Space, Place, and the Holbeck:

exploring the challenges of managing a community venue through the perspective of an artist-turned-manager in Slung Low's tenure at the Holbeck social club.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores an alternative framework for considering the relationship between arts venues and their communities through academic theories on space and place-making. I look at what is meant by the terms 'space' and 'place' and draw my definitions from the work of Henri Lefebvre, Lucy Lippard, and Tim Cresswell. From here I move on to examine the theory put forward by architect Bernard Tschumi as an alternative taxonomy for relating a space to its function (termed 'program'). For my case study I take the Holbeck in Leeds, a working-men's club run and managed as an arts centre (*and* a social club) by theatre company Slung Low. I posit that the Holbeck can be considered a crossprogrammed space, by applying Tschumi's concepts, drawing on my own interview with Slung Low's artistic director Alan Lane. The second half of my work introduces the idea of hospitality and offers the term 'welcoming' as a more appropriate and less contentious way of discussing how venues interact with their community, beginning with Jacques Derrida's work as a starting point. Bringing in critique of Derrida, I move on to consider the Holbeck in greater detail, utilising all the theories and terms I have introduced throughout the dissertation. I suggest the benefits and potential drawbacks of running arts organisations, such as theatre companies, in community venues, which are not purpose-built for this 'program.' Introducing this framework, I lay the foundation for future research into the effectiveness of alternative venues, and spatial practices, for arts organisation in engaging their local communities.

Contents

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Slung Low are a community-focussed, Leeds-based theatre company, founded in 2000. Previously based in the Holbeck Underground Ballroom – or HUB – a low-res studio arts space underneath railway arches in Holbeck, Slung Low moved into the Holbeck in December 2018.[1] Between December 2018 and December 2022, Slung Low managed the Holbeck as an arts centre, while the building and social club bar remained owned and staffed respectively by the club's committee and volunteer members. The company has operated within the Holbeck district for a number of years, building its relationship with the surrounding community, and remains there following their move to 'The Warehouse in Holbeck.'[2]

Originally a working-men's club, the Holbeck is the oldest social club in Britain, established in 1871 with the current building opened 1878, and has been in continual use ever since.[3] It contains a bar, snooker room, seating areas, offices, and an upstairs concert room which Slung Low operated as a performance space and events room. The Holbeck housed Slung Low's offices, rehearsal and performance spaces, and continued to operate as a social club for members. The club is a key example of a community venue turned theatre/arts centre, with the social club and theatre company fully integrated and sharing the building. Before Slung Low took over the Holbeck, it operated as a standard Working-Men's club, with a bar and membership fee to join.

Holbeck itself sits just outside the Leeds city centre and comprises a majority white Chirtsian population, and 41.3% 'economically inactive' as of the 2021 census.[4] Over the course of the Twentieth Century, Holbeck's industry declined from employing a large portion of its population in the spinning of flax and thread, and ironworks mentioned in 1848.[5] As of the 2021 census it boasts a range of employment types, including 9.5% never worked/long-term unemployed.[6] Holbeck was also home to the Managed Zone, dubbed the UK's 'first legal red light zone', where sex work was

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[1] 'Slung Low,' *Arts Together*, <https://artstogetherleeds.co.uk/partner/slung-low/> [accessed 12/11/2021]
[2] 'Our Spaces', *Slung Low,* <https://www.slunglow.org/ourspaces/> [accessed 05/07/23]
[3] Alan Lane, *The Club on the Edge of Town* (Edinburgh: Salamander Street, 2022), p. 39
[4] 'Holbeck', Office for National Statistics, ONS.gov.uk, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/#E04007817> [accessed 18/11/23] (later references as 'ONS')
[5] Samuel Lewis, ed., 'Hoddington - Holbrook', in A Topographical Dictionary of England, (London, 1848), pp. 524-527, via British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/england/> [accessed 30/11/23].
[6] Ibid.

decriminalised under certain conditions.[7] The perception of Holbeck remains that it is a deprived area, and still culturally linked to its now scrapped Managed Zone, with household deprivation in at least one dimension of 56.4%.[8]

Slung Low moved into the Holbeck after seeking out a new venue, one which would better cater to the kind of community work they intended to create and be more comfortable to run, the HUB being notoriously cold and small.[9] The Holbeck, as one of the community's oldest landmarks, was close to closure, with debts to pay off and a struggling group of volunteers keeping it afloat, and so Slung Low moved in, agreeing to pay off these debts and manage the space, to provide a larger, more secure base for their company.[10]

Slung Low at the Holbeck provided a range of community activities and used the building in many ways. The building housed their offices and rehearsal spaces, and the large upstairs cabaret-style stage space, comprising a thrust stage surrounded by tables and chairs, serves as the main performance space. The company renovated a small flat in the top of the building, used as accommodation for visiting artists using the space. Slung Low also allow the community to hire the performance space or other rooms for private functions with no hire fee, as well as visiting artists — all use of the rooms, as well as all work they produce, is 'pay-as-you-decide.'[11]

During the Covid-19 pandemic, with the social club closed and theatre on hold, Slung Low ran a 'non-means-tested self-referral foodbank' for the community, with their staff and volunteers working to collect, sort, and deliver food parcels to the Holbeck community.[12] This was so successful, in fact, that Slung Low began taking referrals from the local council, and providing food to community members who had been unsuccessful elsewhere.[13]

Upon re-opening after lockdown, usual business resumed at the Holbeck, with the members' social club bar open, and Slung Low's community college — run out of a double-decker bus parked at the venue — providing a range of classes such as cooking and crafting.[14] When lockdown rules relaxed with social distancing, socially-distanced tables were at one point set up outside in the car park to allow events to continue.[15]

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[7] Charles Gray, 'Leeds red light district: How Holbeck's legal 'managed approach' was allowed to operate - and what happened to it,' *Yorkshire Evening Post,* yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk, 9th March 2023, <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/crime/leeds-red-light-district-how-holbecks-legal-managed-approach-was-allowed-to-operate-and-what-happened-to-it-4058291> [accessed 29/11/23]
[8] ONS.
[9] Alan Lane, interview by Samuel Armstrong (York, 12 June 2022).
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

Slung Low, as a theatre company and managers of the social club, are ruled by their community-focussed missions statement — mainly, their commitment to 'say yes to everything,' (a sentiment which artistic director Alan Lane emphasised in interview) and that all performances, events, and classes are free at the point of use. [16] Lane's approach is to say 'yes' to whatever is feasibly possible for the company to do for the community, such as allowing people to use the space, lending out their vans and equipment, and assisting in events.

Carried over from their work at the HUB, Slung Low's performances at the Holbeck maintain their pay-what-you-decide approach, which Lane explained in detail, noting its deliberate wording.[17] Rather than asking for donations, or stating pay-what-you-*feel,* the use of the word *decide* puts the onus on the participant/attendee to make a decision of how much to pay based on what they can afford and what they think the piece/show is worth, alongside how much they are willing to give to support the company's continued work.[18]

At the Holbeck, Slung Low's activities became much more embedded with their community than before, using their building and resources to help the community during the pandemic and open up the Holbeck to other local residents. Their community college became a key part of the community, and their creative work, although mostly on hold during national lockdown, focused a great deal on providing entertainment tailored to entertain the immediate community of Holbeck. Alan Lane light-heartedly remarked that Slung Low no longer put on fourth wall, naturalistic plays.[19]

This project came about following my undergraduate research, looking into forms of theatre used by self-identifying working-class theatre makers. In interviews, a key area of discussion was the sorts of spaces available to working-class theatre makers and how they employ different spatial practices in the development and performance of their work. From here, I sought to investigate how different sorts of spaces intersect with theatre and experiences of class, in particular the ways that venues which are not purpose-built for theatre function as arts venues.

A great deal of current literature focuses on the theorisation of theatre space through site-specific practices, hosts/ghosts, and palimpsests[20] — or more ethereal concepts such as empty spaces.[21] However, these concepts failed to fully cohere with the on-the-ground problems and

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[16] See Rachel Perry, '"Saying yes to everything": Slung Low's mission in a time of rapid change,' *Arts and the Market*, 9 (2019), 202-218.
[17] Lane, Interview.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Lane, Interview.
[20] For an overview, see *Performing site-specific theatre: politics, place, practice*, ed. by Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[21] See Peter Brook, The Empty Space (London: Penguin, 2008)

practices of the working-class artists I studied and interviewed, and so this dissertation seeks to explore alternative frameworks for understanding theatre makers' relationship to space.

There is also much conflict between the definitions of slippery terms like 'space' and 'place,' which this project seeks to explore. I begin by interrogating whether there is a difference between these terms, and whether they can be pinned down, looking at the philosophy of space presented by Henri Lefebvre and his critics.

I begin by interrogating the relationship between space, place, class, and lived experience. Alison Stenning highlights the differences between working-class and working class*ness*, the latter concerned with the 'symbolic value and cultural practice' of being working-class.[22] Jenny Preece writes about the relationship between work and identification with space: thanks to the shift towards globalism, work is no longer the meaning of life, and the workplace is no longer the centre of being.[23] Working-class people no longer build their identities around work in the same way.

The implications of these ideas is that people are no longer tied to where they live, as they are no longer serving a single industry in that area (E.g. coal, steel) and so have few ties to one place; their lives are less bound to family and place.[24] On one hand, this could mean greater social and physical mobility, but also means that the community- and identity-building suffers as social housing which was once rented from the council now enters the private market.[25] I examine these ideas in order to inform my later discussions around the way in which Holbeck's community interact with the social club, and particularly to tie into Alan Lane's conjectures around the nature of and reasons for the complicated relationship between Slung Low, the Holbeck's committee, and the specific communities each were attempting to serve.

I look at the ways in which other writers have considered this relationship between people and place, to draw out current ideas which can be considered alongside Lane's interview, and explore some of the difficulties in defining a concept of working-classness. Over the latter end of the Twentieth Century, Right-to-buy policies meant that council houses entered the market, so the population of social housing areas has become more mixed.[26] This makes it difficult to conclude that social housing or "council estates" are solely occupied by the working-class. The concept of working-class spaces is no longer as simple to conceptualise as it was when social housing was first

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[22] Alison Stenning, 'Geography and new working class studies. Intervention symposium,' *Antipode*, 40 (2008), 9-14 (p. 9-10).
[23] Jenny Preece, 'Belonging in working class neighbourhoods: dis-identification, territorialisation and biographies of people and place', *Urban Studies*, 57 (2020). 827-843 (p. 828).
[24] Preece, p. 829.
[25] Tim Edensor, 'Mundane hauntings: commuting through the phantasmagoric working-class spaces of Manchester, England,' *cultural geographies*, 12 (2008), 313-333 (p. 319).
[26] Katie Beswick, 'The council estate: representation, space and the potential for performance,' *Research in Drama Education,* 16 (2011), 421-435 (p. 422).

introduced. As such, how we talk about space intersecting with class requires a framework not based on a twentieth-century model or assumptions.

This dissertation's aim is not to interrogate the concept of what it means to be working-class, but, drawing on Preece, I explore class as the 'social relations' within 'specific locales,' the way people interact with each other and a place depending on their socioeconomic point of departure.[27] I apply this to my discussion of the Holbeck to unpack how these ideas relate to this particular community in 21st Century Leeds. To this I add Stenning's thoughts, who includes capital, labour, and lived experience in her discussion.[28] I offer an exploration of how the way Slung Low used the Holbeck, in its particular working-class community, works in tandem with existing systems to provide benefit to local people and strengthen community bonds.

Class is essential to consider when researching the Holbeck as a venue, but this is not the central focus of the study. Instead, I explore the significance of class in formulations of the definition of space and place, and consider some areas where class intersects with these concepts and Alan Lane/Slung Low's ideology. I consider the relationship between class and place in its particular context to the Holbeck community and its social club, and the ways in which these broader ideas around class and place pertain to Holbeck as a community.

With changing relationships to work in the 1970s and into the Thatcher government — and to the home (through right-to-buy) — the literature suggests that the production of working-class identity has shifted. Low-paid and insecure work means people have less time for what Preece calls 'identity work,'[29] which Snow and Anderson describe as 'the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept.'[30] This loss of traditional industry means a huge part of where people build their sense of identity and community is missing. Preece argues that '[p]laces become proxies for different identities, sorting populations through identification and dis-identification, a function that has historically been performed through work'.[31] I suggest later in this dissertation that the Holbeck has come to replace some of the functions of industry in identity formation, and how it functions as a place for building and sustaining community identity. What makes the Holbeck this kind of palace, and how it relates to its community's identity, will be discussed later, but this concept of an intrinsic

[27] Preece, p. 829.
[28] Stenning, p. 9.
[29] Preece, p. 833.
[30] David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, 'Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities', American Journal of Sociology, 92 (1987), 1336-1371 (p.1348)
[31] Preece, p. 838.

link between place and identity, central to literature in the field of human geography, is what is missing from a lot of discussion in theatre.

Academic spaces, too, often forego this attention to class, Schooling is one of the central places we learn we are classed.[32] Classroom attitudes in university teach a middle-class habitus, or socially-ingrained habits.[33] Donna LeCourt and Anna Rita Napoleone argue the expectations of a space are classed: in their observations, middle-class pupils in higher education expect a disinterested, 'rational' and 'objective' perspective from their lecturers, where working-class lecturers' enthusiastic attitudes to instruction are seen as 'too invested'.[34] This makes it not only difficult in research to investigate theatre, class, and place intersection, but also to do so within the context of an academic context. I turn to architect Bernard Tschumi's philosophy in order to try to ground my discussions in more concrete terms, and link this to the Holbeck as a case study, exploring how it functions, and is organised/run by Slung Low, in terms of the relationship between form and function of the venue itself.

It is Sarah Bartley's work which first drew my attention to Slung Low, where she discusses them in detail, alongside Brighton People's Theatre.[35] Her article focuses on the alternative models (of capitalism) which non-profit People's Theatres and companies can offer. People's Theatres are not defined by a particular theatrical style or aesthetic, but by ideologies of 'collective representation and community-led cultural provision'.[36] The Holbeck, as a social club, represents certain ideologies and collective values which may help or hinder community engagement and arts in a working-class area, and I go on to discuss how these values and modes of organisation intersect with the community it lies within. In Holbeck's particular context, the differing relationships to the community demonstrated by Slung Low and the Holbeck's committee problematise the reduction of these intersections to a single ideology, and so I restrict the case study to Alan Lane's discussion from the point of view of artist/manager. Bartley's key takeaway is the possibility of People's Theatres to find alternative economies for community performance to maintain collective ideologies, a hypothesis which forms the key research questions for this project.[37] In a venue which allegedly sits outside the capitalist idea of upskilling people for market and profit,[38] does the way an organisation makes art, and relate to its community, change? And if so, what processes occur for this to happen?

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[32] Donna LeCourt and Anna Rita Napoleone, 'Teachers with(out) Class: Transgressing Academic Social Space through Working-Class Performances,' *Pedagogy*, 11 (2011), 81-108 (p. 83).
[33] Ibid., pp. 86-87.
[34] Ibid., p. 94
[35] Sarah Bartley, 'UK People's Theatres: performing civic functions in a time of austerity,' *Research in Drama Education*, 26 (2021), 171-186.
[36] Ibid., p. 173.
[37] Ibid., p. 177.
[38] Ibid., p. 180.

Establishing a way of separating space from place, and utilising Tschumi's architectural framework of crossprogramming, I explore how the Holbeck functions as an arts centre and social club in one, drawing on my own interview[39] with artistic director Alan Lane, as well as his recent book.[40] Formulating my own concept of what it means to be 'welcoming' through an interrogation of Jacques Derrida's thoughts on hospitality, I add to this work to understand what processes and practices are at work within the Holbeck, from both Slung Low and the club's committee. The final section of the dissertation looks at the extent to which the Holbeck is welcoming, and what running an arts centre in a working-men's club means for the theatre company and community involved.

I focus this attention through the perspectives of Alan Lane, Slung Low's artistic director turned manager, through my own interview with him and his 'pandemic memoir' *The Club on the Edge of Town*, which tracks his experiences operating a food bank and community centre during the Covid-19 lockdown.[41] Lane's comments in interview allow me to link the theories of space and place I examine to the choices of a venue manager, and I look to how Lane used the physical building of the Holbeck and its place within the community to attempt to serve the community's changing needs.

These data, when taken together, chart the journey of Slung Low as managers of the Holbeck, and the changing relationship the company had to both the local community and the committee of volunteers who they worked alongside. Lane's book tracks the company's use of the Holbeck as a community arts centre and the rising tensions between the company and the club committee, explaining — and substantiated by his interview — how the growing separation between these two groups occurred through differences in ideology and approach to the common goal of community engagement.[42]

I use the frameworks I have set up and the relationship between place and program as a lens for exploring Slung Low's tenure at the Holbeck, as well as the breakdown of the relationship between Slung Low and the committee, with their differing values and approaches clashing through the tension between their different approaches to similar end goals.

What is a community venue?

(also hub/centre/space)

[39] Lane, Interview.
[40] Referenced above, and which I will now refere0nce as 'Lane, *The Club…' to* avoid confusion.
[41] See Lane, *The Club…*
[42] Ibid.

For this project, where philosophical frameworks are introduced and interrogated, I feel it is important to define a community venue not in theoretical terms but in the way we understand it in everyday life. I use the term community venue to represent the buildings we use as a place for communities to come together, share and access resources, and which are provided to serve the community. They are free to use, easy to access, and welcoming, and provide services the community needs. For example, the Barnwood Trust has a detailed definition of a 'community space' which attends to many of the same concepts and terms I use in this dissertation:

> 'the determining factor in what makes a great 'community space' are the outcomes which that space brings, not necessarily the physical space itself. So, these spaces do not have to be fancy or beautifully designed, although we appreciate fine aesthetics as much as anyone. What they need to do is *function well* for that community and that means being *welcoming and accessible to everyone*. We believe this it will bring local communities, meaning *everyone*, together. There is a lot of evidence that the opportunity to gather together and pursue shared interests brings many benefits to personal, and community, physical and mental health, well-being and strength.'[43]

The core of Hawkins' description of a community venue is its function, and the way in which members of the community relate to this function, which I return to later when discussing Bernard Tschumi's concept of programming. Community venues have clear functions, and an integral part of their operation is in ensuring that all members of the community are able to partake without barriers. Hawkins very clearly distinguishes the physical space from the purpose of these building for their surrounding community, and with each different community must come different challenges and needs.

I use the term community venue throughout to refer to the physical building (e.g. the Holbeck) which functions in this way within its community, and specify 'Slung Low' or the club's 'committee' to refer to the organisations that run and manage it. I also refer to 'the club' in the same way, to mean the Holbeck Social Club as a building/location/place. The nature of what is meant by the Holbeck as a 'place' is the subject of discussion in the following chapters.

[43] Martin Hawkins, 'What is a 'community space?*' Barnwood Trust*, 2017, <https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/blog/what-is-a-community-space-and-why/> [accessed 17/04/2022]

1. Defining 'space' and 'place'

It is essential for this dissertation to explore, then, what we mean by 'space' and 'place.' In the following section, I draw upon literature from a number of intersecting disciplines to pin down how space and place relate to one another and to people's lived experiences. I look to curator and art critic Lucy Lippard, whose book *The Lure of the Local* looks at how the concept of the 'local' functions, exploring different types of places/spaces and how they function in relation to people and art.[44] I draw parallels with cultural geographer Tim Cresswell, who formulates in his book, *Place: an introduction*, his own definition of place and how it differs from space, through its taking on different social qualities and being imbued with meaning.[45] Finally, I bring in the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose sociology, although dated, explores the foundations of the relationship between people and the social spaces which we create. Lefebvre's work holds true today when combined with Cresswell and Lippard's ideas to understand how our lived experience of class impacts the spaces and places we inhabit, and allows me to consider how places like The Holbeck fulfil certain functions for communities in the gaps that changing industries and housing have left. In *The Production of Space,* he breaks down in political and social terms what is meant by 'space' and how it sits in relation to our understanding of ideology, the state, the workers, and forces of production; he heavily draws on Marx for his frame of reference.[46] I conclude this section with a list of definitions for both space and place that form a critical foundation for the remaining chapters.

