STUDIES IN THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE
https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2024.2391210

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Meaningful agency in participatory performance: a contextual approach

Astrid Breel

Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries, Bath Spa University, Bath, UK

ABSTRACT

Agency is a significant concept in participatory performance: as a participant you are able to take actions that affect the direction or outcome of (part of) the performance and this ability is a key element of the work's meaning. Contemporary discourse on participatory performance conflates two perspectives of agency: agentive behaviour (where a participant carries out an action that looks to an observer as if they have made a decision) and the experience of agency (as articulated by the participant themselves). However, my original audience research demonstrates that the instances of observed agentive behaviour significantly outnumber the articulations of experienced agency by participants. A new and more nuanced perspective is necessary to understand how agency becomes meaningful in the context of participation. This article sets out an innovative contextual approach to agency, combining theoretical perspectives from cognitive philosophy and phenomenology with insights from original audience research to create the necessary multi-dimensional perspective. In this article, I draw on empirical audience research on 94 participants of *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (2014) to illustrate this relational and contextual approach.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 29 November 2021
Accepted 15 July 2024

KEYWORDS
Agency; audience research; cognition; experience; participation; performance

Introduction

It's halfway through the performance of *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* and things are getting heated trying to decide on how to re-unite our country. The rumblings of discontent started after the first vote, where we narrowly agreed to allow the World Council into Dacia to help rebuild the country, and increased after we collectively decided that Dacia should be run as a representative democracy (rather than with a single president or as a co-operative). A small group of citizens shouted that the votes were rigged and the media reporter was part of the conspiracy. After the formation of the three main parties to make up the nation's parliament, representing The City, The Plains or The Islands, elections were held in each group to select their representative. During this process, the small group of citizens broke away and announced they'd started a new political party called The Dacia Party, with the main aim to bring the different

CONTACT Astrid Breel a.breel@bathspa.ac.uk Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries, Bath Spa University, Corsham Court Campus, Chippenham, Bath SN13 0BZ, UK

parts of the nation together for decisions rather than keeping them separate. Conversations about how best to solve the main issues facing Dacia are continuing now with four Parties.

Suddenly, there is a commotion on the other side of the room, as the media reporter tries to start his broadcast of recent events to the Nation; members of the Dacia Party have stormed the broadcast platform and remove the reporter from the room. Instead of seeing the usual broadcast by the reporter, reflecting the action back to the room, now the Dacia Party representatives are presenting their own manifesto on how to solve the challenges the country is facing. They're arguing for anarchy and to resist the structures that have been imposed on us within the performance.

After the performance, in conversations with participants and responses to the audience research, it becomes clear that a group of participants – who ended up setting up the Dacia Party and evicting the performer who plays the media reporter – were responding to what they felt was a significant lack of agency and fairness. For them, the structure of the performance did not allow the choices they wanted to make, and worse – it pretended that the decisions *had* been made by them, which they didn't feel was true. *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* is a performance with continuous opportunities for the audience to steer the performance and decide what happens next within a loosely held structure (more details of this below). From an observer's perspective, the participants were able to make decisions at several key moments to collectively decide what happens next as well as make contributions throughout the project to shape the performance content. But what this moment highlights is that it's the *perception* of agency that is important to a participant. The Dacia Party did not feel like they had any choice and they felt the game was rigged, so they rebelled against what they perceived as a rigid structure. This highlights several interrelated questions that need exploring further in the context of participatory performance: does agency exist if the participants have not perceived it? How does agency become meaningful for participants? And how can we better understand and determine agency in the context of participation without making assumptions?

As the above moment illustrates, experiencing agency in a participatory performance is often the most meaningful aspect of a participant's experience, however the ways in which acts of agency become meaningful are complex and not easily predictable. In this article, I challenge the way agency is discussed in contemporary discourse on participation where the term agency is frequently used without definition, making it challenging to develop a rigorous understanding of the aesthetic and ethical implications. The full implications of agency in participatory performance can only be understood by taking a contextual approach that combines philosophical and cognitive perspectives with insights from empirical audience research. I argue that bringing together these seldom combined fields provides a multidimensional approach, which creates a nuanced model for the analysis of agency that inverts the common perspective where assumptions about agency are made from an observer's perspective.[1] Upturning this common perspective on agency has wide-reaching consequences and potential, from a radical re-imagining of how we determine audience agency in performance to a shift in how performers facilitate audience choices.[2] Understanding how agency becomes meaningful is also essential in any context that claims the ability to 'empower' those involved, such as socially engaged art practices, community and charity projects aimed at making a meaningful impact, and research

engagement. It is imperative to fully understand the implications and potential of creating situations that conduct the agency of those taking part. This is especially important at a period in time when our agency as citizens feels like it is diminishing through ever increasing restriction in political structures (such as the recent legislation in the UK that limits citizen's ability to peacefully protest) and we are seeing new grassroots movements that challenge those existing structures.

Agency in participatory performance has direct aesthetic, ethical and political implications, but it is also a situated, relational experience that positions the participant as part of the performance and suggests a level of authorship with the ability to make decisions. The last two decades have seen a participatory turn in contemporary theatre and performance with an emphasis on the audience's experience (Bishop 2012; Breel 2017; Frieze 2016; Harpin and Nicholson 2017; White 2013). The explosion of practices that directly involve the audience, including participatory performance as well as immersive theatre and socially engaged works, necessitate a reconsideration of our understanding of agency. In this article, I use the term participation to describe a work 'where the participant is able to make an impact on or change something in the content or structure of the work, which situates their actions as aesthetic within the performance' (Breel 2017, 9). In this context, the artist creates a predetermined situation for the participant to enter, which asks them to contribute something that will add to or change the content or structure created by the artist. For example, a verbal statement that becomes part of the performance text or a physical action to solve a problem that in turn determines the performance ending. The way that participation is facilitated creates boundaries for the possible ways of taking part, which is part of the artist's interaction design, and includes the invitation to participate, specific tasks, and the structure whereby participant responses and contributions are incorporated into the performance. The mutual influence between the participants' actions and the performance content requires a clear and nuanced understanding of agency in this context.

The participatory turn, or 'century of spectators' (Burzyńska 2016, 9), has inspired scholars to re-examine the role of the audience, spectator or participant in performance. This ranges from framing the audience as performer (Heim 2016), which describes the way they contribute to the event beyond interpretative processes (although stopping short at participation in the way I define it here) to the socially engaged and applied practices discussed by Nicholson (2005), Shaughnessy (2012) and Harvie (2013), which situate them as participants engaged in the creation process of a performance. White (2013) rigorously examines the aesthetics of participation in performance and theatre, whilst I have built on this using empirical audience research to develop an understanding of the aesthetics and ethics of participatory performance that is rooted in experience (2017). In reconsidering the role of the audience in performance, Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (Rancière 2011), has played a key role to explore and expand the role of audiences in immersive and participatory performance. Rancière (2011) argues that the opposition between viewing and acting needs to be challenged for emancipation to begin. Josephine Machon has suggested that his call for an emancipated spectator is 'modelled in genuinely immersive theatre practice' (2013, 120), whilst White expands on the implications raised for the participant's agency through Rancière's provocation and suggests 'its emancipatory aspect [is] in the attention it brings to the subject as possessing an

active will' (2016, 29). There are, however, challenges with using Rancière's work to explore participation raised by a closer examination of agency, which I will return to at the end of this article.

