s reconceptualisation of utopia as “an approach toward, a movement beyond set limits into the realm of the not-yet-set” (Bammer, in Dolan 2005, 7, original emphasis) to locate vision in the present moment and in a sense of possibility.

Utopian performatives can also, I would add, engage the cosmopolitan imagination (the ‘vision’ that Hill defends (2011, 133–136)), functioning as an exploration of “ways to be fully human together” (Dolan 2005, 163). While such experiences are difficult to adequately capture in a scholarly context, the moment of felt, shared experiencing (or ‘lifting above’) in performance that Dolan describes feels familiar to me – as I suspect it would to many performance-goers and performers. Her argument is convincing. Even Snyder-Young, who challenges the political efficacy of Dolan’s concept, acknowledges that:

Utopian performatives … are real. I do not dispute that they are joyous. I have felt them. There are moments where a performance event comes together and the audience feels united
as a public, and is able to imagine together a space in which the world can be just a little more just.

(Snyder-Young 2013, 138)

Dolan’s concept, it seems, is a productive articulation of a widely-experienced aspect of performance – one which offers spectators a sense possibility through shared moments of exchange.4

The potential that such moments hold for opening up a world beyond the parameters of individualism is considerable. By their very definition, utopian performatives sit in contrast and contradiction to the individualised society: the human consequences of globalisation that result in fatalism, denial, and the individualisation of agency are directly contradicted by moments in performance that evoke a shared sense of hope and possibility. In utopian performatives, the “temporary interpretive communities” (Lilley 2010) that I outlined in Chapter Two become ones in which “people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (Dolan 2005, 2), stepping beyond the dangers of “elitist individualism” (Wee 2014, 8) in spectating and instead becoming engaged in the act of exchange. And as shared experiences of hope, collectivity, and possibility, utopian performative moments emerge as distinct points of disruption in the dominant frameworks of globalisation and individualisation.

I do, however, think that the impact and extent of the disruption can be variable. Some of the moments that capture ‘the possible’ in the creative works that I have discussed in this thesis, for instance (such as the

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4 Of course, utopian performatives are not the only place where the possible can be fostered in performance; the less ‘transcendent’ moments of unsettlement, imagination, and understanding that I discussed in relation to the cosmopolitan imagination, for example, to do not fit strictly within Dolan’s definition but do, I feel, offer a sense of the possible. I consider these moments together with more quintessential utopian performatives later in this chapter.
moment of unified movement and cohesion after relentless fragmentation in *Trust* seem to me to carry more ‘frame-breaking’ potential than some others that I have felt (such as seeing *Les Miserables* in London), though their value and function as utopian performatives are the same. This is similar to a point I argued in Chapter One (that due its reliance on the bodied exchange between the spectator and the performer and/or performance space, *all* performance engages the space between the globalised and the individualised to some degree, but that the extent to which it does this can vary); while the very existence of a utopian performative sits in contrast to the individualised society, there are varying degrees to which these moments disrupt or unsettle the dominant frame. I do agree to some extent with Dolan’s claim that “we too often flounder on the shoals of ‘what does this do’, when how something feels in the moment might be powerful enough” (Dolan 2005, 170) – but given the overall challenge that I am responding to in this thesis, I also think that the political impact of finding the possible in performance invites further exploration. From this perspective, asking ‘what does this do’ (and ‘what can this do’) does not limit the creation or experience of such moments, but rather opens up a deeper understanding of how we might move towards an ability to engage with and respond to global challenges through performance.