These three specific works will allow me to draw links between space and class, and later interrogate how the Holbeck community in Leeds functions in relation to its community space, here the Holbeck Social Club, in a 21st Century context. I explore how place is inherently classed, in that we cannot separate talking about the places people inhabit and interact with without also considering how people's lived experience of class intersects with the places they live, work, and take leisure. The question I will now respond to is *What is 'place'?*

…an interplay between people and spaces

One way of defining place is through formulating it through the interactions between human activity and the concept of an uninflected 'space'. Tim Cresswell achieves this by separating the term 'place'

[44] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local* (New York: New York Press, 1997).
[45] Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).
[46] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

from ‘space’ by suggesting that spaces (more physical and concrete) are made into ‘places’ by their interaction with people.[47] He explains that, when we talk about spaces, we are referring to physical, spatially-confined locations, and that places are ‘spaces which people have made meaningful.’[48] He offers the example of a person’s university bedroom, which itself is a space, but becomes *their* bedroom once it has been imbued with meaning through the person interacting with it.

He states that ‘when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place.’[49] The act of attaching a space to ourselves and our experience of it, i.e. naming, transforms it, from a bricks-and-mortar entity to a more emotional concept. This is certainly what we mean when we talk of turning a house into a home, and Cresswell highlights the everyday use of the term ‘place’ as contributing to its difficulty.

While he describes place as a ‘rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment’, he is deliberate in positioning his ideas in conflict with Lefebvre’s.[50] Cresswell acknowledges that his use of the term place is confused by Lefebvre’s own ‘social space’ in that the two overlap, as will be discussed below. Nevertheless, his idea of place as *meaningful space* helps us to contrast it to simply space alone, and he reminds us that ‘places as “things” are quite obscure and hard to grasp.’[51]

Lefebvre, then, defines ‘social space’, which functions in much the same way as Cresswell’s place, as being not a thing among other things, or a product among other products - it ‘encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity.’[52] It encompasses the interrelationships of these 'other things' (in this case, people, architecture, locations, objects, behaviours) — rather than being a thing in itself, it is a conglomeration. While markedly different in its origin and theory, Lefebvre’s social space also separates itself from physical space by its definition as an outcome of our relationships within and to physical space. He describes it as an ‘outcome of a sequence and set of operations’ and ‘the outcome of past actions.’[53] What we do with and in a space transforms it from its physical bounds into a conceptual ‘social’ space, imbued with political and social meaning. Cresswell also notes this importance of past actions on space, describing the ‘hauntings of past inhabitation’ which exist within the place of, for example, the student’s university bedroom.[54] Both agree that a space is the result of many past actions and uses, and for Cresswell, making our space say something

[47] Cresswell, p. 7.
[48] Ibid., p. 13.
[49] Ibid., p. 17.
[50] Ibid., p. 18.
[51] Ibid., p. 18.
[52] Lefebvre, p. 73.
[53] Ibid., p. 73.
[54] Cresswell, p. 7.

about us is what turns it into *our place.* In this sense, the two ways of describing meaningful space (social space and place) can coexist alongside one another, and indeed overlap.

Lippard's view supports Cresswell's in that 'space combined with memory defines place.'[55] However, she also introduces a new way of understanding this interrelation between people and space which creates places. She looks at the concept of 'local places', those familiar, meaningful spaces which we relate to, for example, the area we live. She looks at people moving between these places (like moving to another city), and explains that, '[e]ach time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity' which is really what "local places" consist of.[56] This hybridity is the place of others, built from the combination of memory and space, which we become part of.

She then explains how we change a local place by our interaction with it, when we enter into and alter this hybridity that already exists when we arrive. Who we are, and how we interact with the space and people within a local place, changes the makeup of that place as well as our identity.[57] We as people have an 'affect and effect' on places which we enter into – that place is created and altered (and in a reciprocal manner we are, too) by the people who inhabit/enter into it and their social contexts.[58] She is particularly referencing 'places' as local communities, and how people of different social contexts can affect and effect a community which they enter into, such as the difference between a 'white middle-class art type' entering a mainly Latino community versus a 'white upper-class suburb.'[59]

Our classed position within society interacts with and has an effect on the places we live, work, and pass through. Yvette Taylor notes how "[t]ypes' of people are understood to inhabit 'types' of locales,' in the same way that places can be categorised by class or ethnicity.[60] Her analysis highlights the same reciprocity between people and place, and demonstrates how this intersects with our other identities. These 'types' can be any one of a number of multiple identity markers, like gender, race, and class, and alter the extent to which people are made to 'fit-in' or not.[61]

Specifically turning to artists, Lippard explains how artists *engender interplay* between people, politics, ideologies, experience, and place, rather than just reflecting it back.[62] Theatre, as an art form, significantly involves these integrations between people, politics, and where it takes place.[63]

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[55] Lippard, p. 9.
[56] Ibid., p. 6.
[57] Ibid., p. 6.
[58] Ibid., p. 6.
[59] Ibid., p. 6.
[60] Yvette Taylor, *Fitting into place?: class and gender geographies and temporalities* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 2.
[61] Ibid., p. 1.
[62] Lippard, p. 19.
[63] Ibid., p. 19.

The meanings contained within a particular place, such as a local community or building, necessarily have the same potential for bringing about (effecting) and influencing (affecting) the art located there. In the same way, the art of theatre entering a particular place can be said to enter into its existing hybridities, and has the same reciprocal relationship between the act and the space. We can extrapolate from Lippard, then, that for theatre, the place (local community, building and the place's meaningful significance) cannot be separated from the art.

Lippard conceptualises what we simply observe as a landscape – what Cresswell would call a space – and a landscape lived-in and made meaningful becomes a place. She uses the terms 'place' and 'landscape', defining landscape as what we can observe, what can be represented from a single point of view (like the eponymous painting), and that 'a lived-in landscape becomes a place'.[64] We can extrapolate from Lippard's terms 'landscape' and 'place' the same distinctions which exist between Cresswell's 'space' and 'place' respectively, in that the two pairs of terms both rely on a distinction between space and place which is abstract, and which exists materially in the architectural or natural structures we observe. She and Cresswell use different terms thanks to their different initial points of inquiry, but we can still talk about 'space' (to use Cresswell's term) as it exists before we consider the meaning which makes it a certain 'place'.

…a process

Place is conceptualised as a *process*. Cresswell argues that place itself is made of our everyday practices. He terms 'place-making activities' those everyday actions which imbue a space with meaning for us and create a place from a space.[65] In a later chapter of his book he returns to this idea, explaining how places are not fully formed, but are always *in process*, being continually created by cultural practices.[66] This idea of places as non-final and ever-changing will be key when I look at the multiplicity of spaces like community venues, or student bedrooms (which are renewed as someone else's place with each new inhabitant).

Lefebvre's view is compatible with Cresswell and Lippard's because he argues that the way we organise ourselves in space is key to the process of the creation of place. However, he looks to Marx for his understanding, focussing on the social spaces created by the repetitive gestures or actions of society's workers, writing that 'repetitious spaces are the outcome of repetitive gestures.'[67] Physical and social spaces tend to arise from how society is organised, and society for Lefebvre and Marx is

[64] Ibid., p. 7.
[65] Cresswell, p. 11.
[66] Ibid., p. 82.
[67] Lefebvre, p. 75.

organised around the forces of production. Organisations of society – ideology, politics, people, and class – guide how we organise our spaces, and therefore have influence on the social spaces, or the imbued Cresswell/Lippard 'places' that are created. The spaces we create come about through the necessity of organising ourselves and our ideologies but, as Lippard also suggests, the way we organise our spaces may necessarily also have a reciprocal effect on the way we organise our society.

In essence, all three contend that there is a constant process of place-making occurring between people, physical spaces, and the way we organise ourselves in society. To use Lefebvre's terms, we can say that the cultural, political, and labour practices of society are interrelated with the places that we create through interacting with space. The production of place/social space is constant, and constantly negotiated and renegotiated. It is also, therefore, interrelated with our human experiences of the spaces which we inhabit, and the certain subjectivity which must ultimately come with this.

Of course, the way in which we apply this framework will be specific to a certain community/people in a particular place and time, and so the extent to which these ideas can be applied to the Holbeck as a case study will be discussed later in this thesis. Lefebvre's points of departure is an attempt art a universal explanation, but the nuances of a Twenty-First Century working-class community demand that we refocus this towards the current lived experiences of identity which operate within a less rigid framework. The Holbeck community complicates this as it does not fit rigidly to a Lefebvrean understanding of class, and its own labour practices have shifted dramatically over the social club's life.

…lived experience

Lippard has the most to say about the centrality of lived experience to the concept of place. Approaching place from a more art-focussed starting point, she highlights that lived experience and subjectivity are essential to talking/thinking about place.

She explains how inherent in the 'local' is the concept of place, temporally, spatially, politically, socially, and personally.[68] As quoted above, a place is a lived-in landscape, and she expands on this in describing it as being inherently 'sensual' rather than simply observed.[69] Her 'landscape' is what we observe from a single point, much like a painting, and can *only* be seen from the outside, but what makes 'place' is the sensuality of experiencing it, of feeling it, and being *within it.* Drawing comparison between her 'landscape' and Cresswell's 'space', we can then begin to see a

[68] Lippard, p. 7.
[69] Ibid., p. 8.

common definition arising, of 'space' as what we can observe – perhaps what a computer would observe, without knowing the *meaning* of a space – and that it is the placing of ourselves within space, and our emotional experience of/in it, which makes a space a place.

She discusses the inherent placedness of history, and the inherent histories contained within place. She references folklorist Henry Glassie, who states that 'History is the essence of the idea of place', that, '[i]n place, the person is part of the history.'[70] Place is not simply the *present* lived experience that interrelates us to/within space, but the *cumulative* history of that place, and the many lived experiences which make it up. The lived experience element of place is a combination and negotiation of its different histories, and present lived experiences.

Place also intersects with identity through our individual and collective interaction with the places we become part of or help to create. Dikeç et al. explain how identity itself is 'organized in fundamentally spatialized ways,' in that how we relate to one another is often tied into the places in which we form our individual and collective identities. It is our lived experience within a particular place which constitutes its identity, and also influences our own.

A place is made up of the entire cumulative and coexisting histories of lived experience within a space. Both Cresswell and Lippard agree that we can *look at* space/landscape, but imply that there is never a time when a space is not a place. We may be able to talk about the different places a particular space is/has been (e.g. Manchester is my ancestral *home*, a tourist's *destination*, a student's *adopted city*), but it has always been some kind of place.

What we can do, however, is recognise this importance of lived experience, and the fact that there is no space (and place is inherently subjective), because every space that exists contains political and social histories. Lefebvre makes the point that 'vis-a-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere 'frame' […] nor a form of container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it.'[71] No matter how far we "zoom out" to try to get a neutral, objective look at space, it is always contained within, and contains, something political and subjective. Our *experience* of space is inherently political – for him, 'space is social morphology; it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism.'[72] Like Cresswell and Lippard, space for Lefebvre is a way we understand and talk about people and places: the thing that we can observe ourselves and our ideas sitting within, but never separate from them.

…classed

[70] Henry Glassie, quoted in Lippard, p. 13.
[71] Lefebvre, p. 93-94.
[72] Ibid., p. 94.

Space, social space, landscape, and place as concepts – and indeed ways of classifying space – cannot be separated from the political interactions and ideologies which site themselves within and around them. Ergo, and as stated by all three authors, space is inherently *classed*. It is inseparable from the forces of power, production, capital, and policy which intersect with our physical and conceptual spaces.

Cresswell specifically notes the link between space and power. He states that place is 'space invested with meaning in the context of power.'[73] Place is created by naming, and by specific practices or identities and is inherently organised somehow by people in power. Take England's counties and boroughs, which have changed and renamed over time. The State decides the lines which divide one place from another, and renames accordingly. In any one space there can be different places organised by those in power. For example, where I grew up, the historical place of *Turton* no longer exists as a township, with its North now part of the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen, in Lancashire, and its South, part of the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, in Greater Manchester – yet the place still exists in signs, history, memory. Even in this one example there are three types of places: the historical township, the borough, and the county, all with different meanings and serving different functions, reorganised and dictated by those in power.

Cresswell continues this thought, stating that the creation of place is a sort of classification system we use to judge transgression. He notes how being 'out-of-place' is a transgression, and explains that transgression is a distinctly spatial idea, meaning literally to step across. [74] For him, the creation of place functions as the classification system by which we judge transgression.[75] Those in power have the power to alter places, and redraw the boundaries of place, and so have influence on the way we judge whether we are *in* or *out* of place.

Alan Mace's argument looks to the placedness of class and racial identity, analysing how the ways in which Londoners interact with their space (owner-occupiers versus tenants, for example) works to construct different white identities.[76] He notes how the construction of this white identity works by 'identifying and explaining intra middle-class distinctions in London's suburbs.'[77] Individuals and communities can draw their own boundaries between places in relation to their own identities and perceived place within the community. The transgression, then, within this identification with place, occurs when others enter. In Mace's study, this is in the white suburban population's

[73] Cresswell, p. 19.
[74] Ibid., p. 103.
[75] Ibid., p. 103.
[76] Alan Mace, 'Whiteness, class and place in two London suburbs,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42 (2019), 1032-1049.
[77] Ibid., p. 1033.

response to ethnic diversity,[78] and in my later case study will be the wider members of the Holbeck community.[79]

Lefebvrian spaces, both physical (observed) and social (experienced), are inherently tied up with class, and how workers relate to each other and others, simply because everywhere is a place – every space has meaning. Lefebvre, drawing on Marx, argues that social space is produced in relation to the forces of production, and highlights that these forces do not develop in a neutral or empty space.[80] His 'social space' contains relations, and pathways which 'facilitate the exchange of material things and information'.[81] The forces of production exist within a spatial world of exchange, moving things (resources, capital) from one place to another.

He explains that social space cannot be separated causally from the relationships of power. He writes that space is a 'precondition and a result of social superstructures'.[82] Space as Lefebvre understands it is both a product and a means of production. It both produces social relationships within it and is created in response to them. In the boroughs and counties example, geography can determine the social superstructures of (to use Cresswell's term) place, as rivers and hills may separate parishes and groups of people, but how we organise ourselves socially also influences where we build our roads, and which areas of space belong to whom/are known as what. How we exchange materials and information is tied up with what *spaces* are used for, and what different *places* arise from this. In this dissertation, I look at how the Holbeck is spatially organised, how it functions as a place for its community, and how Slung Low's management of it as a community arts centre had an effect on how this community related to it and each other.

Lefebvre outlines other kinds of space, and states that class relationships are inherent in space. Space is ideologically divided 'in accordance with social divisions of labour,' in terms of where resources and people are located.[83] Lefebvre talks of geographical space, ethnological, demographical, musical (etc.) and remarks upon the fragmentation of space in accordance with social (class) ideology. Space is thus fragmented into areas of housing, labour, leisure, sport, tourism, etc. and the existence of these different spaces depend upon what we use them for and how we relate to them, as well as how they relate to production and consumption.

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[78] Ibid., p. 1033.
[79] See Lane, *The Club*…, (e.g. pp. 49, 62-63)
[80] Lefebvre, p. 77.
[81] Ibid., p. 77.
[82] Ibid., p. 85.
[83] Ibid., p. 90.

Through this, Lefebvre concludes that we cannot discretely define space:[84] in fact he implies that it is moot to attempt it. Effectively, each academic discipline (e.g. geography, theatre, politics, tourism) has its own way of dealing with the concept of space, and so to attempt to generalise a definition is to assume that the term 'space' functions the same across all points of entry/inquiry. This not only presents a problem for this interdisciplinary research project (I look through the lenses of theatre, architecture, sociology – all with their own ways of understanding space) but supports why I believe Lefebvre's concepts of space are not necessarily in opposition to the definitions I have drawn from Cresswell and Lippard. Lefebvre's understanding of space relates the way we interact with the city and the locations we work/inhabit through a Marxist lens, focusing on our class relations within physical and social space. Similarly, Cresswell discusses the relationship between space and power, but draws greater importance to the lived experience of the individual, rather than one social group/class. Lippard may theorise a similar relationship between people, place, and locale, but her focus on the local as a concept grounds her framework in considerations of the community, which is useful when considering Alan Lane's comments on how the Holbeck's local community interact with it. Therefore, I conclude below with a list of my own definition, drawn from these different, nuanced frameworks.

Lefebvre also draws comparison between the perceived neutrality of space, and class, which will inform my own inquiry of my case studies. He explains how "neutral space" is a concept of the middle-class. The middle-class see a space which is 'neutral, or seemingly so, on account of their social and political position midway between the bourgeoisie and the working class' – this imagined space does not *express* the middle-class, but rather mirrors their desire for a labelled space.[85] This bears comparison to LeCourt and Napoleone's more recent comments, that the middle-class often do not see space as classed, and fail to acknowledge the values and expectations imposed within a space they do not see as discretely middle-class.[86] Even in terms of placedness, the traditional working-class of Marx's time occupy the social *bottom* of society, in the geographical locations where resources are collected or made (think England's Northern mines, quarries, cotton mills) and the bourgeoisie the social *top*, like in the city, where products are consumed. The middle-class, always a slippery, unbound middle-ground between peasantry and aristocracy, do not in the same way occupy a distinct space or place. Instead, what we can draw from Lefebvre's understanding is the inherent placedness of the working-class experience.

[84] Ibid., p. 92.
[85] Ibid., p. 309.
[86] LeCourt and Napoleone, p.94.

Lefebvre's concept of placedness can be applied today, despite changing relationships between workers and the places of production. The places in which identity creation and identification occur have changed since Lefebvre's time, but the production of a working-class identity in relation to places of leisure remains. The Holbeck, for example, has had to adapt to a post-industrialist Twenty-First Century, and take on new functions through Slung Low to serve its community where Leeds' infrastructure and industry has changed. In the ways which Lefebvre's working-class live within the areas of production in the city, Holbeck's community today must commute, thanks to the decline of its industry over the Twentieth Century.[87] A distinctly different but equally placed relationship exists between where people are located and the things they can easily access (i.e. get to on public transport and afford to visit) which I remark upon later in this dissertation, unpacking Alan Lane's thoughts, alongside Rachel Turner-King's writing, on the location of cultural centres and distance to the intended community who are invited to partake in culture.

In the same way, spatial organisations tend, according to Lefebvre, to be used for control, and portrayed as self-evident, rather than ideological. 'Zoning, for example, which is responsible – precisely – for fragmentation, break-up and separation under the umbrella of a bureaucratically decreed unity, is conflated with the rational capacity to discriminate.'[88] His point is that we are led to believe that the spatial organisations of society are the product of reason, and not ideological constructs. 'Spatial' here is both social (like the classes: middle, working, bourgeoisie etc) and physical (like inner-city, suburbs, slums, rural areas): society is organised around *where* people are both in relation to everyone else and literally where they live and work. Lefebvre is arguing that the moral and political order which dictates this fragmentation and zoning (i.e. spatial organisations of power) are played off as naturally occurring and self-evidently true.

The way people, types of housing, and resources are distributed within a particular place has an effect on both the formation of (racial) identities but also on the class relationships within the city. Mace acknowledges these spatialised ways in which class plays out in the city, where the 'middle-classes position themselves within the contemporary city both in relation to other middle-class groups and to ethnic diversity.'[89] Both individuals and the state, then, can organise and categorise people and places according to class, and vice-versa, experiencing class identity through spatial relationships to other people and places.

The final key takeaway from Lefebvre which I will go on to use throughout this dissertation is that how we behave in society, and whether we feel *in* or *out* of place, can be explored through a

[87] Lewis.
[88] Lefebvre, p. 317.
[89] Mace, p. 1045.

space's *function*. For Lefebvre, spaces are divided into prohibited or designated spaces to one group or another, and further subdivided into work/leisure and daytime/night-time.[90] How we use a space, and what its function is within society, contributes to whether we feel permitted to be there or not. In a social context, this is whether we feel like this is a space *for us*, or to what extent we feel we have legitimate right to be in a space.

I will continue, in looking at the concepts of welcoming and crossprogramming later in this dissertation, to unpack how the function(s) of a space relates to its ability to welcome us in or shut us out. For now, I will explain how I will be defining *space* and *place* through the following statements:

1. Space encapsulates the physical and architectural site we can point to when we look at different places, such as buildings and areas of the city. It is the location before we consider what that location means to the people that inhabit or interact with it.

2. Space is also social morphology – it is a way of understanding and talking about the relationships, politics, and ideologies which arise within it through *place*.

3. The same *space* can be different *places*, to different people in different times/contexts, but…

4. One *place* has contained within it many hybrid histories. It is a cumulation of the entire history of lived experience within a given space.

5. Place is inherently classed. Because space necessitates place (all spaces have meaning), and place is a social phenomenon, it is tied up with the way we relate to each other and the forces of production (material/information exchange) and thus, class.