Agency is a complex notion, as it is inherently linked to our embodied experience of action and our perception of ourselves in relation to others and our context (Bayne 2008; Gallagher 2005, 2007, 2012; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008). In philosophical terms, the definition of agency is derived from the philosophy of action, which states that 'an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and "agency" denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity' (Anscombe 2000; Schlosser 2016; see also Davidson 2001 [1980]). This general definition does not differentiate between manifestations of agency, for instance bodily movement, and an intentional act with consequences on other people's lives, meaning that an intentional act that fails to achieve its intended purpose is still an agentive act. Agency also refers to 'the perception that I (or you or he/she[/they]) caused the movement that just occurred' (Hallet 2011, 62), which requires one's will (the intention for an action) and an event (the action) to correspond with each other. The emphasis on perception is important, as agency depends on the agent's consciousness of it (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 158). Agency derives from three aspects in participation: the intentional aspect (a decision on how to respond to the work), the bodily sensation (physical experience of engaging with the work through doing something), and the reflective attribution (an understanding of the impact of your action on the performance). The emphasis on perception in this definition of agency necessitates a new approach to agency in participation that incorporates participants' experiences.

In this article, I use an interdisciplinary approach that brings together performance theory, audience research and cognitive philosophy, with the latter focusing on an enactive perspective of cognition. An enactive approach to cognition proposes that it arises through a dynamic interaction between an organism and its environment, emphasising 'autonomy, adaptivity, agency, meaning, experience, and interaction' (Cuffari, Di Paolo, and De Jaegher 2015, 1089).[3] Enactive cognition emphasises the inherent connectedness within situations, which makes it a productive approach to elucidating the experience of agency. Cognitive approaches in performance studies have focused on examining the embodied experience of being an audience member (Di Benedetto 2011; McConachie 2008), the potential for cognitive linguistics in the analysis of immersive theatre (White 2012) and explored affect in the context of socially engaged and applied theatre (Shaughnessy 2012; J. Thompson 2011). Tribble (2011) uses a systems-based model of cognition to examine the complex relationships in early modern theatre and proposes a model of cognitive ecology that takes a situated approach, whilst other scholars have applied Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) to performance systems: by Armstrong (1997) to show how consciousness functions in interpreting and staging performance and by Lutterbie (2011) to examine the cognitive processes involved when actors rehearse and perform. I have used DST to elucidate the processes that occur in the dynamic system of participatory performance to examine how participants' contributions build unique performances (2017). The so-called 'cognitive turn' in performance studies has been criticised for falling into the psychological trap that causes any statement that is backed up by neuroscience to carry more weight even when it is logically flawed or nonsensical.[4] In this article, I use cognitive philosophy alongside empirical audience research in the metaphorical manner set out by May (2015), which uses

scientific concepts and research to examine and clarify ideas about agency rather than using it to make falsifiable predictions.

Incorporating empirical audience research into theatre and performance studies is an approach that is becoming more common since Sedgman's call to add audience perspectives into the 'overwhelmingly abstract discussion of spectatorship' (Sedgman 2017, 351). In this article, I connect the complexities of a situated audience response with a cognitive philosophical perspective to better understand the nuances of the experience of participation by focusing on a key part of the process of taking part: making contributions and changes to the performance material. In combining cognitive philosophy with audience research, I aim to provide a multimodal perspective on agency as called for by Overend and Heath (2021, 159) who highlight that agency cannot simply be aligned with participation as *not* taking part is equally a choice. This perspective is integral to the two forms of agency discussed below (agency of engagement and narrative agency). Examining audience responses as a part of interpretative activities, as highlighted by Sedgman (2019), is essential to understanding the nuances of the experience of participation. Sedgman (2016, 10) also suggests that it is important for performance scholars to stop and talk to audiences rather than only conducting cognitive experiments on them; I have gone one step further by incorporating a cognitive perspective with audience research with the aim of providing a perspective on agency in participatory performance that is rooted in a cognitive philosophical, theoretical, understanding of agency *and* an understanding that agency in participatory performance is a central component of the audience's aesthetic experience and should therefore be considered in the context of their meaning-making processes.

In this article, I analyse empirical audience research carried out with 94 participants of *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* by Coney (represented by Annette Mees and Tom Bowtell) to examine the experience of agency in more depth and move beyond a single personal, subjective account.[5] *Early Days* offers many opportunities throughout to participants to make decisions and combines several strategies for participation, such as facilitating group decisions through specified choices and a game theatre style challenge to resolve collectively. The performance narrative explicitly examines the way group decisions are made and how individual (political) perspectives can be heard in such systems and creates opportunities for the experience of both types of agency discussed here (agency of engagement and narrative agency) within the performance structure. As such, the experiences of participants in *Early Days*, and the insights that this audience research contributes to our understanding of the experience of agency, are relevant to participatory performance more widely (and arguably beyond a theatre context).[6]

As we saw in the opening paragraphs of this article, participants enter *Early Days* as the regional representatives of the three areas of Dacia, a fictional nation emerging out of a traumatic civil war. Each region (The City, The Plains or The Islands) discusses the main problems in their area, facilitated by a single performer, before all representatives come together in the main Parliament to make some important decisions. The performance consists of two Acts, in Act 1 the participants need to decide whether to accept the World Council's offer of aid and decide on the system of governance for the new Dacia, with participants proposing their own interpretations of systems based on: a single leader (for instance, how this person would be chosen),

a representative democracy (how many representatives and how will they represent their constituents' views), or a co-operative system (how can effective decisions be made with such a large group). Act 2 takes a game theatre approach (where participants are given a specific goal or challenge to achieve) and asks participants to put their chosen system into practice, as they are challenged to distribute the available resources across a series of important issues (such as law and order, food, and hospitals). The tokens representing the resources are divided in response to the system of governance; given to an elected leader, distributed between regional representatives or a token for each participant. Throughout the performance, a fourth performer represents the media and reflects the action back to the participants through live broadcasts (partly based on participant interviews). The performance ends with their report from the future showing how the participants' decisions impacted on Dacia's future. The work contains 13 possible endings which each consist of an open framework structure, based on participants' narrative decisions, that is live-written in response to the discussions.[7]

In this article, I will first examine agency from a phenomenological perspective using cognitive philosophy to better understand the components and processes that underlie an experience of agency. Following this, I explore how this understanding of agency translates into a participatory performance context before examining experiences of agency of the participants in *Early Days*. Finally, I explore what meaningful agency means in the context of participation and propose a framework for understanding contextual agency.