Snyder-Young considers the political implications of Dolan’s ‘utopian performatives’ in her book *Theatre of Good Intentions: Challenges and Hopes for Theatre and Social Change*. Her key focus, however, is on whether or not such moments directly result in action (Snyder-Young 2013, 138–140), and I am cautious about approaching them as tools to bring about specific acts of change. Utopian performatives harness the “power of affect” (Dolan 2005, 21), and the ethics of deliberately using a heightened sense of affect to incite a particular act or to bring about a particular political end can be questionable. Schechner highlights the danger of this with the example of Hitler’s use of ‘presence’ in Nazi
Germany (Schechner 2002, 216). The lines between art and propaganda can be thin (Pickens 2007, 74–75), as can the lines between art and advertising (Bogart 1995; Gibbons 2005) – and in addition to my ethical discomfort with using affective performance to compel spectators to act in a particular way, it also seems to me to be too closely aligned with the tools of consumer capitalism to adequately challenge it at the systemic level.

In light of this, Snyder-Young’s assertion that because we have “no proof that these disappearing moments lead participants and audiences to take action in the world outside of the theatre” we can conclude that they do not have a sufficient impact (Snyder-Young 2013, 139) does not worry me. Dolan herself argues that insisting that spectators act or intervene in the wider world can rob a performance of its critically utopian performative gesture (Dolan 2005, 50), and my answer to Snyder-Young’s question “what is the effect of affect [in terms of social change]?” (2013, 139) would be the argument that I have already unfolded in this thesis: that a move towards global sustainability also entails unsettling the individualised society, as part of a broader process of change that sits before, (or in addition to) moments of tangible or external action – and that performance has the potential to effect change within this space.

Snyder-Young does, however, raise a concern about the political implications of utopian performative moments that gives me pause. She cautions that:

If in making a utopian world within the theatre we feel we have taken action, and therefore do not take action in the real world, we are wasting our impulse to make change.

(Snyder-Young 2013, 138)

This also calls to mind Grehan’s description of works that “allow spectators to leave the space and enjoy a Chardonnay, feeling as if they
have actually done something by attending” (Grehan 2009, 6); the danger is that in shifting agency or a desire for agency to performance spaces, the impulse driving change has the potential to become placated or contained (a translation markedly similar to individualisation’s reallocation of both agency and hope to cycles of consumption in the continual re-construction of identity). Given that I see utopian performatives as valuable sites of negotiation in which the parameters of globalisation and individualisation are momentarily suspended, such a concern invites a considered response.

A starting point from which to formulate one can, I think, be found in Grehan’s book *Performance, Ethics and Spectatorship in a Global Age*. With a similar question as to the impact of performance beyond the performance space, she considers politically-inflected work that:

…follows [spectators], nags and irritates them, and although they might attempt either to suppress these responses or to establish ways of being in the world with them, the nagging remains and demands consideration. Eventually, if it cannot be soothed, the irritation drives spectators to find ways of changing things personally or politically so that it is soothed.

(Grehan 2009, 6–7)

Moments in performance such as these, as Grehan clarifies, are not about “being charged with a political function and being ordered to change the world” (2009, 7); rather, spectators feel compelled to critically formulate and negotiate a response beyond the performance space due to the “profound and radical unsettlement” they have experienced within it (2009, 37). This is a very different driver of change to the fear and urgency warned of by Gourevitch (2010) or the use of affect to compel a given action (Hurley and Warner 2012) – it offers spectators a greater degree of agency and the space in which to navigate their own particular responses.
My question here is about whether moments of possibility or hope in performance can potentially have similar effects – not the same as Grehan’s ‘ambivalence’ (2009, 22), as the focus is slightly different – but whether they might still productively unsettle the spectator to the extent that afterwards the feeling or response engendered by the work cannot be easily resolved. A moment in performance that ‘nags and irritates’ through a compelling vision that sits in discord with a lived reality, or a sense of hope that acknowledges the complexities of the present and refuses to be left behind in the performance space: that does, as Dolan suggests, “ripple out into other forms of social relations” (Dolan 2005, 34) and out into the world. The potential existence of such moments warrants further consideration, and is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

5.3 Situating the Possible

In seeking a sense of possibility so deeply unsettling that it persists and ripples out beyond the performance space, I look first to another source of radical hopeful unsettlement to see what insight it might have to offer: where engaging with place and places offers a seemingly utopian experience. Such moments are described by poet Mary Oliver in her essay ‘Home’, in which she writes:

