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INFRASTRUCTURES OF RITUAL

FESTIVAL ARCHITECTURE & THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

21st October 2019

Essay 4: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ESSAY

This research was conceived on the stolen Country of the Jagera, Turrbul and Bigambul nations. I begin by paying my respects to these Traditional Custodians and their elders past, present, and emerging.

Sovereignty over these lands was never ceded.

ABSTRACT

'Festivalisation' has been described as a neoliberal phenomenon that co-opts art and culture in the name of 'place-making'. This strategically serves the interests of capital by aiding the expansion of the property market and fuelling gentrification. In Brisbane, this can be seen in the proliferation of temporary arts events, laneway 'activations', and street festivals that has accompanied the city's self-declared transition from 'big country town' to *New World City*. However, festivals and other cultural events have also long served as drivers of civic engagement and catalysts of radical political action. Participating in their production is often a transformative experience for participants, empowering people to exercise creative agency and work collaboratively towards shared goals. Examining the implementation of recent project at Modifyre, an annual event produced by Brisbane-based arts organisation BURN Arts Inc and held near Inglewood in southeast Queensland, I outline an approach to design practice that seeks to enact this type of transformative participation. Like architecture, festivals modify physical space in order to set forth shared imaginaries of both past and future. Their construction serves as a form of collective ritual by which our mythologies of place and identity are formed and challenged. Thus, applying the methods of architectural design, I propose the 'infrastructure of ritual' as a means to describe the underlying social, material and spatial processes that support the production of these events. I argue that this infrastructure is made visible through the experience of active participation in these events and that this ultimately equips communities with the means to advocate for more equitable and sustainable approaches to planning and development. Finally, I set out a strategy for applying this approach as part of an evolving design thesis proposal.

Key Words: festival, participation, ritual, culture, place-making, planning, immediacy

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"Good architecture must be conceived, erected, and burned in vain."

Bernard Tschumi, Fireworks

1   INTRODUCTION

In August 2017, two senior civil servants from Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) attended Burning Man, an annual festival of participatory art that attracts over 70,000 attendees from across the globe to the remote and inhospitable Black Rock Desert in northern Nevada (Burning Man 2019a). Undertaken at a cost of $27,060 to the Queensland taxpayer (TEQ 2017), the trip prompted indignant responses from opposition politicians and bemused coverage in the national media Figure 1 (ABC News 2018; Vice 2018; news.com.au 2018)

> *"I don't know about Burning Man, but it's definitely burning taxpayers' money."*

> –   Tim Mander, Deputy Opposition Leader, Queensland Parliament, October 2018 (ABC News 2018)

The ostensible purpose of the trip was to "gain insights into current trends, ideas, themes and logistics of a large-scale festival" and to "...examine aspects of the event delivery to inform an Outback event concept." (TEQ 2016) Hearing the news of the State government's counter-cultural sojourn, several members of a small Brisbane-based not-for-profit community association, BURN Arts Inc (2019), arranged a meeting with TEQ. They drew attention to the fact that there was already an event in regional Queensland officially endorsed by the Burning Man organisation, and produced by BURN Arts (personal communication — Marisa Georgiou, 2019). Although incomparable in size — attendance in 2019 was capped at 500 — Modifyre is built upon the same foundational principles of community effort, self-reliance, and decommodification that underpin its parent event (Burn Arts Inc. 2019b; L. Harvey 2004). The event attracts a growing number of dedicated attendees to a remote paddock near Inglewood in southeast Queensland for one week each July. It features large-scale installations, theme camps, fire art, and mutant vehicles — in short, everything the TEQ staffers would encounter in Nevada.

Of course, to establish this, government researchers would only have needed to do a quick Google search with the terms "Burning Man" and "Queensland" (Figure 2). Modifyre is held on public land in Yelarbon State Forest (see Appendix A) with permission from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). It has an active presence on social media, and its organisers maintain good relations with the Inglewood branch of the Queensland Police Service, Goondiwindi Shire Council, and the Bigambul Aboriginal Corporation (see Appendix B).xdi So it doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest that TEQ staff would have already known about the event. The overseas travel request submitted by TEQ for Ministerial approval even suggests this:

> *"Attending [Burning Man] presents the unique opportunity to gain valuable insights and learnings into the development and growth of events with direct correlation to events currently held and / or being developed in Queensland" (TEQ 2017).*

So the question is, why should a tiny event like Modifyre attract the attention of a government institution like TEQ?

Australia Today

Queensland Executives Under Fire for their "Business Trip" to Burning Man

The executives want to bring Burning Man to Australia, apparently, and were just doing their research.

By **Gavin Butler**

05 October 2018, 1:59pm   Share   Tweet

IMAGE VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

Figure 1 News coverage of the visit to Burning Man of TEQ representatives John Drummond Montgomery and Rebecca Mantle (Vice 2018)

Google   burning man queensland

Q All   Images   Maps   News   Videos   More   Settings   Tools

About 6,070,000 results (0.37 seconds)

Modifyre: Queensland and Northern NSW Regional Burning ...
https://www.modifyre.org ▾
Modifyre is Queensland and Northern NSW's annual Regional Burning Man Event.

Modifyre - Home | Facebook
https://www.facebook.com › Pages › Community Organization ▾
Modifyre is the regional Burning Man event for Queensland and northern NSW. ... It is with sheer delight that the interim committee of BURN Arts, Inc.* can announce the confirmed location of Modifyre 2017: Once Upon A Time Yelarbon State Forest, Inglewood-Texas Road, Queensland.

Modifyre - Burning Man Australia
https://burningmanaustralia.com › gatherings › modifyre ▾
Modifyre is a fully Non-Profit Organisation that run an event inspired by Burning Man USA and it's 10 core principles. Modifyre. Modifyre Modifyre is Queensland ...

Burning Man Australia - Home
https://burningmanaustralia.com ▾
Burning Man has been a collaborative endeavour,.. bringing ... VIC Camps; NSW Camps; SA Camps; QLD Camps; ACT Camps; WA Camps; TAS Camps ...

Figure 2 Modifyre has a visible online presence

In this essay I take this question as the starting point for an inquiry into the cultural values of BURN Arts Inc. I will argue that in its production, Modifyre enacts 'transformative participation' (Blundell Jones, Petrescu, and Till 2005) amongst its participants. Borrowing from the ideas of Carlson and Walker (2018), I propose that this emerges through cultures of *trust, care,* and *emplacement* and that these cultures in turn are built upon a relational infrastructure of *immediacy* — that is, social interactions unmediated by transaction or exchange — a foundational principle of the event, which I argue makes its cultural values impervious to co-optation by capital. To mount this argument I take as a case study the Temple, a community artwork created each year as part of Modifyre. Showing how the execution of the Temple is driven by immediacy, I will illustrate the ways in which the project engenders trust, care, and emplacement in its practical implementation, demonstrating that it is precisely this approach that makes BURN Arts worthy of attention. Examining the project retrospectively, I unpack this methodology as a means of advancing an implementation strategy for my own evolving design thesis project.

The first section situates my argument in the broader social and historical context of festivals with a brief **Literature Review.** Relating this both to Burning Man and Modifyre, I outline the ways in which contemporary festivals can play dual roles as aiding the production of capital and catalysing social change. I note the difficulty of evaluating the true political function of contemporary events based on surface-level attributes of participation and temporariness, making the case for a deeper inquiry into transformative participation.

The next section illustrates the **Project Implementation** of the Temple from concept to completion. Identifying first the key characteristics of transformative participation, I set forth my core argument for collaborative participatory design as a means of pre-figuring self-organised cultures of *care, trust,* and *emplacement* through a design constraints that require *immediacy* in their negotiation.

