

# **Reimagining Space-Time in the Temporary City**

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Ella Harris, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Accompanying methodological material available to view at:**

[thetemporarycity.com](http://thetemporarycity.com)

Password: TTC

## Abstract

This thesis explores “pop-up” culture in London, drawing on research conducted in 2014 and 2015. Pop-up refers to a trend for temporary, mobile and interstitial places. Since the 2008 recession, pop-up has become increasingly influential in London, and internationally, as a place-making strategy. It has been embraced by multiple stakeholders including creative practitioners, businesses, local governments, housing developers and charities. I argue that, as pop-up becomes a routine and acclaimed way of producing cities, it is crucial to question the impacts of and agendas behind this celebration of the ephemeral, flexible and unpredictable.

Pop-up is, most centrally, a format for places of entertainment and consumption. Empirically, this thesis focuses on three prominent kinds of pop-up geography in London; pop-up cinemas, shipping container architectures and supper clubs. By examining a series of case studies within these three ‘types’, I offer central insights into how pop-up imagines and distributes urban space-time. I explore the spatiotemporal imaginaries developed and deployed in pop-up culture and question what those imaginaries enable, and for whom, in the climate of precarity it emerged from.

Conceptually, I investigate five ways that pop-up imagines space-time; as immersive, as flexible, as interstitial, as secret and as surprising. I also consider three dimensions of what these imaginaries do. I explore how pop-up’s imaginaries engage sensitivities to space-time as nonlinear, how they can alter precarity as a structure of feeling and how they function as compensatory narratives that make palatable, even desirable, diminished conditions of urban life in times of crisis. Methodologically, the thesis experiments with interactive documentary, a web-based, nonlinear form of multi-media documentary, as a way to investigate imaginaries of space-time. The core argument of the thesis is that pop-up responds to turbulence in the city with nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries that normalise, and thereby stabilise without ‘fixing’, precarious urban conditions.

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## Chapter One

### Introducing the Temporary City

When I started this research, few people had heard the term 'pop-up'. Pop-up would usually need explaining before I could proceed in describing my work to somebody or exploring the phenomenon in a conference paper or journal article. Four years on, pop-up is a widely recognised phenomenon amongst diverse bodies of people including governments, charities, arts and cultural organisations as well as multiple segments of the general population. When I say that I work on pop-up culture I now get nods rather than quizzical stares.

In the past 18 months especially pop-up's ubiquity and significance has increased even further. One marker of its current prominence in the UK, and London in particular, is the fact that in February 2016 the Conservative Greater London Authority (GLA) proposed pop-up housing as the answer to London's housing crisis (Boff, 2016). Their report, entitled 'Pop-up Housing, a London Solution', suggested that because it 'will take years' before many sold off sites in London are developed, it is prudent to use them 'in the meantime' to provide a 'range of housing schemes whilst developers await long-term planning permission' (Boff, 2016, p. 5). Their proposition follows the format that has, over the past decade, become known as 'pop-up'; their intention is that sites awaiting redevelopment be used to provide much needed housing, but only temporarily, so as not to preclude the profitable sale and development of those sites in the future. The GLA describe three existing pop-up housing sites, one of which is social housing (PLACE/Ladywell), one housing for the homeless (YCube) and another for graduates (Heijmans One Scheme, Amsterdam). These are all schemes that provide modular, mobile housing for demographics in need, yet while the schemes provide this needed resource, they are only intended to exist in the 'meantime' to the timescales of more profitable developments.

Pop-up culture has, since the 2008 recession, taken London by storm. As indicated above, it refers to the temporary use of vacant buildings or sites for services and activities. Traditionally, these activities have been in the cultural and commercial sectors, including venues like bars, restaurants, cinemas and galleries. Recently, however, pop-up has expanded to include many welfare services such as housing, libraries, health centres and, soon, courts of law. The GLA's proposal perhaps marks the culmination of pop-up's promotion as a solution both to the rejuvenation of vacant urban sites and the provision of underfunded services and amenities. Pop-up has been so celebrated that it is now perceived as not only an economical way to provide arts and cultural events but even to supply essential services such as housing.



Figure One: PLACE/Ladywell, Pop-Up Social Housing

As well as indicating the growing prominence of pop-up, the GLA's report demonstrates what is at stake as the pop-up imaginary takes hold of cities. While the pop-up format allows stakeholders to respond rapidly to unused land to provide needed resources and amenities, it is also being used to relegate those resources to the 'meantime' (Boff, 2016) so that they are only deemed worthy of occupying land when it is not being used for high value enterprises or developments.

As pop-up becomes a routine way of organising arts and cultural events, commerce and even welfare in cities it is timely and crucial to investigate how the city is imagined and produced within pop-up culture and the implications of that approach to the urban. In this thesis I undertake an examination of pop-up's development and imaginaries in London. While, as explained above, pop-up is now rapidly, and worryingly, being expanded into the welfare sector, this thesis was begun before that expansion and focuses on pop-up's origins in the creative and commercial sectors. In doing so, it tells a much needed contemporary history of the pop-up phenomenon and its politics, a story made all the more pertinent by the current experiments in pop-up welfare described above.

In addressing pop-up culture my focus is on its spatiotemporal logics. As suggested by the term 'pop-up', its definitive characteristic is its spatiotemporality, as a spontaneous, mobile, temporary and interstitial urban form. I explore the spatiotemporal organisation of pop-up but also argue that pop-up is, most importantly, an *imaginary* of spatiotemporality. I argue this because temporary and mobile places have long existed in cities with multiple, disparate functions; for example, squats, ice cream vans and market stalls. What is distinctive about pop-up is therefore not necessarily its spatiotemporal format but rather its way of imagining and articulating that format. As will be explored, this thesis approaches pop-up's imaginaries as a collection of modes of encountering the urban fabric. I argue that it is pop-up's distinctive imaginaries that give it such force in the city and purchase with stakeholders, namely because of what those imaginaries can achieve at a time of recession and austerity. The thesis therefore focuses on pop-up's imaginaries, their origins and their instrumentality in the city.

In interrogating the politics of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries I follow similar lines of interrogation to those posed by Sarah Sharma in her book *In The Meantime* (2014). Sharma questions whose time is spent in order to maintain the mobility and recalibration of others, how are bodies 'differently valued temporally' and what temporal processes are employed to make people 'productive for capital?' (14)

Questions of this sort are pertinent to ask of pop-up which, as the GLA's report makes explicit, encourages certain activities to take place, quite literally, 'in the meantime' to others. Or, as the RSA Think Tank more euphemistically put it in relation to PLACE/Ladywell; to operate 'on a time scale which doesn't compete with or crowd out other types of development' (Irvine, 2016). In this vein I question the value systems embedded in pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. Having set out the stakes of understanding pop-up culture, the remainder of this introduction gives an overview of pop-up, its politics and its origins. I then end by explaining the aims of the thesis and its structure.

### **A Brief History of Pop-Up**

As suggested above, the significance of pop-up's imaginaries come into view most clearly when its socioeconomic origins are understood. The first time the label 'pop-up' was used to describe an urban event or place is unknown but the economic crisis of 2008 can be identified as a point when pop-up began to take off. At this time there were high vacancy rates in urban centres and the pop-up format was promoted as a cheap, fast response to the 'blight' of empty properties. Although vacancy rates were high across the UK, pop-up took off fastest in London, the geographical focal point of this thesis, because of the bigger pool of creatives, charities and entrepreneurs present to take up temporary spaces.

10% of commercial property in London was allegedly vacant in 2009 (Savills World Research, 2014), causing widespread concern over the fate of the high street. In this context, pop-up was credited with filling up closed up shops and centres that would otherwise serve as visual indicators of the crisis facing London and other cities across the UK and the world (Harris, 2015). Pop-up was also, at this time, promoted as a way to grant space to arts and creative groups, or to third sector organisations, where funding had been cut. In this sense pop-up could be understood as a spatiality of austerity urbanism (Peck, 2012; Ferreri, 2015).

Pop-up became prominent in the not-for-profit and arts sectors thanks to the 'Meanwhile Use Lease contract' developed by the Labour Government in 2009. Meanwhile Use gives owners of vacant properties exemption from business rates if they loan their empty premises to charities on short term, short notice contracts and enables temporary arrangements between landlords and short term occupiers. The guidance notes accompanying the Meanwhile Use Lease template state that 'We envisage that temporary occupiers might include voluntary or charitable groups, information centres, artists, musicians etc.' (Gov.uk, 2013).

As well as being codified in the Meanwhile Use Lease Contract, pop-up has been promoted by prominent figures and leaders in London, like Mary Portus and Boris Johnson, and included in the 'London Plan' (Harvie, 2013, p. 120). Pop-up was heralded by these figures as both a way to maintain arts and charity activities at a time of cuts and as a stimulus for regeneration during the recession; a method for "animating" areas (Harvie, 2013, p. 123) and attracting investors to disused spaces. In response to the promotion of Meanwhile Use, multiple intermediary organisations emerged to liaise between landlords of vacant properties and potential users. In London these included Meanwhile Space, 3Space, Appear Here and London Pop-Ups among many others. Shortly after, pop-up malls began to spring up across the capital. Perhaps the most famous London pop-up mall, Boxpark Shoreditch, opened in 2011 and, as chapter six will discuss, there are now many more. These malls are themselves meanwhile spaces, occupying disused sites awaiting development, and also provide space for pop-up businesses.

It is crucial to see pop-up in the context of the 2008 recession, as a 'compensatory' (Tonkiss, 2003, p. 316) urban form that developed because usual, preferred organisations of urban space had failed. In this thesis I address this failure of urban organisation through the lens of what Cresswell and Martin have explored as 'turbulence'; a shock to the system that exposes usually invisible infrastructural orderings (Cresswell & Martin, 2012). As will be explored, turbulence refers to moments when usually smooth, and therefore invisible, infrastructures break down

and, in doing so, become temporarily visible. In these moments of turbulence, systems reveal their nonlinearity; that is, their capacities to be organised differently, their openness to dynamic and unpredictable changes. They thus become open to 'scrutiny' and contestation. Following this use of the term, I argue that during and after the 2008 crash London went through a period of turbulence where usually silent and invisible infrastructural orderings, and in particular distributions of urban space and labour, were disrupted. I argue that this constituted a display of the city's nonlinearity, its capacities to be otherwise, and that these nonlinear capacities were responded to by pop-up culture with its own nonlinear imaginary. As I will explore, pop-up culture in some ways highlights, but also normalises, the turbulence and nonlinearity of the post-2008 city and thereby forecloses debate that might have arisen regarding the politics and contingency of urban organisation. To put it another way, while pop-up enabled urban life to continue at a time of crisis, albeit under compromised conditions, it did not *solve* the problems of recession and austerity but instead found ways to normalise and perpetuate them. In short, I argue that pop-up finds ways to ride the waves of turbulence in the city, rather than to stem that turbulence.

Additionally, it is important to note that a changing socio-political climate is also part of this turbulence. As will be important in chapter seven, recession and austerity in London also produced heightened xenophobia, as evidenced by the European Union Membership Referendum (Brexit) vote in 2016 (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016; Wallerstein, 2016; Bhambra, 2016). It has been argued that appetite for Brexit can be partially explained by the impacts of austerity and association of austerity measures with membership of the European Union (Wallerstein, 2016; Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016). Brexit is seen as symptomatic of the economic turmoil stemming from the 'chaotic structural crisis in the modern-world system' (Wallerstein, 2016) and exemplified by the 2008 crash. Wallerstein argues that this turmoil has bolstered identity politics producing, in England, a sense of 'Britain for the British' (Wallerstein, 2016) and underlying 'calls for controlling, even eliminating, immigration' (Wallerstein, 2016). This hostility is present in the atmospheres of contemporary

cities and accompanied by a growing division between those who benefit (or perceive themselves to benefit from) the internationality of London and those who don't (or perceive themselves not to). In the austerity era 'persistent uneven development and growing inequality in the UK have amplified disquiet amongst the working class and older population about cosmopolitanism and globalization that the City and elites are thriving on' (Bachmann & Sidaway, 2016, p. 48) meaning that the global interconnections are experienced by some as an economic driver and source of cultural wealth but by others as threatening to their livelihoods and lifestyles. As well as considering the role of pop-up in responding to instability in labour and in urban land use, chapter seven considers how its imaginaries also respond to this climate of anxiety around the plurality of "others."

However, despite the importance of the recession and austerity as a context for pop-up's emergence, these origins are often forgotten or left out of accounts of pop-up's values. While pop-up started life primarily as a format used by victims of funding cuts or job losses they are now a popular marketing tactic for global brands including Nike and Kopparberg and its origins in recession is overlooked as it is positioned instead as a glamorous, fashionable urban form. As well as being a compensatory form of place making in the aftermath of recession, pop-up can also be interpreted as a compensatory form of labour. Pop-up jobs are, as the term suggests, usually precarious; short term, unpredictable and often require mobile work. Pop-ups are usually run by entrepreneurs and, as I will discuss, are linked to a culture in which young people are expected to 'make rather than take' a job (Gunnell and Bright 2001, in Graziano & Ferreri, 2014). They are affiliated with the resurgence of craft as a desirable vocational pursuit (Harris, 2018, Forthcoming), especially among young middle class 'hipsters' (Ocejo, 2017), with the rise of self-employment and with the growth of the sharing economy; all recent shifts in labour linked to the loss of job opportunities and loss of faith in mainstream economic models following the recession. This thesis therefore also investigates pop-up as a narrativization of changing labour geographies, as well as a narrativization of changing urban geographies.

One of the key reasons why pop-up has become a, paradoxically, permanent feature in cities, ever present nearly a decade on from the 2008 recession, is because of the value it is seen to have in rebranding places in London. Pop-up has been celebrated not just as a way to temporarily fill up vacant spaces but as a way to *transform* those spaces too, serving as a catalyst for urban regeneration (Oswalt, et al., 2013). This acclaimed ability derives from pop-up's distinctive style; characterised by the playful subversion of urban space, an air of unpredictability and a delight in juxtaposition, yet lacking the radical or political edge of other forms of 'urban intervention' or *détournement* (Dovey, 2014; Harris, 2015; Harris, 2016).

The pop-up style was captured by Time Out London<sup>1</sup> who formerly hosted a 'pop-up generator' on their website with the tag line 'you just don't know what's going to pop-up next'. Users were invited to click a button to see what would be popping up in London soon. The fictional listings parodied the cultural logics of pop-up and in particular its fixation on unusual things in unusual places.



Figure Two: Time-Out Pop-up Generator

Above are examples of the fictional pop-up events that *Time Out* imagined; a vegan greasy spoon...in a vast abandoned warehouse, a charity laser-tag tournament...in a repurposed row of garages and a gin and coffee joint....at a recently shuttered fire station. As well as conveying the 'vibe' of pop-up culture, these imagined places point towards some of the political implications of pop-up geographies. It is notable that in these, all too believable, examples the space being used for the pop-up event

<sup>1</sup> Time Out London is part of the media group 'Time Out' and offers listings and reviews of events in London



is ex-industrial or otherwise symbolic of the 'grittiness' of the urban. Abandoned warehouses, garages and closed down fire-stations are spaces that used to be functional, rather than primarily aesthetically or culturally interesting, and which tend to belong to geographies of working class labour. Contrastingly, the pop-up places occupying them are affiliated with young middle class, 'hipster' culture and tastes (veganism, gin and coffee drinking and adult play activities). The *Time Out* generator is an imagined geography where working class spaces are 'repurposed' by hipster activities; as such it points towards pop-up's part in gentrification.

Indeed, while the pop-ups from the *Time Out* generator are not real events, the same contradiction between the demographic targeted by the pop-up and the people who might have used a space previously is apparent in many real pop-ups. These include 'Hackney Hardware', a gin bar in a closed down hardware store in Hackney, 'The Convenience', a pop-up restaurant in a public toilet in Hommerton and 'The Job Centre', a, now permanent, bar in a closed down job centre which attracted much adverse attention because of its connection to the gentrification of Deptford. As deplored in a *Guardian* article about The Job Centre by Jane Elliot 'much of hipster style involves adapting formerly déclassé activities or objects' such as in the case of The Job Centre or the equally as senseless naming of 'a bar...after the Asian Women's Advisory Service that formerly occupied' a building in Hackney (Elliott, 2014). Pop-up's aesthetics can be classed alongside what Andrew Harris has explored as the 'urban pastoral', an aesthetic through which working class or post-industrial urban spaces are romanticized and rendered exotic by middle class, artistic occupants (Harris, 2012). However, while the urban pastoral aesthetic Harris describes in the context of 1980's London is far from innocuous, pop-up's transformations of 'déclassé' urban objects and activities are often outright deplorable and clearly instrumental in the now accelerated and intensified process of gentrification in London (Watt, 2012; Lees, 2014).

Indeed while its prominence in the city is increasing, pop-up is also gaining a poor reputation, perceived by many as an insensitive and mercenary mechanism for

glamorising and profiting from precarious conditions. This is well illustrated by a black joke made by Mark Steel in a satirical thought piece on the Grenfell Tower tragedy entitled 'Crazy Marxists want to give homes to Grenfell survivors – but thankfully we live in a fair capitalist society'; a piece which parodies the attitudes of conservative MP Andrew Bridgen who labelled Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's suggestion that survivors be housed in empty properties as 'hard Marxist'. In the tag line for the piece he jests darkly that 'It's the same with those communists who went down with blankets and food. They should have set up a pop-up bedding and hot chocolate store to tap into extensive market opportunities' (Steel, 2017). Here, pop-up is used to signal the epitome of capitalist inhumanity as an ideology that sees only opportunities for profit even in a context of dire crisis.

Pop-up's romanticized treatment of run down places and its reputation for capitalising on precarity also begs a quite different, although connected, question of how pop-up relates to the makeshift urbanisms of the global south. As will be explored in the next chapter, pop-up's materials, which include wooden crates, shipping containers and corrugated iron, as well as its method of appropriating left over spaces, have clear similarities with makeshift urbanisms in the global south, often understood as 'creative' (Clammer, 2015). In the context of informal place-making being recognised as a pervasive global urban practice (Vasudevan, 2014; McFarlane, 2012; Lombard, 2014) it is important to interrogate pop-up's particular branding of makeshift place-making. This is especially true given that the pop-up branding is taking off in the global south too. Many pop-ups now exist in the Global South. Pop-up cafes in Kampala, pop-up burrito stands in Hanoi and a wave of pop-up restaurants in Mumbai (Tahseeni, 2015) (to name just a few) co-exist alongside the temporary and informal food vendors that have long been a pervasive feature of these cities. A comparative study of pop-up across imagined global divisions is a different project to that being undertaken here (although certainly one worth pursuing) but the fact that pop-up is a *global* phenomenon, and one differentiated from, while undeniably affiliated to, informal, makeshift, urbanisms is important to bear in mind as a context to this research, not least because it sheds light on the

importance of imaginaries in demarcating what is understood as precarious and what is understood as flexible, creative or dynamic.

### **Popping Up in this Thesis**

In this thesis my investigation of pop-up culture focuses on three 'types' of pop-up place, the justification for which is detailed in the methodology chapter. The three types I examine are shipping container architectures, pop-up cinemas and supper clubs. At the time when this thesis was begun these were the key features of London's pop-up landscape, into which pop-up social housing and other forms of pop-up welfare are now emerging. These three types of pop-up, as I show, offer different insights into the imaginaries operative within pop-up culture and the ways those imaginaries respond to and narrativize urban precarity. The overarching argument I make is that pop-up's imaginaries serve two contradictory functions, both offering hope within precarious urban conditions and entrenching, by normalising and glamorising, that same precarity. More specifically, the thesis uses the three types of pop-up to explore five overlapping but distinguishable spatiotemporal imaginaries that I have identified as prominent in pop-up culture; imaginaries of immersion, flexibility, interstitiality, secrecy and surprise. I explore the development and deployment of each of these imaginaries through analysis of a series of case studies and question the roles they serve in responding to precarity in London.

Although the term 'imaginaries' is much used in Cultural Geography its lineage within the discipline has never been fully excavated and its application is frequently vague. As will be explored further in the next chapter, uses of the concept draws variously on several key points of reference. These include Edward Said's work on imagined geographies, developed within contemporary Geography by Derek Gregory (Gregory, 2011; Gregory, 1994; Gregory, 1995), which foregrounds how perceptions of space are created through media and discourses and how those perceptions serve to produce or reproduce power geometries. To a lesser extent, dealings with

the imaginary often show affinity with Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities, which stresses the centrality of imagined and felt affiliations in the construction and maintenance of territorial identity. As such, the imaginary is seen as a form of orientation through which spatial relations are produced and enforced. Emphasising a similar functionality, uses of the term imaginary in Geography sometimes borrow from the Lacanian definition of the imaginary, which Fredric Jameson argued should be understood as a way of orientating oneself within space (Jameson, 1991; Campkin, 2013) and which features in the influential work of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013). Meanwhile other philosophical definitions of the imaginary, such as Sartre's, (Sartre, 2010) seem to have gained little, if any, Geographical attention. The imaginary is perhaps most commonly rolled into looser adaptations such as 'urban imaginary', approached as somewhat intangible collective modes of conceiving and producing the city (Cinar & Bender, 2007).

In using the term 'imaginary' I take the vague etymology and application of the term in Geography as an indicator that it contains within it suggestions of multiple different ways of approaching and encountering the world. I do not claim to be able to iron out what the imaginary means but hope to illuminate the imaginaries at play in pop-up and detail how they mediate and produce urban life and space. Specifically this thesis explores pop-up's imaginaries in two ways. Firstly, I argue that pop-up has multiple, intersecting ways of imagining the urban fabric and I identify and explore five of these, detailing how pop-up imagines urban space-time as immersive, flexible, interstitial, secret and surprising. I call these 'spatiotemporal imaginaries' because, as will be explored, they all relate to particular assumptions about the nature of urban space-time. Secondly, I argue that these five "spatiotemporal imaginaries" enable multiple kinds of orientation in the city at a time of enhanced precarity and specifically explore three distinguishable, but interrelated, kinds of orientation: I argue that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries produce sensitivity to the nonlinearity of urban space-time, foregrounding its unpredictability and dynamism, that they alter precarity as a dominant structure of feeling by giving its conditions a positive inflection, and

that they serve as compensatory narratives that make sense of diminished conditions in the aftermath of recession. In exploring these orientations I argue that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries can be thought as akin to what Lauren Berlant has named 'cruel optimism'. Cruel Optimism is, as Berlant explains, an orientation to the world which exists when 'the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially' (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). In the case of pop-up, I argue its ways of imagining the city make palatable, even hopeful, life in precarious times, but that pinning hope on pop-up is counterproductive because investing in pop-up only normalises and entrenches precarity.

### **Interactive Documentary**

As well as exploring the significances of pop-up's imaginaries a key element of the contribution of this thesis is the methodology. As will be detailed in the methodology chapter, I have pioneered 'interactive documentary' (i-Docs) in geography as a method for exploring space-time and used this to analyse pop-up spatiotemporality. Interactive documentary, as I have explored elsewhere (Harris, 2016), is a nonlinear form of documentary, usually hosted online, which presents users with multiple pathways through a variety of filmic and other media. I-Docs are becoming a popular medium for documentary makers across the world and are increasingly gaining attention in academia too, as indicated by the growth of the annual i-Docs conference<sup>2</sup>. A key part of my methodology has been to make an interactive documentary about the pop-up phenomenon in London. I have taken video footage and still images of the case studies I have researched and these are presented in the i-Doc as short film clips and visual and text based collages.

The methodology chapter will detail the rationale for this approach but, in short, my premise is, firstly, that the spatiotemporal logics of interactive documentary share much with the spatiotemporal imaginaries of pop-up culture (both being nonlinear in

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<sup>2</sup> <http://i-docs.org/>

format), making i-Docs an apt medium through which to elucidate and explore pop-up space-time and secondly, that if analysis of cultural forms has been a way for theorists to gain insights into the spatiotemporal logics of particular eras (Crary, 2002; Barker, 2012; Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1991) then the creation and analysis of an i-Doc can afford me a similar insight into pop-up's role in the contemporary climate.

The i-Doc I have made is submitted with this thesis and available to engage with online. It can be found at <http://thetemporarycity.com/> and entered using the password "TTC"<sup>3</sup>. It is intended to be engaged with alongside the written work. Across the three empirical chapters of the thesis the i-Doc is discussed and analysed to elucidate particular elements of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. However, there is no suggestion to engage with particular parts of the i-Doc while reading particular parts of the thesis. The i-Doc is a nonlinear medium, meaning that each experience of it is different from the last, so it is neither advisable nor possible to try to follow exactly the clips and collages in the order I talk about them. I will leave it up to the reader how and at what stages they choose to engage with the i-Doc. It should be noted though that the i-Doc is not a presentation of the findings of my thesis to be understood as equivalent to/complimentary to the written work. Rather, it is a methodology, meaning that its primary purpose has been to enable me to pay attention to and think through pop-up's spatiotemporality. The intention in sharing the i-Doc with the readers of this thesis is to allow them insight into this process, so that they can see how I have reached my conclusions both as to the implications of pop-up culture and the methodological value of i-Docs.

### **Aims of the Thesis**

The aims of this thesis span theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions to cultural geography. They encompass the following objectives. Firstly, the central

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<sup>3</sup> If this i-Doc is not working when accessed please email [Harriet.Hawkins@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Harriet.Hawkins@rhul.ac.uk)

aim of this thesis is to document the imaginaries emerging within pop-up culture. As the literature review will elaborate, pop-up is receiving increasing attention from academics, including Geographers. However, few have mentioned, let alone focused on, pop-up as a site for the production of influential imaginaries. This thesis argues for the importance of considering pop-up in such a light and surveys five key imaginaries developed within commercial and creative pop-up culture; immersion, flexibility, interstitiality, secrecy and surprise. Specifically, the thesis does so through a detailed exploration of pop-up cinemas, shipping containers and supper clubs as types of pop-up geography although, as I make clear, the imaginaries developed in each type of pop-up are operative across pop-up culture. Secondly, I aim to explore how the five imaginaries I identify in pop-up culture offer three kinds of orientation in the city by developing sensitivity to space-time as nonlinear, altering precarity as a structure of feeling and serving as compensatory narratives. In doing so I make the case that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries should be understood as a collection of modes of encountering the city that are centred around particular ways of thinking about spatial and temporal organisation but also engage and entail assumptions and prescriptions about facets of urban life including labour, sociality and urban change. Equally, this approach to pop-up's imaginaries illuminates how they work within, engage and transform broader structures of feeling present in the contemporary climate including most prominently the pervasiveness of precarity in the aftermath of recession (Berlant, 2011; Anderson, 2014).

Thirdly, this thesis aims to illustrate the value of interactive documentary as a method for exploring spatiotemporal imaginaries. Drawing on a tradition of geographical, filmic and media scholarship that considers the interdependence of spatiotemporal logics in society and in cultural forms, I argue that interactive documentary exhibits a similar spatiotemporality to pop-up culture and is thus a valuable tool in explicating and analysing pop-up's imaginaries. I position my work with interactive documentary in the context of growing interest in creative geographical methods. Following Hawkins (2015) I argue that particular creative methods enable certain kinds of

thinking to take place and that interactive documentary, as a nonlinear media, therefore enables me to pay attention to pop-up's nonlinear spatiotemporality.

In exploring the contemporary pop-up scene and its trajectories, this thesis also undertakes ground work that will be needed to understand pop-up's influence in future cities. This introduction has set out the current evolutions of pop-up into the welfare sector and the analysis of the creative pop-up scene in this thesis will be valuable in critiquing this development, as well as perhaps other evolutions and ramifications as yet unseen.

In formulating my aims I have been mindful of the fact that pop-up is a fast moving object of study. In the lag time between me writing this and you reading it potentially hundreds of pop-ups will have come and gone in London and unforeseen developments within the pop-up landscape may well have emerged. Indeed pop-up, as well as referring to temporary place making, is becoming, more generally, a term for approaching things that seemingly come out of nowhere and have an ambiguous longevity. For example, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote a 'pop-up' newspaper, *The New European*, emerged to respond to what they foresaw would be an 'acute' but short term interest in the topic (Worley, 2016). The existence of *The New European* illustrates an affinity between pop-up culture and what could be described as 'pop-up politics', a world in which Brexit can suddenly take Europe by storm, in which Trump, or Macron, or Corbyn can suddenly take centre stage, in which snap elections yield unpredictable results, etc. etc. In this volatile world, charting the development of imaginaries and the trajectories they might take, as is my aim, seems wiser than trying to map out a state of play as though it were stable. The method I have used to approach pop-up's unpredictable landscape, interactive documentary, is, as I will argue, attuned to its nonlinear logics, yet i-Docs are themselves a fast moving field. Consequentially my methodological experiments with i-Docs aim to open up ways of thinking about their potential uses in academia, rather than to offer a template, and, most centrally, to spark discussion around ways of academically



approaching phenomenon that, like pop-up culture, are erratic and unstable (Harris, 2015).

### **Structure of the Thesis**

There are seven remaining chapters of the thesis. The next chapter, chapter two is a literature review which surveys current literature on pop-up culture and teases out where its imaginaries have so far been identified and discussed, albeit often implicitly. Chapter three, provides a conceptual framework; it draws together the theoretical literature I work with across the thesis and sets out the core concepts mobilized in my approach to pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. Chapter four, on methodology, sets out my practical use of participant observation, interviews, visual methods and interactive documentary but also grounds my use of i-Docs within a theoretical analysis of how cultural forms can be used to interrogate urban space-time. This chapter also introduces the theories and terminologies of nonlinear space-time which I deploy in my discussions of both interactive documentary and pop-up culture. Following the methodology chapter there are three empirical chapters dealing with each of the three types of pop-up places studied and the key imaginaries operative within them.

Chapter five explores pop-up cinema and imaginaries of immersion. It details the modes of encounter that pop-up cinema encourages and argues that immersion both enables and narrativizes the gentrification of places. Chapter six then considers shipping container spaces and their occupation by pop-up businesses. I address imaginaries of flexibility and interstitiality in container spaces arguing that these imaginaries normalise and expand precarious labour practices, providing a spatiality that matches the unstable temporalities of craft and creative work. I argue that interstitiality works alongside flexibility to glorify the use of inbetween spaces and ad hoc architectures but suggest that while interstitiality celebrates heterogeneous

urban geographies, the imaginary actually serves to smooth and homogenize space by furthering the gentrification of the city.

Chapter seven discusses supper clubs, pop-ups that are distinctive for occurring in domestic spaces. I argue that supper clubs shift and make sense of changing relationships between domestic and public spaces. The chapter argues that the two key imaginaries evident in supper clubs, secrecy and surprise, serve to narrativize the commodification of domestic space and the interactions with strangers that are typical in the sharing economy. Across these empirical chapters the interactive documentary is explored to further the points made about pop-up's nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries and their functions in the city. Finally the conclusion to the thesis draws together the findings of each chapter and discusses their significance. I argue that pop-up's imaginaries serve contradictory functions in the city, both offering hope within precarious urban conditions but also normalising and entrenching that precarity. My conclusion also sets out suggestions for future directions for work on pop-up; work which will be pertinent as the phenomenon becomes increasingly significant in cities around the world.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review: Approaching Imaginaries of Pop-Up Space-Time

Pop-up culture is a relatively recent phenomenon so scholarship on the topic is in its early stages. However, distinct approaches to pop-up are discernible within the emerging body of work, which is rooted in a number of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Most often, pop-up is discussed among a landscape of other temporary urbanisms as one of the most significant elements of what has been labelled 'the temporary city' (Bishop & Williams, 2012); a term that identifies the rise of nomadic and ephemeral urban places. In this literature review I survey existing literature on pop-up culture as well as contextual work on other forms of temporary urbanism. I briefly detail the perspectives others have taken on this topic, but my primary interest is in unearthing the, often implicit, ways that pop-up's imaginaries have already been identified and depicted.

The specific term "pop-up" has had unprecedented purchase and been taken up by diverse urban stakeholders. Pop-up culture therefore demands attention as an element of 'the temporary city' that is having a significant and transformative impact on ways of distributing and imagining urban space-time. Yet, precisely for this reason, differentiating pop-up from other 'types' of temporary urbanism is not straightforward. The widespread appeal of pop-up has led to many strange uses of the term, often for things that are inherently temporary; such as "pop-up weddings", things that are actually reasonably permanent, or things that seem very detached from the pop-up aesthetic, such as "pop-up HIV testing clinics." On the other hand, the term pop-up is often *not* used by the organisers of events and places that have a clear involvement with pop-up culture. For example, while shipping container studios and malls usually brand themselves as 'pop-up' there are some that wouldn't use this term, even though their discursive and material practices are no different. Consequentially, I have approached pop-up as a phenomenon with porous

boundaries. While recognising it as a distinct evolution of the temporary urbanisms landscape, I also acknowledge that it cannot be straightforwardly demarcated within this wider field. For this reason, my literature review includes some wider work on temporary urbanisms and vacant space use, both of which are key to understanding the imaginaries pop-up synthesises and develops.

Most centrally, this chapter surveys work on pop-up and temporary urbanisms to identify where others have recognised the imaginaries I deem central to pop-up culture; immersion, flexibility, interstitiality, secrecy and surprise. I unearth the work others have done to describe and explore these imaginaries and consider the contradictory functions they are seen to serve. However, before embarking on these sections, I will briefly map other key perspectives that have been taken on pop-up culture.

One disciplinary area where pop-up has attracted a lot of attention is architectural studies. Usually, this literature starts from the perspective that temporary urbanisms should be considered as a form of interventionist or insurgent place making (Temel & Haydn, 2006; Hou, 2010; Merker, 2010; Bishop & Williams, 2012; Oswald, et al., 2013; Ziehl, 2012) that offers new ways of producing and enacting urban life. Yet, while architectural scholars figure temporary urbanisms as interventionist, and even radical, their accounts are usually of quite modest ways that temporary urbanisms negotiate and transform public space; rather than major acts of resistance to or disruptions of the status-quo. Attention is focused on the roles of pop-ups in generating ludic or social engagement in public spaces. They are argued to produce new expressions of the collective realms in the contemporary city' (Hou, 2010, p. 1) and foster cultural and economic innovation. The reason I say that this perspective on pop-up gives a modest, un-radical depiction of its potentials is that often its focus is on how informal temporary urbanisms could, and should, be codified in planning policy within the neoliberal city (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Oswald, et al., 2013). Much of this work, including notably Bishop and Williams's survey of 'the temporary city' (2012), is promotional in tone; identifying pop-up as a quasi-utopic *neoliberal* urban

form which produces dynamic and participatory urban sites that are, most significantly, economically efficient. An interesting contrast to this approach to pop-up as an urban form that can free up both economic flows and social interactions is work from a legal perspective which considers the how pop-up should be regulated, lest in its ephemerality it eludes the usual laws around health and safety (Schindler, 2015).

In contrast to architectural perspectives, those coming at temporary urbanisms from the point of view of planning usually begin from a consideration of the vacant spaces temporary urbanisms occupy (Colomb, 2012; Groth & Corijn, 2005; Nemeth & Langhorst, 2014; Andres, 2013; Tonkiss, 2013; Rall & Haase, 2011; Villagomez, 2010). Again, this literature figures temporary urbanisms as catalysts through which alternative 'forms of sociality' (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 313) are opened up. Temporary places are usually endorsed as valuable ad-hoc practices that should ideally be more structurally integrated into urban planning (Andres, 2013). This literature, however, also engages a critical perspective on the relationship between temporary and 'long term' urban planning. Temporary use is recognised as a compensatory response to political, economic or urban disorder (Andres, 2013), the temporalities of which stand in complex, not necessarily disruptive, relation to the 'compressed time horizons' and prerogatives of 'rapid return' on which routine investment is premised (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 320).

Discussions of pop-up also feature within work on urban spaces of artistic and cultural practice, undertaken by scholars within Performance Studies (Alston, Forthcoming; Harvie, 2013), Film and Media Studies (Atkinson & Kennedy, 2015) Art History (Pratt & San Juan, 2014) and Leisure Studies (Lashua, 2013). Here, pop-up is considered as both a vehicle of ludic engagement with urban spaces and issues and as a prominent tool within event-based cultural economies and strategies of gentrification. Pop-up has also gained some attention within Cultural Studies and Sociology where it is often understood as a means of engaging with forgotten histories and/or of re-imagining and renewing urban places (Chahine, 2016). Susan

Luckman's work is particularly interesting in this area. Luckman has foregrounded the role of pop-up in 'hipster' economies; locating it within the 'back to basics' sensibility that has emerged as a response to the global financial crash (Luckman, 2015). This is an approach which, as explored in chapter six, resonates with my own understanding of pop-up as a phenomenon through which economic crisis is narrativized.

Within Geography, scholars have explored pop-up's economic instrumentalities. Pop-up has been understood as a type of 'austerity urbanism' (Peck, 2005), promising low cost redevelopment while shifting the onus for financial viability onto amateur actors at a time of widespread cuts (Ferreri, 2015). Geographers have also recognised pop-up's roles in the 'festivalization' of public space (Pratt & San Juan, 2014) and advancement of neoliberal creative city agendas (Mould, 2014). While, across this work, it is clear that it is the particular imaginaries developed in pop-up that make it such an appealing and effective neoliberal tool, Mara Ferreri's work is the most explicit in approaching pop-up as a site where important urban imaginaries are being produced, and she has teased out the implications of pop-up's promotion of flux and ephemerality at a time of austerity, specifically in relation to the justification of precarious conditions for creative practitioners (Ferreri, 2015).

Indeed, many explorations of pop-up make clear that its significance derives from the fact that, more than just a new iteration of temporary urbanisms, pop-up is becoming a key way of imagining the urban fabric and a routine feature of planning discourse and policy. In the rest of this chapter I therefore want to draw out how pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries and their instrumentalities have already been recognised, albeit often implicitly. The rest of the chapter is split into five sections relating to the five imaginaries I have identified as key to pop-up culture; immersion, flexibility, interstitiality, secrecy and surprise. In each section, I unearth elements of the existing literature which speaks to these imaginaries. Because each imaginary is explored in depth in my empirical chapters I do not use these sections to develop my conceptual accounts of the imaginaries but focus on describing their identification

in the work of others. Equally, while the empirical chapters will draw on discussions of related cultural phenomena across history including, for example mobile and immersive sites of spectatorship (Clarke & Doel, 2005; Griffiths, 2013; Gunning, 1986) and architectural plans for temporary and mobile cities (Pinder, 2011) this literature will not be surveyed here but will be explored in the relevant chapters, given that their value is in making specific points of comparison or excavating the lineages of particular pop-up 'types'.

As well as identifying the spatiotemporal imaginaries recognised in pop-up, each section is also concerned with drawing out the contradictory affiliations and instrumentalities of those imaginaries. The contradictions pop-up culture synthesises are abundantly clear across scholarship on the topic. Pop-ups are said to give 'new visibility to users until now excluded from the structures of power' (Tonnelat, 2013, p. 160) but also identified as vehicles of gentrification which displace vulnerable populations (Harvie, 2013). Some commentators suggest they can de-familiarise spaces (Iveson, 2013), uncover lost layers of meaning (Lashua, 2013) and imagine alternative futures (Pratt & San Juan, 2014) while others point to their role in rebranding places in line with normative visions of the creative city (Colomb, 2012). On the one hand, pop-ups are deemed to offer opportunities for imaginative critique (Pratt & San Juan, 2014), while on the other they are identified as instrumental in increasing precarity for artists and creative practitioners (Graziano & Ferreri, 2014; Deslandes, 2013). Here, I tease out these contradictions and focus on how they are synthesised within and produced by pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries.

As the introduction argued, I consider pop-up's imaginaries in relation to Berlant's concept of cruel optimism because they offer hope within a time of precarity but actually serve to reproduce that precarity. The contradictory claims made about pop-up are therefore crucial to explore because they demonstrate that its spatiotemporal imaginaries do not function in singular ways but can be instilled with a variety of meanings and mobilized towards multiple agendas. If imaginaries are always invested with power (Gregory, 1994; Gregory, 1995) who that power belongs to and

how it is operationalized is always being contested. Cruel optimism can perhaps be understood, in particular the case of pop-up, as a condition within which imaginaries are invested with conflicting agendas that have a particular power geometry; one in which the investment of some (the precarious) in those imaginaries is futile, and in fact self-sabotaging, in the face of the ability of more powerful others to mobilize and manipulate the same imaginaries. As the empirical chapters will explore, pop-up's imaginaries are imbued with contested meanings and intentions that have particular power geometries. For example, where for some investment in 'flexibility' is a mode of survival in the face of precarity, for others flexibility is promoted to cut costs and free up flows of capital. The investment of precarious peoples in the flexibility imaginary therefore plays into the hands of more powerful stakeholders, by providing them with a willing, low cost, mobile and disposable workforce. The next chapter will advance this suggestion that pop-up's imaginaries can be understood as cruel optimism, arguing that pop-up's imaginaries both offer hope for precarious urban actors at a time of austerity and recession and entrench conditions of precarity through the extension and normalisation of neoliberal logics (and the retraction of the welfare state). Now, though, I turn to my exploration of other accounts of the five key spatiotemporal imaginaries I identify in pop-up.

## **Flexibility**

One of the most commonly identified imaginaries in pop-up culture is flexibility. Work on temporary urbanisms has explored how space-time is approached as 'heterogeneous, fluid and dynamic' (Hou, 2010, p. 13) and pop-up in particular is championed for how it foregrounds the flexible potentials of the urban fabric (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Some position the versatility of pop-ups as enabling progressive social politics. It is argued that pop-ups, because flexible, can respond quickly to vacant sites to provide ad-hoc places of social value. For example, pop-ups can provide a temporary cricket pitch for Afghani refugees awaiting the results of their asylum applications (Tonkiss, 2013) or a cinema that briefly transforms an



abandoned petrol station before its redevelopment (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, pp. 168–169). Here, there is an understanding that, in promoting flexibility, pop-up not only enables business opportunities but also encourages ‘active citizens’; that is, ordinary people who are apparently eager to ‘engage with the urban topography’ (Mould, 2014) to produce the city in more participatory and socially motivated ways.

Imaginarities of flexibility in pop-up also bring with them an ethical prerogative to treat space–time as a scarce resource in expensive and crowded cities, particularly at a time of recession and austerity (Ferrerri, 2015, p. 184). Pop-up is seen to make the most of ‘wasted’ space–times (Ferrerri, 2015; Rall & Haase, 2011; Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014; Tonkiss, 2013; Tonnelat, 2013) emerging as an exemplary, agile urbanism capable of extracting latent value from temporarily disused sites. Through pop-up, the imaginary of flexibility is thus promoted as more than a temporary response in ‘times of economic uncertainty’. It is figured as a long term urban model providing ‘reduced economic risk given shorter durations of projects’, the ability to ‘unlock the potential of sites now rather than in 10 years’ time’ (Bishop & Williams, 2012, p. 3) and, importantly, the ‘generation of a form of capital flow, which does not come into conflict with the immobility of real estate’ (Bishop & Williams, 2012, p. 25). Rather than just a response to recession, it is argued that pop-up can lead the way in promoting the ‘innovation, fluidity and flexibility’ needed in 21st-century cities (Bishop & Williams, 2012, p. 220).

Yet others identify pop-up’s vision of the city as flexible as a means of prioritising and furthering neoliberal, capitalist agendas because it casts the city as an ever changing medium within which spaces can and should be frequently opened up to new investment. In this context, imaginaries of flexibility also produce and reproduce precarity for less powerful urban actors. In particular, existing work recognises pop-up as instrumental in engineering two forms of precarity, both of which are justified through imaginaries of flexibility; precarity of place and precarity of labour. Firstly, pop-up normalises the idea that some claims to space are provisional and temporary. The promotion of pop-up within the arts and creative industries has made

temporariness almost synonymous with creativity, undermining the need for long-term resources in those sectors and glorifying precarious situations (Graziano & Ferreri, 2014; Mould, 2014). Furthermore, creative pop-ups are often 'obliged to justify their projects, at least in part, on the promise of returning capital to abject urban space' (Deslandes, 2013). Graziano and Ferreri, for example, explore the realisation by graduate artists that their pop-ups primarily benefited the landlords of the properties by increasing footfall and re-attracting long-term commercial investment (2014). Ironically, such pop-ups thereby undermine their own claims to space, showcasing the merits of a site to others who will ultimately displace them (Colomb, 2012). Pop-up becomes a 'locus of displacement' and space of 'conflict between current and future uses' (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014, pp. 458-459). Furthermore, it is understood that precarity of place is not an incidental bi-product of the openness to investment that flexibility also denotes. Tonkiss has argued that the normalised precarity for artists and other underfunded actors using the pop-up format enables the openness valued by investors, as the former become place holders which 'keep vacant sites warm while development capital is cool' (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 318) but can be swiftly moved aside when investors are ready because of the short contracts and notice periods that define pop-up.

Secondly, Ferreri and others have explored how pop-up's imaginaries of flexibility are instrumental in intensifying the longstanding labour precarity in the creative industries. Rather than providing permanent employment, pop-ups encourage individual responsibility for 'making' rather than 'taking' a job (Gunnell and Bright 2001 in Graziano & Ferreri, 2014). For these reasons, Luckman has compared pop-ups in Australia to internships, because young people are expected to work enthusiastically despite low financial rewards while their labour directly benefits established businesses (Luckman, 2014). Furthermore, in being presented as training or employment opportunities, pop-ups camouflage 'the broader lack of infrastructural support' at a time of funding cuts (Harvie, 2013, p. 111), particularly in the arts sector where pop-up is pitched as a solution to that lack (Graziano & Ferreri, 2014). For politicians like Boris Johnson, former Mayor of London, advocating pop-

up constitutes a show of support for culture without requiring actual investment (Harvie, 2013, p. 124). Again, it is clear that pop-up enforces precarity for some which enables flexibility for others. By shifting the responsibility for innovation onto young, creative industry workers, pop-up unburdens employers and governments of responsibility for training and employment and reinforces ideals of competition over provision. Pop-up carries an 'unvoiced assumption of total personal flexibility', normalising not just pop-up places but also 'pop-up people' who exist in a state of 'precarious or intermittent employment' (Ferrerri, 2015, pp. 185–186).

While entailing a shift in responsibility onto individuals for the making of places and entrepreneurial opportunities, flexibility imaginaries in pop-up also carry a sense of informality that could be aligned with 'makeshift' place making practices in cities in the Global South (Vasudevan, 2014; McFarlane, 2012). As suggested by the aesthetics and materials of pop-up spaces – containers, crates, reclaimed wood, corrugated iron, etc. – the flexibility imaginary in pop-up entails a 'creative' making do and muddling through; using incomplete and recycled resources proactively. In this way, as I suggested in the introduction to the thesis, pop-up place making resonates with how informal and temporary place making in the global south is often described as full of 'enormous creative energy' including the 'amazing ability to recycle just about everything' and 'innovate forms of....construction and design' (Clammer, 2015).

This comparison between informal urbanisms and pop-up place making could indicate that the flexibility imaginary in the western temporary city is a particular branding of the kind of 'making do' that occurs elsewhere. It could also be seen to evidence informality as an increasingly routine way of producing cities. Within literature on informal place making, there have been calls to see it as a significant part of the 'normal' production of cities. Lombard has suggested that, rather than be conceptualised negatively as 'slums', informal settlements should be recognised as functional elements of the city (Lombard, 2014). Likewise, Jabareen calls for an approach to 'DIY' place making not as 'chaotic' but as 'self- and community –

organizing' (Jabareen, 2014, p. 426). Equally, geographers have begun to emphasise that informal urbanisms, while thought of as almost exclusively belonging to 'third world' cities are in fact a global urban practice (Vasudevan, 2014; McFarlane, 2012). Colin McFarlane for example has suggested that cities in the global north are not necessarily more formal than those of the global south, pointing towards the growth of informal urban markets and participatory urban planning (McFarlane, 2012). Pop-up supports this argument, demonstrating the pervasiveness of informal and adaptive urban place making in wealthy Global Cities such as London.

This context of the growing recognition of informal place making as structural to cities makes pop-up's celebration of flexible, ad-hoc, urbanisms especially interesting, not least because, as described in the introduction, the pop-up branding is starting to take off in the Global South too. While a comparative focus on the Global South is not the project of this thesis, this context is worth bearing in mind as an illustration of the importance of understanding pop-up's flexibility imaginary and its glamorization of self-organisation and ad-hoc urban design.

### **Interstitiality**

Many commenters have labelled pop-up as 'interstitial' (Groth & Corijn, 2005; Lugosi, et al., 2010; Tonkiss, 2013; Tonnelat, 2013). The term 'interstice' is traditionally used to denote in-between spaces existing in the cracks of dominant urban orders (Brighenti, 2013), or 'residual spaces' (Villagomez, 2010), left out of 'time and place' (Groth & Corijn, 2005, p. 503). However, in Brighenti's recent edited collection on the subject, he argues that interstices should be conceptualised as 'eventual'; becoming spaces that, although 'small' in terms of their '*minoritarian*' (xvi) status are by no means ineffectual within the broader city (Brighenti, 2013). In pop-up, interstitiality is often aligned with this earlier conception of the interstice, figuring pop-up as a phenomenon that occupies gaps in the urban fabric. However, for many, pop-up's interstitiality also has wider transformative potentials. The interstitial

imaginary is identified as a sensitivity to 'alternative cities within the existing city' (Iveson, 2013, p. 943). However, others note the potentials of this same imaginary to actually preclude potentials for intervention because pop-ups pose a distraction from sites where dominant systems have broken down and thereby foreclose attempts to use those cracks more radically (Colomb, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013). At the crux of pop-up's interstitial imaginary is therefore a complex politics of visibility (Brighenti, 2013) where pop-ups are implemented in both creating opportunities to use space differently and in disguising and excluding those opportunities.

To detail the first, more optimistic association of interstitiality in pop-up; it is often argued that, by occupying vacant sites, pop-ups demonstrate alternative uses of space–time, working not just in the physical but the conceptual 'margins' of the city (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 313). Exploring this potential, Iveson (2013) and Tardiveau and Mallo (2014) have taken up Ranciere's politics of aesthetics to explain how dominant spatiotemporal distributions can be disrupted through an act that shows their contingency. For Ranciere, it is the 'placing of one world in another' (Ranciere, 2010, p. 38) that disrupts ways of seeing and offers new alternatives. This phrase is evocative of pop-ups which create temporary places in the margins of other spatialities and in doing so can suggest alternative productions of space-time. By offering, for example, a mobile park instead of a parking space (Merker, 2010) or a tea party instead of an unused plot (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014), pop-ups can show that the imaginaries determining how space-time is used are contingent and can be rethought.' In this sense, pop-ups are interstitial spaces that, conceptualised dynamically, can prompt reassessment of how space–time should be imagined and distributed, offering a 'performative critique' of urban organisation (Brighenti, 2013, p. xix).

Yet pop-ups are also implicated in disguising and precluding opportunities to use space differently. If interstitiality involves occupying urban cracks then pop-ups are as much about filling up those cracks to distract from them as using them to showcase new visibilities. This has been identified in two main areas. Firstly,

temporary use can distract from vacancy's implications. Colomb has argued that, in Berlin, there is a perceived need to fill up 'urban voids', lest they undermine the discourses of reurbanization purported by politicians. Rather than hiding empty plots with canvasses, pop-ups are a better cover up for the 'absence of investment' (Colomb, 2012, p. 135). They cheer up 'dreary' streets, distracting from recession (Department for Communities and Local Government & Pickles, 2012) while simultaneously advertising space to long-term investors. Pop-up can thus be seen to positively narrativize post-recession spatialities, distracting from 'evidence of the flight of local capital' by reframing it as an opportunity for immediate use and future development (Deslandes, 2013).

Secondly, because pop-ups are usually commissioned and monitored by intermediary organisations, pop-up culture makes possible the weeding-out of illegal or undesirable occupations of interstices. Pop-up's sites are those that might once have been squatted or raved in and many share the aesthetics of those more clandestine temporary uses. Pop-ups can therefore create the impression that 'alternative' uses of space are being accommodated while actually official and implicit selection processes, and legal requirements, favour certain uses over others; namely those that are profitable and tied to neoliberal economic priorities (Peck, 2005). These favoured temporary uses can then undermine others. Colomb writes that in Berlin, 'only certain types of entertainment-related, "ludic" temporary uses are portrayed to fit into the image of a young, vibrant, creative city. The caravan sites or alternative living projects that have squatted on vacant plots in Kreuzberg are, unsurprisingly, not displayed' (Colomb, 2012, p. 143) in promotional imagery, reinforcing a hierarchy of temporary use. Furthermore, the way that pop-up identifies 'vacancy' reveals a normative approach. Many 'vacant' spaces are 'not "dead"' at all but contain urban wildlife or provide "spaces of "micro-political activity" (Cupers & Miessen, 2002, p. 123), spaces of "alternative cultures" (Shaw, 2005), or "spaces of transgression" for marginalized social groups, youth, or artists" (Colomb, 2012, p.135) as well as sites of refuse for 'the homeless and those deemed marginal to

society' (Lashua, 2013, p. 125). Yet these uses are not recognised when spaces are designated empty and readied for pop-up occupation.

Clear within the literature is, then, a sense that pop-up conjures an imaginary of interstitiality which fosters greater awareness of the margins within dominant distributions of space-time but is also instrumental in defining and policing those distributions. Pop-ups can challenge ideas about who and what city space-times are for but, at a time when 'the gestures of occupying and re-making terrains vagues and leftover spaces now come as readily to property developers, alert to the speculative possibilities of "acting interstitially" as they do to green nomads and architectural co-operatives' (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 318) pop-ups can also foreclose those contestations.

## **Immersion**

Discussion of immersion as an imaginary within pop-up culture is surprisingly sparse considering its prominence as a feature of pop-up events. Where it is discussed, immersion is usually identified as a trope within pop-up cinema (Atkinson & Kenney, 2017, Forthcoming ; Harris, 2016; Harris, 2017, Forthcoming; Pett, 2017, Forthcoming; Atkinson & Kennedy, 2016); used to refer to certain conventions of performance and spectatorship in which viewers are 'immersed' in a recreated, 'live' version of a fictional or fantastical world. Yet, as well as a style of performance, immersion is a mode of encounter. As will be explored in chapter five, pop-up's 'immersive viewing practices' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 2) create an imaginary of the city as a space with hidden dimensions. This comes across in much work on pop-up cinema where pop-up screenings are argued to generate deep engagement with urban space, conjuring forgotten pasts or imagined futures (Pratt & San Juan, 2014; Lashua, 2013). It is proposed that pop-up offers entry into the forgotten layers of urban space-time; enabling journeys deep into lost strata of the city so that *immersion* is a form of *submersion* within those lost layers. Again, scholars have approached immersion as riddled with political tensions particularly in relation to the

impact that immersive pop-ups have on perceptions of the sites hosting them (Lashua, 2013; Pratt & San Juan, 2014). On the one hand, immersion is said to discover lost layers of meaning (Lashua, 2013) and produce a critical understanding of space (Pratt & San Juan, 2014). But on the other, it is argued to transform sites into a space of play for those with high disposable incomes at the expense of alienating or displacing the populations of the areas they occupy (Harvie, 2013; Lugosi, et al., 2010; Pratt & San Juan, 2014).

Jen Harvie has explored the tensions between pop-up's ability to 'intervene politically in how people see the world' (Harvie, 2013, p. 123) and their role in generating cultural and thereby economic value. For example, journalist Oliver Wainwright has described how a series of immersive pop-up events in the Balfron Tower, a social housing block in London, mediated between the building's council tenants being 'decanted' and the block being turned into luxury flats. The site was transformed for events including an immersive performance of *Macbeth*, pop-up exhibitions and an artistic recreation of an 'authentic' 1968 Balfron flat. At all these occasions the site itself was in the limelight, equally as spectacular as the events happening in it. Pop-up's immersive viewing practices thereby facilitated the block's transformation into an enigmatic landmark worthy of being listed by the National Trust (Wainwright, 2014) and a desirable home for wealthy Londoners. The relationship between immersion and gentrification is also clear in Kenney and Atkinson's (Atkinson & Kennedy, Accessed online 10/06/2016) exploration of an instance in which the immersive world of Secret Cinema broke down. At Secret Cinema's 2014 screening of *Back to the Future* delays to set building meant the opening night was cancelled with just 60 minutes notice, leaving hundreds of confused participants wandering around east London in 1950s costume. As Kenney and Atkinson explore, 'anti-fans...poked fun at the hundreds of lost, costumed participants and their indistinction from hipster Hoxtonites', joking that somebody wondering around East London in 1950s attire might well just be a hipster not a Secret Cinema attendee. This anecdote reveals that immersion in pop-up – far from producing fantasy worlds that are distinct



from the real city – may merely play into and accentuate the ways that urban spaces are already being transformed.

Yet others have explored how immersion can enable attentiveness to the particularities of place, foster community and engage with environmental and political issues. Pratt and San Juan argue that pop-up cinemas encourage ‘serious play’ (Pratt & San Juan, 2014), which denotes a means of extending the imaginative gaze of cinema to examine urban space. Although Pratt and San Juan acknowledge the role of pop-up cinemas in the ‘festivalisation’ of space (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 170) for them serious play is primarily a mode of ludic engagement with local history and environmental issues (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 168). Illustrating this point, they cite a pop-up cinema called Films on Fridges, arguing that the cinema’s use of recycled fridge doors as chairs, tables and a frame for the screen allowed the event to engage with ‘waste, recycling’ and ‘abandoned or neglected spaces’ (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 168). Similarly, Lashua has discussed a pop-up film screening in the car park of Marshall’s Mill, a former flax mill in Leeds. Lashua argues that the immersive event’s festive atmosphere enabled place-shaping processes which reactivated the site’s significance within Britain’s textiles industries while also ‘adding contemporary meanings tied to a community’s sense of identity and place’ (Lashua, 2013, p. 130). Pop-up’s immersive imaginary is therefore recognised as both a tool for rewriting spaces in line with agendas of gentrification but also as a way of uncovering meanings relating to the historical, political and social dimensions of space, bringing the usually hidden layers of the city-as-palimpsest into focus (Lashua, 2013, p. 130).

## **Secrecy**

Closely related to ideas of immersion is the imaginary of secrecy in pop-up culture. While evident across pop-up, it has been most notably discussed in relation to pop-up cinemas and supper clubs. Adam Alston’s discussion of secrecy in pop-up

cinema, for me, foregrounds how secrecy adds to imaginaries of immersion to give a sense that the city is populated by hidden spaces that pop-up can offer access to (Alston, Forthcoming). Alston writes that secrecy secures the possibility of other worlds parallel to the real one. In pop-up culture, secrecy is an imaginary through which the city is figured as a place where unknown things are happening all around you and pop-up is a way of accessing them, albeit temporarily.

As Alston argues, secrecy has both a subversive lineage and an exclusive lineage, both of which are at play in pop-up. Sarah Schindler, writing from a legal perspective, has noted that secret supper clubs and pop-up restaurants play on both the subversive and the exclusive potentials of secrecy in old speakeasies, where temporary and ad hoc constructions of place were a way to evade legal prohibition (Schindler, 2015). Schindler argues that some pop-ups do indeed use secrecy to veil illegal practices and avoid costly regulation but suggests that one reason that this is not clamped down on by regulating authorities is that they cater to the wealthy demographic that cities want to attract, giving this clientele an experience of the clandestine that doesn't involve risk of arrest. Schindler also argues that some pop-ups use secrecy to make a political statement against the exploitative and wasteful restaurant industry (Schindler, 2015, p. 12), tapping into the imaginary of an alternative, parallel economy with its own prerogatives.

Yet for others, imaginaries of secrecy in pop-up are aligned with its elitism meaning that *disruptions* to those imaginaries of secrecy can actually be a form of protest or dissent. Atkinson and Kennedy (Atkinson & Kennedy, Accessed online 10/06/2016) elucidate this in their discussion of Secret Cinema's *Back to the Future*. In the lead up to this screening, photos showing the site's unfinished location were leaked and Atkinson and Kennedy argue that these constituted 'an act of ongoing defiance and exposure' from angry fans or 'anti-fans' who, antagonised by the delays to the event, turned on Secret Cinema founder Fabian Rigall, ridiculing him as a posh hipster charging extortionate ticket prices for events he doesn't know how to run (Atkinson & Kennedy, Accessed online 10/06/2016). Exposing Secret Cinema's 'secrets' broke

the imaginary they were attempting to conjure of Secret Cinema as a clandestine operation and instead foregrounded its workings as a profitable organisation run by and for urban elites.

Discussions of secrecy as an imaginary within pop-up culture also relate secrecy to the multiplicity of public life. Secrecy is recognised as being about involvement, being in on something (Alston, Forthcoming) but also as being a way to differentiate yourself from others who are not privy to the knowledge you have, for example the code of conduct for secret pop-up events (Atkinson and Kenney, 2016). Atkinson and Kennedy explore the tensions between Secret Cinema attendees who enjoyed and wanted to preserve the secrecy element of the screening and 'run of the mill' back to the future fans who were confused by the 'in-fiction' correspondences from secret cinema and just wanted clear, non-cryptic instructions on where and when to meet. This incident shows how imaginaries of secrecy in pop-up culture are used to differentiate and attract those with cultural capital, something that many attendants of Secret Cinema's *Back to the Future* screening turned out not to possess.

However, for Schindler, secrecy is also an imaginary that can enable sharing and sociability. Locating secret supper clubs in the sharing economy she argues that because the format is premised on inviting strangers into a private home it generates 'social interaction and connectivity among neighbours and visitors who dine together' (Schindler, 2015, p. 27). This idea chimes with Alston's discussion of secrecy as an imaginary that suggests the possibility of other, parallel worlds (Alston, Forthcoming). Secrecy can be seen as hopeful; to constitute a promise of alternative, better relations and modes of life that are hidden, but discoverable, within the city.

Secrecy in pop-up culture is then, full of paradoxes. Indeed this is an argument made by Alston who notes that pop-up cinemas paradoxically flaunt secrecy, commodifying it as a marketing technique (Alston, Forthcoming). Here, Alston identifies how secrecy can be mobilized to engage consumers in 'a world pervaded by the aesthetics and economies of commodification' (Alston, Forthcoming). Likewise, Atkinson and Kenney explore how Secret Cinema uses Secrecy to

encourage purchases both within its events and beforehand at 'in-fiction' pop-up shops (2016). These accounts of secrecy highlight that 'secret' pop-up worlds are not, in fact, 'cut off from the world *out there*' (Alston, Forthcoming) but instead are used to create imaginaries that foster glamour and 'charm' (Simmel, 1906) around particular products and purchasable experiences.

## **Surprise**

Surprise can be understood as a subsidiary imaginary to secrecy. If pop-ups constitute a secret geography in the city then it is with surprise that they burst through into the public realm. Scholars of retail and consumption have argued that surprise is what gives pop-up its commercial appeal and accounts for its success in contemporary retail economies. Consumers, it is argued, enjoy an element of the unknown (Niehm, et al., 2007). Pomodoro has suggested that temporary retail is the latest expression of an "impermanent" and transient society where consumers are constantly seeking novelty. The ephemerality of pop-ups satisfy the consumer's need to be constantly surprised with unique and temporary experiences and also entertained with interactive performances' (Pomodoro, 2013). Pomodoro points to two elements of surprise in temporary retail. Firstly, a surprise that derives from impermanence and thus the unknowability of what will, or wont, be in the city at any given time and, secondly, a surprise that derives from the interactive experiences and performances of pop-up spaces.

Indeed, as will be explored, many pop-ups derive their appeal from surprise experiences and encounters. Sometimes this involves surprising elements of immersive performances and activities in which unpredictability is conflated with creative possibilities as, for example, in a pop-up museum at which empty frames were left for participants to fill (Grant, 2015) or in immersive cinema where chance interactions, including 'mistakes' are understood as central to the artistic merits of the performance (Alston, 2016). Pop-up also taps into a desire for interactions with

other urban citizens. If strangers are a defining feature of the urban experience (Koefoed & Simonsen, 2011; Tonkiss, 2003; Simmel, 1950; Amin, 2002; Amin, 2012) then pop-ups, as I will explore, are figured as sites of encounter with some of those strangers.

There is a growing body of Geographical work on encounter, much of which questions to what extent meaningful connections and communications between different demographics can take place in cities (Holloway, et al., 2006; Schuermans, 2013; Valentine, 2008). Schuermans has identified two conflicting depictions of the urban, one of the city as site of productive and meaningful contact across difference and another of a city in which exclusion and segregation is perpetuated (Schuermans, 2013), despite seemingly gracious and polite micro-encounters in public spaces (Valentine, 2008). Such questions are important to ask of pop-up which is promoted by urban designers and governments as tools for fostering connections between 'urban dwellers in new ways' (psfk, 2013) and turning disused land into temporary public spaces (Ireland, 2017). It has been argued that pop-ups produce potentials for social interaction and community connections for diverse groups including for children who, as McGlone has argued, benefit from the 'interactive' nature of temporary public spaces such as pop-up parks (McGlone, 2016). If a key element of the "surprise" of pop-up is chance encounters with others in the city it is important to interrogate the depth and meanings of such encounters.

## **Chapter Conclusions**

This chapter has explored how other scholars have identified and explored flexibility, interstitiality, immersion, secrecy and surprise in pop-up and temporary places. Through my discussion of this literature I have begun to set out the roles that these five spatiotemporal imaginaries play in pop-up culture and the city more broadly. I have demonstrated that pop-up's imaginaries serve conflicting functions and are invested with conflicting meanings. In doing so, I have set the scene for

understanding pop-up as a site of struggle over how cities are, and should be, produced.

In-depth accounts of pop-up's imaginaries will be developed across the empirical chapters of the thesis through a close reading of a series of case studies of pop-up places in London, as well as through my analysis of the i-Doc. Before introducing the i-Doc and embarking on the empirical chapters of the thesis, the next chapter sets the conceptual scene for the thesis. It will draw out the key bodies of theoretical work through which I approach pop-up's imaginaries and their functions and detail how I am using these concepts.