The … physical world, under its green and blue dyes, draws me toward a better, richer self, call it elevation (there is hardly an adequate word), where I might ascend a little – where a gloss of spirit would mirror itself in worldly action. I don’t mean just mild goodness. I mean feistiness too, the fires of human energy

5 Place, site, and landscape can be highly productive avenues through which to activate and inhabit spaces between the globalised and the individualised in performance. I unfortunately do not have the space or scope to do justice to considering them here, but for a more complete and nuanced discussion see, amongst many others: Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002); Kaye (2000); Kwon (2004); McAuley (2006); Pearson (2006); and Tompkins and Birch (2012).
What I find striking about Oliver’s description is the ‘feistiness’ in the sense of hope – a gladness vivacious enough to disarrange the sorrows of the world into something better – which springs not from any sort of ‘elsewhere’ or imagined future, but rather from a heightened, bodied, lived experience of the present. The sense of the possible rises from a platform of connection – “here I build a platform, and live upon it, and think my thoughts, and aim high. To rise, I must have a field to rise from” (Oliver 1999, 25) – with both the vision and the pull towards action being unequivocally situated in place.

I also find the contrast striking between Oliver’s description and the picture of contemporary hope described by Bauman in his writings on utopias (2005a, 305–309; 2007, 99–103). Bauman argues that in a liquid modern world the only option for vision or hope lies in escape:

Escape is the very opposite of early modern utopias, but psychologically it is [now] their sole available substitute: one could say it is their new rendition, refashioned to the measure of a deregulated, individualized society of consumers.

(Bauman 2005a, 308)

The utopian moment described by Oliver is not one of escape: it has its basis in becoming more deeply embedded in the world – a heightened experience of the present that unsettles old frames of reference, and opens up new possibilities. And this, I feel, offers valuable insight into approaching a sense of hope, possibility, and vision in our contemporary society.

A sense of hope through being embedded in the world can also be offered in performance. Meskimmon argues that “art is a very real form of engagement with/in the world, rather than an escape from it” (2011, 92) – and as I have already discussed, the situated nature of
performance marks it as a particularly productive site for negotiating spaces between the globalised and the individualised. The openings for connection that performance can unfold have the potential to form a ‘platform’ from which to rise – or at least from which to consider that rising could be possible. This situatedness is also a key aspect of utopian performatives: utopian performative moments involve not just the act of collective imagining, but also the location of this imagining in a temporary community – “ordinary people lifted from our lives to form connections that in utterly simple ways make the world better” (Dolan 2005, 58).

While the temporary communities of utopian performatives involve the imagination, their location in performativity also moves them towards the ‘real’:

A performative is not a metaphor; it’s a doing, and it’s in the performative’s gesture that hope adheres, that communitas happens, that the not-yet-conscious is glimpsed and felt and strained toward.

(Dolan 2005, 170)

In sharing a sense that another world is possible in performance, it becomes possible in that moment. According to Fischer-Lichte, “the re-enchantment of the world is accomplished through [the] linkage of art and life, which is the aim of the aesthetics of the performative” (2008, 206). I would add to this that the reimagining of the world is accomplished through the linkage in performance of “a way of being in the world” and “ways to imagine other than the actual” (Sha and Plotnitsky 2013, 6). Performance can again be seen to be a site for engaging with the world through an alternate frame of reference – this time by opening up a sense of the possible through a shifted and heightened experience of the present.

In light of this, Snyder-Young’s concern about wasting an impulse to effect change by creating or experiencing utopias in performance is
countered: it emerges as contradictory if the act of creating or experiencing a utopian performative is understood to be *in itself* an act of change. However, the pull towards escape-as-utopia (and the translation of ‘hope’ to ‘escape’) is strong in liquid modernity (Bauman 2005b, 308), and while Dolan argues that “utopian performatives exceed the content of a play or performance” (Dolan 2005, 8), I do feel that the extent to which they function as performatives (and therefore as sites of change)⁶ is affected by the content and frame in which they are placed.

