Research Article

Summoning the Genius Temporis: The Time and Place for Arts-Based, Creative Policy Making to Further Social Justice

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Abstract

This paper considers how conceptions of time might affect the transformative potential of arts-based and creative approaches to policy making. It draws on a project that employed the arts to tackle place-based health inequalities in North Lanarkshire, Scotland, arguing that conventional understandings of time as linear can be limiting. Space, time, and mattering are explored in relation to social justice through a montage of excerpts of creative and academic outputs, reflective diaries, conversations, and ongoing participatory action research in various underserved communities. The paper concludes that when we stay true to the essence of the creative process, rather than insisting activities lead to contrived outcomes, deep experiential learning unfolds.

Keywords

time, arts-based practice, creative approaches, policy making, social justice

(Not) the Beginning

This paper discusses work funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) programs of place-based work (Madgin, 2021), mobilizing community assets and addressing health disparities (UKRI, 2021). This work started off with the idea that *Art is Everywhere*—it is not just something that appears in galleries or that "some" creative people do; it is a mindset, process and form of social engagement that enables us to see, feel and do things creatively and with openness to new possibilities. Two of us (de Andrade, Principal Investigator; Foster, Co-Investigator) collaborated with North Lanarkshire Council's (NLC) Art Development Team, other Council departments, and a range of third sector organizations to share ideas, discuss good practice and challenges of how we might work differently to further social justice through arts-based approaches and creativity. We were interested in shaping policy through community-led, creative practice.

Art is Everywhere was timebound and ran during the calendar year, from January 2022 to January 2023 with a public engagement event in March 2023 to celebrate its "ending"—or, rather, marking the beginning of our strategic vision to tackle inequalities through the arts. Within our tight timeframe, we aimed to stay true to the ethos of our arts-based work and acknowledge the importance of curiosity and embracing the "unknown." Working collaboratively, respecting people's experiences and listening to their stories

requires "surrendering to uncertainty and remaining open to possibility"; it is this sense of uncertainty that "typifies arts-based and aesthetic ways of knowing" (Foster, 2016). This is at odds with more conventional approaches to research which tend to emphasize certainty and closure. The latter, though, is perhaps more conducive to delivering tangible results to funders. We asked ourselves how we make best use of time and space in achieving outcomes when churning out outputs in quick succession is a typically measure of "success".

Our project's "measurable success" within these timeframes was knocked off its linear, timebound trajectory through a different kind of "success"—a funding award for a follow-on project: "REALITIES in health disparities: Researching Evidence-based Alternatives in Living, Imaginative, Traumatised, Integrated, Embodied Systems" (de Andrade, Project Lead; Raman, Co-Investigator). NL's *Art is Everywhere* transformed into one of three, geographical "asset hubs[1]" in Scotland alongside Clackmannanshire and Easter Ross in REALITIES. In swift succession,

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REALITIES 2 became REALITIES 3 with a further award and adding a further two asset hubs in Dundee and Edinburgh.

Each quarter, our funder asked us for feedback and figures for "measuring success and monitoring, evaluation and learning practices." Reports and other "outputs," including this paper, needed to be submitted within timescales that made us aware of the pressure of time—not an unfamiliar feeling to academics working in "fast-paced, metric-oriented" universities (Mountz et al., 2015). These feelings are not exclusive to academics; we also noticed how frequently time was discussed by our collaborators. For instance, during two full-day participatory action research workshops with NLC members and third sector organizations to co-produce an arts strategy, there were multiple concerns raised over "finding time" in already over-full schedules. Some spoke about how they were forced to work "reactively" rather than plan ahead in a meaningful way. Most frequently, time was referred to as a reason for why things could not be done differently. Perhaps, we deliberate here, doing things differently requires a different understanding of time. And perhaps it is the arts that can offer a way forward (or backward or in or out).

Swirling About in a Boundless Coil of a Time Warp

Somewhere along the line, our place-based projects entangled through time and space as the urgency to deliver activities turning into meaningful outcomes grew alongside persistent monitoring and evaluation emails, trackers and focus groups (de Andrade, 2022). Everything we did— whether in physical or virtual spaces—was recorded in case it could be data and evidence of "success." More and more, faster, more frequent reminders to "do." To get through ethics, get into the field, co-analyze data, make sense of findings and publish, publish, publish. *There is never enough time*, we hear ourselves repeating: as we present these ideas on the transformative potential of arts-based inquiry to conceptions of time; as we begin to realize that conventional understandings of time as linear can be limiting when it comes to working with organizations and communities and thinking differently about social justice issues.

As we try to influence, implement and shape policy through creative practice, we become increasingly aware of the deep connection between time and space and how both have become homogenized:

While once, you could say that time was so local that for every genius loci, a spirit of specific place, there was a genius temporis, a spirit of specific time, the history of Western time-keeping has been one of standardization and globalization (Griffiths, 1999, p. 15).

Griffiths' (1999, p. 2) travels take her to places where a genius temporis might still exist: "the little pig moon of the East Indies, the scent-calendar of the Andaman Forest. Cow-time, bee-time, coconut clocks, Watermelon-months and the month of the Snowblind."