## Chapter Three

### Conceptual Framework: Theorising the Temporary City

The last chapter examined depictions of pop-up's imaginaries, drawing out how flexibility, interstitiality, immersion, secrecy and surprise have been identified and discussed by other scholars. This chapter now advances my conceptual approach to pop-up's imaginaries. As explained in the introduction, my use of the term 'spatiotemporal imaginaries', to describe the modes of encounter and orientation that pop-up generates, follows geographical work on imaginaries and imaginative geographies (Gregory, 1994; Gregory, 1995; Anderson, 1991; Cosgrove, 2008) in order to understand imaginaries as ways of approaching the world that are structured by assumptions about and projections of place. More specifically though, I argue that three particular kinds of orientation are synthesised within pop-up's imaginaries. Firstly, as *spatiotemporal* imaginaries, they engage a vision of urban-space time as nonlinear which re-reads precarious urban conditions to make those realities seem desirable. Secondly, pop-up's imaginaries respond to precarity as a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977), transforming experiences of precarity to give them a positive inflection. And thirdly, they work as compensatory narratives that make palatable the adapted conditions lived in after recession, in a move akin to what Berlant calls 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011). My account, therefore, understands pop-up's imaginaries as a sort of collection of modes of orientation incorporating multiple ways of experiencing, approaching and understanding the contemporary urban condition.

This approach to imaginaries builds on ways imaginaries have been discussed by other Geographers. Spatiotemporal sensitivities have always been an acknowledged feature of imaginaries which entail a 'taken for granted spatial ordering' (Gregory, 2009). This is evident, for example, in how imaginaries of territorial borders function to order political and social life globally (Massey, 2008) or in how containerization inaugurated a vision of the world as a 'smooth space' of

homogenized environments (Martin, 2013). My second conjecture, that imaginaries should be thought together with structures of feeling, is perhaps less orthodox. Yet I think that many uses of imaginaries implicitly incorporate structures of feeling. Ben Anderson argues that structures of feeling relate to a “sense” in a ‘*particular* time and place’ (Anderson, 2014, p. 118). We can see this in how the term imaginary is used, for example to describe imaginaries of urban ruination in a place like Detroit (Fraser, Forthcoming), where that imaginary expresses and makes sense of a post-recession structure of feeling that includes shock, grief and fascination at the capacity of urban life to, so suddenly, fall apart. Equally, my suggestion that imaginaries serve as narratives that make sense of changing, often diminished, conditions resonates with accounts of, for example, how imaginaries of empire gave working class Britons an experience of superiority over ‘others’ abroad that compensated in some sense for the difficulties of life at home (Virdee, 2014) and how imaginaries linked to Brexit might serve a similar purpose in the present day (Bhabra, 2016) structure of feeling of precarity. In these examples we see how imaginaries help to reproduce, but can also make sense of or alter, structures of feeling.

In this chapter I draw together bodies of work that advance my approach to pop-up’s imaginaries and introduce how I am working with these concepts. The first part is split into two sections and introduces my theoretical approaches to urban space-time, and pop-up’s nonlinear space-time in particular. Part of my argument around the nonlinearity of pop-up space time will be developed in the next chapter, on methodology. There, I argue that, if accounts of imaginaries have often been advanced through attention to their manifestations in particular media, then interactive documentary – as method - can elucidate the workings of the nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginary (Harris, 2016) which I argue is operative in pop-up culture. This chapter sets out a more urban-orientated account of pop-up space-time. In the first section I explore how pop-up’s nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries relate to, and serve to order, the socio-economic conditions of the city. To explore this I work through other accounts of the relationship between space-time and the city. There



is, of course, a huge body of work on this topic but I focus on theories of spatiotemporality that illuminate pop-up as a phenomenon that responds to a disordering of the urban by making that disorder into a new ordering principle. In the second section I build on this literature to advance my conception of pop-up's own spatiotemporality and its instrumentalities and, in doing so, draw on theories of assemblage and turbulence. In the introduction I suggested that, in the wake of recession, London experienced what could be labelled as 'turbulence', a shock to the system that exposes usually invisible infrastructural orderings (Cresswell & Martin, 2012). Here I explore how systems undergoing turbulence reveal their nonlinearity; that is their capacities to be radically otherwise, and detail how pop-up's imaginaries respond to that. In post-recession London economic turbulence manifested, in part, as high vacancy rates and forestalled development, producing a landscape which reveals the contingency of its normal distributions, which have been undermined by economic crisis. I suggest that pop-up responds to these conditions of turbulence with positively inflected, nonlinear imaginaries; imaginaries that transform uncertainty and instability into flux and ephemerality. Because the methodology chapter develops my theorisation of nonlinearity some of the discussion of core ideas here is relatively brief, intended to introduce this element of my conceptual framework and its relation to the others ideas I work with, before it is advanced in the next chapter.

The second part of this chapter advances my arguments that pop-up's imaginaries transform precarity as a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1977) and that they involve the development of compensatory narratives. I consider precarity as a structure of feeling that many have identified as pervasive in the contemporary condition (Anderson, 2014; Berlant, 2011) as well as exploring other, adjusted, structures of feeling that have been argued to emerge from and relate to precarity including 'flexibility' (Anderson, 2014) and 'austerity chic' (Bramall, 2011). I consider pop-up's involvement in these responses to precarity as a structure of feeling, suggesting that its imaginaries transmute experiences of precarity, producing imaginaries through which nonlinearity is understood as a positive and hopeful mode of urban

organisation. That is not to say that precarity as a structure of feeling is thereby *replaced* but that, as Anderson argues, multiple structures of feeling and other orientations to the world can co-exist and function in combination or, indeed, in conflict (Anderson, 2014; Anderson, 2016). Lastly, I advance what is meant by 'compensatory narratives' by discussing the identification of such narratives in the work of others and arguing that they can be thought about as what Berlant calls 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011).

## **Part One:**

### **Pop-Up Space-Time**

#### **Section One: Urban Space-Time; a Lineage**

Many Geographical approaches to space-time in the city have followed the work of Lefebvre who invented the methodological concept of 'rhythmanalysis' to focus on the ordering functions of rhythm in the city. Lefebvre's work has been influential in geography, most notably explored by the collection *Geographies of Rhythm* (Edensor, 2010) as well as in the work of Derek McCormack (McCormack, 2002). Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis draws a distinction between natural rhythms (biological and environmental) which he sees as cyclical, and rhythms of capital and commerce which he deems linear. In this dichotomy, the rhythms of capitalism are argued to colonise and replace (Evans & Jones, 2008, p. 664) the cyclical rhythms of natural life. The 'massive routinization of work practices that we associate with modernity' is argued to turn everyday routines into 'deadening' activities, rendering people 'enslaved to the rhythm of the machine' (Highmore, 2002, p. 308).

For Lefebvre, power is inaugurated through rhythm. Changes in how life is organised take place when certain social groups 'intervene by imprinting a rhythm on an era', making that group a 'producer of meaning' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 14). Here, capitalism is seen to gain control of life through dominating everyday rhythms while disruptions

to capitalism take the form of interventions into those rhythms. As we saw in the last chapter, much work casts pop-up in this light, suggesting that its ephemerality enables it to contest and disrupt the dominant rhythms of the city and create spaces where people, rather than profit are prioritised (Andres, 2013; Iveson, 2013; Oswalt, et al., 2013; Villagomez, 2010). This reading puts pop-up in a lineage of Situationist style interventions. The ludic urban interventions of the Situationists sought to defamiliarize urban space to expose the spectacle of modern capitalist culture and pave the way for alternative forms of urban living. Architectural theorist Alina Hughes argues that Pop-ups 'echo the Situationist movement, and particular Archigram's call for architecture on the limits of possibility' (Hughes, 2013, p. 305) by cultivating a 'transformative impulse' (306) in order to remake urban space.

Yet, as Kim Dovey argues in his review of *The Temporary City*, such radical claims about pop-up culture jar with a reality where they are 'increasingly used to generate brand identity for both places and products'. As Dovey argues, 'it can become difficult to distinguish creative temporary urbanism from a camouflaged marketing campaign' (Dovey, 2014, p. 262). Far from intervening in capitalist dominance over space-time it seems that even radically orientated pop-ups are, at best, 'interventions among interventions' (Smith, 2010, p. 114) meaning we can no longer understand political contestation through a framework of order and intervention.

While the mechanical motion of the Fordist assembly line (Highmore, 2002) typified the colonisation of modern life by capital, such a linear conception of the space-time of capitalism and its imposition on the 'natural' rhythms of everyday life is no longer apt for describing contemporary cities, where *irregularity* is itself an entraining force subsuming subjects within capitalism. As contemporary work on precarity, especially within the creative sector, makes clear, subjects are subsumed into the prerogatives of capitalism not by the monotony of the nine to five day but by the expansion of space-times of work into arenas that were previously private, through a culture where workers are required to be 'always on' (Hracs & Leslie, 2014, p. 67), functioning as 'pop-up people' (Graziano & Ferreri, 2014) available when required. If life was once

forced to fit between the rhythms of work, then work space-times are now self-identical with "life" space-times.

In this context, a Deleuzian understanding of rhythm has been taken up by Geographers to theorise space-time in an era where there is no 'outside' of capitalism but where control and alterity are immanent to one another. Like Lefebvre, Deleuze sees rhythm as central to how orderings of society are produced. But where Deleuze, writing with Guattari, departs most significantly from Lefebvre is in positing that 'man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other' but are 'one and the same essential reality, the producer-product' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013, p. 15).

Rather than seeing natural rhythms as effaced by the false rhythms of capital, Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism works by 'decoding and deterritorializing' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013, p. 47) flows of desire. Whereas previous systems functioned by codifying the 'flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channelled, regulated' capitalism 'does not confront this situation from the outside' (47). That is to say, capitalism does not seek to *contain* and regulate flows, it functions immanently within them by 'substituting money for the very notion of code' (47). What this means is that capitalism now functions not by fixing unruly flows within its own orders, but by becoming the currency of the flows of previously uncommodified areas of life. They explain that contemporary 'Capitalism is in fact born of the encounter of two sorts of flows: the decoded flows of production in the form of money-capital, and the decoded flows of labor in the form of the 'free worker' (47).

This conception of capitalism is influential in understandings detailed above of how urban-space time is ordered; not through circumscription but through commodification. Lauren Berlant makes a similar argument when she suggests that 'Instead of the vision of the everyday *organized* by capitalism that we find in Lefebvre and de Certeau among others, I am interested in the overwhelming ordinary that is *disorganized* by it, and by many other forces besides' (2011, 8). As she goes on to

argue ‘the rhythms of ordinary existence in the present...scramble the distinction between forced adaptation, pleasurable variation and threatening dissolution of life-confirming norms’ (Berlant, 2011, p. 8). Berlant’s account of the scrambled distinctions within ‘rhythms of ordinary existence’ could very well be an account of pop-up’s spatiotemporality; a set of rhythms which are scrambled in that they are simultaneously pleasurable and uncomfortable in their erraticism; simultaneously rhythms of everyday life and rhythms of capital production. Reading this statement through Deleuze’s assertions about capitalism’s relationship to space-time, we then see pop-up as part of a complex spatiotemporal fabric where the same rhythms carry conflicting meanings and instrumentalities because order functions within, rather than imposing itself on, the rhythms of everyday life.

Paul Virilio’s work on space-time has also traced how flux and instability have become ordering mechanisms of social life. Virilio’s work, as Armitage summarises, has explored the ‘logic of ever increasing speed’ that ‘lies at the heart of the organization and transformation of the contemporary world’ (Armitage, 2000). Virilio argues that the vast acceleration of mobilities within the contemporary world merits a move from cartography, to *trajectography* (Virilio, 2012, p. 43), a way of charting space-time that accepts it as unsettled, constantly in motion. Virilio’s arguments have clear relevance to pop-up culture, which is indeed a constantly changing landscape that cannot be mapped in any stable way but, at best, *followed* via continuously updated online listings. For Virilio, this spatiotemporality constitutes ‘a period marked by precariousness’ (Virilio, 2012, p. 61); where constant change is an anticipated norm. Indeed, Virilio himself has discussed the architectural adaptations of shipping containers; a key feature of pop-up culture. He references propositions to house Polish labourers in containers in The Hague and Rotterdam and the use of containers from old docking ports to house Dutch students (Virilio, 2010, p. 9). For Virilio, these developments signal the onset of the ‘age of general ‘emportement’ (13) – a ‘portable revolution’ (10). However, he stresses that this is not ‘some happy, beneficial neo-nomadism’. Instead Virilio proposes that we have entered an era of

'uninhabitable circulation' (30) where the mobility of place undermines our ability to dwell within it.

As Armitage has argued, Harvey takes issue with the style and tone of Virilio's commentary on space-time, which he sees as an attempt to 'ride' time-space compression (Armitage, 2000, p. 14) rather than to understand it. Others too, have cautioned against a metanarrative of acceleration that misses out the multiplicity of times that in practice co-exist (May & Thrift, 2001). Indeed, Harvey's important theorisations of urban space-time are somewhat less polemical than Virilio's. Yet at the crux of Harvey's conception of changing urban spatiotemporalities is still the premise that speed up is intimately linked to the growth of capitalism because 'in times of economic crisis...capitalists with a faster turnover time survive better than their rivals'. For Harvey, the speed up necessitated by capitalism undergirds the experiences of urban disorientation noted across the past century, all of which, for him, evidence the onslaught of time-space compression. Against Harvey's schema, pop-up can be understood as the ultimate capitalist dream. It removes the fixity of urban land-use as the ultimate barrier to capitalist expansion, meaning that place too can be subjected to accelerated turn over times.

If pop-up eases capital flows by removing the fixity of urban land-use, it also finds ways to commodify disused, failed spaces of production. As Edensor and DeSilvey (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2012) have noted ruins can affirm, as well as critique, the structures of global capitalism (468). As they explore, the temporalities of capitalist growth are able to incorporate, rather than be undermined by, pockets of ruination, as these become opportunities for commercial activity, such as the use of ruins for film sets, or as cultural venues. This is the relationship we see in pop-up too; a recuperation of urban decline into the services of growth.

Imaginaries are crucial to the changing systems of space-time outlined above because it is through the changing imaginaries of space-time that these changing systems are naturalised and perpetuated. Thrift and May have argued for the importance of imaginative geographies of time. They consider the 'events which

shaped 'modern' imaginations of timespace' (May & Thrift, 2001) including inventions like the telegram or the telephone as well as discoveries in geology of the theory of evolution (May & Thrift, 2001) as well as the shift, at the turn of the century, towards ways of thinking timespace based around 'energy, motion' and 'dynamism' (May & Thrift, 2001, p. 21).

For Thrift and May, changing imaginative geographies of time make sense of and reproduce changing spatiotemporal conditions. As they argue, there has been a return to Bergsonian thinking at the turn of this century because information technologies and new developments in the natural sciences have generated heightened sensitivity to flux (May & Thrift, 2001, p. 25). For May and Thrift, Bergsonian ideas have become newly relevant because they resonate with contemporary experiences of time-space and help make sense of the city as an unstable fabric that always contains 'other possibilities' (Crang, 2001). Similarly, I would argue that what we see in pop-up is on the one hand, a changing spatiotemporal distribution, caused by economic upheaval, and on the other, a narrativization and recreation of those conditions through nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries. It is to this nonlinear imaginary that the next section now turns.

## **Section two: Turbulent Times, Nonlinear Imaginaries**

As previously argued, a nonlinear geographical imagination is central to my approach to pop-up because it helps me to understand two key things; the conditions that pop-up responds to and the imaginaries with which it responds. As I explained in the introduction to the thesis; pop-up became prominent at a time of heightened urban precarity. I argued that pop-up has responded to these conditions with a set of spatiotemporal imaginaries that positively narrativize those precarious conditions in a way that, on the one hand, offers a means of carrying on during difficult times but, on the other, entrenches and reproduces precarity as an increasingly pervasive

circumstance of urban life. In this section, I explore the literature which will be needed in the thesis to develop this proposition.

As suggested in the previous section, Geographers have long been interested in how urban life is ordered through spatiotemporal distribution and disrupted by discordant spatiotemporalities, as well as in how changes to spatiotemporal conditions are made sense of through the development of new imaginaries. Working in this lineage, I understand pop-up as a phenomenon that is re-ordering the urban at a time of crisis by producing new ways of imagining and distributing space-time. Specifically, this section draws on literature around assemblage and turbulence to work through the following argument. I argue that nonlinear thinking helps to paint a picture of post-recession London as a city undergoing *turbulence*. Recession can be understood as a shock to the urban assemblage which causes the city to display its nonlinearity more prominently; that is to display the contingency and instability of its current orderings. My conjecture is that pop-up, which was promoted as a direct response to those conditions of turbulence, narrativizes them by producing a set of spatiotemporal imaginaries that put a positive spin on nonlinearity. As such, pop-up stabilizes the urban assemblage at a time of crisis by making its conditions of precarity/turbulence seem normal, even desirable, and thereby precluding more radical re-orderings.

This argument equates precarity with turbulence in the context of pop-up, but I don't mean to suggest that all precarity should be understood through turbulence as a framework, merely that in the context of pop-up culture these terms can work together to shed light on why pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries have emerged at this time. In this section, I undertake two main tasks. Firstly, I draw together relevant literature to clarify what I mean by 'nonlinearity' and outline key ideas in nonlinear thinking that feature across the thesis. Secondly, I set out my use of nonlinearity to explore pop-up culture, elucidating how ideas of turbulence and nonlinearity help to understand the conditions pop-up responds to and the imaginaries with which it narrativizes precarity.



## **Geography's Nonlinear Imagination**

Nonlinear thinking is key to contemporary Geographical thinking. It can be found in many contemporary geographical approaches including vital materialism (Bennett, 2010) and the relational ontology of Doreen Massey's work (Massey, 2005) as well as in theories of assemblage and turbulence; both of which will be further explored here (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; Bennett, 2005; Cresswell & Martin, 2012). A nonlinear imaginary is one through which space-time is understood as creative; continuously, immanently and qualitatively reformulated through the unpredictable and dynamic evolution of the systems which constitute it. This approach will be familiar across contemporary Geography, and Cultural Geography in particular (Anderson, 2014; Bennett, 2005; Dittmer, 2010; Dittmer, 2014; Doel & Clarke, 2007; Hawkins & Straughan, 2014; Marston, et al., 2007; Woodward, et al., 2010). Indeed, nonlinear thinking is so pervasive that it is seldom signalled as a specific approach but usually functions as an unspoken premise about what space-time is and how it operates.

Nonlinear conceptions of space-time have entered Geographical thinking in part through Gilles Deleuze's influential philosophy, which itself draws heavily on the work of Henri Bergson. Rooted in Bergson's assertion that 'change is far more radical than we are at first inclined to suppose' (Bergson, 1998, p. 1), nonlinear imaginaries of space-time recognise that most systems, be that thermodynamic systems, biological organisms or urban assemblages, are temporally asymmetrical. This means that their future is not proportionate to or predictable from their pasts, because their trajectories are open to continuous and unpredictable change. In modern science, nonlinearity is rooted in the theory of thermodynamics which was designed to explain the fluid motion of liquids. Nonlinear ways of thinking are, in that context, intended to account for change and novelty within systems, crucially including intensive, qualitative changes (such as when water changes state to become a gas) not just metric changes (when groupings change configuration.) Although rooted in thermodynamics, nonlinearity is central to contemporary scientific

thought including quantum theory, chaos theory and complexity. Nonlinear trajectories change unpredictably due to both the internal interactions of elements of systems; which might cause radical bifurcations, and through sensitivity to their surroundings (Kwinter, 2003). As Kwinter explains it, in the same way that the pattern a snowflake forms depends on the input from its environment, such as gravity and humidity, as it falls, nonlinear trajectories remain open to changes initiated through external relations (Kwinter, 2003, p. 28). The openness of nonlinear systems to both internal and external stimuluses for change mean that they do not follow predictable trajectories. Rather, the rules for their development emerge immanently and are themselves liable to change.

Understanding nonlinearity within contemporary Geography requires recognising that it is associated with a realist and anti-essentialist ontology. What that means is that nonlinear thinking relates to two ontological propositions. Firstly, it presupposes that things exist independently to conceptions of them. Secondly, and most importantly for my use of nonlinearity, it presupposes that entities are not defined by any kind of transcendental 'essence' but should be understood as metastable assemblages of trajectories. That is to say, any given entity, from a chair to a person, to the planet, may seem to have a stable form, to display some kind of fixed 'essence' of what it means to be that thing. But, nonlinear thinking supposes that these entities are actually made up of constantly evolving processes that happen to be held in reasonably stable and predictable configurations at the moment, but could change quite radically in the future. For example, a human is a collection of biological processes that have been reformulated across evolutionary history and are still being reformulated; albeit slowly. For this reason, nonlinearity is key to assemblage theory; a way of thinking that attends to the world as made up of *metastable* assemblages of processes, where metastable means that these assemblages have, at best, a provisional stability of form and function. For DeLanda, assemblages are *precarious*, because even ones that are currently held in quite steady configurations are in theory open to change. DeLanda borrows the Deleuzian terms 'deterritorialize' and 're-territorialize' to describe the processes through which assemblages are de-stabilized

and re-stabilized either through internal interactions, external shocks, or both (DeLanda, 2002).

The continuous openness to change that nonlinearity foregrounds brings us to another key concept; *becoming*. Becoming is a Bergsonian term which, as Doreen Massey has explored, sees space-time as constantly evolving. Nothing is ever static or fixed because it is constantly being remade by the processes which constitute it. For Massey, this precludes thinking about the world through fixed, inflexible representations of it and requires a politics that is attentive to the world as a 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey, 2005, p. 9). In Bergson's writing, this insistence on change extends to thinking about time as an evolution within which even which is past is not fixed, because it is constantly reformulated within the present. Bergson developed the concept of 'duration', first to describe memory and internal experience of time (Bergson, 2001) and later to describe matter itself (Bergson, 1998). The concept of duration is used to foreground how a past moment does not disappear, but co-exists with the present. For Bergson, the past is contracted into the present because the trajectories a system previously took continue to structure its current and future capacities. This means that even the past is dynamic; the capacities for future change are located not just in the present but in the latent capacities of the past itself.

Understanding this conception of temporality requires two new concepts; those of the virtual and the actual. These are concepts Deleuze developed from Bergson. The idea of the virtual builds on Bergson's idea of 'images' as real, but unactualized, parts of existence. Bergson's explains that memory is a stockpile of images of sorts which we draw on when we act, speak, think or do just about anything. When we use a memory-image we are 'actualizing' that image to use it in the present. The images we are not currently using don't cease to exist; they remain as *virtual* capacities in that they structure the possibilities of our future actions and experiences. In Deleuzian thought (and Bergson's later writing) the same premise applies to matter, not just to memory. The virtual, for Deleuze, is a 'vital component

of the objective world' and, like Bergson's images, structures the capacities of trajectories (DeLanda, 2002, p. 30). As DeLanda clarifies, Deleuze gives a two part definition of what the virtual is: singularities and affects. 'Singularities' are the unactualized tendencies of a system, while affects are the unactualized capacities of a system to affect and be affected by other systems (DeLanda, 2002, pp. 71-72). Importantly, these virtual properties are also *historical*; produced through ongoing processes and therefore themselves liable to change. Furthermore, it is important to note that the relationship between the virtual and the actual is not predictable. As Kwinter explains, rather than 'programmatically' reproducing 'what was already there' 'actualization breaks with resemblance'. Actualization is a form of *creation* that 'occurs in time and with time' (Kwinter, 2003, pp. 8-10) so that a virtual singularity takes a unique form and trajectory, shaped by the process of its actualization.

The last concept that I want to introduce is that of turbulence. Turbulence refers to instability in systems far from equilibrium. In thermodynamic theory, turbulence indicates a system that has been disrupted and could, consequentially, change trajectory because the stability of its current orderings have broken down revealing and unbridling its other capacities. Systems always contain these nonlinear potentials but it is in periods of turbulence that they most clearly exhibit that nonlinearity. As DeLanda explains, non-linear systems are at their most complicated when far from equilibrium (2002, 75), it is at these points that their virtual capacities are most visibly expressed. That is to say, as they become unstable, they show what else they could be.

Tim Cresswell and Craig Martin's work on Turbulence in Geography has drawn on the philosophy of Serres and DeLanda to 'think about turbulence as a process that makes visible the always-contingent orderings of infrastructural mobilities' (Cresswell & Martin, 2012). They argue that while turbulence has been a concept mostly limited to the sciences it has merits as a conceptual and analytical tool in the humanities, including for Geographers. They suggest that it can work alongside concepts like complexity and assemblage to highlight 'contingent, processual, and

heterogeneous formations that are unpredictable in their becoming' (517). Illustrating how turbulence can be applied, Cresswell and Martin discuss the grounding of the *MSC Napoli* container ship in England in 2012. They argue that the crash exposed the 'smooth operation of infrastructural mobilities that are supposed to remain silent and invisible' and, as such, provided 'an entry point into the ordering of a mobile world' (516), bringing to light the infrastructural orders we take for granted and thereby opening up exploration of alternative orderings. However, if turbulence can be understood as a point of disorder, then, as Cresswell and Martin point out, turbulence also produces order. Deviations from 'laminar' (smooth) flow are points of creation where new forms take place because it is here that elements of systems interact in new ways and in doing so create new patterns and trajectories. As I will explore in the next section, this idea of order from disorder is paralleled in my analysis of pop-up's response to turbulence in London, where pop-up culture becomes a new form of order arising from the turbulence of recession. The next section also considers what it means to think about turbulence in an urban setting.

### **Turbulent Cities and Pop-Up's Nonlinear Imaginaries**

Having laid out these key ideas in Geography's nonlinear imaginary, I now turn to how they can be used to understand the urban context of pop-up culture and the imaginaries it develops and deploys. Within assemblage theory, including in the work of DeLanda (DeLanda, 2006) as well as of some Geographers (McFarlane, 2011; Anderson & McFarlane, 2011), cities are understood as metastable assemblages that are always being made and re-made. For DeLanda, a city, like any assemblage, is always continuously produced and reproduced through processes of territorialization and is therefore 'always precarious' since it can also be *de-territorialized*' and destabilized (DeLanda, 2006, p. 28). DeLanda's use of the term precarity here helps us to understand urban precarity as a form of turbulence in the city as an assemblage. Although, as the thesis will explore, analysing pop-up as part

of the urban assemblage sheds light on how certain kinds of instability are made infrastructural in order to stabilise other aspects of the assemblage.

Colin McFarlane has, like DeLanda, used assemblage theory to foreground the metastability of urban environments with a specific focus on the political potentials of that metastability. He writes that 'I am also thinking of assemblage as broadly political....as a means of continually thinking the play between the actual and the possible' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 653). McFarlane uses assemblage theory to foreground 'indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality' and 'turbulence' in urban settings, pointing to the processes through which the orderings of cities change. Elsewhere, McFarlane and Ben Anderson have explored how assemblages can 'claim' territory, holding 'heterogeneous parts' together (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011) in particularly stubborn orderings. However, they emphasize that this can only ever be a 'provisional process: relations may change, new elements may enter, alliances may be broken, new conjectures may be fostered" (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011, p. 126).

This approach to the urban as an assemblage is closely aligned with my nonlinear imaginary of the city in that it attends to how the relations that make up the city 'hold together and change as they become differently expressed through new spatiotemporal interactions' (McFarlane, 2011). Specifically, in my approach, I am interested in the role pop-up's imaginaries play in holding together, but also altering, the urban assemblage at a time of turbulence. Capitalism is often thought about as a precarious assemblage. Prigogine and Stengers, for example, have argued that capitalism is like a metastable system that hasn't managed to regain equilibrium (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). My reading, in this vein, sees pop-up as able to strengthen the stability of the capitalist city at a time of recession, not by solving instability but by *normalising* that instability. Because pop-up's imaginaries make conditions of instability seem common sense, even desirable, pop-up precludes debate about how the urban environment might be differently organised, thereby bolstering the stability of the urban assemblage even while it entrenches *instability*.

To further clarify my application of these ideas my argument is as follows; in London, after the recession, the urban assemblage was undergoing a period of turbulence that deterritorialized its usual orderings. In Cresswell and Martin's terms, it was displaying the contingency of the infrastructural orderings that are normally silent. The prevalence of vacant shops and sites where development was abandoned suddenly showed that the dominant distributions of urban space-time in the city had always been contingent and, indeed, were unstable and could be organised differently. What's more, high unemployment and funding cuts made the former organisation of the urban assemblage seem increasingly untenable. Pop-up grew out of and was explicitly positioned as a solution to these conditions. It was promoted as a different way of using the urban fabric, and as an alternative way of providing things like job opportunities and entertainment that weren't being funded through the usual channels. This is why, for some, pop-up was exciting at first. It showed that space-time could be distributed differently. Yet, pop-up also created new orders at this time of turbulence; ones that normalise precarity. Rather than taking urban instability as evidence of how things could be otherwise, it adapted to instability by developing particular strategies of spatiotemporal organisation, and by advancing imaginaries like immersion, flexibility, interstitiality, secrecy and surprise that encouraged and glamorised those strategies. As such, it produced a new kind of urban order within which the turbulence of recession was not threatening to the urban assemblage because it was *incorporated into it*.

Colin McFarlane argues that one process through which the 'spatialities and temporalities of urban assemblages' are stabilized and/or transformed is by being 'narrativized' and 'storied' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 208). Similarly, I will argue that pop-up's imaginaries narrativize and thereby enable changes in, but also ensure the stability of, the urban assemblage at a time of turbulence. McFarlane also calls for attention to the power dynamics of those narrativizations and this is crucial in pop-up culture where imaginaries of the city are developed and deployed by a range of conflicting stake holders. The case studies in this thesis focus on individual sites, usually run by small businesses or individuals, in which pop-up's imaginaries are

produced, but my account is also attentive to the other narratives they intersect with and come up against; narratives that are mobilized by organisations including local and national governments and private developers. In understanding the role of pop-up in reproducing the urban assemblage it is therefore crucial, as the first section of this literature review argued, to explore how its imaginaries are contested and imbued with multiple meanings. Creswell and Martin write that 'what we make of turbulence depends very much on our investment in the kinds of orderings that turbulence allegedly makes untenable. To some, turbulence is a threat and to others an opportunity' (Cresswell & Martin, 2012, p. 159). Pop-up, as I will explore, displays various groups trying to make different things of this time of turbulence.

This part of the chapter has set out how a nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginary informs my analysis of the conditions pop-up responds to and the imaginaries it develops. Within this, I have begun to advance my argument that pop-up's imaginaries engage sensitivity to nonlinear space-time. The second part of this chapter now explores the value of thinking about these imaginaries as engaging structures of feeling and compensatory narratives.

## **Part Two:**

### **Spatiotemporal Imaginaries, Structures of Feeling, Compensatory Narratives**

In the introduction to this chapter I explained that my approach to pop-up's 'imaginaries' focuses on the spatiotemporal sensitivities that its imaginaries entail but also sees imaginaries as modes of encounter that engage and advance structures of feeling and compensatory narratives. In this section of the chapter I develop this claim. Firstly, I introduce the concept 'structure of feeling' and consider the attention it has gained, and is now regaining, in Cultural Geography. Secondly, I consider how others have thought structure of feeling and spatiotemporal



imaginaries together. Thirdly, I move to a consideration of precarity as a structure of feeling. My argument here is not that precarity is the structure of feeling that guides experiences of pop-up. Rather, I want to argue that, having developed within this structure of feeling, pop-up's imaginaries respond to and alter it so that precarious conditions are experienced in broadly positive ways. I conduct a brief overview of precarity as a concept before moving to talk about precarity as a structure of feeling. In the fourth and final section of this part of the chapter I detail what I mean by the term compensatory narratives and the relationship of this concept to Berlant's work on 'cruel optimism.'

### **What is a Structure of Feeling?**

For Edensor, everyday rhythms contribute to a 'structure of feeling', providing a basis for shared discursive and practical habits (Edensor, 2010, p. 8). As stated, I argue that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries alter precarity as a structure of feeling discernible in contemporary cities like London. But what is a structure of feeling? And how am I using the term here? As explored in the introduction 'structure of feeling' is a term coined by Raymond Williams to describe 'social experiences in *solution*' (Williams, 1977, p. 133). The concept was most thoroughly advanced by Williams in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) but appears across his work. The term refers to the lived and felt experience of emerging meanings and values (132) as distinguished from already articulated and codified ideologies and agendas of established social institutions. Anderson has described structures of feeling as 'an experience of the present that both extends beyond particular sites/occasions *and* is shared across otherwise separate sites/occasions (Anderson, 2016, p. 746) , emphasising that their affect is felt across broad demographics and territories while also being locally and individually experienced and differentiated. Structures of feeling are 'social experiences in process' (132) which, because still experienced nebulously, are often 'not recognised as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating' (132). To summarise, we could say that structures of feeling refer

to a shared but intangible experience of a particular present which emerges from its processual conditions but within which we are too immersed to fully articulate its characteristics. This is with the exception of artistic media which Williams posits are the first places where emerging structures of feeling can be recognised with any clarity.

The idea of structure of feeling was influential in the 'new cultural geography' of the 1980s. In *Maps of Meaning* Peter Jackson writes that structure of feeling is 'an important concept for cultural geographers' (Jackson, 1989, p. 39) and in his 1991 paper 'mapping meaning' he posits structure of feeling as a concept that can give precision and nuance to what he sees as unsophisticated attempts by Geographers, including Doreen Massey and David Harvey, to express distinctive affective atmospheres in particular times and place (Jackson, 1991). The value that Jackson sees in structure of feeling is that it shares 'something of the meaning of 'sense of place' but going well beyond it in several respects' to accommodate 'meanings and values as they are actually lived, not just...formal worldviews or ideologies' (Jackson, 1989, p. 39). Here, structure of feeling is argued to embellish the idea of sense of place by turning in on the 'lived' experience, foregrounding the socialised modes of affective encounter as experienced by the subject. This suggestion is reflected in arguments by other Geographers at this time who also proposed that a key value of structure of feeling was its ability to enrich the idea of sense of place (Pred, 1983; Longhurst, 1991). Allan Pred argues that the concept is perhaps even 'conceptually superior to most versions of sense of place' (Pred, 1983) suggesting, like Jackson that this is because it shifts the emphasis onto the moods *through* which place is experienced by the subject.

Despite this early recognition of structure of feeling's importance to cultural geography, the concept has been out of fashion over the past couple of decades. More recently, however, it seems to be making a resurgence, appearing in the work of geographers including Ben Anderson (Anderson, 2014) and Tariq Jazeel (Jazeel, 2013; Jazeel & Mookherjee, 2015) as well as in the influential theory of Lauren

Berlant (Berlant, 2011) who spoke about structures of feeling at the 2015 AAG. For Anderson and Berlant, a return to structure of feeling helps to emphasise the significance of affect within the realm of the collective. Jazeel, writing with Nayanika Mookherjee, has thought structure of feeling together with Ranciere's politics of aesthetics in order to elucidate the how the political, understood as a common sense distribution of the sensible, shifts as dominant distributions become residual, emergent become dominant and so on (Jazeel & Mookherjee, 2015).

Amidst this emerging resurgence of interest in structure of feeling I examine how experiences of precarity, as a structure of feeling, are transformed by pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. If precarity is a dominant experience of the present both on an individual and collective level, then I conjecture that pop-up's imaginaries alter this experience, offering a positive inflection to the same, nonlinear, spatiotemporal conditions that undergird it. If structures of feelings and imaginaries are both modes of encounter, then I argue that, in pop-up, their operations are intertwined and that considering this interlinking gives a fuller picture of how pop-up makes sense of urban conditions of precarity.

### **Spatiotemporal Imaginaries and Structure of Feeling**

Implicit within most accounts of structure of feeling is the idea that changes in structure of feeling are linked to changes in spatiotemporal distribution and imagination. Indeed, Williams himself indicates that 'different rhythms' as well as 'different feelings' typify a given structure of feeling. Harvey has also argued that structures of feeling are closely related to changing spatiotemporal sensitivities. Across *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey argues that changing spatiotemporal conditions between modernism and postmodernism underlie changes in structure of feeling. For example, Harvey identifies fragmentation as a definitive spatiotemporal feature of the postmodern structure of feeling (Harvey, 1990).

In the mid-2000s, John Urry argued that 'complexity' was emerging as a new structure of feeling that denotes 'a greater sense of contingent openness' as well as 'unpredictability' and 'diverse and nonlinear changes' (Urry, 2006, p. 111). It is interesting that Urry identifies 'complexity' as a structure of feeling in the mid-2000s whereas I identify 'nonlinearity' in the spatiotemporal sensitivities related to the contemporary structure of feeling. Complexity and nonlinearity are essentially different ways of articulating the same spatiotemporal system; they put emphasis on different elements of a neo-realist anti-essentialist, assemblage ontology. That Urry puts the focus on complexity, whereas I put the focus on nonlinearity betrays, I would argue, how spatiotemporal sensitivity is tied up with structure of feeling. Whereas these spatiotemporal conditions seemed, in the mid-2000s to highlight a complexity tied to unprecedented advances in technology and global interconnection it appears, in the post-recession climate, as nonlinearity; shifting the focus onto uncertainty and turbulence rather than intricacy and interconnectedness.

Berlant and Anderson also identify spatiotemporal sensitivities as related to structure of feeling. As we have already seen, Berlant argues that a defining feature of the present is its 'scrambled' rhythms (Berlant, 2011, p. 8). Berlant identifies some of the spatiotemporal characteristics of precarity as a structure of feeling including its 'fragilities', its 'unpredictability' (Berlant, 2011, p. 10) and its 'mounting sense of contingency' (Berlant, 2011, p. 11). Anderson also highlights spatiotemporal dimensions of precarity; the way that precarity is defined by contingency, uncertainty and insecurity. Furthermore, Anderson's account implies that co-existing structures of feeling can be ways of expressing different affective manifestations of the same spatiotemporal conditions (as the contrast between nonlinearity and complexity also emphasizes). He argues that precarity is one of a series of structures of feeling that 'overlap, mutually reinforce one another, blur, become distinct or otherwise relate in complicated ways' and is closely tied up with both crisis and emergency (Anderson, 2014, p. 131) as well as with 'flexibility', which he argues is as 'a contrasting way of dealing with uncertainty and making present the contingency of life and work' (132). In this thesis, flexibility appears as one of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries but I

also follow Anderson in considering it to be simultaneously a structure of feeling that engages different affective dimensions of the same spatiotemporal conditions that can also be felt as precarity.

### **What is Precarity?**

As stated previously, precarity is increasingly identified as a felt, affective condition within which life in the present takes place. Precariousness has also been influentially identified by Judith Butler as an existential condition common to all life (Butler, 2009). Butler argues that precariousness is a pervasive condition because we are mutually dependent on and vulnerable to those we live amongst. For Butler, precariousness becomes *precarity* when the vulnerability of some is exacerbated through uneven power geometries within this relational social ontology.

Despite these more expansive definitions of precarity, the term has traditionally been used in fairly narrow ways to describe insecure conditions of work. Usually, Geographical work on precarity has explored conditions of work within post-Fordist neoliberal labour economies (Lewis, et al., 2014; Coe, 2013; Musson, 2014; Gialis & Herod, 2014) including prominently the creative industries (Gill & Pratt, 2008; Banks, 2010; Banks, et al., 2013) and migrant labour (Lewis, et al., 2014). There has also been attention to the concept of 'the precariat'; a subject made simultaneously precarious and dangerous to the system by their labour conditions (Munck, 2013; Standing, 2011). More recently, Louise Waite and others at Leeds including Hannah Lewis, Peter Dwyer and Stuart Hodkinson have advanced Geographical studies of precarity through two key contributions to the debate. Firstly, they have used the concept of 'hyper-precarity' to explore how multiple circumstances and processes compound in the making of precarious subjects (Lewis, et al., 2014). Secondly, Waite has begun important discussions around the need for attention to space and place in order to understand how 'interconnected geographies... *create* vulnerability for certain people and places' (Waite, 2009, p. 421), discussions that authors in the

forthcoming special issue I have co-edited on Cultural Geographies of Precarity take forward with a cultural geographies inflection (Harris & Nowicki, Forthcoming).

Descriptions of precarity as a phenomenon within labour economies have examined the distinctive temporalities of precarity, temporalities that are also identified by Berlant and Anderson in precarity as a structure of feeling. It has been argued that precarity manifests in and derives from spatiotemporal experiences such as fragmentation and uncertainty (Dawkins, 2011; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Banks, 2010; Banks, et al., 2013) as well as deterritorialized work/life borders within which workers, especially in the creative economies, are expected to be 'always on' (Hracs & Leslie, 2014, p. 67) despite being only sporadically and erratically reimbursed.

Pop-up culture could, and should, be studied within this body of work on precarity in labour economies and within the creative industries. It is a prime example of an arena where insecure and unpredictable patterns of work are becoming routinized (Graziano & Ferreri, 2014). Indeed the resonance of Ferreri's term 'pop-up people' across contemporary labour economies shows the centrality that studies of pop-up could have in understanding how labour precarity is being normalized in the contemporary climate. Chapter six, on shipping container architectures, will go some way to detailing the place of pop-up within precarious labour economies in London. Yet the most central connection I want to make between precarity and pop-up across this thesis is around how pop-up responds to and transforms precarity as a structure of feeling; tapping into that structure of feeling but also transmuting it to produce new imaginaries and experiences characterised by a celebration of ephemerality, flexibility and the ad-hoc.

Precarity is just one example that Anderson gives of structures of feeling and one that he, like myself, locates in relation to the '2007-2008/present financial crisis' (Anderson, 2014, p. 106) while recognising its longstanding existence as a condition of labour in post-Fordist economies. Berlant, likewise, identifies precarity as a pervasive experience in the post-2008 context one that, for her, is defined by a realisation that the 'mass precarity that capitalism inevitably induces' applies not just

to ordinary people but to the state itself which is 'in the same abject and contingent relation to private capital that ordinary people are' (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). This is a state in which 'the present is saturated with a sort of restlessness' and the future 'is made uncertain and becomes difficult or impossible to predict' (Anderson, 2014, p. 129).

Importantly, identifying precarity as a structure of feeling implies that it is not just a socio-economic condition but also a mode of encounter. As Anderson writes, what 'characterises precarity and other structures of feeling is that they are forms of affective presence that disclose self, others and the world in particular ways' (Anderson, 2014, p. 106). This is key to how I think structure of feeling together with imaginaries. Anderson also argues that 'a structure of feeling is a collective mood that exists in a complex relation to other ways in which life is organised and patterned, without being reducible to those other ways' (116). In this vein, I argue that if precarity as a structure of feeling is a significant governing force in contemporary experiences then pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries are one of the 'other ways in which life is organised and patterned' that intersect with it.

If, as we have seen, structure of feeling as a concept added to 'sense of place' in the new cultural geography of the 80s; enabling a focus on lived experience, then I would argue structure of feeling can perform a similar function now. In the context of pop-up, thinking about spatiotemporal imaginaries together with structure of feeling emphasises that its sensitivities to space-time feed into and alter a broader collective mood. It signals that the power of imaginaries is, in part, their ability to transform, mediate and/or strengthen those affective atmospheres. In the case of pop-up, its nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries transform precarity into a more bearable lived experience. If structures of feeling are "(re)enacted through and intensify in particular scenes/objects/figures ('schools', 'the ghetto', etc.)' (Anderson, 2016, p. 748), then perhaps pop-up culture is a scene in which precarity as a structure of feeling is also being re-imagined.

In concluding this chapter I will now explore in more detail what I mean when I say that pop-up's imaginaries also engage compensatory narratives and can be understood as an orientation of 'cruel optimism'. Just as spatiotemporal imaginaries mediate and transform experiences of precarity I argue that compensatory narratives offer methods for living in precarious times yet that these methods, again, perpetuate the problems they ostensibly solve.

### **Compensatory Narratives and Cruel Optimism**

As argued in the introduction to this chapter a third discernible feature of pop-up's imaginaries is how they serve as narratives that compensate for the changed conditions of urban life after recession and under austerity. This approach positions pop-up alongside a host of other phenomenon that play a part in the normalisation or glamorisation of precarity and crisis and that could also be read as compensatory narratives. I have already mentioned how xenophobic narratives compensate for experiences of urban precarity, historically and again today (Freeman, 2017; Bhabra, 2016; Virdee, 2014). Two other interesting examples that have been explored by others are how 'hipster' culture narrativizes the global financial crash (Luckman, 2015) and how 'culinary localism' promotes an aestheticized version of thrift (Potter & Westall, 2013).

Susan Luckman explores the rise of hipster economies in relation to the resurgence of interest in craft in the aftermath of the recession (Luckman, 2015). She argues that there is an emergent culture of 'hipster domesticity' (44) where practices such as 'making, cooking', knitting and 'growing one's own food' are on the increase as is the amount of young, university educated people taking on small scale craft and making jobs such as bike repair, or baking. These practices, Luckman suggests, betray a desire for retreat into the domestic and the DIY which she, quoting Crawford (2009), suggests is about the need for the world to feel intelligible, for people 'to recover a field of vision that is basically human in scale, and extricate themselves



from dependence on the obscure forces of a global economy (Crawford, 2009, 8, in Luckman 2015, 41). For Luckman, the growing prominence of the hipster aesthetic and craft sensibility can be explained as, in part, a reaction to the financial crash; “successfully making something offers the sense of unequivocal achievement missing in the lives of many white-collar professionals’ and, at the same time, speaks to the burden newly ‘placed on the individual to create their own employment options as part of the wider project of fashioning the conditions of their own life’ (44). We can therefore see hipster aesthetics (which, as chapter six will explore, pop-up is closely related to) as a way of narrativizing experiences of post 2008 crisis. And yet, like pop-up, the craft and hipster economies reproduce the precarity they react against by *accepting* that burden for creating their own employment and finding ways to acclimatise to and normalise disruptions to assumed vocational and economic trajectories.

In their discussions of ‘austerity foodscapes’ Potter and Westall make a similar argument that an ‘austerity foodscape’ is discernible in contemporary Britain where thrift, home growing and re-use are encouraged (Potter & Westall, 2013). They argue that this trend draws on a 1940s ‘austerity aesthetic’ to make austere lifestyles seem appealing through reference to an imagined, patriotic past. Potter and Westall argue that this foodscape, while having an aesthetics of thrift, is actually still untenable for many as buying the products to ‘re-use’ in subsequent meals is expensive and the complex processes of thrifty cooking put unrealistic demands on time. The function of this foodscape is then not to offer relief from the very real food poverty in post-recession Britain but to shame those struggling with food poverty by demonstrating a mode of resourcefulness they are failing to attain (Potter & Westall, 2013). These two accounts are examples of other phenomenon which I think produce and engage compensatory narratives in the way that pop-up’s imaginaries do; offering ways of living that are positioned as solutions to precarity but in fact entrench, by normalising, that precarity.

In that these compensatory narratives offer hope within precarious times while conversely entrenching that precarity they are closely related to what Berlant terms 'cruel optimism'. In Berlant's words a relation of cruel optimism, exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). For Berlant, this is prevalent in the contemporary condition where, in an 'impasse shaped by crisis...people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on' (Berlant, 2011, p. 8). Yet the skills developed are often ones that reproduce rather than solve the crisis conditions which necessitated them. As I have explored, this is an apt descriptor for pop-up which offers a solution to pervasive conditions of urban precarity but does so by glamorizing and reproducing those same conditions. Anderson has written that 'structures of feeling can normalise states of affairs –for example make alternatives to capitalism seem ridiculous' (Anderson, 2014, p. 121) and this is certainly what is achieved by pop-up's imaginaries which make alternatives to precarity seem unnecessary.

Now, having drawn together the theoretical concepts with which this thesis approaches pop-up culture, the next chapter turns to the methodological approaches I have developed and applied. As well as discussing the practical dimensions of my methodology, the chapter advances discussion of the relationship I have suggested exists between i-Docs and nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries, arguing for their utility in thinking through pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries, and the functions I have suggested they have, within the contemporary city.

## Chapter Four

### Methods: Interacting with Space-Time

In the previous chapters I have set out the aims of my explorations into pop-up culture and positioned my own approach within the emerging body of scholarship on pop-up. I explained that as well as approaching pop-up's imaginaries as nonlinear, this thesis also takes up a nonlinear ontological position in understanding the city as a precarious assemblage within which imaginaries serve both transformative and stabilising functions. In this chapter I show how these two mobilizations of nonlinearity are synthesised through my methodology. As introduced, this thesis experiments with interactive documentary as a novel method for exploring and examining pop-up space-time. Across this chapter I explore the capacities of interactive documentary (i-Docs) to, on the one hand, evoke and engineer sensitivity to pop-up's *nonlinear imaginaries* and, on the other, engage a *nonlinear geographical imagination* through which to critically understand pop-up's roles in the urban assemblage. This chapter also discusses the core methodologies that underpinned my research and enabled the production of the i-Doc, interviews, participant observation and visual methods. These methods were crucial both in giving me a thorough understanding of the pop-up scene and in generating the material that appears in, and has been analysed through the production of, the i-Doc.

I began preparing to undertake my empirical research in January 2014 and started my data collection in October 2014. It involved the following stages:

#### **January-July 2014**

- Case study identification
- Film training including:  
Editing Course (AHRC Collaborative Training Scheme) (7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April 2014)  
Practical Documentary Film-making (AHRC Collaborative Training Scheme) (30<sup>th</sup> June-18<sup>th</sup> July)

#### **August 2014-September 2015**

- Contacting participants and securing access (ongoing because of nature of pop-up)

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>October 2014-December 2015</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits including participant observation, interviews and filming</li> </ul>  |
| <b>January 2015-December 2016</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editing of video clips and digital collages</li> <li>• Analysis of video footage and field notes</li> </ul>   |
| <b>February 2015-July 2017</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of i-Doc interface in collaboration with Michael Skelly (i-Doc developer)</li> <li>• Coding (by Skelly)</li> <li>• Testing of i-Doc at various development stages</li> <li>• Meetings to discuss and plan alterations</li> <li>• “User” testing</li> </ul> |

Data was gathered through my core methods of participant observation, interviews and visual methods and, as will be explored, this data was brought together and analysed in the making of the i-Doc. This chapter will discuss my use of interviews and participant observation, the various stages of the i-Doc production, and what it meant to use traditional social science methods along with, and in order to inform and constitute, i-Docs as an innovative multimedia method. My use of visual methods, video and collage, are discussed within my account of the i-Doc’s production, rather than given separate sections in this chapter, to avoid repetition.

As this chapter will explore, i-Docs are an emerging form of documentary notable for their *nonlinear* organisation of film sequences and other media content. The interfaces of i-Docs offer users multiple paths through, or modes of engaging with, their material, giving them a malleable, open-ended spatiotemporal format. I argue that the nonlinear spatiotemporal architectures of i-Docs makes them a useful methodological tool for researching pop-up’s nonlinear imaginaries and engaging a nonlinear geographical imagination.

Importantly, the creation of an i-Doc also enables attention to both the nebulous and the operative elements of pop-up’s spatiotemporal imaginaries. Given that pop-up’s imaginaries operate on affective levels, my methodological approach needed to be able to grasp them as they are sensed, to understand what it *feels* like to inhabit those imaginaries; their sensitivities to space-time, their positively inflected

experiences of precarity and their compensatory narratives. However, on the other hand, I was also looking to understand, how it is that these imaginaries are produced, what their features are, and what force they have within the city. The i-Doc enabled both these approaches. As a creative medium the i-Doc can evoke the *sense* of pop-up's imaginaries. Yet producing it also helped me to work out the material, discursive and aesthetic practices through which pop-up's imaginaries are produced as well as their roles in the city because, as will be explored, in order to create an i-Doc that evokes pop-up space-time, careful attention was needed to the constituent elements of its spatiotemporal imaginaries.

This chapter is split into three parts. In part one I contextualise my methodological use of i-Docs within two bodies of literature; work on Geographical creative methods, and specifically on their use to explore space-time, and analytical Geographical work on the way that space-time has been engaged with, across history, through artistic and filmic medium. Part one excavates key propositions about the multiple relationships between creative medium and space-time which inform my own methodology. Specifically, I explore, across three sections, how creative mediums are used to evoke spatiotemporal experience, to enhance and produce ways of seeing space-time and to enact space-time differently. In part two I introduce interactive documentaries. Considering them against the lineage of creative mediums explored in part one, I study how they can be used to explore nonlinearity by surveying a selection of commercially produced i-Docs. Part two also develops a vocabulary for analysing i-Docs, which will be used across the thesis. Part three of the chapter then explains my methodological process. Leaving the actual 'doing' of the methods to last may seem counterintuitive. However, this structure allows me to explore what i-Docs are, and why I think they are valuable, before I explain my own practical experiments. This allows the conceptual value of the methodology to come into focus, as I explore its stages, and makes the discussion of i-Doc production easier to follow for the reader by first giving them a grounding in i-Docs and their terminologies. In part three I discuss the rationale for my case study selection and explore the methodological value of different stages of the i-Doc creation, including

filming, editing, collage creation and interface design. I also explore the complementary methods involved in the i-Doc production, interviews and participant observation, and consider how the use of these methods is altered when they become part of the process of i-Doc making. In the empirical chapters the i-Doc will be referred to and discussed to help investigate the imaginaries I identify in pop-up culture, so this chapter also serves as an introductory discussion that will ground those accounts.

Using an i-Doc to both engage with pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries and to engage a nonlinear geographical imagination prompts a consideration of the politics of both these nonlinear ways of seeing. In using nonlinear ontology to critically examine pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries – considering their instrumentalities in the city - it would be naïve to not also think critically about the Geographical nonlinear imagination itself. Geographers tend to ascribe a progressive politics to the ways of seeing that nonlinear ontologies enable; grounding a sense of possibility in the openness of space-time to being continuously re-assembled. However, as my approach to pop-up shows, nonlinear spatiotemporal logics can be mobilized in multiple ways and, in pop-up's imaginaries, are predominantly used to serve neoliberal agendas.

Pop-up is not the only arena where nonlinear logics bolster undesirable political realities. As Weizman has discussed, the Israel Defence Forces explicitly incorporate Deleuzian 'principle[s] of nonlinearity' to advance a battle strategy that assumes an unpredictable order of events and sees the city as 'a flexible, almost liquid medium' (Weizman, 2011). As I will argue, one of the values of i-Docs as a method is that, rather than assuming a particular politics to nonlinearity, they help to carefully examine the development and deployment of nonlinear imaginaries in specific contexts. In engaging this critical perspective on nonlinear ways of seeing, it is important not to stop at pop-up's imaginaries, but to critically consider *Geography's* nonlinear imaginaries too. Academic conceptions of space-time are not ahistorical; like popular spatiotemporal imaginaries they are developed and deployed in particular settings (Massey, 2005). Perhaps we could even say that ontologies *are*

imaginaries of sorts. This is easy to state but less easy to know what to do with. A challenge of my methodology is, then, to use Geography's nonlinear ontological imagination to critique pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries, without forgetting that my own way of seeing is also situated and performed.

## **Part One:**

### **Creative Mediums and Space-Time**

The recent 'creative turn' in Geography has seen a rise in methodological engagements with amateur creative practices including drawing (Hawkins, 2015) working with audio (Butler, 2006; Gallagher, 2015; Montgomery, 2011), photography (O'Callaghan, 2012; Hunt, 2014; Simpson, 2012) and film (Garrett & Hawkins, n.d.; Garrett & Brickell, 2012; Jacobs, 2015; Lorimer, 2010; Merchant, 2011; Garrett, 2011; Pink, 2007). Central to these methodological engagements is a conviction that creative methods can capture particular qualities of place and space, including, for example, the sensory (Pink, 2014; Merchant, 2011) or the rhythmic (Simpson, 2012). Equally, it is argued that different forms of creative practice allow specific kinds of thinking to occur (Hawkins, 2015; Latham & McCormack, 2009). Video editing, for example, can be an analytic and creative process through which 'sifting, sorting and composing' takes place (Garrett & Hawkins, n.d.), while drawing can be a means of paying close attention to elements of the environment otherwise overlooked (Hawkins, 2015). Many have explored how creative practices can tune in to nonlinear aspects of space-time (Massey, 2008; DeSilvey, 2007; O'Callaghan, 2012) and engage nonlinear modes of thinking (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). My own experiments with i-Docs can be understood within this context as an amateur creative practice through which I attempt to grasp pop-up's nonlinear imagines and think nonlinearly about the roles those imaginaries play in reformulating the urban assemblage.

As well as positioning my approach within other creative methods, analytical explorations of filmic and artistic medium have much to offer in developing my methodology. Analyses of filmic and artistic media by Geographers and others have identified key propositions about the mutually transformative relationships between creative media and urban space-time across history (Clarke & Doel, 2005; Clarke & Doel, 2007; Clarke, 1997; Harvey, 1990; Crary, 2002; Crary, 1990), recognising creative media as central to how shifts in spatiotemporal experience are responded to and advanced. My methodology sits within this lineage. Where other Geographers have turned to existing films or art works to explore the shifting spatiotemporal logics of specific eras, (Clarke & Doel, 2007; Crary, 2002; Harvey, 1990) my methodology seeks to *create* an i-Doc in order to grasp the spatiotemporal shift indicated by pop-up. This endeavour builds on the premise that creative medium are good at grasping spatiotemporality because, through their formal properties and modes of expression, they can mimic and thus elucidate the logics of space-time that are characteristic to a particular socio-historical setting. For example 'Berlin Dadaists regarded montage as the visual form most capable of expressing...the kinaesthetic jolts, estrangements, and disfigurements of an increasingly unhinged modernity' (Clarke & Doel, 2007, p. 598). This proposition informs my use of interactive documentary to explore pop-up. I conjecture that the nonlinear formal features of interactive documentary give it a particular purchase in exploring pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries.

This part of the chapter advances the rationale for my methodology by surveying literature on creative geographical methods and analytical approaches to artistic and filmic medium; focusing specifically on three facets of their relationships with space-time; their ability to evoke spatiotemporal experiences, their ability to develop modes of encountering space-time and their ability to produce space-time. Rather than discussing work on methods and on artistic medium separately, my discussion is organised around the different facets of the relationship between creative medium and space time, considering methodological experiments and artistic practice in the same breath. Instead of drawing a distinction between art forms as *things in the*



*world* - objects of analysis - and methodologies as somehow *outside* that world - looking in on it - I approach both creative methods and artistic forms as evocations of, investigations into and productions of spatiotemporality. In doing so, I echo conjectures that methods, like cultural forms, are embedded in the world and inventive of it (Law & Urry, 2004).

### **One: Evoking Spatiotemporal Upheaval**

Of central importance to my methodological approach is the idea that, across history, creative medium have responded to and articulated upheavals in spatiotemporal experience at times of socio-economic change (Harvey, 1990; Crary, 2002). As David Harvey has argued, creative forms have historically found ways of expressing 'Changes to conceptions of time and space' in the face of 'technological change and economic growth' (Harvey, 1990, p. 418). My experiments with i-Docs build on this premise, seeking to express the shifts in spatiotemporal experience that pop-up responds to.

Harvey's claims add a particular scalar inflection to assertions that creative practices can capture 'the physicality and temporality of space' (Hunt, 2014, 153). Rather than focusing on the ability of creative media to capture localized spatiotemporal characterises, Harvey is concerned with how art and film relate to the pervasive conditions of a given era. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* he traces changing conditions and conceptions of space-time through an analysis of their expression in creative forms. For example, he argues that Cubist artist work, which innovatively integrated multiple simultaneous perspectives within one perceptual field, responded to senses of fragmentation and multiplicity brought about by industrialisation in the early 1900s (Harvey, 1990). Likewise, he suggests that postmodern films like *Blade Runner* (1982) articulate the spatiotemporal conditions of the globalised world; evoking the acceleration of turn-over times, processes of time-space compression, and the unequal spatial relations in globalized cities (Harvey, 1990). These broad

claims by Harvey and others that creative medium offer insights into 'structures of feeling' and 'social conditions' (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 4) inform my own work. As the third part of the chapter will explore, although my i-Doc is made up of clips of particular pop-up places, one of my primary concerns is with the generalised imaginaries evident in and advanced by pop-up culture as a whole. Just as Harvey traces the postmodern experience articulated in *Blade Runner* to the political-economic crisis of 1973, my i-Doc seeks to articulate a particular sense of spatiotemporality in post-recession London, one which is generated through but not reducible to the totality of my case studies.

Harvey is not alone in suggesting such precise correlations between historical events and the emergence of particular experiences of space-time. Deleuze's famous works on Cinema, *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* hang on a conviction that cinema's modes of spatiotemporal expression underwent a radical shift in the aftermath of World War Two, as it sought to respond to changes to cities brought about by the war. Famously, Deleuze argued that post-war cinema developed what he calls 'time-images', filmic images that come into contact with their own virtual image and thus indicate a heightened awareness of contingency. Equally, Deleuze argues that the bombed out and abandoned spaces of post-war cities produced an epistemic shift regarding space; disrupting 'established modes of knowledge' (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 64) by revealing urban spatial relations to be contingently organised. This experiential upheaval provoked by the war is expressed in cinema, Deleuze argues, through the emergence of the 'any-space-whatever'; an indeterminate or empty filmic space 'whose parts are not yet linked in a given trajectory of movement' (Rodowick, 1997, p. 64).

Harvey and Deleuze locate changing evocations of space-time in cinema in relation to particular socio-economic and political upheavals; positioning film as a medium where those shifting experiences can be expressed. A similar premise is seen in some contemporary methodological responses to the crisis of climate change. Caitlin DeSilvey has approached climate change through experiments with creatively

writing 'anticipatory histories' (including a co-edited book (DeSilvey, et al., 2011)). Or, the Stories of Change project<sup>4</sup> led by the Open University, involves an interactive storytelling platform which explores public stories around energy and community in the past, present and future. Both projects use nonlinear storytelling to evoke how climate change destabilizes the relationship between past and future, undermining the metanarratives of 'progress' that have typified the modern imagination and demanding consideration of 'future unmaking' (DeSilvey, 2012).

In using creative practice to evoke changing experiences of space-time these projects all express alterations in the 'intangible aspects of urban space' (Hunt, 2014, 152). They elucidate what would otherwise be nebulous shifts in spatiotemporal experiences; changes pertaining to a shifting structure of feeling sensed 'at the very edge of semantic availability' (Williams, 1977, p. 134). My use of i-Docs follows in this vein. The following two sections explore what is at stake in *evoking* nebulous changes in experience, demonstrating that this is a foundational aspect of how changing conditions are made sense of and thus responded to.

## **Two: Inventing Ways of Seeing**

Fredric Jameson has argued that shifts in the spatiotemporal fabric of cities require new 'perceptual equipment' to be developed. He writes that if there is a 'mutation' in the city unaccompanied by an 'equivalent mutation in the subject' a sense of disorientation ensues (Jameson, 1991, p. 38). In order to make sense of and respond to new spatiotemporal conditions, new modes of attention must be developed. The efforts to evoke changing space-times explored in the last section are a key element of this, but, as this section will explore, creative medium don't only express changes in space-time but help to reformulate modes of encounter themselves so that we are *receptive* to space-time in new ways.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://storiesofchange.ac.uk/>

Many have explored how, across history, creative medium have played an important role in developing these new modes of attention. Several terms have been used to articulate this. Geographical work on landscape frames it as the 'ways of seeing' that art works produce (Berger, 2008; Cosgrove, 1998) while art historian Jonathan Crary uses the term 'regimes of vision' to understand the historically specific assemblages of perception that technologies of spectatorship formulate. David Clarke and Marcus Doel follow Walter Benjamin in emphasising how evolving filmic medium can engage the 'optical unconscious in new ways' (Clarke & Doel, 2005; Clarke & Doel, 2007), an approach that is sensitive to how the latent capacities of human perception can be activated through particular medium and technologies. For example, Clarke and Doel explored how 'film alighted upon the power of the optical unconscious to reveal a dimension supplementary to actuality, a dimension in which 'everything is suspended in movement' (Clarke & Doel, 2007, pp. 603-4). James Ash's work on how video games develop 'sensitivities' to space-time could also be understood in this lineage. Ash has explored how computer games heighten alertness to, for example, the minute windows of time required to respond to and initiate a fight move in combat games (Ash, 2012). My work with i-Docs builds on these discussions in proposing that i-Docs can help to engage the new 'perceptual equipment' needed to understand pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries.

Responding to theoretical claims that creative media can engineer a changing visual consciousness of the urban (Virilio, 1994), many geographers have taken up still and moving images as methodologies to attend to aspects of urban spatiotemporality including rhythm (Simpson, 2012), textures (Hunt, 2014) and the 'everyday ecologies of materials and things' (Latham & McCormack, 2009). In particular, geographical work in this lineage is often concerned specifically with using creative medium to engage ways of seeing nonlinearity in space-time. This work follows an assumption that ontological propositions about space-time need to be accompanied by new 'perceptual equipment' in order to translate abstract conjectures into ways of seeing. Just as Clarke and Doel suggest that film made 'the abstract formulaic notion of relativity both visible and tangible' in 'the realm of everyday life' (Clarke & Doel, 2007,

p. 591), Geographers have turned to creative medium to make nonlinearity visible and tangible too. Jason Dittmer's work on comic books is perhaps the most explicit in its focus on how Geographers can become more attentive to nonlinearity. Dittmer argues that comics can offer a new optical unconscious to Geography (Dittmer, 2010, p. 223). He suggests that comic books highlight spatiotemporal characteristics 'distinct to the form such as plurivectorial narration and simultaneity' as well as 'uncertainty, tangentiality and contingency', 'opening us up' to 'multiple possible narratives' (234) and offering the 'metaphors and imaginaries' (234) that Geography will need to explore nonlinear space-time in its complexity.