6. Place is space made meaningful by human interaction with it. To borrow from Stedman, quoted in Sampson and Goodrich: 'Place can be characterized as including not only the physical setting, but also the range of human activity and social/psychological processes that are carried out there (Stedman2002).'[91]

[90] Lefebvre, 319-320.
[91] Kaylene A. Sampson & Colin G. Goodrich, 'Making Place: Identity Construction and Community Formation through "Sense of Place" in Westland, New Zealand,' Society and Natural Resources, 22 (2009), 901-915 (p. 902).

2. Crossprogramming

Architect Bernard Tschumi introduces the concept of 'crossprogramming' in his book *Architecture and Disjunction*[92], which I will use to frame my discussion of community venues as theatre spaces. Throughout the book, Tschumi uses the word program to refer to the events within or functions of a space; effectively, what goes on in any given space. Following on from this, then, crossprogramming involves 'using a given spatial configuration for a program not intended for it.'[93] Here he gives the examples of operating a town hall (program) in the spatial configuration of a prison (space) or a sports centre in a car park. Where a space is architecturally built for one intended use, it may be crossprogrammed with an opposing use. For Tschumi, there is a disjunction between space and program which he likens to the non-identity between an actor and their character.

A community venue such as a community/church/school hall which is not spatially programmed for theatre in its architecture being used as a theatre performance space is crossprogrammed. Juliet Rufford uses the Battersea Arts Centre as her case study, and links these configurations to Tschumi's ideas of program vs architecture. In this thesis, I examine how The Holbeck in Leeds functions as a crossprogrammed space: a working men's club turned arts centre and theatre space. These two examples exemplify the disjunction between the building's architecture and the things going on within it which Tschumi and Rufford highlight. A purpose-built theatre reduces the disjunction between its architecture and its program, with (usually) a spatially designated box office, bar, and auditorium. Community venues, however, may have a different relationship, with only a bar or a stage space. While box office and bar may be present, as in the BAC or the Holbeck, they are brought into the space rather than fundamental to its architecture. That distinction between foyer and auditorium, for example, may be not as discrete, or at any rate not reflected in the building's construction, in the community venue.

Tschumi's writing centres the link between architecture and how we use it, and the concept of crossprogramming offers ways of interpreting the way we behave in, or use, a space as a socio-political act, and that using spaces for alternative programs can be used to problematise expected behaviours. Rufford explains his view that '…architecture cannot absolutely determine how we behave within it.'[94] A building may have been designed and built with a certain program in mind, but can always at any time be used in different ways. However, Tschumi is careful to again use the word 'disjunction', and clarify that 'there is no cause-and-effect relationship between an architectural

[92] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996).
[93] Ibid., p. 205.
[94] Juliet Rufford, *Theatre and architecture* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 33.

sign and its possible interpretation'[95] – while there may be *correlation* between space and program, there is no direct causation. As Rufford explains, disjunctions in types and program can have the effect of 'destablis[ing] normative practices,[96] and for Tschumi questioning structures through a 'decentering on the entire notion of unified, coherent architectural form.'[97] His disjunction is a separation between a building and its events in terms of architecture, which can interrupt the way we expect to operate within it. It operates socially, challenging the 'normative function of architecture itself.'[98]

Rufford brings a link between this and Judith Butler's ideas on gender performativity. She describes Tschumi's crossprogramming as 'a way to resist certain 'normalising' cultural and architectural pressures that can start to determine the way users think and behave in space'[99] and in his definition of crossprogramming, Tschumi uses the example of crossdressing.[100] While it cannot absolutely determine it, the architecture of a space sets up the expected ways in which we are to behave within it. By crossprogramming a space, we upset the normative expectations and the causal hierarchy of design dictating purpose. For example, purpose-built theatre buildings tend to be architecturally set up to facilitate commercial transaction: we are first greeted with a box office to buy our tickets, and perhaps a bar on the way to our auditorium door, which we enter – a separate space -to sit in our designated seat to watch the show. Programming theatre in a space without this discrete architectural setup removes the distinct areas for commercial exchange, especially if we are familiar with traditional theatre buildings. Furthermore, things work backwards: programming theatre in, say, a Church or community hall changes the way we are expected to behave because there is a gap between the building type and the activity within it.

Tschumi's ideas even go further than this, where he states that architecture can influence programs. Crossprogramming - an intrinsically social and political act in its power to influence behaviour – changes the nature of both the event and the architecture: 'To use a Palladian arch for an athletic club alters both Palladio and the nature of the athletic event.' [101] Both space and program have an effect on one another in being placed alongside each another. In this way, a theatre function in a warehouse has an effect on the nature of the theatre act and on the warehouse itself. Certainly my expected behaviours are altered when I go to see a play in a space with neither (architecturally

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[95] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 221.
[96] Rufford, p. 34.
[97] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 208.
[98] Ibid., p. 209.
[99] Rufford, p. 37.
[100] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 205.
[101] Ibid., p. 147.

speaking) foyer nor auditorium – I'm unsure where to buy my ticket or where to sit/wait. The presence of performance changes our understanding of the purpose of the warehouse.

Tschumi's concepts function in a different way to those of ghosting or palimpsests in other theatre space writing,[102] particularly because they operate in a more physical, architectural way, as opposed to treating spaces as abstract containers, or discussing the ephemerality of "site". Tschumi himself is grounded in the bricks-and-mortar of his theories, and one aspect of crossprogramming is the physical supplementation of the spatial configurations of the theatre 'program' into an architecturally opposing space. Throughout particularly *Architecture and Disjunction,* Tschumi points away from purely theoretical notions of how space and program relate to one another, and towards the significance of being able to physically point towards architectural features which oppose, complement, or problematise what the space is used for. For my research, an architectural framework such as crossprogramming provides a more concrete way of describing the relationship between space and use.

His ideas also carry over to the macro, considering the city as well as individual buildings. Program and its relationship to space exist between spaces but also around the city as a whole, including how we get to and from different buildings, and how the wider cityspace itself is programmed. In Tschumi's words, 'by looking at what happens in a city in terms of its multiplicity and contradictions, the conventionally assumed architectural homogeneity of programmes becomes even more apparent.'[103] The city itself functions in the same way as a building, with its many architectural parts and sometimes-complementary, sometimes-opposing programs contained within. Through architecture considering program, Tschumi attempts to challenge uniformity.

He highlights how 20th Century architecture progressed toward aestheticization and away from considering building function in architecture. He references Jean Baudrillard's *Transparency of Evil* to highlight the importance of function in architecture. Baudrillard explains:

> '…things continue functioning when their idea has long disappeared from [them]. They continue to function with a total indifference to their own content. Paradoxically, they even function better this way.'[104]

Tschumi rejects the functionalist idea that buildings should be designed only for their function (program), but also purely aesthetic, and purely semiotic and views of the 1970s which he heavily

[102] See Sophie Nield's discussion of the topics in *Performing site-specific theatre*
[103]Tschumi in Alexander Eisenschmidt, 'Importing the City into Architecture: An Interview with Bernard Tschumi, *Architectural design*, 82 (2012), 130-135 (p. 133)
[104] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 234

criticises in this book. Through Baudrillard, what he pushes is a non-hierarchical relationship between design and function of space. This idea of functioning 'better' hints towards potential benefits and drawbacks of a distance between form and function through crossprogramming, which will be explored later in this dissertation. For Tschumi, Baudrillard's comments point to architecture as a socio-political art by which 'society explores new territories, develops new knowledge...'[105] He addresses how the move away from superficiality in architecture (towards questioning the structures of function and use[106]) results in 'a weakening of architecture as a form of domination, power, and authority.' [107]

It is here that Tschumi's work and theories of class intersect. He understands architecture to be a social tool of power and authority, and describes its changes across the twentieth century, which in turn allows us to question architecture's relationship to class. Writing in 1996 he explains the nature of *defamiliarization* in architecture, celebrating the fragmentation of the different architectural elements (e.g. form and function). In effect, this fragmentation and separation lets us question the social and political ideologies which underpin the relationships between space (form) and event (function). We can examine how spaces and their programs work in relation to our identities: how ideologies set up spaces with different power relations, and thus can be said to be 'classed'. Tschumi's crossprogramming functions as a base taxonomy for moving onto these ideas.

Furthermore, this carries over specifically into theatre. Ideas around power and authority of space lead us towards questioning how places of theatre contribute to their participants feeling welcome or unwelcome. The spaces in which theatre takes place can change the way people experience a performance and, significantly, the access they have to it; Rufford, using the example of theatre and a town hall, suggests that crossprogramming 'enables a wider variety of performer-spectator relationships.'[108] By separating the space the theatre takes place in from the theatre program itself, Tschumi's concepts allow us to interrogate the ways people can interact with theatre. When considering the relationship between class and space later in this essay, the relationship between performer and spectator is of central importance. In questioning how a space is organised and what happens inside it, Tschumi opens the door to this path of inquiry into the power relationships between performer and spectator, and how these are influenced by spatial practices.

Crossprogramming provides a framework for talking about how a space changes and is changed in relation to its program, how place-making occurs through the use of one space for different functions. We can apply this to community venues as places, interrogating the spaces which they

[105] Ibid., p. 237.
[106] Ibid., p. 208.
[107] Ibid., p. 248.
[108] Rufford, p. 44.

occupy and what their program is and has been. From here, we can explore the place-making activities which occur through the community's engagement with and investment in the community venue. The next section will discuss how this framework can be applied to the Holbeck, and investigate the place-making practices which occur through Slung Low's programming of the space.

3. Crossprogramming and the Holbeck

Tschumi's framework of crossprogramming can then be used to interrogate how the Holbeck, as an example of a community centre now used as an arts centre and theatre venue, operates in relation to its community, to class, and to the place in which it is situated.

The Holbeck is an example of a crossprogrammed place, from working-men's club to arts centre. Architecturally, and in historic usage, it is a place primarily for drinking, centred around the built-in bar. Now, since Slung Low's move, the building is utilised in a more creative way, functioning as a theatre. The bar is fundamental to its architecture, but the program has changed over time.

Alan Lane noted how the club changed its function when Slung Low moved in, but the architecture remained the same.[109] He stated that 'our spaces are places where people have to go for other reasons,' noting the way in which both the club as pub/hub and the club as arts centre serve multiple functions within the community.[110] However, the overall place, the Holbeck, is crossprogrammed from a working-men's club to arts centre with its shift in focus, brought about by Slung Low.

The shift away from pub as program was not only ideological, but practical for club and theatre company alike. Lane explained how 'a pub that opened for two sessions on a Sunday. In a community with many Muslims, and many non-drinkers, and many people who couldn't afford (or didn't want to) [sic] drink in a bar for hours on end, this was financial suicide.'[111] The change from drinking toward programming for arts and education was a way in which the company were able to keep the club financially stable. This crossprogramming was both brought about by, and impacted, the Holbeck's financial situation.

However, we can also contextualise this change in program as a return to the space's original program. When it began, and since Slung Low's taking over, the Holbeck has been programmed as a place for 'education and growth,' and was a 'lecture hall and games room' and an 'experiment in collectivism'.[112] Only during its difficult middle period did it become primarily a drinking space, and so while crossprogrammed from a working-men's club to an arts centre, its intended functions within the community have remained constant. When it was built, the Holbeck was centred around leisure and meeting space, not drinking, thanks to the temperance movement. Since Slung Low took over

[109] Lane, interview.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Lane, *The Club*... p. 63.
[112] Ibid., p. 62.

management, we can say that the Holbeck both changed its program, but also returned to its original program(s) in some way, carrying over the use of its space for education and entertainment.

Like Tschumi, Lane believes that space does *e*ffect program. By this, I mean program can *arise from* preset spatial configurations and architecture. In his work, he is excited by 'the way that just that room changes what you should programme.' Of course, here Lane is using the word 'programme' in the theatrical sense to refer to the plan of performances, but the statement would make equal sense with Tschumi's 'program' substituted. Lane's argument is that the way a space is laid out and organised alters what we choose to do with it (program).

Slung Low fundamentally respond to what is already there, the space that they have available, acknowledging the necessity of 'reacting to the room you're in…' Furthermore, Lane, like Lefebvre, disbelieves the concept of a neutral space. Specific to theatre, he posits that 'people have this idea that they've built a neutral theatre,' and ergo work differently to his company, who understand that their space is not neutral.[113] While this may be the pride of the artistic director, it draws parallels with Rachel Turner-King's criticism of the Warwick Arts Centre (which will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter), that theatre administrators do make the mistake of believing that their venues are in some way neutral and, therefore, not affected by the existing implications of the space and place within which their work is situated.[114]

In the Holbeck, the space itself is set up in a cabaret style, with chairs and tables as opposed to any sort of banked audience seating, thanks to its history with variety performance. Place-making aside, this means that the sort of theatre that can be staged here will need to respond to a physical space which is not designed like a black box studio. Under Lane's belief, then, the way the space is constructed and organised influences the way it is used.

In essence, so much of the spatial configuration and siting of a place determines how people can and do interact with it. The urban city is itself a spatially political act, and its own programs (advertising, public transport etc) dictate, affect, effect, and are shaped by where people can go (transport etc), where they feel welcome, or what feels familiar to them. This is true for Holbeck's community, who are '[p]riced out of mainstage theatre shows, made ignorant by marketing campaigns that fail to touch large swatches of the city, or excluded by public transport systems that find it improbable that anyone in a major northern city might want to catch the bus home after a performance of an evening.'[115] The location of Holbeck and its relationship to the rest of the city affects the way its community can access the larger cultural centres of the inner city.

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[113] Lane, interview.
[114] Rachel Turner-King, 'Creating welcoming spaces in the city: exploring the theory and practice of 'hospitality' in two regional theatres', *Research in Drama Education,* 23 (2018), 421-437 (p. 426).
[115] Lane, *The Club…,* p. 43.

Returning to the Holbeck, then, it is not just what the space looks like on the inside, and whether it as a place is familiar or not to its community, but where it sits within the wider city which affects its program and the way people interact with it. The city itself is programmatic,[116] and different parts take on different functions, such as areas of culture, which Holbeck is arguably not. The ways these specialised areas are organised affects the extent to which the community can reach them and, therefore, how we interact with places.[117] The spatial configuration of the city of Leeds means that Holbeck is excluded, outside the main 'donut zone' of culture, named for the geographical ring around Leeds city centre, which venues like the Holbeck are outside of.[118] The donut zone was coined by the Donut pilot Project Bell and Orozco reference, as a way to describe the distribution of culture within and outside of the concentrate of the city centre, where the main cultural hubs are located.[119] The way the Holbeck as a place relates to its own spatial configuration, the wider city configuration, and their programs impacts how and where its community access culture.

Participation and transaction

Returning to the relationship between people, place, and culture, the Holbeck was and is now a place where cultural participation is negotiated with on a political level. Lane calls it an 'experiment in collectivism' in that, in its early days as much as it does under Slung Low, the Holbeck is programmed according to a non-transactional sharing of space, resources, and arts with the community.[120] It opens itself up to the possibility, through Slung Low's programming of the venue, that the wider community in Holbeck who are perhaps 'excluded' from city-centre arts venues have a place to identify with and intersect with performance and culture in their own way. In theory, and certainly in Lane's mission, the Holbeck serves to bridge the gap between people and culture through place.

During their tenure at the Holbeck, the company's programming sought to engage the local community primarily by prioritising the community's specific needs into the way they ran both the building and events. Outside the Holbeck, Slung Low's cultural community college - operating from a double-decker bus parked in the car park - offered a mobile space for a range of community-led classes, 'a place where people can learn to do everything from South Indian cooking to stargazing.'[121]

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[116] Tschumi, 'Importing the City into Architecture,' p. 133.
[117] Ibid., p 135.
[118] Bell and Orozco, p. 93.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Lane, *The Club…*, p. 62
[121] Alan Lane, cited in John Howe, 'Getting There From Here: How Slung Low are putting Holbeck on the road to recovery', A Leeds Revolution, 3rd April 2019,

Through the community college and suggestions from local residents, the company also set up an adults football club, Holbeck Moor, which 'offers free childcare and has several men's and women's teams.'[122] Slung Low's artistic endeavours in the Holbeck remained 'pay-what-you-decide' as before at the HUB, and in particular one event, *Once Upon a Time in Holbeck,* reached out specifically to engage the immediate local community. This project focused on collecting personal stories of the lived history of Holbeck's residents, allowing people to engage with the process of the creative work without having to be part of any organisational team, or even attend the final event.[123] Furthermore, Slung Low operated the auditorium for hire by the community as a function room. Alan Lane explains how local residents could hire the upstairs auditorium for free, and the team helped to organise birthdays, Christenings, funeral wakes and parties.[124]

However, while the club may have begun as a collectivist phenomenon, it remains exclusive, cliquey, white, and male to this day, problematising the extent to which it can be said to fulfil this mission.[125] Lane argues that 'clubs like this have a sense of exclusion right at the heart of their origin myth' — the very concept of a working-men's club already spells out a clear in-group, almost akin to Derrida's host, which I outline in the next chapter.[126] While Lane has a point, the concept of a working-men's club itself responded to a need for working class places. Fundamentally, the club began and remains majority male and white, which is why Slung Low's takeover of management presents such a drastic change. Slung Low's existing audiences carried over from the HUB brought people from wider areas across the city, and with more mixed social and ethnic backgrounds. Their staff are 50/50 male-female, and a quarter are of non-white heritage.[127] While it may be still a place for the community, it has fundamentally shifted in its ethos and programs.

The space is not shared with the community on the basis of commercial transaction. For Lane it is 'an act of usefulness and service on our part. It's not because we have a desire to fill that space

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<https://www.aleedsrevolution.co.uk/getting-there-from-here-how-slung-low-are-putting-holbeck-on-the-road-to-recovery> [accessed 18/11/23]

[122] Rachel Shabi, 'Stronger communities are emerging out of the wreckage of the pandemic', *The Guardian,* 8th September 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/08/pandemic-mutual-aid-politics-food-banks-welfare-state> [accessed 11/11/23]

[123] Andrew Hutchinson, 'Story project aims to bring Holbeck's rich history and heritage to life', *Yorkshire Evening Post',* 13th December 2019, <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/people/story-project-aims-to-bring-holbecks-rich-history-and-heritage-to-life-1338626> [accessed 23/11/2023]

[124] Lane, Interview.

[125] Lane, *The Club…* pp. 61-64.

[126] Lane, *The Club…*p. 63.

[127] Slung Low workforce stats, 'Who's Who', slunglow.org, <https://www.slunglow.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Workforce-Stats-202122.jpg> [accessed 12/07/23]

with product.'[128] In terms of space and program, the Holbeck is not arranged or run in a way which necessitates spending money on the part of the community member — it is free to enter, free to use, and there is no expectation to pay, especially considering Slung Low's pay-what-you-decide policy for shows. The fundamental shift brought about by the company is in the openness of the space to anyone who needs it, attempting to remove the commercial aspect which the club previously dictated (through its sole program being the working-men's club, which requires a membership fee to join).

Slung Low's non-commercial attitude (the bar is also non-profit) has not removed the commercial aspect of being a member of the club organisation (the membership fee is still in operation), but instead has shifted this to the *program*, rather than the fee being a constituent of entering the *space*. The Holbeck as a place is no longer transactional.

Furthermore, space and program intersect effectively with the company's existing policies to create a place where the community feel welcome and able to access arts and education without financial risk. The pay-what-you-decide policy allows people to 'access culture in an affordable way.'[129] This method means participants do not have to pay to enter the space, and the intention is to create a place where culture comes before capital. We must then question the extent to which the Holbeck actually achieves this.

The policy, combined with the lack of a box office or foyer (no specified transactional space for the performance) eliminates the risk associated with pre-paying for a performance, and allows for the participant to choose how much (if any) money to spend.[130] I would also posit that the physical space being free to enter and use makes it a welcoming place, a term which is interrogated in the next chapter.

The benefit of a venue like the Holbeck is how its spatial organisation can be used to engender Slung Low's free-at-point-of-use policy, in a more financially risk-free environment, as is Lane's idea of a welcoming place.[131] Tschumi's ideas are repeated by Lane, who takes issue with spaces that are set up for commercial transaction. He argues this makes them unwelcoming places, or places certain people can't access, such as newly refurbished theatre buildings 'designed like airport lounges [...] designed to take resources from people for services.'[132] He positions the Holbeck in opposition to this philosophy, both through its existing makeup and the values Slung Low has brought into it.