In the final section I invoke the notion of the 'infrastructures of ritual' in order to reframe the key characteristics of transformative participation as a set of specific implementation strategies for ongoing design work.
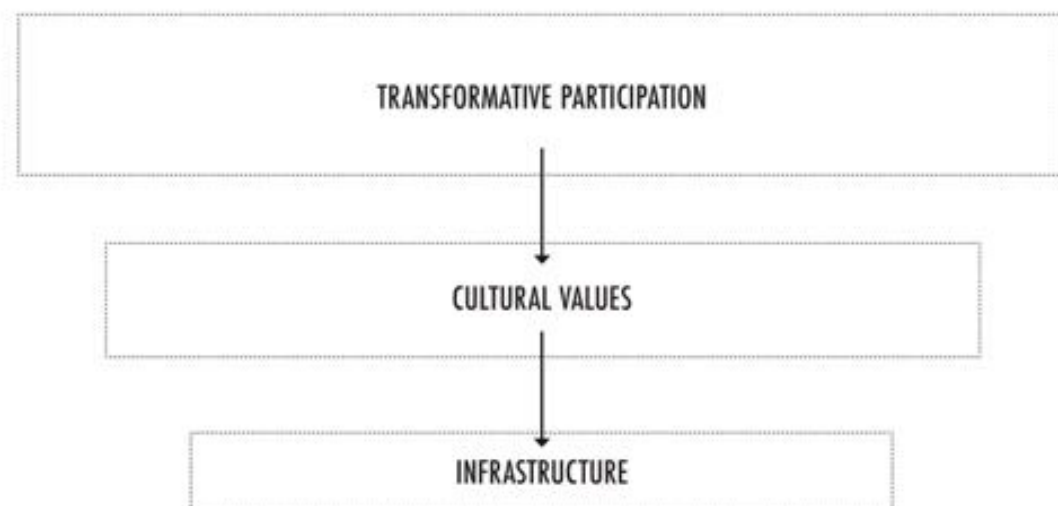
Figure 3 *The Bug:* a Queensland take on *The Man*

The Man, 1990

Black Rock Desert, NV (image: Ranchworld)

The Bug, 2018

Yularbon State Forest, Qld (image: Spygel)

Accidental design theory

This study forms part of an ongoing project of Participatory Action Research (MacDonald 2012) aimed at articulating an approach to participatory design practice developed by members of Unqualified Design Studio (UDS 2019) through the activities of BURN Arts and other grassroots community initiatives. This represents an attempt at capturing five years of accidental (auto)ethnographic research (Fujii 2014) through community arts events and unsolicited design projects. Inquiry based on PAR principles attempts to make sense of the world through collective efforts to actively transform it ("Participatory Action Research" 2019). In the context of a community design process, this means first mobilizing creative responses to constraints as they arise, often with severely limited resources to hand, and then understanding these responses through documentation, reflection, and dissemination (Norrie 2018). Although many of the key ideas presented here have come through extensive reading around participatory spatial practices (Kelly 2014; Bishop 2012a; Krivy and Kaminer 2013; Khonsari 2008), applied design practice remains the primary vehicle through which these ideas have been developed. Thus while I am responsible for the specific content of this paper, much of the conceptual framework has been produced collectively with fellow participants and co-conspirators in the Temple project and the wider Modifyre community.

My role on the Temple for Modifyre 2019 was that of mentor to the Project Lead, Leonor Gausachs. Drawing extensively on conversations with Leonor during and after the project, I have attempted to show how participating in the production of a community artwork can be a step towards empowering people to realise their own potential as creative agents. Recognising that the design process is often all-consuming, during the project I sought to maintain sufficient critical distance to allow for documentation and reflection, whilst still participating in practical delivery in order to gain as full an understanding as possible of the specific challenges faced.

Disclosure

I am a founding member of BURN Arts Inc and served on the management committee during its first two years. I have been involved with Modifyre since its inception, co-leading the design of the first effigy in 2015 with my partner Amy Learmonth, and acting as communications and engagement lead for the event alongside Amy "Delphi" Richardson between 2016-18.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

This section situates the study in the broader social and historical context of festivals. Relating this to Burning Man and Modifyre, I outline the ways in which the contemporary festival plays apparently contradictory roles, both aiding the production of capital and catalysing radical social change. Noting the difficulty of evaluating the true political function of contemporary events based on surface-level attributes of participation and temporariness, I make the case for a deeper inquiry into 'transformative participation'.

Let the festivities begin

Festivals are the "fool's mirror", the metaphoric looking glass through which societies collectively step in order to reflect upon themselves (Graeber 2007). In Bakhtin's (1984) conception of the *Carnivalesque*, festivals, rituals and other forms of popular celebration manifest temporary worlds in opposition to the ordinary or everyday. Central to the construction of these worlds are the performative and participatory spatial practices of street theatre, costume and mask parades, large-scale puppetry, and bonfires, such as those seen still in carnival-esque traditions such as Mas (Ferris 2010), Fasnet (De Soto 1998) and Samhain (Kearney 2016) (Figure 5).

Figure 4 *The Fight between Carnival and Lent,* Pieter Bruegel the Elder

These traditional festive practices acted as drivers of political movement, challenging the status quo by lampooning authority, cultivating a playful spontaneity, and disrupting familiar patterns of behaviour (Shepard 2011a). Such 'ludic protest' is well documented within the repertoire of twentieth-century critical art and political movements from Dada (Bishop 2012b), to the Situationist International (Marcus 2002); the Yippies (Shepard 2011b) to Ya Basta (Graeber 2009a). More recently, ludic tactics have seen a resurgence through protest movements such as Extinction Rebellion (Sugrue 2019) and 'Right to the City' movements around the world, including Brisbane (Figure 6) (Osborne 2016; D. Harvey 2008). Much of the subversive power of these playful tactics lies in their broad-based participation and in their temporary nature, which simultaneously suspends ordinary social hierarchies and makes them harder to pin down. In effect, the ludic protest creates a temporary world akin to that of the traditional festival — a momentary alter-reality that evades capture through its ephemerality. This notion goes to the heart of Burning Man, which in 1990 was part of an explicit attempt by members of the San Francisco Cacophony Society to put the writings of sufi-anarchist poet Hakim Bey (1991) into practice by manifesting a 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' (TAZ) in the Black Rock Desert (Beale 2007) (Figure 7; Figure 8). However, it seems implausible to suggest that in researching Burning Man the Queensland government is hoping to incite a moment of Bey-inspired 'poetic terrorism' amongst its citizens or instigate a 'Mad Max'-esque 'pirate utopia' in the Outback (even if TEQ-TAZ has a certain ring to it). So what are TEQ up to?

Figure 5 Street theatre companies like Macnas (IRL) carry on traditional festive practices

The Macnas Samhain (Halloween) Parade 2016

Galway, IRL (image: Allen Kiely)

Macnas puppets at Woodford Folk Festival 2014

Queensland, AUS (image: Macnas)

Figure 6 Ludic protest by members of UDS and BURN Arts (images: Megan Keene)

Apple Invasion, 2018
A mob of angry fruit led by Amy Learmonth (Unqualified design Studio) explains to news
crews why they don't want Apple in Federation Square, Melbourne

Cult of the High Rise, 2019
BURN Arts lampooning developers by selling milk crate 'units' to unsuspecting onlookers
Kurilpa Derby, Brisbane
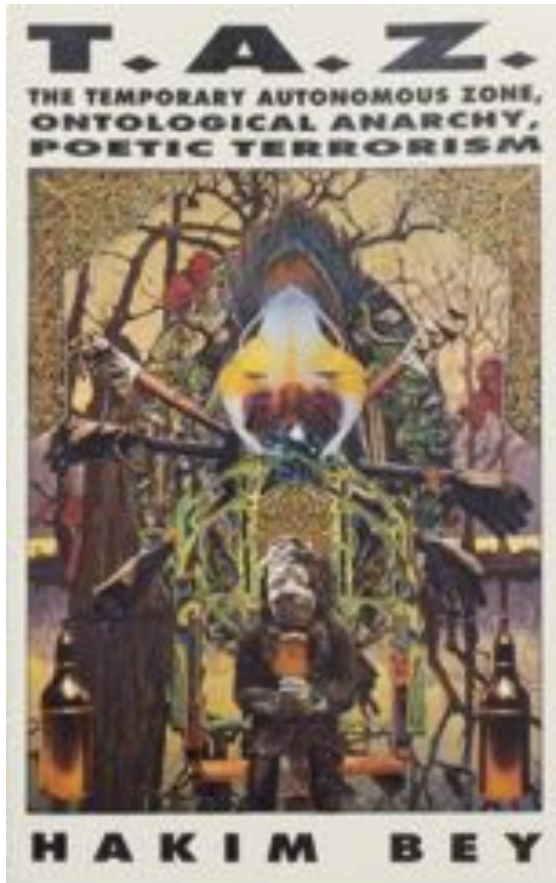
Figure 7 TEQ-TAZ

It is unlikely the Queensland government is hoping to recreate a Mad Max style 'pirate utopia'. Bey speaks of creating temporary worlds that exist beyond the reach of authority.