For Dittmer, engaging with creative forms can realign our 'perceptual apparatus' with our theoretical convictions about the nonlinearity of space-time. This suggestion is evident in the work of other Geographers too. Massey, for example, has used film to explore becoming. In her collaboration with Patrick Keiller to create the film *Robinson in Ruins*, Doreen Massey used film to focus attention on the ongoing becoming of the world and its implications for understanding place. In the essay associated with the film (Massey, 2011), she argued that the long-takes of natural forms, such as flowers, insist, as Bergson argues, that being is becoming. These long-takes, at first glance, seem almost like still-life images. However, if paid attention to for their duration, they reveal constant flux and motion. Massey's admission that at first she found the long takes difficult to watch demonstrates the work that the film does in engineering particular modes of attention; even Massey's own vision was reconfigured through her engagement with film; attuned to see (rather than just intellectually grasp) becoming in landscape.

Others have also used image making to shed light on the different objects and trajectories that come together in processes of becoming, with a more particular focus on assemblage. Caitlin DeSilvey, James Ryan and Steven Bond used a photo essay to explore the assemblage of tools and objects in spaces of repair (DeSilvey, et al., 2013). Their photographs, along with small story units, are positioned, like the objects and tools themselves, as things that can be assembled with productive force.

The style of the photo essay fosters a particular way of seeing the objects; focusing attention on how materials come together in unexpected assemblages, rather than following any teleological progression towards a design or master plan.

Sensitivity to assemblage is similarly engineered by Bruno Latour in his 'sociological web opera' *'Paris, Invisible City'*<sup>5</sup>, made collaboratively with photographer Emilie Hermant and screen designer Patricia Reed. In particular, Latour shows how urban assemblages remain open to change because of interstices within them. Much like an i-Doc, there is no predetermined way to navigate through the images and text in *Invisible City*. Rather than depict Paris using a map, the web opera offers what Latour calls 'oligopticons', 'narrow windows through which we can link up with the various aspects of being that comprise the city' (Latour, 2012, p. 91) which, as featured in the web opera, are things like water systems, tourist routes around historic plaques or city control rooms.

One of Latour's stated objectives is to contest the cinematic 'zoom' metaphor attributed to maps. He argues, in the related essay by himself and Emilie Hermant (Latour & Hermant, 2006), that the metaphor of the zoom creates a false sense that Paris is made up of parts cut out of a whole; which could reconstitute that whole in its entirety. The web opera, countering this, is designed to generate a way of thinking about the city that understands it as made up of connections between heterogeneous, possibly irreconcilable, elements whose encounters continually produce the city in unpredictable ways. As Deleuze argued, following Bergson, for time to be generative (and thus for the future to be open) the whole must not be given in advance, otherwise time would merely be the unfolding of that pre-given reality; a deterministic process. *Invisible City* generates a way of seeing this openness, moving away from conceptions of the city as a closed whole.

For Latour, it is the city's interstices which retain its openness. Interstitiality is key to a nonlinear urban imaginary. Because they cannot be subsumed within the dominant

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/virtual/index.html>

logics of the city they deny its closure as a fixed whole. Cian O'Callaghan has also experimented with creative practice to foster sensitivity to interstitiality and openness. Like Latour, O'Callaghan seeks to 'escape from the net of totalising narratives' enforced by capitalism that occludes 'other views of the city' (O'Callaghan, 2012, pp. 200-201). He argues that taking photographs can show that 'other cities are located in the interstices of this vision' (206) because 'images are inscribed' (perhaps accidentally) with 'relationships and meaning' that are not included in dominant versions of 'what cities can be' (206).

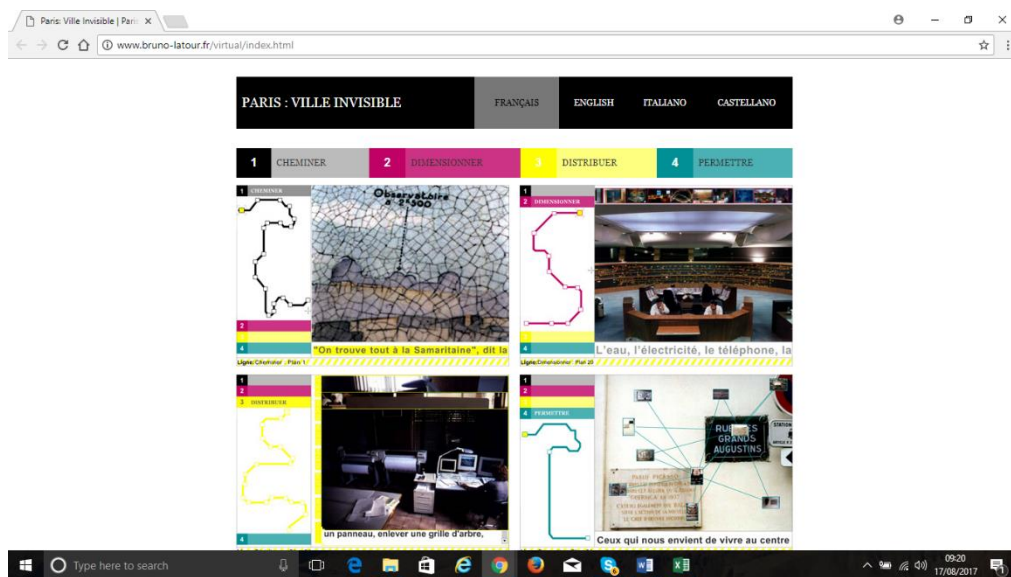


Figure Three: Paris: Ville Invisible

In all these experiments, creative medium transform ways of seeing to make subjects more attentive to nonlinear aspects of spatiotemporality. They work on an assumption that ways of seeing are always being reassembled in specific cultural and socio-economic settings and can equally be engineered in deliberate ways through creative medium. This argument has been advanced by Crary in his explorations of the composition of the observer's field of vision across history. Crary argues that 'what determines vision at any given historical moment' is 'the functioning of a collective assemblage of disparate parts on a single social surface' (Crary, 1990, p. 6); the observer themselves is only one aspect of a distributed assemblage of forces and processes which structure ways of seeing. For Clarke and Doel, these shifts in regimes of vision can be understood as a Deleuzian deterritorialization and reterritorialization of vision or, following Benjamin, as

developments in the 'optical unconscious'; invocations of previously un-activated dimensions of human sensitivity to space-time.

Bradley Garrett has questioned 'What new ideas manifest when geographers *become* filmmakers?' (Garrett, 2011, p. 381). An answer suggested by the work discussed above seems to be that making allows us to inhabit our ontological propositions about space-time so that, as well as *understanding* time to be nonlinear, we are able to *experience* space-time in a nonlinear way. This supposition is foundational to my methodology, which, as well as evoking nonlinear spatiotemporality in pop-up, uses i-Docs to engage a nonlinear mode of encounter through which to understand pop-ups' roles in reformulating of the precarious urban assemblage.

To return to the challenge posed to myself in the introduction to this chapter, to be sensitive to the fact that ontologies are also situated imaginaries, I think using the i-Doc to effect a nonlinear mode of encounter can help to do this. This use of i-Docs positions the nonlinear understandings of space-time that i-Docs advance within a lineage of other historically specific technologies of spectatorship and regimes of vision. This means that, rather than suggesting that my nonlinear imagination is based on ontological 'truths' that can help us to critique pop-up's *false* rendition of nonlinearity, my nonlinear imagination is an alternative, although similar, mode of encounter that, put into proximity with pop-up's, can help to reveal its contradictions. Following Dittmer, this recognises nonlinearity as part of Geography's own optical unconscious; one which is itself situated in a particular historical, political and socio-economic climate.

### **Three: Practice as Production**

We saw in the first section of this chapter how creative forms can express spatiotemporal upheavals and in the second how ways of seeing can be brought into line with new spatiotemporal conditions or ontological convictions. These capacities



undergird the third relationship between creative forms and space-time, the ability of creative forms to enact and produce space-times. Together, evocations of new spatiotemporal experiences and productions of ways of seeing enable us to articulate and make sense of changing structures of feeling and this grounds our ability to critically act within them. As such, creative experiments with space-time are a political endeavour; as methodologies, they can help to 'make social realities and social worlds' (Law & Urry, 2004, pp. 390-391). This is explicit in both Massey and Latour's creative experiments. For Massey, her and Keiler's film encourages people to accept the contingency of orderings such as national borders and land ownership. For Latour, there is also a politics at stake in *Invisible City*. His desire to create a way of seeing the city that acknowledges how '*neither the parts of the wholes into which they fit can be determined in advance*' (Latour, 2012, p. 93) is rooted in a conviction that such a vision will give room for Paris to 'breathe'; uncovering potentials for imaginative action. Indeed, many have argued that changes to modes of encounter can induce reconfigurations of reality. Clarke and Doel have argued that photography's impacts on the optical unconscious 'reconfigured reality in a way that parallels the reconfiguration achieved by technologies and cultures of transport' (Clarke & Doel, 2005, p. 42). As Harvey puts it; 'Although concepts of space and time are socially constructed, they operate with the full force of objective fact and play a key role in processes of social reproduction' (Harvey, 1990, p. 418) to the extent where colonial rule, for example, can be enforced through the imposition of ideas about what time and space are and how they should be distributed (419).

Indeed, as Harvey's example indicates, constructions of ways of seeing are not always productive in a politically progressive way, as Massey and Latour hope they are in their own work. In addition it could be argued that the realignments of vision that creative forms enable might preclude rather than encourage political action. In his discussions of the Panorama's invention in the early nineteenth century, Crary argues that, as a new technology of spectatorship, it 'provided an imaginary unity and coherence to an external world that, in the context of urbanization, was increasingly incoherent (Crary, 2002, p. 21). He argues that the Panorama

reconstructed a sense of order and overview, allowing the spectator to 'overcome the partiality and fragmentation that constituted quotidian perceptual experience' (21). However it did this by offering a new kind of whole, one that was *compromised*. Given the size of the Panorama its landscapes were 'consumable only as fragments' (21) to be reconstructed in the human imagination so it didn't recreate the lost sense of coherence but rather replaced it with a lesser alternative. Cray's choice of the word 'overcome' is interesting in this context. It suggests that, by offering a compromised sense of totality, the Panorama played an almost therapeutic role in the face of an alarming spatiotemporal upheaval. But what if that sense of alarm was important for fostering criticality? For recognising the problems that urbanization brought? There is a danger, perhaps, that in normalising new spatiotemporal experiences focus might be lost on their origins and instrumentalities. Creative medium can help us to *overcome* senses of upheaval and disorientation by realigning perception with new spatiotemporal conditions, but in doing so they might also normalise those conditions in ways that hinder criticality.

Claims that creative methods are not only descriptive but generative and performative (Law & Urry, 2004; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013) position methods as ways in which the world is made and remade. Coleman and Ringrose argue that a Deleuzian inflection within methodologies (an emphasis on their generative immanence within the worlds they study) can 'shift methodology from 'epistemology (where what is known depends upon perspective) to ontology (what is known is also being made differently)' (2013: 397); enacting what Law and Urry call 'ontological politics' (2004, 390) through which realities are 'identified, labelled, and brought into being' (392).

For Law and Urry, writing in 2004, methods were needed that were appropriate for exploring the 'nonlinear relationships and flows' that make up complex global connections; grasping the world as dynamic rather than, via Euclidean imaginaries, as a static container for discrete entities and events (Law & Urry, 2004, p. 399). Such methods were needed to help us to understand, and therefore help produce,

contemporary realities. Twelve years later, social scientists have made headway in developing these methodologies that attend to space-time as dynamic and unstable (401). Furthermore, they have recognised that these methods are not 'innocent'; that they themselves 'interfere with' the nonlinear 'patterns of the physical or the social'. For Law and Urry, this recognition enables us to choose how 'we want to interfere' in the world. Working in this context, my methodology is considerate of how it could interfere with the world, as will be explored in part three of this chapter where I discuss the practical making of my i-Doc. Furthermore, as I will discuss, the interactive elements of the i-Doc I have produced could also extend an invitation to others to take on a position of criticality, and potentially agency, in grasping and perhaps contesting the precarity that pop-up reinforces.

## **Part Two:**

### **I-Docs and Nonlinearity**

Having surveyed the relationships between creative forms and spatiotemporality, this second part of the chapter introduces interactive documentary and argues for the purchase it has in exploring nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries in pop-up culture. Building on the propositions of part one, I explore how i-Docs can be used to evoke particular spatiotemporal conditions, explicate their ability to engage nonlinear modes of encounter, and consider how, as a method, they can help to enact the world in particular ways. I then set out a framework and vocabulary for understanding and analysing spatiotemporality in i-Docs, which will be useful across the thesis.

Interactive documentary is an emerging field of documentary film. Although still a new medium, i-Docs are gaining prominence and are funded and supported by bodies including the film board of Canada and the French company Arte. They are also increasingly gaining recognition and interest within Media Studies and related

disciplines. What differentiates i-Docs from other forms of documentary is their 'nonlinear' spatiotemporal organisation. Rather than presenting footage in a predetermined order, i-Docs offer a collection of video clips and/or other materials such as still images or audio which users can navigate through in various ways. Within media theory competing typologies of i-Docs currently exist. Sandra Gaudenzi has proposed four different forms of i-Docs including 'the hypertext, the conversational, the participatory and the experiential' (Gaudenzi, 2013, p. 11) while Kate Nash suggests 'the narrative, the categorical and the collaborative' (Nash, 2012). Other media theorists, as I will discuss further later, have focused on the prominence of questions of agency in interactive documentary (Favero, 2013; Miles, 2014) as their defining feature. Here, I explore what, for me, makes i-Docs distinctively interesting as a medium and methodology; focusing on their engagements with nonlinear spatiotemporality.

### **I-Docs: Evoking Spatiotemporal Imaginaries**

As yet, there has been little exploration of how i-Docs use their nonlinear formal features to express the spatiotemporal experiences and imaginaries of particular cultures or phenomenon. However, as I will explore, commercial i-Docs make clear the potential that i-Docs hold as a method to express specific spatiotemporal conditions. Here, I will discuss two examples to explore how i-Docs use their nonlinear format to express spatiotemporality. Firstly, I will discuss *A Journal of Insomnia* (2012) to demonstrate how i-Docs have been used to express localized experiences of spatiotemporality; here, the distorted space-time of nights under the grip of insomnia. Secondly, I will discuss *Universe Within* (2015), the latest output of the prominent *Highbury* series, to explore how i-Docs can also explore the spatiotemporal experiences pervasive to a contemporary condition; here, the impacts of digital culture and urban living on contemporary life. The ability of i-Docs to evoke both localized and pervasive experiences of spatiotemporality is important to my own i-Doc in which I try to depict the spatiotemporal experience of London's

particular pop-up culture as well as to conjure a broader sense of the spatiotemporal logics that pop-up is instrumental in producing.

*A Journal of Insomnia* is, like most i-Docs, hosted online but, unlike other i-Docs it cannot be engaged with at will. On your first visit to *Insomnia* you are introduced to four characters but, when you click on one to try and investigate you are not able to follow their story immediately. Instead, you are asked to make an appointment later that night to come back and explore their 'insomnia journal.' Having made an appointment, for example for midnight, you are sent an email with a link that becomes active at that time. The i-Doc thereby forces the user to join the characters in their world of nocturnal wakefulness and evokes an uncomfortable temporal relationship. Having to wait to watch the i-Doc, rather than being able to commence it on demand, parallels the uncomfortable experience of waiting for sleep; of being unable to control your own rhythms.

That *Journal of Insomnia* cannot be watched in daytime suggests that its stories belong to a parallel world of untimely wakefulness that cannot be integrated into everyday experience. This technique effectively evokes the spatiotemporal experience of insomnia, where sleepless nights feel disjointed from daytime realities. The i-Doc also evokes the disorientating spatiotemporality of sleepless nights themselves. On screen are 3D images of rooms in the house of the character you are visiting. The voice of the character accompanies the images, narrating their history of insomnia.

Accompanying the narration with still images evokes the prominence that your own thoughts take during the night, suggesting an active stream of consciousness juxtaposed against the seemingly timeless (because still) interior of a house; as if the house itself is sleeping as you lie awake. Clicking on the screen during a period of narration throws time further out of joint. There is no warning that this function exists, but, if the user tries an experimental click, the narration is interrupted by an unrelated fragment of another story and the still images of the home are temporarily infiltrated by ghostly traces of a figure moving across them. *Insomnia* uses the

specific formal properties of i-Docs to evoke the insomniac experience; taking advantage of its interactive features to enable users to book an appointment and to throw time out of joint by clicking on the screen.

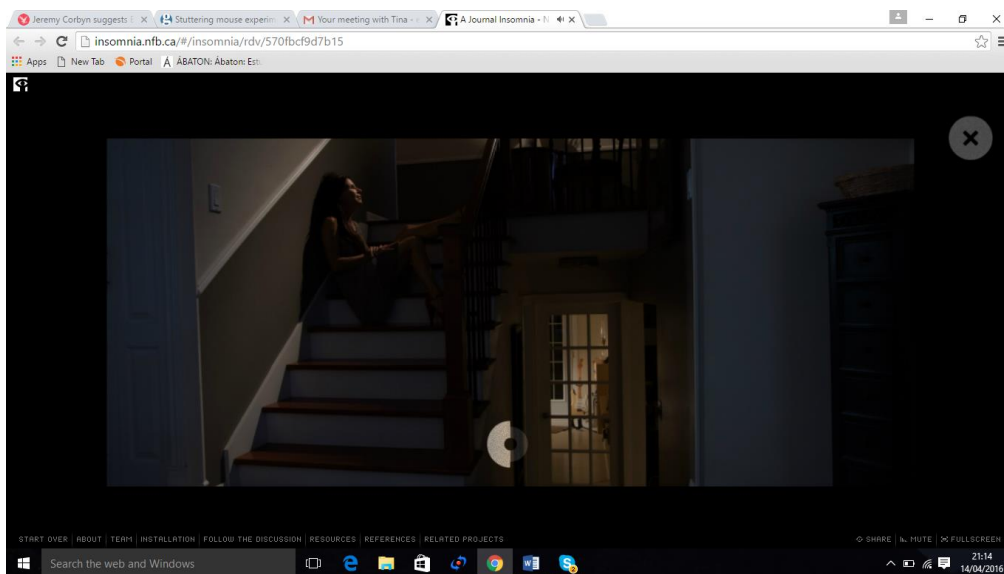


Figure Four: Journal of Insomnia: Still Interior

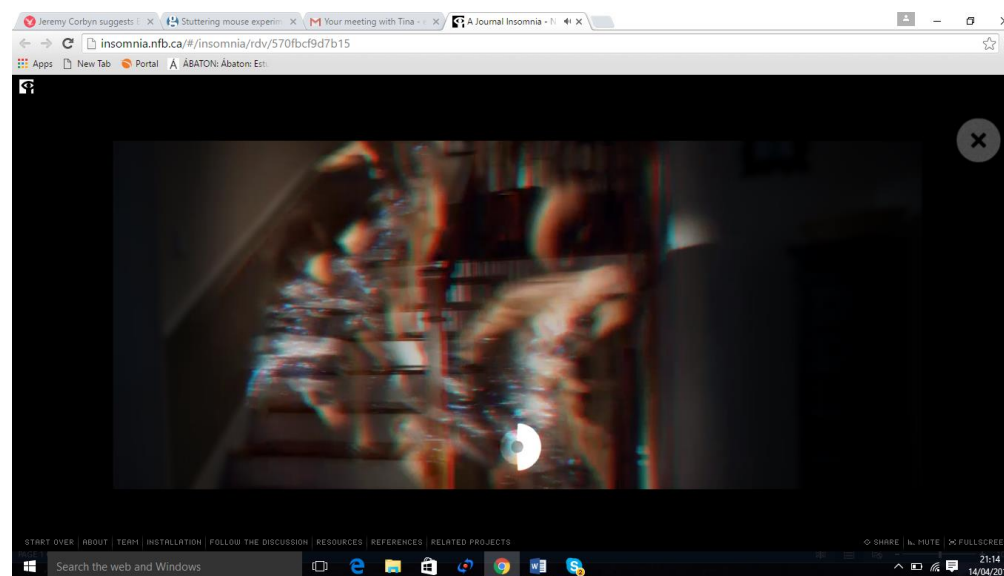


Figure Five: Journal of Insomnia: Time Out of Joint

*Journal of Insomnia* evokes a localized spatiotemporal experience. Only one character can be visited per appointment, giving an impression of the discrete and lonely (yet connected through the i-Doc) spatiotemporal experiences of insomniacs. *Universe Within*, on the other hand, evokes a more pervasive spatiotemporal condition in exploring ‘the hidden digital lives of highrise residents around the world’. The i-Doc evokes imaginaries of digital space-time prevalent within the

contemporary condition; with a specific emphasis on the weightlessness and distance-less-ness of digital space-time. When you open up the i-Doc a choice of narrators introduce themselves, explaining that they are made of code. You pick a narrator who guides you through the i-Doc's clips of the 'real world, whatever that is' (as one of the narrators says). They take you to clips pertaining to disparate geographical locations. One narrator boasts about how quickly she can retrieve any data about the 'real' world, jumping from one place to another almost instantly in a way that 'makes airplanes seem kind of old school'. However, unlike the narrators you are not able to access clips instantly; your only way of seeing them is by being taken to a clip by the narrator who, unlike you, is a true 'digital native.' The digital natives require you to answer their survey-style questions in order to gain access to a clip, mirroring the way companies collect data through web browsing. The i-Doc uses the limitations of user agency to contrast the spatiotemporality of the 'real' world, in which your actions are limited by space and time, with the world of the digital narrators who move easily through a digital realm that is at once nowhere and everywhere. Of course, elements of *Universe Within* also critique this imaginary of online space-time. The fact that you get a choice of narrators, who lead you to different clips and require you to answer their questions to gain access to them, reminds us that the information we receive online is mediated and monetized by particular people, companies and agendas; embedded in the complex material world it is imagined to supervene above. It is this co-existence of an evocation of a spatiotemporal imaginary and a critique of that imaginary that my own use of i-Docs aims to achieve. The next section investigates how i-Docs produce nonlinear modes of encounter that can enable such critique.

### **I-Docs and Nonlinear Modes of Encounter**

As well as evoking spatiotemporal imaginaries, i-Docs also use their interfaces to engage a nonlinear mode of encounter. Different from engineering sensitivity to nonlinear imaginaries operative in the contemporary condition, this entails engaging

a mode of encounter that is attuned with ontological convictions about the nonlinearity of space-time. Media theorists have argued that i-Docs must be thought of as more than 'the extension of linear documentary into digital media' but "something else" entirely (Gaudenzi, 2013, p. 12). A vital aspect of this "something else" that i-Docs offer is a nonlinear mode of encounter that hangs on multiplicity, contingency and the ability 'to change and evolve' (Gaudenzi, 2013, p. 13; Dinmore, 2014; Favero, 2013). It has been argued that, as a film form typified by modularity, variability (Gaudenzi, 2013), complexity and choice (Nash, 2012) i-Docs foster sensitivity to the open ended, unpredictable and multiple possible trajectories of the world and, specifically, the space-times of the subjects they depict. This nonlinear mode of encounter recognized in i-Docs is associated, as in the nonlinear geographical imagination, with a progressive politics premised on openness and multiplicity. Interactive features including user-generated content are used to destabilize representations of socio-political and environmental issues such as the Arab Spring (18 Days in Egypt, 2015), urban shrinkage (Hollow, 2014) or energy futures (Journey to the end of Coal, 2008) and, allegedly, offer alternative pathways for action (Favero, 2013).

It has been argued that interfaces of creative media, 'like maps, compasses, and other instruments' are key 'ways in which geographical knowledge is constructed' (Ash, 2014, 130) and in i-Docs, the nonlinear interfaces construct nonlinear modes of encounter through which their subjects are brought into view. Here, I will again discuss examples of commercial i-Docs to draw out how, in practice, they produce this nonlinear perception. Specifically, I will explore how sensitivity is engineered towards four key features of nonlinear space-time; multiplicity, openness, dynamism and entrainment.

Sensitivity to multiplicity is perhaps one of the most commonly engineered ways of seeing in i-Docs (Harris, 2016). Usually, this is achieved by basing an i-Doc around a plurality of stories or characters. For example the i-Doc *Des Breves De Trottoirs* follows the lives of various characters on the streets of Paris and *Gaza Sderot* is



based around the experiences of people living either side of the Gaza border. In these i-Docs, space-time is made up of multiple trajectories that cannot be reconciled within one sequence; fostering sensitivity to the multiplicity of perspectives. In other i-Docs, this sensitivity to multiplicity extends to a more radical acknowledgement that there are manifold potential narratives that could be included in the i-Doc but which are not currently accessible through it. For example, the i-Doc *18 Days in Egypt* documents Egypt's Arab Spring by allowing users to upload their own material from that period. The site is always evolving as new clips from amateur film makers are added, so it is clear that the totality of clips currently available does not equal the totality of possible perspectives. In i-Docs like *18 Days in Egypt*, multiplicity is given a particular political weighting; used to undermine dominant narratives of the uprising and, furthermore, to insist that no one narrative can be comprehensive.

Another key feature of the nonlinear way of seeing common to i-Docs is sensitivity to the openness of space-time. This attuning to openness is enabled through the multiple pathways i-Docs offer to users. Crucially, the multiple routes through material allow for more than just several orderings of the same information, they enable qualitatively new ideas to be produced. For example, the i-Doc *Gaza Sderot* offers four different ways to sort its clips of people's experiences of the Gaza conflict. It has four screen views; faces – which allows you to follow certain characters, map – which shows the places each clip was filmed in, topics – which groups clips by themes and time - which organises the clips by the date they were made.

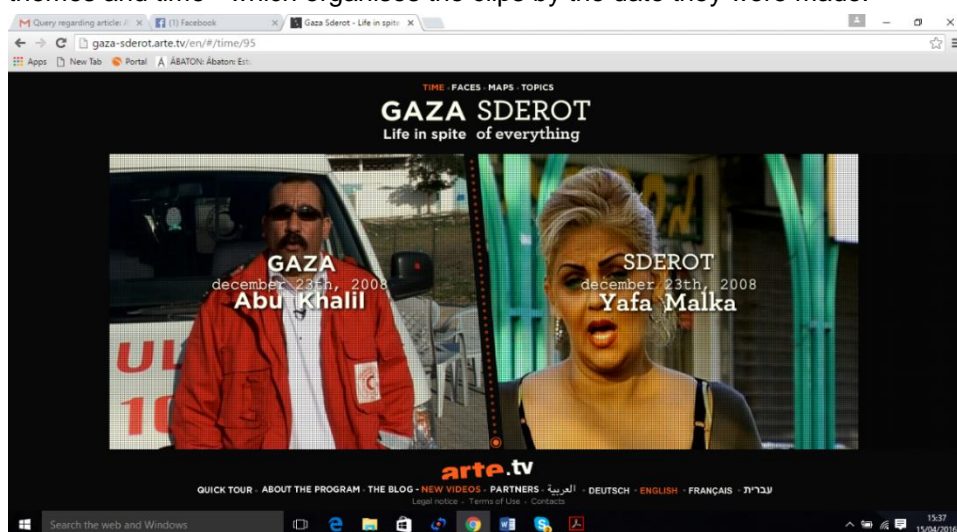


Figure Six: Gaza Sderot: Time

What a given clip reveals is effected by the screen view through which it is arrived at. For example, to watch a clip in 'face' view is to approach it as a personal story, whereas to access the same clip through the 'topic' view is to take it as exemplary of a wider concern. The pathways users take through the i-Doc have their own productive capacities; activating qualities another route might not reveal. Again, this attention to openness is politically significant. Rebecca Coleman has described how the interactive potentials of digital websites evoke the potentials of the body itself (Coleman, 2010). In the same vein, the sensitivity *Gaza Sderot* constructs towards multiple potential narrativizations of its footage arguably generates hope for the conflict itself; suggesting that new possibilities are found by retelling stories.

As well as engaging an imagination of temporal openness, *Gaza Sderot* generates a politicized approach to space as dynamic and processual or, as Massey conceptualizes it, 'a simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey, 2005, p. 9). In *Gaza Sderot's* map view clips are labelled with captions such as 'ambulance drivers HQ', 'polling place' or 'Ahmed Quaffah's Party'. Clicking on a clip makes it start to play; transforming the static terrain into a dynamic spatiotemporal fabric.

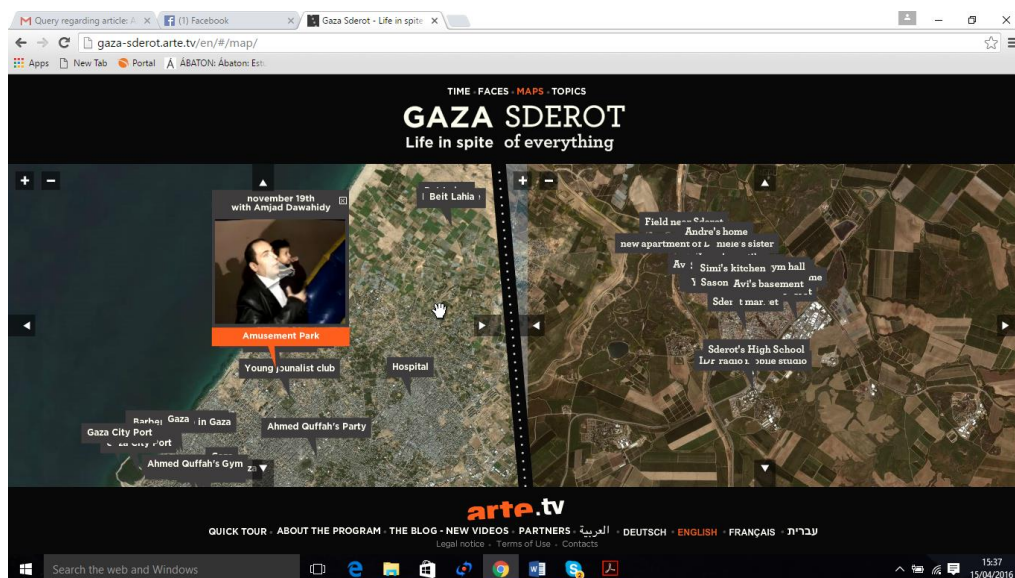


Figure Seven: Gaza Sderot: Maps

Furthermore, rather than displaying 'objective' place names, the colloquial naming of clips refer to how spaces are used by people. This nomenclature suggests that

space-time is not a pre-given container that actions occur within, but created through the multiple, embodied practices of Gaza and Sderot's inhabitants. In a documentary about conflicts over territory, this conceptualisation of space-time as immanently and dynamically produced through the actions of its inhabitants takes on a significant political weight; constituting a refusal to accept fixed and pre-given definitions of space.

Yet the nonlinear mode of encounter in i-Docs, as well as focusing attention on openness and dynamism, also draws attention to the forces which fix and constrain action (Harris, 2016). As we have already seen, the i-Doc *Insomnia* forces users to adhere to a particular temporal scale and in so doing draws attention to the restrictive temporalities of insomnia. This can be understood as sensitivity to 'entrainment'. Nonlinear conceptions of space-time are attentive to how assemblages are held in place through the entrainment of trajectories with one another's cycles. In *Gaza Sderot*, the entraining force of the conflict over the multiple trajectories of its characters is evoked by a line down the middle of the screen separating Gaza from Sderot. In all four screen views the line stubbornly delineates territory. In the map, face and topic views it has no interactive capacities, suggesting an unquestionable geographical division that entrains all trajectories within its structure. The line indicates the paramount influence of the conflict in structuring the lived presents of the characters. Nash writes of *Gaza Sderot* that 'the interface serves as a metaphor for the geographical space, its proximity and arbitrary division' (Nash, 2012, p. 205). The line is essential to this metaphor; it shows how conflict can take hold over life; pulling trajectories into uneasy proximity and restructuring space-time around its quasi-gravitational centre. This is reiterated by how the i-Doc discourages you from following the narrative of any individual. If you are watching a clip about any one character it ends with options to see more clips about that character but also gives you a competing option to watch something happening across the border. In this way, the i-Doc denies the characters the primacy of their own narratives; demonstrating the burden of being entrained within the conflict's geography.

These are just some of the ways that i-Docs produce a nonlinear mode of encounter. What is clear in these examples is that this is a *politicized* mode of encounter that refuses conceptualisations of the world as fixed or singular, instead highlighting its always contingent, processual and ongoing production. As such, the nonlinear ways of seeing that i-Docs produce resonate with the politics of nonlinear geographical thinking. If creative methods can enable different kinds of thinking to take place (Hawkins, 2015) then i-Docs, celebrated by media theorists for their sensitivity to openness and contingency, can help Geographers to engage the nonlinear mode of encounter that contemporary ontological convictions necessitate. The nonlinear organisation of i-Docs as method can thereby extend creative Geographical engagements with thinking space-time nonlinearly (DeSilvey, 2007; Massey, 2008; O'Callaghan, 2012; Gallagher, 2015) and, in particular can add two key things to existing endeavours. Firstly, as will be explored in more detail in the next section, creating an i-Doc fosters attention to the nonlinearity of objects or sites of Geographical study. In my own work, for example, it enables a focus on turbulence in precarious urban assemblages as well as ways in which that turbulence is stabilised and the assemblage entrained. Secondly, as the next section of this part of the chapter goes on to explore, i-Docs are designed to be interacted with and thus beg consideration of agency within the world understood as nonlinear.

### **Interactivity and Agency**

For many media theorists it is interactivity that gives i-Docs their political potential, allowing them to confront the user with their own capacity for action within whatever issue is being explored. Just as Law and Urry argue of methods, interaction in i-Docs works on the premise that, in a complex, nonlinear space-time, the world is constantly being enacted through our interferences in it (Law & Urry, 2004). There can be no innocent action because the world, rather than pre-existing our movements, is brought into being through them. In i-Docs, interactivity carries this weight of responsibility. Perception becomes political because watching the i-Doc

requires constant decision making. As Adrian Miles has argued the scheme of i-Docs is 'notice – decide – do' (Miles, 2014, p. 79); the user is actively implicated in how the documentary unfolds.

Often, there are clear attempts in i-Docs to translate the emphasis on user agency *within* the i-Doc's interface into a drive towards action in the 'real' world. Favero has argued that 'i-Docs connect individuals to the events and situations surrounding them, thus allowing them a deeper immersion in their everyday (offline) lives (Favero, 2013, p. 272). Favero discusses *The Thousandth Tower*, part of the *Highrise* project, exploring how the i-Doc's focus on ways to animate forgotten spaces prompted people to do so in real life. A year on from the documentary, residents had claimed access to gardens and parks and built a playground. For many i-Docs, action in the 'real' world is encouraged through comment functions and discussion forums which prompt users to consider and share their own views and serve as points for mobilization. *Prison Valley*, which explores an area of Colorado dominated by the prison industry, is one such i-Doc. *Prison Valley* is particularly emphatic as to the role of the user in *producing* rather than perceiving reality. Playing on ideas of truth, reality and justice, the i-Doc requires you to create an avatar through which you become a detective within the i-Doc world. Watching sequences allows you to unlock clues such as photographs, extra clips and notes through which you piece together what life is like in Prison Valley. Interestingly, as you meet characters in the world of the i-Doc, you gain the ability to contact them directly in real life. For example, you can send messages to prisoners featured in the film sequences. Often you are also offered links to other websites of relevance to the i-Doc's content, encouraging you to pursue your own investigations beyond the prescribed contents of the i-Doc. These capacities for agency within *Prison Valley* can be understood via Favero's claims that i-Docs require us to 'move beyond a narrow definition of the field of vision and look instead at images as relational items situated amidst the events, socialness and physicality of actors' everyday lives' (261). In *Prison Valley*, the documentary material presented to users is a starting point for understanding the expanded 'real world' trajectories that intersect with the prison industry the documentary depicts.

Importantly, the capacities for agency that a user has in an i-Doc are not always known in advance. We have seen this in my discussion of *Insomnia Journal* and the surprise outcomes of clicking on the screen. Similarly, Kate Nash has described how users of the i-Doc *Bear 71* were confused about how to interact; unsure what they *should* be doing (2014). As Nash's article implies, there is not necessarily any *should* in i-Docs. Instead there are multiple ways of interpreting and performing an interactive documentary experience. This means that agency carries risk because it is not always clear what your actions will achieve. For example, as we saw in *Journal of Insomnia* clicking on the screen creates a disruption of the i-Doc's space-time, as the narrative is interrupted by a ghostly, untimely presence. But there is no indication of what will happen when you click, or even encouragement to do so. The scary interruption that an experimental click in *Journal of Insomnia* produces suggests that agency is not necessarily safe; you don't know what kind of world your actions could enact. The risk of action is heightened when i-Docs offer 'real' world interaction, such as the ability to record your own insomnia journal or talk to a prisoner through *Prison Valley*. The user is encouraged to take unpredictable paths of action. Rather than consuming the i-Doc's version of reality, they take on responsibility as co-performer and producer of the world.

Equally though, the way that agency is figured in interactive documentary foregrounds the forces through which capacities for action are constrained. While nonlinearity is usually associated with openness and potentiality, nonlinear conceptions of space-time also necessitate attention to how assemblages are fixed, as we saw in relation to *Gaza Sderot*, and this applies to user agency too. Ash has explored how a primary requirement of interactive interfaces is that contingency be rendered visible (Ash, 2010, p. 662) so users understand the choices on offer. However, in i-Docs *lack* of contingency is often equally important to interaction and agency. In *Gaza Sderot*, for example, the line representing the border does not just entrain the lives of the characters but also constrains the actions of the user. To interact with the interface at all is to 'choose a side' by picking a clip from either side of the line. O'Flynn argues that in *Gaza Sderot* the interface entails that as users

'choose one video clip from one community' they also 'subordinate the other community'; deciding to whom to give 'voice and agency' and who, conversely, to render silent (O'Flynn, 2016, p. 80). In this way the line also foregrounds the limitations of the user's agency, who is also bound by the entraining force of the conflict; unwillingly forced to reproduce its divisions.

Capacities for agency and limitations to agency in i-Docs help to focus attention on the power geometries at play within the ongoing production of assemblages. The user is made aware of their capacities and inabilities within the i-Doc assemblage and through that is introduced to both their 'real world' responsibility in producing or reproducing those issues and made sensitive to the forces that might stop them from enacting the world as they wish to (Harris, 2016). My own i-Doc, as I will explore later, picks up these ideas around agency.

### **Developing a Language for Exploring Nonlinearity in I-Docs**

Before moving on to talk about my own creation of an interactive documentary, I want to use the examples discussed in this section to develop and clarify the language I am using to explore nonlinearity in i-Docs, and which I will use to discuss my own i-Doc. The vocabulary I engage is drawn from various models for addressing interactive media, from geography and media studies. My sources include Ash's theorisation of the interface (Ash, 2015), Wood and Coleman's experiments with analysing interactive digital media (Wood, 2007; Coleman, 2010) and Nash's typology of interactivity in i-Docs (Nash, 2012). I also draw on Adrian Miles's Deleuzian readings of temporality in interactive documentary and other Deleuzian work on interactive images and interfaces (Sora & Jorda, 201; Barker, 2012). My approach mobilizes Manuel DeLanda's thorough excavation of Gilles Deleuze's ontology (DeLanda, 2002), using this explication of nonlinear spatiotemporal ontology to theorize the ontology of these digital interfaces. Here, I clarify four concepts that are important for understanding and describing nonlinearity in i-Docs;

spatiotemporal architecture, the relationship between the virtual and the actual, attractors, and the tension between contingency and entrainment.

The first three ideas are from the work of Aylish Wood on digital interfaces. Here I reiterate her arguments and excavate their Deleuzian origins. Wood's exploration of digital interfaces as 'spatiotemporal architectures' is very helpful in elucidating the workings of an i-Doc interface (Wood, 2007, p. 86). Importantly, the term 'spatiotemporal architectures' does not imply a fixed spatiotemporal distribution. Rather, Wood's term stresses that digital interfaces need to be understood as a collection of virtual capacities that can be actualised in myriad ways through interaction (Wood, 2007) and transform the media they enable access to. Wood follows Deleuze in using the term 'virtual'. Virtual properties refer to a system's real but un-activated capacities; for example the capacity of a child to grow adult teeth or of an ice-cube to become liquid. These properties are no less real for not being currently actualised because they structure the behaviours of that system.

In explaining the relationship between virtual and actual properties of interfaces, Wood borrows another Deleuzian concept of the 'attractor'. Attractors are tendencies that influence which of a systems' virtual capacities become actualised (DeLanda, 2002, p. 35). Many systems, although their trajectories are not determined, follow similar patterns because they tend towards common attractors, such as a tendency towards equilibrium (DeLanda, 2002). However, when systems have multiple attractors they have a 'choice' between different destinies' (DeLanda, 2002, p. 35). Applying the concept of attractors to digital interfaces elucidates how their virtual architectures are continuously actualised and re-actualised through user interaction (Wood, 2007) and how user 'attention is distributed across a range of possibilities' (Coleman, 2010, p. 276). This is a valuable framework for understanding i-Docs because, in interactive documentary, the plurality of attractors is foundational to the construction of nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries. Almost all i-Docs offer users a choice of pathways through them, and this structures the spatiotemporality of i-Docs as a malleable medium that can be transformed through user interaction.



Also key to understanding the spatiotemporality of i-Docs is, as we have seen, the fact that the multiple attractors are made visible to users so that they have an active experience of contingency, agency and openness. For example, in the i-Doc *Gaza Sderot* the four screen views - faces, map, topics and time – are always visible as competing attractors, emphasising that the option selected is only one of the possible ways the i-Doc can be viewed. Like the nonlinear systems Delanda describes, *Gaza Sderot* 'continues to display its virtuality even once the system has settled into one of its alternative stable states; because the other alternatives are there all the time, coexisting with the one that happens to be actualized' (DeLanda, 2002, p. 75). Media theorist Adrian Miles has argued that the persistent availability of the system's virtual properties is what characterizes the temporality of i-Docs. For Miles, traditional film editing is a process where the virtual potentials of the material, present for the editor, are curated into an actual film presented to the viewer (Miles, 2014, p. 71). Interactive documentary, meanwhile, takes on what Miles terms, following Lev Manovich, a 'database' model where virtuality is visible to the user even after the 'completion' of the i-Doc. This gives the i-Doc a structure that can be understood, following Deleuze, as 'crystalline' (Deleuze, 2013, p. 75), one within which the virtual and the actual are visible together and 'in continual exchange' (Deleuze, 2013, p. 73).

The co-presence of the virtual and the actual is key to understanding the spatiotemporal architecture of i-Docs because it undergirds the contingency that gives i-Docs their formal openness. This contingency makes the i-Doc temporality *generative* because it allows material to be brought into new relations, thereby generating new meanings. However, equally important to understanding the nonlinear spatiotemporality of i-Docs is recognising the forces through which some virtual potentials are hindered and constrained. This force can be termed, following Delanda, 'entrainment'. As I explored above, entrainment emphasizes how the multiple trajectories assembled within a system are held in certain configurations. As DeLanda describes, trajectories can become 'entrained', influencing each other's rhythm and development (DeLanda, 2002). For example, animals' hibernation cycles are entrained with cycles of plant growth, while humans' sleep cycles are entrained

with the oscillations of day and night. Entrainment allows 'many independent sequences of oscillations to act in unison, to become in effect a single parallel process' (DeLanda, 2002, p. 115). This is achieved in different ways by different i-Docs, but generally can be recognised in the way that i-Doc contents are held in relation to each other, as I have discussed in *Gaza Sderot* and *Journal of Insomnia*. Entrainment is key term for understanding how content is organised spatiotemporally in i-Docs as well as for understanding how agency operates within them. Added to the idea of the virtual and the actual, it shows us how potentials are constrained as well as produced in the i-Doc interface.

### **Part Three:**

#### **Practical Engagements**

In this final part of the chapter I build on the propositions developed in parts one and two in discussing the practical aspects of my methodology. My methodology has been focused around the production of the i-Doc, a process that included visual methods, filming and editing video and creating digital collages, as well as designing the i-Doc interface. The gathering of data also included two other core methods of interviews and participant observation. After explaining my case study selection I detail my use of interviews and participant observation and describe the process of making the i-Doc, exploring how each element of this process has helped me to engage with spatiotemporality in London's pop-up culture. At the end of the chapter I give an overview of the features of the i-Doc I have created and set out how the i-Doc will be used across the thesis to advance my arguments.

## Methodology development and case study selection

As I have explored in the previous parts of this chapter, i-Docs are a valuable methodology for my enquiries because their nonlinear spatiotemporal logics give them a particular purchase in elucidating and exploring pop-up's own nonlinear imaginaries. In addition, i-Docs are a method that can both grasp pop-up's imaginaries as they are *felt* and attend, through a nonlinear geographical imaginary, to the processes through which those imaginaries are produced and the roles they play in the city. However, using i-Docs as method was not something I had planned at the start of my research; at that point I didn't even know they existed. I stumbled upon i-Docs just as I was finishing a period of case study identification, in which I had identified nonlinear logics as key to pop-up culture. I was already planning to use film to explore temporality and aesthetics in pop-up and had gained a place on two AHRC Collaborative Training courses in film production and editing.

On discovering i-Docs, I was immediately struck by the resonance between the spatiotemporal logics of i-Docs and pop-up's own ways of articulating space-time and decided that they would be invaluable as a methodology. As well as using video to evoke the localized temporalities and aesthetics of particular pop-up places I saw the potential for an i-Doc to express and elucidate the pervasive spatiotemporal imaginaries that emerge from pop-up culture as a whole; by communicating those through an i-Doc's spatiotemporal architecture. I therefore decided that I would produce short clips about my case studies that would be incorporated into a larger i-Doc and I used the training courses I undertook, a three week course in film making and a one week editing course, to practice making such clips. I later decided to incorporate collages, made up of still images and text, into the i-Doc for reasons that will be discussed shortly. I applied for and gained £750 funding from the AHRC Research Training Support Grant, enabling me to pay a friend, Michael Skelly, to undertake the i-Doc's coding for me. While this did not cover Skelly's time on the project, he was happy to work the additional days on the basis of his own interest in the logistical challenge.

Taking a step back from i-Docs, it is necessary to explain the rationale for my case study selection and discuss the practical aspects of my visits to pop-ups. As mentioned above, I undertook a period of case study identification before commencing my research. Between January and July 2014 I paid careful attention to listings of pop-up places online (including on the websites Time Out, Grub Club, Edible Experiences and London Pop-ups) so see what places and events were occurring, where and for how long. I visited a total of 27 of these pop-up places to survey the various types of pop-ups taking place in London and decide on how best to select case studies. I had come to the research with pre-existing knowledge of the pop-up scene because I had previously undertaken research into some types of pop-up during my MA (Cultural Geography, Royal Holloway) including a dissertation on third sector Meanwhile Spaces run by the charity 3Space and a methodological essay on analysing Secret Cinema's production of *The Third Man*. The case study identification period allowed me to expand and update my knowledge of pop-up and get an overview of the scene in London. I had already identified London as the area to focus on because, as a global and creative city, it is a key centre for pop-up culture. Limiting the area of research to the boundaries of greater London was also important because, although my approach to pop-up as operative within precarity as a *structure of feeling* presumes that my case studies are at least to some extent, resonant with wider experiences, it is clear that structures of feeling manifest in particular ways in particular settings and my own study is interested in exploring pop-up's imaginaries in the particular socio-economic context of London.

During the case study identification period, I identified various 'types' of pop-ups including pop-up cinemas, theatres, restaurants, supper clubs, event spaces, educational pop-ups, pop-ups in public spaces, and 'residencies'; where a pop-up takes temporary 'residence' within an existing establishment such as a pub. I noticed that pop-ups occurred across London, in areas as diverse as Catford, Turnham Green and Tottenham but that there was a prevalence of pop-ups in recently gentrified or gentrifying areas such as Hackney or Brixton. Importantly, I also identified recurring themes and imaginaries notable across the pop-up landscape

which were a starting point for understanding how space-time is articulated in pop-up culture. The most significant of these were a focus on 'immersive' experiences, an emphasis on flexibility and ephemerality within marketing and aesthetics, a fascination with 'secrecy', an emphasis on craft and the handmade (both in terms of products sold in pop-ups and the design of spaces themselves), a playful approach to the site being occupied, usually foregrounding its 'unusual' characteristics and interstitial positioning within the city, and an emphasis on the surprising and 'one-off', singular, nature of pop-up events. My conjecture was that these themes in pop-up all indicate particular imaginaries of space-time that can be understood as narrativizations of the precarious urban conditions pop-up grew out of.

With these discoveries in mind, I decided to narrow my empirical focus to produce in depth knowledge about specific types of pop-ups, while still giving a sense of the common ways of imagining space-time that pop-up culture as a whole displays. I decided to focus in on the 'types' of pop-ups that I thought gave the clearest insights into the key characteristics of pop-up culture listed above. I chose three 'types' of pop-up; pop-up cinemas, supper clubs and shipping container spaces, using each to offer insights into different aspects of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. This decision worked on the premise that certain kinds of pop-ups display particular spatiotemporal imaginaries more clearly than others (which is not to say that they don't also display and develop other imaginaries merely that some imaginaries are more clearly articulated in some pop-up types). As will be drawn out in the chapters to follow, cinemas allow me to explore immersion, container spaces allow me to explore flexibility and interstitiality and supper clubs give key insights into secrecy and surprise. I decided to select case studies within these 'clusters', ultimately choosing 3 or 4 in each, and to conduct participant observation and interviews for each case study as well as take footage wherever possible. Interviews and explorations of pop-up sites, including participant observation would allow me to gain a deep understanding of how and by whom pop-ups are organised, delivered and received while filming events would help, as I will shortly explore, to focus in on their spatiotemporality and to ultimately produce clips to be used within the i-Doc.

My case study identification period had allowed me to identify prominent and interesting examples of each ‘type’; cinemas, shipping container sites and supper clubs. These were targeted by email, phone call or in person. However, because of the nature of pop-up places, which spring up with little warning and exist for short periods of time, the process of finding and contacting participants was ongoing during the research period. The case studies eventually selected were those where access was granted. I gave each participant an information sheet explaining the focus of my research, the data I would be collecting and its intended outputs. I gave them the option to withdraw from the research at any point and to discuss any elements of the research with me. Securing case studies was difficult because many of the people I approached were unsure as to if they would definitely have access to the money or space needed for their planned events, or weren’t sure when the event would be able to take place. However this in itself gave an important insight into the precarity of pop-up culture, revealing the uncertainties to be negotiated in organising pop-ups. Many people also asked if I could help out at events as a volunteer, demonstrating a need for (unpaid) extra pairs of hands that further indicates the financial precarity of pop-ups. Having identified, during my preliminary investigations, that pop-ups occur across London, I decided to focus on the whole city rather than limit my study to a particular area. The eventual case studies within each cluster will be introduced in detail in each empirical chapter but the table below outlines the case studies and the visits and interviews conducted at each.

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Pop-up</b>	<b>Location at time of visit</b>	<b>Visits</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
<b>Pop-up Cinemas</b>	Floating Cinema	Brentford	Two: to two separate events	One
	Feed Me Films	Bermondsey	One	One
	Backyard Cinema	Baker Street	Two: to the same event twice	None
<b>Shipping Container Spaces</b>	Netil Market	Hackney	Two	Two: One with market manager and

				one with a shop owner
	Paradise Yard	Waterloo	Three	Two: One with site manager and one with a shop owner
	The Artworks	Elephant and Castle	Two	One
	Grow up Box	Stratford	Two	One
<b>Supper Clubs</b>	Christabel's	Notting Hill	One	One
	The Ship's Kitchen	Barking	One	None
	Secret Supper Club (The Culinary Anthropologist)	Arsenal	One	One
	Latitudinal Cuisine	Hoxton	One	None

Over a period of 14 months, from October 2014-December 2015, I conducted a series of visits to these pop-up places. I conducted participant observation, as well as interviews with several of the organisers and took video footage. I also closely followed the activities of each of the organisations studied online, keeping track of their events and developments. I analysed their web presences including their own websites and blogs, their appearance in pop-up listing services and any journalistic coverage or visitor reviews. I also continued to monitor pop-up listings online to see how the scene was evolving. Before beginning the research I undertook a risk and ethics assessment in line with the requirements of Royal Holloway's Geography department. The nature of pop-up necessitated relatively brief periods of research at the sites. The length of visits depended on the type of event or place being studied, for supper clubs and pop-up cinema screenings I would arrive a couple of hours prior to the event in order to talk to the hosts, see them setting up, and explore the site and area, and then stay for the duration of the event and as long as possible afterwards. At shipping container spaces I would visit for a day at a time, sometimes

observing and filming and other times also conducting interviews. Because shipping container spaces are relatively long term pop-ups, usually occupying the same site for at least a few months, I was able to visit all of them at least twice. On the other hand, the event based nature of supper clubs and pop-up cinemas meant that most visits were one offs (although I attended two versions of the same screening by Backyard Cinema and two different screenings by Floating Cinema).

At some of the events I attended as visitor (for example eating dinner with supper club guests) while at others I helped out, depending on the desires of the organisers. This alternating, sometimes dual, role allowed me to conduct participant observation from both sides, getting a sense of the experience of pop-ups for both hosts and guests and seeing the work that goes into their production as well as what the 'finished' product looks like. At all of the events I took a video camera (either a mini DV camera or a DSLR) to take footage of the event, as well as some still photographs. Where possible, I also recorded interviews with the organisers.

The material eventually included in the i-Doc consist of 18 clips which total just under 45 minutes of footage. It also contains collaged images and text content in the form of what I call 'outside pop-up city pages', which will be discussed later. Working through my footage and notes and producing the material for, and interface of, the i-Doc was, in addition to my site visits, a substantial and important part of the research process. In the following section I explore how, building on my participant observation and interviews, the different elements of i-Doc creation; filming, editing and designing the interface enabled me to investigate and make sense of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. First, though, I discuss the methods of interviews and participant observation and reflect on what it means to undertake these methods as part of making an i-Doc.



## **Interviews and Participant Observation**

At most of the pop-up places I visited I conducted interviews with organisers of the events or with other stakeholders in the sites, as detailed in the table in the previous section. Most of these interviews were recorded on camera with the exception of my interview with Anna, from The Culinary Anthropologist supper club, and with one of the site managers employed by the developers Lend Lease at The Artworks, neither of whom wanted to be filmed and which I recorded by taking notes instead. The interviews were used in two ways. Firstly, I played each one back to myself (or read back my notes) and took detailed notes that informed the key themes to be explored in the thesis. Secondly, I edited sections of the interviews to produce clips that are included in the i-Doc.

All the interviews were semi-structured. I prepared themes for discussion and some questions in advance but aimed for open questions that would allow participants to answer in an informal and exploratory style (Longhurst, 2016). While trying to cover all my intended topics, I also allowed conversation to evolve and followed up on avenues of interest that emerged during the interviews. Dowling et al. argue that interviews remain a 'mainstay of qualitative methods' but are often now used as supplementary or complementary to other methods deployed alongside them (Dowling, et al., 2016). This was the case for my use of interviews which supplemented my participant observation at pop-up sites and my use of video to explore and produce versions of the sites in the i-Doc.

Some of my interviews were conducted during the same site visits at which I conducted participant observation and involved informal conversations with event organisers and other people I encountered there. For other interviews, I returned on a separate occasion to interview a particular person who might have been too busy on the day. This was especially true for event based pop-ups such as the pop-up cinemas where members of staff didn't have time to be interviewed during the event. The same day interviews allowed me to ask people in more depth about what I had observed them doing or what was happening at their event or site that day, whereas

the interviews conducted at later dates enabled me to interrogate themes and ideas emerging during my ongoing analysis of the data. The questions I asked in the interviews were predominantly around why the participants had chosen to set up or work in a pop-up business, what they had done previously, what their aims for the future were, how and why they had organised their pop-up sites, how they found working and living according to pop-up space-times and their feelings about pop-up as a phenomenon. The interviews were crucial in allowing me to understand the discourses used by people in the pop-up scene. They showed how participants identified with and invested in pop-up's imaginaries (for example many participants described their sites as flexible or their practices as immersive) but also how these imaginaries were differently valued and experienced through the varied lifeworlds of the participants.

For the on site interviews a show and tell about the space was often included, aligning the interviews with a tradition of tour/walking tour based interviews (Dowling, et al., 2016, Pink, 2007) that has been argued to enable insight into the materiality and meaning of spaces for their inhabitants and/or visitors as well for the researcher. Sarah Pink, for example, explores how conducting a walking video interview in a community garden drew attention to the key features 'determining how the garden would be sensed' (Pink, 2007, 243) such as the path down the middle, as interviewees gravitated towards such features. This style of interview helped me to analyse the aesthetics and materialities of pop-up spaces by allowing interviewees to foreground the important parts of their pop-up sites as well as to explain their limitations and aspirations regarding the sites.

A key difference between my video recordings of interviews and the tour based video interviews conducted by scholars including Dowling et al. and Pink, is that while their concerns are primarily with how a camera helps to understand a person's experience of site during the interview, I knew that the footage would be important for me *after* the interview too, as I would edit it into clips to be incorporated into the i-Doc. My focus was thereby on two things at once. On the one hand I was asking questions

that enabled me to create an indepth knowledge of the pop-up sites and business, and to produce a thorough understanding of the pop-up scene. On the other hand I had one eye on what would look and sound interesting in the i-Doc clips and would sometimes note down timecodes for particularly illuminating sound bites. A potential conflict of interest here was apparent to me, especially because of the film training I had undertaken before commencing my video work. The film training was geared towards documentary production and the leaders of the course approached us (the students) as potential documentary makers rather than researchers (which most of us were, given the AHRC were funding places on the course). The way they talked about on camera interviews was, consequentially, a little uncomfortable when applied to research. They would refer to hypothetical interviewees as 'characters' and stress that it was good if you could get the 'characters' to express heightened emotions on camera, including, if possible or relevant, crying or becoming angry. This instruction shows the potential discrepancy between filming interviews for inclusion in documentary and filming interviews as part of a research methodology, where an ethics evaluation is unlikely to encourage eliciting tears or heightened emotions from participants.

Geographers often stress the importance of reflecting on power and positionality when conducting interviews and encourage taking measures to make participants feel at ease, for example by selecting appropriate sites for the interview (Elwood & Martin, 2000). While this is also a skill in documentary film making the aim of such a skill for documentary, according to my training at least, is to create a situation where participants will readily express emotion on camera, rather than primarily an ethical concern with their comfort and wellbeing.

Embedded in my dual use of video are two problems related to the tension described above. Firstly, there was a conflict between wanting to hold conversations that allowed me to *understand* pop-up and between wanting to record participants saying things that would effectively *communicate* pop-up when included in short (on average 2 or 3 minute) clips. Potentially, having one eye on what would work well in

the clips precluded my full attention being on the conversation and thus limited my understanding of what participants were saying, foregrounding instead the comments that reinforced my pre-existing ideas about pop-up. Secondly, my dual use of video raises a concern that the research could have been exploitative if I was 'using' interviews to generate 'good' footage for the i-Doc I was creating. The exploitative nature of research is something that other Geographers have argued is pervasively problematic (not limited to interviews that are filmed or intended for documentary purposes). Cloke, for example, has argued that it is problematic for researchers to 'flip' in and out of the lives of participants 'staying just long enough to collect juicy stories' (Cloke, et al., 2004; 166). This problem is arguably heightened when filming interviews with the aim of creating an i-Doc, where the mindfulness of a potential audience for the footage accentuates the desire for footage to be 'juicy'.

Using interviews as part of the i-Doc production therefore required me to put in place strategies to mitigate these methodological and ethical problems. In attempting to mitigate the problem of focusing on what would make a good clip, rather than on the nuances of what participants were saying I learnt to set up a camera position that wouldn't require me to zoom in and out. In the early interviews I had often tried to zoom in for what I thought might be significant statements that would warrant greater emphasis in the clips, but this led me to be watching for these 'significant' moments, detracting from my engagement in the interview. In later interviews I therefore set the camera up in a position somewhere between a medium shot and a close up so that the interviews would feel intimate in the footage but also the camera wouldn't need adjusting. Budget allowing, I could also have mitigated this problem by hiring a camera person to film for me, but this was not possible as part of this research. I also watched the footage back carefully several times, before and during editing it, and this allowed me to find and consider information I might have overlooked during the interview itself. In addressing the ethical issue of exploiting participants, I decided to offer to share footage, write ups and edits with my participants and encourage them to comment on these if they wished (none of them took me up on this, although a couple requested my footage for their own purposes). I also decided to put the i-Doc

behind a password to assure them that its primary purpose was as part of my academic methodology, not as a piece of entertainment that would be accessed by the general public.

As well as posing problems, filming the interviews had methodological advantages too. It allowed me to look back over interviews and to pick up on subtle gestures, intonations and suggestions I may have missed at the time (Garrett, 2011). There were also actually advantages to the tension between the dual role of the interviews, to understand experiences of participants and to generate i-Doc material. Filming the interviews with a view to making an i-Doc also meant that during the interview I was attentive to potential links between what different participants were saying. I knew that the i-Doc would be structured, in part, by links between different clips so, while conducting the interviews I was mindful of identifying thematic trends that would mean particular clips should be linked together. This gave me a relational mode of attention through which I was particularly concerned with the conflicts and parallels between the experiences and discourses of different participants.

Similar problematic and productive tensions arose from my use of participant observation. Participant observation was conducted at all the pop-ups included in my research and, as previously discussed, involved both involvement with and observation of both those in attendance at pop-up events and those organising or running events or spaces. Participant observation can be part of a long term ethnography or a short term method and my visits were no more than a few hours long as, rather than conducting longitudinal studies of particular pop-up places, my objective was to study a series of pop-ups in order to gain an understanding of pop-up culture as a city wide phenomenon. As Eric Laurier describes, participant observation allows researchers to work out '*what* things are relevant to study', '*why* those things are significant' and '*how* those ordinary and extraordinary things are accomplished by the people we are studying' (Laurier, 2016) by assimilating themselves into a research context in order to produce specific knowledge of its everyday practices. This was true in my research where participant observation was

a key means through which I decided on the important elements of each pop-up site studied and thereby what to shoot and include in the i-Doc. Participant observation allowed me to grasp the different textures of pop-up places and the different meanings of pop-up that were developed and prioritised by their organisers. For example, I helped in the kitchen at both Christabel's Mad Hatter's Brunch and at Anna's Secret Supper Club and whereas at Christabel's I was aware of an emphasis on the theatre of the event, for example the glitter added to food and the immersive decoration of the site, at Anna's event I found the emphasis to be much more on the quality of the food and its cooking. These differing priorities were reflected in the participation I ended up doing. At Christabel's I hung out in the kitchen drinking prosecco with the staff and helping to sprinkle glitter, somewhat haphazardly, on scrambled eggs. At Anna's, however, I was quickly prevented from 'helping' with the food when it became clear that I wasn't capable of arranging canapes with the required level of attention to detail.

Geographers have also argued that participant observation is valuable for being a bodily activity. Chris McMorran, for example, has argued that participant observation of flexible labour in inns in Japan allowed him to 'conduct research through the body' and thereby 'take seriously the spatiality and creativeness of embodied work practices' (McMorran, 2012). The bodily nature of my own participant observation was also productive in understanding the space-times of pop-up that I was studying. For example, being inside the claustrophobic container spaces many of my participants worked in gave an insight into the limitations of those spaces. Likewise, being freezing cold at Alex's house boat (where The Ship's Kitchen supper club was hosted), before he turned the heating on for the guests, helped me to understand the process of transformation by which a second-best housing situation (buying a, by nature cold, house-boat rather than a house) is made into a cosy and exciting destination for supper club guests (who commented on how warm the boat was on arrival). The bodily nature of participant observation was therefore an important part of grasping what it means to invest in and (re)produce pop-up's imaginaries and

allowed an insight into the different experiences of those imaginaries for producers and consumers of pop-up places.

However, the nuanced understanding of pop-ups that participant observation allowed me was complicated by my simultaneous need to film the events. A process that took me 'out' of the scene, requiring me to, at intervals, observe rather than participate and to do so, conspicuously, at the distance of a lense. A limitation of filming while participating in pop-ups is that it clearly reminded participants that I was there as a researcher, reducing their ability to relax and thus my ability to observe the goings on 'naturally'. At many events I was able to successfully film and assimilate into the event. For example in the footage I have of Latitudinal Cuisine, other guests can be heard talking and joking with me while I am filming, demonstrating that, despite filming the event, I was effectively integrating into its sociable atmosphere. At others, my assimilation was less successful, for example in one of the clips of The Artworks a woman dancing in the crowd sees me filming her and looks distinctly uncomfortable about it. However, despite causing discomfort in some scenarios, filming also gave me something to do at times when the pop-up staff were too busy to talk to me or to delegate tasks I could do, or when I was attending an event as an audience member/guest rather than helping out, which I usually did alone. Filming, in these contexts, stopped me feeling awkward because I had something to do that wasn't stand around on my own and therefore eased any potential awkwardness.

Using interviews and participant observation alongside interactive documentary therefore complicated the practice and ethics of these methods but also in some ways enriched these methodologies by making me more comfortable in the research setting or by encouraging me to look out for comparative and pervasive themes between sites. They were invaluable methods both in generating the material needed for the experimental production of an i-Doc but also in giving me the deep understanding of pop-up that I needed to identify pop-up's imaginaires and begin to think about how to articulate them. The next sections explore the various stages of

making the i-Doc and how each helped me to identify and articulate elements of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries.

### **Making the I-Doc: Modes of Attention**

Making the i-Doc involved multiple stages and took almost three years of intermittent work to complete. This section explores the rationale behind the processes including the methodological rationale but also the practical limitations posed by my budget and my limited technical and artistic skills, as a researcher undertaking amateur experiments rather than an experienced practitioner. The table below gives an overview of the process which is then discussed in more detail across the sections that follow.

#### **Planning**

Made a rough plan of the i-Doc infrastructure, the material that would go in it and the software and hardware that would be needed. Sought funding for the project and identified a coder, Michael Skelly, to help produce the i-Doc's interface.