The experience of agency

Agency can be considered from two perspectives: external observation of agentive acts and internal registration of experienced agency. To better understand how agency becomes meaningful I am focusing here on the experience of agency, which can be divided into two parts: a sense of ownership of one's physical movements and a sense of agency for one's actions, which are nearly indistinguishable in the regular experience of intentional action (Gallagher 2005; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008). In participatory performance, a sense of ownership might arise out of moving around the space to decide how to engage with the work, for instance, whilst a sense of agency might follow an action performed (resulting from a decision on how to engage). As such, agency depends in part on the agent's embodied experience of their own actions, but it cannot be reduced to 'awareness of bodily movement or to sensory feedback from bodily movement' (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 165). The intentional aspect of agency, which is situated outside of the bodily movement of the action, is significant in one's sense of agency as a form of intentional feedback that is not direct sensory feedback from a physical movement but rather a perceived sense that one's action is having an effect (p166). These two contributing signals to the sense of agency emphasise that agency is an embodied, physical act within a context upon which that act makes an impact.

To further develop this understanding of agency we need to look at a phenomenological perspective, which is significant in participation because it is *you* who is engaged in a physical act of doing, which is experientially different to watching someone else perform

an action. A phenomenological perspective on agency focuses on how it is experienced, as in Gallagher and Zahavi's (2008, 158) definition, where agency depends

> on the agent's consciousness of agency. . . . The sense of agency (or self-agency) for my actions, then, may involve a thin, pre-reflective awareness of what I am doing as I am doing it, or it may involve a more explicit consciousness filled with well-developed reasons.

This definition focuses on the *experience* of agency, whether this perception is based on an intentional action with a clear desired outcome or one without a conscious expectation of what the action might cause. The phenomenology of agency is complicated and multi-layered (Bayne 2008; Gallagher 2005, 2007, 2012; Gallagher and Haggard 2005; Zahavi 2008), with 'serious ambiguity, not simply in the way we define the sense of agency, but in the sense of agency itself' (Gallagher 2012, 26). To explain what the sense of agency derives from, Gallagher identifies multiple contributories 'some of which are reflectively conscious, some of which are pre-reflectively conscious, and some of which are non-conscious' (p28) and proposes a multiple aspects account of the sense of agency (see Figure 1). This account (Gallagher 2007, 354)

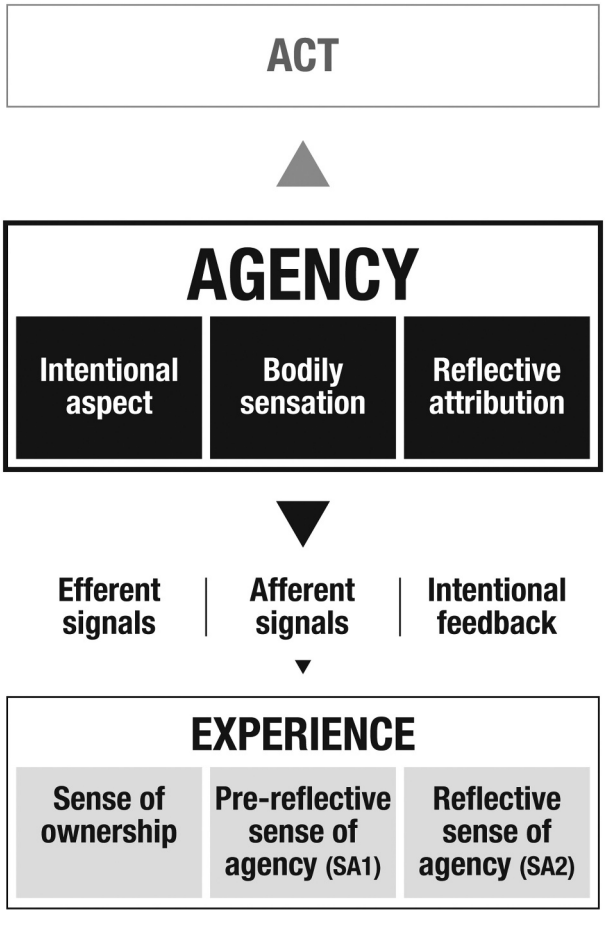

Figure 1. Components of the experience of agency.

includes efferent signals (from the environment), afferent (sensory) signals and intentional feedback ('some perceptual sense that my action is having an effect'). Within a performance such as *Early Days*, such signals may consist of responses from other participants to your suggestion that healthcare should be prioritised (efferent), the feeling of moving across the space to place your token to support Hospitals rather than Law and Order (afferent), and other participants following your lead (intentional feedback). Gallagher's multiple aspects account incorporates 'the experience of one's movements as caused by one's intentions' (Bayne 2008, 191) and 'a sense of controlling events in the external world' (Haggard 2005, 290), elements indicated as important to the phenomenology of agency.

Within the sense of agency, we can distinguish two ways in which intentional action becomes experienced agency:

> First there is an experiential sense of agency that comes along with action at the pre-reflective level, the first-order level of consciousness – the level at which I have a sense that I am moving, even if I am not aware of the precise details of my movement. Second, there is the attribution of agency that I can make if asked about my action. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 160)

As stated above, agency includes a sense of ownership (a kinaesthetic experience of movement) and a sense of agency (the experience of feeling in control of one's action). Both these aspects are pre-reflective and indistinguishable within the experience of agency, however the sense of agency can be divided into a pre-reflective and a reflective component to examine it in more detail (see Figure 1). The pre-reflective sense of agency (SA1) is fundamentally embodied and contributes to a basic self-awareness whilst the higher-order reflective sense of agency (SA2) describes being conscious of an intention consisting of attention towards a project, task, goal or end (Gallagher 2012). In a participatory performance SA1 resides in the ability to engage with the work through action, whilst SA2 arises out of the participant's reflection on their action, the reason for it, and the intended outcome. SA2 supplements and complicates SA1 and is based on 'higher-order reflective consciousness about whether what I plan to do or have done is consistent with my belief system, or with my conception of efficient means-end relations' (Gallagher 2012, 28–29). Both aspects of the sense of agency are at play within the embodied experience of participation, which involves a pre-reflective, embodied dimension of intentional action and a reflective dimension that ascribes specific intentions, plans or reasons for acting to the participant's actions. These are related to the context and respond to intentional feedback that moves beyond afferent, proprioceptive feedback and consist of a perceptual sense of the effect of one's action in the world. In *Early Days*, for example, the three regions engaged in heated discussions against the clock to try and make decisions about the future of their country. A participant described that being able to facilitate the discussion in a smaller group felt:

> Pretty empowering, really nice, particularly after having just sat there going wow everyone is really loud and I don't feel I can think as quick as everyone else. So, it's a bit like ah so this is what I can contribute to this scenario, this is where my skills are. (ED40)

Their sense of agency, therefore, will incorporate SA2 in the reflection on the action in relation to the performance context, which focuses on the intended outcome to be

achieved through that action; in this case, helping develop a response to the tasks that included the opinions of everyone in the group.