We wonder how our projects' genius temporis might manifest and whether the arts might offer a way of conjuring this spirit. And could this spirit help us draw attention to the social justice issues that face the people of North Lanarkshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Easter Ross, and Edinburgh? Our projects are rooted in place (as opposed to an abstract space) and filled with creativity that unfolds in the present from the past and future of our local hubs. So much engagement in and through art was achieved within short-time frames in *Art is Everywhere* and REALITIES 2, and time seems to expand to enable so many strands of the projects that have taken on a life of their own in REALITIES 3. All the while, we continue to be monitored for our measurable success. In a couple of months, there will be our funder's formal mid-term review for this final phase of research. Another 18 months have passed, and they need to ensure our research is on track.

Here we focus on three creative strands *of Art is Everywhere* (dance, visual art, and work with children based on a Maya Angelou poem and forest walks) and playfully look at ways this provides a way of thinking differently about time, and how place became entangled with space. Or how thinking differently about time and space provides a way of seeing and feeling this work. We continue this paper here—not at the beginning, nor at its end—with a closer look at the projects. This is followed by discussion of how time and space have been conceived over the centuries, considering the implications for social justice. Western thought has dominated nature-based and indigenous conceptions. We introduce new materialism and Barad's work on *spacetimemattering*, which draws on quantum physics' understandings of time, as a useful way of analyzing aspects of our entangled projects. Barad (2017c) notes that quantum and indigenous perspectives "are not identical or commensurate or have the same effect or stakes, but they do share in offering profound disruptions of the conception of homogenous empty time" (p. 61). The phrase "homogeneous empty time" comes from Walter Benjamin's work on time, a concept which for him was inseparable from justice, and refers to "clock time," that artificially imposed frame that structures the narrative of the relentless march of progress. We reflect on this favoring of dominant power structures and maintaining of status quo in our subsequent montages, where we unpack how alternate conceptions are played out in these to challenge and/or change these power structures.

The section that follows, *Art as Evidence*, discusses the interplay of time and art, outlines some of the strands of the initial NL project and clarifies our aim of furthering social justice. It introduces the methodology of diffraction which we employ to think playfully about this work. We then present a montage of excerpts of some of the creative outputs and conversations that took place during and after the project, interspersed with emails and diary entries, and with fragments of theory that lend insight or provoke new lines of thinking. This is inspired by Barad's (2017a) essay, *What*

Flashes Up: Theological-Political-Scientific Fragments, which draws on Walter Benjamin's writings on time and Judith Butler's writings on Benjamin. Barad applies their new materialist theory, and concept of spacetimemattering, to enable them to diffractively read insights through one another rather than present a straightforward narrative.

We follow the montage with a discussion of the implications of the work and how it informs, might inform, or has already informed, our future work with communities to further social justice. In so doing we attempt to address Kuby and Taylor's (2021, p. 279) question: "How might spacetimemattering shock your thoughts and provoke new ways of doing inquiry and perhaps pedagogies? How does reconfiguring space, time, and matter—and their relationality—reconfigure your being, knowing, and doings in the world?"

Breathing Life Into Burnt Out Places and People

Art is Everywhere, and the interconnected projects that followed in REALITIES 2 and 3, draw on the potential of connecting "the experiential and social experience of art with the survival and thriving of individuals and their communities" (Wong, 2019, p. 205). They are inextricably linked to place—"the foundation stone of individual and collective life and a repository of emotions, experiences, meanings, and memories. Places are where life courses are shaped, social networks are formed, and the sites of lived and felt experiences" (Madgin & Robson, 2023, p. 5). *Art is Everywhere* was situated in North Lanarkshire, which led the way with its coal and steel industries. The demise of these left many parts of the place bereft of identity. With a population of around 340,000, the authority has the highest rate of school exclusion for looked-after children (those "in care" or in the care of the local authority for more than 24 hours); 24.8% of children in poverty; 21,500 residents in the 5% most deprived areas (where people have a low income and/or fewer resources or opportunities); and 75,000 residents in the poorest 15% datazones (geographical places within local authorities) (North Lanarkshire Council, 2019). *Art is Everywhere* set out to connect with hundreds of locals from diverse backgrounds and across the lifespan through sector-specific, intersecting, bottom-up community initiatives using arts-based approaches including dance, theater, photography, film, fine art, creative upcycling of everyday materials, digital art, and podcasting (Davis & de Andrade, 2024). The three strands we are focusing on in this article are described later.

We believe that employing the arts in such a context can further social justice. The arts offer scope for us to see and feel the world differently, to open us up to its beauty and potential and to nudge us out of complacency or inertia (Foster, 2016; de Andrade, 2022; de Andrade et al, 2025).