#### **Filming and Photography**

Took film footage and stills during my site visits to pop-up places

#### **Editing to produce clips**

Used Adobe Premier Pro to edit the film footage into 18 short clips about my case studies

#### **Making "outside pop-up city" pages**

Used still images from internet sources and from my own photographs and footage to produce collages on Adobe Photoshop that form the 'outside pop-up city' pages for the i-Doc

#### **Working with Michael Skelly (computer coder) to develop the i-Doc interface**

Met and held discussions via email with Skelly in order to design and create the i-Doc interface as well as to make adjustments and add features over the course of its production



**User testing**

Shared the 'finished' i-Doc with a selection of friends who could check that all elements of it were in working order

**One: Filming**

It is commonly argued that video and photography can focus on the sensory dimensions (Merchant, 2011; Pink, 2014; Jacobs, 2015) and materialities (Hunt, 2014) of place. Although my focus was on pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries, the capacity of film to attend to the material and the sensory was important as it was often through these elements of space-time that imaginaries were communicated. Having in mind the eventual aim of creating an i-Doc while filming helped me to tune into the way that spatiotemporal imaginaries are manifest in and conveyed through material and sensory dimensions of place. During my periods of participant observation, intermittent filming helped me to focus on the component features undergirding my senses of what pop-ups were like and what imaginaries were at work in them. I was always thinking about what could be captured that would evoke the spatiotemporality of the pop-up places for a hypothetical audience. Choosing where to point the camera thereby became a process of identifying objects or processes that were instrumental in producing pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries.

In the respect that I was constantly making decisions about what to film and how, so as to be able to elucidate and convey pop-up's imaginaries in the i-Doc, my methodological use of video was quite different from that of other Geographers. As Garrett has explored, video is commonly used to keep a record of research and to allow researchers to capture and revisit 'small gestures, expressions and moments which remind us of something intangible...that may have slipped from memory otherwise' (2011, 526), as attempted by Chris Philo and Eric Laurier in their work with video to record gestures between strangers in cafes (Laurier & Philo, 2006). As Garrett argues, ethnographic film making is often encouraged to be reflexive; to

foreground an awareness of the decisions made by the person in front of the camera in order to acknowledge 'biases' integrated 'into the edited work later' (528) as well as to make the film making feel more participatory to those being researched. Participatory video takes this a step further, allowing participants to 'take control of the production processes' in order to voice their own experiences. In these approaches to film making, the primary aim of video is positioned as capturing that which the researcher might not effectively capture during the ethnographic period; intangible aspects of the field including gestures or rhythms or the experiences of participants expressed with their own meanings and agency.

While the elements of film making described above were important to my own work I was also concerned with how I would use my footage later. My creation of an i-Doc necessitated aesthetic choices designed to allow me to create and convey my own interpretation of the spatiotemporal imaginaries of pop-up culture. At the same time, my use of video is quite different from the large scale, cinematic Geographical films such as Matthew Gandy's *Liquid City* or Patrick Keiller's various collaborations with Geographers, where the aesthetics of film making are key. This is partly because I was lacking the 'large funding bodies and expensive equipment' of such projects (Garrett, 2011; 525) but equally because my main concern was with the methodological value of making the film rather than with the film as a finished product for distribution for an audience.

In thinking about how to represent the imaginaries of pop-up culture, I was imagining a hypothetical audience, but I knew that, because of the ethics agreement made with my participants, my i-Doc would not be distributed beyond the academic context. The primary value of imagining an audience was to help me identify what material, aesthetic or spatiotemporal elements of pop-up places the imaginaries I am writing about are rooted in and produced through, my premise being that finding out how to convey those imaginaries to a hypothetical audience involved identifying their component features.

A good example of how imaginaries are communicated through, for example, material dimensions of place is how owners of shipping container studios customized their containers. As will be discussed in the container chapter, the materiality and aesthetics of containers and their adaptations is key to understanding how spatiotemporal imaginaries of 'flexibility' are produced and function in pop-up culture. The tensions between the homogenous industrial design of containers and their creative customization imaginary was important to the production and instrumentality of the flexibility imaginary and filming was a way to focus, quite literally, on the materials and aesthetics through which ideas of flexibility are conjured.

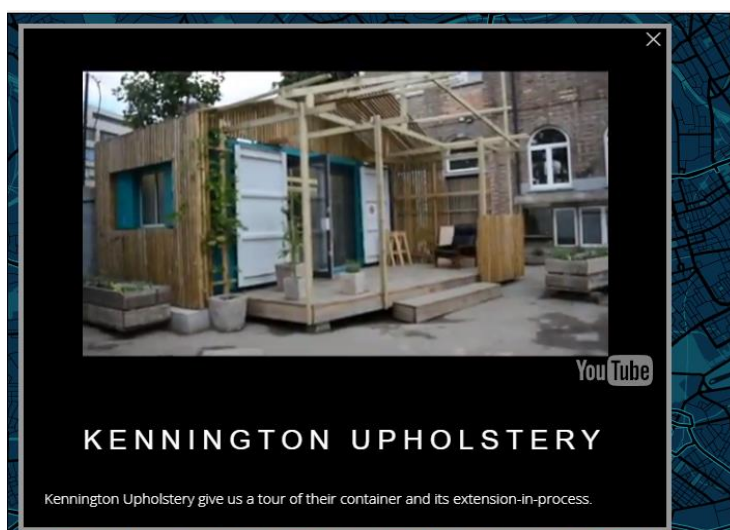


Figure eight: Adapted Container

Other times, the process of focusing in on the material was less conscious. For example, as will be discussed in chapter seven, it was only half way through my field work that I realised I had been recording footage of the doors to supper clubs. This accidental focus of my filming revealed, as I will explore in chapter seven, the importance of a tension between public and private space-times in supper clubs.

Filming also helped me to focus on how the functions of pop-up's imaginaries in the urban assemblage manifest visually. In seeking ways to communicate pop-up's role in the process of gentrification, for example, I filmed bill boards and posters advertising the forthcoming redevelopment of the sites pop-ups were occupying. As O'Callaghan writes of his photographic method, photographs can capture alternatives to the dominant ways of seeing a city (O'Callaghan, 2012), and filming

these kinds of objects helped me to engage a critical perspective through my i-Doc, bringing to the fore a counter narrative to that which pop-up offers; one that sees pop-up as a vehicle for gentrification rather than means of engaging with place or ensuring its openness.

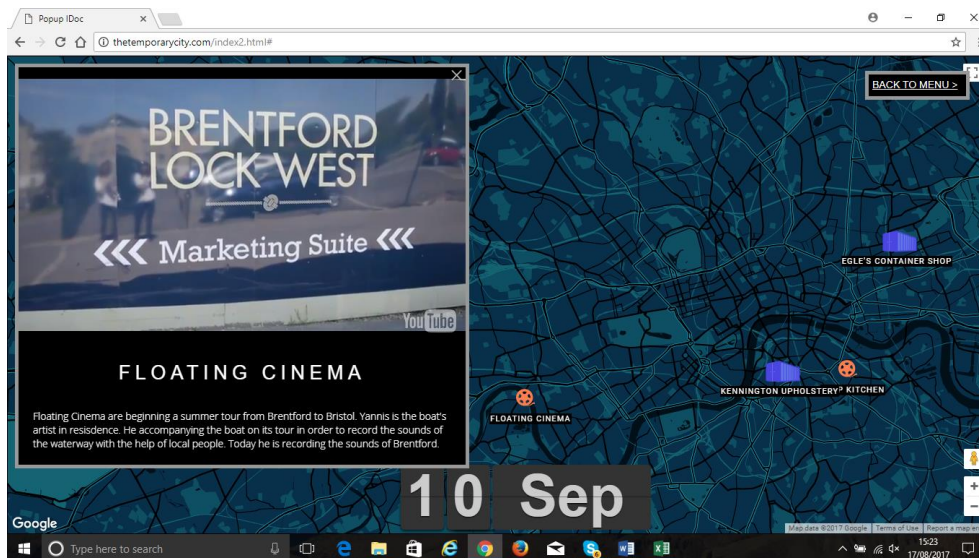


Figure Nine: Redevelopment Billboard in Brentford

Filming was also useful in making sense of my own presence in these spaces. Filming foregrounded the presence of my body space (Hunt, 2014, p. 164). At many points in the footage my body, or its reflection, is visible to the viewer. This is important in emphasizing the way that affective dimensions of spatiotemporal imaginaries are mediated through the body. My own presence reminds us that the spatiotemporal imaginaries I seek to convey are not abstract ideas but material and affective processes felt through embodied subjectivities. Equally, as discussed earlier in the chapter, my presence in the footage is a reminder of the power geometries of my research. If the i-Doc is in some senses a democratic medium, in that users can shape their own experiences, my presence in the footage indicates that it still has an author of sorts so, like pop-up culture itself, its claims to be interactive and participatory have stark limitations.

## Editing

Editing also enabled specific modes of attention to pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. It has been argued that editing is a 'mode of analysis' a 'process of sifting, sorting and composing' (Garrett & Hawkins, n.d.). Hester Parr identifies editing as part of the methodological process, allowing for identification of what is particularly significant and meaningful (Parr, 2007). In my work, editing was indeed part of the methodological process. Sifting through my footage of pop-up places and considering what the footage showed, against the backdrop of my experiences from participant observation, furthered my understanding of the sites I had visited. In particular, it helped to draw out relationships between sites, given that I was producing clips that would stand in multiple relations to one another in the i-Doc. What could be seen as merely coincidences, like a common bird tattoo on two pop-up workers, in the edit started to reveal the socio-economic contexts linking pop-up places together, such as its embeddedness in London's hipster economies (Harris, 2018 (Forthcoming)).



Figure Ten: Bird Tattoos

Editing is also significant in thinking through pop-up's imaginaries because it focuses attention on space-time. As Clarke and Doel have explored in relation to early cinema, editing can be understood as a process of engineering space-time (Clarke & Doel, 2005) and therefore focuses on what space-time *is*, in order to think through

how to reconstitute it. The idea that space-time is reconstituted, rather than captured by film is important to emphasize here.

To edit film is not to present space-time as 'captured' on camera; even in documentary film, creating filmic space-time requires heavy curation. As Laurier and Brown have explored (Laurier & Brown, 2011), film makers take pains to gather 'unnatural' shots and sounds that may seem irrelevant at the time of filming but are crucial in the edit. For example, as I was taught on the course I attended, it is important to capture 'room tone' – that is the background sounds of a room, at a time when your 'character' is not talking. Snippets of room tone can then be spliced in between reordered sections of dialogue or added to the end of a clipped statement to make it seem less abrupt.

Likewise, capturing establishing shots of areas or cutaways to be used in editing interviews are all common practice in documentary film. These heavily curated shots are needed to 'recreate' the place or event in a convincing way. To make filmic space-time seem 'natural' a great deal of 'artifice' is required. Film making, then, is not about mediating a pre-existing reality, it is about assembling images and sounds to *produce* something that will pass as reality for the audience. For Laurier and Brown, the *production*, rather than mediation of a reality by film is clear from the format of editing software which is set up as 'an elaborate geography of windows, tools and levels' (Laurier & Brown, 2011, p. 244). Within this elaborate geography footage is laid out, processed and brought together in new configurations in order to engineer the space-time of the film.

To understand editing in this way is to understand the task of evoking pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries as a process of *assemblage* not capture. Such assembling requires working out what the spatiotemporal experience you're trying to convey is like and how it can be broken down into and reconstituted from component characteristics. For example, in editing the clip 'Pulp Kitchen', I wanted to give a sense of the film's immersive nature which, from my participant observation, I had

understood to be rooted in how the temporality of the off-screen was tied up with the temporality of the on-screen.



Figure Eleven: Editing Pulp Kitchen

As I will discuss in chapter five, one of the key ways that Pulp Kitchen engaged immersion was in giving guests various snacks and drinks to eat at different points in the film; ones that correlated to particular scenes or actions. For example guests were given a shot of alcohol in a syringe to consume at the point in the film where the character Mia is given an adrenaline shot. Simply showing my footage of people taking this shot wouldn't have shown how, for a person attending the event, this action felt tied up with the action of the film. I experimented with ways to convey this and eventually decided that part of the clip would be made up of juxtaposed still images of the corresponding clips and snacks, introduced with gunshot sounds to give them a sense of movement and integrate them into the 'pulp fiction' aesthetic of the event. This was not a direct mediation of 'what happened' but a curated way to express the spatiotemporal imaginary of the event. Editing then helped me to make sense of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries because film making forced me to think carefully about what they are like, in order to know how to 'reassemble' them for a hypothetical audience.

In addition, the particularities of editing for *interactive* documentary were key to the modes of encounter that editing engaged for me. In editing any film, 'additions and removals have ramifications that spread throughout the film' (Laurier & Brown, 2011). Film editing is a 'nonlinear' process (Laurier & Brown, 2011, p. 240) in which

editors must be attuned to how shots or scenes early on in a film will transform the meanings of those that come later, and thus how their removal or alteration will impact on the film's totality. This can be understood with reference to Bergson's comparison of duration with melody (Bergson, 2001, pp. 100-101). For Bergson, duration is like melody because in melody each note qualitatively changes the meaning of those before and after it. The effect of any given note cannot be understood in isolation because those before and after it are foundational to how that note is experienced. For Bergson, moments in a duration work in the same way; the qualities of a given moment cannot be understood in isolation because what comes before and after it changes its nature. This also means that the qualities of that given moment are not static, but are constantly being reformulated as new moments occur and retrospectively interact with them. Editing draws attention to this nonlinear temporality, showing how 'past' and 'future' are contemporaneous in the sense that they interact with and co-produce each other. Usually, the editor to some extent 'fixes' the meaning of each shot by deciding, definitively, what will go before and after it and therefore which of its capacities will be activated. However editing interactive documentary doesn't work this way, because the editor instead is producing sequences that can be viewed in multiple orders.

For Adrian Miles, editing i-Docs becomes a process of 'assembling particular sets of possible relations' (Miles, 2014, p. 75). In producing clips that could be viewed in multiple orders, the contingency of meaning, the ability for one shot to be activated in new ways if others are placed before or after it, is retained for the user rather than shut down in the edit. As such, editing i-Docs generates awareness of contingency. It requires increased attention to the multiple ways meaning could be generated by the co-presence of clips across time. This aspect of editing for i-Docs is therefore central to the nonlinear mode of encounter they enable and, in my work, enabled me to focus on the multiple and often conflicting trajectories that pop-up events can be part of.



## **Making the i-Doc**

To create the i-Doc interface I worked with Michael Skelly, a friend and web coder. Although i-Doc producing software does exist (for example “Klynt” is one popular software) I wanted to build my own i-Doc from scratch rather than use the templates available. This was because what is important to me about the i-Doc, as a method, was partly the process of designing its interface and making the decisions about its spatiotemporal architecture including; how the pages would be arranged, how clips would link together, its temporality, its aesthetics and its abilities to host different media including moving and still images. None of the software available offered enough flexibility on these elements as they are designed to provide an infrastructure that can be adjusted to varying degrees but always includes some, and usually many, fixed elements. Building the i-Doc from scratch involved me thinking up features of the i-Doc’s spatiotemporal architecture that I thought would communicate pop-up’s imaginaries and working with Skelly to see how these could be manifested.

There were multiple important decisions to be made about the interface. I had to decide how many pages the i-Doc would involve and what would be on each one. In the ‘play the pop-up city’ page, which is the i-Doc’s main view, a calendar marks the passing of time as a user watches clips and I had to decide how fast time would pass and how long a user would be allowed to stay in the play view (if not infinitely), thus determining how many of the clips they could potentially watch. I also had to decide what links to offer at the end of what clips, including which clips would link to one another and which outside pop-up city pages would be available from which clips. There were also decisions to be made about the aesthetics of the i-Doc, its colour schemes, the icons used for clips and the font for the text.

The way that coding works made this kind of collaboration possible. For many of the i-Doc’s features, Skelly was able to show me several options pretty much instantly by making small changes to the code, changing, for example, the colour scheme or the positioning of an interface feature and then changing it back if we decided the alteration wasn’t successful. I held three meetings with Skelly over the course of the

i-Doc's production and the rest of the decisions and production we discussed via email.

Collaborating was beneficial as it required me to consider how pop-up's imaginaries can be communicated to others. Whereas I tended to get tied up with how to design the interface in line with my theoretical convictions, Skelly was interested in what the i-Doc would be like to use. This forced me to focus on how pop-up is felt and would be communicable in contemporary culture rather than on the academic articulations of its imaginaries that I, by that point, was so embedded in. For example, I had reservations about using a map for the basis of the interface in case it gave an impression of the city as a static space, a container *within which* pop-up occurs, rather than a dynamically produced assemblage. But, in talking with Skelly, I realised that without a map users would find it hard to know how to navigate the interface. Furthermore, on reflection I realised that the map, although potentially problematic for *Geographers* as a totalizing representation of space might actually help to communicate pop-up's imaginaries of dynamism and flexibility to others. Whereas for me, the idea of a dynamic pop-up city juxtaposed against an otherwise 'fixed' urban space-time was *ontologically* erroneous, I realised that this would not necessarily be a problem in communicating pop-up's *imaginaries* to others. Clearly the strength of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries in popular culture derives from the fact that pop-up is seen as *unusual* in its flexible and nomadic use of space; its imaginaries wouldn't have the power they do if they didn't sit against more traditional imaginaries of space as static that, while outdated in Geography, are clearly still to some extent operative within society more broadly (otherwise pop-up wouldn't be seen as novel and exciting).

This raised an interesting question for me as to who I was making the i-Doc for. While I was thinking of the i-Doc as a methodology, I was also concerned with how it would communicate pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries to a hypothetical audience. On reflection, I felt that the hypothetical audience were in fact part of the i-Doc's value for me as a mode of thinking. It was thinking about this audience that forced me to

engage with what pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries are and how they can be made tangible, and in doing so to identify the components and contexts they emerge from and operate in. Thinking about the user was also helpful in sorting through the difference between pop-up's imaginaries as felt in contemporary culture and my own academic understanding of the phenomenon.

Building on the propositions worked through in the first and second parts of this chapter, I now discuss three key ways that the i-Doc interface engages with space-time in pop-up culture. Firstly, I show how its design helps to evoke pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries and secondly I show how it helps to foster a critical perspective on those imaginaries; drawing attention to their instrumentality in the city. Thirdly, I explore how the i-Doc engages with tensions between agency and inaction. I also discuss the challenges I encountered in designing the i-Doc interface.

### **Evoking Pop-Up's Nonlinear Imaginaries**

The 'spatiotemporal architecture' (Wood, 2007) of my i-Doc is designed so that its features evoke the spatiotemporal imaginaries I have identified and explored in pop-up culture. As already mentioned, thinking about and designing these features allowed me to focus on what pop-up's spatiotemporality is like and how to evoke its experience for others. The features of the i-Doc will be explored more in the next section and referred to across the three empirical chapters in order to further the arguments I make. Here, though, I want to give an overview of some of the interface's key features to introduce how its design helped me to elucidate and evoke pop-up's spatiotemporal logics. Designing the spatiotemporal architecture was a key way of thinking through what pop-up's imaginaries are and how they are constituted because being able to evoke them for a user required me to think about how to reconstitute them.

The first page you arrive at in the i-Doc features an 'enter' button. Originally, this button had been labelled 'next' but I decided to change the wording so that it instead

said 'enter'. I did this after reflecting on the ways that the i-Doc could evoke immersion. In pop-up culture, immersion can be understood as 'the sensation of entering a space that immediately identifies itself as somehow separate from the world' (Griffiths, 2013). Whereas 'next' implies proximity, the word 'enter' evokes this sense of entering a demarcated space. Although the i-Doc is hosted online, the enter button on the home page signals to users their admission into an 'immersive' space that is other to the rest of the internet. Needing to actively click on the button also foregrounds the relationship between immersion and interactivity, evoking how immersive spaces are performed and reformulated immanently by user interaction.

The second home page offers two ways of accessing the i-Doc. It can either be 'played' or the clips can be sorted by category. The category view has links to all the clips that the i-Doc contains. Here, users can watch clips at will, whereas in the play option access to clips is determined by the pace the i-Doc progresses at (as will be explained shortly). I wasn't sure at first whether to include the category view as, in one sense, it undermines the point of the i-Doc, which is to convey the unpredictable coming and going of pop-up events. However, on reflection, I decided that presenting the clips in this way as well would emphasise the multiple individual actors and groups of actors that pop-up culture is made up of; foregrounding the idea that the sense of space-time conjured by the 'play' view is embedded in and produced through the practices of those multiple actors. The category view then prompts a nonlinear way of thinking about pop-up's imaginaries as an assemblage; produced through the multiple trajectories that the category view lists.

While the category view encourages nonlinear, assemblage thinking, the play view evokes and elucidates pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries. The basis for the play view is a map on which the clips appear, labelled with icons that indicate which 'type' of pop-up they are (container space, cinema or supper club). Whereas many i-Docs use stills of clips, instead of icons, I decided to use icons. Stills, as appear in the category view, give too much insight into what the clip will be about. Wanting to evoke the importance of secrecy and surprise in pop-up, I decided to use icons because they

give little sense of the clip, further than the 'type' of pop-up it is. Clicking on an icon makes it start to play. The way that the clips are 'activated' by clicking echoes claims by stakeholders in pop-up that pop-up events can 'activate' and 'animate' latent urban space. In this way the i-Doc helps to elucidate imaginaries of pop-up as an urban form that animates the city.

One of the crucial methods through which pop-up space-time is evoked by the i-Doc is through how time works within the play view. A calendar marks the passing of time as users interact with the pop-up city. Clips appear and disappear as time passes, signalling the flexibility of the city's spatiotemporal fabric and evoking the ephemerality and flux of the pop-up city. As a user of the i-Doc, the way pop-up clips come and go generates a sense of uncertainty and anxiety. It is impossible to move backwards in time, so users have no choice but to move along with the ever evolving pop-up city. They can choose clips from those available on the map but might find that, while they are watching one clip, another that they had planned to view has disappeared. Each clip ends with options to follow a thematic link to another clip as well as sometimes with options to see 'outside pop-up city'. Choosing one of these 'outside pop-up city' links opens up collages that include still images and text and reflect on elements of the pop-up city, as will be discussed in more detail shortly.

Interestingly, creating the i-Doc's 'nonlinearity' required the clips to be given precise time loggings, mapped out by me in advance, and for the possible links between clips to be plotted in the i-Doc's coding. This foreground the importance of thinking about user experience and the difference between the 'reality' of an i-Doc's architecture and the 'reality' it conveys. Making an i-Doc that *is* nonlinear won't necessarily convey nonlinearity; instead attention is needed to how to reconstitute nonlinear imaginaries. The success of the i-Doc in evoking nonlinearity was evident when, at the end of its production, I came to test it. It was incredibly difficult to check that there were no problems with the i-Doc because there are so many possible pathways through it and only a limited amount of them are available to take in each sitting. The nonlinearity of the i-Doc therefore made a systematic user checking of it

from the 'front end' practically impossible. Instead I sent the password for the i-Doc to a selection of friends who 'tested' it for me, helping me to identify anything that didn't work.

### **Engaging a Nonlinear Geographical Imagination**

In designing the i-Doc I wanted it to not just *evoke* pop-up's imaginaries but to generate a critical, nonlinear way of seeing those imaginaries. As previously argued, in order to be critical of pop-up's *nonlinear imaginaries* a nonlinear way of seeing is necessary because it enables attention to the ongoing production of the city as a precarious assemblage and to pop-up's role in normalising and thereby stabilising precarity within it.

Earlier in the methodology chapter I explored Crary's argument that particular mediums can 'overcome' disorientating spatiotemporal sensations such as fragmentation by providing a perceptual apparatus that makes sense of them. I suggested that this raises concerns around how creative media and methods could acclimatise us to troubling conditions and thereby reduce our desire and ability to respond to them critically. This is something that I have been concerned, in developing my own methodology, to avoid. As the thesis argues pop-up's nonlinear imaginaries play a key role in normalizing precarity. Rather than reinforce that normalization by using the i-Doc to realign perception with pop-up's imaginaries – thus in some way acclimatizing potential users within the precarious city - I have aimed to use the i-Doc to engage a critical perception of the construction and instrumentalities of those imaginaries. To do this I have included features in the i-Doc that explicitly resist the normalisation of pop-up's imaginaries, prompting potential users to instead see outside of pop-up's spatiotemporal logics and critically consider the role those logics themselves play in acclimatizing people to precarity.

The key feature of the i-Doc for enabling a critical nonlinear imagination is the integration of the 'outside the pop-up city' pages. The 'outside the pop-up city' pages

are offered to users as options at the end of certain clips. These links open up text and image based information boxes which discuss impacts that pop-up culture has on the wider city, or some of the broader socio-economic and political issues it is tied up within. To make these pages I used images from google searches as well as stills from my video footage to create collages on Adobe Photoshop, including text in the collages too. Skelly then added these into the i-Doc. The aesthetics of the collages were intended to be in keeping with 'the temporary city' as presented in the i-Doc, but the text in them offers a perspective that jars with and critiques pop-up's imaginaries. For example, the clip about *The Artworks*, a shipping container mall, ends with an option to see 'outside the pop-up city'. The page that opens up explains how the mall occupies the site of the former Heygate Estate, a council estate which was controversially decanted, sold at a loss by the council then knocked down to be turned into expensive flats. The page offers a critical insight into the mall, showing how it is being used by the developers Lend Lease to rebrand the site and attract the middle class buyers the new flats are aimed at. This information problematizes the notion that pop-up's transformations of sites are 'temporary' and shows how its imaginaries of the urban fabric as 'flexible' correspond to *forced* urban changes through displacement and demolition.



Figure Twelve: Now-here

Although the outside pop-up city pages are in keeping with the i-Doc's aesthetic, their content undermines rather than reinforces the pop-up affect. Their inclusion in the i-Doc aims to ensure that it doesn't just immerse viewers within the spatiotemporal logics of pop-up culture but also contains provocations which prompt them to critically consider what is *not* included in, or indeed masked by, the stories pop-up tells about itself. The 'outside the pop-up city' pages encourage users to engage not just with the experience of space-time in pop-up culture but with how pop-up's imaginaries are put to work in stabilizing and transforming the urban



assemblage; maintaining a faltering economy, normalising reduced provision of welfare (for example the provision of council housing) and being mobilized for state and developer led gentrification. In addition, the 'ending' of the i-Doc offers another critical perspective. After ten minutes in the i-Doc's 'play' view the i-Doc is interrupted by another 'outside pop-up city' page which takes over the whole screen and informs users that their time in pop-up city is up because development is due to commence. As will be explored later in the thesis, this ending encourages users to think critically about pop-up's role in urban transformation and its value (and lack of value) to stakeholders.

Through the i-Doc the nonlinear geographical imagination; which recognises the city as a transforming assemblage within which different actors have different levels of power, is brought up against pop-up's own nonlinear imaginaries. This encounter exposes the politics of pop-up, but it perhaps also exposes a nativity within geographical conceptions of nonlinearity, which tend to assume that nonlinear logics are always conducive to progressive politics, as indeed is often assumed of pop-up by those who take its imaginaries at face value (Iveson, 2013; Nemeth & Langhorst, 2014).

### **(Limits to) Agency: Producing Space-Time**

As explored in the previous two sections, creative media and creative methods are also instrumental in enacting space-time differently. In part two, I explored how i-Docs are seen to foster a sense of agency within the 'real' world. However, as I have also discussed, *lack* of agentic capacity in i-Docs can be just as integral to fostering critique. As stated above, a key aim of the i-Doc is to allow me to expose the logics being produced in pop-up culture and enable them to be questioned before they solidify as common sense, as they rapidly are doing. The outside the pop-up city pages offer this kind of critique. In a different (and much better funded) project there are several ways that the i-Doc could be used to foster more agency and criticality

around pop-up culture, not just for me and those engaging with this research, but for potential users of the i-Doc as a standalone medium.

Firstly it would have been good to embed discussion forums to stimulate debate around pop-up culture, as many commercial i-Docs do. This would have allowed users to feed back their opinions to me, as well as to other users, generating debates to encourage critical thought and serving as a way to collate reactions and opinions that could then be presented to governments, developers and other influential stakeholders. It would also have been interesting to in some way link the i-Doc to live lists of pop-up places currently in the city, so that users are encouraged to visit pop-ups and explore pop-up culture for themselves. This would, importantly, give them more opportunity to form their own opinion on pop-up's imaginaries and their implications, rather than accepting my presentation of it.

Another interesting way to engage with questions of agency would have been to have different avatars through which users interact with the pop-up city, for example developers, pop-up organisers, guests, people displaced from decanted housing estates etc. It would be interesting to make an i-Doc where the pop-up city is experienced differently through these different avatars, who could all have different capacities within it. Such an experiment would bring the i-Doc closer to a 'news game' (Nash, 2015) and encourage users to critically examine the power geometries of pop-up culture.

Although such experiments were far beyond the budget of my project I have tried to foreground people's capacity for agency in the 'real' pop-up world by providing links to other resources and articles on the 'about' page of the i-Doc (including journalism on pop-up, links to the Conservative Government's report on pop-up housing, etc.) as well as giving my contact details for those who want to discuss ideas further. As in *Prison Valley*, the links to other resources on the web encourage users to see my i-Doc as part of a 'real world' issue and to use it as a starting point for their own critical investigations beyond its parameters.

In addition, I wanted to use the i-Doc to engage with myths of agency in pop-up culture. Within pop-up culture the flexibility imaginary carries a sense of enhanced agency for urban actors. The names of pop-up organisers such as 'Appear Here' and 'Somewhereto' suggest an open and inclusive access to urban spaces for amateur and start up enterprises as well as for charities and individuals. However, this imaginary of a city where anyone can have agency over urban space-time has been critiqued by those who argue that pop-ups only create the *impression* that 'alternative' uses of space are being accommodated (Colomb, 2012, p. 143). What's more, because pop-ups are explicitly used by policy makers to attract long term occupiers back to sites, they actually close up the very sites they ostensibly create access to. This is one of the ways in which pop-up can be framed as a form of 'cruel optimism'; where an object of hope - the potential to have control over space in the city - actually forecloses that very opportunity.

These issues around agency are engaged in the i-Doc by the limited capacities that users have. While they are able to choose which pop-up to 'activate'; giving them a sense of agency in the pop-up city, they are limited by the imposed time-frame of the i-Doc and, crucially, unable to make their own changes to it, for example by uploading clips. The capacities for interactivity in this *interactive* documentary are, in that sense, actually fairly limited; reiterating the myth of agency within pop-up culture itself.

### **The I-Doc in this Thesis: Analysis as Method**

Finding an effective way to discuss the insights afforded by the i-Doc is a challenge of this thesis. As an experimental methodology, there was no model for how to do this, and my attempts are a work in progress. The sections above have discussed the kinds of attuning to pop-up space-time that stages of the i-Doc's creation enabled and, in the chapters that follow, I further explore the i-Doc's making and the focuses

it afforded. However, as well as discussing its making, I often approach the i-Doc analytically when discussing it in the thesis, as it would be encountered by a user.

There are two reasons why I discuss the i-Doc from an analytical user perspective. Firstly, as noted, imagining a hypothetical user was important to the value of making the i-Doc. As discussed, the i-Doc will not be distributed publically, but thinking about a potential user experience was crucial to its value because it forced me to identify 'component' features and processes of pop-up's imaginaries, in order to know how to evoke them for an imagined user. Writing about how a user would experience pop-up culture through the i-Doc, and which features of the i-Doc produce that experience, therefore illuminates the processes, aesthetics and materialities through which pop-up's imaginaries are created.

Secondly, sometimes my discussion analyses the i-Doc from a user perspective, rather than focus on its making, because it was actually my analysis of it that was illuminating for me. While the making of the i-Doc was invaluable in exploring pop-up, analysing the i-Doc *after* its making was also a central element of the methodology. As argued, a key value of creative methods is that they allow particular kinds of thinking to take place (Hawkins, 2015). The thinking enabled by the i-Doc as a method took place in its analysis as well as in its creation and it was often in reflecting on the 'finished' i-Doc, that I was able to verbalise the importance of particular features.

For example, when designing the play view I created the map that is its background using a program called 'snazzy maps' that enables alterations to google maps. Snazzy Maps allows the design of new colour schemes, and the adding or subtracting of certain features from the map, including roads and place names. It was only when writing about the i-Doc after its creation that I articulated why I removed place names from the map. While writing the section on imaginaries of flexibility (chapter six) I was exploring the i-Doc and it occurred to me the lack of place names on the map suggested pop-up's disregard for existing places in the city, it's assertion that all space can and should be transformed, and its tendency to

overlook what is lost in those transformations. This feature of the i-Doc drew my attention to the political implications of the flexibility imaginary and enabled me to articulate its stakes in my writing. Analysing the i-Doc while writing, as well as making it, therefore offered its own nuanced insights into dimensions and functions of pop-up's imaginaries. Of course my analysis of the i-Doc is very different to the analysis that somebody else might undertake, given that I myself designed and created it. Rather than drawing my conclusions based on the contents and features of the i-Doc encountered afresh, analysing the i-Doc evoked facets of pop-up's imaginaries that I had experienced, but perhaps not fully articulated, during my participant observation. The year I spent in the field visiting pop-up places and following the pop-up scene online had given me a deep understanding of pop-up's logics, aesthetics and imaginaries, and reflecting on the i-Doc, designed to evoke the experience of the pop-up scene, allowed me to elucidate and articulate the particular elements that added up to my overall 'sense' of what pop-up culture is like. Analysing the i-Doc was therefore an important part of the methodological process.

### **Chapter Conclusion: Moving Forward Nonlinearly**

This chapter has explored the theoretical rationale and practical requirements of my use of interactive documentary as method. I have surveyed the utility of creative media, across history, in providing perceptual apparatus appropriate for particular socio-economic conditions as well as, specifically, the use of creative media as methods for exploring nonlinear space-time. I have introduced interactive documentary and argued for its value as a method for exploring nonlinear imaginaries in pop-up culture. I described the process of creating an interactive documentary and argued for the insights that particular parts of this process, including filming, editing and designing the i-Doc interface, allowed me. I have also developed and explained the vocabulary with which I describe and explore the i-Doc I have made and introduced the key features of it.

The thesis now takes these ideas around i-Docs and their utility in understanding spatiotemporality forward into to a discussion of my empirical data; spread across three empirical chapters on pop-up cinemas, shipping container architectures and supper clubs. I begin with pop-up cinemas for a specific reason. As this chapter has considered, cinema and cinematic technologies have, across history, developed particular modes of encounter. In this vein I consider pop-up cinema as engaging a mode of encounter that is key across pop-up culture. Beginning with pop-up cinema therefore allows me to set up pop-up more generally as a phenomenon within which particular modes of perception are being developed. As I will argue, containers and supper clubs produce and engage modes of encounter too. However, pop-up cinemas, given that they are positioned in a history of technologies of spectatorship, are most easily understood in this light. The next chapter explores four pop-up cinemas and their appearance in the i-Doc in order to consider the *immersive* modes of encounter encouraged in pop-up culture and their instrumentalities in the city.

As explained previously, in considering the modes of orientation produced and engaged by pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries I focus on three key aspects of its way of seeing the city: its attentiveness to spatiotemporality, its role in structures of feeling and its production of compensatory narratives. In the following chapter on pop-up cinema my primary concern is with the first of these elements, pop-up's attention to spatiotemporality, but the chapter also sets the scene for understanding pop-up's role in emerging structures of feeling, and compensatory narratives, arguments which are developed more thoroughly in the later empirical chapters.

## Chapter Five

# Pop-up Cinema: Immersive Imaginaries and Urban Interactivity

### Introducing Pop-up Cinema

Pop-up cinemas are a core element of 'the temporary city' (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Harris, 2016; Harris, 2015). London has a well-developed pop-up cinema scene led by commercial front-runners including Secret Cinema, but also including many smaller scale, often experimental or art house pop-up cinema projects. Pop-up cinemas are significant among the pop-up landscape because they are prototypical of how pop-up culture transforms city spaces into *immersive* locations, signalled as other to everyday urban space. Immersion takes multiple forms in pop-up but, as explored in the literature review, can be centrally defined as either using real city spaces to (re)create a fantastical world, or, making real space fantastical by engaging 'immersive viewing practices' (Griffiths, 2013). Pop-up cinema offers a valuable insight into how pop-up brings the city into focus through this immersive gaze.

Pop-up cinemas can be contextualised within a broader trend for 'live' cinema (Atkinson & Kenney, 2017, Forthcoming ). Live cinema, as Atkinson and Kennedy have defined, is cinema 'that escapes beyond the boundaries of the auditorium whereby film-screenings are augmented by synchronous live performance, site-specific locations, technological intervention, social media engagement, and all manner of simultaneous interactive moments including singing, dancing, eating, drinking and smelling' (Atkinson & Kennedy, 2016). Such screenings foreground 'atmospheric, immersive and participatory' experiences and can be located within an 'increasingly participatory cultural and creative economy' (Atkinson & Kennedy, 2016) that includes immersive theatre (Alston, 2016; Alston, 2016) exhibitions and dining events. Pop-up cinemas are forms of live cinema that are further distinguished

by their spatiotemporality, as temporary or mobile events that unexpectedly appear in and transform urban spaces.

Exploring immersion through pop-up culture therefore offers a unique insight into a phenomenon that is increasingly prominent across the creative and cultural economies. Specifically, as I will argue, pop-up encourages us to think about how immersion operates not just as a form of performance and spectatorship but also as a mode of encounter. It allows us to focus on the relationship between immersive imaginaries and the city. As will be explored, pop-up cinemas are differentiated from other forms of film spectatorship through their emphasis on *site* and encounters of it. Pop-up cinemas transform the films they show by encouraging them to be experienced *through* the immersive site of spectatorship. Reciprocally, they also engage films in ways that alter experiences and perceptions of those sites. Pop-up cinemas therefore beg attention to how the immersive viewing practices cultivated in such cinematic spaces transform ways of seeing urban space-time. Alston has argued that immersive theatre 'describes a mode of encounter' through which the audience, in an immersive state, is attentive to 'cues' and clues in the environment including, crucially, elements of the environment that weren't designed as part of the immersive world' (Alston, 2016, p. 31). Similarly, I will explore how the modes of encounter encouraged by pop-up cinema leak out into experiences of urban space more broadly.

As argued previously, pop-up's imaginaries must be understood within the socio-economic context that pop-up emerged out of. In exploring pop-up cinema's immersive imaginaries I consider how its encounters of the city relate to reconfigurations of the urban assemblage in the post-recession, austerity context. In this chapter, I am concerned with exploring how immersion is engaged in pop-up culture as a way of seeing urban space-time. Equally, I am interested in the instrumentalities of pop-up's immersive imaginary within the precarious urban conditions it emerges out of. As well as furthering understanding of pop-up's imaginaries, the arguments of this chapter contribute to a longstanding tradition of



work on film's reformulation of spatiotemporal perception (Griffiths, 2013; Crary, 1990; Clarke & Doel, 2005; Jameson, 1991). I build on arguments explored in the previous chapter, that film develops a particular 'optical unconscious' (Benjamin, 2008) and that vision has been, historically, unassembled and reassembled through technologies of spectatorship (Crary, 1990) to consider how pop-up cinema - as a mode of spectatorship that is as much about urban space as about film text and media - reconfigures spatiotemporal perceptions of the city. As such, I also further a tradition of related work in Geography, Urban Cultural Studies and Film Studies that considers the symbiotic relationship between cinema and the city (Clarke, 1997; Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2001; Atiken & Zonn, 1994). Scholars have long been interested in the ways that cinema 'leaks' out into the city, and vice versa (Clarke 1997: 3); in this vein, I explore how real and reel space come into contact through pop-up film spectatorship.

### **Imaginaries as Spatiotemporal Sensitivity**

Analysing pop-up cinema allows a particular insight into the *imaginary* as it functions in pop-up, illuminating how pop-up's imaginaries generate and engage particular spatiotemporal sensitivities. The reason that pop-up cinema is a good place to start for exploring spatiotemporal sensitivity as part of pop-up's imaginaries is, firstly, as already argued, because film has long been thought about as an arena where spatiotemporal perception is reconfigured, but also because 'the imaginary' has a particular meaning within film and screen studies. There, as compared with in Geography, it has been more closely aligned with Lacanian definitions of the imaginary, and/or with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reinterpretation of Lacan. In studies of film spectatorship, the imaginary can be used to evoke how the spectator identifies themselves in the film image (Campbell, 2005, p. 2). This process of identification is argued to parallel Lacan's identification of the imaginary as a way of seeing developed in the mirror stage of psychological development. In this stage, the child makes sense of the loss experienced when they realise they are separate

from their mother, and the rest of the world, by imagining a unified, stable self in the mirror. Ben Campkin summarises the Imaginary Order as 'where the subject, in the pre-verbal mirror stage, constructs an internalised image of the whole self', a 'realm' in which 'relationships between the external world and the subject's psyche, between private and social arenas, are negotiated' (Campkin, 2013, p. 8).

In evoking this Lacanian definition of the imaginary, I am not suggesting that I will read pop-up cinema through Lacan; a consideration of the value of psychoanalytical studies of film spectatorship for approaching pop-up cinema is not the theoretical focus of this chapter or thesis. My aim in evoking the imaginary's psychoanalytical origins is not to align my reading of pop-up cinema with this tradition in spectatorship theory but to foreground a specific element of this conception of the imaginary that is somewhat lost in contemporary Geographical accounts, yet incredibly valuable to recover: the idea that the imaginary entails a recognition on the part of the subject of their spatiotemporal relations with(in) the world.

As Campbell explores, Lacan depicted the imaginary as a misrecognition of self 'as a unitary whole'. Important here is partly that this it is a *mis*recognition and partly that it is a *spatiotemporal* misrecognition. The mirror offers an illusory construction of unity much like the illusory 'total view' of space-time that Crary argues the panorama provided to spectators in its heyday. The mirror transforms the subject's awareness of space-time from an implicit understanding of their immersion within a material world to a self-conscious conception of themselves as a discrete entity within a spatiotemporal field. This realisation is unsettling and the imaginary then compensates for that alarm of recognising the isolation of the self by providing a fantastical image of unity within space-time.

This understanding of the imaginary is also foregrounded by Fredric Jameson in his reading of Lacan, where he argues that 'The imaginary may thus be described as a peculiar spatial configuration, whose bodies primarily entertain relationships of inside/outside with one another, which is then traversed and reorganized' (Jameson, 1991, p. 357). Others, departing from Lacan, have argued that the imaginary, rather

than providing a *false* vision of unity, actually signals an *orientating* awareness of the self within space-time. As Campbell explains, for Merleau-Ponty, the 'imaginary is not a narcissistic illusion covering primary fragmentation, but a stage where the perceptual relations between self and other, or self and object, are dialectically put into play' (Campbell, 2005, p. 18). In this, reading, the imaginary can enable 'not just a harmonious relation to space and time, but also a situated perception and identity within history' (19).

So, with reference to Lacan, the imaginary can be understood as a way that the subject orientates themselves in space-time; framed either as a false sense of personal unity and distinction from *other* space-time, or as a constructive awareness of their relational presence within the spatiotemporal fabric. My explorations of pop-up's immersive imaginary work in this vein. I am concerned with how immersive viewing practices make spectators aware of spatiotemporality and their place within it. In particular, I argue that the immersive imaginary reveals to the subject their *immersion* within a space-time that is virtual as well as actual, that is continuously re-assembled (in part through their interactions) and which is metastable; open to being deterritorialized and reterritorialized.

This chapter also works with Deleuze's response to the idea of the imaginary (Deleuze, 1986). In an interview entitled "Doubts about the Imaginary", Deleuze is largely dismissive of the imaginary as a filmic concept because, for him, it can be reduced to the constant exchange between the virtual and the actual (Deleuze, 1986). Deleuze denies that the imaginary (in cinema) entails more than a recognition of the capacities of space-time to be otherwise assembled. This is, again, an account of the imaginary that aligns it with spatiotemporal orientation, here emphasising the role that filmic 'time-images' play in fostering awareness of space-time's generative, open formation. Deleuze's identification of the filmic imaginary with the recognition of the virtual will be valuable in this chapter, where I argue that the immersive imaginary indeed constitutes an awareness of the capacities of space-time to be otherwise assembled. Deleuze's analysis of film's reformulation of spatiotemporal

sensitivity is also relevant in this chapter. In *Cinema One* and *Cinema Two* Deleuze traces how spatiotemporality has been expressed by cinema and argues that cinema found new ways of thinking both time and space, demonstrating pure time as radically open and exposing the contingency of spatial distribution. For this reason, Deleuzian concepts and terminology are valuable for analysing spatiotemporal sensitivity in pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary.

### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter will explore pop-up's immersive imaginary as a way of engaging with urban space-time, with reference to five case studies of pop-up screenings in London. It has three interrelated aims. Firstly, the chapter's central concern is to develop an account of what immersion, as an imaginary in pop-up culture, is and does. Secondly, in beginning my empirical explorations of pop-up in sites of film spectatorship, I set the scene for considering pop-up culture more broadly as an arena where modes of encountering space-time are being reformulated. Thirdly, this chapter develops the argument that spatiotemporal sensitivities are key elements of pop-up's imaginaries. I show that pop-up's imaginaries engage sensitivities to space-time as nonlinear and that these nonlinear imaginaries play a key role in narrativizing changes in the urban assemblage at a time of turbulence.

Structurally, the chapter moves through five further sections. I begin with a theoretical introduction that sets up this chapter's argument that *sites* of spectatorship, as well as films themselves, have *always* been key to producing perceptual modes. The chapter is then split into three empirical sections across which I use conceptual theorisations of immersion and comparisons with historical immersive sites to explore immersion in pop-up cinema. Each section deals with a particular iteration of pop-up cinema's 'immersive viewing practices' (Griffiths); immersion as serious play, immersion and interactivity, and the immersive

imaginary's vision of the city as an 'any-space-whatever'. I then end with a conclusion on the chapter's findings.

### **Cinematic Site and Ways of Seeing**

It has long been argued that film and technologies of spectatorship have a transformative impact on spatiotemporal sensitivity. These arguments rest on the premise, articulated by Walter Benjamin, that sense perception does not occur 'naturally' but is 'historically' dictated (Benjamin, 2008, p. 8). Within this view, filmic and pre filmic medium are seen as hugely significant in the historical reformulation of spatiotemporal encounter and distribution. As Clarke and Doel have described it; "From the magic lantern's otherworldliness to the panorama's uncanny dislocations; from the diorama's untimely time-image to photography's opening up of the optical unconscious, visual culture has constantly reconfigured reality in a way that parallels the reconfiguration achieved by technologies and cultures of transport' (Clarke and Doel, 2005, p. 42). The last chapter already explored how film and other creative media reconfigure spatiotemporal sensitivity, so these arguments are not repeated here. Instead, I introduce arguments that, as well as filmic *media*, sites and apparatuses of spectatorship also play a key role in the reconfiguration of vision. Leo Zonn has called for an approach to film which considers not just film text but attends to filmic sites too (Zonn, 2007, pp. 64-65). By excavating arguments that film sites reconfigure modes of encounter, and furthering these arguments through my analysis of pop-up cinema, I follow this call. I argue that the 're-engineering' (Clarke & Doel, 2005) of imaginaries of space-time in pop-up cinema happens through the subject's encounter within an assemblage of 'real' and 'reel' space.

Various scholars of film spectatorship and technologies of exhibition have explored the significance of the physical geographies of spaces of exhibition in generating ways of seeing. Such arguments are often made about pre-cinematic forms of visual exhibition. For Crary, it was 'The viewing platform in the centre of the panorama', as

a physical site where the audience stood, that generated the sense that 'an individual spectator could overcome the partiality and fragmentation that constituted quotidian perceptual experience' (Crary, 2002, p. 21). Likewise, Della Dora argues that it was the physical structure of boxes of curiosities brought by travelling raree showmen, 'their hidden yet liberating spatiality, their physical containment', that allowed them to 'take the viewer further, visually and imaginatively' (Della Dora, 2009, p. 337).

Filmic sites too have generated particular modes of encounter. In its early days, film was often shown at travelling exhibitions where it was fascinating to viewers as much because it was a novel technology of vision as because of the images depicted in the film. Early audiences marvelled at demonstrations of film alongside other technological 'marvels' such as X-rays (Gunning, 1986). Here, the exhibition and demonstration format was crucial in generating the imaginative mode of encounter that film still evokes. These technologies were exhibited as curiosities by performative showmen addressing crowds of eager onlookers. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Vaudeville exhibition format saw film exhibited alongside live music, sing-alongs or lectures (Hansen, 1991, p. 43) and these live elements of exhibition were key to the modes of encounter engaged by the film screening events. Miriam Hansen has suggested that elements of live performance in early film exhibition asserted the incompleteness of film as a circulated commodity, which needed to be completed through 'improvisation, interpretation and unpredictability' during the event (Hansen, 1995, p. 208). The live elements of film exhibition gave spectators a more personal involvement with film content, particularly as they often responded specifically to the demographic in attendance. For example, Hansen describes how movie theatres in Chicago, which largely catered for African Americans, would draw on Southern black performance, jazz and blues in producing entertainment to accompany white mainstream productions, altering the meaning of that text (209). The site of exhibition was therefore foundational, rather than just supportive, of how the films were received.

This is also clearly true of how exhibitors in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, like Hale's Tours, screened films in immersive sites much like many pop-up cinemas. Tom Gunning has described how Hale's Tours, which featured shots taken from moving trains, were staged in an imitation train-carriage with conductors taking tickets (Gunning, 1986). Clarke and Doel similarly describe how, at the Trans-Siberian railway Panorama, spectators 'sat on the deck of a ship, which was made to pitch and roll' (Clarke & Doel, 2005, p. 48) and was accompanied by sounds imitating a moving train. These screenings were even led by conductors who would lecture on points of scenic interest. Here, much as in pop-up cinemas, the creative design of the site of spectatorship and live elements of exhibition were used to enhance the immersion of the audience within the film.

Alison Griffith has argued that 'immersive viewing practices' (Griffiths, 2013) are activated by spaces including museums or churches, as well as site of film spectatorship. Griffith's examination of immersive spectating considers 'audience mobility around the viewing space' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 1) and treats technologies of spectatorship, such as at the panorama, together with architectural spaces like churches as sites in which awe, spectacle and immersion are constituted (32). Griffith's wide reaching approach to 'immersive viewing practices', moving between sites of exhibition and other kinds of, less straightforwardly spectacular, spaces resonates with my conviction that while pop-up cinema is a good starting place for considering pop-up's ways of seeing, pop-up's modes of encounter are in fact formulated across all kinds of pop-up geographies.

In the rest of this chapter I take inspiration from these accounts of *sites* of exhibition as crucial to reconfiguring modes of encounter to consider how immersive imaginaries of space-time are engaged through sites of pop-up cinema spectatorship. In addition, situating pop-up cinema within a history of cinematic and pre-cinematic spectatorship plays another function. As discussed in the last chapter evolutions in spectatorship often correspond to changing realities of collective life. For example, for Crary, the viewing practices of the panorama must be understood

in relation to the modernising city while, for Della Dora peep hole spectatorship played on imaginaries of the exotic at a time when the possibilities of travel were rapidly expanding. Reading pop-up cinema in this tradition, this chapter will begin to account for how the spatiotemporal sensitivities of pop-up relate to contemporary conditions of precarity.

### **Empirical Sections: Three Versions of Immersion**

Each of the empirical sections of this chapter addresses a different aspect of pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary. In the first empirical section, I explore a kind of immersive imaginary that Pratt and San Juan term 'serious play' with reference to one case study; Floating Cinema. Here, immersion constitutes an imaginative and explorative approach to 'real' urban space. Considering Floating Cinema against historical sites of spectatorship, I question how 'serious play' is instigated through filmic site; by the boat that Floating Cinema operate out of. Then, reading Floating Cinema's practices through Deleuze's response to the concept of the imaginary (Deleuze, 1986), I consider how serious play, as a mode of attention to space-time, brings the virtual into focus. In the second empirical section I think about the relationship between interactivity and immersion. I start by explaining how real and reel space come into contact in pop-up cinema through examples from Back Yard Cinema's screening of *Romeo and Juliet* and Secret Cinema's screening of *Miller's Crossing*. I then focus on the interactive pop-up cinema Feed Me Films and their event 'Pulp Kitchen', as well as on Secret Cinema's staging of *Miller's Crossing*, to think about how interactivity in immersive pop-up events draws attention to the subject's immersion within the real-reel assemblage and to their, often uncertain, capacities to affect and be affected within it. In the third section I draw on Deleuze's concept of the 'any-space-whatever' to consider how pop-up's immersive viewing practices suggest an 'any-city-whatever'; a metastable urban fabric open to being deterritorialized and reterritorialized. Here I consider Secret Cinema's screening of



*Back to the Future* and its relationship to the ongoing remaking of Stratford in East London.

Across all three sections I pay attention to the particular ways that an immersive mode of encounter is constituted. This speaks to my conviction, signalled in the introduction to this thesis, that nonlinear imaginaries of space-time do not entail a particular politics and that attention is therefore needed to how they are developed and deployed in particular settings. In discussing my case studies, I work with close reference to the interactive documentary, using it to elucidate the spatiotemporal sensitivities that pop-up's immersive imaginary engages. As argued in the methodology, following Jameson, new 'perceptual equipment' is needed to make sense of changing spatiotemporal conditions and here I use the i-Doc as this perceptual equipment; drawing on it to illuminate the spatiotemporal sensitivities of the immersive imaginary.

## One

### Immersion as Serious Play

'Serious play' refers to a mode of ludic attention to public space that Pratt and San Juan argue is enabled by pop-up cinema (Pratt & San Juan, 2014). In their book *Film and Urban Space*, Pratt and San discuss a series of London based pop-up cinemas, including Floating Cinema - the case study for this section. They explore how pop-up cinemas allow spectators to 're-experience cinema afresh' and argue that pop-up cinemas have distinctive critical potentials in urban space. They suggest that pop-ups' site specific screenings allow spectators to imaginatively approach the urban; for example, to engage 'directly with ideas of waste, recycling, abandoned or neglected spaces and local histories' (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 168). Pratt and San Juan's discussions of pop-up cinema are part of wider arguments they make about film's critical potentials. For them, pop-up cinema provides a vantage point

from which to think through the extension of film's critical potential beyond the immediate site of spectatorship, to impact on urban space more broadly. At the crux of this view is the idea that 'serious play' is a mode of encounter that, while developed in cinematic sites, reverberates through encounters of urban space. Here, I take up Pratt and San Juan's concept of 'serious play' and argue that it corresponds to a spatiotemporal sensitivity towards *the virtual*. I suggest that serious play can be classed as one iteration of pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary and argue that it foregrounds the potentials of urban space-time to be otherwise assembled (Harris, 2017, Forthcoming).

Floating Cinema are a mobile cinema that operate from a purpose built canal boat on London's waterways. They are run by the company 'Up Projects' who, in their own words are an organisation that 'curates, commissions and produces contemporary art that explores heritage, identity and place, engaging citizens of London, the UK and across the globe' (UpProjects, 2016). Up Projects aims to 'empower communities and enrich the public sphere' (UpProjects, 2016). The proposals for the Floating Cinema were developed by Up Projects in response to the 2012 Olympic Games held in London. As Anna, who works at Floating Cinema, explained to me in an interview, the LLDC, who managed the Olympic park, wanted cultural activities to 'connect people living around the park with what was happening inside of it and make it feel like it was sort of a space for them' (Anna, 2015)<sup>6</sup>. Because the Olympic park is strewn with canals, they decided to produce a floating cinema that could reach those who don't normally attend cultural events by *literally* going to them; mooring the boat at points along East London's waterways. From this starting point the Floating Cinema soon expanded into a London wide project. Each season Floating Cinema develop a programme of events that use film and activities to respond to urban, environmental and heritage issues along the waterways. For example their event 'Gone Fishing' used a film about fishing and a trip to a fishery to

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<sup>6</sup> All quotes pertaining to my interviews with participants are referenced with the first name of the participant and year of interview, e.g. (Anna, 2015). Last names of interviewees have been omitted for increased anonymity.

engage with issues of water pollution. Or, their screening “Vertical Living” which took place at a mooring near the Balfour Tower, a large housing block in East London undergoing redevelopment, featured short films that explored ‘the impact of urban renewal.’”

In addressing Floating Cinema’s immersive imaginary and the spatiotemporal sensitivity it engages, I discuss a series of events they held in the London suburb of Brentford in the summer of 2015. The Brentford events formed part of a tour the boat undertook of the waterways from Brentford to Bristol and back. Brentford was picked as a point of departure because it was the furthest place you could go to on the canal before getting out of London. For the duration of the tour a sound artist, Yan Seznec accompanied the boat. Yan worked with interested people at points along the waterway to explore and record the sounds of their area. He spent a week in Bristol in the middle of the tour producing his final piece. On the way back, Yan exhibited the sound piece on the boat including at Brentford where the boat returned to. The events I attended in Brentford included a sound recording workshop with Yan, an open air screening of the film *Life in a Day* (2011) which marked the launch of the tour, an afternoon of on-board screenings of archive footage of Brentford and an event that marked the return to Brentford, where Yan exhibited the piece he made during the boat’s journey. My analysis of Floating Cinema also draws on an interview with Anna that I undertook after the events. In the i-Doc, Floating Cinema is featured in two clips; one that follows Yan during the sound recording workshop in Brentford and another based around the interview with Anna which also features clips of the other Brentford events. Both clips can be located in the ‘reel’ city category of the i-Doc. The naming of this category encourages the idea that, in the immersive imaginary, urban space is seen *through* reel space and its viewing practices. The clips also appear on the map in the ‘play’ view and can also be found through links from other clips including options to ‘follow the river’ or ‘continue in the reel city’.

## Generating Immersive Viewing Practices: The Boat



Figure Thirteen: The Floating Cinema

While Floating Cinema regard themselves as ‘immersive’, Anna explains that this is a different kind of immersion to that which you would find at a Secret Cinema event, for example. Rather than creating a *fictional* world for participants, Floating Cinema make *real* space immersive. Anna argued that this act of making real space immersive is achieved by ‘the charm of the boat’ by ‘getting on board and being excited by that’ (Anna, 2015). As argued in the introduction to this chapter, sites of spectatorship are equally as important in generating immersive viewing practices as films themselves. Here, I want to make a parallel between Floating Cinema and examples of pre-cinematic immersive spectatorship to unpack how Floating Cinema’s boat engages serious play as a type of immersive imaginary that fosters sensitivity to the virtual.

The Floating Cinema boat was purpose designed by the architectural firm Duggan Morris. In a promotional video about the boat’s making<sup>7</sup>, Duggan Morris describe the impetus for the boat’s design. Having researched the history Lea Valley (the area of the Olympic park) they discovered that it was, historically, a hub of invention where technologies such as aviation and petrol were pioneered. Responding to this, they

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<sup>7</sup> <http://upprojects.com/projects/floating-cinema/>

wanted a boat that would evoke that history and the tag line for the design project became 'a cargo of extraordinary objects'. The original plan was to use a refurbished industrial hopper boat, so that the vessel would grow, quite literally, out of the area's history of invention. However, it was found that the repairs and adjustments needed would be too extensive so a boat was designed and built from scratch. To keep the idea of invention alive regardless, Duggan Morris wanted a design for the new boat that would look 'magical'; evoking the enticement and fascination of invention. The way they achieved this also drew on the magic of the cinema. They designed a boat with a shell made from translucent materials so that it would light up at night like a classic cinema light box. This 'cargo of extraordinary objects' therefore came to conflate two kinds of technological invention; on the one hand it evoked East London's history of industrial invention and on the other it evoked cinema as another magical technology.

The mixing of these two kinds of fascination; fascination with invention and fascination with cinema recalls how film, in the early years after its invention, was itself seen as a fascinating, scientific invention. At travelling fairs, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, moving images were often shown alongside other technologies of vision, including x-ray; presented as another example of scientific inventions that would enhance human perception (Sheffield, 2017). The 'charm' of Floating Cinema's boat, designed to evoke both the magic of cinema and the magic of invention, resonates with this former understanding of film as an invention and, in particular, an invention that would offer, like x-ray, new ways of seeing and understanding the human condition. Indeed, Anna talks about Floating Cinema as a set of tools for discovery. She explains how lots of different equipment is contained on the boat, hidden away in its tardis like structure, so that it 'unpacks into many different version of itself', offering, for example, AV equipment or chairs and tables for discussion or workshops (Anna, 2015). The boat, she suggest, can transform to offer tools for different kinds of exploratory practices so that, like the X-ray, it enables spectators to explore human life, but here with a focus on the urban rather than the biological.

This framing of the boat as a magical, traveling vessel is also reminiscent of historical itinerant spectacles (Clarke & Doel, 2005) and landscape objects (Della Dora, 2009) that were brought from place to place to offer communities images of exotic places. Della Dora has described how itinerant showmen in the seventeenth century and onwards carried peep show boxes from village to village, displaying images of distant lands (Della Dora, 2007). Alison Griffith has similarly characterised panoramas as 'moving geography lessons' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 72) that brought viewers experiences of being elsewhere. The Floating Cinema boat could be positioned in this lineage as a peep show that travels around and beyond London but, rather than bringing exotic images of faraway places, uses cinema to make the locations it visits exotic for their spectators.

For Griffith, immersion is closely tied to travel because it also carries imaginaries of 'being elsewhere' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 81). Floating Cinema's boat evokes this sense of immersion being a mode of transport. It is of course, quite literally a form of transport but also, as we will see, enables a kind of 'virtual transport' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 40) whereby spectators are given an uncanny experience of seeing urban places anew; *as if* travelling to them from afar. If peep shows immersed viewers in imaginative geographies of locations they could never visit, then Floating Cinema's boat turns that immersive view onto everyday spaces of London and in doing so makes them seem exotic.

For Della Dora, the materiality of the peep show box was key to the immersive view it produced and this resonates with Floating Cinema. Della Dora discusses how 'much of the charm derived from the very physical structure of the peepshow: from it being a hidden space' (Della Dora, 2007, p. 290) and this is strikingly similar to a comment Anna made during our interview, where she also suggested that the boat has a 'charm' that generates a 'sense of wonder' (Anna, 2015). This charm, as with historical itinerant spectacles, derives from a sense of mystery surrounding the boat. Anna described how whenever they travel the waterways, people will hang out of windows, looking at the boat, wondering 'what is this!?' Della Dora suggests that it

is precisely the physical act of looking through the eyepiece of peepshow boxes which produced mystery and thereby conjured geographical imaginaries of an unknown and exciting world to be discovered. That is to say, it was not just the landscape visible within the box that produces a way of seeing other countries as exotic, but the material circumstances of exhibition and the embodied way that spectators are required to interact with the peepshow as a technology of exhibition. Likewise, the materiality of the Floating Cinema boat is, like the peep show, crucial to its immersive view. Throughout my interview with Anna she used the phrase 'get on board' in two senses; a literal sense, meaning to get on board the boat, and a metaphorical sense, meaning to get on board with the spirit of the project. This dual usage of the term is telling. For Floating Cinema, *getting on board* the boat enables 'serious play' as a mode of encounter. The boat serves as a kind of portal through which spectators can enter into an immersive state. Just as Griffiths suggests that some spaces, like churches, create immersive states without the need for technologies of spectatorship, Floating Cinema's boat itself can produce this mode of encounter; to get on board is to enter into the immersive imaginary.

This sense of immersion beginning with an invitation to 'enter' an immersive way of seeing is elucidated in the design of the i-Doc. The start page for the i-Doc features an enter button that serves as the primary attractor at that stage. Its existence is an explicit invitation for users to 'enter' the i-Doc's interface. I choose the word 'enter', as opposed to other options such as 'next' or 'play' to evoke this key element of pop-up's immersive imaginary. 'Enter' conjures the idea that, as Griffith notes, immersion corresponds to *depth*, to the ability to penetrate a depth of spatiotemporality that we normally hover over.

Thinking about how to make the i-Doc 'immersive' illuminated what makes sites of pop-up spectatorship immersive too. An i-Doc is, in practical terms, part of the 'normal' internet. It is coded and hosted in the same way and can be arrived at through hyperlinks, like any other web page. Yet, despite this, i-Docs are experienced as demarcated, immersive spaces in which a more imaginative

approach to (internet hosted) content is encouraged. The viewing practices with which one explores an i-Doc are very different, for example, from how you might browse Wikipedia, because it engages an immersive, imaginative way of seeing the content; serious play, if you like. In my i-Doc, I used the enter button to signal this break between 'routine' internet space and the immersive space of the i-Doc. The text on the first page, where you find the enter button, is over-laid on a darkened image of the Floating Cinema boat and I chose this image because of its 'magical' look; it is an image, I feel, that signals to users that a new way of looking is now required. This elucidates the function of the boat in Floating Cinema's events. Designed to look 'magical', and to evoke historical ideas of journeys and invention, it signals that a new mode of encounter is now required and this signal transforms everyday spaces of the city into immersive sites of spectatorship. The boat is a *portal* of sorts that enables that shift between usual and immersive perceptions of space-time.

### **Cinematic Sounds: Hearing the Virtual Through Serious Play**

I now turn to think about how serious play brings virtual capacities of urban space-time into focus, by looking at Yan's sound art practice. Yan enlisted visitors and passers-by to use his sound equipment to explore the noises of Brentford. Just as the boat contained a number of tools that could be unpacked to help visitors explore the area, Yan, as we see in the i-Doc clip, had tools with which to create attentiveness to the soundscapes of Brentford. In this section I argue that the attentiveness to the sounds of Brentford that Yan engaged can be understood as a sensitivity to the virtual dimensions of space-time.

In one part of the i-Doc clip about Yan's sound art we see Yan's tools laid out across the table. Yan, as he prepares his tools, testing them out by fiddling with them, dipping them in the water, noting the sounds coming through his headphones, does seem much like an inventor who has arrived, via the boat, to share his inventions



with the people of Brentford. Indeed, during the day I spent with Yan I saw how he offered his array of tools to passers-by. Yan showed participants how to use the sound recorders, and they came back with sounds including water fountains, factories, dogs or the buzzing of the M4.