Agency in participatory performance

> [I] never [had] like a strong agenda ideologically … though I do believe in a more distributed structure and that it's efficient, but … I was more interested to see: can I bring about that change – whatever change it is. So like I would have been equally motivated to bring about a dictatorship for the fact of making something happen. (ED6)

We can develop a nuanced understanding of the phenomenology of agency in participation by differentiating between two types of agency, 'agency of engagement' and 'narrative agency', which is an analogous distinction to that between SA1 and SA2 (see Figure 2). Agency of engagement is pre-reflective and like SA1 is based on an embodied self-awareness arising from physical action or movement that creates afferent and efferent proprioceptive signals, which are processed through a comparator-based system (that compares expected outcomes from physical actions with sensory feedback; Bayne and Pacherie 2007). This sense of agency derives, for instance, from the ability to explore an environment (similarly to the navigational agency as defined by Klich and Scheer 2012; Murray 1999) and from the experience of performing deliberate actions within a performance, such as proposing a system for governance in *Early Days*. Agency of engagement is located in the participant's ability to decide how to engage with the work; from how to navigate the space to decisions on how to respond to the invitations to take part. It creates a direct, basic sense of agency through proprioceptive feedback (SA1) and through the immediate impact it has on one's embodied experience of the performance. This sense of agency consists of 'first-order, phenomenal aspects of experience, pre-reflectively implicit in action' (Gallagher 2005, 174) and means that agency of engagement is effective in creating an experience of agency for the participant. Agency of engagement is prevalent in immersive work, which generally offers the ability to explore an environment, creating a basic experience of agency even when there is no impact from the participant's actions on the performance content. This sense of agency is significant in the participant's experience, however, as it has substantial impact on their embodied experience of the work. In participatory performance the sense of agency that derives from the participant's agency of engagement is supplemented by a higher order reflective, narrative agency analogous to SA2.

Narrative agency in participation is concerned with intentions and arises through higher-order, introspective reflection on an action performed and environmental feedback communicating the effect of it.[8] Narrative agency builds on agency of engagement and supplies the reasons for an action performed by a participant, which are consistent with their sense of self and interpretation of the performance situation. As such, narrative agency describes an intentional action that impacts on the context, in this case the performance content, which creates feedback that may or may not be perceived by the participant to create an experience of agency. The mechanism underlying this attribution of agency to an action is a narrative-based account, which includes conceptual information about the action to supplement the motor intention and represent agentive judgements (Bayne and Pacherie 2007). A narrative-based account of agency focuses on

explaining complex intentional agentive action and supplements the more basic comparator-based sense of action (which arises out of a sense of ownership of one's actions) with a sense of what kind of action is being performed and why. The narrative-based account of experienced agency also relates to a participant's sense of self (including goals and reasoning) and is the process leading to the reflective attribution component of phenomenological agency.

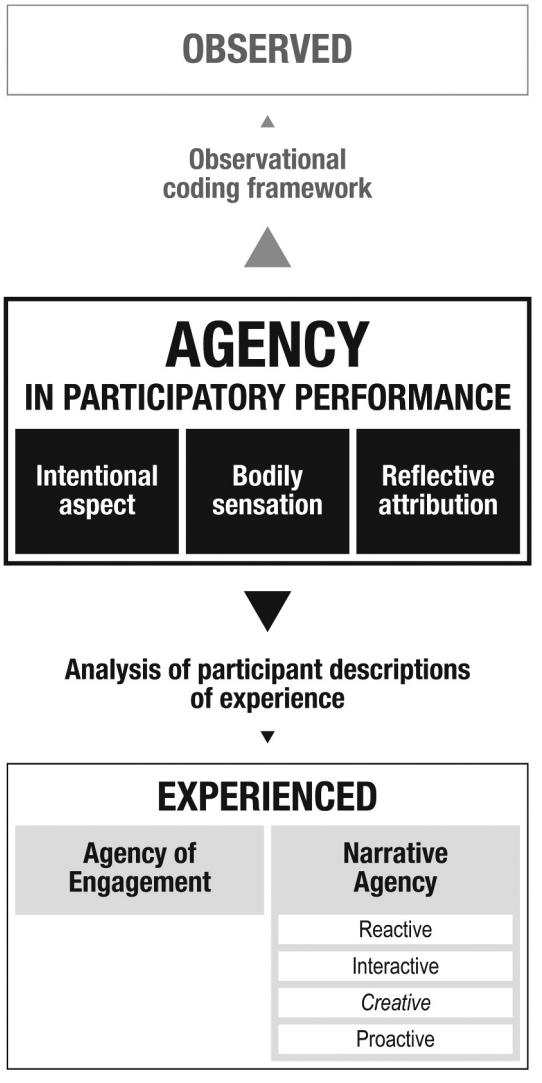

Figure 2. Components of the experience of agency in participatory performance.

Narrative agency in participation exists along a spectrum:

- Reactive agency happens in direct response to a request or invitation, such as answering a question (either verbally or physically) or responding to a stimulus or request, where the participant has no control over the options for how to respond. For example, in *Early Days* participants are asked to vote whether to let the World Council in by standing in a particular place to signify their vote of yes, no or abstain. This action impacts on the direction of the performance but the choices are pre-set.
- Interactive agency exists when a participant contributes something directly in response to an invitation within the work, but where they can decide to respond in a number of different ways and with wider choice on the response content. For instance, engaging in a two-way dialogue to develop the content or structure of the work. In *Early Days* a participant can discuss why they think it would be a bad idea to let the World Council into Dacia and choose their own response to the issue. They can adapt or modify existing information and make the decision of how best to express it.
- Proactive agency consists of a self-initiated contribution, made without an explicit invitation from the work, and where the response sits outside of the affordances of the situation. In one of the performances of *Early Days* a small group of participants evicted the media representative from the room and tried to take over the broadcast platform. The structure of the performance used the broadcasts to reflect the action back to the room and to introduce the tasks (such as voting or distributing resources), so the decision to take over this platform was not invited by the work.[9]

Acts of proactive agency are often difficult for the work to meaningfully respond to, as they can challenge the context of the performance and, depending on the work's structure, can situate themselves outside of this context.

However, this triad does not acknowledge the participant's very specific act of creatively contributing to the content during a performance, which is directly in response to the context whilst also bringing something new into the situation. This contribution is central to the participant's aesthetic experience and engagement, so to enable a more nuanced discussion of participants' agency I propose 'creative agency' to describe this action.[10] My use of creative agency goes beyond the authorship present in the reception and interpretation of a performance, although significant in the experience of participation or immersion, and focuses on the ability to impact the pre-existing content of the work. This use of 'creative' is based on Sawyer's (1999, 461, emphasis original) definition, where 'novelty is not sufficient for creativity; we also need *appropriateness* – the novel creation must somehow be viewed as useful, appropriate, or valuable in some (higher level) system'.