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[128] Lane, interview.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

Emma Lucy McDowell effectively lays out the nature of the transactional relationship existing within theatre (between performers and audiences) and through marketing.[133] There exists contention already between how participants in the art interact with it, and the ways our relationships to culture are often shaped by the nature of commerce. Her thesis focuses on the meaning-making of performance, but these concepts can be applied here to the spatiality of transaction present within the Holbeck. We can understand these airport-lounge-like places as being transactional in themselves, and areas like the box office in a theatre as transactional spaces within a building.

Lane himself is aware of the distinction between a place which prioritises transaction and draws a distinction between these and the concept of the community centre. Where an arts centre such as a regional theatre is designed, organised, and constructed in such a way that prioritises transaction, for Lane, 'in that sense they don't function like community centres.'[134] He suggests that the function of a community centre itself must remove the transactional barrier between people and culture, and attempts to put this into practise in the Holbeck. What the Holbeck's model demonstrates, therefore, is the potential for alternative means of interaction with a place of culture in similar communities. However, the extent to which this can be further generalised is limited, due to the specific nature of this case study. The Holbeck exists within its particular community at a particular point in time, serving a largely white Christian community with 43% classed as economically inactive; as such, its possibilities and success are unique to it and cannot be easily generalised.[135] At the Holbeck at any rate, community members can interact with one another and participate in place-making in a non-transactional way. Lane articulates this as 'pushing you to being [sic] a citizen, not a customer.'[136]

In order to fulfil the function of the community centre, therefore, places can remain opposed to a single transactional program. Rather than being solely a theatre or a social club/bar, the Holbeck is effectively open to all members of the community free of charge, as both a meeting place and a service. This is fundamental to the place itself (because of how it is spatially organised and programmed) and also contained within the values of the company. It is through the combination of the existing club (both physical building and group) and the values of the theatre company (through crossprogramming) that the Holbeck effectively serves its community.

The Holbeck is crossprogrammed as an arts centre for theatre and education but also remains in operation as a community function room. It operates beyond the bar-focussed program it previously had. It is the extent to which it does this effectively that is questionable. Even Lane, interviewed

[133] Emma Lucy McDowell, 'From transaction to enaction: reframing theatre marketing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2022), p. 22-24.
[134] Lane, interview.
[135] ONS.
[136] Lane, interview.

toward the end of the company's tenure at the Holbeck, acknowledged the tension between what the Holbeck had been and what it became during Slung Low's management, from the points of view of the community and the club's committee:

> 'And then there are some people who are like "This is our place," and I'm like "What does that mean? Who are you excluding? How are you feeling that?". "What is it to be 'from' somewhere?" Especially in this day and age where people don't stay.'[137]

This study is restricted to Lane's perspective on these issues, but his thoughts express a tension he perceives between people and place, in that he believes there are people being excluded from the club. Of course, a survey of the Holbeck committee's views may suggest an alternative picture, around who may be excluding whom. Lane's views introduce greater questions around feelings of ownership and placedness, such as who believes they own or have greater right to the Holbeck and where Lane sees himself in this discussion as manager of the company and therefore the club. The Slung Low values Lane talks about have clashed with the existing placedness of the Holbeck, and the changes that they have brought about have caused tension between *how* it is serving the community and *who* exactly this community is.

Some of these questions are too large to be explored here, however the next chapters will interrogate how places can operate to make people feel welcome or unwelcome, and seek to address Lane's confusion over the people who feel a sense of exclusion or ownership over the Holbeck.

[137] Ibid.

4. ‘Welcoming’ and hospitality

As part of understanding how people interact with place, we must also consider how and when people can be made to feel welcome, like they have a right to belong to a particular place. I offer the term ‘welcoming’ as an alternative to the popular ‘hospitality’ for use in this context.

Derridean hospitality

Jacques Derrida writes about hospitality as the system of written or unwritten laws, rules, and codes governing how a “host” should behave towards a “guest,” and which he attempts to reconcile with the notion of unconditional kindness and giving towards others.[138] Judith Still, in her analysis of Derrida, notes the slipperiness of the term in both common use and Derrida’s own writing, using the term flexibly in her own book, ‘to cover a wide range of relations, both macro and micro.[139]

The first domain of hospitality for Derrida is the social inter-relationships ‘governed by moral or ethical concerns,’ as ‘hospitality is always about crossing thresholds.’[140] For Derrida, hospitality is a law of ethics, and his thinking is grounded in the work of Immanuel Kant, who believed hospitality is a question of ‘right and not philanthropy.’[141] It arises from duty and not from love of mankind. The action of ‘being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill’ is, therefore, one of moral law.[142]

Within the framework I have laid out, the concept of “place” here is simply the ownership of space: the place that is my “home” is the physical space which I legally own. Derrida references Kant’s Wirtbarkeit (as an equivalent to the Latin hospitalität) which means ‘the right of the stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else’s territory.’[143] Hospitality here is an interplay between one who owns and one who does not, and constitutes letting someone into a place in which they don’t belong per se.

Both Derrida and his predecessor Kant see hospitality as arising from a moral sense of duty and natural law. It is opposed to hostility, it is ‘an obligation, the *greeting* of the foreign other as friend

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[138] Judith Still, *Derrida and hospitality: theory and practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 5.
[139] Ibid., p. 6.
[140] Ibid., p. 7.
[141] Jacques Derrida, ‘Hospitality,’ *Angelaki*, 5 (2000), 3-18 (p. 4.).
[142] ‘Hospitality’ in the Oxford English Dictionary [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/88730?redirectedFrom=hospitality#eid> [accessed 05/09/2022]
[143] Derrida, p. 4.

but on the condition that the host [...] remains the *patron* [...and…] maintains his own authority[...]'[144] They accept that, despite the intention of equality established by the host giving up their space and their resources to the guest, there is tied up within hospitality a notion of condition. What these conditions of hospitality are and how they are imposed on one's guest is the subject of Derrida's inquiries.

Derrida's hospitality is ultimately tied up with power. The very idea of one person being another's 'guest' introduces the question of who this guest is, where they are from, and how they relate to the 'host,' for, 'if one determines the other as stranger, one is already introducing the circles of conditionality that are family, nation, state, and citizenship.'[145] Some sort of context is needed to resolve the concept, which introduces a power dynamic, ergo some conditional relationship between the two. This host 'must be assured of his sovereignty over the space and goods he offers' to maintain that the place is really his place.[146] In this framework, as soon as there is a door and windows, '[...] someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality.'[147]
The point we reach with Derrida's hospitality is the breakdown of these conditions of hospitality arising from the unequal power relationship between two people in a given place. However, this is not the focus of this dissertation. Instead, the question which will be later explored in relation to The Holbeck is how people and place interact where the place (The Holbeck) and its resources (rooms, Slung Low's resources) are intended to be equally open to and shared with the community. Hence, I look to alternative literature to offer the term 'welcoming' as an alternative to entering the debates around power contained within 'hospitality'.

Welcoming as opposed to hospitality

Rachel Turner-King introduces the term welcoming in her analysis of Derrida's work to discuss how we create welcoming spaces in the city.[148] She uses as her case studies the Warwick Arts Centre and The Belgrade (Coventry) and begins with the Derridean premise that, since hospitality is a role which is performed, either as host or guest, the ensuing power relationship means a host has the potential to make their guests feel welcome or unwelcome. It is important to note that she uses the term 'space' in the Derridean/Lefebvrean sense of abstract social space, where I have substituted the idea of 'place.'

[144] Ibid., p. 4 (emphasis in original).
[145] Ibid., p. 8.
[146] Ibid., p. 14.
[147] Ibid., p. 14.
[148] Rachel Turner-King, 'Creating welcoming spaces in the city: exploring the theory and practice of 'hospitality' in two regional theatres', *Research in Drama Education,* 23 (2018), 421-437.

Turner-King refers to the Warwick Arts Centre's director's view that their Helen Martin Studio is designed to be a kind of 'neutral space,' with its bare, blank canvas room with large windows.[149] However, she rightfully rejects this idea, drawing on Lefebvre to argue that '...space is intrinsically linked to issues of access and territory.'[150] She concludes that 'spaces' (covering Lefebvre's social spaces; physical 'spaces' and 'places', as previously defined) are not always automatically accessible, no matter how neutral their design may have been.[151] In any place, then, Derrida's host is automatically considered the insider, and the guest the outsider — there is one who belongs in or owns the territory and one who does not.[152]

This introduces many slippery terms which would require more in-depth definition — access, belonging, neutrality — which Derrida and Turner-King admittedly do not provide, and for which it is not necessary to investigate in this project. Instead, where Derrida does use the word 'welcoming,' he considers it alongside the verbs 'invite,' 'bid,' and 'accept.'[153] But I argue that welcome is an outlier here in that it does more than just 'allow' someone passage into a place. These other terms revolve around the idea of letting someone into a place which is the domain of another who has control over its space and resources.

Instead, my case study considers the concept of welcoming someone into a place shared by the community, which does not share the same power relationship as in Derrida's examples. In these places, while there are appointed managers or overseers, they are places where anyone is allowed to be without invitation. Rather than revolving around the idea of one person/group 'taking' space and resources from another — the 'double postulation of giving and taking'[154] which Derrida refers to — 'welcoming' is what can occur also when we are sharing a common space, and resources intended for all.

Turner-King also makes reference to Dikeç et al., who comment that the host should do more than just open the door, but should engage and respond to the specificities of the guest.[155] From here we can work towards a definition of 'welcoming,' encapsulating not only making sure the door is open (both figuratively and physically) but that we are actively looking for ways to make a place respond to the individual nuances of the guest.

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[149] Ibid., p. 426.
[150] Ibid., p. 426.
[151] Ibid., p. 426.
[152] Ibid., p. 426.
[153] Derrida, p. 6.
[154] Ibid., p. 7.
[155] Turner-King, p. 427.

Furthermore, access to a place (i.e. being able to enter it; having the barriers removed which prevent you being able benefit from it)[156] is not 'enough to foster meaningful engagement'.[157] People have to invest in a place to become attached to it, such as the local pub, working-men's club, or community centre. The Holbeck is an example of a place which has been invested in by its community, not necessarily in a financial sense, but in the meaningful engagement with it. Turner-King goes on to reference Cresswell's[158] idea of 'place' being space invested with meaning, and draws comparison to Helen Nicholson's argument that to feel belonging, participants 'need to be recognised by others as integral to producing that space.'[159] In essence, the extent to which a community can enter and make use of a place alone does not effect a sense of belonging to it or welcome in it.

Turner-King draws on Ash Amin's critique of the city as being a ready-made place for conviviality, noting a difference between 'co-presence' and 'collaboration' within a particular place which constitutes how we welcome people into it.[160] Co-presence here is simply the sharing of space, different people using a space for different (to use our term from Tschumi) programs, co-existing together in the physical space. Collaboration, on the other hand, is more akin to Cresswell's place-making, when the people using a space are working together on a shared program or activity, investing meaning in it together. Following this concept, strangers are no longer the opposition, to be let in or kept out, but fellow makers and users of the shared place that is created. Hence, it is more useful to adopt an idea of welcoming which encompasses the endeavour to collaborate within a place, over giving, receiving, or taking control over it.

A theological perspective on welcoming

The concept of welcoming in relation to ideas around hospitality and duty is not only an ethical or philosophical concept, but a key area of religious thought, which can provide additional ways of defining and using the term. Thomas E Reynolds is a theologian who provides an interesting Christian take on what we mean when we talk of welcoming people.[161] He, too, discusses Derrida, though he

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[156] See Alistair Duggin, 'What we mean when we talk about accessibility,' *Gov.uk*, 16 May 2016, <https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/05/16/what-we-mean-when-we-talk-about-accessibility-2/> [accessed 04/06/2022]
[157] Turner–King, p. 429.
[158] Referenced and discussed in my section on defining 'space' and 'place.'
[159] Helen Nicholson, p. 209, quoted in Turner-King. (Note she is using 'space' in the Derridean/Lefebvrean way where I am using 'place')
[160] Ash Amin (multiple works), in Turner-King, p. 433.
[161] Thomas E Reynolds, 'Welcoming without Reserve? A Case in Christian Hospitality,' *Theology Today*, 63 (2006), 191-202.

disagrees with his conceptualisation, instead taking his own definition from the Christian teachings of Christ.

Reynolds articulates how Christian hospitality is a 'willingness to make room for another's unique presence' and addresses the conditionality of Derrida's hospitality in opposition to the unconditional and community-orientated Christian concept.[162] His article explores how we navigate hospitality and how welcoming someone in affects the person who does so (welcoming here is *part* of hospitality, the act of bringing someone into a place). He gives the example of a Church in America which was used to perform a Jewish funeral for a member of the community.[163] Reynolds discusses the theological and social implications of this, in what could be articulated as a spiritual cross-programming, where the Christian place of worship is used for a Jewish ceremony. His concern is the question: 'Does hospitality require a person or group to readjust who they are in order to welcome the guest?'[164]. Reynolds' interest is in the way the power dynamic and the act of giving up resources or letting someone into a place changes the relationships within, or perceived ownership of, that place.

The person or people to be welcomed into a particular place (e.g. the home) can be regarded as marginalised members of the community, whether that be the existing local community (e.g. Holbeck) or the wider Christian community of all people. Reynolds links this to Eastern biblical traditions, where the idea of being a good host arose around providing a place for the 'stranger' in need, where, '[m]ade vulnerable by this "lack of place," the stranger was regarded as a person in need, on a par with the marginalised in the community.' In the context of a community such as Holbeck, those in need are those in the community who need a free space and resources to put on their theatre; those who needed food from the foodbank during Covid lockdown; and those who want to access the cultural community college to learn things they did not know before.[165]

In this Christian conceptualisation, 'hospitality is a radical form of reciprocity that created space for identifying with and receiving the stranger as oneself.'[166] This is why hospitality as a term is difficult to apply in my discussion, as it assumes one party to be the stranger or outsider to the place. The difficulty comes in considering the Holbeck community, as I would argue no members of the local community are strangers/outsiders to it, unless we categorise those 'in need' as such. Whereas, 'welcoming' offers us a way to describe the act of making those people who are already part of the community, but do not participate in the Holbeck (club), feel both invited and active within it. In

[162] Ibid., p. 191.
[163] Ibid., p. 192-193.
[164] Ibid., p. 196.
[165] See Alan Lane, *The Club*...
[166] Reynolds, p. 196.

doing so, we can talk about the Holbeck club as still belonging to the community, who are all by definition invited guests, but not all experiencing a sense of active participation and, to use Amin's term, collaboration.[167]

It remains true that some sort of shift occurs when people intersect a place they may not have participated in before. Reynolds admits that inviting the stranger in causes change to the existing relationships between people and place, as '[t]he status quo is challenged' and '[t]he familiar is defamiliarized [sic].'[168] New people are welcomed into a place to collaborate on its shared program, and the existing ways of being and interacting must move to accommodate. How this functions in the Holbeck will be discussed later on.

However, Reynolds is clear in his rejection of Derrida's more dire sense of a host giving up/away their home, and reinforces that '[h]ospitality traffics neither in indeterminate self-abandonment nor in controlling self-preoccupation'.[169] Reynolds' disagrees with Derrida's idea that the host must give up their home and the guest must give up their identity at the same time, which Derrida struggles to reconcile. For Reynolds, the guest need not give up their own identity and assimilate into the place and program of the host in order to be welcomed.

Welcoming, then, does not require a sacrifice of power or place, as causes difficulties for Derrida, because, in doing so, one gives up the very resources intended to be shared. For Reynolds, '[g]iving up one's identity in order to attend to another forfeits the resources for welcoming and caring for another, namely, having a place, a home.'[170] With welcoming, neither party must alter their identity (i.e. assimilate or change their relationship to the place) in order to participate in the program. The relationships within the place must be renegotiated when the existing, 'familiar' status quo is altered by new arrivals, but they can be welcomed into collaboration (place-making through a shared program) without affecting the existing identities within. This is the 'centre of gravity' which Reynolds postulates 'lies neither in the home nor in the stranger, neither in the host nor in the guest.'[171] Of course, Reynolds articulates this as God, but within the context of this dissertation we may take this to be the collaborative program we are bringing host, guest, space, and place together to participate in.

Furthermore, the very idea of a 'host' can cause complications for application to places like the Holbeck. Judith Still suggests the host concept can encourage 'self-flattering.'[172] The centre of

[167] Turner-King, p. 433.
[168] Reynolds, p. 197.
[169] Ibid., p. 198.
[170] Ibid., p. 198.
[171] Ibid., p.198.
[172] Still, p. 9.

gravity for her also does not reside with the host, but she does not postulate where it lies. Instead she provides an apt articulation of why the concept of hospitality is not as useful a term to apply here, since it 'implies letting the other into oneself [...] it is invasive of the integrity of the self, or the dominion of the self.'[173] Welcoming, as opposed to hospitality, does not rely on a concept of othering, but allows for a community-centred approach where, despite one group or person taking responsibility for the management of the place (this could be the Holbeck's committee and/or Slung Low), all members of the community are members of the place, and do not need to be invited, nor perceived as other.

Hospitality must be 'negotiated and renegotiated in each instance and according to different exigencies.'[174] Therefore, the driving focus of the negotiation between place and person is the most urgent need. As such, this project concerns the pressing needs of the Holbeck community, such as the need for food from the foodbank, or the need for community members to be able to use the resources and space for their events. The needs of the community take precedence over the needs of the perceived 'host' to maintain control.

Forming a definition

From here, then, we can form a definition of what is meant by 'welcoming,' and consider it different from the idea of hospitality. Firstly, welcoming does not just open the door, but looks for and practises ways of responding to the individual needs and nuances of the target community. Secondly, it is not concerned with (and does not assume) the giving up of one's identity for the sake of another (either way round, host-guest or guest-host). Instead, it concerns itself with the indiscriminate sharing of space, place, and resources without having either person need to give up their identity. Simply put, it revolves around meeting together on common and equal ground.

Therefore, it is about negotiating or renegotiating in relation to the most urgent needs of the person we are welcoming into a particular place. The way the concept of welcoming pertains to the Holbeck, its local community, and Slung Low, centres around the ways the Holbeck as a place, and the people who use it, respond to and intersect with the those who are not current participants in it.

[173] Ibid., p. 13.
[174] Reynolds, p. 201.

5. Considering the Holbeck

Is the Holbeck a welcoming place?

There is great importance of focusing efforts to welcome people into a community arts place. The sort of 'place' a venue is can either shut people out or welcome them in. As explored in the previous chapter, I use welcoming as a more applicable term than 'hospitality' but continue to draw on literature which uses both, in order to understand how principles of hospitality can be applied to the discussion of creating welcoming places. In interview with Alan Lane, he elaborated on the ways people relate to his company and the Holbeck, as well as the problems they have tried to overcome.

For Lane, there are difficulties around how to get the community through the door of the Holbeck. Not only has the social club seen a decline in its activity, and the small group of volunteers have made up a large portion of patrons, Slung Low are faced with barriers when trying to entice theatre audiences to participate. The crux of the matter is that they are trying to get people into the Holbeck for theatre, in an area of Leeds which is not commonly targeted by other cultural institutions.

Slung Low's focus was upon that community who, through lack of outreach from city-centre cultural products, regularly do not engage with the arts, alongside those (overlapping) who sit outside the membership of the Club and may not have historically had a reason to enter. The Club's committee, in Lane's view, prioritise the functioning of the Holbeck as a social club, maintaining the bar through volunteers in the period before Slung Low moved in and during.[175]

Welcoming people into a place begins with seeing them as valuable members of, and participants in, it. In essence the venue has to become a place which appeals to people who are usually on the periphery of the city's cultural sphere, in areas or demographics which are not frequently advertised to or do not have the same access (e.g. distance or transport links) to places such as theatres, such as Holbeck outside the donut zone.[176] Lane explains his own frustrations:

> 'I live in a city with an opera company, ballet company, and a producing theatre company, and it's less than two miles from Holbeck - and I don't ever see a poster for it, because the marketing… Quite right, the marketing campaign goes "let's not waste our money on Holbeck, they're too poor to come to us."'[177]

[175] See Lane, Interview and Lane, *The Club…*
[176] See Bell and Orozco
[177] Lane, interview.

His issue is a spatio-political one. The programming and zoning[178] of the city of Leeds means that communities outside the donut zone,[179] particularly more deprived areas like Holbeck, are not targeted as viable customers for the city's cultural enterprises, made to feel like they are not welcome in the places where the arts reside.