Of course, this is not a given, and a careful "tightrope walk" is often necessary to avoid falling into meaningless aphorisms or even hijacking the language of liberation while maintaining the status quo (Foster, 2016). Employing an ethics of care and justice (Gilligan, 1982; Moore, 1999) is one way of enabling this balancing act, and our projects—and indeed the writing of this paper—were carried out with care and concern, not only for the human lives involved. The United Nations defines social justice as "an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations" emphasizing key values of equity, access, participation, rights, and diversity (UN News, 2025). We also acknowledge the entanglement of social justice and environmental justice. The nature/society dualism is as "directly implicated in the modern world's colossal violence, inequity, and oppression" as the binaries of Eurocentrism, racism, and sexism (Moore, 2016, p. 2). Thus, a peaceful, flourishing coexistence should be extended to include the nonhuman or "more-than-human" (Abram, 1997).

Relationships are at the heart of *Art is Everywhere* (and REALITIES). We are always relating. Our relationships with our communities, the human and more-than-human, with each other in our hubs, in our consortium, shape our "making" of justice. In our relationships, we carry our past, our cultures, our countries. And we respond to the contexts we bring—however diverse and contradictory—so that we can "make" justice together (Kuntz, 2022).

Time Moves Forward It Never Moves Back?

Western conceptions of time and space are intimately connected with issues of power and justice and have played a large role in the colonization of the planet (de Andrade, 2022; Foster, 2023). Indigenous languages tend not to make a clear distinction between time and space; indeed, the Maori word for time and space is the same (Smith, 2012, p. 52). In the West though, they are understood as distinct, in a long, linear, history which stems from the ancient Greeks. Aristotle defined time as a number, something which is countable, making time synonymous with figures and sequence. Euclid formulated an abstraction of space from the physical world: "We still commonly envision the curved surface of the earth, with all of its local irregularities (its mountains and river valleys), to be embedded within a three-dimensional space lacking any curvature of its own" (Abram, 1997, p. 198). Systematic records of history chart a steady line of measurable "progress" which marched through the Enlightenment, where Newton pronounced an absolute time and absolute space which subsists independently of the material world. This line of progress charted the sea voyages of old, where the "great breakthrough of timekeeping" enabled a

colonizing of "the wildness of ocean time" (Griffiths, 1999, p. 10). It took us to the Industrial Revolution, where time became "work-money-bodies-material goods-global distribution chains" (Murris & Taylor, 2021, p. 279). And so, people (almost) everywhere became distanced from intimate connection with their own surroundings and even their own bodies. For instance, clock time divided us from the actual experience of time as measured by hunger (Griffiths, 1999, p. 12).

This dominant, linear narrative reinforcing systems of power and control has been "instrumental in the displacement, if not outright annihilation, of other more cyclical, mythic, spiritual and Indigenous ways of figuring, knowing and feeling time" (Kuby & Taylor, 2021, p. 279). This social justice issue makes Barad's (2007) reconfiguring of time and space and matter as spacetimemattering something "profoundly interesting" (Kuby & Taylor, 2021, p. 279). Spacetimemattering acknowledges Einstein's theory of relativity, where space and time consistently work together as space-time, and brings in Capra's work on matter whose materialization is inseparable from space-time (Sinquefield-Kangas et al., 2022, pp. 40–41). Thus, spacetimemattering as a noun marks "the inseparability of space, time, and matter in a radical troubling of Newtonian metaphysics and epistemology" (Barad, 2017b, p. 110). As a verb, it is intended "to signal a dynamic (re)making and reconfiguring of a field of relationalities among 'moments,' 'places,' and 'things' (in their inseparability)" (Barad, 2017b, p. 110). This is an entangled field where intra-actions between the phenomena of time and space and matter produce what we perceive as reality. "Matter doesn't move in time. Matter doesn't evolve in time. Matter does time. Matter materializes and enfolds in different temporalities" (Barad, 2013, p. 17).

This is not, as Barad (2013, p. 17) explains, "a mere exercise in metaphysics, or physics. At stake are questions of justice and response-ability." Spacetimemattering involves relationality and non-hierarchical thinking, and it displaces human centrality in the world. It is a "democratic practice" where more than human forces "play an important contribution that is missed though an anthropocentric gaze" (Mitchell, 2017, p. 174). In contrast, a teleological Chronos enables poor treatment of the other—whether non-humans or those people seen as inferior (Murris & Taylor, 2021). Understanding the relationality that defines spacetimemattering also "calls forth ethical considerations as to how past, present, and future are coconstitutive in shaping our realities" (Sinquefield-Kangas et al., 2022, p. 41). This understanding was with us in *Art is Everywhere* (and REALITIES) as we sought to—and continue to—re-imagine healthier, fairer and just systems (spaces) for citizens, our planet and beyond.

The past cannot be erased but rather continues the process of endlessly entangling with present and future resonating with the notion of "kala"/time in Hinduism—the cyclical, present past and future coexisting, and intrinsically linked to action: ". . . when an action ceases, time, conditioned by that action is called past. When something is about to happen, time, conditioned by that event is called future. When has been initiated but is yet not completed, time is then called present" (Coward, 1999, p. 25). This speaks to the idea of time as something "enacted" rather than "measured," relating to the three strands of *Art is Everywhere* presented in this paper along with its "successor" projects REALITIES 2 and REALITIES 3. Where does each project—including their "deliverables," funders' and the academy's expectations—begin? Where do they end? When do we—as active, relational actors in these systems (spaces)—choose to slow down enough to make healthier, more equitable choices for ourselves, each other and the environment?