Figure 8 Bad Day at Black Rock

The zine announcing 'Zone Trip #4', an attempt by the SF Cacophony Society to create a Bey-inspired TAZ. The event would come to be defined by the burning of Larry Harvey's iconic effigy (see Fig 3)

'Festivalisation' and the New World City

In a contemporary context, festivals have come to be understood as instrumental to processes of urban renewal under the guise of place-making. This strategically serves the interests of capital by aiding the expansion of property markets, making cultural experiences into consumable products for tourists and investors (Picard and Robinson 2006). In Brisbane, this so-called 'festivalisation' (Cudny 2016; Schacter 2014) can be seen in the proliferation of temporary arts events, laneway 'activations', and 'interactive art' festivals that has accompanied the city's self-declared transition from 'big country town' to *New World City* (BCC 2019; Brisbane Marketing 2019), (TEQ 2019). The policies and strategic plans underpinning these events make explicit their aims of creating a new 'creative class' (Florida 2003) by promoting Brisbane itself as a lifestyle brand (BCC 2013) and its river as a 'cultural destination' (BCC 2018). This is reinforced at State level through policy documents such as TEQ's Event Strategy 2025 (TEQ 2019b). The writers of these documents use a language of participation and temporariness to convey a sense of critical cultural value in the events they promote: 'Temporary Activation' becomes synonymous with a kind of curated cultural vibrancy, 'Participation' with democracy and inclusion. Thus, the festival is reduced to mere Spectacle (Debord 1958); its once-subversive weapons of temporariness and participation are firmly co-opted into neoliberal processes of place-branding and financialisation through planning and cultural policy (Maeder, Piraud, and Pattaroni 2017).
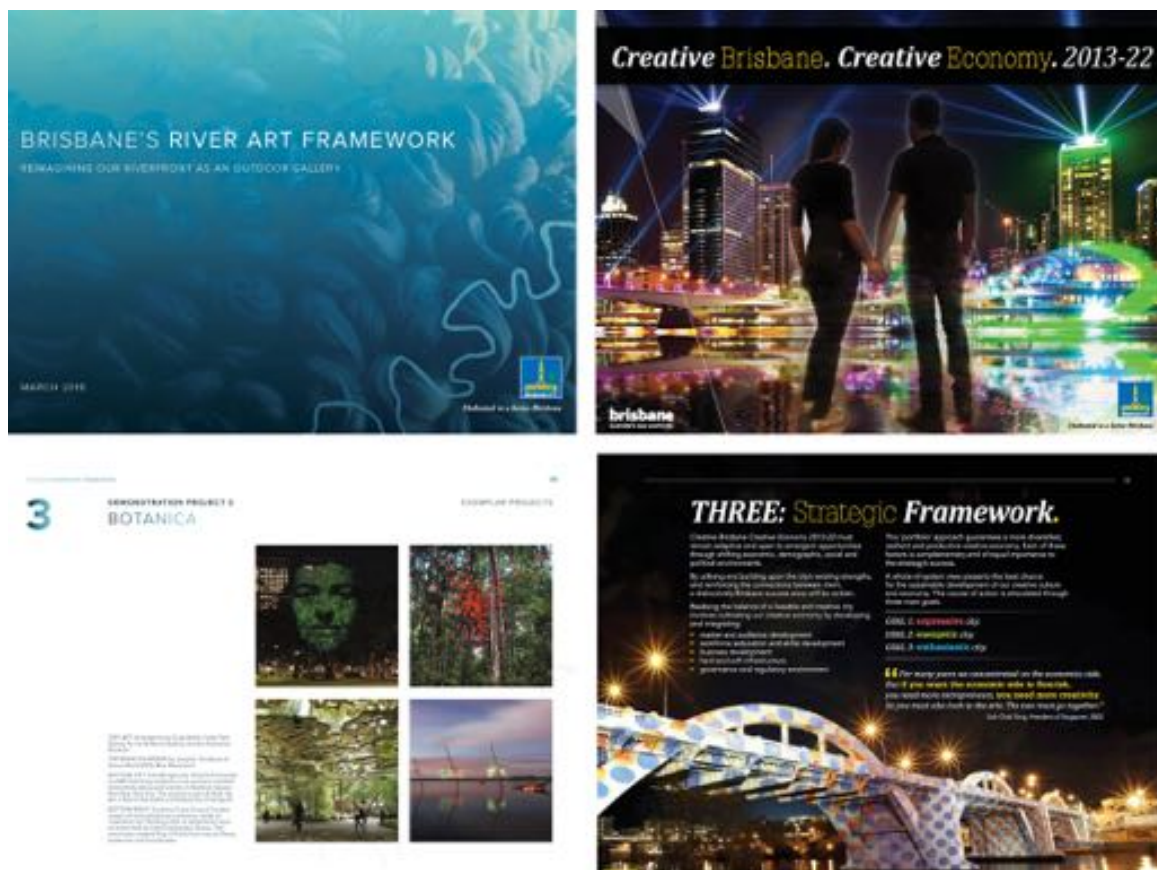
Figure 9 Brisbane City Council cultural policy documents

Gone but not forgotten

'Festivalisation' helps to explain the State government's interest in Burning Man — a globally recognised event[1] that has brought well-documented economic benefits to northern Nevada, a remote desert region in economic decline (Conway 2016), and at the same helped to place San Francisco, its city of origin, at the forefront of global technological innovation[2] (Rowen 2018). And what about BURN Arts? With an annual turnover of just over AUD$100k (BURN Arts 2018), against TEQ's AUD$150million annual budget (TEQ 2019a), BURN Arts' economic impact is hardly comparable to that of Burning Man. Its cultural origins, on the other hand, may be. People are drawn to Burning Man from across the world by its perceived connections with the globally resonant counter-cultures of the San Francisco Bay Area (Rodriguez 2014). There is a sense that the event somehow contains an authentic expression of the transcendent aspirations of the hippie movement, carrying the torch lit by Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters[3] when they first crashed *Furthur* across the United States in 1964 (Wolfe 1969). Modifyre meanwhile draws on a rich counter-cultural heritage of its own in southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales. Many of the event's core constituents have come from more established events such as Woodford Folk Festival and Lismore Lantern Parade (Figure 10) — events which trace their origins to the Nimbin Aquarius Festival of 1973, 'Australia's Woodstock' (Garbutt 2014) and carry its counter-cultural values into the present. Moreover, Modifyre has fostered strong ties with the Bigambul Aboriginal Corporation through Auntie Cheryl Moggs, a nationally recognised Indigenous artist and advocate, and her niece Tanya Kirkegaard, who now sits on BURN Arts management committee. By engaging with the Inglewood community through its interactions with QPWS Rangers and emergency services, the Community Advisory Network, local business owners, schools and sports teams, Modifyre can surface its cultural values within these institutions. That cultural change is a long game is implicitly acknowledged in the TEQ report:

> "Although Burning Man is now a mature event, it is important to understand that it commenced as a small-scale event and has grown to its current form over 31 years."

I propose that the strength and depth of its heritage places BURN Arts in a position to counteract the profit-driven logic of 'festivalisation'. As I have shown, it is no longer possible to assume a festival or 'activation' is radical simply by virtue of its ephemeral or participatory nature. Events that are similar in aesthetic may be each other's polar opposites in terms of social, political or economic function. Instead, I argue, it is the *quality* of ephemerality or participation that denotes the true political function of the festival. Beyond their economic impacts, festivals are powerful drivers of civic engagement and catalysts of social and cultural change (Whitely 2010). This change comes through the transformative experiences of participants when they are empowered to exercise creative agency and take on new roles as civic actors (Edensor and Sumartojo 2018). If the means by which this transformative participation occurs are enshrined in the event's cultural values then, I argue, the event can be made impervious to instrumentalization by the short-sighted aims of neoliberalism.

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[1] The arrival of Burning Man into the mainstream is perhaps exemplified a succession of well-documented visits by conservative public figures including Grover Norquist, an American political activist and tax reduction advocate, and Paul Romer, a Nobel-prize winning former chief economist at the World Bank (New York Times 2019). Reading the account of Romer's visit, Black Rock City, as Burning Man's spatial manifestation is commonly referred to comes, across as an epitomic utopia of neoliberal urban planning: a self-exploiting workforce of "creatives" operating in an unmediated environment of entrepreneurial exchange and innovation; the bare minimum infrastructural outlay required to stimulate economic interaction; a self-imposed cultural scrutiny bordering on surveillance; all overlaid with a rhetoric of personal freedom and unlimited possibility that obscures deeply entrenched privilege and elitism. I recognise all of these as potential red flags for my own line of argumentation.

[2] The links between Burning Man and Silicon Valley run deep. The one name that slips through the redactions in the TEQ CEO memo ((TEQ 2016) is that of Michael Mikel, better known as Danger Ranger — the founder of Burning Man's Black Rock Rangers, the volunteer crew that looks after safety and wellbeing of participants. An electro-mechanical engineer by training Mikel was a core member of the Cacophony Society and a co-founder of San Francisco's first tech startup ((Burning Man 2019b)

[3] This connection is made explicit in the September 1990 edition of *Rough Draft* (see Figure 8), which exclaims: "We are the Merry Pranksters of the 90s, traveling through the social landscape, dispensing a variety of mind challenging activities to everyone." (SF Cacophony Society 1990)

Figure 10 The 25th Lismore Lantern Parade, June 2019

3   PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This section illustrates the design and construction of the Temple at Modifyre 2019 in order to show how the 'infrastructures of ritual' are made visible to participants. I have proposed that transformative participation emerges through BURN Arts' cultural values. As both drivers and outcomes of the design process, I suggest that these values are embedded in the architecture of the Temple. In order to substantiate this, I begin by interrogating the means by which participation occurs through the practical implementation of the Temple: What type of engagement is being encouraged? What form does this take? And in what context does it takes place?