A drive towards an ever-shifting and ever-anticipated utopia as escape through the pleasure of consumption (Bauman 2002, 123) can affect the experience of being a spectator in performance, and utopian performative moments found in creative works that play more directly into this culture of consumption – the mega-musicals of Rebellato’s “McTheatre” (which “really [do] take the commodity form and run with it” (Rebellato 2006, 99)), for example, or grand-scale spectacles in which the human being becomes part of a disappearing act (Kershaw 2003, 595)⁷ – are perhaps more likely to be experienced and remembered as a shared theatrical *fiction* (Carlson 2004, 130) as opposed to a shared *imaginary* (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; C. Taylor 2002)). Vision and hope again become slippery – felt in the moment in performance, even *brought into being* in that moment, but potentially lost at the close of the performance as the individualised spectator shifts their focus to

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⁶ Performativity is a complex and contested theoretical concept, as evident in McKenzie’s discussion of it with regard to performance and globalisation (McKenzie 2002, 162–172). I use it here following Dolan’s use of the term, to refer to the degree to which the ‘doing’ in a performance translates to a ‘becoming’ (Dolan 2005, 5–6).

⁷ In the interest of brevity I am perhaps being over simplistic in my use of broad genres to discuss what are quite particular moments in performance, and while “McTheatre often shows a profound disregard, even contempt, for space and particularity” (Rebellato 2006, 103) this does not mean that the politics of all the utopian performatives contained within it are compromised. For example, following Dolan’s location of a utopian performative in watching *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Dolan 2005, 18–19), I can recall ripples from a performance of *Jesus Christ Superstar* set in the ‘Occupy’ movement, with Jesus and Judas as protest leaders and the Pharisees as businessmen: the incongruence of the opulent, musical portrayal of an anti-capitalist protest movement was striking, but its effect and affect sparked some productive reflection (Jones 2013).
the next anticipated experience of pleasure. Deliberately situating moments of hope or possibility that are offered in performance can help to counter this, I feel, and can therefore increase their potential to have ripples beyond the performance’s frame.

Returning, then, to explicitly seeking a sense of hope or vision that is embedded in the world, I shift my focus from the general to the particular: to the creative works that I have explored already in this thesis. Considering them collectively in this context yields new insights, into both the works themselves and into the question of finding the possible in performance. Each of the creative pieces I have discussed is different and distinct: neither Trust, Of All the People in All the World, nor Women Are Heroes were selected to fit a particular criteria for form, content, or function. Rather, I looked to works containing an element of performance that had had ripples beyond the performance space for myself as a spectator – which I found resurfacing in my mind when considering the questions this thesis asks. And while Tag. You’re It. was created with specific intent (to engage the local, to challenge the spectator to play with their own agency, to build connection and moments of possibility between both people and place), its features were not chosen to fit with the others. It is interesting to note upon reflection, then, that despite their different forms, styles, and functions, a common thread emerges between all four performances. They all, quite deliberately and explicitly, inhabit another space between: between the ‘real’ world and the performed or imaginary. Instead of utopias, they evoke something closer to what Tompkins (following Foucault) calls heterotopias: “alternative spaces that are distinguished from [the] actual world, but that resonate with it” (Tompkins 2014). And I would suggest that it is through this location and dislocation that the sense of the possible evoked in performance extends outwards to the world beyond the performance’s frame.
There are myriad examples of this to be found in the performance works discussed in this thesis, and I only have the scope here for a brief outline. As an overview, though, Trust can be clearly seen to unsettle the space between the world of the performance and the world outside of it. As I have already explained, it is unclear as to whether the performers are performing a character or themselves; or whether the text they are speaking is autobiographical, fictional, or a combination of both. And while the form and style of the performance is in no way naturalistic, the collapsing global systems that the performance responds to and the global, systemic origins of the individualism that it critiques are all too real.