Creative agency sits between interactive and proactive agency in this spectrum (see Figure 2) and describes the act of creatively contributing to the performance, which responds to the affordances of the situation and adds something distinct to the work that did not explicitly exist before. This fulfils the criteria for a creative response as defined by Sawyer (1999), as the contribution is both novel and appropriate to the situation. Whilst interactive agency enables a participant to put forward their perspective on what has happened within the work, perhaps reframing parts of the

action, in creative agency participants add something to the content of the work that was not already present in a different form. For example, after the three regions have entered the main performance space, which includes three separate seating areas, they are asked to decide how they (as the country's parliament) want to govern the country going forwards. In one performance of *Early Days*, a participant put forward their vision of how a co-operative system of government could work in practice, using working groups that report to the main council. A co-operative system was one of the three options mentioned by the actors to start the discussion and the participant added the new idea of working groups as a way for this system to operate in practice. This elucidation of creative agency acknowledges the tension between choice and aesthetic structure and highlights the contributions made by the participants, which go on to make that performance distinct to that particular audience. To establish whether an agentive act is creative, it is required to first identify whether its content was novel in relation to the preceding events. Secondly, it is necessary to establish how the agentive act responded to the work's affordances and how it subsequently influenced the performance, to determine whether it was appropriate to the context. In reality, agency is of course a tangled, messy spectrum; these definitions are not mutually exclusive and overlap at times, which is another reason agency requires a multi-dimensional and contextual approach.

The analysis of creative agency in the audience research on *Early Days* demonstrates that agency can be located in two contexts: in the behaviour of a participant (observing their actions, the context that invited them and the subsequent impact, analysed with a coding framework) or in the participant's experience (where they describe a particular course of action as something they did, tried or managed to achieve). It is important to consider the difference between these two contexts for agency in participation, as there is a significant disparity between the two. For instance, as described above, in one performance of *Early Days* several participants thought that the vote was rigged and as a result these participants reported feeling they did not significantly change the outcome of the work and so did not experience agency in that situation.[11] My audience research indicates that participants generally underestimate the impact they had on the performance. When asked whether their contributions significantly changed the outcome of the work, only 6.5% felt strongly that their contribution had significant impact whilst 32% strongly disagreed with the statement. Although this may be partly due to the group dynamic of 40 to 60 people trying to make decisions together, which makes it more difficult to see the particular impact of one's action or idea, it does highlight the need for an approach that recognises the difference between agentive acts and the experience of agency in participation.

The experience of agency in Early Days

The complex phenomenology of agency makes it challenging to identify separate elements (such as the bodily sensation, intentional aspects and reflective attribution of agency) in audience responses, although it is clear that participants experienced agency in different ways. This is apparent in their responses when asked about their most meaningful moments; some participants described the performance situation or elements in terms of their affordances (suggesting they identified an opportunity to actively engage

with the work) whilst others articulated their action as something they (tried to) achieve, which suggests that they perceived the (potential) impact of their actions. Participants related their involvement in different ways, with some describing their contributions as an intentional action together with its impact. This suggests that agency was perceived in that moment: 'I said I thought we should elect people who up until that time hadn't really contributed to be our representatives & my group pretty much did that' (ED84).

Acts that influence decisions, or are acknowledged as significant in the performance, were most likely to be experienced as agency by the participants. The first vote in the performance splits the participants into new groups, as they move from their region's seating area to one of two lit spaces in the central area to demonstrate their vote for or against the support from the World Council. Some participants remain in their seats, wishing to abstain from this vote, whilst the groups for and against outside help passionately put forward their perspectives to persuade others to join them. One example of a significant decision is convincing others to change sides, as one participant from the City related:

> [The structure of the performance] allowed me to bring something of my own to it which was like this compelling sort of speech to the other side of the room [. . .] and apparently swayed a few people to vote in . . . the direction I was voting in, to vote against the World Council. (ED28)

Another example is coming up with a new interpretation of a system of governance for Dacia, as another participant recounted:

> what I was doing was interpreting what might this option be like, and I was just sharing out how I saw it and thereby saying, 'Hey, listen guys, it's not some kind of anarchy [. . .] it looks like this and this is why I think it's good, so why don't you join us?' It felt like I was understood. (ED6)

In both these examples of creative agency, the participants perceived that they made an impact on the performance. This translated into an experience of agency that gave their actions, the impact, and their aesthetic experience meaning. It is important to remember that creative agentive behaviour will not always translate into an experience of agency. However, if it *is* perceived then it is more likely to be meaningful for the participant, as the experience of bringing something to the performance is significant in the context of participation. This emphasises the importance of being nuanced about agency, as well as the need to ask participants about their experience (and to not presume experienced agency from agentive behaviour).

Agency of engagement was experienced more frequently than narrative agency in *Early Days*. The proportion of participant responses that describe an affordance of the work or an action taken exceed those that link such an action to an intention (91 and 67, respectively, compared to 61). This disparity is due to a combination of factors: firstly, agency of engagement (which relies on a sense of ownership and a basic sense of agency or SA1) requires fewer processes to be experienced when compared to narrative agency (which relies on a higher-order reflective sense of agency, or SA2, in addition). Secondly, the performance includes 40 – 60 participants taking decisions together, which creates a context where it is difficult to disentangle individual impacts. This indicates that participants are more likely to experience instances of creative agency than any other

level, as it includes adding something new into the situation, making it easier to identify the impact.

In participatory performance, the reflective attribution of agency is a significant element of experiencing narrative agency, through the processes that lead to a higher-order reflective sense of agency (or SA2). However, this presents challenges as the link between one's actions and the impact on the event cannot always be fully perceived until the end. There is a time-based connection between an action and the expected feedback and if the response is delayed then agency is not experienced (Hallet 2011). This particularly applies to bodily movements or situations where an instant response is expected, such as when moving a token or standing somewhere to indicate a vote in *Early Days*. Postdictive agency processing through reflective attribution is particularly fallible and error-prone, as this aspect of the experience of agency is at 'risk of being misled by *ad-hoc* events and distorting factors in the environment, absent or noisy action feedback, misguided background beliefs, and confusing emotions and evaluations' (Synofzik, Vosgerau, and Voss 2013, 3). There are many distorting factors present in participatory performance, such as a lack of knowledge of exactly how participant responses impact on the predetermined performance content and structure. Although in experience postdictive agency processing is connected to the infallible direct access to the cognitive and motor processes that precede action, incongruities do happen (Synofzik, Vosgerau, and Voss 2013). In participatory performance, these include instances where the agent feels they caused an action that would have happened anyway or where the agent does not perceive the result from their action as having been caused by it. In *Early Days*, for instance, not all participants perceived that the method for dividing the tokens for Act 2 was dependent on their decision on the government structure (i.e. for a representative democracy the tokens were divided between the representatives).

A missing connection between an action and the performance outcome can cause significant feelings of a lack of agency. However, reflecting on one's contributions at the end of the performance can also create, or enhance, an experience of agency. One participant made the connection between their action and the performance outcome during the interview:

> when we had the representatives at the end and they had to do the tokens, I was very involved in the conversations [. . .] with those representatives, and so the views they took were ones that I had helped [and] contributed to form. So in that sense I guess [I contributed] quite a lot. (ED88)

Reflective attribution, whether immediate or delayed, is most likely to lead to an experience of creative narrative agency because the participant needs to perceive the impact on the performance (in contrast to agency of engagement, which depends on bodily sensation and intentional aspects for a sense of agency).