Art as Evidence

The arts are fertile ground for troubling conventional ideas of space and time. Art is "a natural ally of 'wild' time, with an ability to release the watcher from time-measurement" despite its history having been "corralled into time-bound definitions" (Griffiths, 1999, p. 275). Engaging in art—as viewer or practitioner or participant—might go further than displace perceptions of time and also "blur the boundaries between ourselves and that which is other, or more-than-human" (Sinquefield-Kangas et al., 2022, p. 40). For Manning (2016), who employs a Deleuzian theory of time to explore alternative ways of understanding the making of art, art is not the end result, rather "a quality, a difference in kind, an operative process that maps the way toward a certain attunement of world and expression". Art is the *way*:

> . . .the intuitive potential to activate the future in the specious present, to make the middling of experience felt where futurity and presentness coincide, to evoke the memory not of what was, but of what will be. Art, the memory of the future. (Manning, 2016, p. 47)

In the montage presented below we look at three strands of *Art is Everywhere* (Art Is Everywhere - Measuring Humanity):

i. ***Status***: *Changed* by Overdrive Dance Company, which engages male identifying young people with dance and creative movement. The contemporary dance performance was reworked by young people involved in its creation and filmed in various heritage and nature sites across North Lanarkshire.

ii. ***Referlished***: *Trash Art* by artist and jewelry designer, Emma Ferla, who cares deeply about plastic waste and the climate challenge. Inspired by the woodlands and nature reserves that surround her home, Emma created three visual art pieces using

plastic waste and bottle tops to turn art as process into an artistic creation.

iii. Addressing themes from Maya Angelou's poem *Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All*, local creative artists used collaborative, messy, fun outdoor play, forest walks, and research looking at themes of transition for nursery children moving to primary school.

In the montage, these are "threaded through one another in a nonlinear enfolding of spacetimemattering" (Barad, 2013, p. 18), interspersed with data and reflections from REALITIES 2 and 3—and a manifestation of *This Paper's Passage of Time* as the three of us attempted to find the time to get it published over the years. We include excerpts of emails we sent each other during this process.

We use Barad's concept of diffraction as a tool here which is developed from the work of feminist scholar Donna Haraway. Barad's take involves reading feminist theory through quantum physics; the details of one discipline are read "attentively and with care" through another to "come to more creative insights" (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016, p. 7). The term diffraction means to "break apart in different directions" (Barad, 2007, p. 168) and in physics refers to the phenomena that occur when waves encounter obstacles. This also happens more generally in the world through ongoing intra-actions. Things do not precede intra-action as clearly separate entities; they are always interconnected "and dependent on their intra-activity as constituting them" (Rautio, 2013, p. 398). It is intra-action "that yields us to consider ourselves, and any other thing in the world, as a consequence of the world" (Rautio, 2013, p. 398).

Diffraction, with its relational ontology, offers an alternative dynamic approach to reflexivity. It highlights the entanglement of material-discursive phenomena and is "attuned to differences and their effects in knowledge-making practices"; reflexivity "remains caught up in sameness because of its mirroring of fixed positions" (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016, p. 112).

Barad's notion of diffraction "cuts through the past, present and the future, as temporal composites. This way of thinking counters timelines as a structure and likewise, challenges how and why we think the way we do" (Power, 2020, p. 75). Through their experimental writing, Barad (2017a) encourages the reader "to explore various crystalline structures that solidify, if only momentarily in the breaking of continuity." The "time of now," they point out, "is not an infinitely thin slice of time called the present moment, but rather a thick-now that is a crystallization of the past diffracted through the present" (p. 25). If spacetimematterings are articulated simultaneously in emergent processes of material entanglements and differentiations, it is important to remember:

These differentiations matter. They provide insights into how the politics of time are wound into the specificities that shape material and spatial processes of domination and destruction (Kuby and Taylor, 2021, p. 280).

Power (2020) employs diffraction as artistic process. The objective, she notes,

> is not to reach a determined path but rather, to tune into how materials work together and repel each other. Ideas work this way as well. Think of an idea or problem by experimenting with it: the process of entangling materials, making mistakes, thinking through problems draws on Barad's theorisation of diffraction. (Power, 2020, p. 75)

Ideas and insights can be read through one another; they "need not be critical but can be inventive and creative" (Barad interviewed in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 50). We playfully present the creative work of our project diffractively, engaging with Barad's work and that of others who have been inspired by them, also Abram's work on our relationship to the natural world.

Montage

This Paper's Passage of Time

July 19, 2024, 04:32

I've been awake since 3:23 a.m., sleep stolen by seagulls striding on my slate roof. I want to blame them, but it's my mind and body that has woken me. A slight twitching in my upper back somewhere near my spine, a head exploding with unwritten thoughts.