This in-between space is unsettling, and the distinct utopian performative moment at the close of Trust is imbued with its layers of meaning. The “fragile and moving vision of the possibility of cooperation” (Croggon 2011) offered by the sweeping movements of the performers is so moving because of the precious fragility of the budding possibility of a world outside the frame of contemporary globalisation – and the act of collectively imagining as an audience becomes all the more significant because of the hour and a half spent considering the fragmentation and disconnection that individualism entails. The “potential for radically altered social communities in the momentary suspension of disbelief” (Dolan 2005, 66) awakened at the close of Trust is located in a heightened awareness of the conditions that these communities are looking beyond, and the ability of the spectator to experience the moment as a fleeting pleasure is therefore minimised. The utopian performative here radically unsettles the idea that global social systems and cycles of collapse cannot be changed, by offering the spectators a shared experience of an alternative.

In Of All the People in All the World, the rice is a metaphor but its configurations are potent and moving because the statistics they present
are real – and the imaginary that we are all like uniform grains of rice is transformative as a social imaginary fused with fact (the global population can be represented by one type of grain because in reality we are all human beings). Because of the form of the work there is not a definable utopian performative moment here – instead, a sense of the possible unfolds through a situated engagement: the representational and the real become blurred, and the possibility of a cosmopolitan vision being a global lived reality can be felt in the quiet presence of the mounds of rice.

Women Are Heroes, too, inhabits this in-between performative space: the women laughing on buildings are reshaping the space of the city in real time, and their existence in real time in a global elsewhere locates the connection that the spectator feels (or has the potential to feel) in a changing understanding of the world. As Tompkins writes of staged heterotopias, the embedding of the creative work in the present also “enables audiences to discern some hint or inkling of another world, even one that is otherwise invisible” (Tompkins 2014); the cosmopolitan imagination in Women Are Heroes becomes both a vision and a bodied experience through a moment of connection in performance.

Finally, the deliberately situated reimagining of the present in Tag. You’re It. can be seen to extend the performance’s provocations of the possible beyond its frame. The content and focus of Tag. You’re It. varies throughout the performance, but regardless of the degree of fiction and crafting (or lack thereof) in each encounter, the situation and connection is real (the touch of an actual hand; an act of actual agency; a connection with an actual person, within an actual place). In this sense, the work functions as “the creation of public situations for reimagining reality” (Papastergiadis 2013a, 97). The re-enchantment of the world through performance (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 26) also becomes the re-enchantment of everyday space. And this re-enchantment and
reimagining can, as demonstrated by some of the responses to the piece, resonate with and linger in the site long after the performance has finished. As Sophie Nield explains:

There is more at stake in a performative moment than a transient, fleeting ‘ghosting’, which will be lost to the memory of the site once it is over. The work of performance is not a haunting: it is a battle for the right to determine, inflect, and produce the site itself.

(Nield 2012, 232)

The site produces the performance and the performance produces the site (ibid.) – whether the site is a physical space, a social imaginary, or the ‘placeless’ globality of the political and economic systems shaping our world. In producing the possible within these sites, hope moves away from a sense of escape, and towards another way of becoming and being in the global present.

5.4 The Wheel Invents the Road

Seeking vision, hope, and a sense of the possible is a shifting and negotiated process in liquid modernity, both within and beyond the parameters of performance. Hardt and Negri write that no Martin Luther King, Jr. will emerge in seeking systemic change in the contemporary moment – that change and vision will occur instead through an “emerging cycle of movements [which] will express itself through horizontal participatory structures” (Hardt and Negri 2011). The ‘wheel invents the road’ in the sense that in creating moments of transformation, disruption, or unsettlement in the individualised society, a deeper understanding of what a broader change might entail emerges. Again, Nield’s work offers insight into this task, this time in her description of the global anti-corporate-globalisation movement as a ‘theatre of resistance’:
Other spaces, other worlds, are implicated in it. It can invoke spaces which may not exist yet; which may only exist for the duration of the event, but which, being materialised here, become possible … which face, not existing authority, but [their] own differently imagined world.