The ethos of Slung Low has shifted between its time at the HUB and its move to the Holbeck in response to these contentions — two different places, occupying radically different spaces. His remarks cut to the point of the issue, that venues and companies must work twice as hard to create welcoming places for their communities to access culture like theatre, music, dance. It seems that, at the HUB, Lane saw his job as being to bring people from outside *into* Holbeck — to make it a place of culture in itself. Now based at the Holbeck, his focus has changed. Instead, the company is trying to prioritise the immediate community, the culture (Slung Low's theatre work, the community college classes, and social events in the club which the community can hire out) is embedded in and on the doorstep of the people the venue serves. The differences in the spaces themselves (the HUB is five railway arches and the Holbeck is a working-men's club) have had an effect, how they are laid out and what they have to offer, such as the Holbeck's greater number of rooms, better heating, etc. Furthermore, the vision of the company — and/or its funding imperatives — has shifted since the Covid pandemic, looking at ways to further embed within and serve the community.

Lane rightfully argues that theatres may have cheap tickets or special schemes, but need to actively market to people that they are worthy customers. Welcoming people in and creating welcoming places is more than simply being close and cheap. A welcoming place has to communicate to its community that they are worth inviting in and that the program(s) is for them. In a community context, this needs to push ever further, too, to avoid the community feeling as though they are only worth welcoming in if they are customers. As explored earlier, community places must welcome without reserve[180] and seek out non-transactional[181] ways of allowing people and program to meet based on the nuances of the immediate community.

The Holbeck functions in this way. Firstly, following Lefebvre's understanding, if space is ideologically organised 'in accordance with social divisions of labour,' then the city is fragmented — into areas of work and leisure.[182] Lefebvre believed this to be true of cities in his temporal context but, as we know from Bell and Orozco, this is also applicable to Holbeck. As Lane argues, where the culture is located, the culture is advertised; more affluent areas in the city centre are more likely in

[178] Tschumi in Eisenschmidt, p. 135. Also see Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction.*
[179] See Bell and Orozco.
[180] See Reynolds.
[181] See McDowell.
[182] Lefebvre, p. 90.

turn to be advertised to and places located within the city's donut zone are easy advert points. Holbeck lies outside this, in a zone lacking in cultural building as well as being less affluent. In their use of the Holbeck, Slung Low are attempting to serve a working-class community which not only has limited interaction with the larger cultural centres of the city, but is less advertised to; people who may not have the chance or money to previously engage with theatre are the company's main demographic in Holbeck.

Secondly, the Holbeck's location coupled with Slung Low's commitment and experience with the HUB and the benefit of the Holbeck's place in the city mean that culture is embedded within the community and on the doorstep. Rather than trying to get people to come *to* the theatre, or assuming they're 'too poor to come to us', community-embedded theatre like the Holbeck assumes that its community wants to access culture, and programmes accordingly in a way which is welcoming to them. The Holbeck is welcoming to its immediate community, I would argue, because it foregrounds this idea of its program as to serve the community's needs. It also serves as a useful model of how other venues can reorientate their focus towards their local communities.

The important relationship between culture and place.

The spatial relationship between place, culture, and people can dictate and affect how welcome people feel. Particularly, where Holbeck sits outside the city limits, its main cultural centre is The Holbeck. Whether a place is welcoming or unwelcoming to an individual is affected by their relationship to it, the sort of place it is in their subjective lived experience. Where a person or community lives in relation to where culture is practised within the city not only gives information about an individual's relationship to places of culture, but also culture itself. It is through Slung Low's ethos and how they program the space they have that answers Lane's questions: '*where* are you telling people about it? *How* are you telling people about it? Who meets you at the door? What is *the door*?'[183] Lane is considering this by being embedded within their target community, and programming according to the needs and wishes of Holbeck's residents, in a free-to-enter, open venue, Slung Low work towards making a welcoming arts centre and giving greater access to culture to their community.

Slung Low's ethos around the Holbeck seeks to serve its particular working-class community, a socially deprived, multi-ethnic demographic of people who live in Holbeck but work elsewhere. This necessitates a place in which the community can meet and interact with one another in leisure time focused around the home, as the Holbeck social club has provided to its mainly white male demographic of pub-goers since for most of its operation in the Twentieth Century.

[183] Lane, interview.

The Holbeck under Slung Low provide the community with services that they are missing, and/or are not marketed to Holbeck by the other culture centres in Leeds, in doing so changing the Holbeck community's cultural identities and increasing cultural capital. Dikeç et al explain 'every act of hospitality gives space, just as it gives time,'[184] in that the Holbeck physically provides space(s) for the community to use, such as through their 'say yes' policy, letting members of the community use the function room for free and saying 'yes' to every request.[185] The values of Slung Low focus around giving the community's space *to* the community. Holbeck's community form a cultural identity around the Holbeck social club, because identity itself is 'organized in fundamentally spacialized ways.'[186] Like any community, the community venues act as anchors for cultural identification, since our identities as participators in culture are formed and maintained around what we access through the community.[187]

We are given space (physically in which to create our cultural activities, like the pub, performances, or clubs etc.) through the community centre, or the theatre, or the pub, and these places become intrinsic to our cultural identity. In being given space in this way, the Holbeck community can participate in culture and form their own cultural identities without having to leave their familiar territory or community.

The Holbeck not only provides a gateway to culture, but to a place where residents can form an identity with their community. Despite the club dropping the title of 'working-men's club' at Slung Low's request, the Holbeck is a site for working-class identity-formation. Douglas Robertson states that 'place is a proxy for class identity,' and thus the way the Holbeck operates in relation to culture and its community is fundamentally tied with class.[188] Why this occurs significantly in this place is not only because of the inherent classedness of place, but thanks to the Holbeck's unique working-class history and the strong identity of its community. The complications of place and welcome within the Holbeck arise from the specific community each group running the club (the committee and Slung Low) are trying to serve. To paraphrase Lane, Slung Low's attempt is to widen the Holbeck's reach through their arts programs to members of the community who may not want to access the bar but have other culture needs, hence his Community College to share skills within the community.[189] The

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[184] Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, 'Extending Hospitality: giving space, taking time,' *Paragraph*, 32 (2009), 1-14 (p. 12).
[185] Lane, interview.
[186] Dikeç et al., pp. 7-8.
[187] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[188] Douglas Robertson, 'Knowing Your Place: The Formation and Sustenance of Class-Based Place Identity,' *Theory and Society*, 30 (2013), 368–383 (p. 368).
[189] Lane, Interview.

committee, on the other hand, appear - from Lane's perspective - to be more attuned to preservation of its existing members who regularly use the bar as a social meeting place.[190]

Robertson goes on to explain how 'the class-based constructions of place identity are symbolically grounded in historic and thus, now largely defunct, male employment stereotypes.'[191] The original and existing community around Holbeck — outside the main donut zone — is what allows for this strong cultural identity production, and why Slung Low's entrance caused tension between the existing group and committee of the working-men's club. The historic makeup of the area — male and working-class — meant that actions for change within the Holbeck were difficult.[192]

With the removal of traditional labour following Thatcherite policies, the necessity for a place for the (male) working-class community, particularly around Holbeck, was exacerbated. Angela Lait identifies how 'work is a significant measure of identity and personal value, so the removal of many of the certainties and stabilities of employment has great impact on the individual.'[193] The Holbeck functions as this community hub through its use as a working-men's club, providing a welcoming place for *this* community, but, as Lane suggests, this led to problems with welcoming the wider Holbeck community.

This shift towards the end of the Twentieth Century, concurrent with the Holbeck's use mainly as a drinking place, reflects Lait's observation of the 'social and organisational structures and processes [which] changed towards the end of the twentieth century, making it more difficult to construct identity with any coherence.'[194] The very process of identity-making is concerned with the organisation of programs like work, and can explain the tension between existing program of the club and its new direction under Slung Low.

How the Holbeck is physically located and operates relative to its community has potential to change the sort of place it is, and the way people may feel welcome to it and its services. The physical, spatial relationship between Holbeck's people and the Holbeck as a place is crucial to the way that they can access this cultural centre and site of identity-formation. For the Holbeck, '[i]f you're in the middle of a community and they have to walk past you every day, that's different than if they have to walk *to* you every day.'[195] Being physically in the community, the Holbeck takes on a different function or potential program to Slung Low's previous venue the HUB. This spatial relationship to the venue itself changes the way people interact with it. It is not somewhere people

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[190] Ibid.
[191] Robertson, p. 377.
[192] Lane, *The Club*..., p. 64.
[193] Angela Lait, *Telling Tales: Work, Narrative and Identity in a Market Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 1-2.
[194] Ibid., p. 5.
[195] Lane, interview.

have to go *to*, leaving Holbeck, but rather it is within their own community and space, where they already feel welcome.

Moreover, it is not only the removal of physical barriers such as money and travel which constitute identification with a place. Drawing on Lefebvre and Derrida, Turner-King identifies that access to a space alone is not 'enough to foster meaningful engagement' between the community.[196] In fact, it is the investment within a particular place which allows people to become attached to it, and thus feel welcome. Lane's difficulties arose with the conflict between those who had already identified with and invested in the Holbeck, including its committee of volunteers, and the new members of the community Slung Low wished to target to welcome in.

Tensions of place

Slung Low clashed with the Holbeck's committee over who was coming into the space and who the venue is for/serving. In Lane's words, 'when we're not physically present, the values of the space go back to the committee, so we can't be sure that everyone is welcome when we're not there, and that's not good enough.'[197] Again Lane is not using the term space in the same way, and the location of the 'values' is another tangent, but the point he makes is reminiscent of Dikeç and Lait's points (above) that ideology is placed. The ideologies of the committee and Slung Low clash within the same place, each representing alternative programs and ways of welcoming.

As discussed in chapter 3, within the Holbeck there were two conflicting ideologies at play: the retentionist ideology of the club's committee who sought to hold on to the club's existing membership and offer, as well as Slung Low's commitment to widening the scope of programs with which the community interact in what, until their move out of the Holbeck, was 'the only public performance space [...][and] event room in Holbeck.'[198] As ever, this study is limited to Lane's own perspectives as artist-turned-manager, and reflects his views at a particular point in time, and his company's existence.

Nevertheless, Lane's view can help to unpick the ways this relationship eventually broke down, and these clashing - though not mutually exclusive - ideologies of program necessitated Slung Low's departure. Lane and his colleagues 'believe in some things, around accessibility and diversity, that they [the committee] do not believe in. And that reflects on how people feel welcome and what can be done in that space.'[199] His assertion supports the notion that program is affected and in some

[196] Turner-King, p. 429.
[197] Lane interview.
[198] Lane, 'Blogpost: AGM vote to leave The Holbeck.
[199] Lane, interview.

way dictated by the ideologies of place held by those groups who invest in it. The historic white working-class groups have forged their own identities around the place that is the Holbeck, and the crossprogamming to an arts centre upset these existing relationships.

As quoted earlier, Nicholson states that to feel a sense of belonging in a place, people 'need to be recognised by others as integral to producing that space.'[200] The tension comes from who is integral to 'producing' the place that is the Holbeck, and Alan Lane seems to feel that the white, working-class, drinking community see themselves as integral, and others as outsiders coming *into* it. In the Holbeck — which has a bar and seating and is set up for the purchase and consumption of alcohol — it is easy to see how someone who does not drink could be not integral to the production of place if that place is understood to be a pub. Hence, Slung Low's commitment to changing the program contested the notion that the Holbeck was a place of drinking.

We do not need to consider that some group will always feel unwelcome, however, as Tschumi's understanding that multiple programs can exist in one place can recontextualise how the Holbeck deals with being a different kind of place to different groups. Here we can apply Amin's 'co-presence' versus 'collaboration.'[201] What we can take from Amin's point is that the Holbeck committee's perception is one of co-presence, where others are being welcomed into their place, or perhaps Slung Low are attempting to remove the place with which they have identified. In the opening-up of the Holbeck to a multitude of activities while keeping the bar and club membership, the company are attempting to incite collaboration over co-presence. Firstly, by bringing Slung Low's existing audiences in contact with the immediate community of residents through events and performances. Slung Low also work to specifically invite residents — such as Holbeck's non-drinking Muslim community — who would not ordinarily interact with the club as primarily a bar to performances, events, and encourage different groups in Holbeck to use the club for their own private functions.[202] Lane himself took a slightly pessimistic view of the situation. Speaking of Slung Low's departure, handing back the management of the venue to the committee, his opinion that 'It's incredibly sad to me that I can't see a way forward financially for the club without our money, but that's life' demonstrates that perhaps this attempt has not been wholly successful.[203] Of course, this is limited to Lane's view alone, at a busy, seemingly tense time shortly before Slung Low's move, and

[200] Helen Nicholson, quoted in Turner-King, p. 429.
[201] Amin, quoted in Turner-King, p. 433.
[202] See Lane, Interview and Lane, *The Club…,* p. 63.
[203] Lane, Interview.

more research is needed to determine the extent of this collaboration. Indeed, at the time of writing, The Holbeck is still open, programming events in the social club.[204]

Nevertheless, the benefit of the Holbeck crossprogrammed as an arts centre, as opposed to a purpose-built venue, is that it contains multiple programs, and has mixed use by different groups of people, compared to a new-build theatre, for example, (who may begin with only two groups: staff and audiences) and engenders more collaboration. Lane is correct that there may not always be cohesion between these different groups, but I would argue that the way the Holbeck is programmed and spatially configured offers a greater *possibility* of Amin's 'collaboration' than a venue which is designed and built for a particular program — or, in Tschumi's terms, where architectural form is treated as a starting point.[205]

Neither pub nor arts centre

During the Covid pandemic lockdown measures, Slung Low went a great way towards creating a welcoming place for their community, despite not being able to open the space. This further change of program, including using the Holbeck as a foodbank, allowed for greater identification between the community and theatre company, and allowed the Holbeck to fulfil community functions it had not done previously. Slung Low were able to make use of the club's existing presence as a community organisation to expand its functions in a time of need.

During lockdown, Slung Low at the Holbeck were functioning to help clinically vulnerable members of the community as a response, before governmental and local authority measures could be put in place.[206] 'Government schemes for the shielding and clinically vulnerable would kick in over the coming weeks,' Lane states, but the company's presence within the community allowed for swifter action in responding to people's needs.[207] Uniquely positioned within their community, Slung Low were able to not just make theatre but to fulfil these other significant roles. This represents the aspect of welcoming through sharing of resources, which Derrida also features in his ideas on hospitality.[208]

The tensions around place, explored above, can arise from the idea of not only sharing the space (thereby inviting others into the place) but also in Slung Low sharing their resources for free and the say yes policy. Derrida's hospitality is invasive to the self, 'perceived as potentially dangerous

[204] 'The Holbeck – Holbeck WMC', Facebook Page, <https://en-gb.facebook.com/holbeckwmcleeds> [accessed 11/07/23]
[205] Tschumi in Eisenschmidt, pp. 134-135.
[206] See Lane, *The Club…,* p. 70.
[207] Lane, interview.
[208] See chapter 4.

in economic terms because it implies sharing scarce resources.'[209] However, Judith Still argues that 'guests may be productive and may bring their gifts to the economy,'[210] with which conclusion Lane agrees, sharing that he believes without the help of the community, the Holbeck would not have survived.[211] Slung Low's activities — the sharing of their resources (people, space, time, food, money) — strengthened the relationship between them and the community, and opened the door for greater cohesion between the existing club members and Lane's team, at least from his point of view.[212] What Still does note is the potential for metaphorical violence depending on what limits are imposed or perversion of the 'law' of hospitality occurs, or who and how resources are perceived as being taken away from the host.

In the Holbeck, its use for different purposes, opening the club's rooms up for use by the community and theatre-makers when Slung Low took over gave some club members the feeling that the Holbeck was being taken over.[213] Lane also remarks upon this, explaining how Slung Low were aware of these tensions and sought to work with the committee to dispel them.[214] This violence, or 'cultural alteration experienced as violence' which the Holbeck committee seem to have experienced at first was able to be reconciled by the change of program during lockdown.[215] Using the club as a food bank and responding directly to the needs expressed by the community through running Holbeck Moor FC provided the collaboration needed to overcome the initial barriers.

The reciprocal relationship between space and program which Tschumi discusses manifests itself in a similar reciprocity between the conditions of the place in which Slung Low operate and the ethos of the company itself. Since leaving the HUB, the company's circumstances changed, and therefore naturally the mission-statement must change, alongside its ethos, because it is a community–embedded and –facing company (as opposed to a static and profit-driven one). John Howe tracks Slung Low's evolving ethos, 'from staging spectacular stage shows all over the world, in the most unusual places, to creating a community college in Holbeck.'[216] The crossprogramming of the space, and the place-making and collaboration which have occurred as a result of its use for different

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[209] Still, p. 13.
[210] Ibid., p. 13.
[211] Lane, Interview.
[212] Lane, *The Club…*, p. 210.
[213] Brett Chapman, *Standing in the Rain: Slung Low & The Holbeck, A short documentary*, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/340400303> [accessed 10/10/2021]
[214] Lane, Interview, also see Lane, *The Club.*.
[215] Still, p. 13.
[216] Jon Howe, 'Getting There From Here: How Slung Low are putting Holbeck on the road to recovery,' *A Leeds Revolution,* 03 April 2019, <http://www.aleedsrevolution.co.uk/getting-there-from-here-how-slung-low-are-putting-holbeck-on-the-road-to-recovery> [accessed 17/07/2022]

functions, has enabled a renegotiation of the company manifesto in response to the exigencies of its community.

It is Slung Low's mission statement, and its relationship to and manifestation through place, which demonstrates the benefit of the crossprogrammed space as a location for the arts/theatre. Rachel Perry discusses this in her article, and explains the usefulness of the mission statement for arts organisations in general, quoting Kotler and Kotler, who articulate the mission statement as the 'basis for compiling a set of sequenced priorities which consider the interrelated goals of creating powerful art, developing audiences and increasing community engagement (Kotler and Kotler, 2000).'[217] Her discussion covers similar territory, emphasising the link between ideas of hospitality and removing access barriers to arts participation.[218] In a company whose focus is on community engagement, the mission statement guides the way the organisation puts place into practice.

Perry refers to the Community College's statement, as a 'place to come and learn, free at the point of use,'[219] and I include Alan Lane's three values: 'Be useful. Be kind. Everyone gets what they want, but no one else gets to stop others getting what they want.'[220] Both of these statements encapsulate the core values of the kind of place the company wants to create, fulfilling Kotler and Kotler's notion of developing audiences and community engagement. Especially significant is the use of the word 'place' — albeit a more casual use of the term than in this dissertation, it demonstrates Slung Low's implicit attention to the significance of creating a welcoming place through which the community can access the arts and their other educational services.

In essence, through programming a multitude of non-performance events and points-of-entry, Slung Low shifted its own focus from its more migratory audiences at the HUB - bringing people from outside *into* the Holbeck area - to the more stationary and majority white working-class members of its immediate community.[221] These ideas of place are specific to Slung Low at the Holbeck, acting as a place in which the company attempts to identify and remove specific barriers to culture of its particular community.

Slung Low's application of its mission statement(s) through place-in-practice (collaboration, changes of program, sharing their place/resources with others) is a model for other companies and venues to welcome their communities. The company during the pandemic is, in the words of Chris Bond, 'the perfect bridge,' spanning the gap between theatre venue — a place to 'gather together and

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[217] Perry, p. 204.
[218] Slung Low, quoted in Perry, p. 205.
[219] Ibid., p. 203.
[220] Lane, *The Club…*, p. 14.
[221] ONS

hear stories' — and community centre, providing local residents with essential services.[222] While its ethos may shift over time, what drives the company — and, I argue, makes it so effective in its community engagement — is the unchanging approach Slung Low's Sally Proctor calls 'the same as it was a decade ago when we moved into the HUB: to turn up and to keep turning up.'[223]

Form vs function vs ethos

Fundamentally, Slung Low are capable of enacting their spatial practices in any space, using their policies and community engagement as a method of place-making and identity-formation. As a company, Slung Low's focus is on the community, and, in relation to the troubles of other groups or the requirements of the building itself restricting their vision of its program, they have moved from the Holbeck into a warehouse space in the Holbeck area.[224] In Lane's own words, they are 'capable of doing all the things we're doing in Holbeck somewhere else.'[225] The company's evolving values and ethos, while intricately tied to the Holbeck, are not dependent on it, and will be renegotiated in any new place according to the demands of the venue.

There is a resulting tension between the need to make money and the idea of the working-men's club at the Holbeck. If 'the club cannot exist within the confines of capitalism,' then its use as an arts centre, in a time when arts funding is limited and competitive, becomes precarious.[226] While Lefebvre correctly identified the fragmentation of the city into places designated for work and leisure, certain places like the Holbeck can blur the lines. To use his concepts of space, the Holbeck is fundamentally a leisure space, and the presence of the bar means it functions as a commercial space. However, its use by Slung Low designates it a work space, too, and perhaps even an educational space. In the terms I have used, the one place has many programs, which do not all reflect the non-capitalist ideals the club was founded with.