Figure 11 The Temple at Modifyre 2019 (image: Ismaan Ameer)

I begin by identifying the key characteristics of transformative participation. I then show how these characteristics emerge through a set of design constraints that require *immediacy* in their negotiation, encouraging and rewarding cultures of *care, trust,* and *emplacement*. I propose that these design constraints are purposefully imposed by BURN Arts through its projects, and thus that the key characteristics of transformative participation can be translated to a set of specific implementation strategies for ongoing design work. Thus I set forth my core argument for collaborative participatory design as a means of fostering cultural values that unsettle capitalist modes of production.

CONTEXT
[SITE]

FORM
[INSTITUTION]

TYPE
[EVENT]
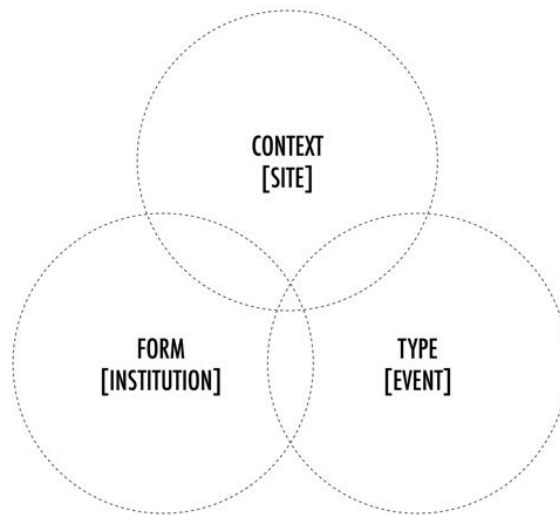
Transformative participation; or, "building fires and why it matters"

BURN Arts forms part of a constellation of pre-figurative community organising projects centred in and around Brisbane (Osborne 2016). Many of these projects prioritise caring for organisers, participants, and places over achieving any other specific outcomes, relying heavily on "joyful, relational organising" (Osborne 2018) to sustain themselves. The production of BURN Arts events and large-scale artworks is explicitly geared towards empowering participants to exercise creative agency by encouraging them to take on roles as active convenors rather than passive observers of social space (L. Harvey and Van Rhey 1997). By configuring unfamiliar environments and non-hierarchical organisational structures, these activities set in motion an alternative set of social, material and spatial relations that transforms the expectations and futures of participants — what Jeremy Till calls 'transformative participation' (Blundell Jones, Petrescu, and Till 2005).

Situated beyond the explicit political agendas of allied Brisbane community organising projects, yet populated by many of the same participants, Modifyre has become a test bed for the cultivation of this experience amongst organisers and volunteers, offering them a blank canvas on which to experiment with design, planning, and project management at multiple sites and scales. In particular, the two focal artworks of *the Bug* and *the Temple* have acted as gateways for new participants at the event and vehicles for their experience of transformative participation. Drawing on my experience in the production of these artworks and the wider event over the last five years, I have identified the key characteristics of transformative participation as it occurs at Modifyre and other BURN Arts events (Table 1). In the analysis that follows, I show how the implementation of the Temple project creates the conditions of transformative participation to occur by purposefully cultivating each of these key characteristics.

Table 1 Key characteristics of 'transformative participation' at BURN Arts event.

Core value	Characteristic
Immediacy	*De-commodification*
	Navigation of order & chaos
	Low barrier to participation
	'Theatricalising the lobby'
Trust / Care	*De-structuring*
	Devolution of creative agency
	Detachment from outcome (process over product)
	Responsibility / respect for convention
	Self-interest dissolving into group interest
Emplacement	*De-familiarisation*
	Connection to place
	Shared narratives
	Recurrent ephemerality

DESIGN

?

BUDGET

MATERIALS
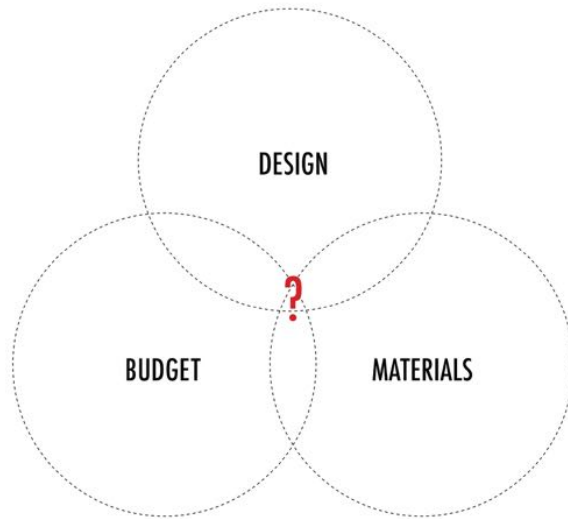
CASE STUDY: The Temple

The Temple is one of two effigies built each year by the Modifyre community for the event. It is conceived as a monument to grief, a space of reflection in which participants leave memorials to loved ones lost in the year just passed or write messages of hope for the coming year. Situated at a significant remove from the high-intensity environment of the main event, over the course of the week the Temple serves as a vessel for the emotional traumas of participants. In the final act of the week, it is ceremonially burned as part of an hour-long performance. In an effort to facilitate an experience of catharsis and emotional release, the audience sits in silence while the Temple is burning, typically breaking this once the main structure has collapsed. Like other aspects of Modifyre, this emulates a similar ritual at Burning Man. It is inspired in particular by the work of artist David Best, whose distinctive style of CNC-cut architecture has taken him from Black Rock to cities around the world (Figure 12), though of course the symbolism of fire as catharsis by no means begins or ends with Burning Man.

> "The importance of the Temple burn remains inherently the same across any group of individuals who participate. It is sacred, it is a time of release, transformation, integration and letting go; a time of renewal and an opportunity for growth. This is the essence of fire."
>
> - Tanya Kirkegaard (2019), Bigambul woman and BURN Arts Indigenous Liaison

Building it up: navigating order through chaos

Brief

The design of the Temple for 2019 was led by Leonor Gausachs, a Chilean Architectural Graduate based in Brisbane, and first-time participant at Modifyre. The brief for the Temple is relatively straightforward: Create a burnable monument out of found materials with a group of willing volunteers. To this was added the ambitious aspiration to make it climbable — the tallest structure at the event to date — so the full brief looked something like this:

Table 2 Design brief for the Temple 2019

Design Brief	
Burnable structure	Compliant with Queensland building code for trafficable decking
Design ideas centred around the notion of grief	In a remote paddock
Built by volunteers of varying skill and experience	No available power, water, shelter, or heavy lifting equipment
Using found / recycled materials	No indication of available budget

Figure 12 David Best's Temple in Derry / Londonderry, 2015

Finance

Modifyre is run on a shoestring, barely covering costs from year to year. In line with its radically de-commodified ethos, the event seeks no corporate sponsorship and allows no commercial vending. Once onsite, all monetary transaction is effectively suspended. The total combined budgets for the two central artworks, the Bug and Temple, typically amounts to less than AUD$2000 (Table 3). Designers are encouraged to work only with salvaged or recycled materials insofar as possible, both to save on cost, and in consideration of the environmental implications of burning new material. However, money for the projects is normally only allocated once there is an indication of what each design demands. This instantly poses a conundrum for the designer, neatly summarised by Leo as follows:

> *"How do I decide on materials without knowing the budget? How will they allocate the budget without a design? How can I design without materials?"*
>
> (Gausachs, in Gausachs, Blacket, and Sugrue 2019)