Both Gallagher and Zahavi (2008) and Bayne (2008) agree that the phenomenology of agency is complicated and multi-layered, including an intentional aspect, bodily movement, reflective attribution, experience of self and experience of free will (which come together to form SA1 and SA2, see Figure 1). It is not surprising that misperception does happen with such a complex process, for instance where the agent does not perceive the result as being caused by by their own action(s). The failure of the connection between the event and the outcome can cause significant feelings of a lack of agency, as seen when

participants felt that the votes were rigged, resulting in the overthrow of the media. Agency depends on the agent's consciousness of agency; the *experience* of agency is the significant aspect, regardless of whether it is a thin pre-reflective awareness or a higher-order reflective judgement. This perspective conflicts with most descriptions of participants' agency in participatory performance as many authors describe participants' agentive behaviour without identifying whether agency was experienced. Any analysis of agency in participatory performance needs to take into account of how participants may experience their agency and how this may be meaningful for them.

Meaningful agency (and free will)

Time is rapidly ticking down for the country to solve some of the most pressing issues it's facing, such as rioting in the streets and hospitals that can no longer cope with the influx of patients. The co-operative parliament has turned into a large group of people all talking at once. One participant speaks loudly, suggesting a decision-making process that involves voting and taking turns to speak; most of the group falls in with this and decisions start to get made.

> Interviewer: 'How did it feel to have instigated that moment of action?'
>
> It felt pretty good, yeah … I don't think it was about that though, it's not about what it meant for me, I think … it felt good to have an impact in which I think we moved somewhere and we had progress in a way that everyone was still heard. (ED33)

The experience of participatory performance is inextricably bound up in the phenomenology of agency, which significantly impacts on the meaning participants ascribe to their experience. Participants engage with the work through embodied action in the context created by the artist, which is made significant, in part, by the phenomenological agency arising out of this combination. Gallagher (2005, 190) describes two models of motor action in the context of cognition that support the experience of agency, which are 'an ecological, sensory-feedback model that delivers a sense of ownership for action [and] an *anticipatory* pre-action or forward model that delivers a sense of agency for action'. For example, an action taken in a performance (such as carrying out a task in *Early Days* through physical movement) includes sensory feedback through proprioceptive (afferent) signals that create a sense of ownership for the physical action as well as an anticipation for potential feedback or responses from the performance context (efferent signals), which is part of the intentional aspect of a sense of agency. The experiential aspects of both these models are 'experienced as intrinsic to the action. They are phenomenologically indistinguishable properties of the acting itself' (Gallagher 2005, 190), which highlights the importance of focusing on an experiential perspective on agency.

Agency becomes meaningful in the context of participation in two ways: through the immediate impact on your own experience in agency of engagement and by perceiving the impact from your actions on the work through narrative agency. In both cases it is the *experience* of agency that makes it, and the action it accompanies, meaningful. However, in participatory performance it is necessary to acknowledge that agency and choice exist within a context, which restricts the choices or possible actions of the participant in

different ways. This raises a question: can we speak of free will in participation, if we acknowledge that the situation and the possible actions have been pre-determined by the artist?

The question of free will in relation to participatory performance is complicated as agency is a complex notion and experience, as this discussion shows. The challenge to free will in participation resides in the fact that the participant's agency is always already limited by the performance situation, including its affordances and invitations as well as the structure whereby responses are able to impact on the work's direction (the possibilities of which are pre-decided). However, as Tallis (2004, 308) argues: 'we must recognise that freedom that is meaningful must be exercised in a context; and to this extent must in some degree be constrained'. Tallis' argument, which responds to the claims by Libet (1999) and others that freedom of will is an illusion, states that agency is embodied and real although not absolute.[12] Instead, an act of free will, or agency, derives its meaning from *not* being isolated, as actions outside of the world they belong to cease to make sense or have meaning.

> The immediate reason for which I do something reaches past itself into an entire context of meaning, purpose and decision-making but it does not in doing so reach into a material world of causes in which reason is situated, as an effect or a product. An isolated act of free will, attached to an isolated cause (of an agent or otherwise), is as meaningless as an isolated perception lifted from a perceptual field. (Tallis 2004, 320)

This understanding of agency and free will elucidates the meaningful nature of agency in participatory performance, as the ability to act within a system that imposes limitations creates the meaning of that action; without the specific context the action would not carry the same significance. This perspective also positions meaningful agency as inherently relational and situated in both participatory performance and real life.

My audience research confirms that the perception of agency is what makes it meaningful in participants' experiences, with half the responses describing their most meaningful contribution relating to perceiving the impact, such as: 'The 1st debate of whether we will get the help from the council because I was heard and made quite a lot of points against it and the majority voted against' (ED23).[13] The audience research also makes clear that the ability to make an impact, even if it is not always the intended outcome, is significant in the participant's experience. Two-thirds of respondents' descriptions of the most meaningful moment relate to having this ability with one interviewee explaining that:

> I think that particular moment where I felt like I contributed was quite important and it changed the way in which I was interacting as well later on, and I felt very much like oh, I can actually take part in this in a way in which I hadn't expected. (ED28)

This response highlights that experienced agency is meaningful, not only due to the link between the participant's actions and their impact on the performance, but also in how it affects the way they see the significance of their actions afterwards.

It is also clear from the analysis of *Early Days* that creative agency is most likely to be experienced by participants, as it means contributing something new into the situation, making it easier to see any potential impact. It is important to remember

that creative agentive behaviour will not always translate into the experience of agency, but if it *is* perceived then it is more likely to be meaningful for the participant, as the experience of contributing something is significant in the context of participation. Perceiving your own agency, even without a direct link to an action, is significant in the experience of the work. One participant stated that the most meaningful moment in the performance was 'Being informed + questioned in a way that naturally triggered agency' (ED31). This emphasises the importance of a nuanced approach to agency, as perceiving it is what makes an action meaningful for a participant.

The structure of *Early Days* also illustrates some of the constraints on participants' agency, which includes the others present and their actions. For instance, in one performance the co-operative system descended into chaos when distributing the resources and 'one person took leadership in a very undemocratic way and appointed a chair. He basically said: "Who are two other people who are with me? Yes, ok, now we have a chair"' (ED6). This action significantly impacted on the performance outcome as the participant 'elected' chair led the discussion and resource distribution, but also demonstrates the impact of one participant's actions on others. In this case, the co-operative system that had been chosen was set aside due to the actions of one participant, which subsequently constrained the agency of the other participants present in the decision-making process.