(Nield 2006, 61)

‘Vision’ is present here, but it is negotiated, shaped, and brought into being through situated acts of exchange. As Andrew Boyd and David Oswald Mitchell write in their discussion of performance and activism (with reference to The White Bicycle Plan (Constant 1970) and the work of The Yes Men (Reilly 2013; The Yes Men 2015)), putting forward a utopia or imagining another world can indeed be powerful, but it is “better if we’ve already tasted it” (2012, 84).

In his consideration of the role of performance in the contemporary political moment, Schechner highlights the need for a new avant-garde (2015, 16–19) in which performance moves beyond a ‘niche-garde’ where even the boundary-pushing groups, artists, and works “operate as well-known brands” (2015, 19). I feel the frame-breaking potential of a radical hope – ‘vivacious enough disarrange the sorrows of the world into something better’ – might have something to offer to this project. Again, the suggestion is not prescriptive – the political potential of performance is nuanced and variable, and boundaries can be crossed in myriad ways (including recognising and engaging with despair, the inverse of hope; I recall, for example, to the active unsettlement and impulse towards change I felt watching 4.48 Psychosis, upon hearing the recurring line “this is not a world in which I wish to live” (Kane 2000)). It has, however, emerged in this thesis that the spaces of connection opened up in performance can pose a productive challenge to the fragmentation and disconnection of the individualised society, and also to the fatalism and denial that it fosters. And while the flattened language of change can present hope as two-dimensional, trite, or naïve, I have found in practice that deliberate acts of moving beyond unspoken
boundaries towards connection have comprised some of the most challenging, unsettling, and memorable experiences that I have had in performance, both as a performer and as a spectator. I do not think I that have found a ‘new avant-garde’ in the works created and explored in this thesis, but through engaging with them I think I can feel the possibility of it: somewhere in our ability “imagine, invent, and perform alternative ways of becoming” (Schechner 2015, 14), in the spaces in between.

5.5 Conclusion

Finding utopia in performance (and, following Dolan, hope at the theatre) that ripples out beyond the performance space is a complex undertaking in an individualised society. Despite its complexities, however, it is worth pursuing; as Meskimmon states, “works of art have the power to articulate against the grain, materialise ideas as yet unthought and, through these means, enable us to conceive the world differently” (Meskimmon 2011, 92). Such conceptions can have broader implications, as recognised by Schechner’s challenge: “I am asking you … to take seriously the personal, social, and worldmaking force of performance” (2015, 9). In this chapter, and in this thesis, I have attempted to do so. Performance has been shown to open up in-between spaces in which new ways of belonging and becoming can unfold: a budding avant-garde that just might push the boundaries of art and performance towards cultural change through its hopeful and ‘world-making’ potential. And by situating the bodied spectator, performance can – momentarily, but with possible ripples beyond that moment – shift the concept of ‘another world’ from a distant, utopian dream to the realms of the possible.
CONCLUSION

She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies — little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts — from her bag and was offering them to all the women at the gate. … We were all covered with the same powdered sugar.

And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought, This is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate – once the crying of confusion stopped – seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies.

Naomi Shihab Nye ~ *Gate A4*

A move towards a more equitable, sustainable world involves many different types of change – alongside the practical measures demanded by politics, economics, and governance sits a need to engage the social and cultural patterns that shape our responses to the global. In this thesis I have highlighted how the individualised society and the increasing gap between the globalised and the individualised can drive or enable inaction, arguing that finding ways to unsettle these frameworks, and to traverse the space between them, can open up possibilities for another world. Nye’s prose-poem *Gate A4* illustrates this beautifully. Located in the disjointed and still somewhat terror-conscious space of an airport, it traces the transition from disconnection and fear (a Palestinian woman wailing and crying at the gate, intercom requests for someone who speaks Arabic) to a temporary, transient, and yet almost tangible community, marked by the simple sharing of cookies (Nye 2008, 162–163). As a microcosm of the global – a globally-inflected microcosm in the airport’s liminal space – it demonstrates the possibility of moving
from disconnection and self-interest to a world that looks beyond the individualised frame.