MODIFYRE TEMPLE 2019 - Expenses

Date	Item	Details	$/unit	Qty	$	Purchaser	Notes
	MATERIALS						
15/6/19	Pine	6000m	24	14	336	Andy	
12/6/19	Decking clouts		19.9	1	19.9	Bundy	
12/6/19	Sandpaper roll		6.96	1	6.96	Bundy	
12/6/19	Abrasive belt cloth		2.4	1	2.4	Bundy	
15/6/19	Decking clouts		19.9	-1	-19.9	Shane	
15/6/19	Batten screws	x500	57	1	57	Shane	
15/6/19	Hex head bits	x15	18.98	1	18.98	Shane	
22/6/19	Tie down ratchets	25mm x 4.5m	3.56	4	14.25	Leo	
22/6/19	Drill bit	5mm	3.51	5	17.53	Leo	
22/6/19	Halogen globe	500W	2.33	2	4.66	Leo	Return whichever isn't suitable for working light
22/6/19	Halogen globe	150W	2.33	2	4.66	Leo	Return whichever isn't suitable for working light
22/6/19	Fastener drive impact	57mm	1.71	10	17.08	Leo	
22/6/19	Stanley knife		12	1	4.75	Leo	
22/6/19	Gaffer tape	50mm x 20m	10.67	1	10.67	Leo	Must replace 2 rolls of gaffer from HSBNE
22/6/19	Rope	3mm x 60m	15.18	1	15.18	Leo	
22/6/19	Cable ties	300 x 4.8	0.13	100	12.92	Leo	
22/6/19	Sanding sheets	80 grit	0.7	10	7.03	Leo	
22/6/19	Spray paint	white 350g	6.21	1	6.21	Leo	
22/6/19	Carpenter pencils	med	1.84	5	9.2	Leo	
22/6/19	Sharpie	fine black	1.88	3	5.64	Leo	
22/6/19	Cicular saw blade	184mm	12.59	1	12.59	Leo	
	HW posts	12x 2.4m	18	12	216	Bundy	Petty cash - see cash receipt book
	HW fitches	1.5 loads	1x carton per load	1.5	90	Shane	3 loads split w/ Effigy
						Tom B	Receipt req'd
	Batten screws	x500				Gordi	Confirm cost
	Wood screws	x100				Gordi	Confirm cost
	TRANSPORT						
	kerbside collection fuel	day of driving			30	Leo	Leo reimbursed James - receipts to Kira
	3 tonne pantech	600km		48 hours	170	Shane	Split with Effigy
					339 + 300 hold	Shane	Actual truck cost - invoice from Shane to Kira
	1x tank diesel					Andy	Confirm amount
	Red Rock Transport	2x tipper loads	In-kind			Bundy	
					SUBTOTAL 1069.71		
					REMAINING BUDGET -69.71		

Table 3 Temple 2019 expenses

Concept

This triangular puzzle sets up the conditions of relational immediacy that lie at the core of BURN Arts' philosophy. The tension between the need for resources and an ethos of de-commodification is the driver of participation. Without money to facilitate the acquisition of materials, or materials to guide the design, the designer is obliged to engage directly with the people around them in order to set the project in motion. Without the usual medium of transaction, they are compelled to interaction. The only factor within the control of the designer at the outset is their capacity for imagination — thus design becomes the medium that facilitates interaction. Thus the solution to Leo's puzzle was to take a leap of faith. Via a series of gestures of trust — in strangers and the strength of her imagination — the project was set in motion.

First, she approached a sculptor friend and produced some initial sketches (Figure 13). Alongside these, she articulated a simple story:

> *"The first concept that came to mind was the experience of discovery. After various iterations of ways to layer the entry to the heart of the structure, the spiral stood out as an organic geometry."* (ibid.)

Recruitment

Next, collaborating via Skype (and having never met in person), I suggested to Leo we think of the structure in simple terms as a series of platforms, to begin moving towards an architectural diagram (Figure 14). A computer model emerged. This I immediately published on her behalf to a variety of social media forums populated by experienced builders of similar projects around Australia and overseas (Figure 15). Leo was distraught at the publication of such preliminary ideas, although as a driver of recruitment the strategy worked. We ended up with a team of fifteen core crew (Table 4) ranging in experience from professional set builders to folks who had never held a drill. In Leo's words:

> *"some responded with concern about the lack of a handrail, others with flight bookings from all corners of Australia to be a part of the project."* (ibid.)

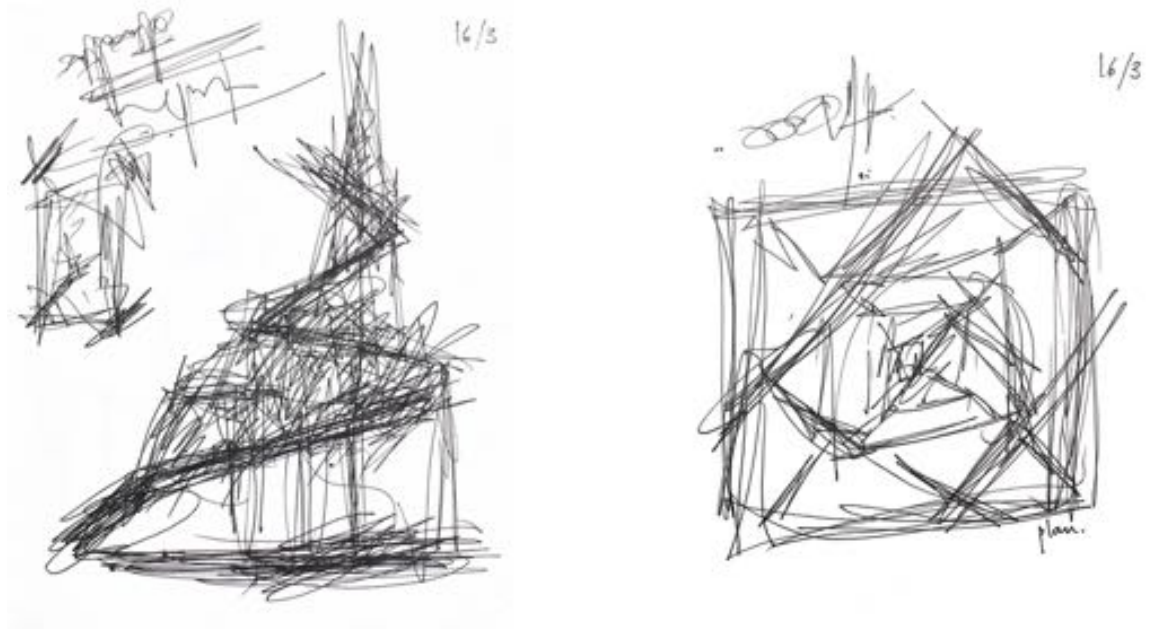Table 4 Temple crew indicative availability

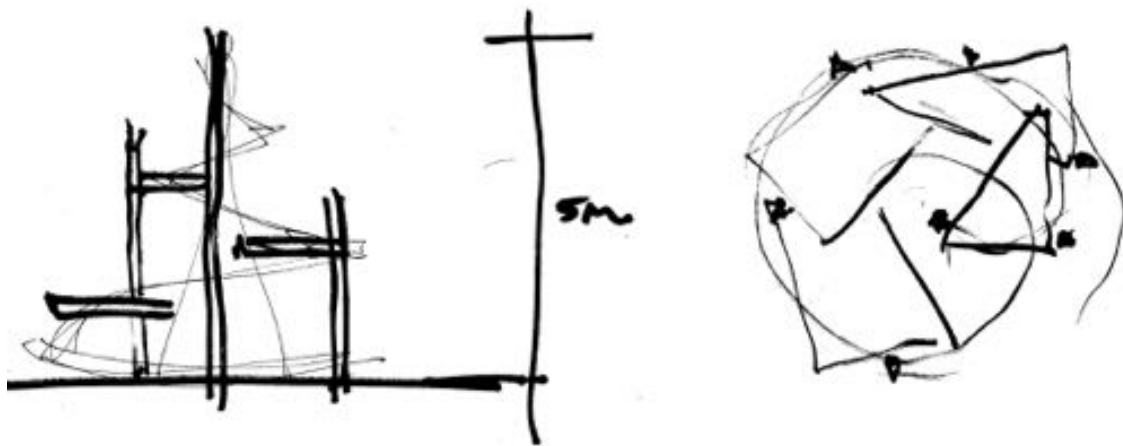Figure 13 Initial concept sketches - Leonor Gausachs
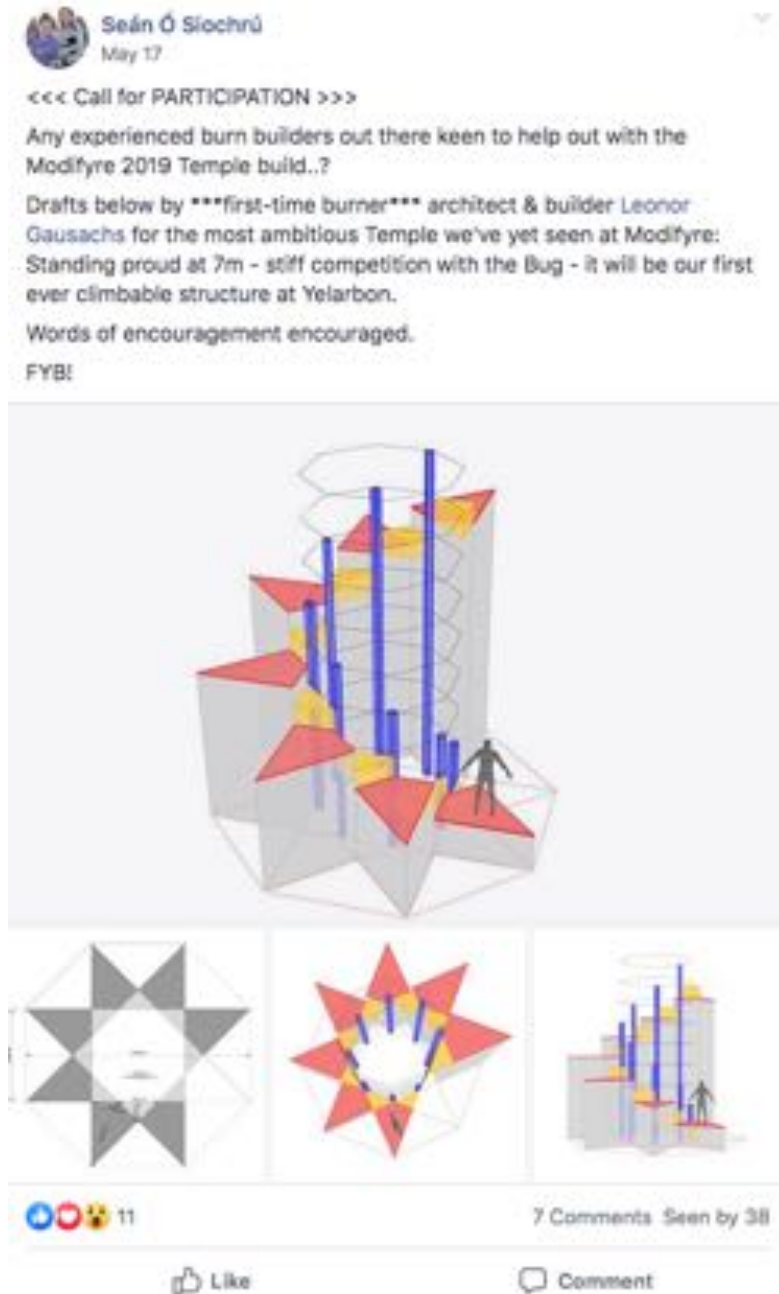