Anna explained that one of the Floating Cinema's aims is to think about how you can experience things cinematically without sitting and watching a film (Anna, 2015). Floating Cinema routinely work with artists interested in how other art forms can sit alongside cinema in developing attentiveness and connectedness to place. Read through Anna's suggestion that cinematic ways of knowing the world don't have to be achieved through film spectatorship, Yan's practice on Floating Cinema's tour from Brentford to Bristol and back shows how sound can be a cinematic way of knowing. Indeed Walter Benjamin, talking about the *optical* unconscious, makes clear that cinema enhanced acoustic perception as much as it did visual perception (Benjamin, 2008, p. 28). While the optical unconscious foregrounds the enhancement of sight through cinematic spectatorship, it is clear that film also alters sensitivities to sound, haptic senses of movement and touch and (as will be clear in a later section), taste. Benjamin's claim that cinema creates a 'deepening' of the 'sensory world' helps us to understand Yan's sound work as a cinematic mode of encounter that deepens the acoustic perception of his participants.

The deepening of sensory perception through Yan's sound recording tools is evident in the i-Doc clip about Yan. In one part of the clip, Yan wears the headphones while listening in to the sounds made by shaking a mental fence. The headphones seem to communicate something to him that we, without wearing them, can't hear. Yan turns enthusiastically to the participant accompanying him on the sound walk. "Wanna hear it?" he says. The participant puts the headphones on and nods enthusiastically at the noise's new qualities, transmitted through the headphones. He hands the headphones back to Yan. 'It's kind of amazing' Yan says.

This part of the clip is strange to watch because our soundscape; the soundtrack of the clip, is different from the one that Yan and his participant have access too. This

same dislocation exists at the start of the clip. The image we see there is of a sound boom waving in the bushes as Yan and I tried to record the sound of bees. Yan was waving the boom, but I was wearing the headphones. In the clip we hear Yan say 'How was that'? His question again foregrounds the disconnection between the two kinds of encounter going on. I, wearing the headphones, am the only one who has access to this enhanced sensory dimension.

My aim in producing a disconnect, throughout the clip, between what can be heard through the headphones and what can be heard by other people in the clip, as well as by i-Doc users, was to create the sense that this equipment gives access to a usually hidden layer of reality. Yan's sound equipment allows elements of the soundscape that usually go unnoticed to be recovered, because it enhances the auditory capacities much as film is argued to enhance visual capacities. In the clip, the sound recording equipment makes the everyday sound of the fence into an experience of curiosity and fascination. It also, as I will now argue, focused attention on the virtual capacities of space-time. It did this by assembling sounds belonging to temporally disparate versions of Brentford and asserting their co-presence as virtual capacities for its future trajectories.

As we can see from the list of sounds Yan and his participants aimed to record (image below) the sound equipment focused attention on fading, enduring and emergent elements of Brentford. Participants were interested in recording historical features of Brentford as a place, including its boating culture and its wildlife. They also wanted to record more recent elements of Brentford's soundscapes, such as the variety of accents, the trains and planes that run regularly over the canal, and the industries now located there such as the huge GlaxoSmithKline factory.

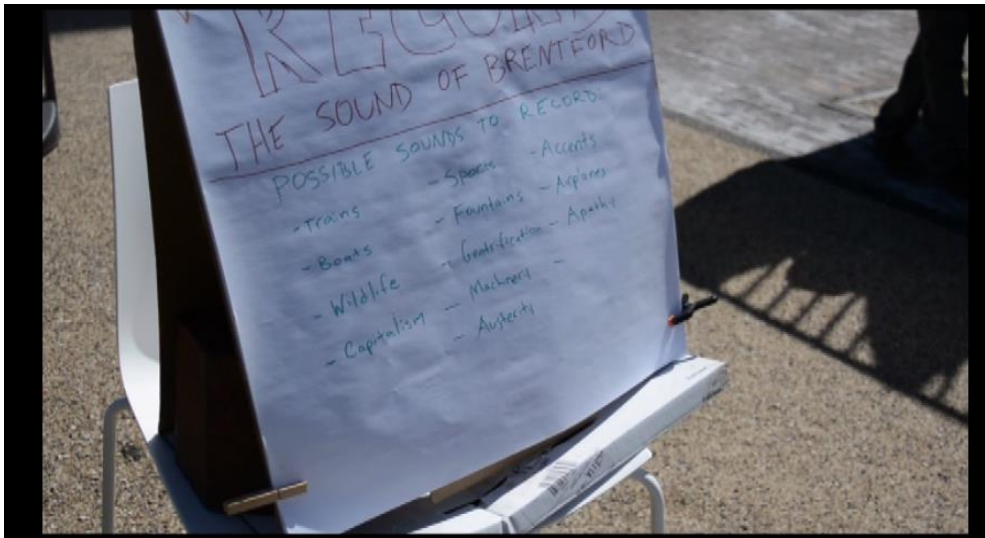


Figure Fourteen: Record the Sounds of Brentford (Possible Sounds to Record: Trains, boats, wildlife, capitalism, sports, fountains, gentrification, machinery, austerity, accents, airplanes, apathy)

Additionally, they were keen to record features of Brentford that relate specifically to the post-recession climate, including 'austerity' and 'apathy' and in using sound to trace the processes of gentrification underway in Brentford. Yan and his participants were also interested in elements of Brentford that could no longer be easily identified but retrieved only in the memories of long-term residents. They recorded interviews with residents who recounted their experiences of Brentford when they had first moved there and, in Yan's final piece, he incorporated sounds from archived material that Floating Cinema had collected about Brentford's waterways; giving his piece a soundscape spanning many decades.

The soundscape collected therefore pointed towards the ongoing becoming of Brentford as a place that, like all places, is in transition (Massey, 2008). But, while in lived experience, some of these qualities of place are more dominant in others, Yan's practice brought sounds from different characterisations and eras of Brentford together in co-existence. I have previously discussed how Deleuze's Bergsonian understanding of time posits that the past persists in the present in the form of the co-existence of the virtual in the actual; meaning that what governs the future trajectories of an assemblage is not just that which is presently actual, but that which has the capacity to be actual; i.e. the virtual. This same image of time can be used

to characterise the spatiotemporal sensitivities engaged by Yan's sound work. The sounds Yan and his participants recorded made co-present the past and the emerging qualities of Brentford alongside its currently dominant features. They brought boating and nature back to the forefront of imaginations of Brentford and tried to draw attention to nebulous changes in its atmosphere by finding auditory traces of things like apathy or austerity. In assembling these different sounds, they pointed towards Brentford's future capacities and recovered forgotten elements that might guide those trajectories.

Yan's activation of virtual capacities was also enhanced by the films programmed for the first weekend of events in Brentford. The Floating Cinema screened archive footage of Brentford on board the boat. They had about two hours of footage which they repeated on a loop throughout the day, for visitors to drop in. The archive footage demonstrated many things that Brentford once was (and still is); a destination for fishing and holiday making as well as a boating community. It also pointed towards past visions of the future of Brentford. It showed how Brentford, as an area that became part of Greater London in 1963, was a site where new visions of the urban were played out. The footage explored how rows of terraced housing were knocked down to make way for the now infamous high rise blocks that were at the time seen as ground-breaking as well as how the M4 was built, radically changing the feel and function of the area. This footage was complemented by Yan's sound work, drawing attention to the remaking of Brentford over the years. As a whole, the weekend of events thus set out resources for reimagining what Brentford is and what it could become.

The way that Yan brought different dimensions of Brentford's trajectories together can be understood through Deleuze's reading of the imaginary. As I have already explained, In 'Doubts about the Imaginary' Deleuze suggests that the imaginary marks the intersection between the real and the unreal and, in particular, relates to a situation in which 'the distinction between them keeps changing round' (Deleuze, 1986). He conflates this with the crystal image. The crystal image is explored in

*Cinema 2*. It refers to the image of pure time in post-war cinema and suggests that, in time-images, the virtual and actual co-exist in a relation of fluctuation, continuously exchanging places in a circuit (Deleuze, 2013). This, for Deleuze, is an image of 'pure time' because it conjures – directly - the irrevocable relationship of the actual to its virtual image, or, phrased more intuitively, the constant dialogue that film images engage between what is and what could be. Deleuze uses this idea of the crystal image to define the imaginary as an ongoing exchange between the 'real' and the 'unreal'; a constant swapping of places between capacities to be and currently activated capacities. Deleuze writes that 'I think the imaginary is this set of exchanges. The imaginary is the crystal-image' (Deleuze, 1986, p. 66). The imaginary that Yan's practice employs is one that can be understood through this reading of the imaginary; as an attentiveness to the ongoing exchange between what is and capacities to be. The sound recordings bring sounds from different eras, versions and possible futures of Brentford into contact demonstrating that what is actual *now* is connected to manifold virtual capacities for things to be otherwise.

Adrian Miles has argued that i-Docs also have a distinctively crystalline structure and, indeed i-Docs can help us to understand my conjecture that the immersive imaginary corresponds to sensitivity to the virtual. I-Docs too foster sensitivity to the virtual because, unlike other filmic forms, they display their virtuality even when one 'choice' has been actualised and therefore make evident the exchanges going on between the virtual and the actual. In my i-Doc I made this exchange very literally observable. In the 'play the pop-up city' view the icons that appear and disappear serve as competing attractors for users; different virtual capacities of the i-Doc's spatiotemporal architecture which the user could activate. Clicking on an icon 'activates' it and the clip starts to play, while the other icons remain static; left out of the progressing time indicated by the calendar. However, at any point while watching a clip you can click on a different icon, sending the clip you were watching back into the i-Doc's *virtual* space-time and actualizing a different one. This ability to exchange the virtual for the actual (and back again) in the i-Doc speaks to Deleuze's definition of the crystal image in film, and his definition of the imaginary as a set of exchanges.

Importantly, if you click on an icon within the i-Doc then a viewing window opens but doesn't extend to fill the whole screen. You can still see the most of the map view and are aware of other icons coming and going as you watch the selected clip. This retention of the virtual alongside the actualised clip draws attention to the virtual potentials you haven't actualised. Designing this visible co-existence of the virtual with the actual in the i-Doc enabled an insight into how Yan's sound work makes audible the co-existence of the past and the future in the present. My design of the i-Doc also highlighted the fact that a system's virtual capacities are also in flux. In designing the play view I scheduled clips to appear and disappear at various intervals across the ten minute period a user is given in the play view. Users of the i-Doc will therefore see that some of the potential clips – the i-Doc's virtual capacities – disappear from the map as they are watching the 'actualised' clip. This feature demonstrates that while the virtual capacities of a system structure its actual capacities, those virtual capacities are not a *fixed* structure but are themselves always being reformulated. This was perhaps an attentiveness missing from Yan's practice which focused more on the capacities of Brentford that *could* be recovered rather than making participants alert to any lost virtual potentials.

This ability to exchange between the i-Doc's virtual and actual qualities helps us to understand the imaginary of potential exchanges that Yan's practice creates. This process of exchange is paralleled in the i-Doc where clips of Brentford and the interview with Anna exist within a web of possible relations with other the other featured temporary places. I designed the i-Doc so that each clip had multiple entry points. The clips of The Floating Cinema can be watched by clicking on them in the time view, found by choosing the option to 'follow the river' offered at the end of other clips or encountered in the category view alongside other clips of temporary cinemas. Users are also given the option, at the end of the clips, to see 'outside the pop-up city', a link which opens an outside pop-up city page prompting users to consider the relationships between pop-up cinema's re-imaginings of place and gentrification.

The outside pop-up city page includes a still from my footage of The Floating Cinema. In the still a sales man from the housing development being built at the site shows a potential buyer the view from the showroom. I spliced this image together with indicators of gentrification and resistance from other pop-up cinema sites including Bermondsey, where 'Feed Me Films' held their event 'Pulp Kitchen', and Stratford, where Secret Cinema held their screening of Back to the Future. The co-presence of different places across London in this image is intended to highlight their shared virtual capacities and potential trajectories. It demonstrates the weight of gentrification as an attractor governing those trajectories, an almost suffocating force in London, but also highlights the different processes of gentrification in each place. The image of the London Orbital points to the event led gentrification of East London through the 2012 Olympic Games. Meanwhile, the image of resistive graffiti, taken from Bermondsey, indicates the smaller scale, everyday acts of protest that take place within gentrifying London. I used this outside pop-up city clip to therefore suggest both the overwhelming force of gentrification as an attractor but also the plurality of trajectories and capacities that interact with its direction in the pop-up scene.

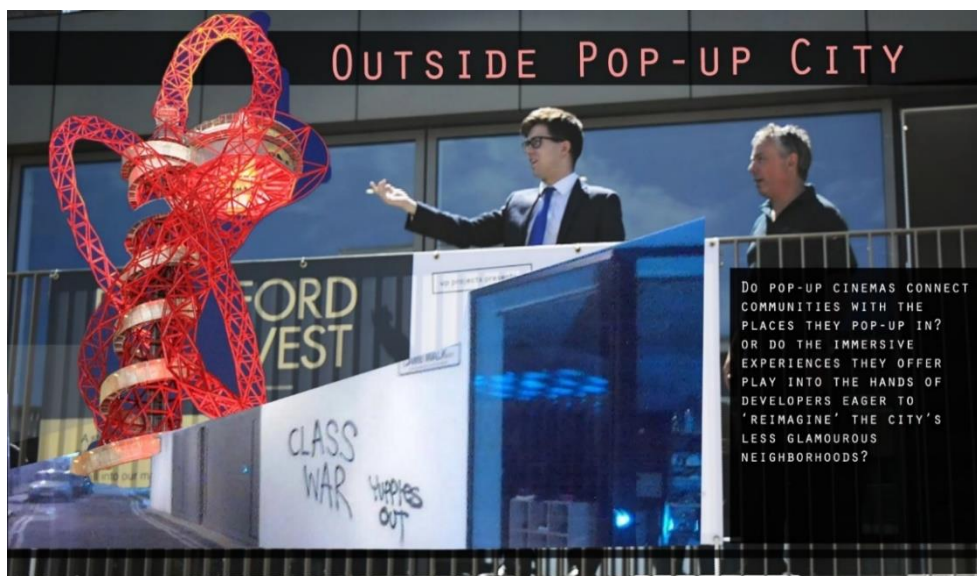


Figure Fifteen: Outside Pop-up City, Immersive Experiences

The different routes to the clips and image pertaining to the Floating Cinema that I included in the i-Doc mean that different virtual capacities can be activated depending on how they are accessed. For example, if you watch the clip of Yan after

watching the interview with Anna, where she talks about gentrification, and/or after encountering the outside pop-up city page, then themes of gentrification within Yan's clip will be more prominent. In contrast, if you arrive at the clip by choosing the 'follow the river' option at the end of The Ship's Kitchen (a supper club) you might be moved to think about the contemporary surge of people living on the waterways due to the housing crisis, and the potential conflicts or alliances between this new boating community and older ones. Just as Yan makes disparate sounds co-present, and in doing so shows different potentials for Brentford, the i-Doc brings spatially and temporally disparate temporary places into contact with Brentford and in doing so illuminates, depending on how you arrive at it, different capacities of Brentford as a place.

As well as visiting the boat at the start of its tour, I also met it at the end of its journey two months later. At that point The Floating Cinema were doing a final event where visitors were invited to hear the sound piece that Yan had made. As Anna explained, thinking about how to present the sound work on the boat was a challenge for Yan, as it was very different from a traditional gallery (Anna, 2015). His solution was to blindfold audiences and allow them to listen to the sound piece while the boat circled the lock. I joined in one of these demonstrations.

The movement of the boat, while listening to the piece, married a sense of embodied, visceral motion with the auditory journey Yan had created. The sensation of the boat's movement made it feel like you were actually *moving through* a changing soundscape as if the disparate geographical and temporal sources it was made from were assembled in a physical place that could be traversed and explored. The title Yan gave to this work is telling of the affect he hoped this would have for listeners. The piece was called 'Neither here nor There'; a title that I think can be understood as evoking – very directly – the unsettling of place that attention to the virtual engages. However the phrase of course has a second meaning of irrelevance or unimportance which could be argued to critically indicate the lack of import placed on what is being lost as Brentford changes.



The imaginary present in serious play can, then, be understood to make the spectator sensitive to the virtual and its ongoing exchanges with the actual. If, for Jameson, the imaginary signifies 'a peculiar spatial configuration' (Jameson, 1991, p. 357) in Lacan's mirror stage, then in pop-up's immersive imaginary the spatiotemporal configuration signalled is not, as Jameson describes, a recognition of the 'opposition of container and contained...inside to outside' but a recognition of the ongoing rearrangement of such oppositions; their 'exchanges', in Deleuzian terms. This recognition of exchange is also what Deleuze sees in cinema's time-image. Whereas in the movement-image time is indirectly expressed by the 'out-of-field' (the way that images gesture towards something *outside* - not currently on screen), in the time-image the *outside* becomes located *inside* the image so that the image is in direct contact with its own virtual capacities. What happens in the time image is therefore a disruption of relations of outside and inside that movement in early cinema is premised on. Here, in pop-up cinema, rather than apply to on-screen film images the site specific nature of pop-up film screenings means that the image corresponds to 'real' space making the image a broader, *actual* - what is currently – that contains and is in dialogue with a pervasive virtual; *what could be*' (Harris, 2016).

Benjamin's depictions of how cinema enhances the optical unconscious also help in understanding serious play in this way. Benjamin writes that 'film increases our understanding of the inevitabilities that govern our lives while ensuring, on the other hand, that we have a vast, undreamt-of amount of room for manoeuvre.' Film, he argues 'exploded all these dungeons' of everyday spaces, 'Our pub and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our factories and railway stations' with its 'tenths of a second' and thus leaves us 'free, now to undertake adventurous journeys amid their widely scattered ruins' (Benjamin, 2008, p. 29). While framed differently from Deleuze's take on the imaginary, Benjamin's descriptions of film's optical unconscious carry the same conviction that film's way of seeing; and in particular its temporal sensitivities expose the contingency of current spatiotemporal organisations and allow imaginative exploration of how things could be different. This section has argued that serious play can be understood as a spatiotemporal

sensitivity to the virtual. However, whereas for Deleuze and Benjamin it is film images that enable this sensitivity we can see that in Floating Cinema it is the expanded site of immersive spectatorship, including the boat and the artistic collaborations they undertake, that enables this mode of encounter.

### **Tensions: Serious Play and Gentrification**

Having considered how serious play is engaged by Floating Cinema's boat, I now consider what instrumentality this imaginary of space-time might have. As Pratt and San Juan have discussed, serious play, while enabling progressive attention to the liveliness of space, also stands in tension with the potential of cinematic events to 'festivalize' urban space; commodifying that very liveliness to make spaces more financially lucrative (2014). Serious play, as an immersive imaginary can be seen as an operative force within London's turbulent urban-assemblage but one with conflicting affects. These tensions were very much apparent within Floating Cinema's Brentford events.

On the one hand, the Brentford events were positioned as a chance for the community to connect more deeply with Brentford as a place to live. The programme of films for the tour kicked off with a screening of *Life in a Day* (Macdonald, 2011); a crowdsourced documentary made out of 80,000 clips uploaded on YouTube, recorded by 'ordinary' people on one particular day; 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2010. The film was introduced by two artists, Nina and Carol, who have been working with Up Projects for several years. They argued that 'archive footage is something we are all making all the time'. Comparing life in a day with old archive footage of Brentford, they demonstrated to spectators that they are the ones who, for example by taking every day footage on their mobile phones, are making the images of their area that will define how it is imagined in future years. Much as Yan encouraged participants to engage in recording and exploring the sounds of Brentford, the *Life in a Day*

screening suggested that people could take ownership over future imaginaries of Brentford.

However, when interviewing Anna it was apparent that the same processes by which local residents became more connected to the places they inhabited were those by which gentrification takes place. As Anna describes, Floating Cinema 'try and spread the programme out across London', to 'places where harder to reach audiences would feel comfortable coming to as well, and we quite often work with the housing development agencies around there to make sure that those communities feel like this is something for them, that they are involved and they are invited' (Anna, 2015). This was the case in Brentford where tickets were put aside for local residents. At this event Floating Cinema worked with Brentford Lock West, the developers, who gave them access to the mooring site and partly funded the event. Anna explains that Brentford Lock were 'really keen that this was something for their residents' (Anna, 2015). Yet, as is clear in the clips about Floating Cinema, the new developments happening around the canal as part of the Brentford Lock development are not necessarily properties designed for those you might consider as 'harder to reach' audiences of cultural events. They are new, high spec flats where even the one bedroom properties are upwards of £400,000, and are more likely to attract newcomers to Brentford who have been pushed out of more expensive areas. Floating Cinema's engagement with the Brentford Lock West development could then be argued to undermine what they seek to support; a community's attachment to Brentford. Their use of the Floating Cinema to 'make the ordinary into something exciting' could instead play into the branding of the area by developers, providing a cultural attraction to entice new residents.

Anna explained that 'Brentford wouldn't really be considered a cultural destination, but we like that kind of challenge, we're inviting an audience from all over London, like, 'come to Brentford', cause nobody else is going to ask you to do that, but we can make it look amazing, and it is a great space around the lock. And to think about celebrating everything that is Brentford, we did a thing about the M4, so really

thinking about how to make the ordinary into something exciting' (Anna, 2015). Here, the suggestion that 'we can make it look amazing' gains a double meaning in the context of the collaboration between Floating Cinema and Brentford Lock West. The intention to 'change how people think about Brentford, who comes here, would they again' is potentially at odds with the intention to make Brentford a more exciting and meaningful place to live for its existing residents.

These issues were very apparent in Yan's sound work explorations of Brentford. As seen in the clip about Yan, his list of sounds to record (a list made by soliciting opinions on twitter as well as from passers-by) includes 'austerity', 'apathy', 'gentrification' and 'capitalism'. In the clip you can see Yan making this list in front of the billboards advertising the new development. While I was there, one participant went to record the sounds of the builders working on the new flats by Brentford Lock West, Floating Cinema's partial funders, and returned to tick off 'gentrification' from the list. In the clip Yan expresses his worry that the list of sounds to record in Brentford is getting a bit grim. Looking at the words capitalism and gentrification he exclaims 'I should probably put something else in between.' Yan's discomfort at the grim picture that the list of words he and his respondents have assembled highlights the interesting incongruity of the Floating Cinema event, where local residents were invited to use Yan's equipment to detect sounds signalling gentrification, austerity and capitalism and did so by recording the sounds of the very development that were sponsoring Floating Cinema.

This was not just a Brentford based issue but a wider concern for Floating Cinema. All their programming, Anna says, takes the canals as a starting point to think about 'London as a transient city.' The canals are a good way in to thinking about industrial decline and reuse and 'to try and capture some of that and think about what it means for the people who live there now' (Anna, 2015). Yet, as Anna noted, the canals are also rapidly changing and the waterways are getting busier, especially as London's housing crisis pushes more people to think about the canals as a way of life (as is explored by one of the i-Doc's outside pop-up city pages and will be discussed in

chapter seven). The canals, for Floating Cinema, are at the centre of a tension between London's industrial history and its imagined futures. Talking about King's Cross, where Floating Cinema hold lots of their screenings Anna said that 'the perception of the canals has changed so much recently', 'there's so much development work that's gone on'. For Anna, this has made King's Cross 'a lovely place to go' (Anna, 2015). However, this raises a question of who is able to access places along the waterways once they become 'lovely'.

Anna describes how hard it is to navigate these tensions. She says that 'a lot of developers are thinking about how to use meanwhile space for cultural activity, and what do they get out of that.' And describes how 'it's something we're really aware of...not using art as a tool for regeneration but as a place to talk about regeneration, a place to think about how communities remain resilient within a time of change, and how do they retain that power as well, that they can make change, this is not just something happening to them'. She says 'we have to find our own ethics in how we work with developers' and try and make it a learning process for them too (Anna, 2015).

The tensions between serious play and gentrification that pop-up cinemas play into are foregrounded in the i-Doc by the 'outside pop up city' page about pop-up cinema, already discussed earlier in this section. The link for this page can be found at the end of the clips about Yan or Anna. As mentioned, it presents a collage of images relating to gentrification and pop-up cinema. Its text also prompts users to question what kind of changes in the city immersive pop-up cinemas actually produce. The outside pop-up city clip is designed to rupture the pop-up imaginary. Whereas the rest of the i-Doc aims to *evoke* pop-up's imaginaries, I intended these pages to offer provocations around the impacts and affiliations of pop-up that its imaginaries might not disclose. For example, the salesman, who is at the centre of this outside pop-up city image, is not the kind of participant included in pop-up's imaginaries, which instead (as will be discussed further in the next section) emphasise the engagement and interactivity of audience members. Yet people like this salesman are key players

in pop-up culture's political economy, both in terms of who enables it and who benefits. Here, it was the developers at Brentford Lock West who had granted the space and they clearly found it beneficial to their own objectives given that the salesman had booked in several viewings during The Floating Cinema's event, no doubt taking advantage of the screenings and Yan's workshops to show how arty the area is becoming.

That is not to say that trajectories of gentrification were missing from the virtual capacities Yan drew attention to. As we have seen, gentrification was among the sounds he and his participants sought to find, but it reminds us that this was not *just* a critical exploration of space-time. At the same time as Yan and his participants were recording building sounds to focus on gentrification, the property sales man pictured was using their activities as an example of how attractive an area Brentford is to buy property in. This irony provokes an important consideration about the conflicting ways that imaginaries can be deployed by different actors (Harris, 2017, Forthcoming). For Yan, attention to the virtual was heightening the connection of his participants with Brentford as a place to live and nurturing their critical approach to urban space, while for the property sales man, that same process was demonstrating a particular future vision of Brentford as a place that, as Yan was showing, is in the process of changing.

## Two

### **Immersion and Interactivity: Nonlinear Assemblages**

Having explored serious play as a key dimension of pop-up's immersive imaginary this section considers the relationship between immersion and interactivity. Allison Griffiths has argued that interactivity and immersion are 'blood relations' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 178); necessitating and enabling one another. Interactive elements are certainly central to immersive pop-up screenings and are prominent within pop-up

cinemas where the 'reel' world is expanded out into 'real' space. If, as we have seen, serious play creates sensitivity to the virtual then interactivity also attends to the nonlinearity of space-time. Here, I want to argue that interactivity fosters sensitivity to the subject's agency, but also entrainment, within spatiotemporal assemblages.

In Jameson's description of Lacan's mirror stage he writes that this is a point where the child makes 'the connection between inner motoricity and the specular movements stirring before him' (Jameson, 1991, pp. 354-355). Here, the imaginary, as well as relating to spatiotemporal orientation, relates to the acknowledgement of agency within space-time; to the realisation that the subject is part of the matter of a world that 'swarms with bodies and forms' (355) and can create movements within that matter. Yet, the 'configuration of space' that the imaginary offers is not, Jameson argues, 'yet organized around the individuation of my own personal body, or differentiated hierarchically according to the perspectives of my own central point of view' (354-355) so while it carries an awareness of agency, it equally contains a sense of entanglement. This version of the Imaginary is fruitful for exploring the spatiotemporal experience of pop-up cinema's interactive immersive imaginary. As I will argue, the interactive-immersive imaginary makes the subject aware of their agency within the spatiotemporal assemblage but also gives them an experience of their lack of distinction from that assemblage.

A similar understanding of the immersive imaginary has been advanced by Hawkins and Straughan in their discussion of the immersive installation art piece *Midas* (Hawkins & Straughan, 2014). They explore how immersion generates an imaginary of the porosity and physicality of the subject. They argue that the invitation offered to spectators of *Midas* to 'touch' and take part in the piece foregrounds 'the ongoing process of assembly and dis-assembly of skin and membranes' (Hawkins & Straughan, 2014, p. 137) that challenges the 'modern fantasy of closure and self-completion, orientating us away from the separation of self and world enacted by Cartesian coordinates of vision' (132). Immersion here, is figured as a kind of

sensory entanglement with other materialities that foregrounds the always incompleteness of forms.

This idea that immersive imaginaries position subjects as embedded within an assemblage that reconfigures them, and that they reconfigure, resonates with how immersion and interactivity are presented in pop-up cinema. This version of immersion can also be elucidated through examining the production of immersion in i-Docs. As the methodology explored, in i-Docs, the user is needed to *activate* the i-Doc, which can only exist through interaction. An i-Doc is thus a mutual re-assemblage of subject and interface that has an open, nonlinear temporality because the outcomes are affected by the subject's interaction as well as the i-Doc's virtual capacities. Creating my i-Doc therefore helped to understand how pop-up cinema screenings – which also require user interaction to function – engage an approach to space-time that is attentive to its ongoing assemblage and within which subjects are active agents. Griffith too, defines interactivity around spectators being able to affect outcomes, positioning it as an invitation to 'insert their bodies or minds into the activity and affect an outcome' (Griffiths, 2013, p. 3). As Griffith argues in the context of museum writing, the 'discursive construction of the term *interactivity*' has changed over the years, coming to refer to – more than just manipulating an object – becoming *part of* the installation.

Immersion as an *insertion* of self into an activity or object is, I will argue, a key feature of much pop-up cinema. Exploring this with reference to the i-Doc helps to elucidate the connection of this form of immersion to ideas of interactivity. We have seen how, in my i-Doc, an invitation to 'enter' signals that serious play, as an immersive viewing practice, is now called for. The enter button also generates the idea that the user is now immersed within the spatiotemporal architecture of the i-Doc; *inside* it and therefore now able to interact with and affect its trajectories. The explanation of the time view is headed 'play the pop-up city'; where the word 'play' suggests the experimental interactions that are required.



In this section, I explore the spatiotemporal sensitivities that interactive elements of immersive pop-up screenings enable; arguing that they draw attention to the subject's agency and entrainment. First, though, this section explores how the spatiotemporal assemblage that subjects interact within is constituted by a fusion of 'real' and 'reel' space. I explore three case studies where immersion refers to an expansion of 'reel' space into 'real' space as well as to the invitation to visitors to interact with this expanded filmic geography. In the first part I advance my argument that real and reel space come into contact in pop-up cinema screenings, with reference to a Secret Cinema screening of *Miller's Crossing* and Backyard Cinema's screening of *Romeo and Juliet*. At both these events, the fictional worlds of the films shown were recreated in urban spaces. For Secret Cinema's screening this was an elaborate recreation of the film world of *Miller's Crossing* in Hornsey Town Hall, complete with actors, several in-fiction bars and restaurants, staged scenes and a huge building participants could explore. In Backyard Cinema's screening the immersive elements were less extensive but the screening was held in a church with live music, reflecting elements of Baz Lurhman's *Romeo and Juliet*. Having argued that real and reel space form an assemblage in these screenings, and that that assemblage brings urban space-time into view as nonlinear, the second part of this section explores how the subject is made aware of their entanglement within this real-reel assemblage. Here I refer to the pop-up cinema Feed Me Films and their event 'Pulp Kitchen' where, rather than a recreation of the world of *Pulp Fiction*, participants were given food and drinks relating to particular parts of the film. In the last part of this section I consider the kinds of agency immersion within the real-reel assemblage enables and argue that awareness is created of both the agency and uncertainty that stems from being entrained in an assemblage. As in the previous section, my analysis of these events is entwined with analysis of the i-Doc. However, while the i-Doc has clips of Feed Me Films and Backyard Cinema (both of which can be found in the reel city category and on the time view) there is no clip of Secret Cinema's *Miller's Crossing* because Secret Cinema events have a policy of no cameras at their events.

The rest of the section is split into three parts exploring three elements of the relationship between interactivity, immersion and assemblage. In the first I explore the assemblage of real and filmic space. I consider how the real and the reel come to relate to each other in Secret Cinema's and Backyard Cinema's screenings; drawing on Miriam Hansen's idea that a 'perceptual continuum' between on and off screen is engaged by live elements of film screenings. This argument then undergirds what follows. In the second section, I explore how *Feed Me Films* and *Miller's Crossing* produce a mode of encounter that foregrounds the subject's haptic and porous relationship to the (social) world. In the third, I explore the unpredictability of the real-reel assemblage that the subject is incorporated into, with reference to tensions between agency and entrainment in the i-Doc. In doing so, I suggest that pop-up cinema creates a sense that users can actively reconfigure space-time through interaction, but also that such interactions have both limits and unpredictable results.

### **Perceptual Continuum**

This section explores pop-up cinemas in which immersion refers to a recreation of filmic worlds in 'real' space. Secret Cinema are notable for putting on this kind of 'immersive' event. Secret Cinema are London's most prominent and successful pop-up cinema. They occupy vacant spaces, temporarily transforming them into theatrical versions of the films they show. Visitors explore these sites before the screening and can buy food and drink, enjoy entertainment and interact with props and characters. What the film will be remains undisclosed until, at the end of the night, the spectators are ushered into a room and the movie begins. Backyard Cinema, this section's other case study, enact a similar practice, although their creations of site are less extravagant. Rather than create a total film world for visitors to interact with, Backyard Cinema choose and decorate the building they occupy in keeping with the film and have ushers dressed in costume. At Secret Cinema's screening of *Miller's Crossing* the whole of Hornsey town hall was decorated to

resemble the unnamed Eastern American city where the film takes place. Spectators were given instructions on how to dress and assigned characters through the online distribution of mock business cards. They were given instructions to follow on arrival and, for several hours before the film started, could explore the building, interacting with characters, taking part in short performance sequences and drinking, dancing and eating in themed bars within the site. At Backyard Cinema's screening of *Romeo and Juliet*, a church in Baker Street had been decorated in keeping with the aesthetic of Baz Lurhman's version of *Romeo and Juliet*, ushers were dressed like Montagues and a live choir had been hired to sing along with the songs in the film.

If uncanny experiences of the cinematic have long been felt in the city, these kinds of immersive pop-up cinemas play on the porous boundary between the cinematic and the urban. It has been argued that cinema always has the potential to leak out into the city and vice versa (Clarke 1997: 3), but immersive pop-up cinemas stage that leakage performatively by deliberately bringing films into imaginative relation with London's urban environments. In doing so, they generate, I argue, a more extreme merging of filmic and urban space.

At Secret Cinema's *Miller's Crossing* the merging of cinematic and 'real' space was evident even before the screening. The map sent with instructions on where to meet playfully overlaid the imaginative geography of *Miller's Crossing* onto the London area of Hornsey. The image, made to look like it might belong in prohibition era America, encouraged spectators to read the Geography of London *through* the Geography of the film. Furthermore, while we were queuing up to get into the town hall, events 'leaked' out of the cinematic space inside. A car pulled up and suited men with guns jumped out before enacting a fight around the water fountain, our pockets were checked, ostensibly for alcohol, but also for mobile phones, fusing the regulated secrecy of secret cinema with the regulations of prohibition America.

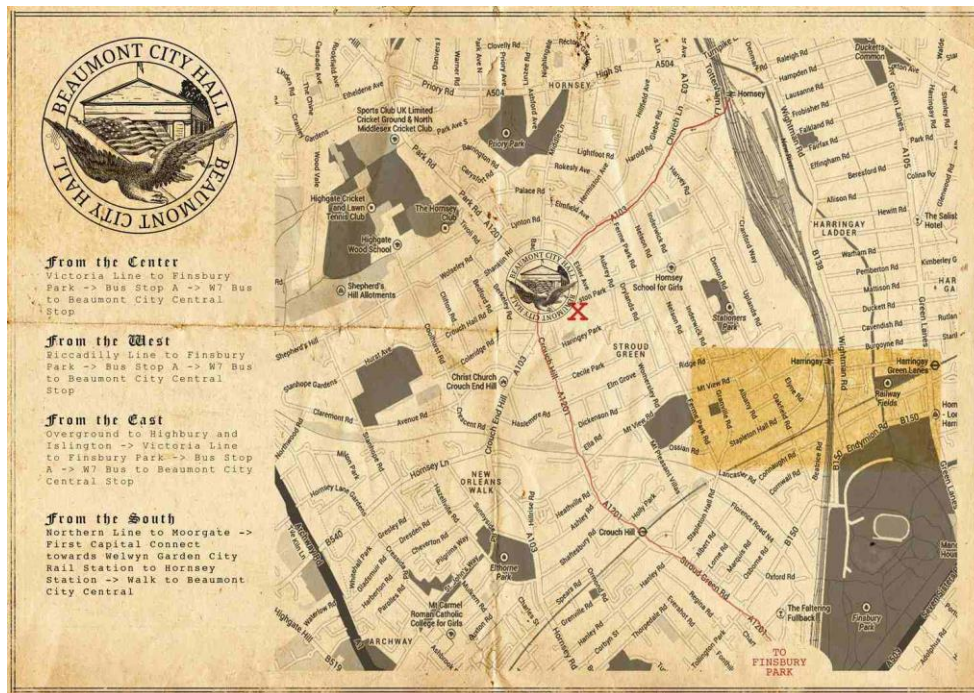


Figure Sixteen: Map sent by Secret Cinema

Elements of the Geography of Hornsey became elements of *Miller's Crossing*. This fusion of spaces is evident from the map where instructions to, for example 'take the Piccadilly line to Finsbury Park' are merged with those to 'arrive at Beaumont City central stop'. Likewise, Backyard Cinema transformed the church where they held their screening into an imaginative version of *Romeo and Juliet*, using candles and illuminated neon crosses to evoke Baz Lurhman's aesthetic and thereby allowing spectators to feel like, by entering the church, they were entering the world of the film.

The way immersive pop-up events couple film exhibition with other forms of consumption and entertainment is reminiscent of the live entertainment at Vaudeville shows. As Hansen has described, Vaudeville shows programmed film alongside other entertainment, including live music, sing-alongs, lectures, sound effects and stereopticon shows (Hansen, 1991, p. 43), these live elements forming a crucial part of the screening. For Hansen the live entertainment created a 'perceptual continuum' between the words on and off screen (93), bringing filmic space into 'real' space and vice versa. The term 'perceptual continuum' refers to how, as Hansen argues, the

attentions of audiences moved fluidly between the on-screen and off-screen events that co-produced the experience.

In Backyard Cinema's screening of *Romeo and Juliet* live elements of the screening were designed, as in Vaudeville shows, to create an expanded object of spectatorship where attention moved between the off screen and the onscreen. For example, the live choir they hired to accompany the film's songs meant that audiences enjoyed these songs as something happening simultaneous in the 'real' and 'reel' spaces of the event. The way that real and reel space come to be merged here is by the encouragement of the viewer to, as Hansen says, distribute their attention across real and reel space rather than seeing these as separate realms.

As Alston argues, audiences at immersive performances engage with features of the 'real' world through the immersive mode of encounter, including when those features aren't supposed to be part of the immersive world. Alston describes how, during immersive performances, objects and places like occupy stickers on phone boxes, or store cupboards and back rooms in performance venues, are treated as objects of fascination, despite not being intended as part of the spectacle being consumed (Alston, 2016). This account of 'making mistakes' in immersive theatre, mistaking 'ordinary' objects for immersive content, indicates how effectively immersive modes of encounter move between the 'reel' and the 'real'. This expanded mode of encounter is deployed purposefully by many i-Docs. As discussed in the methodology chapter the i-Doc *Prison Valley* includes options to contact prisoners directly via the i-Doc as well as to follow links to related media and chat forums. In *Prison Valley*, users are given an avatar whose purpose is to investigate the prison system and such options encourage the immersive mode of encounter within the i-Doc to be extended into 'real world' investigations. Similarly in my i-Doc it is intended that the links to other resources in the about section will be approached with some of the same explorative mode of encounter that immersion in the i-Doc engages.

In Secret Cinema's screening, being allocated a character enhanced this spread of attention across real and reel space. I was assigned the character of 'Carmen

Gabler', Freeholder of the company Cakes and Steaks. I was given instructions before the event to go and find the Mayor on entry to the building. On arrival, I found his office and was greeted by two secretaries who warned me that I needed to address the Mayor as 'worshipful Mayor'. When I was finally let into the office the Mayor greeted me with recognition – 'ah! Cakes and Steaks' he said. He invited me to invest in Beaumont city and asked me lots of questions about my turn over before giving me \$500, a letter to take to an attorney and a food parcel for somebody called officer O Brian. In return I gave him the 'gift' I had been instructed to bring, which I had decided would be some cake sauce. The Mayor inspected the bottle I presented to him and asked what was 'really' in it, worried – and breaking the fourth wall slightly in his worry- that I might be smuggling alcohol into the event. I told him it was actually just cake sauce. He said, 'good, remember that Beaumont City is a dry zone.' Here, our conversation took place on two simultaneous levels; on the one hand it was an in character conversation about business deals and prohibition regulations, while on another it was a negotiation, between a confused participant and an actor, that aimed to ensure the smooth running of the event as a piece of immersive theatre and as a regulated space where the only alcohol allowed was that sold in the event. I was required to act in a liminal space between these two personas; myself and Carmen Gabler.

Secret Cinema's event merges the real with the real, accidentally but also intentionally. It has been claimed that "The modern world consists of "mixing spaces" that include things people have experienced and seen in movies (Escher, 2006, p. 311). Secret Cinema's immersive screenings explicitly perform this 'mixing'. As such, they demonstrate the powerful role imaginaries play in 'real' space. In their writing on film, Aitken and Dixon have explored how meanings of film images are not pre-given but are 'given meaning through the actions and thoughts of people' (Aitken & Dixon, 2006, p. 327). From this anti-essentialist position, the onscreen is seen as read through the imaginaries produced in and engaged by the off-screen. Here, though, these kinds of events invite the opposite. They invite us to imagine the off-screen world through the imaginaries of the onscreen.

The mode of encounter this foregrounds is a recognition that place is always an assemblage of the 'real' and the imaginative. Žižek's reading of Lacan's imaginary makes this clear. For Žižek, we can understand the imaginary, symbolic and the real in relation to a game of chess. The imaginary refers to how pieces are 'shaped and characterized by their names (king, queen, knight), and it is easy to envision a game with the same rules, but with a different imaginary, in which this figure would be called 'messenger' or 'runner' or whatever' (Žižek, 2017). The same is true of Secret Cinema's events, where new imaginaries are overlaid onto the rules determining how we interact in space. For example, the rules of tube travel stay the same, but the imaginary changes as we are asked to get off at 'Beaumont City Central'. Likewise, the ban on bringing alcohol into the venue is refigured through an imaginary of prohibition. The events therefore draw attention to how space is always a real-imaginary assemblage and thus, suggests that the same spatiotemporal distributions can come to have different meanings and affects as they are re-assembled through imaginaries.

Žižek's reading of the imaginary as an overlay is revealing when thought in proximity to pop-up culture which, as I have argued, operates by generating new imaginaries of space-time. As detailed previously, pop-up culture doesn't *fix* urban precarity but gives these conditions different meanings by generating a positive imaginary of 'the temporary city'. This conjecture is important to bear in mind in relation to the discussions of this section; providing a politicized framework through which to understand the work pop-up cinema does in developing tools for the mixing of urban spaces with new imaginaries.

### **Interacting in the Real-Reel Assemblage**

Having argued that interactive immersive pop-up screenings foster attention to the assemblage of real and reel space, this section now considers the role of the spectator within those assemblages. I argue that it is only through the interactions of

the spectator that such an assemblage can take place and that interactive immersive screenings therefore foster sensitivity to the entanglement of the subject within a socio-material assemblage. The next section will then examine how this identification of entanglement draws attention to the subject's agency within that assemblage but also to the uncertainty stemming from such a relational positionality. As argued in the thesis introduction, pop-up culture imagines urban space-time as something that people can interact with and transform, carrying a suggestion that the pop-up city is a democratic city, co-produced by its inhabitants. In exploring interactivity in immersive pop-up cinema, I think through such claims, questioning the capacities and limitations for action that pop-up gives publics.

The case study I explore in this section is Feed Me Films, a pop-up cinema who screen well known cult movies and provide food that compliments the film. Alex and Nick, its founders and organisers, design the menu to augment the spectator's experiences of the film. The i-Doc contains a clip of Feed Me Film's event *Pulp Kitchen*. This was a screening of the film *Pulp Fiction* with accompanying food. The i-Doc also includes an interview with Nick. In our interview Nick explained to me that the first step in designing an event is always for him and Alex to watch the film together and think about which bits could be enhanced through food (Nick, 2015). At *Pulp Kitchen* they had designed cocktails and snacks corresponding to various scenes in the film. As the clip shows, these were numbered and given to spectators in a bag at the start of the film.

Titles were then added to the film with instructions about when spectators should consume each item. For example, in the film when Mia overdoses and has to be given an adrenaline shot, spectators were instructed to take shots of espresso martini in syringes. Or, when Vincent and Butch are gagged, spectators have gob stoppers which they can strap onto their mouths.





Figure Seventeen: Gapped up – strap it on

For Nick, it is these culinary augmentations of the film that generate a ‘social atmosphere’; one quite different from the normal cinema where ‘you might as well go...on your own, because it’s so dark and people are so against you talking at all that it’s like, you might as well have blinkers on’ (Nick, 2015). These acts of eating also make the screening an immersive experience; bringing elements of the film out into the ‘real’ social site of spectatorship. Hansen has suggested that the elements of live performance in early film exhibition asserted the incompleteness of film as a circulated commodity, which needed to be completed through ‘improvisation, interpretation and unpredictability’ during the public event (Hansen 1995: 208). The model of spectatorship created by Feed Me Films also asserts the film as something incomplete, which must be brought to life through the engagement of the spectator.

The way the spectator is needed to complete the film experience can be elucidated with reference to the i-Doc, where interactivity has an equally as integral function. In the play view of the i-Doc, time doesn’t begin to pass until the user clicks on a clip. Choosing another clip is required to move the action on; nothing will begin to play automatically. Although I wanted the passing of time to feel anxiety inducing in the i-Doc, I also identified the requirement for the i-Doc to be incomplete without the involvement of the user, illuminating the importance of interactivity in pop-up. That time stands still until a user chooses another clip means the i-Doc is incomplete without the involvement of the user; its temporality can only operate when the user enters into the assemblage. As Gaudenzi puts it; ‘An interactive documentary as an independent and standalone artefact does not exist’ (Gaudenzi, 2013, p. 14). However, while, in the i-Doc, this requirement for interactivity draws attention to user

agency through the need to click, the requirements for interaction in Feed Me Films are much more full bodied, as users must consume unknown foods, put on gags or drink shots of alcohol. This bodily form of interaction resonates with Hawkins and Straughan's discussions of immersion in installation art. They argue that immersion, when it requires the physical participation of a spectator, foregrounds the porous boundary between the body of a subject and the space they inhabit and draws attention to the always incomplete process of material re-assembly (Hawkins 2010; Hawkins and Straughan 2014).

Similarly, Feed Me Films does not just emphasise the necessary role of the subject in completing/enabling the real-reel assemblage; it foregrounds the bodily materiality of this agency. Here, immersion is not a case of *escaping* your body to enter into the film but a sense that, as Rushton defines immersion, 'the film is *entering your own space*, perhaps that it is entering your own body' (Rushton, 2012, p. 50). The i-Doc clip makes this entrance of the film into the body clear. Images of the drinks and snacks spectators were given are juxtaposed against images from the points in the film where they were designed to be consumed. I used this editing technique to foreground the points of interconnection where, through the physical actions of the spectator, the reel-real space is brought together. This practice 'brings the consciousness of ones corporeality to the forefront of the art experience' (Hawkins & Straughan, 2014, p. 335). It also foregrounds the body as a centre through which the real and the reel are brought into contact. Eating makes the 'external' 'internal', it is an act which mixes up matter supposedly belonging to discrete entities and, in doing so, reveals the fluid movement of matter and energy between bodies thought of as distinct. In the context of Feed Me Films, where the substances eaten are directly linked to the film action; this mixing is also a mixing of real and reel. This kind of interactivity therefore draws attention to the subject's entanglement within the real-reel assemblage. The interactions required to activate the event extend to the incorporation of matter pertaining to the immersive performance into the audiences own bodies; a radical denial of the event as something *separate* that the spectator

can witness from the outside. The spectator becomes inseparable from the event, entrained within its assemblage.

In the literature review I argued that the immersive imaginary in pop-up corresponds to pop-up's assertion that we can all be 'active citizens' (Mould, 2014) and shape the urban topography through hands on actions. The kind of embodied interaction I have explored in this section corresponds to such a model of agency and, moreover, suggests that interaction is not only possible but *required* for things to work at all. Interactive-immersive pop-up cinemas like Feed Me Films or Secret Cinema put the onus on spectators to make their event work. Spectators must perform their role, submitting their bodies in order to generate the real-reel assemblage that constitutes the event.

The capacities and limitations of interactivity in pop-up cinema, as well as in the i-Doc, shed light on to what extent these 'active citizens' of pop-up culture are able to shape the city they are deemed responsible for. On the one hand, pop-up cinema and i-Docs reveal audiences to be essential to the proceedings of immersive events and thus indispensable to their producers. Yet on the other, the freedoms of spectators to shape events are fairly limited. In Feed Me Films, little freedom is granted other than to eat or not eat, submit or not submit, to the event. In Secret Cinema, audiences have significant interactive capacities, yet it is only through 'mistakes' that they can venture off-piste, and such mistakes, as I found out with my cake sauce, are corrected by the in house actors who police the boundaries between allowed and elicit interactivity. In the i-Doc, likewise, as discussed in the methodology chapter, interactivity is limited. Users can choose which parts of it they watch and, as in pop-up cinema, are required for it to function, yet their capacities do not extend, for example, to the ability to upload their own clips or change the spatiotemporal architecture of the i-Doc.

The limits of agency in pop-up cinemas jar with the weighty amount of labour spectators are required to perform in taking on assigned characters, dressing up, eating what they are told to eat and being generally enthusiastic enough to maintain

the immersive world of the event. If the immersive imaginary is, as in Žižek's reading, an overlay onto the rules of the screening, then the enthusiasm of spectators in that imaginary is required for it to flourish. This juxtaposition of enthusiastic interaction, yet limited decision making power is, I would argue, a microcosm of the political economy of pop-up culture. In pop-up, publics are required to interact in order that the temporary city function. Pop-up needs creative practitioners and micro entrepreneurs to plan events and open and run businesses. What's more, they are required to do so enthusiastically. In pop-up cinemas such as Secret Cinema or Feed me Films, enthusiasm from participants is crucial. If nobody came in costume, or agreed to eat the provided food, then the immersive imaginary of the event would fall flat. This enthusiastic submission to and performance of pop-up imaginaries will be clear in the next chapter, where I explore how pop-up workers in container studios embrace precarious labour conditions through their passion for container architectures and personalize their containers in a way that merges their creative and vocational identities with the imaginaries of pop-up; bolstering the aesthetics and affects of those imaginaries. Yet, as will also be explored, these pop-up workers, despite being to thank for maintaining the pop-up imaginary, have little power within pop-up's spatiotemporal distributions and must be compliant with the prerogatives of more powerful urban actors such as developers. The enthusiastic interactivity required by pop-up cinema spectators therefore illuminates the role of pop-up publics in submitting to the pop-up imaginary and willingly performing it. Indeed we could say that pop-up cinemas are a site of development and practice for such compliance. The next part of this section will further explore issues around agency in immersive pop-up cinema.

### **Uncertain Assemblages/Nonlinear Imaginaries**

In this section I want to further explore the idea that the interactive immersive imaginary illuminates both the agency of participants in assembling space-time *and* their lack of control over assemblages that proceed in unpredictable ways. I will show

how the real-reel assemblages that pop-up cinemas create are shown to be nonlinear; that is to say, the outcomes of interactions within it are not necessarily predictable from the actions themselves.

The unpredictable outcomes of interaction within immersive spaces are evident in the spatiotemporal architectures of i-Docs. As Ash has argued, a primary requirement of interactive interfaces is that contingency be visible (Ash, 2010, 662) so that users are made aware of the choices available. These contingencies, as discussed in the methodology chapter, are signalled by 'attractors' (Wood, 2007); elements of the interface that invite users to interact in experimental ways. Crucially, users don't always know what impact their interactions will have. Users interacting with my i-Doc, for example, will quickly discover that they can activate a clip by clicking on an icon, and can leave it again by clicking back on the map. However, I left the consequences of these interactions somewhat unclear. While some instructions are given on the homepage, many potential questions are left unanswered; will users be able to see a clip again if they leave it? If they choose an option at the end of a clip such as 'follow the river' where will this take them? And what other routes through the material might it preclude? Furthermore, the i-Doc might have attractors signalling some of its capacities, but others are not made clear. For example, an impatient user could spend a long time within the i-Doc and never notice the 'outside pop-up city' pages if they never watch a clip through to its ending; given that these pages are not located in the map, or mentioned in the instructions, and are accessible only by links when the clip finishes. Or, a user who didn't use notice the map's zoom button might spend their whole time in the i-Doc zoomed in to a point where they missed clips happening further out in London, such as in Brentford or Barking. These design features were intended to produce a constant tension when, interacting with the i-Doc, between agency and uncertainty. Users never know entirely what the consequences of their actions are or what possibilities their current actions are precluding.

Creating these tensions between agency and uncertainty in the i-Doc enabled me to articulate the logic of interactive immersive pop-up cinema events too. At Secret Cinema's events, spectators are forced to make ongoing choices for which the outcomes are unpredictable and which preclude other adventures. For example, during *Miller's Crossing* myself and the friend I was attending with (Mike), encountered an actor who sent us to 'the police station' to try and find some paper work he wanted to use in a bribe. When we arrived at the police station another character was in the process of gathering participants to go on a raid of one of the site's clubs; to find people skirting prohibition laws. Mike and I had to decide whether to follow this new mission or to complete the task set by the previous character. We didn't know what would happen if we followed the raid team, or what we would miss by not further exploring our mission in the police station.

Adrian Miles argues that interactivity in i-Docs revolves around both agency and uncertainty (Miles, 2014). Kate Nash has also argued that the user experience is typified not just by choice but by confusion and hesitation (Nash, 2014). Discussing user experiences of the i-Doc *Bear 71*, Nash argues that users don't always understand the choices on offer to them or how they are meant to interact with the interface and this causes anxiety that they are doing something 'wrong' and missing parts of the i-Doc. Nash draws attention to how users are made aware not just of their potentials to affect the i-Doc, as part of its assemblage, but of their limited perspective within it; the fact that they are entangled in processes that extend beyond their perceptual capacities despite being impacted by their actions. As in the immersive installation art Hawkins discusses, users are denied a 'birds eye view' (Hawkins, 2010, p. 327) and therefore must act without full knowledge of the consequences of their actions. To read this through Jameson's interpretation of the mirror stage and its imaginary, we could say that interactive-immersive pop-up events make the subject aware of their 'inner motoricity'; the bodily capacities they have to act, but also of their lack of control over the world of 'bodies and forms' within which their own actions have unpredictable impacts (Jameson, 1991, pp. 354-355).

This tension between agency and uncertainty was particularly clear in Secret Cinema's screening of *Miller's Crossing* (Coen & Coen, 1990). *Miller's Crossing* is a film in which chance and uncertainty are primary themes. The film opens with a conversation between two mob bosses, Leo and Johnny Caspar, about fixing boxing fights. Johnny complains that 'It's getting so a business man can't expect no return from a fixed fight. Now if you can't trust a fix, what can you trust?' This conversation sets up a theme of uncertainty reiterated across the film, largely through a motif of Tom placing and losing bets. Caspar's failed fixes are emblematic of the pervasive mood of uncertainty in *Miller's Crossing*, of a world where even that which is 'fixed', supposedly made certain by those most powerful, is liable to have unpredictable outcomes. This theme of uncertainty was made central to Secret Cinema's staging of *Miller's Crossing*. As mentioned, when I entered the site I was given \$500 by the Mayor, this money could be used to pay my way into bars, do business deals with actors and other characters and to place bets. For example, towards the end of the evening actors began encouraging us to place bets on a boxing fight that was going to take place in the courtyard. The ability to invest and bet was anxiety inducing because it had real implications for how you were able to navigate the space. For example, having given hundreds of dollars to an 'attorney', I was later unable to pay my way into a bar where I'd agreed to meet Mike. My in-character exchange had caused an unpredictable outcome, not only limiting my interactive capacities within the in fiction world, but separating me from my friend for the best part of the evening.

If the heightened sense of spatiotemporal agency noted in the previous part of this section can be linked to pop-up's encouragement of citizens to be creators of space-time, then here we see that the flip side of this is uncertainty; that our actions have consequences beyond our control. This experience of uncertainty recalls Butler's ontological definition of precarity. For Butler, we are all precarious because of our dependence on others, whose actions we can't predict (Butler, 2009). Here, though, rather than feature as precarity, uncertainty becomes part of the game of pop-up cinema. Spectators at Secret Cinema attend precisely because they *want* uncertainty, the enjoyment stems from being part of an immersive fictional world

where your actions have unpredictable outcomes and events take unpredictable courses. At a time of increased urban precarity, the attention to uncertainty that such events foreground can be seen as a way to make sense of a more pervasive condition of uncertainty and turn it into a sought after, pleasurable experience. Uncertainty, rather than being experienced negatively in relation to precarity, becomes part of pop-up's positive nonlinear imaginary; figured as exciting unpredictability.

### **Three**

#### **Any-City-Whatever**

In this last section of the chapter I turn to a discussion of how spatiotemporal sensitivities within pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary translate into a vision of the city. As argued in the introduction to this chapter, pop-up cinema can be fruitfully explored within a lineage of work on the mutually transformative relationship between film and the urban. I have suggested that, in pop-up cinemas, the centrality of site to the cinematic experience means that a consideration of how pop-up cinema shapes the city and vice versa must be thought in relation to the real-reel assemblage. On this premise, I argue that pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary generates a way of encountering the city as a deterritorializable urban space akin to what Deleuze calls the 'any-space-whatever.' I suggest that pop-up cinema's deterritorialized and reterritorialized sites of spectatorship respond to a time of flux and place-unmaking (Fraser, Forthcoming) in the city and, in turn, reconfigure visions of the city by imagining urban space-time as metastable and thus open to manifold and ongoing transformations.

Bret Lashua has made a Deleuzian, argument about pop-up cinema's capacities to deterritorialize and reterritorialize sites (Lashua, 2013, p. 130) in his discussion of a pop-up cinema at an old textiles Mill in Leeds. For Lashua, pop-up cinemas can add



new layers of meaning to overlooked sites. Further to this, I would suggest that Deleuze's account of deterritorialization and reterritorialization gains a particular force in the context of pop-up cinema. Lashua emphasizes the capacities of urban sites to be reterritorialized through pop-up film screenings, but I argue that pop-up cinema events destabilize and remake not just urban sites but filmic space too, meaning that, here, deterritorialization and reterritorialization describe a reciprocal alteration of film and site. It is this mutual deterritorialization which generates a way of seeing the city that can be characterized against Deleuze's idea of the 'any-space-whatever'.

The any-space-whatever is a concept Deleuze coined to describe filmic spaces such as 'disused warehouses' or 'cities in the course of demolition' (Deleuze, 2013, p. x). Deleuze argued that such sites become prominent in post-war cinema where the constant presence of ruin and abandonment opened up 'new circuits of thinking' (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 36) by demonstrating the contingency of spatiotemporal distribution. Any-space-whatevers are sites that have lost their determination because their usual functions have been disrupted (Deleuze, 2005, p. 113), undoing their established relations with other spaces and their current trajectories (Deleuze, 2013, p. x). Deleuze argues that, in the absence of a normative function, such spaces are open to potentially infinite new relations, making them at once no space and any space at all.

Deleuze's any-space-whatever has clear resonances with pop-up culture as a whole. As we have seen, pop-up geographies are commonly regarded as indeterminate spaces because they usually occupy gaps left by dereliction in the aftermath of recession and 'interim' sites awaiting or undergoing redevelopment. It is argued that they demonstrate the capacity of such spaces to be re-imagined (Iveson, 2013; Nemeth & Langhorst, 2014; Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014). The very premise of pop-up is that urban space can be used in multiple and ever-changing ways. Pop-up space-finding companies such as 'Appearhere' list numerous urban sites 'ready to be filled with your idea' (Appearhere 2015), asserting the contingency of a site's former

determinations and its ability to be reterritorialized by each new user. Pratt and San Juan echo this sentiment with particular reference to pop-up cinema, arguing that pop-up cinemas are 'liminal places' (2014: 171) offering 'unexpected possibilities for cultural innovation and a range of informal and formal underground and autonomous activities' (2014: 167). As Lashua notes, pop-up cinema is premised on an understanding of urban space as indeterminate and ripe for reterritorializations. In fact, the urban sites occupied by Secret Cinema and other pop-ups are reminiscent of Deleuze's examples of any-space-whatevers in film: vacant city spaces awaiting demolition or re-use. Pratt and San Juan have noted that Deleuze's description of any-space-whatevers, although intended to describe filmic spaces, can be applied to cinema spaces themselves (Pratt & San Juan, 2014, p. 161) in as much as they offer unexpected possibilities for thinking about and acting in urban space (167).

For Deleuze, the any-space-whatever emerges as a visual trope in post war film because it is needed to make sense of the destruction and dereliction in cities at that time. The any-space-whatever is thus, in a sense, a form of 'perceptual equipment' (Jameson, 1991) that enhances understanding of these urban spaces; making sense of the spatiotemporal indeterminacy they signal. In this section I refer to the i-Doc as a similar piece of perceptual equipment that makes sense, not of particular any-space-whatevers in the city, but of the way that pop-up figures all city spaces as any-space-whatevers; an *any-city-whatever*.

### **Any-Space/Time-Whatever: Back to the Future**

This chapter has shown how real and reel space come into contact in pop-up cinema because a perceptual continuum is generated between the on and the off screen. Adding to this, this section will argue that this perceptual continuum also requires sensitivity to the ongoing capacities of space-time to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized; to its *metastability*. Through an exploration of Secret Cinema's screening of *Back to the Future* (Zemeckis, 1985) in the summer of 2014, I think

through how the event mutually deterritorializes filmic and urban space and, in doing so, imagines the city as an any-space-whatever. Again, there is no clip of *Back to the Future* in the i-Doc, because of Secret Cinema's policies around recording devices, but I talk about the i-Doc's spatiotemporal architecture to further my arguments.

Unlike for their usual screenings, the fact that *Back to the Future* would be screened by Secret Cinema was announced in advance. The event took place at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic park in Stratford, East London. Stratford is an area that has become synonymous with the gentrification that followed the 2012 Olympic Games (Watt, 2012) and Secret Cinema's occupation of the site can be seen as instrumental in the ongoing rebranding of the area. Indeed, Atkinson and Kennedy have argued that social media tensions in the run up to the event included hostility towards 'hipsters' coming to Stratford (Atkinson & Kennedy, Accessed online 10/06/2016). In this context, *Back to the Future* was an interesting choice of film, as this section will explore.

*Back to the Future* is a cult classic about a boy called Marty who, thanks to his friend, the crack-pot scientist Doctor Emmet Brown (known as Doc), travels from 1985 to 1955 in a car that Doc has turned into a time-machine. Marty must then enlist the help of Doc's past self to get 'back to the future'. However, in the process, he accidentally disrupts the getting-together of his teenage parents, thereby threatening the event of his own birth, and must work to make sure they do eventually fall in love, lest he accidentally erase himself from time.

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, where this screening was hosted, is a strange place. One of the 'legacy' areas surrounding the Olympic Games, it has been newly developed. Roads have been built, landscaping has been undertaken and yet the area, at least in 2014, was still sparsely occupied; awaiting the bustle of businesses and inhabitants it sought to attract. The embryonic site was resonant, for me, of a scene in *Back to the Future* when Marty arrives at the site of the estate he lives at which, in 1955 is just being built. The gates exist but the houses haven't been

constructed yet. In the film Marty's arrival in this place destabilizes the present he knows. What, for him, is the unquestioned world he grew up in is exposed as a historical contingency; something that is, but wasn't always, and could not have been.



Figure Eighteen: Lyon Estates, Back to the Future

Across *Back to the Future*, we are reminded not just of the instability of place but of the instability of *personal* identity too. As somebody who belongs in the future, Marty's existence is predicated on a particular trajectory of events which, as he learns, could well have happened differently. The anxiety of the film stems from Marty's attempts to recreate the sequence of events that led to his birth and to the creation of the place he knows as home. Given the setting in the Olympic park, as such a newly developed place, Marty's anxiety's about how place and people come to be took on new significance at the Secret Cinema screening; foregrounding the site as a place and a community in the making which; like Marty's estate, will one day be naturalised in London's landscape.

*Back to the Future* is a film that all takes place in one *geographical space* yet the place that space is made into changes nonlinearly during the film as past and present constantly remake each other through Marty's interactions. The unmaking of future

place is visible in the photographs Marty has of his (future) family which begin to fade and reappear depending on how successfully he is orchestrating the event of his own conception. The main driver of action, and comedy of the film, comes from the interruptions that Marty makes into the past and their impacts in the future; such as accidentally seducing his mother or introducing rock and roll to the 1950s. These interruptions highlight the metastability of urban assemblages; how places and conditions that might seem stable are actually processes or events which could have been, and still could be, otherwise territorialized.

The vision of the urban that Secret Cinema's *Back to the Future* cultivates is one where space-time is malleable and the future can be created in multifarious ways depending on how it is deterritorialized and reterritorialized in the past/present. As a site specific rendition of this film, I would argue that Secret Cinema's event extended this awareness of metastability to the Olympic park area of Stratford. The immersive performance space accompanying the film contained elements of both the 1950s and 1980s worlds. Actors playing characters from the film moved between both these decades, destabilizing the primacy of each of them as, for example, when Marty's car from 1985 burst into the 1955 fairground space that formed part of the set. Against this background, the unmissable presence of the Orbital sculpture built for the Olympic Games introduced a third temporarily to the event. It loomed over the set as if signalling post-Olympic London as a third potential reterritorialization of the site, an alternative, or subsequent, future to that of the film's 1985.

However, crucially, the plot of the film means that a very particular vision of future Stratford is evoked. In the film, when Marty finally gets back to the future he is reassured to find that his family and his town are still there; yet things are subtly different. More exactly, everything is *better*. His sister and mother are more attractive, his brother and father are more successful and the whole family are richer, cooler and happier. Marty's travels to the past, though they were destabilizing, have resulted in a better present; he has succeeded in reterritorializing place to put his own family higher up the social ladder.