Finding such moments through performance – through performative acts of reframing, reengaging, and reimagining – has comprised the major work of this thesis. I began by placing my gaze on ‘the global’ (though with the individualised unsettled alongside it): tracing the reflexivity between global economic collapse and social disconnection in Trust, illustrating the global cosmopolitan imaginary offered by Of All the People in All the World, and considering the possibility of reaching across global distances (both physical and emotional) towards a cosmopolitan exchange in Women Are Heroes. In the latter part of the thesis I turned to the local: exploring how smaller, bodied connections and moments of agency can unfold in practice through Tag. You’re It., and arguing that situating moments of unsettlement and radical hope can open up a sense of ‘the possible’, forming a platform from which to move towards broader systemic change.

On the scale of global concerns, these are small acts of disruption. Tiny acts of expansion. Ripples in the frame of individualisation that engage the spaces in between. The pull, even now, is towards doubt as to whether or not this is enough. The question is a persistent one: when facing gross economic inequality, looming ecological catastrophe, and any number of institutionalised oppressions, can small, transient moments of connection really be worth pursuing? The act of smiling at the giant smile of a faraway woman pasted on a building – a jolt of recognition at how a performer ‘used to want to change the world’ – a moment of quiet reflection amidst seven billion of grains of rice? Being challenged to play, engage, connect, and reflect when moving through a familiar city landscape? Such tiny acts seem almost absurd when placed on the global spectrum, in light of the very real ecological threats the world is facing – or of the very real, material needs of those suffering the
most keenly at the hands of the cultural, political, and economic systems that sustainability seeks to address.

In short, and in conclusion, then: no, such moments are not enough. But it is important to recognise that in this case, ‘enough’ is a fundamentally flawed unit of measurement. As I outlined in the introduction, performance will not ‘save the world’ – but neither will any one singular act or vehicle for action. The systemic nature of the global sustainability challenges we are facing means that no one policy, movement, behaviour change program, or even internationally ratified treaty can be enough on its own – and while a sense of criticality and reflexivity as to the effectiveness of an action is still essential, to base an assessment of the action’s validity on whether or not it is enough can lead to a lack of any action at all through fatalism, catastrophism, or denial.

Somewhere within an understanding that no single act will save the world, however, I would suggest, lie the stirrings of hope. Locating acts of change within their broader context and questioning their place within the systemic is deeply important. It is simply a matter of navigating a paradox: that an individual’s actions do not demonstrably affect the global, but that individuals’ actions do collectively make up the global – and by changing them, therefore, in one sense the global does change. Such a paradox sits alongside another, highlighted by Cornel West, that:

Hope is inseparable from despair. Those of us who truly hope make despair a constant companion whom we outwrestle every day. … It is impossible to look honestly at our catastrophic conditions and not have some despair – it is a healthy sign of how deeply we care.

(West 2008, 215)

Creating change in the interstices between our daily lives and the systems within which they operate – and still holding the bigger picture in our minds – is an act of balance, a paradox, sitting somewhere between
hope and despair; between a sense of our own real agency and a sense of the broader system that needs changing.

Performance, as I have demonstrated, can help us to navigate, make sense of, challenge, and act through and within these contradictions. There is something of this in Elliott and Lemert’s response to the new individualism by locating ‘hope’ in the individuals who look beyond its borders to “remake what corners of the world they can” (Elliot and Lemert 2009, 196).¹ Performance is in itself an act of remaking, and the corners of the world that are remade in performance can have impacts that extend well beyond the work’s duration. Performance, it has become evident in this thesis, can open up spaces of possibility at the intersection of the intimate and the spectacle; the local and the global; and the individual placed within a broader socially and ecologically inflected frame.