A first draft of this paper sits in my flooded inbox dated **March 19, 2023, 12:00**. Author 1's working on a Sunday to get this "over the line."

The draft time-travels to a potential third author, Sneha—a Co-Investigator on REALITIES phase 2. I sense having her write with us will spark something special.

June 5, 2023, 16:57

Re: post-qualitative inquiry & policy Time paper—third author?

Thanks again for inviting me to co-author and for sharing the draft. I've had a skim through and certainly resonates with some of my thinking around "designing time," and I would love to contribute.

I've tried to block a couple of hours this week to read in greater detail and outline some thoughts. Next week is chock-a-block, so blocking more time w/b 19th to do some writing, and I can share something by 22nd—for us to then develop together further; does that sound ok?

August 11, 2023, 10:42

RE: Our paper

Dear Victoria—Our paper's getting there, hasn't been forgotten. Apologies it hasn't been submitted yet. We were bidding for phase 3 for REALITIES (£2.5 million over

3 years) and the bid writing + reporting on phase 2 has consumed my every waking hour. Sneha is definitely on board.

The radical political potential that exists in the thick-now of this moment requires thinking time anew—diffracting the past through the present moment, like the play of light inside a crystal (Barad, 2017c, p. 22).

Status The play of light on a spider web, on the bark of a tree revealing touch-inviting texture, on the bodies of the two young men—now at the side of the canal—now in the woods—jumping, spinning, stretching and bending, together and apart. White t-shirts smeared with soil—becoming soil-body- fertile, rich, alive with minerals, microbes, traces of past Scottish climates and NL biologies, decomposing. The month of decay; death, funerals, religion, Christianity, life, renewal, renewal, always renewal.

> [P]ressures above and below surfaces that will not be stilled . . . troubles in the past that have not been reconciled in the life of . . . communities in the present. (Ivinson & Renold, 2020, p. 227)

> Not so long ago much of the landscape was blighted by bings and darkened by dust, grimy legacies of North Lanarkshire's dominance in the mining and iron industries. Heavy industry centred on Motherwell and Coatbridge, towns that had grown and prospered to such an extent that Motherwell, with its coal mines and iron and steel works, was nicknamed "steelopolis." People flocked into these industrial centres in their thousands to find work, and in turn, smaller towns and villages were born. (The Herald, 2015)

> To value the mysteries we must describe the world in ways that make possible encounter with mystery. When we view the world through the lens of that description, the old systems and structures may themselves be revealed as distortions. (Starhawk, 1987, p. 26)

Life "[T]here was a couple of children who didn't know how to walk on the terrain down in the forest because they had never walked off the pavement."

Clackmannanshire: The Great Outdoors [proposal for REALITIES 3]

Who?—youth affected by poverty and disadvantage; forest rangers; community-based conservation groups; Forest School Leaders; Forest Bathing Guides; arts youth workers; visiting artists; yoga teachers.

Importance?—Supporting young people, particularly those with additional support needs and communication disorders, to have a deepening awareness of the natural landscape. Visual art, creative writing, performance art all takes place outdoors while respecting nature and leaving the landscape undisturbed.

Impact?—Understanding how to be in nature without impacting on biodiversity; developing outdoor skills and realizing how creative processes can be enhanced in a natural landscape setting; positive impact on mental and physical health from being in green spaces:

> We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse . . . [W]hat we need is something like an ethico-onto-epistem-ology—an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being—since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter (Barad, 2007, p. 185).

Life In the playground one day they put loads of fruit under this tarpaulin and stood on it and rolled on it and the school were so on board because at the beginning I mean the kids were covered, they were throwing paint bombs. But all eco and all washable so it wasn't staining their clothes. . . . Parents come to pick up their kids and they were like—they'd written home and told them all, but they said the kids had come out of school at the end of the day and they were just like—they looked like little gremlins themselves. . . . the janitor they said was just amazing because they said this will be chaos, but a hose—and he just went, it'll rain. As if, you know, kids should be able to work in this way.

School uniform-fruit-paint

> The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and its very substance from the soils, plants and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, the composting earth, to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself, so that it is very difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends . . . the body is a creative, shape-shifting entity. (Abram, 1997, pp. 46–47)

Referlished Snowdrop Paradise, the community of Coltness calls it. Snowdrops overrun the area in early spring. The month of the snowdrop. A community of flowers, flowering, blooming, promising, wilting, returning, collecting plastic. The plastic wraps itself around the plants—"our new nature will eventually be plastic"—leaves are imprinted into melted plastic bottle tops. Nature *is* plastic; plastic is a paint palette; plastic . . .