Figure 14 Return sketches - author

Figure 15 Publication of design concept on social media

Material preparation and pre-fabrication

Alongside recruitment, the publication of the design also kickstarted the gathering of materials. With assistance from Modifyre's Department of Infrastructure and Construction (DIC), Leo trawled the suburbs where Brisbane City Council's annual 'kerbside hard-rubbish collection' was underway. Components were pre-fabricated during weekend workshops at HSBNE, a community maker-space in Hamilton (Figure 17). The irregularity and scarcity of each material meant they had to be carefully selected to minimise waste. This handed responsibility for creative decision-making to the crew, engendering a culture of care as they became increasingly invested in the endeavour. Thus, while Leo became detached from specific design outcomes, a growing community of participants attached itself to her vision, allowing the project to grow.

> *"I began burdened by the idea of having complete creative control and concluded as just another spectator to a pre-ordained ritual."* (ibid.)
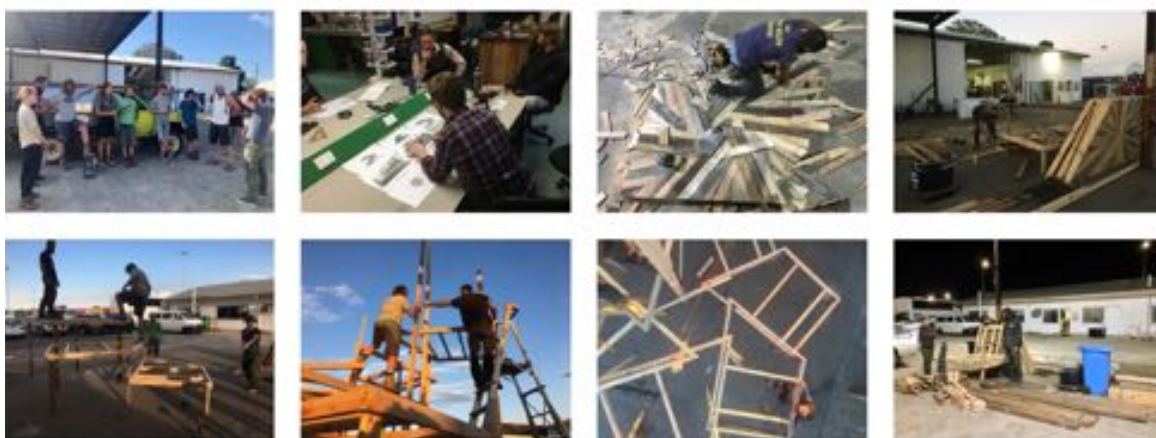

Figure 16 Material preparation at HSBNE

Figure 17 Pre-fabrication at HSBNE

Design development

As materials accumulated, they fed back into the ever-evolving design. Intending to stay a step ahead of the build team, though often in reality several steps behind, the earlier computer model was developed in tandem with this process in order to produce a set of schematic drawings for use onsite. (Figure 20)
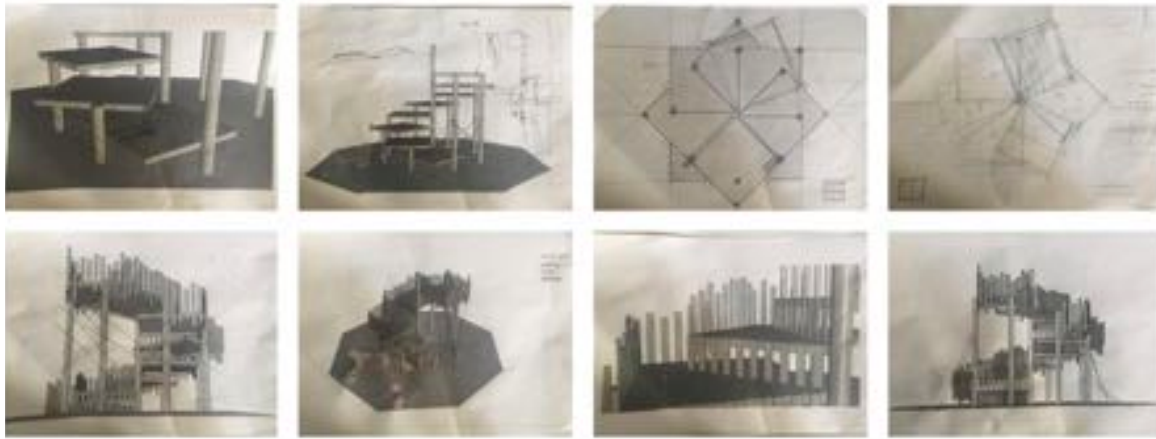

Figure 18 Design development - computer model

Logistics (transport)

The pre-fabricated components were transported from HSBNE in a rented 3-tonne Pantech removal truck. The cost of this was shared with the team building the Bug, who reciprocated by towing the dual-axle trailer containing tools and equipment. The truck was packed with as much spare material as possible. However, without more substantial haulage options available, it was impractical to collect cladding materials for the two structures in Brisbane. We decided instead to clad the structure using hardwood flitches (bark offcuts) sourced from a mill close to site. Aside from being both more practical and economical – two truckloads of flitches were delivered to site at a cost of two cartons of beer – the use of local materials signalled the return of the event to Inglewood, enacting emplacement with small but appreciable contributions to the local economy. The architecture of the Temple thus became a tangible expression of its relationship with the place.