At the end of her book Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination, Meskimmon states:

I bring this volume to an open ending, rather than closure, in the spirit of offering more possibility than prescription and more hope than resignation.

(Meskimmon 2011, 93)

Meskimmon’s sentiment resonates, and here at the close of this thesis I would like to echo it. I began this project with ideas about both exploring and creating grand-scale political works that clearly – even unequivocally – effected global change toward sustainability. What I have ended up exploring and creating instead, after considering the social factors driving the problem in more detail, are quieter moments of exchange in which the spectator looks, sees, feels, reflects, and responds, from outside of (or at least from the borders of) their individualised frame.

¹ I am also reminded, again, of Rich’s poem, and those who ‘perversely and with no extraordinary power/ reconstitute the world’ – placing the corners of the world in a global context.
What I have found here instead of answers, it would seem, are openings: openings for engagement; openings for connection; the opening up of an ability to respond; openings for creating a sense of possibility; and, amongst these, openings for creating meaningful global change.
AFTERWORD

I write this afterword from the top of a hill in the bush where I grew up. Half an hour’s drive from Perth but I can see it there – the city – tiny and twinkling on the horizon like a picture of the Emerald City on a cover of *The Wizard of Oz*.

The sun has just gone down, and the streetlights and houses in the suburbs below are beginning to make sky-scapes across the valley.

Looking out, it seems impossible to picture the global from here. The city, only 25kms away, looks so small already – and it is just one city in just one country, one of the most geographically isolated in the world. I attempt to ‘zoom out’ in my mind – networks of cities-like-stars placed in tiny corners of continents. But even there the frame will not focus: it is unsettled in my uncertainty about where land meets ocean; where summer shifts to winter; where dusk becomes midnight or dawn or the brightest light of day.

The world may be a pale blue dot, but it is still too big for my mind to grasp.

And if the world is a pale blue dot, there is not a pixel small enough to be me within its pictured landscape.

I think of Tipping’s poem again – *finding the little place inside where all the stars come out*. Looking out, I realise that these are my stars. The dusty smell of the bush; the sound of magpies and Carnaby cockatoos in the trees; the distant lights that house the people I love. They are stars, even if they would not fill a pixel on a picture of the globe.
I think of other places, other pixels. I think of the woman whose interview moved me so deeply in *Women Are Heroes*, and wonder who and what *her* stars are now – quietly hoping that a bright orange dress is amongst them. I think of tangles of bodies from Germany and the Netherlands on stage in Australia in *Trust*, tired from ninety minutes of frenzy and collapse, moving together in hopeful unison – and of the unseen frenzy that is present in the rush-hour city below me, despite its apparent stillness through my faraway frame. I think of each of the little lights that I can see in the valley as a grain of rice: piles upon piles of households – a glowing mountain of proverbial hearths and homes in a shifting landscape of stars.

I think of standing side by side in shared silence with strangers, as night falls over the summertime city. Watching, with them, a river of people drift by as the carnival lights turn on below. Imagining with them, just for a moment, that the fabric of their world could be ever-so-slightly different.

‘The global’ now seems somehow less abstract. I still cannot picture the physical magnitude of the globe in my mind, but *imagining* the global, or seeking a *sense* of it, does not seem quite so difficult – through acts of imagination rooted in the real, made possible by the opening of time, space, and connection in performance.

My face cracks a smile as I realise that my slogan of fifteen years ago – *Another World is Possible* – may need to be retired, or at the very least reworked. The frame through which I view the global is shifting even now, through the exploration I have undertaken in this thesis. It would seem that I, like Tipping, do not want another world after all. I want a more inclusive and connected society; a more equitable and just economy; governance that recognises the value of the planet on which we live. But while I want to change its *systems*, the world’s people and
places – mostly as they are now – are at the heart of my imagined other world. However utopian my vision, it is seeded here is the dusty air and the lights that flicker in the valley stretching out beneath my feet.

And so it seems that, in one sense at least, another world is here. It is sitting there below the surface, in the spaces in between, just outside the frame.
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