> The past is not erased but is materialised in present and future times. Time does not head into the future but is fractured, turned back on itself, knotted and enfolded in ghostly traces and material matterings. (Kuby & Taylor, 2021, p. 298)

Life

> [W]hen the door opened the first family that walked through the door had Mum, Gran and Granda, and when they walked in, we said, oh hello, welcome, and she said, we couldn't wait to come down. You have no idea the conversations we've been having at home because of this. So, Gran and Granda told us everything they knew about the project that the little girl had been coming home and saying. They got to look at the pictures, they got to read the book. They loved the book. They said the book wasn't a traditional children's book because it's quite dark, the imagery in it is quite dark, and so the gran flicked through the book and said she as gonna buy it for home and then they all took part in the art activity . . .

> The past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the "past" and the "future" are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetimemattering . . . all are one phenomenon . . . Space and time are phenomenal, that is, they are intra-actively configured and reconfigured in the ongoing materialization of phenomena. Neither space nor time exist as determine givens, as universals, outside of matter. Matter does not reside in space and move through time. Space and time are matter's agential performances. (Barad, 2013, p. 28, emphasis in original)

This Paper's Passage of Time

November 14, 2023, 14:23

Re: Marisa—Sneha—papers

Hi Marisa, Sorry for the late request! I haven't made progress on the papers, so I was wondering if it would be ok with you to cancel this meeting. I can use the hour to get back to the "time" paper, and send you an updated version on email. Unfortunately haven't had any time to make a start on the other paper—and it really doesn't feel feasible to have it done this side of the holidays. I can have a rethink of the platform accordingly and update you on a plan, possibly looking at this being submitted around our February deadline?

November 17, 2023, 21:51

Hi Marisa, Time paper with my comments and suggestions, as promised . . . Again, apologies it took me so long to get to this!

I've got some time blocked on 7/8th Dec if you'd like to send an updated version marking specific actions related to expanding on/adding/editing sections or a general sensemaking.

Marisa [note to self] >> URGENT >> TO DO—FOCUS GROUP WITH FUNDER ABOUT PROGRESS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, ADDITIONAL FUNDING REPORTING, PREPARE FOR RESEARCHFISH SUBMISSION, PUBLISH BRIEFS, CHASE TEAM FOR OUPUTS ESPECIALLY PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS, MARKING, MENTOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS, SUPPORT EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS, REVIEW MASTERS AND PHD APPLICATIONS FOR NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR, PHD SUPERVISIONS, RESEARCH HUB CO-DIRECTOR DUTIES, EXTERNAL EXAMINER ADMIN, PLAN A HOLIDAY, TAKE A HOLIDAY, SLEEP

From: Ninewellsgarden [REALITIES 3 Dundee Asset Hub]

Sent: 10 July 2024 18:09

Subject: Re: (Ethics) Hub check-in—how is the community garden work coming along?

Tomatoes are coming on slowly, could do with a little more heat and sunshine!

> Art is really a co-operative endeavour, a work of cocreation in which the dynamism and power of earth-born materials is honoured and respected. In return for this respect, these materials contribute their more-than-human resonances. (Abram, 1997, pp. 278, 22)

Life And something that came up in the CPD [Continuing Professional Development] that we did for the early learning practitioners, in the music session, was around association. So young people are able to tap out what a thunderstorm sounds like because they've heard it and so they can associate sounds, you know, like pitter patter [taps fingertips on table], bang, bang, bang. But what one of the early learning practitioners said was when she asked the group to stop and say what they could hear in an imaginative forest that they were in, and she said, "listen to the silence—what can you hear?" And because she said the word "silence," they said, "nothing." And it made her realize that they had never stood in a forest or a park and just listened. Because they had no association:

> It is evident, however, that when our awareness of time is joined with our awareness of space, space itself is transformed. Space is no longer experienced as a homogeneous void but reveals itself as this vast and richly textured field in which we are corporeally immersed, this vibrant expanse structured by both a ground and a horizon. It is precisely the ground and the horizon that transform abstract space into space-time. And these characteristics—the ground and the horizon—*are granted to us only by the earth.* Thus, when we let time and space blend into a unified space-time, we rediscover the enveloping earth. (Abram, 1997, p. 216)

Bad dogs barking loud

Big ghosts in a cloud

Life doesn't frighten me at all (Angelou)

Status I [Davis] journeyed through the first ecological site alongside two local artists (a dance choreographer and filmmaker) and two adolescents, who identify as male . . . this dance was an enactment of their joy and expression of being in their world at this time . . . The synchronicity of their dance—specifically moments when they would push each other away before returning, catching each other from falling in time with the music being played—reflected our conversations about the woodland. . . . As we walked around the canopy, they described how locals call this the "fairy circle," and how the place felt magical with local visitors to the site leaving offerings to the trees (Davis & de Andrade, 2024).

Referlished This is the Perchy Pond made entirely out of bottle tops and lids collected by the local community. This is the pond here; it's based on a photograph that I took with the pond and the reeds:

> The past is not fixed, not given, but that isn't to say that the trace of all memories can simply be erased. Memory is not a mere property of individual subjects, but a material condition of the world. *Memory—the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra-activity—is written into the fabric of the world.* The world "holds" the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is its memory (enfolded materialization). (Barad, 2010, p. 261)

Status Music speeds up, images strobe.