In staging such a film in the Olympic park, what kind of message is given for the deterritorializations and reterritorializations of Stratford; as a rapidly developing and gentrifying area? Following the logics of the film, the event could suggest that the unmaking and remakings of place are going to generate a better future for the area; one where the poor, unhappy and unattractive are replaced with cooler, richer and happier people. Although, unlike in *Back to the Future*, these are unlikely to be new and improved versions of the place's original inhabitants but, instead, an incoming, middle class demographic more closely aligned with those spectators who have come, in costume, to the Secret Cinema event, ready to enact this other kind of time travel and re-creation. The Secret Cinema event thereby asserted the validity of the remakings of place that it, by adding to the cultural appeal of Stratford, bolstered. It brought real and reel into contact to assert the benefits of unpicking the past and remaking the future. In this way, the event imagined the city as an any-space-whatever; somewhere that, as in Deleuze's depiction is indeterminate, but the event also suggested that those recreations are un-problematically positive.

The relationship between film and spatiotemporal flexibility developed within pop-up culture has been identified in other filmic uses of urban sites. Vanessa Matthews has discussed the re-use of a distillery in Toronto as a film set. She suggests that the ex-industrial building's transformation into numerous film worlds illuminates the 'becoming other' of the site, 'imbued with an endless lexicon of meanings which can be used to fabricate other spaces, places and times in films' (Matthews, 2010, p. 181). Her discussion of 'the flexibility of place to contain meaning (and value) based on the practices which occur within and outside it' (181) resonates with my argument about Secret Cinema's imaginary. Matthews' article questions 'What is a distillery when it can become a tire manufacturing plant (*Tommy Boy*), a concentration camp (*X-Men*) or a prison (*Chicago*)' and argues that the various assemblages the site is brought into via its relationship with films disrupt 'singular claims to space by highlighting simultaneous realities' (Matthews, 2010, pp. 181-182). Likewise, the regime of vision generated by Secret Cinema is one where urban space is cast as flexible and re-writeable, open to being transformed and performed in myriad ways.

Secret Cinema's deterritorializations and reterritorializations of urban space are, however, as should be recognized, normatively geared towards commercial ends. The any-space-whatevers it creates in the city are not strictly indeterminate, given that they are successfully and *profitably* operationalized as sites of cultural consumption. As Matthews argues of the distillery, where multiple realities are opened up they are then singularized again through the commodification of the distillery as a site to be redeveloped. Ultimately, the use of the site for multiple film worlds 'created a place imaginary that could be packaged and disseminated' to smooth 'capital flows' and allow the site to be remade to cater for middle and upper-class tastes (Matthews, 2010, p. 186). Secret Cinema's rewritings of urban space are similarly instrumental in place-rebranding and gentrification.

Against this background of pop-up culture's assertion of spatial indeterminacy, the way Secret Cinema makes site and film refer to each other (as co-productive of an imaginative world) deterritorializes and reterritorializes not just urban space but filmic space too. The mutual reference that film and site are brought into enacts an expansion of the film's territory into urban space and vice versa. Through this reciprocal invasion, the internal relations of both spaces are destabilized as they cease to be circumscribed systems, becoming an assemblage forged through new, extraverted relations. In this way Secret Cinema's screening can be interpreted as constructing a way of seeing urban space as an any-space-whatever. By repurposing urban sites, it, like other pop-up places, asserts the contingency of current spatiotemporal regimes in cities. Then, building on this first indeterminacy of urban space it creates a further indeterminacy by mutually destabilizing the filmic and urban territories it employs as they come into contact and alter one another. This mutual indeterminacy becomes a mode of encounter because it is fundamental to Secret Cinema's mode of spectatorship. As in the early cinema screenings Hansen describes, the audience's attention at Secret Cinema events is spread across the deterritorialized assemblage of filmic and urban space, which together make up the event's action. Understanding the event therefore requires a perceptual sensitivity to how the site is deterritorialized and reterritorialized through its relation with the film.

Thus, Secret Cinema's mode spectatorship requires and constructs attention to spatial indeterminacy, generating a way of seeing urban space as an any-space-whatever.

### **Any-Space-Whatever/Any-City-Whatever**

Secret Cinema is by no means unique in staging film events that play into the rebranding of London. The use of pop-up cinema to rebrand place is a clear tactic for developers and governments across the city. For example, a series of pop-up film screenings and other pop-up events called 'The Power of Summer' take place annually at Battersea power station, during its redevelopment, as part of the many public events held at the site to raise its profile<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, a series of pop-up screenings in disused underground stations were planned to accompany the (delayed) coming of the night tube<sup>9</sup>. In these kind of events, pop-up cinemas help to re-imagine sites. As we saw in the case of Floating Cinema in Brentford, the immersive viewing practices pop-up cinema events encourage make these sites seem fantastical and thereby foster interest in them. What's more, as seen previously in this section, pop-up cinema events also require a mode of encounter that thinks about space-time as something that can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized. It is no surprise, then, that pop-up cinemas are enlisted in places where a transition is desired. Pop-up cinemas imagine the city as metastable and celebrate its potential for transformations; an imaginary clearly valuable to stakeholders in redevelopment projects.

To think about the assertion of metastability in pop-up's immersive imaginary, I developed the spatiotemporal fabric of the i-Doc as something that can be territorialized in a number of different ways. This imaginary is clear in the category view, where three versions of the city, the reel city, the edible city and container city,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.timeout.com/london/film/everyman-the-power-of-summer>

<sup>9</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/underground-film-club>



bring the temporary city into view in competing ways. Sorting the clips into these categories in the i-Doc illuminated for me how pop-up's imaginaries function as various overlays onto the fabric of London (as in Žižek's description of the imaginary) and, if there were more clips in total, I would have made it possible to see only each 'type' of clip at a time in the play view, further elucidating this idea of imaginaries as overlays.

The i-Doc's play view also illuminates pop-up's conception of the urban fabric to be malleable. As time passes in the i-Doc, pop-up sites come and go from the map that makes up the interface, demonstrating the city as an any-space-whatever that pop-up places temporarily reconfigure, but in ways that hold no lasting sway over the configuration of the interface. Of course this is where the parallels between pop-up's *imaginary* of the city and the 'real' impacts of pop-up places breaks down. In the play view of the i-Doc, which I designed to convey the *imaginary* of pop-up, the city is presented as an any-space-whatever where deterritorializations and reterritorializations can take place endlessly, but where there is no indication of the trajectories those 'temporary' transformations intersect with and mutate. However, the out-side-pop-up city pages, which I designed to rupture pop-up's imaginaries, give glimpses into these trajectories. One, as explored previously, raises the question of whether pop-up cinema plays into place rebranding and gentrification. However, the outside pop-up city pages are, crucially, glimpses *outside* of pop-up's imaginary. The "outside" label is important; these pages indicate processes that are related to but not included in pop-up's imaginaries

In Secret Cinema's *Back to the Future*, the immersive imaginary enables what are suggested as unproblematic, localized changes to the urban fabric. Just as in *Back to the Future* Marty's meddling with space-time produces a future that is unproblematically better for his family, a vision of Stratford is created that overlooks any adverse outcomes of the transformation taking place; for example the displacements that gentrification in the area is causing. Of course, in *Back to the Future* there are 'negative' outcomes of Marty's actions. For example, Biff and his

son, swapping places with Marty's family, become poor and ugly and effectively servants to Marty's newly rich family. But within the film's narrative these outcomes are figured as justice - after all Biff is a *bad person* - and so, rather than serving as a lesson about the impacts of deterritorializations and reterritorializations of space-time, strengthen the idea that recreations of place are justified and unproblematically beneficial.

In his discussion of Liverpool as a location of choice for film producers, Les Roberts applies the term 'any-space-whatever' to describe how the city 'becomes a stage or set where narratives and histories are (re)played or performed, crowding out those that reflect the lived spatialities of everyday life' (Roberts, 2012, p. 158). In its aspirations to be a 'world in one city' Liverpool, he argues, is emptied of 'locally embedded structures of history, identity and organic sociality' (87). Pop-up cinemas like Secret Cinema arguably use the immersive imaginary to effect a similar process, undermining the fixity of urban spaces to assert that they could always be reconfigured differently. There is an important lesson here about the instrumentalities of nonlinear imaginaries. It is often argued that the imaginaries of place as fixed and bounded can lead to a less essentialist, insular and hostile notion of territory (Massey, 2011). Yet, here it becomes clear that pop-up's imaginary of the city's metastable assemblage can be used to normalise changes desired by actors such as the developers of Battersea power station, or those funding the post-Olympic redevelopment of Stratford.

The way that pop-up cinema's immersive imaginary asserts potentials for transformation therefore has important consequences in the current socio-economic climate. It generates a sense of the city as an any-space-whatever but, importantly, does so within the context of pop-up as a phenomenon that arose from, and has been pitched as a solution to, urban instability. Against this backdrop, pop-up cinema normalises that instability, asserting that all space-times are metastable, but, at the same time, it can be mobilized to effect particular transitions over others.

As argued previously, a mutually transformative relationship between changing exhibition practices and changing urban imaginaries can be charted across history. For example, I have explored Crary's arguments that the panorama 'provided an imaginary unity and coherence to an external world that, in the context of urbanization, was increasingly incoherent' (Crary, 2002, p. 21). In Secret Cinema's case, its mode of encounter arguably provides an imagined malleability of urban space-time that can be related to its own urban context. Just as Crary links the panorama's 'imaginary unity' to the 'incoherent' urbanization of the time, I would argue that Secret Cinema's unsettled and flexible urban imaginary corresponds to the post-recession city it is prominent within, where, as foregrounded and perpetuated by pop-up culture, places are subject to radical transformations.

## Conclusions

Across this chapter I have explored the spatiotemporal sensitivities that pop-up's immersive imaginary develops. I have examined how immersion can be aligned with 'serious play', generating attentiveness to virtual capacities of space-time. I then discussed the relationship between immersion and interactivity and explored how this generates sensitivity to the immersion of subjects within the urban assemblage; where that foregrounds both their agency within it but also the uncertainty that stems from their actions and those of others. Lastly, I have explored how the immersive imaginary envisions an any-city-whatever by fostering a sense that space-time is metastable and can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized

This chapter has also advanced the idea that, if cinema and other creative medium are seen to reconfigure modes of encounter, *sites* of spectatorship play a role in these processes too. Having begun this argument through an exploration of pop-up cinema's real-reel assemblages, the following two chapters will work from this premise that pop-up sites are instrumental in reconfiguring imaginaries. In pop-up cinema, the direct invitation to spectators to extend an immersive view to urban

space, as an equal spectacle to the space on-screen, makes especially apparent the fact that modes of encounter are being reconfigured. But, as I will explore, container spaces and supper clubs are also instrumental in developing pop-up's imaginaries; no less spaces where ways of encountering the world are formulated.

In addition, this chapter has developed my understanding that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries entail particular sensitivities to, and orientations within, space-time. This argument is carried through into the next two empirical chapters where I also advance two other claims about pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries; that they engage and transform structures of feeling and that they work as compensatory narratives. I have also used my discussions of pop-up cinema in relation to the i-Doc to think through the politicized ways that nonlinear imaginaries of space-time are developed and deployed, as well as to reflect critically on Geography's own assumptions about nonlinearity. This chapter has also discussed some of the political stakes of pop-up's immersive imaginary. Contributing to my argument, across the thesis, that pop-up's imaginaries narrativize and perpetuate conditions of urban precarity, I have explored how pop-up cinema's immersive imaginaries can both enable and justify gentrification.

Having ended the discussion of this chapter by arguing that pop-up's immersive encounters see the city as an any-space-whatever, I now extend this line of argument in the next chapter where I examine pop-up container spaces, architectures that, as I will show, also assert the metastability of the city. There, I explore pop-up's imaginaries of flexibility and interstitiality and argue that these imaginaries are key to how pop-up responds to and alters experiences of precarity as a structure of feeling.

## Chapter Six

### Container Spaces: Flexibility, Interstitiality, Precarity

#### Introduction: The New Container Principle

This chapter explores one of the objects at the centre of pop-up's imaginaries of continuous urban reformulation; the shipping container. Examining containers that have been converted into temporary architectures, I argue that container spaces generate imaginaries of spatiotemporal flexibility. I address imaginaries of flexibility produced by containers in terms of the relationship between imaginaries and structures of feeling. I argue that imaginaries of flexibility in container architectures engage, but alter, precarity as a structure of feeling, seeking to reimagine its spatiotemporal characteristics as a desirable and positive condition.

In examining the spatiotemporal imaginaries produced by pop-up container spaces, I recognise that containers are also at the centre of other debates about spatiotemporal logics. Containerisation has received significant attention as a pivotal moment in the development of imaginaries of the globalised world. Containers are positioned as central to the production of imaginaries of smooth, seamless space-time in the second half of the twentieth century (Klose, 2015; Cresswell & Martin, 2012; Martin, 2013; Martin, 2016), producing imaginaries of efficiency and flexibility that bolster humans' sense of mastery over nature. Here, I argue that if containers have, historically, been key to the production of imaginaries of efficiency and flexibility, their adaptation for temporary architectures is transforming those imaginaries, bringing new meanings to ideas of flexibility and, in particular, associating it with a new labour economy.

Central to my argument about the new meanings of flexibility in pop-up containers spaces is a related imaginary of interstitiality. Interstices have been traditionally defined as leftover or forgotten spaces created as by-products of urban planning. Yet, as Brighenti emphasises, their '*minoritarian*' (Brighenti, 2013, p. xvi) status does

not mean they are ineffectual within, or distinct from, the broader city. Rather, they are inbetween spaces where negotiations are staged between orders and visual regimes. However, as I will show, it is the traditional imaginary of interstices as leftover spaces that is operative within pop-up container architectures. Whereas containerization conjured imaginaries of the world as a smooth space that could be effortlessly traversed, container architectures produce a quite different spatiotemporal imaginary; one where they occupy interstitial pockets of the city; leftover spaces that are awaiting redevelopment. In doing so, they foreground the uneven surface of the city; its nooks and crannies; much unlike containerization's imaginary of smooth space. The interstitiality imaginary operative alongside flexibility in pop-up container spaces repositions flexibility as a prudent ability to occupy and make use of what is leftover (a form of thrift) rather than an ability to smooth and thereby dominate space. However, as the final section of this chapter will argue, this imaginary of interstitiality actually narrativizes another kind of smoothing or homogenising of space. This is because container spaces are implicated in processes of gentrification and thereby contribute towards the homogenization of space under the pursuit of profit.

The chapter begins with an introductory section where I consider the broader context of adapted uses of containers and trace how 'container principles' (Klose, 2015) are changing as containers become part of flexibility's new meanings. In particular, I argue that, as containers are re-appropriated for new purposes, the imaginaries of efficiency, flexibility and mastery they connoted are dissipating and being replaced by indications of precarity. After this introduction, three empirical sections consider how pop-up container spaces, while celebrated as flexible and efficient, actually betray the same shift towards precarity that the changing use of containers more generally suggests. I argue that the primary function of imaginaries of flexibility and interstitiality in container spaces is to narrativize and normalise conditions of precarity by transmuting precarity as a structure of feeling, giving its spatiotemporal conditions a positive inflection. Each of the three empirical sections examines case studies of container spaces to draw out different aspects of pop-up's imaginaries of

flexibility and interstitiality, and what those imaginaries do in the contemporary socio-economic climate. As in the previous chapter, I analyse these spaces through their appearance in the i-Doc. In the first section, I explore Netil Market, a container space in Hackney occupied by several small craft and creative businesses. In the second section I consider the Grow Up Box, a mobile aquaponics farm, and in the third I explore two further container spaces; Paradise Yard, in Waterloo and The Art Works, which occupies the site of the demolished Heygate Estate in Elephant and Castle.

### **Containerisation Stage Two**

Before embarking on this chapter's empirical content, this introductory section explores the spatiotemporal imaginaries containers have produced over recent history and considers how those imaginaries are changing as containers are adapted for new functions. The container was supposedly invented in 1956 by an American named Malcom McLean. The steel boxes come in a series of fixed sizes, enabling diverse produces to be stored in homogenized formats. Along with standardizations in vehicles and machines at ports (Martin, 2013), containers allowed 'intermodal' transportation of goods as the box could be easily transferred from trucks to trains to boats; enabling apparently seamless movement across land and sea. Containerisation revolutionised international trade and was a key driver of globalisation, leading containers to be labelled as 'the box that changed the world' (Donovan & Bonney, 2006). Sixty years on, containers are now receiving new acclaim within the realm of architecture.

Containers allegedly became popular for re-use as buildings because of an excess of containers in global circulation. Parker argues that 'it is often cheaper for exporting countries to make new containers than it is to ship the empty ones back again' (Parker, 2012, p. 9), so spare containers stack up, leading to 'a huge variety of innovations with the use of containers for housing, office space, pop-up events and so on' (Parker, 2012, p. 9). During recessions, in particular, there is an oversupply

of containers (Parker, 2012, p. 13) because of reduced demand for goods. This could explain the increase in their use in the past decade, although now containers have become so popular as building materials that many are bought new, rather than re-used from old trade containers. Practically, containers are valued for their strength and versatility as a building material. They offer ready-made units that can be stacked on top of one another, producing larger structures without the need for additional support. Given they are designed to be transported they are easy to move in and out of sites at short notice, thus making them desirable for temporary and event based architectures (Martin, 2016). They are also easy to adapt by adding windows and doors, verandas or internal and external walls, floors and ceilings (Slawik, et al., 2010).

Containers are now widely used to produce a range of sites including performance venues, exhibition spaces and radio studios. They have also been used for housing across the world, designed for a range of inhabitants including homeless people in Brighton or students in the Netherlands. They have ‘acquired something of a “cult status” and their image is now as much valued as the ‘wide range of spatial solutions’ they offer (Slawik, et al., 2010, p. 10). One of the most prominent architectural uses of containers has been for the construction of pop-up malls. Container malls exist across the world, from 7<sup>th</sup> Kilometer Market in Odessa to QUO Mall in Buenos Aires to Dordov Bazaar in Kyrgyzstan. After the 2011 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand the commercial centre was rebuilt using containers to form the ‘Restart’ Mall.

In London, several container malls have been built within recent years including Container City, Containerville, Netil Market, Boxpark, Pop Brixton, Bootstrap Yard, The Artworks and Paradise Yard; three of which feature in this chapter. The success of these malls means similar developments are now being planned and opened in places like Croydon and Milton Keynes which are less central to the creative economy; demonstrating the growing ubiquity of container spaces. Container Malls usually occupy vacant spaces awaiting or undergoing redevelopment in the interim



period before building works take place. The containers can be quickly deployed to provide a temporary infrastructure for pop-up businesses to inhabit, then moved on again once the redevelopment is ready to begin. As well as these container malls, some pop-up businesses buy their own, individual, containers which they can move from site to site, such as Grow Up Box, the subject of the second section of this chapter.

### **Mutations of the Container Principle**

As mentioned previously, the rapid development of container shipping across the latter half of the twentieth century transformed both distributions and imaginaries of space–time. Central to these shifts was a growing sense of humanity’s mastery over space–time. The intermodality of container shipping meant that sea and land could be seamlessly traversed as one fabric, as containers were loaded on and off trains, trucks and ships. This unified movement conjured imaginaries of the planet as a ‘smooth space’ (Cresswell and Martin, 2012, p. 521) that could be faultlessly navigated by humans. The sea had once been figured, in maritime culture, as site of unknown mysteries and non-human forces. Containerization seemingly tamed these ominous and expansive oceans and mobilized them toward prerogatives of economic growth. What’s more, the standardized metal structures of containers also generated a ‘spectacle of efficiency’ (Martin, 2012, p. 154) that masked the messy multiplicity and incongruities of global capitalism that might have otherwise been evident in the sundries they carried. Alexander Klose has argued that these imaginaries of smooth space, homogeneity and efficiency, constituted changes in the very ‘order of thinking’ (Klose, 2015, p. x). The standardization within containerization produced an accompanying sense that space-time itself had been standardized by humans.

Such imaginaries of efficiency are of course, still operative to this day and, as I will explore, still present in the use of containers in pop-up. Yet the ‘container principle’

is also evolving or, better, mutating in light of recent changes in container geographies. As Klose notes, containers have now existed long enough for the first 'generation' of containers to have exceeded their useful life span and be taken out of circulation (Klose, 2015, p. 279). Retired containers escape their designated purpose to become, variously; stylish new homes, spaces of detention, art works, sites of torture, pop-up shops, vessels in which to smuggle weapons, beached wrecks, sunken structures lurking beneath the sea or vehicles to stowaway in in search of a better life (Squire, 2015; Parker, 2012; Klose, 2015). These numerous reuses mean that containers are more ubiquitous than ever, but equally that their presence in the landscape now evokes new significations linked to these adapted functions. Following Klose's argument that containerization changed the order of thinking, I would add that adapted uses of containers might also transform the principles containers initially produced; suggesting that we are now entering containerization stage two; an era marked by mutations of the 'container principle'. The three empirical sections of this chapter explore the mutations of the container principle particular to pop-up container spaces, with a focus the changing meanings of flexibility and its alignment with interstitiality.

## **Part One**

### **Netil Market: Crafted Containers**

In this first empirical part of the chapter I explore Netil Market, a container space in East London, and consider two key dimensions of the flexibility imaginaries generated within pop-up container spaces. Firstly, I argue that flexibility in pop-up container spaces acquires new meanings as it comes to correspond to practices of crafted customization. This argument builds on a broader conjecture made by others (Bramall, 2013; Luckman, 2015) that contemporary craft practices respond to the global financial crash with an aesthetic of thrift and resourcefulness. I explore the relationship between customized container spaces and what Ocejo would call 'old

jobs in the new economy' (Ocejo, 2017), arguing that that, as spaces for such jobs, customized containers strengthen the idea that these forms of employment offer a meaningful alternative to a more soulless, impersonal version of capitalism symbolised by office work. Secondly, I argue that flexibility in Netil Market also normalizes personal flexibility, as container spaces become vehicles which smooth, and thereby reproduce, the mobility and temporariness that derives from precarity.

This argument positions container spaces as an architectural manifestation of the shifts towards post-Fordist economies that have been especially apparent in the craft and creative industries, including in pop-up; an arena where 'flexible' work patterns are normalized and glamorized (Deslandes, 2013; Ferreri, 2015; Graziano & Ferreri, 2014). It also aligns container spaces with the aesthetics of the 'hipster' economy; a scene whose sensibilities include a return to domestic practices of 'making, cooking and growing' (Luckman, 2015, p. 44) and which can be partially understood as a retreat to a world that is domestic in scale, in the face of the global financial crash (Jakob, 2013; Luckman, 2015; Luckman, 2013; McRobbie, 2013).

### **Netil Market**

Netil Market is located in Hackney, East London. Hackney is the epicentre of London's 'hipster' scene and, increasingly, a renowned area for craft production and retail. However, as rental prices in the area continue to rise, there is growing financial pressure on Hackney's creative community and Netil Market is one of several sites that has sprung up to provide affordable, albeit temporary and makeshift, space for craft makers and sellers. It occupies the car park of Netil House which was squatted for several years before being taken over as spaces for artists and creative workers. As Sarah, the market manager, describes it, Netil Market is 'a space for creative professionals to conduct their work in a flexible environment (Sarah, 2015). The market now contains several temporary units, mostly made from shipping containers, within which these professionals work and trade throughout the week. The market is

affiliated with Netil House and likewise run by the company 'Eat Work Art', who, in their own words 'transform empty buildings into studio spaces that become home to exceptional communities' (Eatworkart, 2015).

In the i-Doc, three clips correspond to Netil Market. One is an interview with Sarah, the market manager, another depicts The General's Barber shop, a barber shop in a container in the market, and the third is an interview with Egle who, at the time, ran a gender neutral clothing shop called Suwun with her partner in a container in Netil Market. Netil Market is a space for craft but, as the next section explores, it is also a crafted place for which containers provide the building blocks.

### **Flexibility as Customization**

It has been argued that containers act as 'black boxes' (Klose, 2015, p. 316) which hide their contents, and instead project a spectacle of efficiency (Martin, 2012, p. 154), disguising the messiness of capitalism. However, in Netil market, craft's logics of one-off, handmade production are infused into the materiality of the space and the containers are designed to reveal the details of the labour that takes place within them. In Netil Market, re-used materials are employed to craft personalized temporary spaces that, like craft products, are celebrated as one-off, DIY creations.

The traders in Netil Market position themselves as craft makers and sellers. Their websites promote their products as unique, emphasize the careful attention to their crafting, and celebrate craft's shift away from globalized production and retail towards the handmade (Luckman, 2015; Dawkins, 2011; Sennett, 2008). One of the businesses in Netil Market is "The Worshipful Little Shop of Spectacles"; a handmade glasses shop. The naming of this shop harks back to a time when companies with livery status in London were permitted to use the prefix 'Worshipful Company' as part of their businesses' name, thus associating the glasses shop with London's history of design and trade. Natalie from 'The Worshipful Little Shop of Spectacles' describes on her website how she designs and crafts 'one off handmade spectacle

frames...a rare art in a world of mass, factory-line production' (Theworshipfullittleshopofspectacles, 2015). In WeAreArrow, a jewellery shop, owner Tatiana also stresses that her jewellery is all handmade 'in her small workshop she and her husband built inside a shipping container' (WeAreArrow, 2015).

This emphasis on the *crafted*, is, indeed, reflected in the use of customized shipping containers. Most of the containers in Netil Market were bought from the company 'Bell'<sup>i</sup> who specialize in container conversions and each trader has customized their container to express the style and ethos of their business, making architectural as well as decorative adjustments. For instance, Tatiana's container is fitted with an internal wall of white painted wooden boards and shelves made of reclaimed wood. She uses a log for a stool. Bare light bulbs hang on exposed wires and the inside is decorated with leaves, reiterating the aesthetics of her jewellery which, at the moment is inspired by 'found plant parts' including 'seeds, pods and petals' (WeAreArrow, 2015).



Figure Nineteen: WeAreArrow

In contrast, another container used by The General's Barber Shop's, a hairdresser, is decorated more like an old fashioned North American ranch workshop. As visible in the i-Doc clip, brooms, metal dust pans and hair brushes hang from chains and products are stored in chests. The barber chairs and bottles for shampoo and lotion

are all made to look old fashioned. On top of the container a typical red, blue and white stripy barber shop pole has been fitted. Customers can buy beers, which the barbers brew themselves. Even the barber looks like a lumberjack, sporting a large beard and work boots. The pseudo-workshop environment that The General's Barber shop have created affiliates their hairdressing practice with historical craft production. The effort put into the unit's design, as well as the brewing of their own (craft) beer, is aesthetic labour (Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Warhurst & Dennis 2009) which assists in the crafting of identity for the barber shop.

The aesthetics of The General's Barber shop are similar to those of a barber shop in Chelsea Market in New York, as portrayed by Richard Ocejo (Ocejo, 2017). Ocejo describes how the Chelsea Market barber shop offers 'quality men's haircuts in an array of cool styles – undercuts, fades – as well as razor shaves in a classic-looking environment' that the owner chose to locate 'right next to an old-fashioned shoeshine stand' (Ocejo, 2017, p. 4); like The General's Barber shop, associating itself with historical forms of urban production and commerce. Indeed, Netil Market as a whole has similarities with Ocejo's account of Chelsea Market as a place where visitors are invited to 'experience the industrial past through a lens of modern urban consumerism' (Ocejo, 2017, p. 2). The shops, both in Ocjeco's description of Chelsea Market and in Netil Market, are designed to be reminiscent of a time when small scale industry took place in cities of the Global North, like New York or London. But equally the shops in Netil Market, located as they are in shipping containers, draw on the cachet of the more recent, globalised industrial history. If Chelsea market is nostalgic for a time before the global shift undid New York's industrial economy, then Netil Market is (somehow) also nostalgic for the ongoing process of globalisation.

The personalized design and decoration of the units in Netil Market extends the sense of intimacy with the makers that is promised in their handmade products, creating places that are also 'imbued with touch' (Luckman, 2015, p. 2), bearing the embodied labour of their makers. Containers are often positioned as 'an archetypal

standardized, monotonous product' (Martin, 2016, p. 101). They play a crucial infrastructural role in maintaining the dominance of capitalism as a global system, the power dynamics of which are reflected in the standardized design of containers, that has traditionally meant that 'one is never privy to the contents...Everything is hidden from view to the extent that all that is given to the eye is the spectacle of efficiency' (Martin, 2012, p. 154). In stark contrast, the containers in Netil Market aim to evoke individuality (ironically, given the increasing ubiquity of pop-up container spaces in London). Where the exteriors of industrial containers hide the contents of the box, those in Netil Market signpost their contents even when locked up as, for example, achieved by the barber sign on top of The General's Barber shop. The customizing of the containers creates 'crafted places' which suggest a movement away from the logics of mass production towards the unique.

The significance of this visibility of the contents of containers is clear through a corresponding visibility in the i-Doc. Container spaces are signalled in the i-Doc by small icons resembling shipping containers. If containers are usually 'black boxed', as Klose argues (Klose, 2015), then in the i-Doc the icons are black boxed too, unrevealing of what is behind them. Yet, unlike containers in global circulation, the container icons in the i-Doc can be opened up at will by users who can click on them to reveal the videos. The videos contain interviews with the craft workers of Netil Market and close up insights into their shops and products. Among all the videos I made for the i-Doc, those pertaining to container spaces in Netil Market are some of the most intimate. For example, the video clip about The General's Barber shop includes quite endearing footage of a man receiving a haircut from the smiling barber, Lee. The clip shows Lee gently running his hands through the man's hair as he trims it, zooming in for a close up of his distinctively tattooed hand. A downward shot of the container's wood panelled floor shows the shoes of several people coming in and out of the small space, to buy beers or to chat to the barbers. One man dances a little to the music playing. The clip demonstrates the shop as a lively social environment where customers and workers are in friendly communication.

These features develop an understanding that pop-up's flexibility imaginary positions containers as sites of labour and consumption, but also as spaces of intimacy.

In Netil Market, the customization of containers signals a different kind of relationship between producer and consumer, one that is more personal and more immediate. This, as Ocejó argues of Chelsea Market and other 'urban villages', caters to a desire for community among a demographic of 'college students and recent graduates, creative workers, and young professionals' who want to 'put down roots in 'authentic' neighbourhoods, such as by shopping at local independent stores' (Ocejó, 2017, p. 11). Responding to this desire, 'businesses in the artisan economy, such as craft brewers, coffee roasters, and knitters are based on shared understandings of quality, authenticity and the importance of 'localness' (11); thriving on the idea of 'connecting people with the products they buy and the people who make them' (20). The containers remake a local market experience within what are, aesthetically at least, residual structures of the globalised economy.

This positioning of Netil Market's containers as a local centre for trade, in opposition to the global economy containers normally symbolise, chimes with Bramall's arguments about 'austerity chic' as a structure of feeling which, although it operates through consumption, at the same time seems 'in a small way – to animate alternative modes of satisfaction and pleasure' (Bramall, 2013, p. 28). The imaginary of flexibility in Netil Market, where it corresponds to customization in contrast to standardization, performs a similar kind of, small, alternative to contemporary capitalism. If contemporary consumer society replaces human interaction with mediation through the capitalist spectacle, as argued by Debord (Debord, 1984) then Netil Market's shops offer face to face communication with the makers and sellers of goods. Perhaps the naming of the Worshipful Little Shop of Spectacles can even be read as a play on Debord's commentary; signalling its offer of handmade spectacles to be a very different kind of 'spectacle' to those on offer elsewhere in London's consumer economy.



However, the jobs in Netil Market are of course symptomatic of, rather than in opposition to, contemporary capitalism. They belong to a move towards 'flexible' labour based around self-employment and entrepreneurship. These are what might be seen as 'bad' jobs (Ocejo, 2017), in that they are unstable, precarious and require workers to 'get their hands dirty, stand on their feet all day, do heavy lifting, sweat and deal with various splashes, spills and stains' as well as to 'engage in emotional labour' in order to convince customers of the value of this personalized interaction (Ocejo, 2017, p. 17). Yet, these are also jobs desired by many young people and that are on the rise as a sector of the economy. This rise can be partly explained by a recalibration of taste through which small scale manufacturing is appealing to middle class consumers; Luckman writes that 'the mechanical tools of the industrial age are ready to be re-signified as bespoke when used on a small-scale, artisanal level producing quality items for a growing 'discerning' middle class audience' (Luckman, 2015, pp. xiii-xiv). But it is also about the recalibration of the kinds of labour that are desired so that, as Ojeco argues, jobs like barbering, cocktail making and light manufacturing, when figured through imaginaries of craft and artisanality are seen as 'among the new elite' (Ocejo, 2017, p. 5). Ojeco argues that contemporary conditions are such that 'these workers find themselves pursuing these careers without experiencing them as downward social mobility' and, on the contrary, experiencing them as jobs that give meaning and pleasure because of their focus on personal passion and on smaller scale, less wasteful and intensive production, standing in supposed opposition to the ethics of mass production. The meaningfulness of such jobs, Ocejo argues, is especially apparent when undertaken in 'occupational communities whose members recognise them and their work as good' (Ocejo, 2017, p. 5).

This desire to do something 'good' within a sympathetic community is reflected by Sarah the Market Manager who attributes the rise of spaces such as Netil Market to the fact that 'people want to make a living in an interesting way if possible' (Sarah, 2015). It is also reflected by the positioning of businesses like Suwun the gender neutral clothing shop who, according to one of its owners, Egle, sees Netil Market

as a welcoming space for businesses aligned with progressive politics and thus a good place to open her own business. Holding an MA in Gender Studies, Egle did not see working in a clothes shop as an underuse of her education but as an opportunity to pursue a meaningful career aligned with her social values.

As this section has described, containers can be customized in keeping with the personalities and aesthetics of their owners. This heightens the meaningfulness of the jobs in Netil Market. It makes them not just jobs which are flexible in terms of hours but in terms of self-expression. Each container is a small kingdom that can be governed by its owner. Both Egle and the staff at The General's Barber shop express, in the clips about their businesses, their pleasure about being able to easily customize or adapt their containers. It is also clear that their designs reflect their personal and business sensibilities. For example, Suwun's container is minimalist and almost futuristic in design; it has an iPad embedded into one wall and is furnished with multipurpose units that can be benches, shelves or cabinets. This design chimes with Suwun's positioning of itself as part of a new wave of clothing that sees gender as almost passé, reflecting their belief that 'style is *beyond* gender' (my italics), posing gender neutral clothing as the coming future (O'Carroll, 2014).

One of the appeals of the flexibility imaginary in its alignment with customization is its promise to unlock individuality through labour. As such, flexibility as an imaginary in pop-up is closely related to flexibility as a structure of feeling. For Anderson, flexibility as a structure of feeling harnesses 'desires for personal liberation to the world of work' by imbuing unstable forms of labour with 'hope' and promises of '(self)transformation' (2014, p. 132) so that they betoken those positive qualities, rather than precarity.

The reframing of precarious labour as positive, through the flexibility imaginary, is not necessarily about changes to the actual work taking place, but about changes to the affective atmospheres they are affiliated to. Bringing the individual clips I had made together in the i-Doc made tangible this affiliation. The clips each show individual pop-up businesses and the labour that happens inside them. However, the

i-Doc is more than the sum of these parts. Each clip gains meaning from its inclusion in the i-Doc's totality, including its relationship to the other clips. The clips have aesthetic continuities between them. For example, as shown in the methods chapter, the bird tattoo sported by Lee from The General's Barber shop is mirrored by a very similar tattoo on one of the bar staff in The Artworks. This aesthetic connectivity between clips helps to clarify how, while pop-up workers find meaning in their individualized container spaces, it is also their affiliation with pop-up's broader imaginaries and aesthetics that the value of these enterprises is rooted in. Reinforcing this, I used the links at the end of clips as connective attractors, encouraging users not to take clips as standalone experiences, but to be constantly aware of the culture they are part of.

However, while container spaces enhance the meaning found in craft economy jobs, their positive imaginaries could also be argued to mask diminished conditions of life and labour, and make palatable capitalism's disappointments and injustices. Both Ojeco and Luckman argue that the cachet of the craft economy enables middle class people to take on jobs that would be less desirable without the accompanying imaginaries lending a positive affective force to an economic shift that could just as well be read as 'downward social mobility' (Ojeco, 2017, p. 5). As crafted spaces, containers seem to, in Berlant's words, 'scramble the distinction between forced adaptation, pleasurable variation and threatening dissolution of life-confirming norms' (Berlant, 2011, p.8), making a process of adapting to the weakened economy seem, in some lights, a pleasurable pursuit. The next section builds on this argument by exploring how containers provide an *infrastructure* that eases, but thereby entrenches, the unpredictable temporalities of craft economy jobs.

### **Flexibility/Personal Flexibility**

The surge of work within the craft and creative industries reflects a move towards self-employment corresponding to a rise in unemployment (Luckman, 2015, p. 136).

As is widely recognized, the craft and creative economies are at the forefront of shifts towards 'flexible' labour and experiences of precarity are widespread (Banks, et al., 2013; Gill & Pratt, 2008). Binge work patterns are usual, with dry spells punctuating intense periods of labour, and securities such as sick pay and holiday pay are lacking. Yet regardless of oscillations in work, and importantly income, workers must be 'always on'; constantly putting energy into the maintenance of a business identity that 'becomes increasingly difficult' to separate from their personal lives and leisure time (Hracs & Leslie, 2014, p. 67). The use of container architectures seeks to mitigate but actually serves to reinforce those precarious work conditions, engaging what Ferreri et al. have described, in a different context, as a 'mutually constitute relation between work precarity and precarious relation to place' (Ferreri, et al., 2017, p. 248).

Container spaces are designed to occupy a space for temporary periods; usually between few months and a couple of years. They usually have short notice periods so can be easily evicted at any point. Containers match the unstable temporalities of work in the creative economy with an unpredictable, 'flexible' geography (Harris, 2015) where businesses can move nomadically from site to site as and when cheap space is available. Sjöholm has questioned the nature of the modern studio at a time when 'artistic practices' are increasingly 'nomadic', 'fragmented' and 'precarious' (Sjöholm, 2013, p. 506) and in Netil Market, the craft makers mobilize the pop-up format to respond to this precarity with studios that are themselves nomadic; built from containers specifically designed to be moved and transported. Sarah was initially hesitant to allow too many containers in the market because of the growing ubiquity of container spaces but, as she says, 'the market is a transient thing, daily it changes [and] monthly we have new people coming in' and in these instances it is 'much easier to have a container' (Sarah, 2015).

The utility of containers is partly down to the temporary leases given to sites like Netil Market, which may be evicted at short notice and thus require an infrastructure that is easily relocated. The way pop-ups occupy interim space-times between more

routine uses of sites makes them subservient to other investment cycles. One of the reasons pop-ups are valued by stakeholders such as private landlords and local governments is because they attract investment to disused sites (Ferreri, 2015) but can be easily moved on when that investment is found. Pop-up is a precarious urban form; easily mobilized to rejuvenate a 'wasted' space-time but just as easily displaced when a more profitable use is identified. Sarah's comments on Netil Market confirm this sense of precarity. In the i-Doc clip of Sarah's interview, she mentions the new housing developments surrounding Netil Market and suggests that the market's future is uncertain as the space becomes increasingly desirable for investment. 'We only get brief opportunities to use these spaces', she comments 'before they're developed'. 'And the way things are going around here, if there's any chance of developing it, it will be' (Sarah, 2015). In the clip the building works around the market are visible. I also offered a link, at the end of the clip, to the clip of The Artworks, which similarly includes a panning shot of new build flats, foregrounding the role that pop-up container spaces routinely play in processes of gentrification. The container spaces are beneficial to the eventual developers of the land, as they raise its value and attract interest, yet, despite their value, their use of the site is precarious as they are moved out once developers are ready to break ground.

However, as well as containers easing the forced mobilities of Netil Market as a whole, their value is also down to the fact that many of the businesses *intend* to be there temporarily, seeing the pop-up format as a starting point for gaining access to permanent space. For example, Lee from The General's Barber shop explained to me that the team always wanted to open a permanent hair dressing salon but didn't have the financial resources to do so initially, so decided to use a container while they gained momentum and money. Since I completed my research, they have managed to move into a permanent space near to Netil Market, but the container was crucial for them in the early time of need. Sarah confirmed this as one of the reasons why businesses come and go so fast from Netil Market; many, like The General's Barber shop, do well and move on to permanent accommodation, others (like, sadly, Suwun) leave because of failure or dissatisfaction in their pop-up

business. In either case, container studios are rarely a permanent solution for a small business, they are instead an architecture that eases the mobility that, either through success or failure, the business requires.

Designed to withstand transoceanic travel, containers are strong and secure. Although moving them does require forklifts, containers don't need to be dismantled so can be relocated without risking damage. Alfie, another member of Eat Work Art (who will feature more latter in the chapter) explained to me that containers allow small businesses to move themselves from site to site easily at short notice because they can simply be picked up and transported in their built form. They can also be locked up anywhere they need to be left, keeping their contents safe from theft. As Egle, one of the owners of Suwun, comments in the clip about Netil Market, 'you just lock the container door at night and that's it; nobody can get in'. Containers provide an architecture that enables the traders to both withstand and succumb to the flux and the anxieties they face in the absence of permanent premises.

In the introduction to this thesis I argued that pop-up's nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries respond to conditions of turbulence in the urban assemblage; mirroring a period of instability and flux with positively inflected imaginaries of such spatiotemporality. I think the use of containers for work studios in Netil Market makes clear the function of these imaginaries of nonlinearity in the context of turbulence. Rather than reducing turbulence, by offering more stable forms of labour, pop-up's imaginaries and architectures find ways to normalise and ease the frictions of that turbulence because containers provide an infrastructure that can accommodate the erratic mobilities workers are subjected to.

Containers can be seen as a 'temporal architecture'. This is a concept that Sharma develops in her book *In the Meantime* to make tangible the politics of producing and maintaining certain temporalities. Sharma describes how temporal architectures are composed of elements including the built environment, commodities, services, technologies and the labour of others; they are infrastructures that enable certain social rhythms to take place. She argues that temporal architectures tend to serve

to manage and enhance the time of privileged groups whose temporalities are particularly valued (Sharma, 2014, p. 139). Using Sharma's concept, we can understand container spaces as a form of temporal (as well as spatial) architecture in that they reinforce short term and unpredictable mobilities for small creative businesses. And, as Sharma argues, there is a particular power geometry to this because the unstable temporalities that containers enable free up the time of developers who can easily evict pop-up occupants of sites as and when they want. Sharma writes that there is 'an expectation that certain bodies recalibrate to the time of others as a significant condition of the labor' (Sharma, 2014, p. 20) and we see this clearly in Netil Market, where the containers are a method by which creative and craft workers recalibrate to the time scales of developers and to the volatile realities of self-employment; containers ease, but in doing so reinforce, their precarious and unpredictable movements around the city. The result is a geography that is infrastructurally impermanent. Just as impermanence is coded into the i-Doc, whose infrastructure contains places that are intended to come and go, containers codify mobility and uncertainty into London's urban environment.

This is not to say that pop-up is the only arena where precarity is entrenched through spatial forms that encourage and enable 'permanent temporariness' (Ferreri, et al., 2017) while positively narrativizing that precarity through imaginaries of flexibility. As Ferreri et al. discuss, the term precarity has long been used to describe an insecure relation to space. It was used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to refer to 'tenancies "held or enjoyed by the favour of and at the pleasure of another person"' (Oxford English Dictionary 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. in Ferreri et al., 2017, p. 249) so that, as implied by my reading of container architectures through Sharma's temporal politics, the pleasant flexibility of some is enabled through the precarity of others. Ferreri et al.'s discussion of property guardianship schemes in London (where people pay lower than market value rents to 'guard' vacant properties in return for very insecure, yet strictly regulated, tenancies) resonates with my discussions of shipping container spaces in that guardianships are shown to also be places that both ease and entrench labour

precarity by offering 'flexible' homes (253) that are suited to the erratic temporalities, and financial instabilities, facing creative industry workers

Ferreri. et al. argue that 'permanent temporariness' in property guardianship is 'symptomatic of wider dynamics of work and life precarisation in urban centres' (Ferreri, et al., 2017, p. 246). Indeed many of the pop-up workers I encountered during my research had experienced precarious relations to space in other settings. One of the i-Doc's 'outside pop-up city' pages is titled 'pop-up people'. This page contains an excerpt from an interview with Michelle who works in The Artworks (discussed later). It explains how, when asked about how she finds working in a temporary place, Michelle commented that the last place she'd worked was a studio scheduled for demolition, so the uncertainty of her current container studio wasn't so different. "That's London I suppose", she says. Michelle's comment shows how typical the timescales of pop-up are within London's economy. Yet what is notable about pop-up is that it makes this temporariness and mobility an *expectation* and one that is framed as positive. The next section explores how this happens.



Figure Twenty: Pop-up People



## Fun Flexibility/Cruel Optimism

Because containers make it possible; temporariness and mobility become even more of an expectation within the creative industries (Mould, 2014), requiring 'pop-up people' (Ferreri, 2015) to eagerly respond to opportunities for space as they become available. I elucidated the alertness this mobility requires through the format of the i-Doc. I designed the 'play' view so that users would be required to constantly watch the map in order to see spaces as they emerge. Users quickly realise that icons will disappear again after a short time and that they will miss them if they are busy watching another clip. The i-Doc therefore requires a vigilant approach to playing the pop-up city. However, it also inevitably means that attention is distributed across the map rather than on the clip being watched at any given time, so that users can never fully commit or settle into a clip because of the need to watch the map as it shifts to keep an eye on what else they are missing. The calendar at the bottom of the screen adds to the sense of anxiety by foregrounding the rapid passing of time, illuminating what the affective experience of popping up might be like for those who inhabit container spaces.

However, I would argue that precarity and anxiety in pop-up are not necessarily experienced as such because of the way that pop-up's imaginaries of flexibility intersect with precarity as a structure of feeling. In the i-Doc, I labelled the main view 'play the pop-up city', the word 'play', suggesting a positive, exciting experience. Although the i-Doc's infrastructure imposes temporal constraints, limitations and anxieties on its users these conditions are framed as something fun, part of the 'game'. The aesthetics of containers likewise figure pop-up's flexible geographies as something game-like. Journalist Dan Hancox has compared pop-up container spaces to 'gargantuan lego blocks' (Hancox, 2014). Hancox, writing about The Artworks (explored later in this chapter) quotes a video made by the company My Space Pod, who provided the containers for The Artworks' site. He quotes Sam Minionis, from My Space Pod, on container architecture saying 'It's flexible, it's durable, it's demountable and transferable, and that's an incredible advantage. You

can take a new building, demount it and transfer it somewhere else. It's a plug and play system' (Hancox, 2014). The phrase 'plug and play' is interesting in this context. It shows how the flexibility imaginary in container spaces is conceived of as *fun*, as a playful form of urbanism.

Understanding the flexibility imaginary as aligned with play is important to why pop-up's unstable temporalities may not be felt as precarity but instead be desirable to creative economy workers and visitors. Flexibility, as an imaginary, mingles with precarity as a structure of feeling, mediating and transforming it as an enjoyable affective state. We could understand this function of pop-up's flexibility imaginary as cruel optimism, following Berlant; a relation of optimism that 'is cruel' because the object that 'ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving' (Berlant, 2011, p. 2). Here, this relation of cruel optimism is apparent in the fact that pop-up container spaces help to make precarious labour conditions desirable and thus, rather than energy being put into long term solutions to precarity, the structures that perpetuate and normalise that precarity (here, container architectures) are embraced and bought into as a method for attaining 'the good life' (Berlant, 2011, p. 3). Container spaces seem to offer this good life because, as we have seen, they allow people to pursue their passions in a personalized environment. The optimism they engage is, as Berlant argues, pleasurable, even 'profoundly confirming' to inhabit, despite the futility of its promises of transformation (2). Container spaces also mediate the 'scrambled' (8) rhythms indicative of precarity so that they are instead experienced through flexibility; a more positive affective manifestation of the same conditions. However, by reinforcing, and making structural, the idea that creative work should belong in impermanent spaces they also undermine the potential for this good life to escape the confines of the 'inbetween' space-times they currently inhabit.

It is useful here to return to Sharma's exploration of temporal architectures and their power geometries in light of Berlant's ideas around cruel optimism. I think the two,

thought together, help us to see that *imaginaries* play a key role in attaching people to, and holding them within, the unbalanced temporal architectures that Sharma describes. In Netil Market, we have seen how imaginaries of flexibility as customization and personalization draw people to precarious labour. Furthermore, we can see here how imaginaries can be invested in and mobilized differently for different actors. For the creative workers in Netil Market, investment in flexibility as an imaginary allows them to make sense of and think positively about their labour conditions. Yet for developers that same imaginary enables a temporal freedom which manifests as precarity for Netil Market's workers, who might be displaced at short notice. Investment in the flexibility imaginary can therefore be a kind of cruel optimism, not necessarily because the process you're investing in is on its own terms unsound but because the imaginaries you hold to are being mobilized differently, even *against* you, by other more powerful actors. I think this is the case in Netil Market. The workers there are investing in an imaginary of flexibility that enhances their sense of personalized, rewarding and meaningful work. Yet this imaginary is simultaneously being instrumentalised by other urban actors as a way to manage the timescales of development, and so their energies get diverted into agendas that are not their own.

Indeed, accessing the counterproductive 'pleasures' (Berlant, 2011, p. 2) that pop-up workers find in the flexibility imaginary demands a great deal of literal and emotional labour from those people in return. The nomadism pop-up enables for craft practitioners, also relates to an expectation that craft makers and traders should be instrumental in making the city more efficient and resourceful. Containers, as used in pop-up, ironically create a revised version of the 'spectacle of efficiency' they evoke in geographies of mass production (Martin, 2012, p. 154). As Ferreri has argued, in post austerity London pop-up carries a 'moral imperative' to make use of 'waste spaces' at a time of '(alleged) social and economic scarcity' (Ferreri, 2015). In a city where space is expensive and in high demand, and at a time when funding for creative projects is scarce, disused sites are framed as opportunities for temporary creative use which it would be wasteful not to take up. Importantly, it is

individuals and small businesses who are expected to activate these opportunities and, what's more, feel it as their responsibility (Ferreri, 2015), as evidenced by Sarah's worry that 'we only get brief opportunities to make something of these spaces' (Sarah, 2015).

Likewise, as well as being made responsible for reinvigorating space, individuals take on the responsibility of creating gainful employment. Netil Market is populated by people who, rather than looking for a job that satisfies their desires and makes use of their skills, have taken upon themselves the risky endeavour of opening a business. Luckman argues that within the creative and micro-enterprise economies individuals take on enhanced 'personal responsibility for one's own success or failure in life', as well as the burden of creating 'their own employment options as part of the wider project of fashioning the conditions of their own life' (Luckman, 2015, p. 136). In the i-Doc, the onus on the individual in pop-up culture is evident from there being not one but three clips about Netil Market. Although I have explored the importance of the affective connections between the container clips in the i-Doc, it is also significant that the container businesses each have their own clip, suggesting that despite their affective and aesthetic affiliation with *container city* they are structurally *on their own*, and succeeding or failing on their own merits.

In this section I have explored how containers enhance the appeal of new forms of creative economy work, but also normalise and perpetuate precarity in the creative economy. In doing so I have argued that imaginaries of flexibility, and specifically ones aligned with customization, intermix with precarity as a structure of feeling, stopping precarity being experienced as precarity and instead making its conditions appealing. I have argued that investment in such imaginaries thereby becomes a form of cruel optimism because they promise a life that, in practice, they help to relegate to the 'meantime'. I have suggested that this is connected to the fact that imaginaries can be mobilized in conflicting ways simultaneously, so that the efforts of workers to turn flexibility to their advantage are thwarted by its mobilization by others.

The flexibility imaginary prevents an experience of precarity that might lead to critical awareness of its conditions. For Creswell and Martin turbulence can offer opportunities for things to be different, for new progressive orders to take formation (Cresswell & Martin, 2012). However, if precarity is a form of turbulence, and thus an opportunity for such re-orderings, the flexibility imaginary normalises that turbulence, as such potentially precluding radical re-orderings. The next section continues these arguments that the flexibility imaginary normalises and thereby stabilises precarious conditions.

## **Part Two**

### **Grow Up: The New Efficiency**

My discussion of container spaces and their flexibility imaginaries now turns to the alignment of flexibility with efficiency. As explored in the introduction to this chapter, containerization has been argued to produce a 'spectacle of efficiency' that insists upon the prowess of contemporary capitalism. In this section I consider what happens to ideas of efficiency as imaginaries of flexibility are reformulated in pop-up container spaces. Specifically I make two arguments, across two sections. Firstly, I argue that efficiency in container spaces is associated with efficient use of urban space, where the word is taken as a synonym for 'economically productive'. I suggest that container architectures are seen as efficient because they turn all urban sites into potential sites of economic productivity. Secondly, I argue that efficiency in container spaces move away from efficiency's association with mass production and towards efficiency as associated with a thrifty, DIY approach to provisioning; one which crucially shifts the onus for efficient production and distribution of resources onto individuals.

I make these arguments through a discussion of The GrowUp Box. The GrowUp box is an aquaponics farm in a shipping container which currently sits on 'roof east'; the

roof top of a carpark in Stratford, East London. The container was converted into an urban farm in 2013 by a small team who initially funded the project on kickstarter, raising £15,000. The container has been adapted to function as a vertical farm. A greenhouse has been attached to the top of the container, where salad leaves are grown, and inside are fish tanks containing tilapia fish. Water is recycled as it circulates through the system. As the water passes through the fish tanks it gains nutrients from their excrement which then fertilizes the salad leaves, which in turn purify the water ready for it to be pumped back into the fish tanks.

As well as being a working farm, the box is used as a showcase to illustrate sustainable urban farming practices for schools and other interested parties (The box claims to be sustainable because it grows a lot of food in a small space and reduces air miles and food spoilage by growing food for local delivery by bike). The container design allows GrowUp box to be mobile. It used to be located in London Bridge but when that site was no longer available it was driven to East London and lifted onto the 8<sup>th</sup> floor roof of a shopping centre, where Roof East is situated. In the i-Doc the GrowUp Box features in one clip which includes excerpts from an interview with Sam, who is in charge of design and development, and Oscar who is the farm manager.

### **Efficiency One: Expanding the Social Factory**

For Sam and Oscar the mobility and modularity of the GrowUp Box is one of its key assets. Thanks to the container, the farm is able to move as opportunities arise and make use of urban spaces which might otherwise go to waste; leftover spaces that can be categorized as 'interstices' (Brighenti, 2013). As Sam, who designed the box, explained, the 'modular' design of containers mean they can be easily erected in any space. For him, this architectural advantage is also an ethical advantage because the GrowUp Box can be deployed to make use of vacant space, building on the

sustainability ethos of the farm by treating urban sites as a scarce, valuable resource that must be used efficiently, especially at a time of recession.

Sam's enthusiasm for the mobile modularity of the GrowUp Box speaks to a wider imaginary of modularity in container spaces. In the last section I explored Dan Hancox's characterisation of containers as lego blocks, a metaphor often used to describe container spaces. For example, the activist group 'Southwark Notes' have described container spaces as a 'Lego-land labyrinth of creative types.' For Southwark notes and Hancox, the lego imaginary has negative connotations, suggesting that containers that have no fixed links or considered responses to places but instead dump themselves down in environments as if all places are neutral spaces that they can occupy. However, the lego imaginary is also one of positive efficiency and versatility. Sam's pride at how easy the box is to move demonstrates the value he sees in a box that can make use of many different kinds of spaces. Just as containerisation involved the standardization of ports, trains and container ships so that containers could move seamlessly through the global trade system (Martin, 2013), container architectures allow pop-up places to move seamlessly across the city, turning any available space into their workspace.

However, if the imaginary of flexibility in container spaces evokes a sense that all urban interstices can be made use of then *making use of* is also conflated with *making money out of*. 'Wasted', as Sam terms it, does not necessarily mean 'not being used' but not being used *profitably*. This point has been made by Southwark Notes in relation to the former site of the Heygate Estate (discussed in the following section). Southwark Notes point out that the justification for the development of a container mall on the site of the Heygate was that the site was lying empty and therefore going to waste. Yet this definition of the site as vacant ignored informal uses of the space such as for football matches between Local Latin American teams or play space for children (Southwark Notes, n.d.). Southwark notes drew attention to how 'waste' in pop-up is a normative categorisation. Indeed other theorists have argued that many 'vacant' spaces are 'not "dead"' at all but contain urban wildlife or

provide “spaces of “micro-political activity” (Cupers & Miessen, 2002, p. 123), spaces of “alternative cultures” (Shaw, 2005), or “spaces of transgression” for marginalized social groups, youth, or artists” (Colomb, 2012, p. 135) as well as sites of refuse for ‘the homeless and those deemed marginal to society’ (Lashua, 2013, p. 125). Yet these uses are not recognised when spaces are designated empty and readied for pop-up occupation because they are, crucially, not profitable.

As argued in the last section, Ben Anderson has suggested that flexibility as a structure of feeling ‘acts to harness desires for personal liberations to the world of work’ (Anderson, 2014, p. 132) so that drives for self-realisation are enacted through rather than in opposition to labour. Similarly, flexibility as an imaginary in pop-up mobilizes desires for the realisation of urban spaces through labour; conflating making use of urban interstices with a prerogative for entrepreneurship. The flexibility of the container as a mobile architecture thereby extends how labour is increasingly ‘deterritorialized, dispersed and decentralised’ (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 7) within the neoliberal economy.

The imperative within pop-up to seize ‘wasted’ space-times positions the whole city as a prospective site of work so that empty car parks, roof tops, shops after hours, gardens, parks, yards, derelict buildings and much more all become potential sites of labour. The city becomes a ‘factory without walls’ (Negri, 1989, 79 in Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 7). Furthermore, the discourse of ‘waste’ gives this expectation more weight, positioning it as an ethical prerogative (Ferreri, 2015). If leisure time and domestic space have already been colonized through the logics of precarious labour (Gill & Pratt, 2008), then pop-up subsumes new urban geographies in to the ‘social factory’.

In that they turn all spaces into spaces of production, containers have a prescriptive function in the city. Yet, at the same time, the lego-like imaginary of containers as flexible, modular units give a false sense that the virtual capacities of the city remain open. Containers, because they can be deployed anywhere and, as the last section suggested, customized in myriad ways, are imagined as units for *anything*. Indeed Shane Boyel has argued that containers are ‘proving their profoundly democratic



potential: they are as fit to be playgrounds for the rich as they are prisons for the poor' as evidenced by the range of uses including 'container cafes, container hotels, container malls' as well as migrant-detention centres, military barracks, and jails' (Boyel, 2016). In Boyel's account, flexibility corresponds to *plasticity*, to the ability of a ubiquitous item to serve countless functions.

This imaginary of plasticity is important in pop-up's nonlinear spatiotemporal imaginaries because it indicates a city where qualitative as well as quantitative changes take place. If containers were not customizable their movements round the city would be more closely aligned with what Deleuze calls the movement image, and what Bergson criticises as an inaccurate rendition of time; an image in which change equates to the redistribution of pre-established parts. However, because containers can be transformed in unpredictable ways, here to produce an urban farm, their movements enable qualitative changes in the city, asserting the city as an open assemblage in continual transformation in which, as Martin argues, the container 'might just be the perfect object to navigate this sense of continual change' (Martin, 2016, p. 102).

However, as I have argued, this imaginary of openness jars with the prerogative to turn all sites into sites of production. A comparison with a similar architectural imaginary can tease out this contradiction. The ability of containers like the GrowUp box to move around the city is reminiscent of the imaginaries of flexibility within the urban plans of the 1960s group Archigram. In particular, container spaces chime with Archigram member Peter Cook's designs for a 'plug-in city' made up of itinerant units 'designed for change' (The Archigram Archival Project, 2010). Just as GrowUp aims to promote a more sustainable city, where food is efficiently grown and consumed, Archigram also imagined a utopian city in which modular units allowed efficient, flexible urban environments. Cook's visions of places 'swinging from cranes, clipping on, plugging in and floating' (Pinder, 2011, p. 177) could be a hyperbolic description of the movements of containers like the GrowUp which are also perceived to move seamlessly from site to site. Cook's 'permanence ratings' (The Archigram Archival

Project, 2010) for the plug in city eerily foreshadow pop-up. He suggests that shopping locations should exist for 3-6 years, within which sales spaces change every 6 months, an accurate account of the temporalities of pop-up malls like Netil Market, Paradise Yard or The Artworks.

However, while Archigram's plans were supposedly for a liberated urban environment, David Pinder has argued that the mobile units they proposed were more like 'the materialisation of a capitalist fantasy' of 'expansionary and nomadic drives' (Pinder, 2011, p.183) because the mobile units Archigram envisaged allow constant reinvestment by overcoming the 'immobility of real estate' (Bishop & Williams, 2012, p. 25). Likewise, container mobilities serve to generate profit in London. They too overcome the 'immobility of real estate'. If one of the drawbacks of redevelopment is that seeking planning permission and readying sites for development is a very slow process, then container architectures allow this 'wasted' time to be profitable because small businesses can be brought in that make profitable use of those interstices while they await development.

Yet, ultimately, container spaces also stabilize real estate. Even while they 'overcome' the limitations of its immobility they do not undo that immobility, but in fact reinforce it by helping to attract and advertise redevelopment so that declining sites become, almost always, profitable housing developments. Container architectures provide a model of urban development which enables commercial activities to occupy a space without precluding rapid replacement by a more profitable investor and, furthermore, by encouraging the wider gentrification of the area. Ideas of efficiency within the flexibility imaginary therefore also relate to an efficiency of the gentrification process. If pop-ups use space efficiently then part of this efficiency is in how successfully and rapidly they transform sites and surrounding areas.

The nonlinear imaginary of flexibility in container architectures is then misleading, given that the nonlinear potentials enabled by containers, for mobility and for transformative adaptation, are governed by attractors towards gentrification that are

so strong that their nonlinear potentials are essentially futile. This is a good reminder that nonlinear ontologies do not necessarily imply openness, because nonlinear systems are governed sometimes more by the entraining force of attractors than they are by their virtual capacities. This suggestion is developed in the i-Doc both through the content of the container clips (and others) and through the spatiotemporal architecture of the i-Doc.

Firstly, in terms of the content of the clips, most of the clips about container spaces include images of housing being built around or near the site. In the clip about GrowUp, we see the view from Roof East where the box is located; a view that includes cranes and other markers of the gentrification taking place in Stratford, including the London Orbital. While Sam and Oscar state, in their interview, that containers open up spaces for alternative activities, the view from the roof shows the overriding force of gentrification and its homogenization of space.

Likewise, the spatiotemporal architecture of the i-Doc develops this idea that the virtual potentials located in pop-up's nonlinearity are shut down by the force of the city's attractors. I organised the i-Doc so that the progress of users through it is (although they are not made aware of it) towards one immobile attractor. The i-Doc is designed so that after 10 minutes the play view is interrupted. Users are unable to access any further clips and are confronted instead with an outside pop-up city page that informs them that they must leave the temporary city, which is now ready for redevelopment. In the same breath, they are encouraged to visit the 'pop-up city showrooms' and browse for luxury apartments.



Figure Twenty One: The End of Pop-Up City

This abrupt, singular, ending (somewhat crudely) illustrates the fallacy of openness in pop-up's nonlinear imaginary. While the flexibility imaginary asserts the openness of space-time, such openness is, as in the i-Doc, effectively pointless, because the pop-ups are drawn by and put to work for one overriding attractor; the redevelopment of the city. It is important that in the i-Doc this is a hidden attractor. Earlier I discussed *Gaza Sderot* which has a line down the middle of its interface that forces users to reproduce the divisions of the Gaza conflict, given that they can only choose clips from one side of the conflict at once. In *Gaza Sderot* the attractor is made very obvious to the user, because the line is key to the imaginary of the Gaza conflict. However I designed my i-Doc so that users would be unaware of the forceful attractor that governs the i-Doc's trajectories and this is because it is not part of pop-up's imaginary. This helps to articulate a key denial in pop-up's imaginary, which foregrounds openness, flux and change while omitting the overwhelming pull of redevelopment. In their interview, Oscar and Sam say that you'd hope that pop-up projects will come to inform planning so that developments will include spaces for the *unplanned*. Yet the view of the London sky line from their container somewhat undermines this hope, exhibiting instead a city that knows where it's going, and uses pop-up merely to get there.

## Efficiency Two: Ad-Hoc Design and Individualism

Having argued that efficiency, as part of the flexibility imaginary, corresponds to the expansion of 'the social factory' as well as the advancement of gentrification, this section turns to explore a second element of the relationship between pop-up's flexibility imaginary and ideas of efficiency. If containers, as explored previously, evoke a 'spectacle of efficiency' in global trade systems (Martin, 2012), then in so doing they deny everyday people insight into and control over those systems. However in pop-up, container spaces are spaces in which individuals have the power to intervene in urban systems. Here efficiency moves away from ideas of black boxed processes and instead becomes associated with DIY, ad-hoc design; so that what is efficient is the individual's resourceful use of materials. We have seen how flexibility, in its alignment with efficiency, corresponds to the ability to transform urban spaces and here it corresponds to a similar transformative capacity, the capacity for individuals to understand and transform objects and their processes. In this section I explore this capacity for transformation through ideas around adhocism which bring to light some of the politics embedded in the flexibility imaginary.

For Shane Boyel, the spectacle of efficiency evoked by shipping containers is a comforting spectacle. He argues that it excuses us from needing to know the processes through which the world functions. (Boyel, 2016, p. 61). Boyel argues that the container is therefore 'more than a tool or symbol of supply chain capitalism; it testifies as well to what Fredric Jameson...called our'"incapacity...to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects" (61-62). That is to say, containers are emblematic of a world where individuals are distanced from infrastructural processes to the point of not even being able to imagine or orientate themselves within them. Yet, if containers normally distance us from the processes which govern the world then the GrowUp Box does something quite different; it encourages a DIY approach to flows of resources; here the flow of food around the city.