Lane, at least, seems to believe in the socialist essence of the club. But how does this align with his company? Both the company and the Holbeck need to make money, but also prioritise the open and free place they are trying to create. The club's entire being is in a state of contention

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[222] Chris Bond, 'Why Leeds-based theatre company Slung Low is a modern day inspiration,' *The Yorkshire Post,* 29 October 2020, <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/arts-and-culture/theatre-and-stage/why-leeds-based-theatre-company-slung-low-is-a-modern-day-inspiration-3019216> [accessed 04/08/2022]
[223] Sally Proctor, in 'Slung Low & The Holbeck: A Case Study,' *Co-Creating Change,* 23 January 2020, <https://www.cocreatingchange.org.uk/stories/slung-low-the-holbeck-a-case-study/> [accessed 04/07/2022]
[224] Jeremy Morton, 'Slung Low set to move on from The Holbeck club,' *South Leeds Life,* 04 April 2022, <https://southleedslife.com/slung-low-set-to-move-on-from-the-holbeck-club/> [accessed 29/11/2021]
[225] Lane, interview.
[226] Lane, interview.

between form and function, group vs group, program(s) at times conflicting with its fundamental makeup (socialist, place of leisure, white working-class). In this sense, the club space is programmed according to its fundamental aims (community, free, socialism) but clashes with the way the company chooses to do this, and the policies it has brought in.

Eventually, Slung Low's residence at the Holbeck came to an end, and they moved into the Warehouse at Holbeck in Holbeck's Jamyang Buddhist Centre in January 2023. On his blog in August 2022, Alan Lane announced the club committee's vote to allow Slung Low's departure and regain control of the venue, now debt-free.[227] Leading up to this, particular tensions between the committee and Slung Low - as well as the company's changing needs - contributed to a breakdown of this relationship and the strategic decision to move on.

Lane comment about being tired of 'subsidising the beer and racists' speaks to his frustration with the venue's focus, and a belief that the committee saw the Holbeck primarily as a pub rather than a community hub.[228] Certainly Slung Low's vision saw the Holbeck as community venue first and pub second, and with both parties problem solving from two opposing starting points, it can be understood how certain decisions could not be made to satisfy both simultaneously. Slung Low identified a community of non-drinkers, Muslims, and people of different ethnicities who as demographics has little interaction with either the social club or the company's work at the HUB, and sought to directly target these people and welcome them into the Holbeck. Slung Low worked towards programming or facilitating events which directly reach out to suit these demographics, whereas Lane's suggestion seems to be that the committee saw perceived their local community as those who already interact with the Holbeck, primarily its bar.

On a practical level, the Holbeck served as the 'only public performance space….[and] only event room in Holbeck,' and the move to the Warehouse - as well as continuing with their links to Ingram Road Primary School and taking over an industrial space on Bath Road (the site of the former HUB) - serves to increase the amount of programmable space open to the local community.[229]

To paraphrase Lane, Slung Low never set out to be bar managers, and his comments in interview allude to a mounting difficulty in running the bar on behalf of the Club alongside managing their own projects.[230] Slung Low sought release from this - and expansion, both of their own in-house

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[227] Alan Lane, 'Blogpost: AGM vote to leave The Holbeck' <'https://alanlaneblog.wordpress.com/2022/08/30/blogpost-agm-vote-to-leave-the-holbeck/ August 30, 2022> [accessed 28/11/23]
[228] Lane, Interview.
[229] Alan Lane, 'Blogpost: a new adventure for Slung Low- go big and get a new home.' <https://alanlaneblog.wordpress.com/2022/08/30/blogpost-a-new-adventure-for-slung-low-go-big-and-get-a-new-home/> [accessed 28/11/23]
[230] Lane, Interview.

projects and of the available places of community theatre in Holbeck. In looking to move (expand), they had greater opportunity to programme their own work and events in a larger and more adaptable spaces within the venue.

Both groups who manage the Holbeck (Slung Low and the committee) are attempting to achieve the same thing — be a welcoming space to their community — but their approaches clash, in relation to their idea of place and program. It seems that within the same space there are two contrasting places trying to exist and fight for dominance, the Slung Low arts centre/community hub and the working-men's social club. Both are equally valid and necessary as a meeting point for the community, and in theory can co-exist together, collaborating in the creation of place, but in practice have been unable to reconcile their values. Lane certainly sees a 'racist' community within the Holbeck's existing white working-class social club demographic, which is diametrically opposed to his multi-ethnic/cultural target community.[231] Lane sets out the disparity between 'the community that I'm in at the minute [that] is too poor, is too Muslim, is too non-culturally used to drinking for large periods of time in rooms with no windows, [that] they don't wanna do it' and the community targeted by the committee.[232] Lane's ideology certainly demands an explicit effort to reach hard-to-reach members of the community through adaptation and a critical change of program, over any focus on the bar at the centre of operations. For these community members, 'forcing them to [intercat with the club as a bar] is a bit ridiculous [...] they are interested in other things and it's important that the club reflects that and when it doesn't, it will die.' The Holbeck (club) which Alan Lane saw was one 'where people come for all sorts of social and civic reasons,' for which he saw Slung Low as solely responsible.[233]

Ultimately, it seems this attempt at collaboration could not be sustained, as both parties feel their values are being imposed upon and they are being restricted in what they can do. The integral and often fraught relationship between place and programme is played out in the ways people relate to a place and the values and ideologies contained within it. My framework explains the ways in which these concepts relate, and goes some way to understanding how collaboration can be possible, and why clashing interests can lead to failure. Certainly for Alan Lane and Sung Low, the need to move on and take back control of their own place and program is vital to sustaining their creative work as a theatre company. For the Holbeck social club, the need for the Holbeck as a place to remain owned and operated by club members is imperative, and serve that portion of the community who choose to invite themselves in and make themselves members.

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[231] Lane, Interview.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

The function of the community venue

The Holbeck also allows us to interrogate the nature of community venues themselves, and the benefit of the arts organisation *on* the community venue. Slung Low's Holbeck became a 'non-means tested, self-referral food bank' operating on behalf of the council, including taking responsibility for existing referrals.[234] Due to governmental and infrastructure problems, there was a gap where official services were not in place and, thanks to their position relative to the community (both physically — within it — and through their existing work) Slung Low ended up fulfilling other essential roles besides that of an arts centre.

This *is* the function of the community venue, to provide for its community and serve their needs, and therefore when the theatre company moves into this venue, in a sense this also becomes part of their remit. While unexpected, the services Slung Low provided to the Holbeck community are part of what it means to be a community venue. In essence, the company acted to change the program of the place, but the concept of service to the community remained the same.

Slung Low's lack of experience providing council services revealed significant issues posed to members of their community, and allowed them to address these in ways which they could not before, acting primarily as an arts centre. Lane recalls a local woman in need who, unable to get the required help through normal process, repeatedly called Slung Low for help.[235] The Holbeck effectively became a substitute for the community responsibilities of the council, putting huge pressure on the company, but also allowing for a closer, more immediate link between the community and the help they required (e.g. food parcels, energy top-ups).

The Holbeck being used for this program, in this way, demonstrates an alternative process of realising its socialist goals, with Slung Low 'effectively practising the universalism that once underpinned the welfare state but has long been eroded: the idea that the only way to ensure everyone has what they need is to give to anyone who asks.'[236] The fundamental underpinnings of the working-men's club — the mission statement of service to its community — while clashing with the company's own views in the arts centre/men's club co-existence, were able to be realised through collaboration on their shared values, in the joint program achieved as a result of covid lockdowns.

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[234] Lane, *The Club*..., p. 95.
[235] Ibid., p. 87.
[236] Rachel Shabi, 'Stronger communities are emerging out of the wreckage of the pandemic,' *The Guardian,* 08 September 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/08/pandemic-mutual-aid-politics-food-banks-welfare-state> [accessed 25/06/2022]

Amin's concept of collaboration becomes fully realised, and offers an alternative methodology which could address the continued problems Lane raises regarding the ideological differences which have had some part in the company's move.

Providing non-vocational education through the Cultural Community College, Slung Low bring together the responsibilities of both community centre and arts centre, creating ways for residents to access knowledge and skills otherwise unavailable to them. This program is shared by both theatres (i.e. purpose-built places in the city centre) and community centres alike. The sharing of knowledge and skills is inherent to both types of places, but enhanced by the unique position of the Holbeck being an arts/theatre venue *and* a community hub at the same time. Where theatres offer youth programmes, clubs, or courses, and we may expect to find classes, interest clubs (e.g. gardening, book clubs), or health and fitness (like Yoga in the village hall) in a community's local venue, Slung Low are able to combine these in one space, creating a free, welcoming, and useful place in the Holbeck.

This community–facing education, 'distinct from the instruction provided by schools, universities and the education departments of theatres,' is tailored to Holbeck's needs (and wants), and provides, like its food bank services during lockdown, a tailored service to its individual community.[237] In being a familiar environment, and through its welcoming practices, the Holbeck under Slung Low attempt to 'bring in people who may be put off by traditional learning environments,' which we could take to mean formal academic environments like colleges and universities, or the services available through city-centre theatres which, as Lane tells us, are not marketed to areas like Holbeck.[238]

The makeup of the Holbeck, with its intersection of social club, community centre, and arts centre, has combined with Slung Low's ethos and attitude to allow for useful risks to be taken in expanding the ways organisations and venues can address the needs of their communities. It is the advantages of place combined with Lane's blatant rejection of criticism around 'doing it [theatre, television, food bank] wrong' or 'putting public money at risk' in favour of bold risk-taking which have allowed the Holbeck to deliver the community engagement and council/arts services other places may not. I link this to the positive outcomes of 'rupture' which Perry claims of Slung Low, where 'public subsidy enables non-profit arts organisations to 'take risks with creative content and ideas.'[239]

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[237] Catherine Love-Smith (published as Catherine Love), 'Fair, please! The bus offering education for all, from stargazing to curry-making,' *The Guardian,* 08 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/jan/08/school-bus-leeds-cultural-community-college-slung-low> [accessed 15/03/2022]
[238] Love-Smith.
[239] Crossick and Kaszynska, quoted in Perry, p. 204.

Without public money, and without an ethos of taking risks, Slung Low's achievements at the Holbeck would not have been possible. Combined with its place within the community both physically and through investment from its members, the Holbeck serves as a key model for current and future arts organisation.

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored an alternative framework for conceptualising how community venues, not purpose-built for theatre, can function as welcoming places for their communities through attention to the relationship between space and program, in relation to class and the arts. I have discussed how the Holbeck operates within these frameworks as a meaningful place to its community which serves civic functions and enables Slung Low theatre company to enact their civic and artistic values in practice. A crossprogrammed space, the Holbeck is a place where the local community can go to access cultural, educational, and — in times of need —charitable services.

Using an architectural framework for my research, I have been able to offer a more concrete and practical understanding of how a venue's program relates to the space it is located in and how place-making occurs through collaboration with the community. Avoiding purely theoretical frameworks, the concept of program can be tied to bricks-and-mortar spaces and resources, and how these are utilised or negotiated to serve the community's needs and an organisation's values. Focusing on welcoming, as opposed to debates over the nature of hospitality, I have shown how Slung Low put practical measures in place with their resources, personnel, and policies — in this specific context — to support and engage the residents of Holbeck.

Tschumi's concept of a building's program enables a more nuanced way of framing how an organisation chooses to put the existing spatial configuration of their venue into use, enabling us to0 tie use and activities to the conditions or choices of the space itself. Tschumi's theory avoids the presupposition that form precedes function, and he offers a unique way of separating the two, while maintaining their intrinsic links.

However the difficulties Slung Low have faced, and their departure from the Holbeck in December 2022, illuminates that this is no exact science, and as such this project does not put forward an instructional approach for others to follow. Instead, I hope this research offers alternative frameworks for researchers, companies, or venues to think about the link between policies and place, and the different ways organisations can structure their approaches to community engagement.

Of course, this case study is restricted in its application, to the Holbeck in a particular time and place, and with a particular community surrounding it, with specific needs. I believe the points of departure through Welcome and Crossprogramming could offer other researchers the tools to conduct similar case studies, and provide alternative ways of framing discussions around how places of arts and culture relate to their immediate and target communities.

In a century where the politics of class are often lacking in debate or in academic material, a continued investigation of how people's lived experiences of class intersect with the places they live,

work, and participate in culture is more than necessary. While what it means to be working class has changed significantly over the last hundred years — and continues to change in relation to increased globalisation — the experience of being working-class has not gone away. As Lippard and Cresswell argue, people form their identities around their local communities, as they have always done, and despite the shifting of communities as people move for work or social mobility, community and cultural venues remain vital places where people can create and navigate their experiences of class.

At the point of departure, this research acknowledges that the effectiveness of Slung Low's practices is still yet to be fully seen. Certainly Alan Lane believes they have been effective in themselves, and the practical positive effects on the community, such as delivering food and topping up electricity metres, are measurable, but further research is needed to analyse the long-term impacts — on both the Holbeck community and how Slung Low are able to carry this over to their new venue. Future research should investigate the extent to which Holbeck's residents and the Holbeck's resident artists have benefitted from the way the venue is organised.

Asked about what will change following their departure, Lane told me: 'I think we'll also stop being a community centre.'[240] Instead, Slung Low will reprogram and renegotiate how the company operates. The conclusions of this research are specific to this place, in this time, and will not be relatable to all companies or venues, indeed to the same company in a different venue, but demonstrates how, 'distinct from the instruction provided by schools, universities and the education departments of theatres,' Slung Low's arts centre responds to its community's needs (and wants), and provides, like its food bank services during lockdown, a tailored service to its individual community.[241]

[240] Lane, interview.
[241] Love-Smith.

Appendices

Note: project title has been revised — following the distribution of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form — into the dissertation title, however all agreed parameters remain unchanged.

Contents:

Appendix 1:

Investigating the use of multi-purpose community spaces as working-class performance venues.

UNIVERSITY of York

Department of Theatre, Film, Television and

Interactive Media Ethics Committee

Participant Information Sheet – Non-Anonymous Interviews

Project background

The University of York would like to invite you to take part in the following project: *Investigating the relationship between theatre makers and multi-purpose community spaces, and class*.

Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or you would like further information.

What is the purpose of the project?

This project is being performed by Samuel Armstrong (sna520@york.ac.uk) who is an MA by Research student in Theatre at the University of York. This research is being undertaken for the assessment of the masters thesis, under the supervision of Dr Karen Quigley (karen.quigley@york.ac.uk) and Dr Mark Love-Smith (mark.love-smith@york.ac.uk).

The work that is being performed for the assessments within the module is being conducted according to restrictions that have been subject to approval by the TFTI Ethics committee. The Chair of the TFTI Ethics committee can be contacted on TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk.

For this research project, I am interested in understanding how community venues and venues not purpose-built for performance can offer accessible spaces for theatre-makers who self-identify as working-class to put on their work. I would like to investigate the alternative models of theatre space which multi-purpose venues offer. Your participation in this project will involve being interviewed in your capacity as a professional theatre-maker or community venue owner. I will record an online or in-person non-anonymous interview, and use your comments to support my thesis.

Please note that to comply with the approved Ethics requirements of this work, we do not intend to discuss sensitive topics with you that could be potentially upsetting or distressing. If you have any concerns about the topics that may be covered in the research study, please raise these concerns with the researcher.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you wish, we will provide you with access to the final thesis, which will also be available on the White Rose database once the marks have been ratified. If you would like to receive access to these, you can indicate as such on the consent form.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you identify yourself as a working-class theatre-maker or performer, or because you are associated with a venue which offers its space to working-class performers as one of its purposes.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant consent form. If you change your mind at any point during the research activity, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason. To withdraw your participation you need to email the researcher (sna520@york.ac.uk) and request that your data be removed from the project, upon which your interview recording will be deleted and none of your comments will be included in the thesis.

Will I be identified in any outputs?

Yes. Your participation in this interview is non-anonymous and therefore you will be identified in the final thesis by name and associated with your interview comments.

Privacy Notice

This section explains how personal data will be used by *Investigating the relationship between theatre makers and multi-purpose community, and class* at the University of York.

For this project, the University of York is the Data Controller. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Our registration number is Z4855807.

What is our legal basis for processing your data?

Privacy law (the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018) requires us to have a legal reason to process your personal data. Our reason is we need it to perform a public task.[1]

[1]This refers to UK GDPR Article 6 (1) (e): processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller

This is because the University has a public function, which includes carrying out research projects.[2] We need to use personal data in order to carry out this research project.

Information about your health, ethnicity, sexual identity and other sensitive information is called "special category" data. We have to have an additional legal reason to use this data, because it is sensitive. Our reason is that it is needed for research purposes.[3] All research projects at the University follow our research ethics policies.

How do we use your data?

You will be able to select an in-person audio-only recorded interview, or an online video and audio-recorded interview format in the consent form you will receive. Recordings will be used to refer back to in the writing of my thesis, and will not be published, but your comments in interview will be transcribed and quoted. Your personal data will be retained digitally until 12 months after the ratification of marks, for potential use in further research. Any further research using the data will be subject to a further ethics procedure and consent from the participants.

Who do we share your data with?

Your data will be shared with the project supervisors and the board of examiners only, for the purpose of marking the thesis.

As well as this, we use computer software or systems to hold and manage data. Other companies only provide the software, system or storage. They are not allowed to use your data for their own reasons.

We have agreements in place when we share data. These agreements meet legal requirements to ensure your data is protected.

How do we keep your data secure?

The University is serious about keeping your data secure and protecting your rights to privacy. We don't ask you for data we don't need, and only give access to people who need to know. We think about security when planning

[2] Our charter and statutes states: 4.f. To provide instruction in such branches of learning as the University may think fit and to make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in such manner as the University may determine.

[3] This refers to UK GDPR Article 9 (2) (j): processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) based on Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

projects, to make sure they work well. Our IT security team checks regularly to make sure we're taking the right steps. For more details see our security webpages.

How do we transfer your data safely internationally?

If your data is stored or processed outside the UK, we follow legal requirements to make sure that the same level of privacy rules still apply.

How long will we keep your data?

The University has rules in place for how long research data can be kept when the research project is finished. For this project, data will be kept for 12 months following the ratification of marks, for potential reuse in further research.

What rights do you have in relation to your data?

You have rights over your data. This sheet explains how you can stop participating in the study, and what will happen to your data if you do. This information is in the section 'Do I have to take part?'

If you want to get a copy of your data, or talk to us about any other rights, please contact us using the details below.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about how your data is being processed, please contact sna520@york.ac.uk or the supervisors at karen.quigley@york.ac.uk and mark.love-smith@york.ac.uk.

If you have further questions, the University's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@york.ac.uk or by writing to: **Data Protection Officer, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD**.

Right to complain

If you are unhappy with how the University has handled your personal data, please contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above, so that we can try to put things right.

If you are unhappy with our response, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. You can also contact the Information

Commissioner's Office by post to **Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF** or by phone on **0303 123 1113**.

Appendix 2:

Investigating the use of multi-purpose community spaces as working-class performance venues.

UNIVERSITY of York

Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media Ethics Committee

Participant Consent Form – Non-Anonymous Interviews

Thank you for your interest in this project. This project aims to investigate the ways working-class theatre makers use alternative performance spaces – or spaces not purpose-built for performance, creating alternative models of the function of leisure spaces.

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the appropriate box:

	YES	NO
I have read the information sheet about this project	X	
I agree to take part in this project	X	
I consent to being interviewed for this project	X	
I consent to the interview being video recorded	X	
I understand my right to withdraw and/or destroy my data from this project at any time	X	
I consent to be identified by name in the outputs from this project	X	
I am over the age of 18	X	

Please select your preferred mode of interview:

In-person	x
Online (Zoom, Skype)	

Participant Name:	Researcher Name:
_____ALAN LANE__	___SAMUEL ARMSTRONG__
Participant Signature:	**Researcher Signature:**
___ALAN LANE__	_____*S. Armstrong*_____
Date:	**Date:**
_27/06/2022_	28/06/2022

If you wish to be informed about the outcomes from this project, please provide your email address:

_____

Appendix 3:

Transcript of interview: Alan Lane

Conducted by Samuel Armstrong

The Perky Peacock Cafe

York, 12th June 2022

SA - Sam Armstrong

AL - Alan Lane

Begin recording.