Agency is not absolute, either within participation or real-life situations, rather it is dependent on its context. The ability to choose in participation does not necessarily bring any agency or empowerment. Agency in participation can be effectively faked and even in situations where your choice has 'genuine' impact, this still happens within a largely predetermined structure. Although this perspective on agency would be troubling if one assumed that participation equalled 'real' power or impact on the participant's life, in fact it resembles the agency we experience in everyday situations. Our agency is always curtailed or structured by the systems we live in, for instance the choices we are able to make are increasingly circumscribed by a neoliberal, capitalist society, meaning we mainly get to choose what to buy (and where from). This makes a discussion of agency in participation, and particularly of meaningful, contextual agency, significant beyond the context of the type of performance examined in this article. This innovative reconceptualization of agency leads to a consideration of it not as a direct route to empowerment but as a deconstruction of the power relations within which it operates, which has relevance beyond participatory performance.

Conclusion: conducting agency

Agency becomes meaningful for participants when it is experienced, which can happen through agency of engagement and narrative agency within a performance. This understanding requires a reconceptualisation of agency as well as a re-examination of the terms we use to describe participants' agency. I suggest the term 'conducting' agency to describe the way an artist manipulates participants' agency; this is intended to replace the more common 'giving' or 'providing' agency, which negates a participant's ability to make choices in order to 'empower' them through participation. The concept of conducting agency also highlights the way the artist frames participants' agency within the work's

structure. To further reconceptualise agency in participatory performance, I propose an understanding of contextual agency that:

- Situates agency in the performance context, considering for instance the work's invitation to participants, to determine the level of agency (i.e. reactive, interactive, creative, proactive).
- Is clear on the context and location of agency, for example is it observed in the participants' behaviour or is there any evidence that it was perceived by them (and provides clarity on how this evidence was obtained).
- Acknowledges the problematic nature of the rhetoric surrounding agency that suggests the artist has a 'pot' of agency they can distribute and attempts to be more precise by applying alterity ethics (which accepts the otherness of the participants and does not negate their agency by suggesting they need to be given it from outside).

This understanding of contextual agency aims to create a more precise language around agency in participatory performance so that this essential aesthetic element can be discussed more productively.

The contextual approach to agency I propose here represents a fundamentally relational and enactive perspective that contrasts with that presented in Rancière's essay *The Emancipated Spectator* (Rancière 2011), which has been significant in discussions of participation (for example Burzyńska 2016; Machon 2013; White 2016). Rancière argues that 'Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting' (p13) and that an artist who presupposes a particular interpretation or effect from the work is making assumptions that keep an unequal relationship between them and the spectators. Instead, Rancière suggests that mastery and knowledge should be uncoupled, in an analogy with pedagogy, so that the ignorant schoolmaster

> does not teach his [sic] pupils *his* knowledge, but orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified. (p. 13)

Applying Rancière's perspective to participatory performance highlights the importance of not presuming what may be significant in the participant's experience and the value of ensuring that scholarship goes beyond the critic or researcher's personal reflections. These ideas suggest a particular way of thinking about participation and enable a critique of the instrumentalised ethical view on participation as a route to empowerment, whereby the act of taking part is more empowering than sitting in a dark auditorium.

Rancière's rethinking of the opposition between viewing and acting is useful, however he posits an 'emancipated' spectator who is separate from the events to critically engage with them. This conceptualisation of audience engagement in theatre runs counter to the perspective I have put forward here. I argue that meaning is found in the interaction and mutual impact between elements, as is exemplified by agency which becomes meaningful through the relations between a agentive act and its context. Outside of a context there is no meaning as the action is isolated. As such, the perspective on participation proposed here is a fundamentally enactive and relational one, which disputes the idea of an emancipated spectator.[14]

A contextual, relational perspective situates agency not as something that is derived from the artist, the work, or the situation the participant is placed in; instead, it argues that the participant enters the performance with agency, which the work conducts in different ways, by restricting, emphasising, or manipulating it to create an aesthetic experience. This perspective is significant beyond participatory performance as agency in our everyday lives exists within the same type of constructed situations. Our agency is limited by societal rules, other people and the systems we work within (for instance academia). Participatory performance highlights the fact that agency exists within a context, but crucially that it is that very context that gives any action meaning. Participation also illustrates the limits to our agency in a way that is not usually apparent in everyday life; the overt aesthetic construction of participatory performance highlights the manipulation of agency. This overtness provides a perspective on ourselves in relation to the situation that is more difficult to achieve outside of an aesthetic frame.

Notes

1. In this article, I build on my previous research (2017 and 2022) to present a rigorous analysis of audience agency in participatory performance. The audience research methodology I used to collect the empirical data analysed here is set out in Breel (2015), which outlines a methodology I developed for understanding aesthetic experience in participatory performance.
2. The implications of the work set out in this article for teaching agency and participation to performers and students are discussed in Breel (2023).
3. For more detail about enactive cognition see Noë (2004), E. Thompson (2007), and Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1993).
4. See Weisberg et al. (2008) for the experiment that demonstrates this and Shaughnessy (2013), May (2015) and Jarvis (2019) for a wider conversation on the place of cognitive science in performance studies.
5. The audience research took place over three performances at Ovalhouse in November 2014: 92 participants completed a questionnaire and seven participants were interviewed. The audience research approach was approved by the ethics committee at the University of Kent. This performance is discussed through personal reflections in White (2012) and mentioned in Jarvis (2019), neither of which include empirical audience research.
6. The research to create the contextual approach to agency presented in this article is based on four audience research case studies, however to present an in-depth understanding of the audience experience I focus on *Early Days* here.
7. The first vote produces two options, multiplied by the three options of the second vote. Act 2 adds the variable of whether the distribution of resources (guided by the chosen political system) works well or badly to produce 12 options. The thirteenth possible ending represents a total collapse of the process and system.
8. The term narrative agency is also used by Murray who defines it as 'using the act of navigation to unfold a store that flows from our own meaningful choices' (1999, 133) in relation to digital interaction. My use of the term goes beyond this as Murray's narrative agency does not impact on the work, rather it is a form of navigational agency.
9. Although participatory performance does always contain an implicit invitation, as participants are aware they will be asked to contribute something. This can lead to the errant immersion described by Alston (2016).
10. Machon (2013, 68) also uses the term 'creative agency', but in relation to the interpretation of the work and relating to moments that only impact on the participant's own experience.

The examples of immersive theatre she cites, such as Punchdrunk, focus on enabling audience members the opportunity to choose how they move through and engage with an environment instead of providing the opportunity to change the work's content.

11. It is difficult to calculate the precise disparity between agentive behaviour and the experience of narrative agency, as participants contribute throughout the performance. However, each participant makes at least three decisions that impact on the performance direction yet only 39% agreed they had made a significant contribution.
12. See Mele (2009) and O'Connor (2016) for more detail of Libet's experiment, which shows our brain registers movement before we are conscious of the intention to move as well as the responses arguing that this does not negate the possibility of free will.
13. A third of responses related to the feeling of being part of either a group or the performance, whilst the remaining sixth centred on participants' feeling that they had not made an impact. This reinforces the importance of seeing the relationship between action and result.
14. Instead, it is Rancière's (2002, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010) theorising of equality, difference and dissensus that is constructively applied to participation and supports the deconstruction of power.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Coney for their support of the research, particularly Annette Mees and Tassos Stevens, and all the participants who took part in the audience research. The author is also indebted to Sam Jolly for creating the agency figures and the supportive critical feedback on early drafts of this article by Kate Holmes and David Pattie.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by a 50th Anniversary PhD Scholarship from the University of Kent.