In the clip about GrowUp, Oscar and Sam suggest that the ability to open up the container so that the system inside can be understood by visitors is one of the main advantages of its architecture. They explain that ‘you can open up the long side of it, it makes *it much more visually easy to read the system*. There’s the fish, there’s the growing space, you can see the pipe work and how it reads as a whole. That’s one of the main drivers for using the shipping container is we can open it up to the public’ (my italics). This statement stands in contrast to suggestions that containers are usually unreadable systems (Boyel, 2016; Martin, 2013; Klose, 2015). If containers usually disguise their functions from the public then GrowUp, on the contrary, invites them to understand the process occurring within it. GrowUp often organise school visits and other events where members of the public can learn about how the box works. They hope that others will be inspired to create similar urban farms based around their model.



Figure Twenty Two: Grow Up Box

## Aquaponics

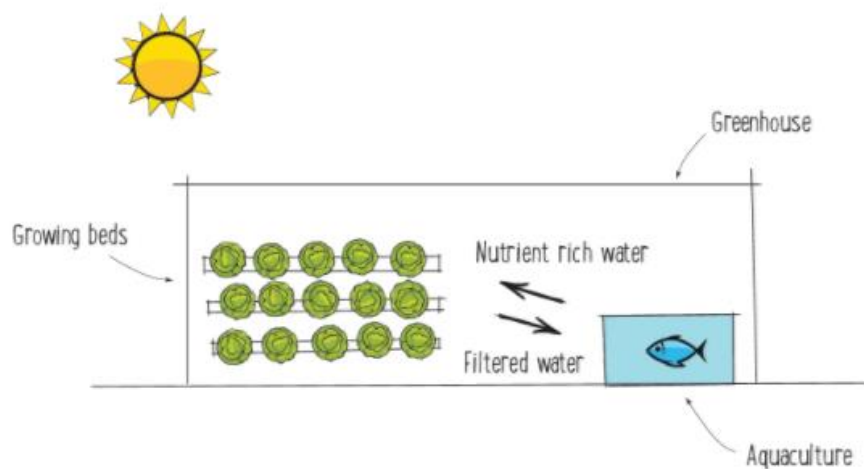


Figure Twenty Three: Grow Up Aquaponics

The GrowUp website invites schools, universities and the public to arrange a visit to the box. It also presents an easily understandable diagram of how the box works along with a simple, bullet point summary of the 'efficient' process:

“Aquaponics is a recirculating system that combines hydroponics (growing plants in a nutrient solution without soil) and aquaculture (fish farming) to create an efficient closed loop system:

1. We feed the fish
2. The fish poo
3. The nutrient rich waste-water from the fish tanks is pumped to the roots of the plants where microbacteria convert the waste nutrients into helpful nutrients
4. The nutrients fertilise the plants and in turn the plants purify the water
5. The water is then pumped back into the fish tanks”

Here, efficiency is not a 'spectacle of efficiency' (Martin, 2013), alienating in its opaqueness, but a simple efficiency which visitors are invited to understand and explore. Reading this through Boyel's discussion of container shipping and through Jameson's ideas of cognitive mapping starts to bring its politics into view. For Jameson, as Boyel describes, being able to orientate oneself within urban and global systems is a prerequisite for being able to critique and resist them. Jameson suggests that the complexity of globalised hyper-space means the individual can no longer form 'cognitive maps' of the world which has 'transcended the capacities of the individual body to...organise its surroundings perceptually" (1991: 44). In light of this claim, the practices of GrowUp seem to reinstate the ability to cognitively map the production and circulation of resources. As such, GrowUp is a progressive system of food supply because it is one that the public can understand and thus hypothetically have control over.

This progressive politics is located in the design of the GrowUp box and in particular, its adhoc construction from an 'upcycled' shipping container. As well as being an efficient reuse of wasted materials, its readable design matches Jencks and Silver's descriptions of adhoc items that show 'what their previous history was, why they were put together and how they work' (Jencks & Silver, 2013, p. 73).

Jencks and Silver argue that such readable design is indicative of a politics of democratic participation. In their manifesto statement on Adhocism they argue that adhoc design is 'radically democratic' because it doesn't require mediation through 'experts' (Jencks & Silver, 2013, p. 111) and instead allows for 'active, individual participation' (Jencks & Silver, 2013, p. 23). Importantly, it is the aesthetics of adhocism that allow for this participatory approach. Jencks and Silver explain that 'legibility' is the key 'expressive aspect of adhocism' (vii). This is reiterated in the 10 point, Adhocist Manifesto which asserts that 'combinations that display themselves, and explain their use and origins, are especially adhocist' (xix). The adhoc aesthetic is, then, one where elements and processes of construction are visible. Jencks and Silver locate the political potential of adhocism within two particular features of this aesthetic. Firstly, they write that in adhoc objects there is a 'visual...record of past action' that enables 'present and future actions' to 'become intelligible' (Jencks & Silver, 2013, p. 23). That is to say, their components and design are exposed which, crucially, keeps them open to intervention. Secondly, this openness of design means that component parts stop functioning prescriptively. Talking about the various ways in which a bicycle seat could be used, they argue that adhocism enables it, to be seen as part of an "open set" which shows "the "multi"-potentiality of any form" (44.) As they go on to clarify, adhoc aesthetics involves being able to see that parts are not 'stabilized' and can be re-used in other ways (43).

These adhocist qualities are discernible in the GrowUp box which, as Sam and Oscar point out, is an intelligible system explicitly designed to inspire others to use and adapt its functions. By making visible the way that the fish tanks and the salad plants



are connected, through exposed piping, the box demonstrates a system that could, and is intended to be, adapted by others. Craig Martin has argued that containers 'might even be the perfect ad hoc object' and noted that Jenks and Silver themselves discuss containers as an example of adhoc objects, describing their transformation into prefab housing or military architectures (Martin, 2016, p. 100).

Martin reiterates that adhocism implies an exhibition of 'canny knowledge about the potentiality that objects have to become something other than what they were originally designed for' (Martin, 2016, p. 101) and highlights the political potentials in such transformations, by which 'passive consumers' become 'active' (100-101) citizens able to intervene in and contest the meanings and uses of objects usually enforced by corporations. However, while this DIY version of efficiency is democratic it is also arguably demonstrative of a 'big society' ethic where community groups and small scale entrepreneurs are expected to take responsibility for sustainable provision of urban resources. Ferreri has argued that pop-up culture constitutes a shift of onus towards individuals and small groups/businesses who are expected to rejuvenate urban spaces and provide innovative urban activities (Ferreri, 2015). Similarly, GrowUp suggests that sustainable urban food provision should be enabled by small groups like schools. Indeed the only help that GrowUp gets from the wider urban system is permission to exist in its interstices.

The design of the i-Doc's play view helps to foreground the powerlessness of projects such as GrowUp within the urban assemblage. The container icons rest on top of the play view's map but are not integrated into it. The map itself is an altered version of google maps, suggestive of the ability of individuals to intervene in a system. Yet while its colours might be adjusted, having been given an aesthetic overlay, the features of the predesigned map (and its google branding) maintain their integrity and the container spaces supervene over rather than insert themselves into its flows. Likewise, the global food supply system of which London is part continues regardless of the actions of GrowUp box and the overlay (to echo Zizek again) of the flexibility imaginary. This is not to say that their sustainable food provision is not

successful on a local level, but that it does little to adjust the system as a whole which arguably remains black boxed in an efficiency that adhoc designers are not invited into.

Ideas of efficiency within the flexibility imaginary are thus potentially false promises. I explored how the flexibility to transform urban space is mobilized towards an 'efficient' transformation of all sites into potential sites of productivity and how imaginaries of small scale, ad hoc, efficient design, which carry the promise of democratic intervention into urban systems, are not necessarily able to affect change on systems more broadly. Instead I suggested that container spaces are relegated to the interstices within dominant urban systems. The next section further explores interstitiality as an imaginary, developing my argument around tensions between intervention and impotence in pop-up culture.

### **Part Three**

#### **Paradise Yard and the Artworks: Interstitial Spaces and the Politics of Visibility**

In this final empirical part of the chapter I consider the imaginary of interstitiality in container spaces. I explore how container spaces position themselves as interstitial, sites that exist in between the cracks of routine uses of space. I argue that, while interstitiality aesthetically suggests a break with or interruption of the dominant orders of the city, container spaces actually work to smooth urban space by distracting from and filling up gaps in dominant spatial orders. This argument chimes with Brighenti's suggestion that interstices do not only contest visual orders but emerge from and perpetuate them (Brighenti, 2013, p. xix). Building on this, I suggest that while contemporary container aesthetics may seem to stand in opposition to imaginaries of seamless space in 20<sup>th</sup> century containerization, their interstitial imaginary performs its own kind of homogenisation of space as it works to

advance processes of gentrification in the city, ironically closing up the gaps it claims to crack open. I argue that while interstitial container spaces pose a visual interruption of the orders of the city their primary function is actually to maintain and police those orders.

In this section I consider two container spaces, Paradise Yard and The Artworks to explore the production and instrumentality of the interstitial imaginary. I consider how the interstitial imaginary is invested with different objectives by different groups – the workers in and organisers of container spaces, and the developers that allow or encourage them in their sites – and explore where the power lies in these conflicting mobilizations. Firstly I explore Paradise Yard, discussing how pop up container spaces align themselves with the interstitial aesthetics of the sites they occupy. I then discuss the concerns of Alife, the site's manager, that the aesthetics and practices of container spaces are becoming so popular that they are now being co-opted by housing developers. I then explore the implications of Alfie's concerns in relation to The Artworks. Addressing Paradise Yard and the Artworks together is fruitful because the worries Alfie has for the future of container spaces can be seen to play out in The Artworks.

Paradise Yard is a creative work space in Waterloo, South London. It consists of several studios located in an old school building as well as additional container studios spread around in the building's large yard. The site is owned by St Thomas's hospital which is located over the road. It is managed by Alife from Eat Work Art (who also manage Netil Market.) Alife explained to me that after the building closed as a school it became a Buddhist centre, and then when that closed down it was squatted. Alfie says that the squat used to be a very organised one where everyone works but then Occupy London moved in and started having parties, so the police came in and shut the squat down. St Thomas' then started planning a redevelopment of the space into flats as well as a new building for hospital. Because the planning would take a long time, and protecting the site from squatters with security guards would cost a lot of money, they commissioned Eat Work Art to use the space in the

interim period. The old school classes and the containers are now occupied by small businesses such as video editors and fashion design studios.

Interstices have been defined as 'in-between' spaces (Brighenti, 2013, p. xv) and are traditionally associated with 'wastelands and leftover spaces, generated as by-products of urban planning' (xvi). Brighenti gives examples including 'vacant lots' or 'decaying ruins' (xvi). A key part of what defines an interstice is its aesthetics. Evidence of dilapidation and of adhoc repurposing of items indicates spaces that are not as strictly regulated as others in the city; which fall somewhat outside the control of urban authorities. Aesthetically, Paradise Yard fits this description of an interstice. In occupying a former squat, left vacant while St Thomas' Hospital plan their development, Paradise Yard has maintained its aesthetics of vacancy. Despite being a formal and licenced creative work community the ad hoc building materials used to create work spaces in the yard visually assert that the space is a temporary and makeshift use of the vacant space. As well as the container studios other ad hoc building materials such as crates have been used to make flower beds, seats and fencing.

Writing about the interim use of a pier on the Hudson Riverfront Stephane Tonnelat has described how during the interim use the pier bore a striking resemblance to its 'former supposedly abandoned state, when residents used it for gardening, rowing or fishing' (Tonnelat, 2013, p. 153). Tonnelat draws attention to the lack of aesthetic difference between sanctioned and unsanctioned temporary uses of the space as the formal use retains the interstitial aesthetics despite no longer necessarily being a '*minoritarian*' space (Brighenti, 2013, p. xvi) used by 'interstitial subjects' (xix). Indeed, Paradise Yard still retains many of the aesthetics you might imagine of a squat. Individual businesses in Paradise Yard have produced their spaces in a way which also reflects this interstitial aesthetics. For example, an upholsterer, whose space is the subject of an i-Doc clip, has enhanced and extended his container through makeshift adaptations. Using planks of wood he has created a kitchen area inside the container, and, in the clip, is in the process of making an outside area. He

explains how the roof will be made using plywood and reclaimed windows, set at jaunty angles.

Through the aesthetics of these materials, Paradise Yard positions itself as an interstitial space which allows ‘fresh air to breathe that flows through the otherwise asphyxiating landscape of the corporate city’ (Brighenti, 2013, p. xvii). Such an association of interstitiality with ‘fresh air’ and freedom is indicated in the naming of Paradise Yard, which suggests a space of sanctuary. At the same time, though, the word Yard reminds us that this is a space of work, and indeed one that is part of rather in opposite to London’s economy. However, the space is at least aesthetically alternative and thus appealing to its residents. When I interviewed Alfie he argued that the appeal of container studios stemmed from a boredom with sterile office spaces. He suggested that people want to work somewhere more unusual and to feel like they’re part of a community not a business.

For Alfie, the appeal of spaces like Paradise Yard goes beyond their practical functionality. As the Upholster indicates, container spaces are not especially practical. In the i-Doc clip about the upholster he describes how ‘I knew it would be a struggle containing myself to just to container’ and explains how the outside space he has built to work on big pieces will be very cold in winter. The container then, is not an ideal solution for his business. Alfie argues that it is, instead, a shift in sensibilities that has made container spaces popular. He explains;

“People come in now and they actually want to take the container space. We have these beautiful school class rooms which you assume they’ll want first, amazing places to work. And the containers are only there for when we run out of space. But, you get people coming in now and they *want* to be in a container, and you think, *something has happened there.*” (my italics) (Alfie, 2015).

Here, Alfie indicates that the popularity of container spaces relates to a shift in imaginaries by which the temporary and the interstitial become desirable. The

interstitiality imaginary is attractive for small businesses who, as Alfie indicates are fed up of office blocks and disillusioned by traditional white collar jobs. The appeal of this imaginary speaks to the arguments of the last section, where, in relation to Netil Market, I explored how imaginaries of flexibility as customization give jobs that could be seen as 'bad' jobs an appeal for young, educated people. However, as in Netil Market, the interstitial imaginary also has a particular purchase for the land owners. For St Thomas' hospital, getting in an occupier who maintain the 'dilapidated' aesthetics of the space means they can have a formal user for the space, who will protect it from *actual* squatters, while still giving the impression that they have granted permission for the space to be used 'alternatively'.

Alfie explicitly says that St Thomas's chose them to take over the site because their work model 'suited the dilapidated style of the place' (Alfie, 2015). In fact, it seems that Paradise Yard is much like a controlled, sanctioned version of the kinds of uses of the space that squatters were making. In the i-Doc clip Alfie describes the occupy squat being shut down because of the parties they were having. As he utters these words, the clip shows a bill board advertising a party that Paradise Yard have organised that night. This juxtaposition suggests that what has changed in Paradise Yard is not necessarily the practices going on there but the status of such practices. Paradise Yard offers a sanctioned version of the former squat's interstitial use of space. The value of a switch like this, exchanging a squat for a squat themed work collective, is fairly self-evident. It speaks to the politics of visibility at work through interstitial aesthetics.

As argued in the literature review chapter, interstices are at the centre of a complex politics of visibility. Traditionally, interstices have been seen as places that interrupt the status quo. Temporary places too have been positioned in this way as for example, argued by Hakim Bey in his work on temporary autonomous zones. Bey draws on imaginaries of cyberpunk futures in which 'the decay of political systems will lead to a decentralized proliferation of experiments in living: giant worker-owned corporations, independent enclaves' (Bey, 1991, p. 96). He imagines Temporary

Autonomous Zones as spaces that use temporariness in order to be uncatchable by the system, unable to be assumed into its spectacle, and thus to operate as paradises in which alternative forms of life and work can take place. This is an imaginary that has obvious connections to that of Paradise Yard, which also positions itself as a space that, because temporary, offers a different mode of urban existence.

In Bey's account, temporary spaces are seen as disruptive because, as a kind of interstice they allow alternative practices to exist, albeit only in the short term. Bey's TAZs, though, never become permanent states of affairs. He writes that they are more like an uprising than a revolution because they remain 'nonordinary' (Bey, 1991, p. 98). As such, Bey's TAZs are different from other models of aesthetic interruptions which argue for the durable impacts of such interventions. Many theorists have modelled pop-up around the later sort of model, as interventions that can change, rather than just temporarily oppose, the status quo. Talking about contemporary temporary places, both Kurt Iveson and Tardiveau and Mallo have used Ranciere's politics of aesthetics to argue that temporary places have a disruptive power and can produce new imaginations (Iveson, 2013; Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014) that come to alter how space is conceived. For Ranciere, politics is aesthetic because consensus is a force through which 'fundamental disagreement' is rendered 'near invisible' (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012, p. 92) and dissensus, as the act of making visible what was previously not, and installing a new 'regime of the sensible' (Ranciere, 2004, p. 23). This is a politics defined in terms of the 'visible' and the 'invisible', where change to a system requires an act that 'place[s] one world within another' (Ranciere, 2010, p. 38), juxtaposing the given regime of the sensible with an alternative way of seeing to demonstrate that the prevailing sensible system is not, in fact, unquestionable, and to proceed down lines of action not formerly conceivable.

Many have taken pop-up as a quite literal placing of one world within another, and thus associated it with disruptive visual politics. In their paper 'Unpacking Habitus'

Tardivea and Mallo describe a series of temporary interventions which they and their team of researchers staged in an estate in Gateshead. They argue, following Ranciere, that these interventions provided 'opportunities to imagine alternatives' (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014, p. 459), giving the residents a starting point for thinking about how their shared outdoor space could be used differently, for community activities. They write that the temporary places they created enabled 'invisible relations to become visible and unregistered space to be acknowledged' (459). Iveson, likewise has used Ranciere's ideas to consider whether micro-spatial' (Iveson, 2013, p. 941) urban practices 'constitute a new form of urban politics that might give birth to a more just and democratic city' (941) by staging a confrontation with normal uses of urban space, offering 'cities within the city' (Iveson, 2013).

Paradise Yard could be read in this light as a space that stages a confrontation by providing alternative ways of working in the city; ones that contest the traditional distribution of work time and space offering, as Alfie explains, a work model based around community rather than productivity. However, equally, Paradise Yard could be evidence of ways in which more formalised interstitial activities replace and distract from radical uses of space (Tonkiss, 2013; Colomb, 2012). Claire Colomb has argued that many contemporary temporary uses of space are primarily designed to 'babysit' properties so that, rather than disrupting their planned use, they guard them, as in Paradise Yard, from more controversial users during interim periods when they are not being more formally occupied. Similarly, Fran Tonkiss suggests that temporary projects 'keep vacant sites warm while capital is cool' (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 318), safeguarding spaces for developers rather than posing a contestation to those plans. This format is clearly applicable to Paradise Yard which, as explained by Alfie, is taking care of the space for St Thomas's hospital while they finalise their plans for it.

At the same time as 'keeping sites warm' for capital, temporary uses of space like Paradise Yard arguably preclude more radical uses of space that might otherwise



occupy them, especially given that users of the container spaces must officially apply to Eat Work Art to be granted a space. Alfie explicitly positions Paradise Yard as way to protect the site from squats like the Occupy London squat that was using the site before. This is where the interstitial aesthetics of Paradise Yard are important to remember. By visually representing an *alternative* use of space, places like Paradise Yard give an impression that alterity is included in the city but without the systemic threat it might pose.

Ranciere writes that the slogan of the police order (the dominant distribution of space) is 'move along, there's nothing to see here' (Ranciere, 2010, p. 37). Meaning that the police order's power is located in its ability to convince people that all possibilities for the distribution of space are already included. Paradise Yard, I would argue, performs this function. It is an aesthetic avowal of the inclusion of alternative spaces in the city yet one whose true function is to preclude, rather than to enable, attempts to imagine urban space differently.

Furthermore, Paradise Yard does not just maintain but strengthens the dominant urban order. Alife explains that temporary spaces have now been monetized by developers who have realised that their existence increases the appeal, and thereby raises the value, of areas by making them seem cool and alternative. He argues that "we transform the area and the building becomes more lucrative, so that when we hand the lease back they get a building that was handed over as a squat in a rundown part of town and is handed back to them as a vibrant business."

In raising the value of urban sites, container spaces like Paradise Yard ironically push themselves out of the gentrifying city. Alfie explains that the popularity of container spaces is ironically making it harder to find space for them because the land they use becomes more valuable and is then developed, meaning they have to move even further out of town. He says that "in the long term it's just how far out of London people will be willing to go. We're looking at Deptford, 5 years ago you wouldn't look at Deptford and now were almost being priced out of Deptford....and

places that are hideous are being occupied' He jokes 'we'll wake up one day and be on the outskirts of Milton Keynes with artists in containers' (Alfie, 2015).

The tensions between intervention and impotence in this politics of visibility are manifest in the lack of affective power that I gave the outside pop-up city pages in the i-Doc. As explored, the 'outside pop-up city' pages are intended to serve as interventions that offer critical insights into pop-up's distributions of space-time. However, the interruptions they pose have no lasting impact on the i-Doc's interface. When a user closes an outside pop-up city page they return to the play view and continue to watch pop-up clips, unknowingly progressing towards their eventual ejection from the city when its redevelopment is ready to begin.

The aesthetics of the outside pop-up city pages are also important in demonstrating this futility. They are all collages and often include juxtaposing images. For example, the outside pop-up city page about container architectures includes images of a container from Paradise Yard and part of the container mall The Artworks, but also images of containers as used in container shipping. This juxtaposition, alongside the text in the image, is intended to provoke a consideration of the different spatiotemporal orders that containers engage in containerization and in pop-up culture. Positioning these images alongside one another invites users to think about their different meanings in each context.

## OUTSIDE POP-UP CITY

Containerization changed the world as we know it. After the invention of containers once ominous expanses of land and sea could be traversed seamlessly and all manner of objects could be subsumed and circulated within these black boxes of efficiency. Containerization marked the advent of the globalized economy and the birth of 'smooth space.'

The containers popping up across London's landscape seem to mark the birth of containerization stage 2. It's cheaper to make new containers than send them back for new goods, so they pile up in ports of the global north and find new homes as barber shops, craft studios or aquaponics farms.

If containerization stage 1 signalled human mastery over global space-time, what can we make of stage 2? Is inhabiting these results of overproduction a form of atonement? Does it signal a geographically liberated, eo-nomadism? Is this a submission to the demands to move, footloose around the city, grateful for any space at all? Or is our retreat into these mobile, sea worthy structures a preparation for coming waves of crisis? London's container city is just one iteration of this mutation of the container principle. Elsewhere containers are inhabited by the refugees of Calais, detainees at Guantanamo bay, students in Amsterdam and people on Brighton's homelessness register.



Figure Twenty Four: Containerization Stage 2

Ranciere has discussed how some art poses a 'clash of heterogenous situations' (Ranciere, 2011, p. 74), juxtaposing two conflicting orders in order to, supposedly, offer critical insights into both. In the outside pop-up city pages this juxtaposition is apparent in the collaged images as well as in the discrepancies between the messages of the text and its style, which is in keeping with the rest of the i-Doc, as part of pop-up's imaginary. However, as I have explored, the aesthetics of juxtaposition in Paradise Yard, which juxtaposes an interstitial space against the more apparently ordered spaces of the city, presents a false contrast and its aesthetics actually serve to perpetuate, rather than to provoke criticality within, the dominant urban order. Likewise, the outside pop-up city clips aestheticize conflict (between visual orders), presenting it in the same style as the rest of the i-Doc, so that the different orders represented in its collages are subsumed into, rather than critical of, its broader imaginary. This is symptomatic of pop-up culture as a whole

which works around an aesthetic of rupture that has *become* part of, rather than alternative to, the order. The next section explores in more detail the co-option of aesthetics of disruption in container spaces and, through that, the aestheticization of gentrification.

## **The Artworks**

The Artworks occupies the site of the infamous Heygate housing estate which was demolished in 2014. The Artworks is described on its website as a 'creative business community'. It is made from brightly painted shipping containers stacked 3 high and organised to create a courtyard in the middle. The businesses resident in The Artworks can be broadly categorised within the creative and craft economies. They include several food vendors, a barber shop, a yoga studio, galleries, art studios, a digital production agency and clothing retailers. It also houses a temporary council library that replaces Newington library, which was damaged in a fire in 2013.

The artworks was organised by the developers Lend Lease who are redeveloping the Heygate estate into 'Elephant Park', a high end housing development. The site was controversially sold at a loss to Lend Lease by the council. The Heygate was one of the most famous social housing estates in the country. As Will Montgomery has phrased it, the Heygate became a 'by-word for failures of modernist social housing projects' (Montgomery, 2011) in certain discourses and its demolition was justified on this basis. However, for others, the Heygate has come to signal the social cleansing enacted through the widespread displacement of council tenants in London, as depicted in 'Heygate Was Home' archival project led by South Notes Archive and Loretta Lees (Heygate Was Home, 2017). 'Elephant Park' – the development underway on the site, is a new housing complex where one bedroom flats cost upwards of half a million pounds. Despite the council's usual requirements for 35% of a new development to be 'affordable', Lend Lease have negotiated a much smaller percentage. The site is undergoing a phased development with areas

being completed in stages. The Artworks occupies a part of the site which won't be needed until the end of the process. The Artworks earns a rental income for Lend Lease during this interim period and, worryingly given its temporariness, also fulfils their section 106 obligations to give something back to the local community. Most importantly, though, its function is clearly to rebrand the area and raise interest in the future development; in this sense it functions as an infrastructure for transition – a pivot between the Heygate Estate and Elephant Park.

Others have discussed the work that went into manipulating the image of the Heygate estate to ready it for demolition. Francesco Sebregondi has argued that the long, seven year period between the 'decanting' of the Heygate's residents and the demolition of the building was an important part of this exercise. For Sebregondi, the gap allowed the building to fall deeper into disrepair, enhancing what he refers to as its 'monstrous' image and thereby justifying its destruction. It also created financial value, offering a long window of time within which investors could bid and speculate, thus raising the value of the land (Sebregondi, 2012).

Now that the redevelopment of the site has begun, the Artworks is occupying a second interim period, between demolition and redevelopment during which it serves a comparable function in changing the image of the site to that which Sebregondi identifies. The activities in the Artworks, which include club nights, art shows, yoga lessons and theatre, attract the desired demographic for the rebranded Elephant and Castle; changing perceptions of the site to replace the 'monstrous' image of the former Heygate estate with the promise of a dynamic, young, middle class urban community. The events also draw people to the site so that they see the properties under development. A showroom for the housing stock occupies a prominent space in the container mall.

The aesthetics of The Artworks are important for its rebranding function. Like Paradise Yard, The Artworks presents as an ad hoc, interstitial space, differentiated from the routine uses of the city. The containers make it seem temporary and spontaneous, as if creative and exciting things are happening there that are in some

sense clandestine (even though in practice they are organised by Lend Lease). As Alfie argued in my interview with him, container spaces, while once seen as something that 'poor artists do in rough parts of Hackney Wick' are now seen as 'this cool thing that's beneficial to them [the developers] as the flats are worth more money because there's 'creatives' on the ground floor' (Alfie, 2015). Impersonating the developers he says, 'we're building all these high end luxury flats, but if we have containers there with creatives in it gives it an edge' (2015). From Alfie's comments it is clear that he feels like developers like Lend Lease are co-opting interstitial aesthetics as a branding exercise through which to raise the value of the flats.

The creative use of vacant sites in working class areas has always been a key stage in processes of gentrification. Andrew Harris has explored, for example, how artists act as the 'precursors and agents of gentrification', with specific reference to the gentrification of Hoxton in the 1990s. Harris argues that artists made the run down area seem charming, figuring it as "Shabby Chic" (Harris, 2012, p. 223). He recounts how artists including Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas took a 'delight in Hoxton's vernacular environment', going so far as to create 'lists of working-class slang' and produce art pieces 'featuring kebas, cigarettes, toilets and cars with smashed windscreens' (Lucas). Drawing on Ley he suggests that artists valorise mundane elements of urban spaces and that this aesthetic is 'appropriated by market forces' (Harris, 2012, p. 234), pushing up the value of the area and in turn displacing the artists and creatives that drove the process in the first place.

Harris argues against the notion that artists are often seen as unintentional gentrifiers. He cites Ley's assumption that artists will be 'disdainful of the market system and its commodification' (Ley, 2003, p, 2530 in Harris, 2012, p. 235) and retorts that 'Although adopting anticonformist dispositions, many artists in Hoxton, in particular Damien Hirst, actively acknowledged and courted the market system' (235). An even more knowing approach to creativity's utility for gentrification is clear in *The Artworks* where, rather than capitalise on the aesthetic production of artists who happen to have moved into Elephant and Castle, developers Lend Lease have

purposefully orchestrated a creative community in The Artworks. They deploy The Artworks and the energies of the creative businesses inside it to catalyse the desired transformation in the image of the site. Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly have argued that gentrification is 'mutating', undergoing both temporal and spatial changes to include, for example, new build gentrification or gentrification of rural areas (Lees, et al., 2008, p. 129). The process apparent in The Artworks, and in container spaces generally, could be framed as one of these spatiotemporal changes to processes of gentrification. Containers function as a modular and mobile infrastructure for gentrification that allows 'creatives' to be deployed and capitalised on efficiently and incredibly rapidly.

The aesthetics of The Artworks also override the other images of the site that once existed in the public consciousness, such as the infamous image of the Heygate that Sebregondi discusses. Harris comments on the way in which, in Hoxton, some gentrified spaces name themselves after the previous uses of buildings. He describes the bar and music venue the 'Old Electricity Showrooms, named after the previous use of this building, once relied upon by many local residents to pay their electricity bills' (Harris, 2012, pp. 226-227). As explored in the introduction to this thesis, many pop-ups use this nomenclature; for example 'The Convenience', a restaurant in a disused public toilet or 'Hackney Hardware', a gin bar in an old hardware store. There is also a clear trend for container places to evoke imagined industrial histories in names like *Netil Market*, *Paradise Yard* and *The ArtWorks*.

It is very interesting that The Artworks alludes in its name to a (possibly imagined) history of the site as a 'works' of some sort rather than referring to its more recent history as a council estate. The forgetting of this recent history in the naming of The Artworks perhaps stems from their awareness that it wouldn't go down well, such as when, as discussed in the introduction, the Deptford bar 'The Job Centre' opened in a former job centre and was understandably met with a mixture of hostility and disbelief. Such a scandal might put off potential buyers so The Artworks plays it safe. Instead of drawing attention to the fact of the Heygate's demolition and its residents'

displacement, The Artworks evokes an industrial history of the site and offers a dynamic creative community to aesthetize that imagined history and raise the value of the development in process.

The selection of businesses in The Artworks is indicative of a conscious desire to 'reshape local character' (Zukin, 2011, p. 163). Although it claims to cater for 'the vibrant and diverse Elephant & Castle community' (Artworks, 2017) its yoga classes, vegan cafe, jewellery shops, unsweetened drinks outlet and poetry slams are clearly marketed at a middle class, hipster audience, even if they present as 'respectful of the community's authenticity' (Zukin, 2011, p. 164), for example by including Latin American shops and food outlets, reflecting the large Latin American community in Elephant and Castle. These businesses evidence Sharon Zukin's suggestion that gentrification involves 'the entrepreneurial role of newcomers who open businesses in the district – art galleries, performance spaces, restaurants, boutiques and bars – that not only provide spaces of consumption for residents and visitors to develop a lifestyle, but also provide visible opportunities for neighbourhoods to develop a new place identity' (Zukin, 2011, p. 163).

Yet at the same time the use of *mobile* container units in The Artworks signals that the creatives doing this rebranding will soon be gone, leaving only the luxury housing they have raised the appeal and value of. Klose argues that containers allow unwanted peoples to be kept precarious. Refugees, asylum seekers and construction workers are forced into container camps (Klose, 2015, p. 305) (as in the recent move to refugees into containers in Calais) while in Guantanamo bay detainees are literally contained in the metal boxes (Squire, 2015). In these instances the container, as an emblem of mobility, reassures the host population, promising 'I'll be gone soon! Don't worry, this is just a temporary installation' (Klose, 2015, p. 308). These containers ensure that their inhabitants are perceived as a temporary blight on an otherwise stable landscape, regardless of how long term, and indeed infrastructural to the functioning of the host country, their presence may be. A similar argument could be made of container spaces such as The Artworks, which



signal a vitality of space but at the same time assert its temporariness, its willingness to be replaced by the eventual, more upmarket housing development.

The Artworks, as well as being an infrastructure for labour, could also be deemed an 'affective infrastructure' that normalises and reproduces precarity. Berlant uses the term affective infrastructure to address 'practices of the reproduction of life', that is the 'patterns, habits and norms of a given historical present' which guide how life takes place (Berlant, 2011, p. 49). This, as I understand it, conceptualises an infrastructure through which thinking and feeling takes place, which mediates and shapes responses to life in a particular structure of feeling. Berlant argues that in the aftermath of global recession we have 'an emergency in the reproduction of life' in which societies have been struggling to produce affective infrastructures which will enable us to move forwards in the face of ruptures in our imagination of what life is or should be. For Berlant, widely used, politicised terms like 'precarity' are being used as place holders during a state of confusion while we work out how to produce new affective infrastructures that will lead us out of crisis (Berlant, 2011).

Against this backdrop, I would argue that The Artworks, as the same time as providing a literal infrastructure also provides an affective infrastructure. Indeed we could say that the temporary city more broadly is a response to the lack of affective infrastructure being defined as *precarity*. Growing out of these conditions, container malls, as I have explored, make the instability provoked by recession seem intuitive, even desirable, and thereby allow urban life to move forward because we no longer recognise those conditions as ones of crisis. Furthermore, as The Artworks show, they also produce an aesthetics which smooths and justifies the transitions of gentrification; providing an affective infrastructure through which the inhumanity of such transformations is muted by, as Dan Hancox phrases it providing 'a shiny bauble to distract from what the long-term project is actually doing: the regeneration [that] will replace the Heygate's 1,200 demolished council homes with only 71 new ones (out of nearly 3,000 homes altogether)' (Hancox, 2014). Berlant frames affective infrastructures as guides for how life takes place, but in the context of The

Artworks it is clear that such guides, while they may be comforting and orientating, can have sinister agendas.

In this context we could see the recent tragedy at Grenfell Tower, which provoked a tsunami of critical commentary on the retraction of council housing through redevelopment, as a rupture of the affective infrastructure through which redevelopment seems common sense, and a reminder of its instrumentalities. How obscene the pop-up imaginary now looks, as part of that affective infrastructure, is captured by Mark Steel in the thought piece discussed in the introduction to the thesis. As previously explored, Steel jokes that 'Marxists' who 'went down with blankets and food...should have set up a pop-up bedding and hot chocolate store to tap into extensive market opportunities' (Steel, 2017).

In this section I have explored pop-up's imaginary of interstitiality and considered the functions that imaginary plays in a broader urban politics of visibility. I explored how interstitial places are usually understood to imply a politics of rupture or dissensus but argued that in pop-up their impact is, conversely, the policing of dominant distributions of space-time; a foreclosure of, rather than opportunity for, alternative urban imaginaries.

In relation to Paradise Yard I argued that interstitiality suggests inclusion of alternative modes of work and life into the city but in fact serves as a false indicator of such alterity and acts to preclude genuinely radical alterative imaginations of urban space-time. In relation to The Artworks, I furthered this argument to explore how container aesthetics catalyse redevelopment by transfiguring images of urban sites to encourage and enable their gentrification. I explored container architectures as a new spatiotemporality of gentrification which speed up the process and demonstrate a knowingness as to the role of creatives in producing urban land value. I argued, that in as such, container architectures are affective, as well as architectural infrastructures that provide a framework for thinking about urban change that naturalises social cleansing.

## Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has explored pop-up's container geographies, traversing a variety of container spaces including Netil Market, The GrowUp Box, Paradise Yard and The Artworks. It has considered both the role that container geographies play in contemporary labour economies (and the craft economy in particular) and their instrumentality as part of geographies of gentrification in London.

Through an analysis of these spaces and themes I have developed an account of pop-up's imaginaries of flexibility and interstitiality and their functions. In exploring imaginaries of flexibility I argued that flexibility in pop-up is aligned both with ideas of customization and individualization and with ideas of efficiency. In relation to Netil Market I argued that flexibility is an appealing imaginary for craft and creative workers because it promises an opportunity to develop careers that are meaningful and personal. Yet I also suggested that this imaginary could be seen as a way to justify and make palatable shifts in contemporary labour economies that could equally be understood as 'downward social mobility' (Ocejo, 2017) and to normalise, and therefore reproduce, precarious work patterns for creative workers that directly enable 'real' flexibility for urban developers.

Similarly, when exploring GrowUp Box, I suggested that the positive connotations of flexibility as an avowal of the openness of the city are in practice put in the services of a neoliberal vision of urban space through which all sites are potential spaces of economic productivity; making the city into an efficient 'social factory'. I suggested that ideas of efficiency within the flexibility imaginary also correspond to a DIY attitude discernible in GrowUp, in which individuals are seen to have the power to intervene in urban systems. However, I questioned how far this is actually possible, suggesting that pop-up's vision of urban participation might well be illusory; that the reuse of containers in pop-up is superfluous to, rather than operative within, the global infrastructures containers remain part of, and likewise the infrastructures of power that dominate the city.

If flexibility indicates an opening up which, in pop-up, is actually a closing down of possibilities then interstitiality was found to display similar contradictions. In exploring Paradise Yard and The Artworks I demonstrated how the interstitial aesthetic they deploy is indicative of a rupture in dominant urban orders that allows insight into how things could be otherwise, yet actually serves to police those orders and render invisible their malevolent logics.

Conceptually, this chapter advanced some key ideas around the functions of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries. I explored how pop-up's imaginaries can be mobilized in conflicting ways by different urban actors and suggested that the power geometries of these conflicting mobilizations mean that the energies invested in imaginaries by some (for example, craft economy workers) are enlisted towards the agendas of others (for example, developers). I also explored how pop-up's imaginaries intersect with structures of feeling and alter how those structures of feeling are experienced, transmuting them into new affective conditions. Specifically I argued that imaginaries of flexibility intermingle with precarity as a structure of feeling in order to produce a situation where the same spatiotemporal conditions are experienced as exciting and affirming despite being indicative and reproductive of precarity. For this reason, I argued that pop-ups imaginaries can be understood through Berlant's concept of 'cruel optimism' as an investment of hope in an object or process that is in fact counterproductive to one's flourishing. I also drew on Berlant's idea of affective infrastructures to suggest that pop-up container spaces help to produce patterns of thought and feeling through which problematic transformations of urban space are felt to be common sense, with worrying political consequences.

The next, and final, empirical chapter of this thesis now moves to an exploration of supper clubs in London. This chapter advances the arguments of the previous two empirical chapters, furthering the thesis's larger conjecture that pop-up's imaginaries are normalising, and even glamorising, the entrenchment of precarity in London. Picking up from my discussion of changing labour economies in relation to Netil

Market, the next chapter considers the work, and work based social encounters, that supper clubs enact in domestic spaces and considers how this relates to the conditions of precarity from which pop-up emerged.

## Chapter Seven

### Supper Clubs: Imaginaries of Secrecy and Surprise in London's 'Underground' Dining Scene

#### Introduction

Across the past two empirical chapters I have explored imaginaries of immersion, flexibility and interstitiality as produced by pop-up geographies. I have examined how these nonlinear imaginaries of space-time respond to and make sense of precarious urban conditions. This final empirical chapter explores a different kind of pop-up geography: the supper club. Supper clubs are distinctive within London's pop-up scene as the only kind of pop-up place to be (usually) hosted in domestic spaces. A supper club is essentially a dinner party where hosts cook for paying strangers in their home. Having traversed public pop-up geographies the thesis now steps into these supposedly private spaces to explore the imaginaries produced and deployed there. Specifically, I examine imaginaries of secrecy and surprise in supper clubs and consider how these imaginaries enable and envision encounters with unknown others in the city. Conceptually, this chapter argues that pop-up's imaginaries serve as compensatory narratives that mediate and make up for uncomfortable ways of living including, here, changing space-times of work and changing experiences of otherness in the city.

The chapter is split into two main sections, a first on imaginaries of secrecy and a second on imaginaries of surprise. In the section on secrecy I explore the role of secrecy in making sense of shifting geographies of labour occurring as part of moves towards a 'sharing economy.' In the second section, I consider how imaginaries of surprise mediate encounters in supper clubs, arguing that these imaginaries ascribe a sense of encounter with difference to what is more realistically 'just a sense of conviviality' (Wilson, 2012).

In contemporary London, Supper Clubs are usually advertised on websites including the notable sites 'Grub Club' and 'Edible Experiences'. People wishing to attend supper clubs can search through numerous listed events, book a place, and pay in advance of meeting the host. They then arrive on the night to be greeted in the host's home. Some supper clubs also function by word of mouth or are attended by friends of the host as well as by unknown guests. On arrival, guests are usually fed a multiple course dinner and often provided with some kind of entertainment; including live performances, immersive themes and sometimes insights into the host's home life such as the sharing of photographs or telling of stories. A large part of the appeal of supper clubs is meeting strangers. Hosts usually seat people together with others they don't know and it is not unusual for guests to come alone with the assumption of making friends there. Supper Clubs can be found all across London with a choice of several events happening in the capital each night. They also exist in most major cities of the Global North including a well-developed scene in New York (Koch, Forthcoming).

Historically, supper clubs have existed as clandestine spaces of sociality in conditions of prohibition. For example, supper clubs were popular in America during the 1930s and 1940s when drinking was prohibited (Hamilton, 2014); serving as an alternative space for the social consumption of food and alcohol. Similarly, supper clubs or "paladars" have been run in Cuba as a way to evade rules around the ownership of private businesses by informally selling meals in one's own home (Burnett, 2012). The contemporary supper club scene in London still carries this sense of the Clandestine even though in reality few of them are truly 'secret' events. If, historically, supper clubs have *needed* to be secret to evade rules and restrictions, I argue that, now, the secrecy imaginary serves other purposes, instead narrativizing changes in geographies of work and encounter.

Indeed, the rise of supper clubs in London can be situated as part of the broader rise of what has been termed 'the sharing economy'; an economy based around the sharing of resources that are traditionally privately owned; such as cars, domestic

space, dinners etc. yet sharing with paying strangers rather than friends and family. Arun Sundararajan has written that the sharing economy is a phenomenon through which 'peer-to-peer exchange becomes increasingly prevalent, and the "crowd" replaces the corporation at the center of capitalism' (Sundararajan, 2016). Three key aspects of the sharing economy resonate with the themes I explore in supper clubs. The first of these is how the sharing economy changes uses and imaginaries of domestic space, in particular by commodifying those spaces. While domestic spaces are increasingly becoming sites of work (Gregg, 2011), supper clubs and other home based aspects of the sharing economy, such as airbnb, are distinctive in that the home's *qualities* become part of the product on offer, marketed to paying visitors rather than merely of value to owners and renters as work spaces.

Secondly, the sharing economy changes the nature of relations with others in the city because it entails interactions with strangers that are not purely social and yet not purely financial given that the interaction between host and guest has a social appeal as well as commercial appeal for both parties. Part of the marketed appeal of supper clubs is those interactions with strangers, as will be discussed in the following section. Thirdly, I am concerned with the relationship the sharing economy has to recession. The sharing economy arose in part as an adjustment to rising unemployment and underemployment as well as a decrease in disposable income and a 'decline of access to public common resources' (Shaw 2014 in Richardson 2015). Equally, it has been argued that the recession has prompted a 'revolt against the 'stuffy, rigid nature of fancy dining'' (Hamilton, 2014) making more casual forms of urban dining popular.

This chapter also positions supper clubs within the context of the housing crisis in London. As will be explored, as a phenomenon that invites us into domestic spaces, supper clubs shed light on compensatory forms of home ownership and domestic life in the current economic and political climate. Equally, I am concerned with what supper clubs say about changing imaginaries of encounter in the post-austerity city; in a climate of heightened tensions around immigration and multiculturalism (further



exacerbated by Brexit during the course of writing this thesis), examining spaces of imagined encounters with strangers has a particular significance. In these contexts, supper clubs, like other pop-up geographies, can be seen to be prompted by recession and the ensuing period of austerity; a period of turbulence that shook up the city and made it settle in a slightly new form. As in the previous two chapters, I consider supper clubs as both a product of this turbulence and a way that it is narrativized and thereby stabilised.

In exploring these themes the chapter analyses four supper clubs and their appearance in the i-Doc. In the Secrecy section I explore two main case studies; The Secret Kitchen and The Ship's Kitchen. I consider how an imaginary of secrecy narrativizes the transformation of home into not only a space of labour but a space that must act as an 'experience' to be consumed by guests as part of what they are purchasing. I also consider how the hosts of supper clubs perform aesthetic labour so that their personalities and skills become part of this experience too. In this section I also make comparative reference to supper clubs held by a woman called Christabel which, although often held in her house, are sometimes held in private locations. I consider a supper club she held in a bar called The Little Yellow Door in order to further investigate the commodification of the domestic in supper clubs. In the second section on surprise I explore the supper club Latitudinal Cuisine. Through an analysis of Latitudinal Cuisine I interrogate how imaginaries of surprising encounters with strangers are produced and argue that as well as imagining supper clubs as spaces of encounter with strangers in London, Latitudinal Cuisine positions itself as a site of encounter with global 'others'.

## Part One

### Secrecy: Selling Domestic Space

#### The Case Studies

In this part of the chapter I explore the imaginary of secrecy in supper clubs and argue that secrecy narrativizes the commodification of domestic space and private life that supper clubs entail. Firstly, I explore how domestic space is marketed and consumed as 'secret' and secondly I address the aesthetic labour performed by supper club hosts in order that they too become part of the experience being consumed. I do so with reference to The Secret Kitchen, The Ship's Kitchen and Christabel's Mad Hatter's Brunch. Firstly, I introduce these case studies, I then move to a discussion of how they market themselves as secret in their web presence, aesthetics and entertainment as well as the responses of supper club guests to the events.

The Secret Kitchen is a supper club run by Anna who also runs cooking classes, food consultancy and publishes books under the name 'the culinary anthropologist'. She left a career in international development to become a cook in 2006 (Colquhoun, 2017). She later took an MA in anthropology of food at SOAS University and is now studying for a PhD in the same subject. Anna holds regular supper clubs in her large terraced house near Arsenal in north London. She hires staff to help at the events but leads the cooking herself. She tries to design meals that convey stories behind the food and the culture it derives from. The 'secret' element of the supper club is in part the location of her home, which is revealed on paying for the ticket, and in part the menu, which is normally not announced in advance of being served. She advertises the events by email to regular attendees, on her own website and on the site 'Edible Experiences'. I attended one of Anna's supper clubs which was held in January and therefore themed around Burns night.

Unlike Anna's centrally located, large terraced house, The Ship's Kitchen takes place in a small house boat moored in Barking. The host, Alex, and his girlfriend moved there a couple of years ago, finding that buying a boat was a more realistic possibility than buying a house in London. Alex and his friend Tom regularly host supper clubs in a disused tube carriage in Walthamstow under the name 'Basement Gallery' but Alex also occasionally hosts more intimate events in his house boat. Alex studied cooking at Le Cordon Bleu School in Paris and on moving to London decided to start a supper club when he and his flat mate Tom ran out of money but wanted to have a dinner party (Gallery, 2017). It was so successful that they decided to launch a regular supper club which they advertise on Grub Club. They are both aspiring chefs so running a supper club was a more affordable option than starting their own restaurant. I went to the Ship's Kitchen the same week that I attended Anna's Secret Supper club and it was also a Burns night themed event.

The third case study in this section is Christabel's Mad Hatter's Brunch. Christabel is an aspiring chef and event planner who also hosts supper clubs in her flat in East London. However, like Alex, she sometimes hosts events in other locations too. I attended an event which she held at "The Little Yellow Door" in Notting Hill. The Little Yellow door markets itself as a pop-up bar (strangely, because it is both stationary and permanent) and, interestingly, claims to be a "*flat-share themed*" bar (this will be discussed in detail later). The founders of the bar, who say they were former flat mates, write that 'It was our vision of the perfect house party: a place where people could meet in an unpretentious environment; and have whatever party they wanted' (The Little Yellow Door, 2017). They hold events such as 'The Flatmates Cocktail Masterclass' and 'The Ultimate Dinner Party', all themed around an imaginary of young peoples' flat shares. Christabel runs The Mad Hatter's Brunch, which is themed on the book *Alice and Wonderland*, as a regular event and decided to host it in The Little Yellow door for a one off weekend.

In the next part of this section I explore the production of imaginaries of secrecy in supper clubs, both in their online marketing and in the aesthetics of home. The

second part of the section then considers the roles played by these imaginaries in offering compensatory narratives for the commodification of home and home life. In considering Christabel's hosting of a supper club in a *flat-share themed* bar I examine the ad absurdum commercialisation of supper club's imaginaries, suggesting that pop-up's imaginaries evolve beyond their immediate instrumentality to have unpredictable impacts in cities.

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### **Producing Secrecy Online and in the Home**

It has been argued that 'secrecy is a way of achieving privacy'; a means by which a subject can maintain a 'private-public boundary' where such a boundary is not otherwise easily obtainable (Nippert-Eng, 2010, p. 24). In supper clubs this is true to some extent. Certainly one reason for supper club owners to only reveal their location on purchase of a ticket is to ensure that their private address is not listed on public forums, thus maintaining some privacy for their home life. Home classically 'epitomizes' the 'private sphere', providing 'personal space' and refuge from the 'scrutiny of others' and protecting members of the home 'from the public, impersonal outside' (Madanipour, 2003, p. 71) including the 'anonymous world of capitalism' (98). Many scholars have noted the falsity of this division, demonstrating that economic processes, public encounters, and scrutiny or aggression all take place in private domestic spaces (Domosh, 1998; Madanipour, 2003) and, likewise, that private lives are staged in public spaces (Miller, 2007; Chauncey, 1994). Nevertheless, imaginaries of and desires for home as a space of privacy and comfort persist and, as we will see, must be negotiated in supper clubs as homes also become sites of labour and commodification. However, secrecy is also not just about maintaining privacy in supper clubs. Rather than using a secrecy imaginary to guard potentially private domestic spaces from a public realm, secrecy is used to market those spaces, to entice (paying) others to enter them. Rather than being aligned with privacy, secrecy in supper clubs shares more with accounts of it as a magical

(Luhmann, 1989) and charming (Simmel, 1906) property; enticing because it offers an exclusive possession of something withheld from others.

Nippert-Eng suggests that 'Anything can be a secret. The form is analytically distinct from its content' (Nippert-Eng, 2010, p. 25) and, given that the secret is by definition not known, its charisma derives not from the secret object but from the relation of secrecy itself. As George Simmel theorized it, a 'relation of mystery' is attractive to people regardless of what the secret is (Simmel, 1906, p. 464), especially when others are excluded from that secret. Alston has explored the cachet of secrecy in relation to Secret Cinema, arguing that there is a cultural capital in secrecy (Alston, Forthcoming). As Atkinson and Kennedy explore (and as I have discussed in chapter five), this cachet manifests in the barriers to entry, as spectators are required to understand how to engage with tropes of secrecy and immersion when attending secret pop-up events (Atkinson & Kennedy, Accessed online 10/06/2016). The cachet of secret events also comes from their rarity; the fact that the events don't occur often and are therefore exclusive. Indeed, one of my interview participants, Nick from Feed Me Films, commented in an interview (Nick, 2015) that the appeal of pop-up events is often this exclusive rarity. He said:

"If you went to pulp kitchen [his event], for example, and then the next week somebody at work says 'oh what did you do' you say 'well I did this, but the thing is, you can't do it, it's happened, its gone, it's not happening again, and I think that's really attractive to people, it's kind of, been there, done that, I've experienced it and other people couldn't. That scarcity is a really important factor in pop-up I think" (Nick, 2015).

While Nick is discussing the cachet deriving from the rarity of pop-up events, due to their ephemerality, his comment applies equally to their secrecy, demonstrating Simmel's suggestion that 'For many natures, possession acquires its proper significance, not from the mere fact of having, but besides that there must be the consciousness that others must forego the possession' (Simmel, 1906, p. 464).

In this sense, secrecy in supper clubs is paradoxical (Alston, Forthcoming). An imaginary of their secrecy makes them attractive but that secret must to some extent be revealed in order for them to be advertised and attended. Alston has framed this as the paradox that 'secrecy sells. Secrets are owned and they can be exchanged. This is a kind of secret that flaunts itself as secret, a spectacular secret, paradoxical secrecy that thrives on implied naughtiness and exclusivity' (Alston, Forthcoming). While wanting to appear as secret, supper clubs also want to '*involve* prospective audiences' (Alston, Forthcoming) so rather than secrecy being a reason to avoid publishing the event it becomes the way of publishing the event.

Indeed, in supper clubs an imaginary of secrecy becomes the attraction of the event and while it suggests exclusivity it also offers the potential for inclusion. For Alston, secrecy gives the promise of community, drawing on a history of subversive secrecy within resistive communities. Referencing Simmel he argues that secrecy offers 'the possibility of a second world alongside the obvious world' (Alston, Forthcoming). Supper Clubs market themselves in this way, promising entry to a secret world that differs from London's everyday commercial dining scene and promises sociability and inclusion within community not offered by restaurant dining.

While the supper clubs explored in this chapter have a reasonably moderate interpretation of secrecy, referring to a location unannounced before ticket purchase, or to an immersive theme fully realised only on the night, others take the idea to more heightened extremes. For example, one supper club 'Gingerline' takes a similar format to the pop-up cinema 'Secret Cinema' in requiring dinners to await and follow mysterious instructions in order to attend the event. The name 'Gingerline' comes from the fact that all the supper clubs take place somewhere along the over ground route in east London, which is represented on tube maps with an orange line. After booking a ticket to Gingerline you wait for instructions to be sent out at 6pm on the night of the event, you then travel to the station stated in the text and from there follow markers left by the organisers which lead you to the location of the supper club. You're also instructed to keep the event secret after the night. The Gingerline's online

presence doesn't give much away as to what the night will involve or the kind of experience it will be. Rather, the marketing of the event works almost solely on the secrecy surrounding it. The appeal of the event is that it involves entry into the unknown. What is bought is not primarily dinner but an evening of adventure.

In its alignment with adventure, secrecy in supper clubs could also be thought in proximity to imaginaries of the off-limits in urban exploration (Garrett, 2013; Garrett, 2011; Bonnett, 2014). Urban exploration foregrounds a sense that even in 'closed cities' where surveillance and securitisation are paramount there are 'hidden places that manage to be both near and far' (Bonnett, 2014) and into which urban explorers can make 'brazen forays' (Garrett, 2013). Figured as a subversive practice, urban exploration offers to upset public/private binaries in the city at a time when cities are increasingly closed off to their citizens. Similarly, adventures into 'secret' domestic spaces through supper clubs carry a sense of subversion although it is here orientated towards a "transgression" of public/private boundaries in relation to domestic space.

Secrecy has different alignments in different supper clubs though. For Anna's 'Secret Kitchen', secrecy is very much aligned with exclusivity. Her web presence emphasises that her supper club was one of the first to appear in London. The lengthy descriptions of her culinary and academic qualifications, coupled with the information that her menus are kept secret until the night and the events always sell out, creates an imaginary of a high quality experience that is not easily accessible. Christabel's Mad Hatter's Brunch constructs another kind of secrecy, following its *Alice and Wonderland* theme its marketing materials invite guests to 'Dive deep down the rabbit hole'. This statement also conjures an image of a parallel, second world alongside the normal one but foregrounds fantasy and immersion rather than quality and professionalism.

The way that these events market themselves as 'secret' builds an image of domestic spaces as a clandestine geography that, like the imaginary of off-limit places in urban exploration, is felt to exist in parallel with the 'public' city. Importantly,

in readying their homes to be used as public spaces, supper clubs do not emphasise the openness of their homes but instead deploy secrecy to, first, create an imaginary of bordered separation and only *then* to offer visitors an invitation inside that demarcated space. Geographers of home have explored imaginaries of home as familiar, comfortable spaces of 'belonging and attachment' (Home & Dowling, 2006), imaginaries of home as a bounded space that persist in public perceptions despite the fact that homes are also sites of conflict (Brickell, 2012; Valentine, 1989) and spaces where encounters with acquaintances and strangers take place (McDowell, 2007; Munoz, Forthcoming). In the context of South Africa, Schuermans has argued that it is precisely mental and literal fortifications of the home that allow people to interact comfortably with others unlike themselves (Schuermans, 2013). For Schuermans a sense of being protected in the home as a bounded space allows wealthy white South Africans to take part in meaningful encounters with their poorer, black domestic staff so that, ironically, it is bounded imaginaries of home that enable a relative space of social openness. In supper clubs a similar paradox is apparent; in preparing to be public geographies supper clubs first assert their secrecy as spaces demarcated from the public realm.

This paradoxical presentation gives them a liminal status as both part of and separate from the rest of the city. This liminal status is indicated through the i-Doc. In the 'Play' view the icons distract from the fact that supper clubs are public events held in what are traditionally private spaces. Supper clubs are presented alongside pop up cinemas and container spaces as just another kind of pop-up geography. Rather than being differentiated with an icon that indicates them as being domestic spaces they are represented by a knife and fork; foregrounding their role as spaces of social dining rather than private dwelling. Like all the icons in the i-Doc, the labels for supper clubs are unrevealing; each one looks the same despite the different experiences they offer. This reinforces the sense of secrecy, the idea that the only way to learn about what is behind closed doors is to pay for a ticket and join the event.



Visitors to the i-doc who watch all the clips about supper clubs will notice a common thread between each clip; the inclusion of images of the door of the supper club. It was only half way through my fieldwork that I realised that I had been taking establishing shots of the doors to all the supper clubs I was visiting. Having noticed this, I realised that the doors were important to the imaginaries of supper clubs. In a home, the door is the gateway between public and private space. As Bodnar describes the home has a 'graduated privateness'. It 'starts with the inner circle of spaces that do not even have windows (bathroom), followed by the rooms (bedroom) which no visitor is to see, and continues with the living room with large windows to the outside, from where through the front hall one can reach the front porch, the garden, then the street" (Bodnar, 2015). The door is the beginning of this gradation; the portal between the outside and the inside worlds. In the i-Doc the recurring images of doors mark the distinction between the public spaces of the city; which the pop-up cinemas and container spaces inhabit, and the parallel, quasi underground world of supper clubs. In public sites of consumption, like restaurants, doorways are usually clearly sign posted, left open, made of transparent glass, or in some way marked to attract customers. In supper clubs, however, the doorways are not designed to be inviting to an unknown stranger given that for the majority of the time the houses are people's private, domestic spaces. The doors visible in the i-Doc clips are therefore unrevealing, giving nothing away as to the kind of event occurring inside and suggesting a secret pop-up geography.



Figure Twenty Five: Supper Club Doors

Doors are prominent in the imaginaries discernible in the marketing of supper clubs too. In the introduction to an interview with Christabel, conducted by staff at Grub Club, the interviewer writes 'Walking through London I always have the urge to peer through house windows and peek at the lives led behind closed doors and last week I went one step further and stepped behind the door and into the home of Christabel Beeson to talk to her about dinner parties, brunch and unusual restaurant venues' (Aston, 2014). This set up to the interview indicates the prominent role that doors play in the secrecy imaginary of supper clubs. Doors are imagined as the portals into worlds that are normally hidden; an imaginary where the ordinary-domestic becomes intriguing and thus an invitation inside becomes exciting. In both the i-Doc clips of *The Mad Hatter's Brunch* and *The Ship's Kitchen* I included a shot of the door being opened, revealing the space inside. This emphasises a dichotomy between indoor and outdoor that marks supper clubs out as clandestine spaces.

Yet the foregrounding of public/private dichotomy in supper clubs of course masks an erosion of this boundary that is simultaneously taking place as paying customers are invited to socialise and consume food in domestic environments. While pop-up's secrecy imaginary reinforces a longstanding conception of public and private spaces as separate realms, supper clubs actually change the distribution of public and private space in the city. The adaptation of private spaces into part of the public pop-up geography of London suggests that urban assemblages can be reshuffled into new configurations despite longstanding patterns in their organisation. As DeLanda explains, spaces of possibility have structures and tendencies which lead to regularities (DeLanda, 2002, p. 10), so that assemblages can adopt a certain form for a long period of time; for example such as particular kinds of urban spaces being sites of public encounter and others being private spaces. But regularities are not essential and the trajectories that a system, such as an urban system, settles into temporarily can be reconfigured.

This reconfiguring of the urban assemblage occurs, as DeLanda explores, after periods of turbulence. As Cresswell and Martin clarify, turbulence is not just about

disruption to existing orders but about the 're-orderings' that are able to take place because those disruptions expose a system's nonlinearities, enabling different virtual capacities to become actual (Cresswell & Martin, 2012, p. 517). In relation to cities, others have explored how periods of turbulence in urban centres at the end of the twentieth century have led to new patterns of labour emerging. Bridge and Watson explore how, as London became a global city, a period of turbulence occurred in labour markets which resulted in labour becoming more dispersed and flexible (Bridge & Watson, 2000).

DeLanda has argued that institutions and bureaucracies in cities can function reactively at times of turbulence, seeking to 'limit' and 'control' changes or that, equally, they can 'set them in motion of accelerate their mutation' (De Landa, 2000, p. 29). In the case of supper clubs, the mutation of public-private boundaries is arguably accelerated by institutions, such as the websites that have emerged to list and mediate purchase of tickets to supper clubs, like Grub Club and Edible Experiences. And, as we have seen, the mutation of the city into a more flexible, ephemeral medium is being encouraged by governments too, as evident in the promotion of pop-up welfare. These institutions thus stabilize the mutations and transformations caused by turbulence in the city, accelerating but also normalising the changes taking place.

At the same time as institutions stabilize the urban mutations brought about by turbulence there is also, apparent in pop-up culture, a need to adapt to and stabilize *imaginaries*. Berlant's work on cruel optimism suggests that times of crisis in modes of living are also times of crisis in modes of imagining life. She argues, throughout her work, that the current experience of precarity relates to an 'impasse' (Berlant, 2011, pp. 4-5) resulting from the fact that 'the neoliberal present is a space of transition, not only between modes of production and modes of life, but between different animating, sustaining fantasies' (Berlant, 2011, p. 261). For Berlant, precarity is felt more acutely in the absence of new fantasies replacing those that can no longer sustain us. Coleman summarises Berlant's position that, in the current

climate, 'the promise of upwards mobility has been replaced with an ongoing sense of crisis – a precarious present' (Coleman, 2015, p. 109), reinforcing the idea that Berlant's 'impasse' corresponds to a period of turbulence in fantasies themselves, as we struggle not just for new modes of living but for new *imaginaries* to which to attach our optimism.

In a period of urban turbulence one task is, then, to produce new imaginaries that enable life to continue, even if in ways that are counterproductive. It is in this sense that I argue that imaginaries serve as compensatory narratives in pop-up, in that they provide what Berlant might call a 'fantasy' that allows people to make do with 'bad' jobs (Ocejo, 2017), the erosion of private space, or otherwise compromised conditions. Such compromises and sufferings were previously made palatable by certain visions of 'the good life' (Berlant, 2011, p. 7) that, at a time of economic crisis, it has now become very difficult to sustain. Even if the optimism in these visions was 'cruel', their loss is still traumatic, so, during the ongoing period of turbulence, new imaginaries are needed to serve as objects to which to attach optimism. These objects are provided, in pop-up, in the form of imaginaries like secrecy that enable people to optimistically invest in careers and domestic set ups that weren't first choices or, equally, as we have seen, in imaginaries of flexibility that allow people to embrace precarious labour conditions. If "Cruel optimism" names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility" then pop-up's imaginaries are an object that this optimism can become 'magnetised' to (Berlant, 2008, p. 33) after other such objects have been lost.

The next section will explore how, in supper clubs, imaginaries of secrecy narrativize the erosion of public/private boundaries happening due to turbulence in economic and labour markets. I will show that they offer people a means of maintaining optimism in the face of such changes and the resulting break down of previous fantasies of the 'good life'. Elsewhere in the thesis I have argued that pop-up stabilizes the urban assemblage at a time of turbulence by normalising and glamorising that turbulence and, in this vein, I will show how secrecy imaginaries in

supper clubs can stabilize changes in the distribution of public and private space by recalibrating expectations and desires in line with those changes.

### **Home for Sale**

Having explored the production of the secrecy imaginary in supper clubs I now turn to an exploration of the function it serves both as a way to make the home commercially valuable and as a compensatory narrative in the face of labour shifts involving the commodification of home and home life. The secrecy imaginary makes entry into strangers' homes a desirable experience for which paying seems appropriate. Richardson has made a similar argument about the sharing economy more generally, suggesting that it makes meeting strangers a part of the product on offer (Richardson, 2015). The second section of this chapter, on surprise, will address the commodification of encounters with strangers in relation to anxieties around plurality and difference in urban sociality. Here, I argue that the cultivation of a desire for encounters in domestic spaces narrativizes the shift of work into the home.