Mean old Mother Goose

Lions on the loose

They don't frighten me at all (Angelou)

> Thus, it is easy to "conceive and even *feel*, behind all the seasonal recurrences in the sensuous terrain, the inexorable thrust of a linear and reversible time" (Abram, 1997, p. 185).

> This "beginning," like all beginnings, is always already threaded through with anticipation of where it is going but will never simply reach and of a past that has yet to come. It is not merely that the future and the past are not "there" and never sit still, but that the present is not simply here-now. (Barad, 2013, p. 18)

I've got a magic charm

That I keep up my sleeve

I can walk the ocean floor

And never have to breathe (Angelou)

> The very telling of these stories actively participates in a creative process that is felt to be *happening right now*, an ongoing emergence whose periodic renewal actually requires such participation. (Abram, 1997, p. 186)

This Paper's Passage of Time

Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 19:28

Subject: REALITIES 3 and time

Hi Sneha,

A heads up on REALITIES 3—a group email coming soon, but [our funder] is fixed on a 1st Feb start. I'm on the paperwork hamster wheel behind the scenes for contracts etc.

I've also just had a sabbatical granted from February 1 for 6 months, so can commit to finishing off REALITIES 2 papers and set up the project properly while supporting my 12 PhD students and other research matters I've neglected in the last few years. Too much to do!

So much has happened in the last few months that's made me look at "the time paper" in a slightly different light. Lots more outputs now completed for the funder for both Art is Everywhere and REALITIES 2 (several posted on [anonymized for review] website), and I think it makes the most sense to combine "findings" across both projects rather than just looking at AiE given that the 2 projects dovetailed.

I was ironically very squeezed for time to get these submitted to the funder just before the holidays (a further reporting Researchfish window submission coming soon too), so I've been reflecting on the ridiculousness of all these competing deadlines and timescales, and the impact that has on individuals/systems etc. I'm weaving these thoughts into the paper now and hoping my "research leave" will give me the time to get this over the line.

April 22, 2024, 09:22

Subject: RE: Visiting Fellowship

Morning Victoria . . . making progress on our time paper. So many urgent things (including papers from students who're submitting their PhDs and need publications for their submission) are taking precedence, but I am thinking deeply on this. Feel a bit like a phoney glamorizing time when I too seem to have very little of it in the academy, even when on sabbatical, but recently I've been taking solace in a Maori paper where time (or at least "colonial time") does not exist (as we know it). . .

I know the paper will shape up and be submitted, thanks for your patience.

July 19, 2024, 05:53

My 6-year-old is still asleep. I make another instant coffee (the espresso machine will wake him). I need a few more precious minutes of silence before it starts all over again.

I'm going on a self-directed writing retreat on Sunday. I've promised myself 4 days of protected writing in a room filled with West African art, mosquitos and a raging hot summer.

The room is cool, I'm assured. I don't care if it's a sweatbox.

Time is like smoke, I remember learning on a Time Management course 6 years ago. The more you have of it, the more it smokes—filling and spilling into an empty room.

I'll finish our time paper by next Friday, I promise myself. Meanwhile, a practitioner in Easter Ross [REALITIES 2 and 3 asset hub] writes:

> Very stressful day today at work. Our funding has changed . . . and the structures now placed on us are horrendous. We used to have a wonderful person-centred programme where we could walk around the park with a learner if they needed it. Now we are placed under these horrendous targets and progress updates that are killing my programme. The soul has gone from the project, it is not about their progress anymore, it is about getting them in and getting results. We are expected to get a long-term unemployed person into full time work in 6 months! Everything has to be a focus on employability and not the holistic approach that we used to take where we considered all of the person's problems . . . it is an awful way to treat people. People are not targets and they don't work well to a plan. Life just isn't like this.

Onward and Upward (Sometimes Backward and Spiraling Downward)

"How might spacetimemattering shock your thoughts and provoke new ways of doing inquiry and perhaps pedagogies? How does reconfiguring space, time, and matter—and their relationality—reconfigure your being, knowing, and doings in the world?" (Kuby & Taylor, 2021).

Our work on these projects confirmed for us that art *is* everywhere. Yet when we began the work, we had not reckoned that "everywhere" encompassed time as well as place. In *Referlished*, the repurposing of old "rubbish" means that past and present are materially connected; *Status* evokes both a physical and metaphorical connection to the land of the ancestors. Both offer hope for the future: *Referlished*, speaking to environmental justice, suggests that creativity and beauty can grow from desolation and debris; *Status* revels in the joy of life and of a sexuality that has not always been able to be expressed. A freedom that, sometimes, we are able to get in touch with as we immerse ourselves in nature and do slow, meaningful work through creative practice that challenges the status quo. In *Life*, the montages (captured in the "present" when they happened, in the "past" at the time of writing) provoke glimpses of "future" and how this translated into NL's first ever strategy to tackle inequality through the arts.