ORCID

Astrid Breel http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6262-7413

References

Alston, A. 2016. "Making Mistakes in Immersive Theatre: Spectatorship and Errant Immersion." *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 4 (1): 61–73. https://doi.org/10.1515/jcde-2016-0006.

Anscombe, G. 2000. *Intention*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Armstrong, G. 1997. "Theatre as a Complex Adaptive System." *New Theatre Quarterly* 13 (51): 277–288. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X00011271.

Bayne, T. 2008. "The Phenomenology of Agency." *Philosophy Compass* 3 (1): 182–202. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2007.00122.x.

Bayne, T., and E. Pacherie. 2007. "Narrators and Comparators: The Architecture of Agentive Self-Awareness." *Synthese* 159 (3): 475–491. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-007-9239-9.

Bishop, C. 2012. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso.

Breel, A. 2015. "Audience Agency in Participatory Performance: A Methodology for Examining Aesthetic Experience." *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 12 (1): 368–387.

Breel, A. 2017. "Conducting Creative Agency: The Aesthetics and Ethics of Participatory Performance". PhD Thesis, University of Kent. https://kar.kent.ac.uk/64138/ .
Breel, A. 2022. "Agency." In *Routledge Companion to Audiences and the Performing Arts*, edited by M. Reason, L. Connor, K. Johanson, and B. Walmsley, 402–408. Abingdon: Routledge.
Breel, A. 2023. "Facilitating Narrative Agency in Experiential Theatre." In *Experiential Theatres: Praxis-Based Approaches to Training 21st Century Theatre Artists*, edited by W. W. Lewis and S. Bartley, 74–79. Abingdon: Routledge.
Burzyńska, A., Ed. 2016. *Joined Forces: Audience Participation in Theatre*. London: Live Art Development Agency.
Coney. 2014. *Early Days (Of a Better Nation)*. Performed at Ovalhouse, London on 14 - 16 November 2014. More information and a trailer can be found here. http://coneyhq.org/2014/09/12/early-days-of-a-better-nation-2/.
Cuffari, E. C., E. Di Paolo, and H. De Jaegher. 2015. "From Participatory Sense-Making to Language: There and Back Again." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 14 (4): 1089–1125. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-014-9404-9.
Davidson, D. 2001 [1980]. *Essays on Action and Events 2nd*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Di Benedetto, S. 2011. *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Frieze, J., ed. 2016. *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gallagher, S. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Gallagher, S. 2007. "The Natural Philosophy of Agency." *Philosophy Compass* 2 (2): 347–357. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2007.00067.x.
Gallagher, S. 2012. "Multiple Aspects in the Sense of Agency." *New Ideas in Psychology* 30 (1): 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2010.03.003.
Gallagher, S., and D. Zahavi. 2008. *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Haggard, P. 2005. "Conscious Intention and Motor Cognition." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 9 (6): 290–295. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2005.04.012.
Hallet, M. 2011. "Volition: How Physiology Speaks to the Issue of Responsibility." In *Conscious Will and Responsibility* , edited by W. Sinnot-Armstrong and L. Nadel, 61–69. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Harpin, A., and H. Nicholson, eds. 2017. *Performance and Participation: Practices, Audiences, Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Harvie, J. 2013. *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Heim, C. 2016. *Audience as Performer. The Changing Role of Theatre Audiences in the Twenty-First Century*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Jarvis, L. 2019. *Immersive Embodiment: Theatres of Mislocalized Sensation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Klich, R., and E. Scheer. 2012. *Multimedia Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Libet, B. 1999. "Do We Have Free Will?" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6 (8–9): 47–57.
Lutterbie, J. 2011. *Toward a General Theory of Acting: Cognitive Science and Performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Machon, J. 2013. *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
May, S. 2015. *Rethinking Practice as Research and the Cognitive Turn*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
McConachie, B. 2008. *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Mele, A. 2009. *Effective Intentions: The Power of Conscious Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Murray, J. 1999. *Hamlet on the Holodeck. The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
Nicholson, H. 2005. *Applied Drama: The Gift of theatre*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Noë, A. 2004. *Action in Perception*. London: The MIT Press.

O'Connor, T. 2016. "Free Will." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Summer 2016. edited by E. Zalta. Accessed March 24, 2016. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/freewill/.
Overend, D., and O. Heath. 2021. "'The Majority Has spoken': Performing Referenda at the National Theatre." *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 41 (2): 143–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2019.1676510.
Rancière, J. 2002. "The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes New Left Review 133-151." https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii14/articles/jacques-ranciere-the-aesthetic-revolution-and-its-outcomes.pdf.
Rancière, J. 2006. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
Rancière, J. 2007. *On the Shores of Politics*. London: Verso.
Rancière, J. 2009. *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Rancière, J. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury.
Rancière, J. 2011. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.
Sawyer, R. K. 1999. "The Emergence of Creativity." *Philosophical Psychology* 12 (4): 447–469. https://doi.org/10.1080/095150899105684.
Schlosser, M. "Agency." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Fall 2015. edited by E. Zalta. Accessed April 10, 2016. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/agency/.
Sedgman, K. 2016. Locating the Audience: How People Found Value in National Theatre Wales. Bristol: Intellect.
Sedgman, K. 2017. "Audience Experience in Rimini Protokoll's Outdoors." *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 37 (3): 350–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2016.1257756.
Sedgman, K. 2019. "On Rigour in Theatre Audience Research." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 29 (4): 462–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2019.1657424.
Shaughnessy, N. 2012. *Applying Performance: Live Art, Socially Engaged Theatre and Affective Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Shaughnessy, N., Ed. 2013. *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science. Body, Brain and Being*. London: Bloomsbury.
Synofzik, M., G. Vosgerau, and M. Voss. 2013. "The Experience of Agency: An Interplay Between Prediction and Postdiction." *Frontier in Psychology* 4 (127). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00127.
Tallis, R. 2004. *I Am. A Philosophical Inquiry into First-Person Being*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Thompson, E. 2007. *Mind in Life. Biology, Phenomenology and the Sciences of Mind*. London: Harvard University Press (The Belknap Press).
Thompson, J. 2011. *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Tribble, E. 2011. *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Varela, F., E. Thompson, and E. Rosch. 1993. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. London: The MIT Press.
Weisberg, D. S., F. C. Keil, J. Goodstein, E. Rawson, and R. Gray Jeremy. 2008. "The Seductive Allure of Neuroscience Explanations." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 20 (3): 470–477. https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn.2008.20040.
White, G. 2012. "On Immersive Theatre." *Theatre Research International* 37 (3): 221–235. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883312000880.
White, G. 2013. *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
White, G. 2016. "Theatre in the 'Forest of Things and Signs'." *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 4 (1): 21–33. https://doi.org/10.1515/jcde-2016-0003.