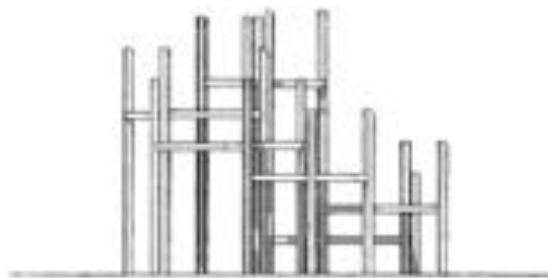Figure 19 Delivery of flitches to site (Jorja and James in foreground)
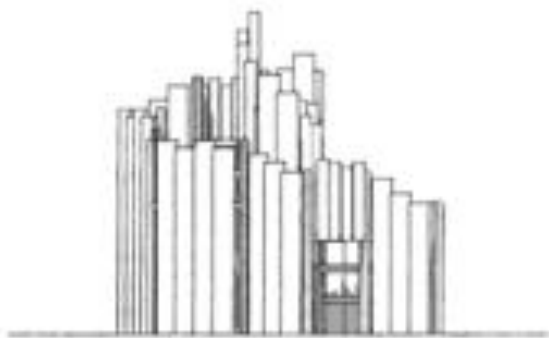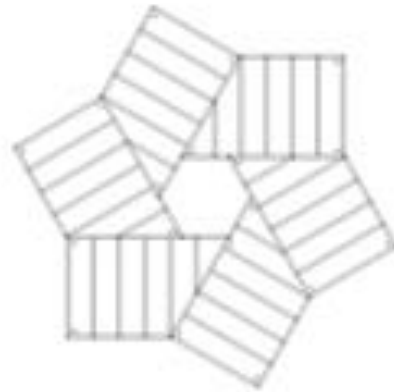
Figure 20 Onsite schematic drawings

Onsite (assembly)

Once onsite, the challenge for the designer becomes amplified, as the task of providing for one's basic needs and those of the crew is added to the task of delivering a construction project under adverse conditions. Before setting off, I encouraged Leo to act selfishly in claiming the resources she would need to pull off the project, ensuring we were self-sufficient on the paddock (Appendix C). The first day onsite was spent unloading the truck, sorting through materials and equipment, and setting up a functional workspace with shade, power, and water, plus a few luxuries like a sound system and a cooler to keep the crew motivated. At breakfast, the site crews gathered around a large whiteboard, in what would become a daily ritual for the next two weeks. Going around the circle, team leads stated their priorities for the day, which were duly transcribed onto the board. Creating the 'To Do' list for the day, this absolved over-stretched leads from answering relentless questions and made sure everyone had a job. Reflecting on this ritual, Leo commented on how she came to appreciate the context of the project in a way she previously hadn't. Irrespective of how successful our initial recruitment drive had been, or which resources we had brought to the site, there was no point having these now if there was no infrastructure to support their presence. There had to be functioning toilets, a kitchen, firewood, water, roads, power, and lighting. Cooperation and sharing of resources — including crew — would be needed. Thus a selfish interest in realising the Temple automatically became a vested interest in the success of the overall endeavour.

Figure 21 Day one onsite - setting up workspace, sorting materials, and the Whiteboard

Lighting

Illumination of both the Bug and the Temple is most often an afterthought. The Project Lead is often so wrapped up in design, collection of materials, crew wrangling, and the practical challenges of building with so few resources that lighting is overlooked until the structure is nearly ready to be handed over to the community. In Leo's case, lighting fell to the already-overstretched Power Rangers lead, Beau, who had single-handedly set up the entire power grid for the event, running off a solar trailer he had finished building just in time for departure. Beau deposited several metres of warm white LED strip and some weatherproof battery packs at the Temple site and told us we were on our own. Thankfully, Modifyre attracts a disproportionate number of tinkerers and electronics wizards, so it wasn't long before a general 'Call for Participation' made its way across the site and Dave, a member of a long-standing theme camp crew, showed up and got creative. The results were stunning — Dave's only regret, that we didn't let him know earlier, so he could have brought the full kit.

Figure 22 Finished piece with lighting

Signoff and handover

Once the event starts and Project Lead declares the Temple complete, an informal sign-off process occurs. Typically this involves handful of experienced DIC and Site Ops crew inspecting the Temple for potential hazards and structural stability. Once they are satisfied, the structure is open for participants to begin adding their messages and tokens.

Figure 23 Final inspection

Figure 24 Temple interior

Burn

Even the final act of burning the Temple is implemented through trust and care. While Leo was recruiting crew and gathering materials, her sketches were being used by the Modifyre Rapid Art Deployment (RAD) Team to devise a ceremony around the burn. This included choral and instrumental composition, bespoke costumes, and fire performance. Materialising over the course of the hour preceding this performance sets a reflective tone for the burn in order to facilitate the experience of catharsis for participants.

Figure 25 Pre-burn flare performance (image: Zachariah H Lethe)

Figure 26 Messages of grief

Repeat

Aside from the symbolism of the fire as release, the burning of the Temple clears space for the process I have just described to unfold again. While the structure is obliterated, it imprints its image both on the landscape and on the collective memory of participants, denoting a place of pilgrimage and gathering, and exemplifying detachment and emplacement; absence and presence in one gesture.


Figure 27 Embers of the Temple (image: Thomas Oliver)

Just to burn it all down: exposing the infrastructure

In this final section, I suggest that the design constraints which lead to transformative participation are intentionally imposed by BURN Arts through its strategy of immediacy leading to care, trust, and emplacement. Read in this way, the key characteristics of transformative participation are re-interpreted as a set of specific implementation strategies for ongoing design work (Table 6).

The tension between a practical need for resources and a strong ethos of decommodification produces conditions whereby participants are compelled into mutual dependence and unmediated social interaction to achieve their aims, transforming their expectations for future interactions and creative processes. The removal, physically and psychologically, of Modifyre from its place of origin amplifies this experience. The combination of remoteness from everyday comforts and proximity to one another produces a mode of social interaction that rewards cooperation and sharing (Rohrmeier and Starrs 2014). Over time, the place where this occurs is made visible and accessible to an increasing number of people, taking on a specific significance for those who make the journey and dislodging established understandings of that place in terms of its economic and cultural value (Mariani and Barron 2014). Upon returning home, participants form geographically dispersed networks bound by their shared experiences of trust, care, and emplacement, integrating these values into their own lives and therefore into the social and economic functioning of the city. Thus the logic of the event's alter reality begins to infiltrate or permeate the 'default world' as an 'outside within' (Sebregondi 2014),

Participants in the Temple project witness its full lifecycle from conception to destruction. The ordinary temporal relationship between the individual and the work of architecture is reversed. Through the implementation of the project, the social, material, and spatial infrastructures that underpin the manifestation of cultural significance through ritual practice are revealed. This experience equips and empowers participants to realise their own creative agency as civic actors. However, it also opens the process to manipulation, and thus implies significant trust and care on the part of those who enact and facilitate it — architects and designers.

TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION

↓

CULTURAL VALUES

↓

INFRASTRUCTURE
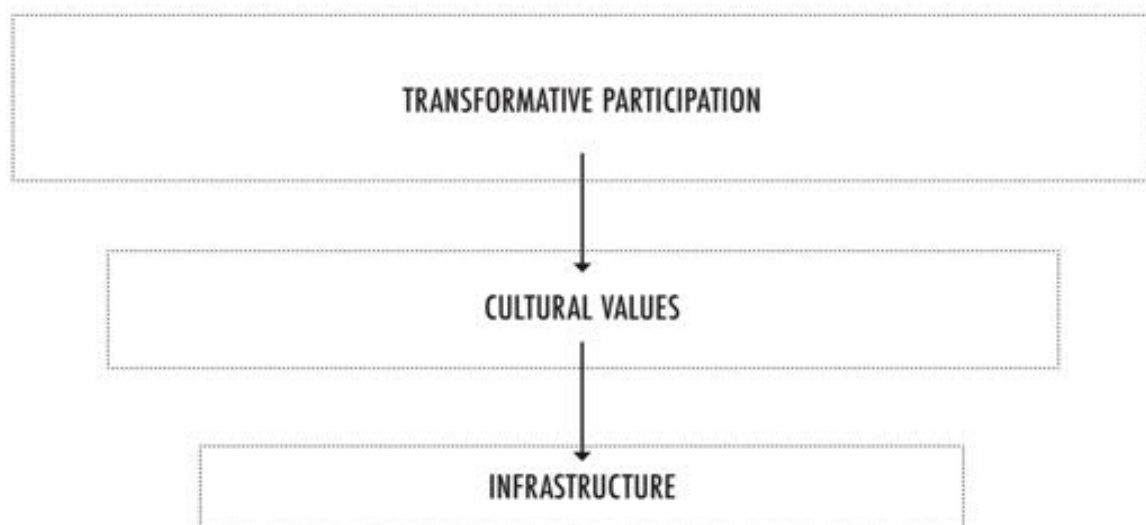
Setting the stage: turning symptoms into strategy

In his work on political imagination, David Graeber (2009b) invokes feminist theories of labour that highlight the invisible work of 'setting the stage' on which political life unfolds. In the same way that the DIC creates the physical infrastructure made apparent to build crews on the whiteboard, BURN Arts lays a legal infrastructure that, while invisible to most participants, acts as an interface between the temporary world of the event and the 'default world' outside. Building a framework of risk management plans, emergency services liaison, insurances and permits (see Appendix D), BURN Arts clears space for participants to weave the fictional narrative in which they each perform particular roles (on teams with names like DIC, RAD, and Power Rangers). The extent to which a group can collectively suspend their collective disbelieve often determines the success of a project. Chair of BURN Arts Marisa Georgiou speaks of devising activities with a low barrier to participation (Georgiou and Blacket 2019). This draws directly on the same Situationist rhetoric of 'spectator and performer' (Debord 1957) that underpins Burning Man and much contemporary socially engaged art (Bishop 2012c; Mouffe 2007). The Temple attempts to make the boundary between spectator and performer so spatially and temporally diffuse as to render it nearly invisible, blending the fictional with the real. Felix Barret, founder of Punchdrunk, a pioneering immersive theatre company, uses the concept of *"theatricalising the lobby"* (Tomlin 2015) to denote this dissolution. As a liminal space between the street and the theatre, the 'lobby' negates binary conceptions of inside-outside. Based on her experience, Leo describes three tiers of participation (Table 5).