Our writing partnership draws on years of working together on shared challenges, both professional and personal, and a feeling of not wanting to let each other, our collaborators and our so-called marginalized communities down (who, at times, raise our academic team up). So, there is a sense of "responding—being responsible/response-able—to the thick tangles of spacetimematterings that are threaded through us, the places and times from which we came but never arrived and never leave" (Barad, 2014, p. 184). This process of writing and stepping in and out of the montages and our dialogue, including our "dialogue" with reviewers, is diffraction too. We continue to work differently through our entangled projects in the complex systems we are part of—always sense making together, but not seeking simple answers or "conclusions." Through this, new insights and understandings are revealed as we apply different "lenses" or ways of looking to see the "data" differently. The more we engage, the more we encourage "others," including policy makers and our funders too, to do the same—to see "data" as dynamic and shapeshifting—staying true and authentic to the time and place, "trusting" what the data reveals to take action without the need to overly generalize or abstract it for the purpose of "static evidence" one can keep referring back to as "single truth."

The REALITIES of time-pressurized-outputs *are* everywhere too. The more art that is being created by artists and communities and people of all ages, the more we creatively navigate a prism of realities to try and produce new meanings of human experience (de Andrade, 2022) that resist rigid and inflexible definitions and conceptualizations of space, time, and matter. We were able to, and continue to, gather "evidence" in REALITIES 3 to strengthen our claim for the importance of this work. This evidence often takes on alternative forms, plugged into our communities' and researchers' diverse perspectives and experiences of reality, and focusing on art as *process* rather than simply an *output* or *outcome.* Our communities and stakeholders keep telling us, when we stay true to the essence of the creative process rather than insisting activities lead to contrived outcomes, deep experiential learning unfolds. For instance, the schools involved in the *Life* strand explored in this paper, which deliberately set out to be "outcome free," reported that this is "exactly what the young people need after Covid."

While working without defined outcomes in mind may feel new in this context of creative work with communities, from a new materialist perspective, any start "references back to the past and is already/always connected to the future" (Shelton and Melchior, 2020, p. 53). Policy makers are beginning to appreciate how they may translate this thinking into more tangible approaches as shown through North Lanarkshire Council's Co-Produced Arts Strategy, which illustrates "meaning" and "felt experience" as evidence for "transformation" (NLC, 2025).

This work takes *deep time*. It does not always follow the neat timeline of tapered funding and policy calls with narrow windows for getting grants costed, submitted and non-negotiable starting dates; nor can findings and conclusions be neatly packaged into peer-reviewed publications and datasets promptly released a few months after

project completion. That said, continuous movement and commitment is crucial with *relational responsibility* being central for arts-based, creative approaches to have meaningful impact on policy making in social justice. How can we hold the tension between other stakeholders' (funders, policy makers, organizations, project leads responsible for reporting) needs and demands on their time, with those of our own? How are we changing our own relationship with time when "urgent" requests keep coming in to monitor and assess our own accountability and productivity? What feels possible? What are we doing to make the impossible possible? (Glăveanu, 2023).

There is something ironic about advocating new ways of working. Newness is so often equated with that progress and "improvement" that we are critical of. However, in new materialism it is noted: "Read in the context of non-hierarchical and non-linear views, 'newness' appears as contributing to the ever-richer understanding of what is—of the here and now—rather than as harnessed to direct and change the world in the future" (Rautio, 2013, p. 401). As Rautio (2013, p. 401) argues, a focus on what is does not lack values or goals: "Education for deeper understanding of what humans are growing as part of, and in relation to, highlights practices of simultaneously becoming a distinct human being and elaborating on the necessary interconnectedness and interdependence with other bodies."

The more we recognize this, the more possibilities open up. So too can a different understanding of time situating people "within a temporal freedom of becoming, thus opening possibilities to affirm our many entanglements as we research together" (Myers, 2014, p. 43). The implications of this and how it informs, has already informed, and might inform future work we do with communities to further social justice is alive in REALITIES 3, which we envisage as Research-Practice-Policy partnerships mindful of the "power imbalances and inequities" in these partnerships; thinking together about "how to nurture healthy ecosystems" (de Andrade & The REALITIES Consortium, 2024). These, in turn, might enable us to engage in aesthetic moments of deep reflection, engagement or beauty—new ways of working with deep time; rooted in place.

As more and more deadlines arrive, things feel faster with more frequent reminders *to* "do," it is essential to remember *to* "be." The arts can also offer a meditative state (Marisa used a meditation exercise "to get back into the body" in the participatory action research workshops with professional stakeholders mentioned in this paper, who told her they are often "in their heads" in time-pressurized environments). As Abram (1997) reminds us: "Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on, this improvised between my animal body and the fluid breathing landscape that it inhabits." Perhaps this

is the way to connect with, and befriend, our genius temporis.

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Note

1. Asset hubs here refer to an integrated way of working between public systems and community "assets," that is, cultural, natural, and community resources known to improve health outcomes such as artists and arts organizations; libraries; museums; heritage sites; green and blue spaces; gyms and exercise-related assets; legal or debt advice services and, importantly, the relationships and research-practice-policy partnerships connecting them.

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