As mentioned, Basement Gallery supper club (who run The Ship's Kitchen) began because Chef, Alex couldn't afford to host dinner parties during a hard financial time. When I met Alex he had left his job as a chef because it wasn't enabling him to earn enough to live in the capital. Holding a supper club in his own home was therefore a way for Alex to make money and continue to pursue his passion for professional cooking without the overheads required to open a restaurant or the low pay within the restaurant industry. Many supper clubs are held for similar reasons. As Koch explores in the setting of New York (Koch, Forthcoming), they are an affordable way for people to follow desires to be commercial cooks without needing to open a restaurant. Anna who runs The Secret Kitchen also states in an interview with 'Islington Faces' that a supper club was a more affordable and less risky alternative to opening a restaurant. The interviewer writes that Anna 'hadn't wanted the risk or

superhuman effort of setting up her own restaurant' and had pointed out that 'something like nine out of 10 fail within a year' (Baird, 2014). In this context, supper clubs can be seen as a sort of 'compensatory' urbanism (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 316), a version of restaurants that is more affordable and less risky to run. The imaginary of secrecy that is overlaid onto the home thereby becomes a way to make that attractive rather than make it *feel* compensatory. Anderson and Holden have suggested that an orientation of hope can hold things together, including the 'multiple disjointed processes that make up' a city, because it contains a 'normalizing and normative force' (Anderson & Holden, 2008, p. 151). Here, hope attaches to secrecy as an imaginary in supper clubs and thereby holds together labour and leisure in the city at a time when both are indeed becoming more disjointed.

There is also a second kind of compensation that the secrecy imaginary performs. As well as narrativizing the inability of hosts to open restaurants, it also narrativizes the growing need for people to make use of personal resources in generating an income, as will be explored further in the second section. As in other elements of pop-up's imaginary, this repositioning of home as a financial resource is figured as an efficiency. The sharing economy has been positioned as a way to make resource use more efficient by enabling multiple people to use a resource (be it a car, a house or food) when others are not so that it doesn't go to waste. In this sense, supper clubs play into the same imaginary of resourceful flexibility that container spaces generate. If pop-up culture is about sharing space; engaging an imaginary of flexibility to make use of time-spaces that the owners of spaces are not taking advantage of (as discussed in the previous chapter), then supper clubs extend this idea of wasted space to domestic space-times and resources, suggesting that meal times at home could be shared with others. Indeed a Grub Club blog post on supper clubs and food waste written in 2016 argued that the sharing economy is making London a more environmentally-friendly city and that supper clubs play a big role in this. They argue that supper clubs are crucial in helping to reduce food waste in the UK because 'one supper club event for 16 diners save £4.33 and 6 litres of food waste from landfills compared to homemade meals'. Equally, they argue, 'Supper

Clubs provide another environmental benefit: *space optimization*.<sup>7</sup> Because, 'Instead of building another building to host events (which costs hundreds of tonnes in carbon dioxide gas emissions and thousands of pounds), supper clubs use preexisting spaces to host dinners' (Sohngen, 2016). Here, homes as well as public spaces are incorporated into pop-up's imaginary of flexible and efficient space use, positioned as a resource that it is wasteful not to share and thus altering imaginaries of what private domestic spaces are and how they should be used.

When the reporter from *Islington Faces* (interviewing Anna) describes supper clubs as a 'rather cool' concept the 'cool' attached to it, I argue, compensates for these recession era adjustments to how and where work takes place. The coolness of the supper clubs is actively produced and performed by supper club hosts in how they present their homes and themselves. Rather than being embarrassed or disappointed by the need to use their home for their commercial cooking aspirations, elements of domestic space are foregrounded as key to the event's appeal.

In Koch's discussion of supper clubs he explores how supper club hosts turn their domestic spaces into private spaces for the evening through 'ad hoc adjustments' to the space (Koch, Forthcoming). For example, he describes how bathtubs were packed with ice to make them function as refrigerators or how food that was prepared in advance was 'stored in bedrooms and closets'. Yet, as much as supper clubs require adjustments to domestic space to make them function as commercial dining spaces they also foreground the fact that they *are* domestic spaces as part of their appeal. Within the secrecy imaginary, the home is a key part of the secret and supper club hosts capitalise on that in marketing and presenting their events.

In the opening of the i-Doc clip about Anna's supper club, a pair of shoes can be seen in the hallway by the stairs. The shoes, which lie on the floor as if they have been thrown off by somebody coming home, indicate a relaxed domesticity which is thrown into question when from the right hand side of the shot a member of the kitchen staff in a work apron appears in the doorway, scurrying to fetch ingredients from downstairs. Although Anna's events are staffed by paid kitchen workers, the

domestic setting is emphasised in the way she markets the event. Despite the careful curation of her house for the event – the laying of tables, the methodological preparation of food – elements of domesticity are left to give the supper club its charm.

The perceived charm of the domestic is apparent on Anna's website too. The 'about' section of the site has two small sections entitled 'Who is Matt' and 'Who is Barnaby'. The 'Who is Matt' section is a description of Anna's husband Matt who she jokes 'eats very well'. The purpose of the section is ostensibly to inform visitors to the supper club about Matt, who, as he lives in the house, is likely to be present at events. However in practice it also emphasizes that this is a domestic space and creates an impression that guests will be visiting a happy family environment. The 'Who is Barnaby' section explains that Barnaby is a 'culinary bear' – a teddy bear that goes with Anna and Matt on their travels and is photographed in these various settings. The inclusion of the teddy bear on the website suggests an approachable, friendly family atmosphere (Colquhoun, 2017). Rather than adjusting domestic space to make it private, as Koch discusses, Anna foregrounds the fact that this is her family home, differentiating her event from restaurant dining and marketing the domestic setting of the event.

Indeed the pleasant domestic environment at Anna's supper clubs is often what users comment on. One reviewer of Anna's secret kitchen on the site Edible Experiences writes 'The food was exceptional and the presentation was lovely, but what really put it over the top for me was the wonderfully warm and welcoming atmosphere. It was a cosy and intimate affair – and not for lack of space!' Here the user's main reason for liking the event is the domestic environment that Anna provides.

Anna's ability to create this pleasant domestic environment evidences the idea that the sharing economy is tied up in 'new forms of inequality and polarisations of ownership' (Richardson, 2015, p. 122). Anna, despite not having the capital to open a restaurant, has possession of a large house in London that enables her to run



successful supper clubs. If the sharing economy is a compensatory geography, it is perhaps also one which is only open to those who have something to share; an imaginary more useful for the older or upper middle classes than to those pushed out of the property market.

In a post about Anna on the Islington Faces Blog the writer explains that

‘There are so many creative ways to use your home – from Airbnb where you rent out a spare bedroom to kitchen table freelancing – but Anna who loves to travel and to cook has clearly hit on a winning formula’ (Baird, 2014).

This description positions supper clubs as an aspect of the sharing economy and indicates the transformation of a home into a work space as a ‘creative’ act. Yet such ‘creativity’ requires a resource that is increasingly unavailable in London; a spacious, stable home. Yet not all supper clubs are hosted in spacious houses. The Ship’s Kitchen is hosted in a small barge described as a ‘designer-converted 1914 Dutch barge.’ On the Grub Club website, pictures of the outside and inside of the boat are used to market the event drawing on the common imaginary in pop-up of unusual and creative spaces.

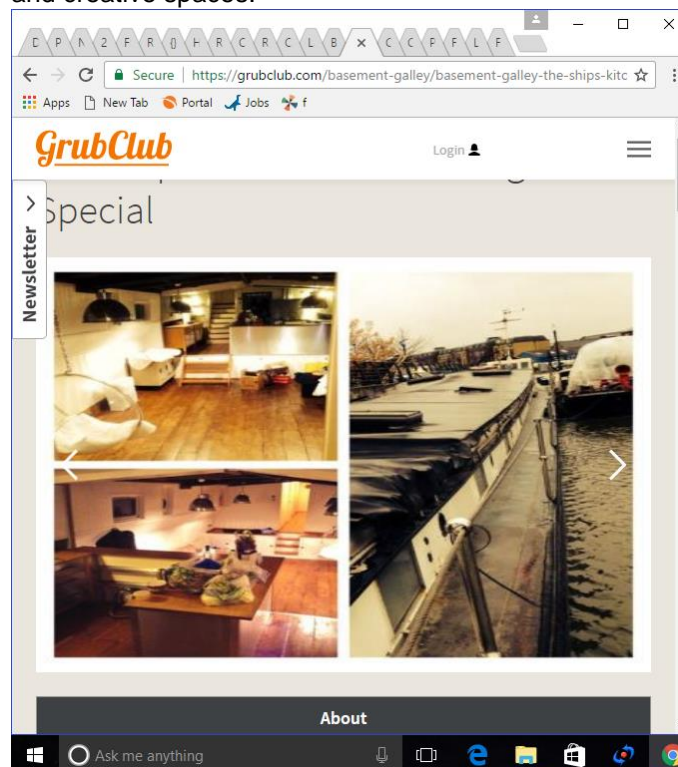


Figure Twenty Six: The Ship's Kitchen

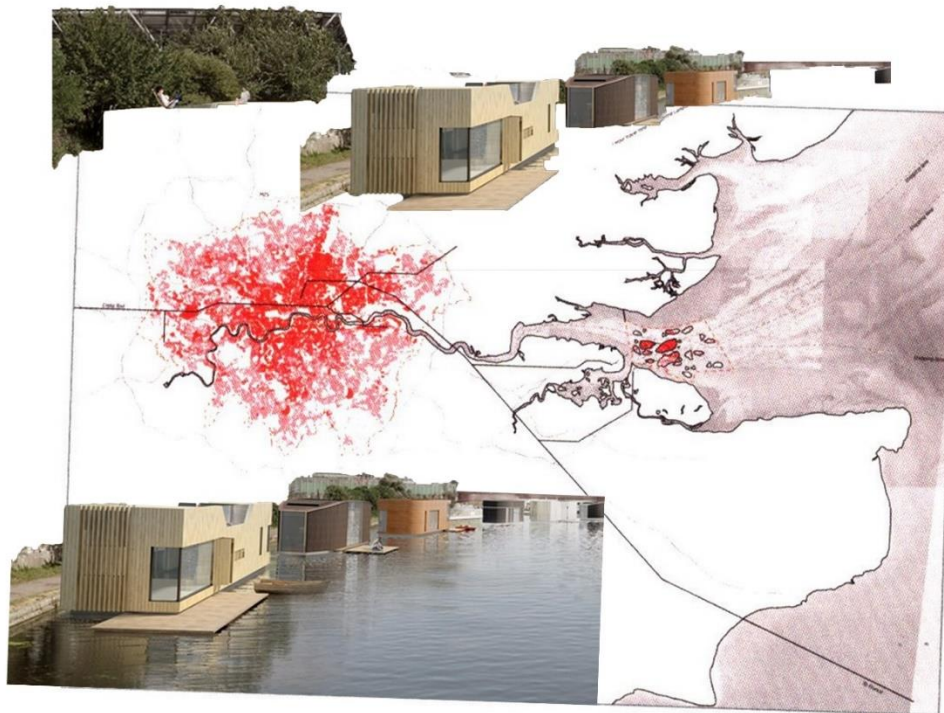
The celebration of the barge as a creative place to live in the event's marketing jarred with the attitude toward the barge that Alex expressed to me during my participant observation at the event. Alex and his girlfriend had been trying to buy a house in London but, with the rising prices of housing in the capital, had been priced out of any of the areas they wanted to live in. They ended up buying the house boat, moored in Barking, which was a lot further out of the city than they would have liked. Like many young people, they had been pushed to consider living on the river as one of the only affordable ways to stay in London because of the housing crisis (Knight, 2010; Shepherd, 2016). Urbanists and journalists have noted that the waterways of London are getting increasingly crowded because growing numbers of young people, like Alex and his girlfriend, who are unable to afford to buy houses are electing to buy house boats instead so that they can stay within (relatively) central areas of London (Slawson, 2015; Shepherd, 2016). Many of these 'new boaters' don't pay for permanent moorings and end up having to move every 14 days. Alex and his girlfriend, however had compromised on location in order to get a permanent mooring in Barking. Their boat was a long walk from the tube through dark car parks and industrial areas and although it was smartly converted inside was clearly not the first home that young couples dream about.

One of the 'outside pop-up city' pages in the i-Doc explores the role of the river in London's housing crisis. This page can be found through a link from the clip of *The Ship's Kitchen*. It features a collaged version of designs from New London Architecture's competition 'New Ideas for Housing' which asked architects to come up with solutions to London's housing crisis. The collage contains images from two plans; one to create a "34<sup>th</sup> Borough" in the Thames; a "Thames Archipelago", and another called 'Buoyant Starts' which involved the design of 'prefabricated floating homes, at an affordable price, for the unused water space of the capital' which would 'address the housing crisis in Greater London' and give young people affordable starter homes". These projects designate the waterways as 'bluespace' or 'bluefield' sites which are needlessly going to waste when they could be used to find solutions to the housing crisis (NLA, 2015, p. 29). These projects propose that 'generation

rent' could become 'generation float' and floating architectures are posited as a 'flexible' way to create new housing opportunities. This outside pop-up city page sets the scene for understanding Alex's supper club; demonstrating his move to the river as part of a broader geography of London's housing crisis.

## OUTSIDE POP-UP CITY

The housing crisis is pushing increasing numbers of young Londoners onto the waterways



Architects have proposed that 'colonising' the waterways is a good solution to the crisis of affordability. Generation rent can become 'generation float'. They can live in 'waterhoods' surrounded by flexible, floating, architectures; or they can move to the "34th Borough" envisaged in the Thames Estuary.

Figure Twenty Seven: Colonise the Waterways

Yet in the New Ideas for Housing exhibition these floating solutions are celebrated as 'fresh thinking' and as 'innovative and ambitious' ideas. Buoyant starts is even described as 'eye-catchingly radical' (NLA, 2015, p. 5). Although the competition was

framed as a response to the private housing sector being at 'maximum capacity' in London (NLA, 2015, p. 5) the projects are not discussed as last resorts at a time of crisis but as inventive, creative models for urban living; their context of crisis quickly forgotten. Likewise, rather than be presented in this light, as a compensatory form of home ownership, the marketing for the supper club positively narrativizes the house boat using it as part of the appeal of the event.

Imaginarities of secrecy in supper clubs could also be argued to narrativize adjusted expectations of personal space. At a time when both buying and renting are increasingly expensive in London, young people especially have become used to flat sharing and moving frequently and to aspiring only to own or gain permanent access to modest spaces such as Alex and his girlfriend's house boat . As Watt and Minton argue, young professionals and students have become used to 'experiencing multiple private sector rent hikes and evictions' (Watt & Minton, 2016). Young people, including those who are relatively privileged, live in housing precarity. They often move frequently because 'Even if you pay the rent on time, take care of the property, and learn your neighbours' names, you can be forced to move if the landlord decides to sell up, raise the rent to a level you can't afford, or just doesn't renew the tenancy' (Craw, 2016). Equally, young people in London's private rental market are often living in cramped conditions, often, for example, with people sleeping in the designated living room so that the flat has no shared space. If pop-up can be seen as a geography of 'austerity urbanism' (Peck, 2012) in that it relates to high vacancy rates, uncertainty in investment and low levels of employment then equally, imaginaries of homes as places you can use 'creatively' are perhaps symptomatic of a time when bad housing conditions require positive imaginaries to make them palatable, as seen for example in the imaginaries that positively narrate the 'permanent temporariness' of property guardianship as a mode of urban living (Ferreri, et al., 2017).

Alex's housing situation resonates with Berlant's description of how subjects maintain an 'affective attachment to what we call 'the good life', which is for so many

a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it" (Berlant, 2008, p. 35). Berlant's statement can illuminate how, here, attachment to a dream of homeownership has the potential to be wearing for Alex and his girlfriend who, in order to own a property have to move to the outskirts of the city, learn to live on the river, and use their private space as a second space of work.

The discrepancy between the 'realities' of domestic life and its 'creative' transformation into a marketable event is shown in the clip of The Ship's Kitchen supper club. The clip has a reverse temporality, after some establishing shots of the river at Barking the clip begins with a walking shot of the approach up to the barge. My hand can be seen opening the door to the boat, like a guest arriving not knowing what they will find inside. As soon as the door opens we are greeted with Alex and his friend playing the bagpipes for the guests, providing the entertainment of Scottish music at the Burns night themed event. When the music finishes we see the guests clapping, sitting at a shared table with the remnants of the dinner. The clip then cuts back to Alex and another chef getting ready for the event in the kitchen. Alex wears a hat because the boat is very cold and he hasn't yet turned the heating on for the guests because heating the boat is expensive. The chef affectionately feeds him some of the food he is preparing and the friends laugh. We see a shot of the haggis cooking on the stove, of the table set up ready for guests, and of Alex and his wife putting out extra glasses before the guests arrive, taking their coats off and commenting that it is nice and warm inside the boat. The nonlinear chronology of the clip captures the various stages of transformation that take place as the home is turned into a supper club venue.

The nonlinear structure of this clip shows home to be a fluid substance which can be 'creatively' transformed into an asset of the sharing economy. Although the writer describing Anna's supper club means 'creative' in terms of the creative economy the word could also be taken in the sense that Henri Bergson uses it in his book 'creative evolution' where it refers to the production of qualitative newness; the bifurcation of

a system to produce something different (Bergson, 1998). The 'creative' process in supper clubs enables a bifurcation of the home, to make it into a public, commercial space. In turn, this is part of a wider urban bifurcation within which the distributions and meanings of spaces are altered. That is not to say that using homes as work spaces is anything new. At the "Government and Housing in a Time of Crisis: Policy, Planning, Design and Delivery" conference Frances Hollis explored housing that, across history, had been specifically designed to allow tenants to work from home, including running craft businesses and shops (Hollis, 2016). Supper clubs indicate a return to the imagination of the home as a work space but also a changing imaginary in which home becomes a commodity to be consumed by others and the imaginary of privileged entry into the domestic becomes a selling point.

I would argue that the imaginaries of secrecy that surround this bifurcation of the home serve to narrativize that reconfiguration in a way that compensates for circumstances that could otherwise manifest as indignities; not being able to pursue a career as you originally intended, and therefore needing to expose your private space to others. Rather than the movement of work into the home being interpreted as a failing, or rupture in the current system, the imaginary of secrecy makes supper clubs seem like a desirable adjustment to the commercial dining scene in London. It thereby stabilizes that change so that, rather than being felt as turbulence, it is experienced as a new normal. Equally, as will be explored in the second section of this chapter, supper club also engage compensatory imaginaries that narrativize the perceived loss or lack of community in cities, and its replacement with monetised social encounters.

The success of the narrativisation performed by the secrecy imaginary is indicated by the high entrance fees that supper clubs now charge; usually between £25 and £40. Although supper clubs have historically been a response to conditions of prohibition and currently are a response to unemployment, low wages, and a reduced appetite for risk in the context of recession, the imaginary of secrecy they have developed means that they are no longer seen as compensatory but instead

as an exciting new urban phenomenon. This suggests, as will also be explored in relation to The Little Yellow Door, that compensatory imaginaries can outgrow their compensatory functions and take a wider hold over urban life.

### **Aesthetic Labour**

It is not only domestic *spaces* that are made part of the product in supper clubs. As hinted at with Anna's online account of her husband and her teddy bear, the hosts perform aesthetic labour through which their own attributes as inhabitants of a domestic space become part of the consumable experience. Many scholars have commented that the personalities and imagined home lives of producers are becoming part of commodities created and sold within new and revived economies such as the sharing economy and the craft economy. Luckman has commented that digital technology is 'closing the distance between the consumers and the homes (Luckman, 2013, p. 254) of so-called amateur producers' in the sale of craft items on platforms like Etsy, enabling a realm of consumption based around imaginaries of suburban authenticity. Ert et al. have explored how the 'host's attributes, such as her responsiveness, hospitality, and fairness" are part of the guests experiences in Airbnb rentals (Ert, et al., 2016) and supper clubs similarly position the host as part of the product. We have already seen that Anna markets her supper club, in part, through the appeal of her domestic family life. The visitor reviews of supper clubs also make clear that guests are judging their hosts as much as they are the other features of the event. In a review of Christabel's supper club, hosted in her flat, one guest writes:

'Christabel Beeson is a human version of Barbie: she can cook, paint and host 20+ people flawlessly- oh, and she has beautiful pearly whites and golden locks. Her creative spunk and attention to detail are what makes her pop-up's interesting, quirky, fun, hands-on and an experience, rather than just any meal in someone's home' (Reviewers, 2014).

Here, not only Christabel's hosting skills and cooking ability are commented on but her appearance too becomes part of the reviewed event. The suggestion that Christabel is a 'human version of Barbie' is telling of approach to supper club hosts which treats them as if they are consumable toy versions of people. As Ert et al. have explored, even the attractiveness of hosts is a factor when accessing sharing economy resources such as Airbnb apartments (Ert, et al., 2016, p. 64) and this visitor comment suggests the relevance of this in supper clubs too. Equally, for this reviewer, Christabel's skills make the event more than just 'any meal in someone's home'. This suggests that the secrecy imaginary in supper clubs is about more than just entering 'any' home; the host must curate a *performance* and enable guests to immerse themselves in that experience through 'quirky' and 'hands-on' aspects of the event. Indeed immersion, as discussed in relation to pop-up cinemas, is also a key aspect of supper clubs. Guests are invited to immerse themselves in someone else's world but to do so that domestic world must become a theatrical version of itself.

At many supper clubs the hosts provide literal performances to entertain their guests. In the video of The Ship's Kitchen we see Alex and a friend playing Scottish music for their guests at their Burns night themed event. Alex plays the bagpipes and his friend plays the Scottish drums while the guests sit around the table finishing their wine. Alex knew how to play Scottish music because he had been part of a military band while at university in Scotland. At the supper club, this knowledge became a way to give the event 'authenticity', to make Alex seem like an appropriate host for a Burns night evening. The performance was especially appealing to three guests who were European tourists in London and appreciated the Scottish music and Burns night themed food as part of a 'British' experience. Anna's Burns night themed supper club also included relevant entertainment. Anna decided to read a poem by Robert Burns (who Burns night is in honour of) out loud to the guests as they finished their canapes and before they sat down to dinner. These performances demarcate supper clubs from being 'just any meal in someone's home' but do so not by aligning the events with restaurant dining but instead through foregrounding the talents of



their hosts. Indeed, supper clubs hosts are expected to provide entertainment as well as food to the extent that guests at one of Christabel's events were actively disappointed that 'the 'mad hatters' theme was merely just a title and not executed in any artistic or creative way' and 'needed more theatre!' (comments from guests posted on Grub Club website, (Reviewers, 2014)).

Through being expected to provide entertainment, the personal creative skills of hosts are made part of the experience of the supper club. More than just being able to cook the supper club chefs are expected to have other hobbies and talents such as Scottish music or an interest in poetry which make their private worlds appealing to paying guests. These skills are expected by guests an integral part of the 'secret' world on offer. Such an expectation speaks to my earlier claim that imaginaries are invested in competing ways by different groups. I would conjecture that for hosts the appeal of the secrecy imaginary is that it makes palatable the revision of their aspirations as chefs and the need to use their home for their commercial dining events. On the other hand, for guests, the secrecy imaginary in supper clubs carries a suggestion of immersion, probably because of its shared instrumentality in immersive pop-up events such as Secret Cinema, and they thus expect more than just a delicious meal. We have seen here how the connotations guests associate with secrecy are internalised by the hosts of supper clubs who feel they need to offer up creative or unusual aspects of their homes and personal abilities as part of the event.

Before moving on to discuss imaginaries of surprise in the second section of this chapter I want to discuss Christabel's Mad Hatter's Brunch which she held in a 'flat share themed' pop up in Notting Hill. As introduced, Christabel usually holds her supper clubs in her flat but wanted to branch out and hold them for more people so decided to rent a larger space. She held a weekend of Mad Hatter's Brunches in 'The Little Yellow Door' a flat share themed pop up bar in Notting Hill. In the i-Doc clip Christabel talks to camera explaining why she likes the venue. Her events are *Alice and Wonderland* themed and thus premised on an immersive kind of secrecy;

a trip 'down the rabbit hole' into unknown, magical worlds. In the clip a close up of the dining table shows the 'Eat Me' labels that Christabel has made for some of the food, in a reference to the novel, as well as the Mad Hatters themed menus on the table. Some of the guests have brought their own Alice and Wonderland masks which they wear during the event, voluntarily immersing themselves in the theme.

Christabel's event displays a whole hearted adherence to the alignment of secrecy with immersion. Her event is also fascinating for showing an investment in the secrecy imaginary while being detached from the public/private binary of domestic and public space that structures most supper clubs. In the clip Christabel says that 'the venue fits the theme perfectly, it's up a quiet secret little alleyway through a little yellow door'. This statement was actually factually incorrect. As is apparent in the opening of the clip, The Little Yellow Door is actually on Bayswater road, a major A road through central London. Christabel's comment suggests that the facts of the matter are less important than the imaginary of secrecy that she desires for the event. The co-presence of the reality, in which the event is on Bayswater road, and the imaginary, a secret, hidden away venue is switched between fairly seamlessly in the i-Doc clip. Following on from the shots of the road we cut to the yellow door, which could be anywhere. The door appears open on its own accord (because blown by the wind) creating an air of mysterious invitation which differentiates the space from the other buildings on the street.

What is especially interesting about The Little Yellow door as a venue, as indicated earlier, is that it is a Flat Share *themed* venue. Unlike the other private worlds behind doors The Little Yellow door is not somebody's home but a home *themed* bar. Christabel says in the i-Doc clip that its appeal is that it has 'weird and mix matched' clutter, like a home would, and in the slow pan around the space we see mix matched furniture, hats hanging on the wall, drinks served in mugs, framed portraits on the walls and the mantelpiece and random ornaments scattered around. The venue does look fairly like a flat and although there are waiting staff in aprons this is no

different from Anna's supper club or The Ship's Kitchen where staff also wear aprons and are usually paid.

Against the backdrop of the other supper clubs, where homes are presented and performed to make them appealing for paying guests, Christabel's supper club has interesting implications. It suggests that home has been commodified through supper clubs to the point where it has become a *theme*. In this instance the secrecy imaginaries' function is not as a compensatory narrative for the need to hold events in domestic spaces (which Christabel also does), rather it becomes a way of branding another kind of commercial event. We could say that what begins as a compensatory way of holding paid dining events, the absence of capital to open restaurants, is recuperated, becoming a marketing tactic for commercial, non-domestic events. The Little Yellow Door, I think, demonstrates how forceful pop-up's imaginaries have become in cities; surpassing their compensatory origins to become ways of imagining urban space outside of the context of precarity it grew out of. The danger, here, though, is that if imaginaries like secrecy are used in multiple settings, their association with compensated conditions will be forgotten, thus further masking the precarity they arose to narrativize.

The Little Yellow Door also shows a difference between the appeal of domestic settings in supper clubs and the appeal of the domestic in other kinds of home-based enterprises. I have argued that pop-up's imaginaries respond to a time of crisis and precarity in London following recession and austerity. Luckman argues that at 'times of crisis, instability and anxiety' there is a 'nostalgic desire for retreat...security and the home' (Luckman, 2013, p. 224), explaining the heightened appeal of homemade products. However, in supper clubs, the imaginary of home is somewhat different. Rather than being figured as secure, the secrecy imaginary positions home as a site of the unknown. In The Little Yellow Door Christabel used this home 'themed' space to produce an immersive world based around *Alice and Wonderland*, a book which is explicitly about surprise, unpredictability and disorientation. I would argue that this shows a desire in pop-up to *normalise* rather than to cancel out uncomfortable

experiences in the contemporary climate. In the next section I explore the imaginary of surprise in supper clubs to make a similar argument that supper clubs normalise uncomfortable encounters with others in the city. As Valentine explains, Gordon Allport's seminal concept of the 'contact hypothesis' suggests that contact 'lessens feeling of uncertainty and anxiety' that are otherwise felt in diverse cities 'by producing a sense of knowledge or familiarity between strangers, which in turn generates a perception of predictability and control' (Valentine, 2008). Taking forward this notion of encounter, I argue that supper clubs address feelings of anxiety generated by plurality and difference in contemporary London but that, unlike in Allport's suggestion, they do not necessarily produce any 'real' encounters across difference.

## **Part Two**

### **Supper Clubs and the Surprising City**

In this second section of the chapter I turn to examine imaginaries of surprise in supper clubs through an analysis of one particular supper club, Latitudinal Cuisine. While surprise has many connotations and functions in pop-up culture, I here explore its alignment with encounter, suggesting that one key element of the surprise imaginary is a sense of the potential for encounters with unknown others in cities. In exploring Latitudinal Cuisine I discuss its imaginaries of unexpected encounters with otherness and consider to what extent the encounters it stages and imagines are productive in connecting people across difference. Before doing so, I briefly position supper clubs in a tradition of work on strangers and the city including recent geographical ideas around encounter in urban settings.

As discussed in relation to pop-up cinemas, the i-Doc evokes the immersive experiences encouraged in pop-up. Its 'enter' button on the first home page invites users into the circumscribed world of the i-Doc; a hyperbolic version of the pop-up

city. This invitation to enter a demarcated, immersive space is mirrored by the supper club clips in their shots of doorways and doors being opened. This double imaginary of immersion, in which the i-Doc's pop-up city is itself an immersive geography and, within that, each supper club is a self-contained immersive space positioned behind a closed door, demonstrates an important addition to the secrecy imaginary in pop-up; that of *strangers*. Working alongside imaginaries of secrecy in supper club is the imaginary of encounters with unknown others including both the hosts of supper club events and other guests in attendance.

Cities have long been characterised as places of unexpected encounter with others. Many literary authors have explored the paradoxical nature of urban isolation despite the 'denseness' of people in the city. For example, Edgar Allen Poe's 1840 story 'The Man of the Crowd' (Poe, 2004) considers the peculiarity of being surrounded by unfamiliar faces in the city, inhabiting a world that is full of people but at the same time solitary and uncommunicative. There is also a wealth of Geographical literature on strangers and strangeness (Holloway, et al., 2006; Amin, 2012), a significant amount of which focuses on encounters with 'otherness' including in cities defined by multiculturalism (Barnett, 2005; Amin, 2002) and in a climate of prejudice towards LGBT persons (Valentine, 2008) and questions how far encounters in urban spaces can bridge boundaries between different demographics, sometimes optimistically asserting that 'A city is a place where people can learn to live with strangers' (Sennett, 2001) and at others emphasising persistent segregation and exclusion. Although most of this literature focuses on encounters in public spaces, there has been some attention to encounters with others that take place inside the home (Schuermans, 2013).

Against the backdrop of the longstanding characterisation of the city as a space of strangers, supper clubs have an interesting approach to encounters unknown others. As part of the sharing economy, they function on the basis of transactional encounters with strangers who share privately owned resources with paying guests; in this case, domestic space and home cooked food. If, as Sennett argues, 'Flexible

capitalism has precisely the same effects on the city as it does on the workplace itself: superficial, short-term relations at work, superficial and disengaged relations in the city” (Sennett, 2001), then supper clubs and other parts of the sharing economy, as a newer arena of flexible capitalism, instead position themselves as an antidote to impersonal, corporate relations; a rejection of an urban life organised around business and commerce and one which instead celebrates sociality, encounter and the unexpected; all of which are supposedly made possible by its peer to peer format.

However, despite the connotations of the word ‘sharing’, goods are usually exchanged for money in the sharing economy and in supper clubs. An imaginary of friendly sociability exists despite this transactional relationship in part because of the assertion that seller and consumer are in theory interchangeable (Richardson, 2015, p. 222) (although this rests on a false assumption of equal ownership of shareable assets). Socialising with hosts as if they were new friends is encouraged in areas of the sharing economy such as the newly launched ‘AirBnB experience.’ ‘AirBnB experience’ extends the premise of AirBnB – paying to stay in a stranger’s home while on holiday – to include activities with the host (such as tours of the local area) as part of the product; tapping into a desire to meet and interact with strangers. Similarly, supper clubs derive a large part of their appeal from both meeting the host and being welcomed into their private home and from meeting other guests at the event. Richardson argues that ‘The imagination of community in these alternative economic spaces is vital’ (Richardson, 2015, p. 223). She suggests that an imaginary of heterogeneity and openness operates within the sharing economy; envisaging a multitude of possible encounters that sharing economy events and services could enable. Drawing on Thrift’s work on affect, Richardson suggests that the sharing economy produces an affective infrastructure within which meeting strangers is ‘desirable or at least acceptable’ (Richardson, 2015, p. 223). In the last chapter, I explored how affective infrastructures can discourage modes of thinking that might otherwise lead to uncomfortable conclusions. Similarly, I would argue that the sharing economy’s affective infrastructure of desire for surprising encounters

with strangers masks a situation in which such encounters are actually increasingly monetized and/or anxiety inducing.

For Simmel, cities are characterised by transactional relationships, ones which are 'obligatory' in order to attain resources and therefore, rather than treat people as individuals, 'deal with persons as numbers, that is, as with elements which, in themselves, are indifferent, but which are of interest only insofar as they offer something objectively perceivable' (Simmel, 2002). However, at the same time as the relationships within supper clubs are transactional they are also, at least marketed, as about meeting and getting to know other people; experiencing them as individuals rather than just as a means to an end. If, as Tonkiss suggests, the city inhabits a tension between being a place of solitude and a place of community (Tonkiss, 2003, p. 298) then supper clubs straddle this divide, being at once an event that foregrounds the multiplicity and the seemingly infinite expanse of unknowable others in the city and one that encourages social interactions where they might not usually take place.

If, as Koefoed and Simonsen suggest, 'the stranger' is an 'inevitable condition of urban life (Koefoed & Simonsen, 2011, p. 350) then supper clubs embrace the trope of the urban stranger and integrate it into the appeal of their events. Imaginaries of surprise in supper clubs function as a promise of getting to know some of those strangers, albeit for one night only. This impetus to meet strangers in supper clubs could be seen as progressive form of encounter in that it encourages sociality with others leading to more spaces for discussion and, hypothetically, encounters with difference or solidarity within difference. Historically, supper clubs have been heavens for minorities such as queer communities in New York (Stokes, 2002) but in London's contemporary supper club scene the imaginary is not of a safe haven for persecuted minorities but of a meeting space that is theoretically open to all.

However, Richardson has questioned whether the sharing economy 'performs a narrative of collaboration and community in order to reject stories of the economy as engendering isolation and separation' or if it is merely a way of masking 'new forms

of inequality and polarisations of ownership' (Richardson, 2015, p. 122). As discussed, being a supper club host is only possible if one owns or has access to an adequately proportioned domestic space and, given the high prices at most of them, there are also clear accessibility issues around attending as a guest.

Following this line of interrogation, the next section questions whether supper clubs provide spaces for more than transactional encounters with others at a time when feelings of otherness are strong, not only because of the growing class divides driven by austerity but because of a climate of xenophobia evidenced and perpetuated by the Brexit vote. Although my research was conducted in 2015, the Brexit vote in 2016 indicates the mood in the UK that was developing at the time, one of hostility to immigrants and in which overcrowding, unemployment and overstretched services and resources were blamed on immigration. London has been characterised, and proven by regional voting records, to be anomalous for its relatively outward facing and tolerant attitude. In this context, I argue that supper clubs engage a narrative of inclusivity and positive encounter which react not only to 'isolation and separation' in the economy but to a pervasive structure of feeling in which otherness is feared and, in reaction to that, celebrated.

### **Unpredictable Encounters and (Imagined) Otherness**

One of the defining features of an i-Doc is its openness of form and the unpredictability of its trajectories. In my i-Doc I engineered unpredictability in two key forms. Firstly, the map is designed so that users don't know what clips will appear next, producing a sense of a city where new places appear and disappear with no warning. Secondly, users who choose to follow links at the end of clips don't know what place they will discover because the links, rather than naming other clips that users can follow onto, are vague and thematic, offering the choice, for example, to 'Open more of London's closed doors' or 'Follow the river' Nonlinear systems, as explained by Kwinter and DeLanda (Kwinter, 2003; DeLanda, 2006) undergo



qualitative rather than just quantitative changes and the i-Doc is a nonlinear system in this sense. Although each new clip added is in a sense a quantitative change, adding a discrete amount of video material to the i-Doc's content, it is also a qualitative one as the addition of each new pop-up site introduces new relationships between places and thus new meanings to the i-Doc.

Elsewhere, I have discussed how the order in which users come to clips in i-Docs changes the sense that those clips have because users uncover different implications depending on what they have just seen (Harris, 2016). Similarly, in my i-Doc, as each new place is added to the i-Doc's assemblage the qualities of pop-up city's geography change. For example, as clips about supper clubs appear, added to the container spaces and pop-up cinemas, the implications of pop-up as a geography of spaces of sociability changes. Most of the other clips in the i-Doc have little in them to suggest pop-up places as sites of encounter with others. They are mostly interviews with pop-up owners or footage of people engaging in predesigned interactive events (such as in the pop-up cinemas). The addition of the supper club clips to the i-Doc alters the meanings of the temporary city and in particular adjusts the perspective on what participation means; shifting it from interaction in curated events to an understanding of unscripted meetings between strangers. This is indicative of the shift that guests at a supper club might feel. Used to understanding transactions with urban strangers that are largely functional, the addition of supper clubs to a person's urban geography opens up the promise of long conversations with strangers in a relaxed environment. This promise not only shifts how supper club guests might understand the city, but also potentially shifts their own identities serving to, as Sennett claims, stimulate and expand the mind (Sennett, 2001).

Part of the reason why a city, as a nonlinear system, is unpredictable is its vast complexity. The multiplicity of elements means manifold interactions can occur making it difficult to pin down and trace the evolutions and bifurcations that could take place. As in the i-Doc, when new elements of an urban assemblage come into contact with other elements qualitative changes take place. In supper clubs we have

already seen how unpredictability comes in the shape of encountering new, domestic, spaces. Equally, it involves encountering new people. A large part of the promoted imaginary in supper clubs is the ability to meet and interact with strangers. The Ship's Kitchen advertise their supper club as a way for people to 'enlarge their personal and business networks' they go on to say 'you are equally as likely to have fun talking to people you came with, or strangers who came alone'. Many guests also comment that meeting strangers at the event was the highlight of their night. For example one reviewer of Christabel's supper club states that 'it was mainly because of the guests we encountered that made the evening an enjoyable one'.

In this section, I interrogate the imaginary of unpredictable encounters with strangers in supper clubs. I do this through an analysis of the supper club Latitudinal Cuisine. Latitudinal Cuisine, unlike most other supper clubs, only charges a nominal (currently £5) fee to attend. Rather than being run by aspiring chefs unable to open a restaurant (as the other supper clubs discussed in this chapter all are) it is run specifically as a way to meet other people in London and share food and stories. It is led by Architect Alex, with the assistance of his partner Sinead, and is attended regularly by their circle of friends who take it in turn to host the supper club in their houses. On their Grub Club profile they write that the supper club is 'our way to meet great new people and overcome the social distance that too often impedes on modern city life.' Specifically, they seek to meet diverse people in order to 'uncover the secrets of this Earth' and 'to learn about this great salad bowl of a city we call London'. They label Latitudinal Cuisine as an 'open community of people exploring the world of global food and local friendships' (Latitudinal Cuisine, 2017).

The reason that the supper club is called Latitudinal Cuisine is because it involves 'touring the food of the world in a year'. They assign one latitudinal degree to each of 360 days in a year and then collectively cook food from the longitude corresponding to the date on which the supper club is held. Rather than one person cooking, all the guests are asked to bring a dish. Early on during the event the guests gather round the table and each person introduces themselves and their dish so that

the group can 'devour the stories that helped make the meal'. Latitudinal Cuisine is about meeting strangers, they write that 'It's great to know that you can start the evening as a group of complete strangers and end as friends'. However, it's imaginary is not just one of encountering people in the city, it is also one of consuming otherness by sharing food from different cultures around the globe.

At a time of growing hostility towards immigration and a 'crisis in multiculturalism' (Lentin & Titley, 2011), Latitudinal cuisine encourages a diversity of encounters and celebrates the multiculturalism of London. The supper club I attended was not themed around one of the latitudes but instead more broadly themed around 'travel'. Guests were asked to bring a dish that reminded them of a journey they had made. A band called 'Safar' (which means travel in Lebanese) played after supper and included songs about travel in their set, as featured in the i-Doc clip. In an email to the prospective supper club guests, Alex linked the band's name to wars in the Islamic world, drawing on a second meaning the word has. He wrote:

"We'll leave it up to you how to interpret their name – SAFAR. You might know it's also the 2<sup>nd</sup> month in the Islamic calendar, and means "empty" – because the ban on war had lapsed at this time of year and everyone had run to battle. Stunningly over-turning this sad legacy, a few months ago, Mayssa (the lead singer of the band) ran a concert in aid of children affected by war, where each ticket helped pay for a child's education for a month. Safar also means yellow, and has autumnal associations – all perhaps more fertile stuff for inspiring food creations than war ; ) All welcome!"

This statement from Alex firstly positioned the supper club as a politically aware, outward looking event, demonstrating his concern for international political situations and an implicit desire to connect with and demonstrate awareness of the plights of other communities. Equally, Alex's explanation of the multiple meanings of Safar, and suggestion that it is up to guests how they want to interpret the name, emphasises the plurality of perspectives possible on the same thing and encourages

the equal weighting of those perspectives. This builds into an imaginary of accepting encounter produced at Latitudinal cuisine.

Other supper clubs in London also engage and produce this imaginary. For example, 'Conflict Kitchen' was a series of events where food from various countries was cooked and consumed as a pretext for talks and discussions about conflicts occurring around the world currently. If, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, xenophobia has often emerged in the face of urban precarity, then supper clubs perhaps react to the xenophobic climate in the aftermath of the Brexit vote with an imaginary of strangers that attempts to be welcoming and inclusive. Xenophobic language often figures cities as crowded places, swarmed or swamped by unwelcome others. In the surprise imaginary, there is a similar sense of the city as a crowded space of multiplicity but here the experience is rendered positive through the exciting connotations of surprise. The surprise imaginary supports an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) in London that is felt as multicultural and inclusive.

This imaginary is also created by elements of the decor and entertainment at Alex and Sioned's house. In the opening shot of the i-Doc clip about Latitudinal Cuisine we see the table which the food is beginning to be laid out on. The Table is designed as a map of the world with countries and latitude lines etched into it. After the shot of the table the clip cuts to Safar playing their first song about travel. The song is a list of things to be packed for a journey. If it is normally public spaces that are imagined as 'providing the opportunity for encounters between strangers' (Valentine, 2008, p. 323) then here Latitudinal Cuisine position their home as a space of contact. Their furnishings and entertainment imagine their East London flat as a nexus of connections, a meeting point for global trajectories.

The design of the table used for the supper club suggests that the world is brought together within the collection food laid out on it. Likewise the tag line 'eat global, meet local' and the description of London as a 'Salad Bowl' emphasises how people and processes that originate from all over the world are thrown together in London and can be encountered through the consumption of food. Doreen Massey has argued

'introverted, inward looking' (Massey, 2005) conceptions of place are problematic because they insist on essential identities for places and 'require the drawing of boundaries', therefore being exclusionary in nature, positing an 'us and them' divide. Instead, Massey encourages us to see place as 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' so that 'each 'place' can be seen as a particular, unique, point of their intersection' (Massey, 2006). This 'extraverted' notion of place is suggested in the imaginary produced at Latitudinal Cuisine, where the small East London flat becomes a space where distant places coalesce, mediated through the food cooked and eaten.



Figure Twenty Eight: Eat Global, Meet Local

This relational spatial ontology has political ramifications; for Massey requiring a 'relational politics for a relational space' (2005; 61). As in the social ontology Judith Butler traces in her description of precarity – in which we are all mutually vulnerable to and dependent on each other – Massey's spatial ontology becomes politicized through an acknowledgment that such interconnection also entails interdependence and inter-responsibility. The imaginary of Latitudinal Cuisine as a meeting place for global trajectories therefore constructs a sense of responsibility for, and interest in, that broader geography.

However, there is a clear power geometry to the connections on offer in Latitudinal Cuisine. Alex and Sioned are able to produce such a space because they are London home owners with the financial resources and cultural capital to plan the event. Indeed the band Safar were known to Alex because the lead singer did an internship at his architecture firm. This relationship begins to indicate the power dynamic at play. Alex, a home owning white middle class man enlisted the help of Mayssa, a Lebanese intern, to create an atmosphere of conviviality (Wilson, 2012). The performance could be seen as a form of encounter, but equally it could be seen as labour performed by the band in order to bolster an *imaginary* of encounter orchestrated by Alex. In Schuermans' discussion of 'ambivalent' geographies of encounter in South Africa, it is in their own, fortified homes that white south Africans are able to encounter difference with a feeling of safety by talking to and getting to know their employees. Although clearly a very different situation, this sheds an interesting light on Latitudinal Cuisine which is also a supposed space of encounter despite the fact that it takes place on the terms and orchestration of the homeowner.

Moreover, while the participants Schuerman interviewed did seem to forge meaningful relations with people they wouldn't normally talk to, it is questionable how much 'difference' or diversity there really was at Latitudinal Cuisine. In the i-Doc clip of Latitudinal Cuisine there is a suggestion of global connections, through the content of the clip – the map table and the travel music –and yet the clip itself is only connected to other pop-ups within London rather than containing links to, for example, Beirut where Safar are from. Similarly, unlike conflict kitchen which was run by a charity (International Alert) who work with communities around the world to give training, advice and support on issues including environmental change, gender politics and state-citizen relations (Alert, 2017), Latitudinal cuisine engaged an aesthetic of compassionate encounters that didn't seem to correspond to any particular action.

Indeed, when the i-Doc clip of Latitudinal Cuisine cuts to a shot of the room, we can see that the crowd gathering is actually a fairly homogenous group composed mostly

of white, middle class people in their 30s and 40s. When attending the event, it was quickly clear that the vast majority of people there were friends or friends of friends and attended the events regularly. Equally, when the group begin to introduce the dishes they've created their stories are largely not about travel, or particularly illuminating about other cultures, but rather are about personal anecdotes such as trying and failing to make food for a date or going on holiday and getting sunburnt. Bell Hooks has argued that 'Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture' (Hooks, 1992). Arguably, at Latitudinal Cuisine, an aesthetic of otherness is used to give the event its appeal. Despite there not being significant interactions with other cultures through the event, its imaginary of travel and otherness makes a meeting of people mostly from East London *feel* like an assimilation of the global.

Yet even if this imaginary doesn't correspond in a direct way to encounters with actual strangers it is arguably still a positive imaginary that supper clubs construct and engage in that it is one which encourages acceptance and inclusion. Yet the imaginary of encounters with strangers at supper clubs is in some senses a paradoxical imaginary because at the same time as it projects outwards – imagining global interconnections – it also moves inwards, performing those connections within private, domestic spaces. There are two implications of this paradoxical movement inwards and outwards that are especially interesting. Firstly, the simultaneous inwards and outwards imaginaries present in supper clubs indicate the changing geographies of the global economy – the fact that global operations increasingly operate from domestic spaces. Pretty much all supper clubs are listed online and theoretically open to anybody who would like to attend them and, as discussed, foreground the excitement of meeting strangers as a large part of their appeal. Much like the imaginary created by other sharing economy phenomenon like AirBnB, supper clubs like Latitudinal Cuisine imagine domestic spaces as sites through which global trajectories can and will pass; an extraverted notion of home, following Massey. But this is not just an extroverted notion of home in a social sense but also in an economic sense. Homes are imagined as part of the global economy as they

become sites of consumption for tourists as well as locals (as seen in *The Ship's Kitchen*). Perhaps, even if *Latitudinal Cuisine* doesn't stage encounters that might qualify as meaningful (Wilson, 2012), it might arguably combat the channelling of precarity into xenophobic imaginaries by engaging a structure of feeling of 'domestic cosmopolitanism' (Nava, 2006) and producing an affective infrastructure that operates as a set of practices, assumptions and feelings about how we could and should approach others in cities.

## **Chapter Conclusions**

Across this thesis I have argued that pop-up culture is an arena in which the city is being re-imagined and, specifically, our experiences of and assumptions about time and space are being reconfigured. An analysis of supper clubs demonstrates that pop-up's imaginaries permeate domestic spaces too, altering imaginaries of homes to make them sites of commerce and encounters with strangers. Through the secrecy imaginary in supper clubs domestic spaces are incorporated into the public city but under the guise of being 'secret' public spaces. At the same time an imaginary of surprise narrativizes the encounters with unknown others that the sharing economy requires and reacts to a climate of hostility by encouraging a positive imaginary of encounters with unknown others. Supper clubs, as I have shown, encourage and celebrate the meeting of strangers and in as such they produce a progressive urban imaginary in which diverse others are potential friends. Yet at the same time they commodify these encounters which usually come at a high cost and, thus, are not particularly diverse in reality.

Supper clubs, as discussed, also convey an imaginary of flexibility but unlike the flexibility imaginary operative in container spaces, where places themselves are mobile, supper clubs figure flexibility as creative transformation through which spaces can flexibly adapt from being domestic sites to being sites of consumption. This imaginary of the plasticity of space is similar to that manifest in pop-up cinemas



which assert the ability of places to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized. In supper clubs it corresponds to an insistence on the ability of domestic spaces to be productive. In the previous chapter I argued that imaginaries of flexibility in container spaces subsume new geographies into 'the social factory' (Gill & Pratt, 2008) and supper clubs show that domestic time-spaces are also drawn into this imaginary of an expanded urban productivity. If the sharing economy resists the alienating and isolating aspects of capitalist exchanges by making those exchanges personal and social (Richardson, 2015) then it, in doing so, also makes the personal and the social potentially commercially valuable so that any space-times that do not have their financial value extracted from them are seen as 'wasted'.

Pop-up's part in the sharing economy also offers an interesting insight into the sharing economy's urban and economic imaginary. The sharing economy has been imagined as a 'nonlinear economy' because rather than being based around hierarchy it is a self-organising system and also one which is 'self inventing'; that is to say, rather than jobs and enterprises needing to be set up by any central or higher system of control individuals self-invent economic opportunities, bifurcating to become economically productive citizens. (Wood, 1996: p287). This bifurcation of individuals into a 'self-inventing' 'self-sustaining' nonlinear economy is especially apparent in supper clubs where, in response to the shifting economic climate, people take it upon themselves to use their personal resources and skills for financial profit. At a time when the systems and structures that maintain the economy were failing (i.e. employment structures and housing) the supper clubs normalise the absence of those structures by changing imaginaries of home and work, and normalising the interactions with strangers that those changes entail.

This chapter has also made conceptual contributions in advancing my theorisation of the imaginary's functions in pop-up culture. I have shown how pop-up's imaginaries can be developed and mobilized as compensatory narratives that ease the impact of diminished circumstances, for example not being able to afford ones' career aspirations. I have also demonstrated that pop-up's imaginaries help people

to make sense of new realities that changing economic systems, such as the sharing economy, throw them into; for example being brought into closer proximity with other urban inhabitants. Building on an argument from the previous chapter, I also suggested that what it means to invest in and perform imaginaries is not necessarily down to an individual, I explored how supper club hosts investing in the secrecy imaginary are required to undertake affective labour to satisfy the meanings that secrecy has for others; namely intimacy with exciting and skilled strangers and participation in immersive spaces. As argued in relation to investment in imaginaries of flexibility, this demonstrates that pop-up's imaginaries are made to do multiple things by different actors and that these conflicting agendas get tangled up and, as a result, the energies invested in imaginaries do not always end up going where people might have intended them to.

In discussing imaginaries of positive encounter in a climate of xenophobia I also suggested that imaginaries could help us to feel better about problems we cannot or are not fixing, but also that they may help to produce affective infrastructures within which we could be better able to perform attitudes that at least move in the right direction for fixing those problems, for example by helping us to imagine other urban inhabitants as potential friends. In this sense, we could say that as well as pop-up's imaginaries being sensitive to nonlinear spatiotemporality (as I explored in chapter five) imaginaries are *themselves* nonlinear in that their trajectories are unpredictable. Across this thesis I've explored what imaginaries do in pop-up culture, in stabilising, by normalising, precarious conditions in the post-recession city. This chapter though has also suggested that pop-up's imaginaries can and will do other thing as they move beyond this context, as shown by Christabel's application of the domestic, secrecy imaginary to a non-domestic space. Such an evolution suggests that pop-ups imaginaries will shape cities in the future in ways we may not be able to foresee.

## Chapter Eight

### Imagining Pop-up Futures: Conclusions

The previous chapter ended on the suggestion that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries are unsettled things. While they serve to narrativize and normalise instability they are also in themselves unstable and, as I have explored across the thesis, are moving beyond their compensatory origins to be seen as positive, even innovative ways of organising urban life. I suggested that pop-up's imaginaries may carve out unpredictable trajectories in future cities. The analysis in this thesis, of how those imaginaries have been developed and deployed in the context of post-recession urban precarity is I think, crucial both to understanding how those conditions have been normalised and to critically examining the transformations that pop-up's imaginaries and their functions may undertake in the future. Indeed the suggestions in the last two chapters, that imaginaries can be mobilized in conflicting ways by different actors, and that compensatory narratives are put to work in contexts where they are not required (at least not as directly) should be considered in the broader context of a reality where logics developed in the context of recession are being used to validate ongoing austerity and retraction of state funding. If pop-up's imaginaries, as I have argued, broadly serve to normalise, even glamorise, precarious urban living then the fact that these imaginaries are becoming more and more influential indicates an entrenchment of precarity that is persisting long after the crash of 2008.

Indeed, contrary to the implications of nonlinearity in pop-up, this thesis has argued that its imaginaries are being put to prescriptive purposes. The ending of the i-Doc, in which users are 'kicked out' of the temporary city because development is due to begin, reinforces (if somewhat crassly) a key argument made across this thesis, that one of the main functions of pop-up is to drive the expansion of gentrification and neoliberal logics in the city while normalising the relegation of other, less productive, urban activities and actors to the 'meantimes' of that broader project (Sharma, 2014).

While pop-ups themselves have a transient place in the city, their imaginaries are having a lasting impact on urban life. In the introduction to the thesis I introduced some of the stakes of understanding these imaginaries, describing, for example, how pop-up's logics are being used to justify the making temporary and provisional of welfare and council services. The development of pop-up welfare in the UK is a worrying advancement of pop-up's imaginaries and illustrates the importance of a critical understanding of pop-up culture. If pop-ups are offered up as 'shiny baubles' (Hancox, 2014) to distract from, while cementing, the gentrification and neoliberalisation of the city, then this thesis has deconstructed the positive imaginaries offered, and, in doing so, provided the tools to assess and resist their deployments.

As stated in the introduction the aims of this thesis were; firstly, to document imaginaries emerging within pop-up culture, secondly, to explore how pop-up's imaginaries engage a collection of modes of encounter, including spatiotemporal sensitivities, structures of feeling and compensatory narratives. And, thirdly, to illustrate the value of i-docs for exploring spatiotemporal imaginaries. In this, the conclusion to the thesis, I summarise the key elements of my findings and arguments. I also suggest future directions for work around pop-up and its imaginaries, as well as around geographical engagements with interactive documentary.

### **Pop-up Imaginaries: Immersion, Flexibility, Interstitiality, Secrecy, Surprise**

Across the empirical chapters of this thesis I have identified and developed an in depth account of five of pop-up's most central imaginaries and their functions. In chapter five, on pop-up cinema and immersive imaginaries, I explored how pop-up cinema engages particular ways of seeing the city. Positioning pop-up cinema alongside other technologies of spectatorship I argued that if film engages an optical

unconscious which makes us alert to certain spatiotemporal characteristics, especially in urban settings, then pop-up film produces awareness of the virtual capacities of space-time, including its potential for deterritorialization and reterritorialization as well as of the agency of the spectator within this assemblage. I explored how this mode of encounter foregrounds the agency of subjects to make changes within the urban assemblage but also argued that pop-up's propensity for revealing the metastability of the city, and for enabling transformations within it, is what makes it such an effective tool for gentrification. I argued that pop-up cinema's assertion of the plasticity of urban space both enables and normalises the urban changes that occur during redevelopment in London.

Chapter six turned to an exploration of shipping container spaces. I positioned pop-up's container architectures within the symbolic history of containers and their adaptations in order to consider the functions and meanings of containers in pop-up culture. I argued that pop-up container architectures engage imaginaries of flexibility and interstitiality. Exploring the flexibility imaginary in container spaces, I considered its relationship to flexible work patterns within the craft and creative economy. I argued that containers provide a spatiality that suits and exacerbates the precarity of this sector. I suggested that its imaginaries of flexibility as customization heighten the appeal of what could be seen as 'bad' jobs (Ocejo, 2017) and that container spaces, by enabling spatiotemporal flexibility, entrench, by easing, the precarity that pop-up work entails while freeing up the time scales of developers. I also argued that, following on from immersion's imagination of the city as an 'any-space-whatever', the flexibility imaginary asserts that all spaces can be sites of work; further expanding the 'social factory' (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Relatedly, I suggested that pop-ups interstitial imaginary alters uses of urban interstices so that, rather than being spaces of intervention into dominant urban regimes, they are loaned to creative workers who 'babysit' the spaces in order to maintain, rather than contest, neoliberal spatial regimes and, what's more, are deployed knowingly by developers to catalyse the gentrification process.

In Chapter seven I explored London's supper club scene, a (normally) domestic geography within pop-up culture. I argued that imaginaries of secrecy in supper clubs narrativize the shift of work into domestic spaces as part of the sharing economy and a rise of self-employment in the face of reduced employment opportunities. I also explored surprise as an imaginary in supper clubs and considered how such an imaginary responds to a climate of xenophobic hostility by engaging positive imaginaries of encounters with strangers, even if they are decidedly *imagined* encounters.

Together these three empirical chapters developed a thorough account of the central imaginaries developed by pop-up culture and their function in the city. The arguments made across these chapters attest to the significance that pop-up culture has as a way of imagining and producing contemporary cities. I have argued that pop-up's imaginaries normalise, narrativize and glamorise the altered conditions of urban life under recession and austerity.

### **What do Pop-Up Imaginaries do?**

Through my investigation into pop-up's imaginaries I have also made a set of conceptual arguments about what pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries are and do. Firstly, I have argued that pop-up's imaginaries engage sensitivities to space-time, recalibrating modes of encounter in alignment with changing spatiotemporal conditions at a time of precarity. Secondly, I have argued that pop-up's imaginaries have transformative impacts within structures of feeling. I explored how they respond to precarity as a dominant structure of feeling in the contemporary condition, mediating and transforming experiences of it so that the same conditions of instability are given positive meanings and affects. I have also explored the role of pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries as compensatory narratives that make up for alterations to urban and work life, veiling undesirable realities and allowing people to invest hope in them. As such, pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries can be seen to produce

an orientation of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011) because they encourage people to invest in ways of life that are actually counterproductive for them because they entrench, rather than offer solutions to, precarious conditions. The thesis as a whole accounted for the role that pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries play in pulling together different dimensions of assemblages of encounter, including spatiotemporal sensitivities, structures of feeling, and narrativizations, in order to make sense of and normalize changing realities of urban life at a time of widespread precarity. In addition, I have proposed that there is a power geometry at play in pop-up's spatiotemporal imaginaries, which can be pulled in different directions by different urban actors so that the more powerful within that geometry are able to redirect or instrumentalise the energies of others. Lastly, I have stressed that imaginaries, while they may develop in particular contexts, can move beyond those conditions, suggesting that it is crucial to undertake an ongoing examination of how imaginaries and their functions are transforming in pop-up culture.

### **What do I-Docs do?**

Related to my suggestion that imaginaries do different things in different contexts, and can be mobilized differently by different actors, I have argued that i-Docs can help us to pay attention to imaginaries, and specifically nonlinear imaginaries, as modes of encounter which have particular effects in particular settings. In opposition to common suggestions that nonlinear space-time is open and therefore inherently progressive, I have explored the prescriptive applications of nonlinearity within various kinds of pop-up place. I have demonstrated that i-Docs facilitate analysis of how nonlinear imaginaries work in particular socio-political and economic settings; a localized analysis that reminds us not to assume that imaginaries have fixed functions and, specifically, not to unthinkingly ascribe a progressive politics to imaginaries of nonlinearity.

This thesis has suggested that nonlinear spatiotemporal logics are dominant within pop-up culture, as well as other arenas of contemporary culture including the craft and sharing economies, the realm of contemporary architectures, and in contemporary media forms such as interactive documentary; making pertinent an examination of the different ways that nonlinear imaginaries can be deployed. I have also argued that a corresponding critique of nonlinear imaginaries in cultural geography is crucial, and have urged geographers to undertake careful analysis of what such conceptions of space-time do in specific circumstances.

In working with interactive documentary I have been able to both ‘think nonlinearly’ about pop-up and to reflect on the nonlinear ontologies through which I am understanding pop-up space-time. Across the thesis I discussed how making and analysing an interactive documentary helped me to elucidate what would otherwise be nebulous dimensions of pop-up’s imaginaries. Designing an i-Doc that would convey pop-up culture to hypothetical users gave me a greater purchase on the constituent features of pop-up’s nonlinear imaginaries. It also enabled me to explore discrepancies between what imaginaries promise and what they do, as, for example, in the tensions between flexibility and entrainment in the play view’s ‘flexible’ architecture. Additionally, it assisted in an examination of what is forgotten or made invisible in pop-up’s imaginaries and deployed the ‘outside pop-up city’ pages to illuminate some of these forgotten contexts. The i-Doc also enabled critical insights into geography’s own nonlinear imaginaries, for example in offering reminders that nonlinear systems do not necessarily imply openness given that they can be entrained and governed by the forceful strength of attractors that limit their virtual capacities; suggesting that geographers should pay equal attention to how virtual capacities are shut down as to how they are opened up.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, i-Docs are just beginning to be taken up as social science methodologies. Other than my own work, they are being used, most notably, by Joe Smith and his team at the Open University (Smith & Tyszczyk, 2016) where the focus is on using i-Docs to engage publics in (producing) narratives



around energy futures. Although my i-Doc (if publically shared) could enhance the impact of my research by making it accessible to a wider audience, my primary methodological contribution is in demonstrating how i-Docs can be used to think through, communicate and analyse spatiotemporal logics and imaginaries.

In addition, my analysis of commercial i-Docs in the methodology chapter showed the value of analysing existing i-Docs in order to understand how spatiotemporal imaginaries are developed and deployed in particular cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. I would argue that there is great potential value for Geography in analysing i-Docs as it offers an important and fascinating insight into nonlinear modes of perception and encounter in the contemporary world. And if a value of analysing i-Docs is to tap into modes of encounter that are operative in the contemporary condition then this in turn reiterates the value that *making* i-Docs can have in Geography, allowing us to critically inhabit such modes of encounter.

As a novel and experimental research methodology, my use of i-Docs has not been without its challenges. Perhaps the most central challenge has been how to write about the i-Doc effectively, in relation to my empirical material, in a way that fully demonstrates its value in developing my understanding of pop-up's and its imaginaries. I hope that my endeavours to do so have demonstrated the potentials of i-Docs as method. At a time when objects of geographical study are increasingly recognised as unpredictable, complex and multiple, methods like i-Docs, which are multisensory, nonlinear and open ended, can be used to critically approach and communicate a world characterised by multiplicity and flux.

### **Pop-up Futures**

As well as urging Geographers to engage with interactive documentary, this thesis demonstrates the importance of further Geographical work on pop-up culture. As I have discussed, the significance of pop-up in cities is rapidly expanding. The term pop-up is now used to refer to a broad range of services including social housing,

medical services, libraries, courts of law and legal advice clinics in addition to the plethora of pop-up spaces of consumption and culture that now occur in cities around the world. The term pop-up is also being used as a job title. For example, in 2015 Citizens' Advice Scotland were advertising for a 'Pop-up' Welfare Benefits Adviser, a role requiring a 'high degree of flexibility' in working across various 'pop-up clinics' and providing cover (Advice, 2015). At the same time, the cachet of pop-up in the commercial and arts sectors continues to grow. In London new pop-ups appear weekly and pop-up container malls, following the Boxpark model, are popping up in locations such as Croydon, demonstrating, as Alfie from Paradise Yard predicted, the ongoing sprawl of pop-up into London's outskirts.

The expansion of pop-up calls for further work along multiple lines. Perhaps most urgently, work is needed on the expansion of pop-up into the welfare sector. It is crucial to question what happens when pop-up, which values flux, transience and temporariness, is transposed into welfare provision. Can the pop-up format allow for innovative flexibility in welfare provision, sharing and distributing resources in a more efficient manner? Or is pop-up being used to justify the retraction of the welfare state, glamorizing the replacement of what should be reliable services with temporary and mobile alternatives?

Further research is also needed into pop-up and labour politics. At the time of writing, the Labour party are campaigning on the scrapping of zero hour contracts and the gig economy, and it is clear that we are at a pivotal point for the future of labour and employment. As this thesis has discussed, pop-up serves as a way to brand and normalise these kinds of insecure labour so a thorough and critical investigation into the pop-up labour economy is timely.

In addition, further work into the history of temporary and mobile places would be a valuable undertaking. This thesis has touched on that history, such as Archigram's imagined mobile places, or early mobile and temporary sites of film spectatorship, but a more thorough historical geography of temporary and mobile places could help to excavate the values, limitations and concerns that temporary and mobile place

making raises in global contexts. Indeed, in its focus on London, this thesis has looked solely at pop-ups in the global north, yet pop-ups increasingly take place in the global south where the longstanding prominence of informal temporary urbanisms and the different stakes of creative entrepreneurship perhaps mean a different theorisation of pop-up's logics and impacts is required. The rise of pop-ups in the global south also provokes questions about how pop-ups sit within and against enduring makeshift and informal urban environments across the globe (Vasudevan, 2014; McFarlane, 2012).

As the pop-up phenomenon takes hold, it seems clear that its imaginaries are increasingly being mobilized towards the creation of cities where critical and creative temporary uses of space are becoming both secondary to, and at times enabling of, processes of commodification, gentrification, precaritization and spatiotemporal control. My work in this thesis has examined this process, but it is also crucial to pay further attention to how, as temporary and mobile urbanisms become instruments of the neoliberal city, the more radical functions of what are traditionally interventionist urbanisms are neutralised or drowned out (Mould, 2014; Colomb, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013) as well as to consider how their critical functions are being retained, and I would urge further work in this area too. Most importantly, though, as pop-up becomes rapidly more routine and its spatiotemporal imaginaries increasingly taken for granted, it is crucial to remember the contingency of those imaginaries, continuing to question why and how they are produced, what work they are made to do, and for whom.

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