Table 5 Tiers of participation in BURN Arts events (Gausachs 2019)

Position	Type of participation	Location
Core crew	Responsible, indispensable; cannot leave	*Theatre*
Casual volunteer	Help out as directed; come and go freely	*Lobby*
Onlooker	Observer, spectator, accidental participant	*Street*

I suggest the mid-tier corresponds with Barret's 'lobby', a space of potential encroachment from the imaginary world inside the theatre. Participants occupying this space are open to diversion — they have bought the proverbial ticket and are willing to take the ride (Thompson and Steadman 1998). It is here that we experience "raw, naked theatricality at its most dangerous." (Barret - Centre Phi 2017)
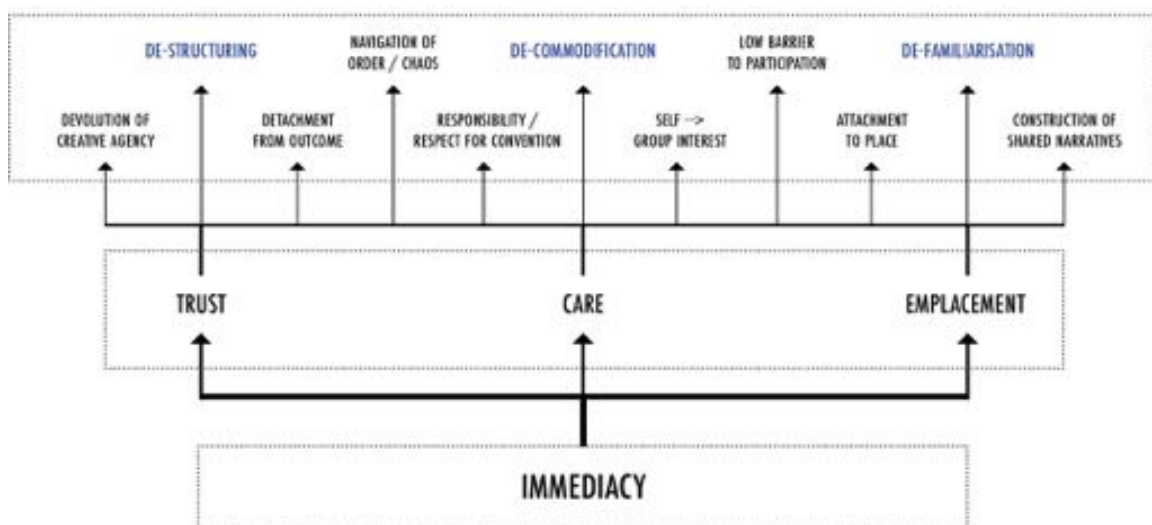
The potential of the 'lobby' is exploited by devolving creative agency as early as possible – for example, with the premature publication of a concept design. This strategy is replicated at every turn, in the collection of materials and construction detailing, in decorative lighting and the planning of a performance, and finally in inviting event participants to make their mark, thus distributing responsibility for the project so thinly as to negate individual claims to authorship. In the same the way Barret's lobby dissolves the boundary between spectator and performer, so self-interest dissolves into group-interest during its construction. This has echoes of Adam Smith's (1778) moral philosophy which holds that all economic activity is motivated by self-interest, the root theory behind free-market logics of capitalism (Conlin 2016). The crucial difference lies in the fact that Smith's economy is transactional, mediated through exchange, while the temporary economy of the paddock is not. As ordinary hierarchies of exchange value collapse in the face of daily survival, utility emerges as a single, shared value (Graeber 2001). Without the infrastructure, there can be no ritual.

However, without the ritual, there is also no need of infrastructure. The meaning of one is defined by the existence of the other. Thus the entire significance of the Temple is both embedded and revealed in its implementation; the 'setting of the stage' is the show, and everyone is both an actor and an audience member. As the means become the ends, utility value collapses into symbolic value (ibid.), and participants become entirely detached from the final product of their labour. So detached are some that they may not even stay for the festival, as was the case with Jorja Christensen, a core crewmember who flew from Perth just for the build. This exemplifies the BURN Arts mantra: "process over product". In this context, the rapid destruction of the Temple makes perfect sense. Without further work to do on the structure there is no further meaning to be derived from it. Once everyone has made their mark, there is really nothing left to do but burn it down. In the words of Andy Price (2019), a veteran of the Modifyre community and Temple lead in 2017, "it's about the journey, not the destination."

Figure 28 The Temple Burn at Modifyre 2019 (image: Thomas Oliver)

Table 6 Implementation strategy - key characteristics of 'transformative participation' reframed

Core value	Characteristic	Implementation strategy
Immediacy	*Decommodification*	*Withhold budget*
	Navigation of order & chaos	- Embrace unpredictability — allow factors beyond control to guide the design direction
	Low barrier to participation	- Open design and construction process to wider community early on. - Actively and repeatedly invite input throughout
	Theatricalising the lobby'	- Spread calls for participation spatially and temporally — involve as many people from as wide a circle for as long as possible - Make it unclear who is in charge around here
Trust / Care	*Destructuring*	*Collapse hierarchy*
	Devolution of creative agency	- Publish design to community early and repeatedly — "play dumb" - Actively encourage other participants to take ownership over particular aspects of the design / construction / performance
	Detachment from outcome (process over product)	- Control key aspects to ensure overall vision is upheld but allow detail to emerge organically - Take time / care — craft specific elements / encourage crew to do so. - Devise material processes that encourage crew to become immersed in the task — make it more complicated than necessary
	Responsibility / respect for convention	- Give direction: articulate vision / narrative / context of project clearly to participants when handing them creative control / decision-making. - Steer from the back, delegate
	Self-interest dissolving into group interest	- Act "selfishly" in gathering resources — assume self-sufficiency - Make resources available on as-need basis to crew & fellow artists - Share costs
Emplacement	*Defamiliarisation*	*Choose challenging environments*
	Connection to place	- Reflect project location through selection of materials and architectural expression - Make hidden / unknown places visible and accessible
	Shared narratives	- Devise story / performance / ceremony around the creation and destruction of work — tell the story - Allow participants the freedom to create their own roles / characters — tell the story - Tell the story
	Recurrent ephemerality	- Enact memorable destruction (eg. Burn) / clearly signal the end of the project in some way that imprints on the memory of participants — make it significant - Repeat

4   CONCLUSION

In this essay I have sought to show how the design process of a community effigy enacts a model for facilitating the experience of transformative participation. Coming together to build a temporary space for people to share their stories of grief and loss, this community creates a new, shared mythology of place. In the process of building a fire, cultures of care and trust are kindled amongst participants. In setting it ablaze, these cultures are branded onto the collective memory. As the ritual is replicated it enacts emplacement through a recurrent ephemerality.

Through a recollection of the design and construction of the Temple at Modifyre 2019, I have described a set of divergent social, material, and spatial relations that underpins the production of the event as a whole. I have sought to argue that in this divergence from the ordinary processes of production, BURN Arts reclaims the festival as an instrument of radical social change. Through the implementation of projects like the Temple, participants acquire a practiced knowledge of an alternative mode of production that challenges the logics of neoliberal capitalism. Crucially, I propose that this practiced knowledge can be reapplied in other contexts as a critical tool for questioning the production of space (Lefebvre 1996) beyond the event. By translating the key characteristics of transformative participation into the specific elements of a implementation strategy for its projects, in the same way that I suggest they become the basis for my own ongoing PAR design research, BURN Arts can court government entities like TEQ confident in the knowledge that its cultural values are safeguarded within the very means by which it operates – the infrastructures of ritual. Then, perhaps, we might hope that these values can outlive capitalism's careless and untrustworthy torchbearers and resist displacement by the short-sighted aspirations of the present.

Figure 29 The Temple Burn at Modifyre 2019 (image: Thomas Oliver)

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APPENDICES