SA: So, for my research I'm looking at the Holbeck and a few other places.
Particularly about places that aren't built as theatres, that are then repurposed, or multipurposed, or cross-programmed is the word I've got as theatre venues and how they function. But, obviously, you do work outside, you do your sort of found space and immersive work, so how do you select your spaces? The question is what are the typical performance spaces you use in your work?

AL: So I suppose we draw a distinction between the work that Slung Low produces that, normally, with a few exceptions, I direct, and then the work that we present behalf of the people. And the work that we produce and I direct, it is, normally has some ceremonial meaning. So we made a show here in York and it started in one place and then did another and both of those places were very important, so you're looking at the cross-section of theatre and ceremony. But also places that are just inherently exciting, so, you know, multistory car parks look like the cinematic versions of multistory car parks. So that's great, if you want it to be anything other than a multistory car park you're in trouble, but if you want it to be a multistory car park then you've got a great set design already in.[1:20] So I think there's some of that going on, and that, I suppose, that's the kinda traditional dramaturg of site-specific theatre company going "Ah, this place (we're currently sat in some weird, medieval keep) - great!" Well that's fantastic, because, you know, if our show's Robin Hood, then we've already done all the heavy work. That's.. yes, so some of that's creative and some of that's ceremonial, some of that is thinking around ceremony, and civic-ness. The second part, the work that we present on [behalf of] other people, we've always had a home. We have to be based somewhere, and for the idea that that, that wherever we're based is gonna cost money and that that money is only for the benefit of us as a company seems to me a bit weird so our homes have always been, our company homes have always been, available to everyone. [2:06] And as a result, if you let people rehearse in the space for more than five minutes they turn it into a theatre eventually. And I suppose - and so we, you know, we were in a railway arch, we're currently in a club, we're gonna be in a warehouse, and after that, who knows? But I think that what ties up both those thoughts is: people are fundamentally interested in the human act of coming together to hear a story. That that is, that is the sort of primeval. And that's not very hard

to sell. And I think, sort of, sell in a non-financial [way] - what I think we've really struggled with the last 20 years is how am I gonna convince lots of people, lots of different types of people, lots of diverse people, to come and spend thirty pounds each on watching this thing in this dark room in this specific place. It normally has shit parking, really expensive, warm wine, and other things that are rubbish. And that's a whole other problem, and I've never really been very interested in that problem, because it just, it strikes me as self-evident that it's a bad idea - just stop it. So, our spaces are places where people have to go for other reasons. So, the space that we're in now is a working men's club and that's problematic and brilliant in equal measure. [3:22] It's a polling booth, it's a pub, it's a football supporter's group, it's a classroom, it's a workshop space, it's a place where your nanna's gonna have her birthday party. It's all of those things and occasionally, it's quite a decent theatre. The thing I get really excited about in all of that is the way that just that room changes what you should programme. That's really exciting. [3:45].

SA: So, what you're programming when you're programming your work's dictated by the space, generally?

AL: Yeah, yeah. Because, when we – I mean. And that's not, that's not a snap cue. So we were in the railway arch, It was very trendy, it was in The Guardian a lot, it was very cold, it was very grotty. So as a result, we could sort of get away with slightly edgy, punk-y Avant-Garde vibe, and that seemed to fit and it felt, you know, it didn't feel laughable because you were like "yeah, that's exactly where"… – when we moved into the club we were all of a sudden in a thrust stage, it was high, it was a really terrible carpet, a blackout was almost impossible, so it was a cabaret space. All of a sudden you were like "Oh, actually you're not gonna really put on contemporary performance art there because it will look silly."

Well, what I just said is potentially not true but equally you go "Cabarets will work" So you start to lean into it, "drag queens will work" fantastic – turns out opera works really well, great. [4:41] Bands, comic comedians, magicians. When we move into a warehouse in a few months' time I believe we'll be in a really large, sort of, white box space that will allow for projections and large-scale shows so we'll do some of that. I think if you're not reacting to the room you're in… I think people have this idea that they've built a neutral theatre. If you go York Theatre Royal that's not a neutral theatre. That's a – That's a Victorian… So I mean it's not neutral. None of it's neutral, some stuff just doesn't work. [5:12]

SA: So you think that – I like that idea that, it's almost like this sort of performance would look silly in this sort of space. Not –

AL: Yeah, I think there's some context where you – we've had performance art but you've got to work it a bit harder than you did at the HUB. Just as it would've been very hard to have Davina de Campo on a – on that space. It was a different space.

SA: Does it make it more difficult to programme the sort of work you want to make because you're almost dictated by the space?

AL: We've never been able to programme, we don't programme our work at our venues, so our venue, it's still a studio. It's a 200-seater cabaret studio. [5:53] I've never made a 200 seater cabaret theatre

piece. So our work is outdoors, it's, sort of, outdoors, large scale, epic, muscular. The work we make inside, the work that's presented inside is made by other people who are really excited by that space. Our space is an act of usefulness and service on our part. It's not because we have a desire to fill that space with product. [6:16]

SA: What do you think's the most exciting for other people about the whole about the Holbeck then? What is it that attracts them first and foremost about the space?

AL: I think there's so many different types of people who come to the Holbeck and there's the people who come because it's the oldest working men's club and they've been coming for decades, generations. There's people who come because it's pay what you decide so they're able to access culture in an affordable way. There's people who come because they hear about what we've been doing in the newspapers so in that sense they're, kind of, cultural seekers. [6:53] There's also our local community who come because there isn't another option. So it's really important we put on the things that they want. I think the brilliant thing about the club is that it feels like we're harking back to… You know when the club was made there was no bar and it was for mutual aid and intellectual stimulation for the community. Well it's almost like we're returning to those… – I'm very un-interested in how the bar works. It's the least interesting thing about the whole club. And it's also the most modern thing, you know, it's a 20th century invention in a 19th century institution. And that's – that I think is very interesting. That people talk about "The club is like this," and you're like "Only for 50 years." For 100 years it was something entirely different. [7:36]

SA: Well that's what interested me about it because on one hand I'm kind of, trying to argue the space has been built for this purpose, and repurposed as a, sort of, theatre space but on the other hand it's always been a performance space.

AL: It's constantly in evolution and I think the… and we did very well out of the Arts Council funding but it's also becoming increasingly clear to me that what the Arts Council funding does is put in aspic [sic] things that should be – should be rigorously interrogated and turned upside down. So, you have our theatre scene at the minute, our theatre sector – our subsidised theatre sector is institutions that were created post-war still fundamentally delivering a core business objective. I don't know another single industry where that's the case, every single thing in our society is changed, and yet here we are still talking about Twelfth Night on Wednesday at 7:30. None of it makes sense anymore. But there's no way of getting rid of it unless we're to hit it with a hammer. I think that, the club scene's moved on incredibly and will – and will die. You know, that's fine, I think as long as the, sort of, resources, the energy and the support that was in place to put it up there in the first place are still present for people to make new decisions. [8:49] I think when people are just ripping resources out of communities that's an entirely different proposition. If people don't… – the community that I'm in at the minute is too poor, is too Muslim, is too non-culturally used to drinking for large periods of time in rooms with no windows, so they don't wanna do it. But I think, forcing them to do it is a bit ridiculous, so – but they are interested in other things and it's important that the club reflects that and when it doesn't, it will die. And that's okay, they're meant to. [9:16]

SA: And for those sorts of people who are coming into the Holbeck because there's no other option, nowhere else could they put on their work-

AL: Yeah.

SA: What makes it so accessible?

AL: I mean it's financially just accessible because everything's pay what you decide. And we don't charge anyone anything for anything. So, every single thing we do is pay what you decide. I think, the second thing is that the gap between us and the resources is as small as possible.[9:46] So, if you need a space, you should send me an email. If it's free in the diary I just say yes. Don't say what sort of play – I'm not interested in what sort of play it's up to you - you don't want me to be a gatekeeper of – of artistic intent. You just want a room. So we pride ourselves on being able to quickly say yes. And it's the same with our community we come and say, this weekend we're at a number of things, none of them are – are what the Art's Council would have recognised as culture, art. There was a woman selling her belongings because she's moving to Turkmenistan, there was another woman running a Lego club because she wanted to – there's loads of things happening. There will always be people coming and saying "Can I- and you go "Yeah you absolutely can." It's not a problem. And that means I spend a lot of time – the team spends a lot of time - hoovering up after people after things – people go "How is this your job?" and I'm like "Well it absolutely is my job." And as a result, for the moment, I think that that place is a palace to people's culture. It's just not mine. Good. I've got enough places. So I think that's the – and there's one of us, we're 7 days a week, 3 sessions a day. Someone is always one of us there. And I think that's very unusual in Holbeck. [10:51] We, you know, we laughed that at 3 o'clock on a Friday you get all the emails from the people who are going home at the weekend and we're like digging in for the number of services and resources that are just not available to people in their free time which seems to be, like it's mad. So, I think that makes us accessible as well.

SA: How do you think it being a social club as well or, you know, on the surface primarily influences the accessibility for the work? If at all?

AL: I think – I think it's double edged. So, I think there are people like Grace who so – we, you know, we have all sorts of theatre on and there's people looking at it through the prism of it being presented in a working men's club might be like "Ah, that's achievable. That's accessible, that's close to my experience." In large part, because it is literally at the end of their road I think, they don't have to get in their car, they don't have to park, they don't have to get the bus. I think where it puts people off is, you know, it's called a working men's club. They won't change the name. And that's fine, it's their club, but that in itself is problematic. Then you've got this building that feels very much like a place where people drink and are very proud of that. [12:03] And there are whole communities that aren't interested in that or actively put… – and it's an unbelievably white place at its core. And we live in an unbelievably non-white community. And so all of that is stuff that we're having to peddle as fast as we can to try and keep a – and equally there's a double edge to the double edge which is our arrival was such a shift in time that all of a sudden quite a lot of, especially the African community were like "Ah, these people we can do business with." Because we were actively leaning in. We weren't just saying, like, "Everyone's welcome." We were saying like "No, you're welcome." So, like all politics, there's constant pros and cons. It's really problematic basically that, you know, that it's been there since 1877, it's full of asbestos and it's not disabl- [sic] it's not accessible to different types of people in a way that's helpful. But it's also the oldest working men's club in Britain. And – and people are

proud of that and people wanna come there – you're always balancing those different things. It's much better than the contemporary glass and chrome version that would be built if it was knocked down. [13:09]

SA: And then sort of on the flip side when you're programming your own work what do you guys look for in the space. I know it's a different sort of space outside its big.

AL: Where are the ghosts?

SA: Yeah

AL: There's a show we did here in York we just started up there, you know, the people of the place coming to recreate the people of that place from a different era, waving away other people from that place going toward – and you're like "Wow." You know, the layers and layers of ghosts, the layers and layers of meaning, the layers and layers of connection. And then also practically like, you know, what's a good picture? Like, where am I gonna put the guy with his head on fire, you know, like sightlines and all that good stuff. [13:53]

SA: So is it all aesthetic? I know it's different, sort of, spaces because they're not always run, like, you know, a building might be run. But, do you encounter bias, in terms of… I don't know, politics or the organisation of it?

AL: God, yeah. No – yeah, I mean. There've been all sorts of shows – people are very happy for anything to happen in theatre as long as theatre is behind the closed door, in the dark, at a certain time and an ideally that you've got to pay quite a lot of money to get in. And you can say whatever you want, you can have people naked and 'F-ing and jeffing' they don't care. You go out into the street, and I know we once did a show where we carried a coffin, because one of the characters had died: people wrote letters of complaint. They said "No, no, no you can't do that." And I was like "I don't – I don't get it." So there's also – because acting being in public now is political. So, we were in Manchester the – the public spaces in Manchester aren't owned by the people any more. They're owned by private companies. And, the security guards of these companies can ask you to move on if you're not doing one of the things they approve of. Now, really they just want you to be a customer, so that's all they – you can't protest. You can't just sit and do nothing. You have to be doing something. So then, we come along and we're doing a play and in, in Sheffield the play was about English Nationalism at the time that the EDL was actually marching in - near Sheffield and we were, like, the street along - with guns and swords and union jack flags and all sorts of nonsense and that gives a different meaning to the play. What I love about this theatre we make as opposed to the dead theatre you might find in buildings [is] real life interrupts my work all the time. I don't start with silence and I don't start with darkness. I start with what's there. So a lot of the time, I mean when we're rehearsing particularly because I don't know what the town's like until we've been there a long time.[15:41] So I don't know what the play's gonna mean until I know how it influences. So I think, you know, all of that comes together to create something – if you go to a wedding, you get really emotionally moved by, like, other people getting married. They're not good actors. They're not, you know, like the suit doesn't fit properly, it's not – it's not excellent. But it's meaningful because it's a ceremony. Plays are just ceremonies without the connection. And once you find the connection it – you get magic. You get power. that's what we're about. [16:15]

SA: So all of your work – I suppose the same question as earlier – All of your work, the work dictated by what space you put it in, do you start with the work, the space, "Oh, we're gonna make something here on this kind of theme"?

AL: Well, we're much more pragmatic partly because the large outdoor stuff just requires so much money and not just money but also good will, that you're normally in partnership with someone. So York Theatre Royal wants to make a show about the first world war and you're like "Okay, great, let's look around and see what's going on." Or, you're having to have a reason to be there. I don't think we've ever just turned up and gone "Oh, we're going to do a big play here," because it would be such a hill to climb.

SA: I was gonna say, yeah, could you? If you wanted to, just decide to do that? Or –

AL: We don't have the money, so the money would have to come from somewhere. So the closest one was Hull 17 saying "Pitch us an idea." And then we'll go "Okay," and they'll say "Well, what's your idea?" But, I've got to spend two weeks walking around Hull to get an idea, I don't know yet. And we came up with something that felt like it could only have worked – we wouldn't have pitched it anywhere else. Leeds 2023 is another big one where they were like "What do you – you know, do you wanna do anything?" And actually in the end we, sort of, it's quite hard – we need a reason to be there. It'll be interesting to see because we're just coming into middle age now as a company we've got to decide do we keep running around saying "Yes," to everything or do we – well, we don't know the answer to it but, it does mean that we need to, sort of, work at working out how we provoke big change in theatre – in theatre pieces that we make without that. And I don't know the answer to it. But, it's an interesting question for us, as it is we keep doing – well, you know, we're about to go and open a theatre we, we're – we arrive cause there's a special occasion and then they need someone to do a special occasion play.

SA: So it sounds like it – it's almost because there's a parallel there between the sort of people who are coming using your space, the barriers that they face in finding a space, and you guys as a big nationally recognized company to actually, you know, you need the good will. To be able to put on the work, I suppose.

AL: Yeah, I think – I think if there is a connection between all that, what it's about is the idea of: who can have culture and where can they have it? [18:34] And there's a structure and there's a set of received, you know, understanding if you go see a theatre royal you go and do this, and lots of different types of people have problems with that, as a status quo, and when you start to change the status quo, everyone gets quite stressed. I think that's probably (Oh, look at these birds go past, they're brilliant) – if there's a connection it's that, it's that actually, in trying to do things differently, you tend to end up with quite a few enemies. That's okay though because I got enough friends.

SA: [19:08] And because that's the thing as well, I mean, casting your mind back to, like, the start of Slung Low, what do you think is the difference between how *you* had to, sort of, approach finding a space, finding somewhere to put on a play, somewhere to work, versus, say, the people who come in using the Holbeck? You know, did you – did you start off there or is there a difference in how you approached it?

AL: Yeah, I think one of the reasons why we run the spaces like we do for the young and the emerging artists is because it was really hard for us to find anywhere. We did in - theatre in the middle of Bradford but that was, you know, that was an hour and a half drive away it felt like we were going to the end of the world. So I think we're very aware of our responsibility to ensure that young and emerging artists in the city have access to a space, that accesses free, quick, friendly, non-gatekeep-y. It's definitely, all of this, all that the company does is a result of having spent 10 years staring at the industry going "Well, none of this makes any fucking sense," and its not that what we think we're doing is better, it's just a response to all that stuff that didn't make any sense.

[background chatter]

SA: When you're thinking about programming across the whole length of the company so far, is there anything you look to avoid in a place, in people, you know, "We're gonna put a play on here – a performance on here, and we might say no if this is the – how its run, or…"

AL: I think that the thing we've learnt is that we've got to keep hold of the recruitment of our community and participants [20:50] and when we haven't done that, we've not been able to operate with the values we want - I think that we don't really, any longer, program plays that are kind of fourth wall, naturalistic plays. Other than that, it's about trying to engage with the place and the people really, honestly. [21:13]

SA: What's it like being in a place like Holbeck because you've been at it quite a while now and going from being in, you know, the HUB, and then the Holbeck Coming from outside the community, and then embedding yourself in it?

AL: I mean Holbeck's brilliant, and it's a place of incredible challenge, but it's a place of great joy and wonder. I think that would be true of wherever we were. I don't think there's anywhere in the world that isn't a place of joy and wonder. It's about the level of attention that you're willing to give it to find it. I'm quite – I think it's an interesting time to talk about identity and I think, there's a really useful thing that's happened is around authenticity and about things that are happening to communities. I think that's really important. I think we have to be very careful around that language and really think about it so we don't end up saying that "Newcomers aren't welcome," I think as a kind of... I'm doing a piece for the Leeds 2023 at the minute and they keep talking to me about Leeds[/leads?] and not Leeds, you know, and I think that that language is used by people quite often just to exclude people of a different colour, different race or whatever it is. So I think this idea of… especially in a place like Holbeck where people come and go all the time. And then there are some people who are like "This is our place," and I'm like "What does that mean? Who are you excluding? How are you feeling that?" And – and I think, we've absolutely made a commitment to Holbeck and that's been, you know, that's been over a decade now. I don't think anyone sensible would criticize that, but they still do. There's still a regular - even at the weekend someone said "Oh, (you know) you're not really from here," and I was like "What is it to be 'from' somewhere?" Especially in this day in age where people don't stay. [23:07] People don't stay where they were born and for lots of good reasons. How is that something to raise up as a, what does that mean? In a place like Holbeck where immigrants are moved in and out by the government all the time… yeah. So I think, and I get it, because it's to stop middle-class art's organisations from coming in and fucking everyone over, so I

totally understand where the stimulus comes from, the impetus comes from, but I think it probably - we're gonna have to give up the guilty pleasure of finding something easy to bash middle class people over the head with, because I'm not sure that its particularly productive in the long run, but it's also –

SA: How do you think... you personally, then and Slung Low the company fit into the discussion about middle class companies coming in and… leaving – Not suggesting that Slung Low is that – [24:04]

AL: No, no, no, well, I mean, we probably are, I think… So, I'm a white straight middle class heterosexual man, so is Jacob Rees Mog. And so, the five words you can describe Jacob Rees Mog and me are the same. I wonder how useful those fives words are then. Because no one who's ever met either of us think we're [???]. We're not though, we're not the same intent, impact, effect. And I think – I think there's some really important work to be done to protect the diversity of voices in our society and that includes working men's club voices. But it's become, especially in the arts – I've seen a lot of, especially white women, and white men, who were struggling with the idea that they might not be the immediate solution to the problem of diversity in the arts all of a sudden discover that if they're a working-class white woman, white man, then they can continue to do exactly what they were doing before without really much reflection. That's not everybody, I don't even think it's the majority, but I think it is prevalent. I went to a, recently, to a meeting of working-class artists I was invited to talk to and I said "What's the definition of working class?" and they said "We don't have one." And I was like "Well…" The one that the Art's Council used recently rendered me working class, but no one else in the company. Now, if you knew the rest of the people in the company you'd be like "Now, hang on a minute. What are we measuring there?" And all of that isn't to say that's an answer but just to say that I wonder whether the – whether the battle between that… we think there's a massive difference between me and you. And in actual fact when you look at it from any distance you go "Well, they're basically the same." Whereas there is a massive difference between me *and* you, and the person who is attempting to take away the rights of…[XYZ] that's important. That difference is important. The nuanced difference between where you're sat and where I'm sat probably, in the grand scheme of things, isn't – as long as you have enough room to express yourself and as long as I have enough room to express myself then I wonder whether there's any real battle between us.

26:10

SA: So, thinking of it, throw in the word class, and as a working-men's club, how does class factor into how you think about an manage the Holbeck, then?

AL: I'm not sure.

SA: Or do you not think about it?

AL: I think what I think about a lot is about whether people have had access to the extraordinary culture of this country that we spend time pour lot of public money in. I get very vexed about that – I think about that an awful lot. I'm not sure. So, for example, on my committee… The committee of the club has a guy who owns a business and that business is mining and he's rich. He presents in all other possible ways, all other cultural signifiers as a member of the upper working-class, lower-middle class, he's the poshest person involved in the club – certainly the richest, and we also have people who

are recently arrived into the country on inflatable dinghies and are learning English in the bar. Now the gap between those two people is let us say on this magic graph ten centimetres – the gap between *everyone* and the director of the BBC is 40 metres, so you're going "well hang on, how are we… nearly all the people associated with the Holbeck do not have access to the cultural life, that all of them are striving to make Holbeck a better place to live and work and to give their families and themselves and their friends a better life - that actually the nuance between whether you… We don't have a middle class in Holbeck it simply doesn't exist, there are a couple of people who you might identify depending on what metric the they're in. There's no meaningful middle class, to the point where we don't even have a fucking supermarket. Literally we do not have enough purchasing power to have a supermarket. So the fine-toothed comb between… We're not, we're, all of us in the, in Holbeck, we're Holbeckians. That as a "what information are we receiving what's our life choices" is a much important than the nuance of however we're measuring: how much money you're earning, what's your cultural value or what your parents did when you were 14. All of these are perfectly reasonable measures but it's so fine, the differences, that, I don't understand the opposition. I completely understand that in other contexts that opposition's there because people have abused their privilege and I get it, I totally get it, I just don't care 'cause it's not happening in Holbeck.

SA: Yeah.

AL: In Holbeck, you know.. If we were some place else and we had funding and all that good stuff and another theatre company moved in we would be [slated?] because hang on a minute there's only… In Holbeck that's not true of any single of the services, you could triple every single service and still not have a basic mandatory level. So we're desperate. So I haven't got time to argue about whether that person is.. I'm just trying to get everybody above a decent line, and I think that's quite helpful because I think, you know, in what is laughably called the culture wars, there are lots of, like "hang on, you people [???] 95% of everything and you're arguing passionately and violently about the 5% that's left, meanwhile that guy over there doesn't believe in a damn thing and is taking away every single thing you care about. It's just not a useful thing. I also think we live in a really complicated world where hardly anything is certain – what we used to call a free [???] you know, "let's go stand outside a South African embassy and scream racist at them 'til we feel better about life. [The] world isn't like that anymore. It's more complicated. And then, occasionally, you find something that isn't and people fucking love it, and you see that in people, you like "Oh, your identity got really complicated and you weren't sure where you were certain and now you've found something new to be certain about." I think that's a problem, 'cause whilst they're shouting at everyone, it's very hard to listen to them.

SA: And the Holbeck is a space, obviously, they still want to keep that working men's club title. It's a completely different space in my head, or it seems like it is, from, say, the York Theatre Royal.

AL: Yeah.

SA: And you've got experience putting work on in both places. What is it that's similar and different about how the two spaces function?

AL: So I think what you get which is really nice and annoying is you get people who feel a sense of ownership over it, and then they start to behave as like minion official gatekeepers, and you find that with theatre audiences and you find that certainly in members, where -

SA: In the Holbeck as well?

AL: Yeah, where it's "our club". Yes and there's a core membership who get very vexed when the Africans come in and some of that is racial but a lot of it isn't, a lot of it's to do with "what is the club for now?". And if a group of people who aren't gonna drink come in, what does that mean for an organisation that prides itself almost entirely on their ability to drink? And I think you get that in theatres so I think that is where they are the same. I think it's true, you know, you look at any of the new theatres that have had refurbs, they're designed like airport lounges , they're designed to take resources from people for services – that's what they're for. And in that sense they don't function like community centres. They function as places people can be customers, different types of customers. And I think that's a difference - I don't think the club's like that. I mean literally today, if you walked in there during the day there isn't anything you can buy – lots of things you can *have*, but there's not anything you can buy.

SA: Yeah.

AL: The belief that we're powerful as customer is – or being well-served as customer - is a real problem, and to see the big theatres rush headlong into that is problematic.

SA: Yeah. 'Cause that's a spatial thing as well, really, theatres are redesigned, consciously, in a consumer-focused kind of way.

AL: Absolutely. And that's a prerequisite of their capital finding, so if you're asking for capital funding one of the things you have to demonstrate [is] how it will help you increase your revenue. Well, ok, but that's mad. That's absolutely mad that's a philosophical political statement.

SA: So the Holbeck for example, I go in to watch a show, I go in, I go to the bar, in the foyer, get a drink go upstairs, sit down and watch on a thrust stage, which I could do in a theatre. How do they function differently, in that sense?

AL: Well, I suppose, yeah, that part of it's the same, I suppose we would point to you "where did you hear about the show?" Who greets you? One of the things that we do at Slung Low is the people who make the shows that you read about in the newspaper are the people who would greet you when you come to see a show on a Saturday night. So it's entirely different. The creative leadership is there. And we're saying hello. And welcoming you and talking to you - you are part of a community. If you got to, name your favourite theatre, the person greeting you will be a house manager, that person isn't an artist – they're not any less important than an artists but they are looking at the world in a completely different way. Their job is to ensure that the environment that's… That's not the same as what I;m doing. I think also you've bought a ticket. You don't buy a ticket at the club, you just turn up, and at the end you might put some money in a bucket or you might not put some money in a bucket but that's a completely different relationship. I think as a result, you get a different relationship with the artist.

SA: Yeah.

AL: So, they are behaving in a different way, than an organisation where you would go to a stage door and, you know, do all of that stuff. [34:05]

SA: I was gonna ask then about "oh so it's the intention you have and the way you relate to people" and all that but I've just heard "pay what you feel".

AL: Yep.

SA: How central is that to this place being, yes, financially accessible, but different?

AL: But it's more than… It's an act of politics not finance. It's *pay what you decide*. *Pay what you feel's* fine, *pay what you can* is grand, but that's not what we do. We do *pay what you decide*. So it's an action. So you decide, because *pay what you can*, well that's… *Pay what you feel?* No – pay what you *decide* and you're deciding all sorts of things. One of the things you're deciding is *how good is the show?* 'Course it is. But one of it is, well, *how many people are there on stage? How much money do you have? What time of the month is it?* At the end of the month you're gonna have more money to spend [than the] beginning – you know, like, all of this stuff. All of that's important, and, crucially, we are pushing you to being a citizen, not a customer.

SA: Yeah.

AL: You are part of something. [35:03]. Much more I think in line with the ancient Greeks than the national theatre. [35:08] You have come to a place to hear a story with other people so that you might live your life more thoroughly. Well that's ancient. If you wanted to be a customer then DisneyPlus is available, it's excellent, and it's got the new Doctor Strange. Great! There's nothing wrong with that. Love that. Knock yourself out. It's not what I'm doing. There are huge benefits to diversity of audience with pay-what-you-decide. But it's a political act. It's a philosophical act – and, in a country that spends five hundred million pounds worth of public money on the arts, absolutely on purpose. Absolutely. The idea that we use that money to prime the pumps is insane.

[SA calls for short break to get refreshments] [36:05]

SA: [36:10] So, I've got four more questions.

AL: OK.

SA: First off, starting off with you and the Holbeck, you've been in the HUB, and then in the Holbeck, and changed it, in lots of different ways to benefit the community. What happens when you move out? To the space, the Holbeck, and the community?

AL: Well, I mean, we are moving out. So we'll leave in December, we've got a new place, and we've made I very clear, our commitment is to Holbeck, not *the* Holbeck. The Holbeck is a brilliant cultural space and it's also flawed in all the ways that we've discussed. And it's really important that we recognise and accept, partly in response to, we were talking before about middle-class companies that – it's not ours. Now, we've got more money, and we've got more cultural capital. We've got more

energy and we've got our… we're professional event managers, so in any flat footrace with the committee of the club, we will win. But that doesn't mean we should. And the problem we have with the club is that there is a fundamental values difference. We believe in some things, around accessibility and diversity, that they do not believe in. And that reflects on how people feel welcome and what can be done in that space. [37:30]. And one version of reality, we stay and we buy them out, fight them out – whatever. But then it feels like the club becomes one of those problematic venues which sort of doesn't really have a guiding light anymore. So we'll move, because we're capable of doing all the things we're doing in Holbeck somewhere else. For us, because we've found our space, and because it's a moment of expansion, and it's great… it's great news. What it means for the club is quite interesting because the club doesn't exist – the club cannot exist within the confines of capitalism.

SA: Yeah. [38:07]

AL: You simply cannot make enough money selling beer. Now the committee, for lots of reasons, believe that it should. Even though, you know, those of us with a knowledge of history look back and go "well it didn't start in that – it was a members club – it didn't start in capitalism, it started in – it was a friendly society." So, the sad thing it is will almost certainly die, because in order for it not to die it would have to change and revert back so far that no-one will let it. And there's a reason why all these clubs are just dying off, because they require a greater good and a level of service to be at the heart of them that's really hard if people are just turning up because they like cheap beer. [38:52] I would argue that when we move… When we moved out of the HUB, the building itself was a shithole and it's still a shithole so, like, it's not my problem. But the impact is still an amazing piece of art out there, people still talk about it, it still sets the standard of what can be done on a small amount of money in the city, and the same with the club, that story will go on, and we will then build something new. And I think that's the bit… We get very obsessed with the protecting of bricks and mortar. Bricks and mortar's the least important bit. It's incredibly sad to me that I can't see a way forward financially for club without our money, but that's life.

SA: Yeah. [39:31]

AL: And after December it won't be my problem.

SA: So you think that… In a sense, then, how much is the space that you're in preventing you doing what you wanna do, as a company?

AL: I think the space is always a red herring. It's about the values. So, one of the things that the club has been brilliant at since we took over is it's a space that's open three sessions a day, seven days a week, where people come for all sorts of social and civic reasons. That wasn't true before we moved in. [40:01]. So we didn't take that responsibility, from someone else, we created it. The values of the club are held by the committee, if we cannot get alongside the committee and agree with them…

SA: Yeah.

AL: I mean, really brutally, Sam, I just got bored of subsidising the beer and racists. I don't wanna do it anymore. And we tried all the ways that you do it beyond putting the nuclear bomb of voting them

out and then we thought, well, we'll just go somewhere else. It's not the building. The building, you know, it's nice that there's toilets, I don't know. Like, the building is, you know, if we were here we'd be like, "Oh, it's great that it's got character but it's freezing cold and it's next to the river, ah, ok, well that's not good." There are pros and cons with everything.

SA: So it's in the people and the values of the space?

AL: Absolutely. The activity. And, you know, when you see a poster, what does it look like? How much is it? Where are you postering? You know, I live in a city with an opera company, ballet company, and a producing theatre company, and it's less than two miles from Holbeck - and I don't ever see a poster for it, because the marketing… Quite right, the marketing campaign goes "let's not waste our money on Holbeck, they're too poor to come to us." Well that tells me all I need to know about a load of stuff. So *where* are you telling people about it? *How* are you telling people about it? Who meets you at the door? What is *the door*? All of that stuff's important. [41:14].

SA: Yeah, 'cause obviously when I'm looking at the theatre "space" it's in, there's a whole collection of things that that means, you know: the bricks and mortar, the physical space, the metaphorical space, the organisation, but I suppose when you… If you've been restricted in the ethos of the company, right? In a little way. What have you seen in the warehouse, as a space in its organisation, its bricks and mortar, that is attractive to you as a company?

AL: Well the warehouse is attractive to us because it allows scale, it allows us to put on larger shows. The reason why we're moving is because, when we're not physically present, the values of the space go back to the committee, so we can't be sure that everyone is welcome when we're not there, and that's not good enough. So we're moving to a place where we can be sure of that. The thing I love about the warehouse is just the scale. But it's a completely different scale, just as I walked into the cabaret space and went "oh, this is going to be great for this", I walked in and went "great, let's get an opera in, let's get an orchestra in here, let's do this, let's do that." I think the thing that I'm incredibly lucky [for], is, at Slung Low I get to be artistic director of something that I can completely reinvent whenever I want, and whenever the team wants. If I was the artistic director of York Theatre Royal, I could not. I cannot relocate York Theatre Royal; I would be fired. So your job is to make that thing work. And I'm like "great!", and that thing [can be] incredibly useful, "brilliant!." My job now, I get to do whatever it is that my community demand, not whatever it that my building needs.

SA: Now that's really interesting, and I've just got this up because I've got just a bit of a quote here about the idea of repurposing old venues – no, not that bit. Basically, about, so, you moved from the HUB the Holbeck, and the ethos of the company changed – shifted – slightly, from…

AL: of course

SA: …bringing people into Holbeck to doing [things for] the community. So how much is space, the space you're in…

AL: Space is a tool. So, the space is a tool. So, the thing that changes is, we are in service to a community, the community needs that, so the most obvious times is: Covid shut all the theatres and the bars, but our community still needed us to be a theatre company, but a theatre company that runs a

foodbank, so we opened a food bank. That transformation, that reaction, that thought is always ongoing. It's more obvious in moments of, you know, the gap between funding opportunities or huge fucking global crisises [sic], but in reality it's happening all the time. We ran a football club because that's what our community needed, we're in residence at a primary school now, 'cause that's what our community needed. [44:00] In time, it will turn into something else, I just don't know what it is, 'cause they haven't told me yet. But it's my job to be out there and working out what is the most creative, interesting, impactful thing we can be doing in response to our community. The building is just one of the ways I do it, because in the same way that I've got a van and we use that sometimes.

SA: So which influenced which? The company's had a shift between the HUB and the Holbeck in its, in its ethos I suppose…

AL: Yeah, but it's because we go, "well, what are we doing?" - we're responding to these people. Cool, how are we responding? "Well, we've got some railway arches, ah, ok, well it's quite hard to... We've got this lovely warm [club] – ooh, that's a bit easier." So some of it's about that, and some of it is also, if you're in the middle of a community and they have to walk past you every day, that's different than if they have to walk *to* you every day. [44:43]. The geography and the location and the building, all of that has an impact, but all it's doing is supporting the thinking you're doing with your community.

SA: So without the sort of spaces that you've used, if you took away that and you're just this floating theatre company…

AL: We weren't having that, we were like "that doesn't work". In large part because what people actually want is the support to get on with the thing they wanted to do, not you do it for them. They want a space to have their parties or a space to have their whatevers, and without that we would just not be as effective. And being useful to people is how you build a relationship.

SA: So if you took that away what would the ethos of the company be? Would it cease to exist?

AL: I mean the thing we've tried very hard to avoid is going around the country making big-scale shows for communities that we don't understand…

SA: Helicoptering in and…

AL: Yeah. And I think that's, you know, the nature of the sector, but it's just something we've tried really hard to not happen as much.

SA: So what's the effect going to be on the ethos of the company this time when you move in December?

AL: I think we're gonna be next to the primary schools, so we're gonna be more attentive and immediate to the kids, which is good. I think our ability to be useful to the sector more broadly is gonna have an impact because we've got a bigger space. So that type of theatre that can come in, the type of shows and project will be larger, and that will be both brilliantly fun but also come, I would imagine, with some sort of risk, and we'll have to engage with that. I think we'll also stop being a community centre, in a really traditional sense. There isn't gonna be a comfortable little room that you

can come and learn English [in], you know, that will stay at the club. So, our day-today, hour-by-hour stuff will move, and I don't know what will happen.

SA: So, to use the wording of this article, by Bell and Orozco, they said that, described it as, at the HUB you seemed like you were bringing people from outside the area *into* Holbeck, at the Holbeck we're bringing…

AL: I think that's true, yeah…

SA: …the community… What's happening at the warehouse now? How is that different?

AL: Well we're even more in the community, like, practically, we're deeper in the housing estate, and next to where the kids have to walk past every day in a way that we're not at the Holbeck. And not a pub. So the large Muslim and… Well, the large non-drinking communities are gonna find less reason not to come to us. [47:41]. That's gonna be really helpful. But we're not gonna have an identity, that's the most exciting… and the challenging thing is, yes, we worked hard to try and explain to people what *type* of club were gonna run but nonetheless we were still a club.

SA: Yeah.

AL: Well now we're not. No we're like "well what does the theatre warehouse look like?" I don't know yet, we've not moved in.

SA: And how do you think that's going to affect how accessible it is for, particularly, like, people who identify as working-class, but, you know, people who struggle… have more barriers to get in other spaces.

AL: Well the really helpful thing is there's less physical barriers. It's there. It's like, literally, you go out the load door and within twelve foot there is a terraced house.

SA: Yeah. [48:16]

AL: So that's really helpful. I think the other thing is the sort of stuff that we're gonna be able to put on is non-studio works, so is big orchestras, big bands, big projections, which you can talk about in a non-arts-sector language, which is really helpful, I think will help. And then I think we'll have to go through the whole process again of, "why should people think it's a good thing they've got a theatre company in their local community – literally on their doorstep." And does that mean they can borrow their van? Does that mean that when they're having a party they can come get a gazebo from somewhere? What does that mean, practically, day-to-day? How is that helpful? And the key to this will be through the school, absolutely – will be making sure that the kids, as they do, understand that we are in service to them, and that sometimes means that there's a fucking inflatable. Great.

SA: Yeah.

AL: Sometimes that means Father Christmas comes on a sled. Great. Finding the perks to having a theatre company and then making sure the kids fully embrace it.

SA: So for somebody who's coming in saying "I want to put my performance on, I don't have the

funds to rent a space, and this is nearby," like they might do at the Holbeck, if they're doing that in the warehouse is there a change?

AL: No, no, all that… It'll still be pay-what-you-decide. So ostensibly, but, nobody hires us as a space, people just come in. The space'll be slightly different, so it'll be much harder to have your Nana's birthday party, but that's because of the nature of the, you know… But I would imagine there'll be more weddings, there'll be more birthdays, and less, yeah. Who knows? That's the joy, is you open the space – same as the club – we're doing loads of stuff the club haven't done for over fifty years – didn't even know it could do. You open the doors, you say yes to everything, batshit crazy stuff comes through.

SA: So the how do you think… What effect do you think it's had being a space not purpose-built for theatre? Do you have visibility issues or accessibility issues?

AL: I mean, have you been to the West End recently?

SA: No.

AL: Right, the seats don't fucking work; the sightlines don't work; the lighting rigs don't work; the bars are rubbish, and the toilets are shit. So, yeah, my warehouse will have a couple of issues, but no more than that. Well they've just had to spend a fortune on our local theatre turning the foyer into a place that works it's only been built thirty years. None of these things work, nothing works. The idea that you can build a place and not do any real changes to it for fifty years and it still fulfil its function is madness. Looks at where we're sat — we're sat in a fucking castle that's a cafe! It's madness! The world doesn't work like that. Markets… people's ingenuity are the just the malls of — what's the word where everything falls apart — no, the… anyway… just, things deteriorate, things improve, things evolve. So, I would imagine that the warehouse will be perfect for its first show — you build it for that — and after that it'll be like "ooh, hang on a minute" and we'll drop lucky, and then we'll fuck off.

SA: So, is the space being completely not-built-as-a-theatre… Does that present a barrier or an opportunity?

AL: Both. If we walked into York Theatre Royal now, there are people who would love the gold and red velvet, whatever's there now, and there'd be other people that felt put-off by it. Just as they'd come in to the warehouse and some of them would be like "ah, finally, I found a theatre that speaks to me" and there'll be other people that go, like, "what's this?"

SA: But for you as a company putting work on there or supporting work on there how does it change…?

AL: The scale is much more exciting to us, so we're gonna have to come off this one- or two-hander and look at — how do we put [on] work that really fills the space that's much bigger? It means we're going to put on work less often, but when it happens, it's bigger. It means we'll be able to support… it's a much more interesting proposition. That's because we've been doing what we've been doing for a number of years now so it's natural that we go "right, well, its time to…"

SA: Yeah well it sounds like a lot about the company, and the work, and the values, and the ethos — quite fundamental things about who you guys are — changes, not necessarily as a reaction to, but in relation to, where you are.

AL: What I find absolutely stunning is that you get chief executives and artistic directors moving to new theatres and they come in and say, like, "we're going to work with a completely different set of values" and they do that and the actual output never fucking changes.

SA: Yeah.

AL: They're still putting Twelfth Night on and I'm like "How? How is that…?" And I get why — they're not allowed to change the output. I remember going to a theatre that wanted something in an interesting space and they said "But when you're in that swimming pool doing that show, I have to still sell every single seat in this theatre, because of my business plan" and that's madness, that's actual madness. Whoever decided that — and of course the answer is that the people who decide these business plans are never the people that actually have to do them, because they make no sense.

I've only got a couple of minutes, do you have anything else?

SA: No, that's absolutely fantastic.

End recording.

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