Staging Ecologies:

The Politics of Theatricality and the Production of Ecological Subjectivities

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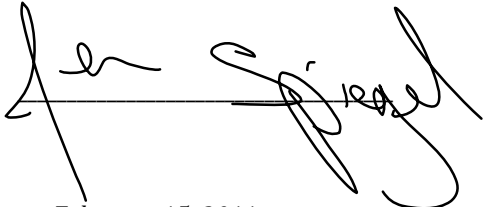REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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SIGNED DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of Goldsmiths, University of London. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of Goldsmiths. The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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ABSTRACT

Since the latter decades of the twentieth century, environmental threats posed by global industrialization have become a matter of growing public concern. Increasingly grievances are aired in the streets around the world, and are broadcast in the popular media. However, with the prominence of techno-scientific and eco-managerial approaches to the 'ecological crisis' ecological discourse may be in the process of becoming the new rubric of global governance. Here I engage debates concerning biopolitics and the production of subjectivity, in order to assess the implications of the *theatricality* of interventions for recasting the terms according to which ecological problematics are approached. I pursue this question: How can theatrics intervene in shaping the political ecology of the future?

I begin this thesis by presenting a theory of the politics of theatricality as it applies to the development and reshaping of global ecological politics. In the subsequent chapters, I develop this theory in light of the uses of theatricality in the World Urban Festival, an 'arts-for-social-change' festival on the theme of 'sustainability' held in Vancouver; an environmental health education program launched in Ecuador with international support; and within local and international activist movements in the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Leak, widely considered to be the worst industrial disaster of the twentieth century.

I argue that while the theatricality of such interventions can promote a particular ecological ethic that minimizes the politics at stake, theatrical interventions can also challenge the de-politicized naturalization of ecological problems. I conclude that the context and nature of relationships staged in and through each event shapes the *politics of theatricality*, and in turn, the *production of global ecological subjectivities*. As such, I identify the various challenges and opportunities signalled by this trend toward *staging ecologies*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Scene 1: Vancouver, Canada, 2006

"We have been waiting for you a long time now," says a man with a long white beard. He sits on a bench surrounded by people of all ages. For the past hour they had been sitting, as dancers performed a multi-media dance piece. The production was the culmination of three years of research during which time youth, in a series of multi-media workshops around the world, had articulated their concerns, responses and relationships to the state of the Earth. In the centre of the dome there now stands the cast of dancers that had just danced a "translation" of what was said, shown and done in these workshops. Now the audience speaks – to the choreographer, to the dancers, to each other.

Outside the dome, similar scenes are going on as people mill about the site of the World Urban Festival, entering tents, watching performances, taking workshops… For the World Urban Forum on "Sustainable Cities" is in town, and this is the official "Arts and Culture" Festival that is accompanying it, to help put "ideas into action".

Scene 2: Tucayta, Ecuador, 2008

'Sit', a young medical doctor says to the international team of university health professionals. The doctor is a Master's student in a new graduate program in Ecosystem Approaches to Health. The professionals are her teachers who had come from different universities - some Ecuadorian, but mostly, professors from the University of British Columbia, Canada. Today, however, it is not the teachers who take centre stage. A rented sound system has been set up in the middle of the village centre. Children from the village are invited to dance the traditional harvest dance. Elders speak of changes to the village from the pressures of the agrochemical and mining industries.

The doctor is from a nearby city. Many of the other students are from the indigenous village where all now are gathered. The scene is a culmination of a program that has been going on for several years. The students had been trained using role-play scenarios, and encouraged to use creative and multimedia strategies in considering various ways of approaching social and environmental ecologies. Now they speak at the festival that they themselves had organized, and the invited elders and children join in performing their take on the past and future of the region.

Scene 3: Bhopal, India, 2009

A group of middle-aged women in their colourful saris and dark burqas stand before the gates of the abandoned Union Carbide pesticide factory, where they had laid out a long tablecloth and series of plates for the various government ministers and scientific officials whom they had invited to their "Benign Buffet". None of the invitees had shown up, but still the women continue to serve plates of sludge from the factory grounds, accompanied by water from the wells beside the factory. As they serve, the cameras of the news media capture their images.

This is the site where political street plays had been performed by the local Indian Peoples Theatre; where countless effigies had been burned of Union Carbide (and now Dow Chemical) Chief Executive Officers and government officials; the site that had inspired plays from playwrights around the world, and some of the most famous political theatrics of the Yes Men. It is the site of the world's deadliest gas leak and the site that, the women fear, continues to leak toxins into their drinking water. Still, they remain hopeful that their theatrical appeal in the streets might help sway a change in the future of the region.

Since the latter decades of the twentieth century, environmental threats posed by global industrialization have become a matter of growing public concern. Large scale industrial disasters, contamination of water by toxic chemicals, the growth of agrochemical and extractive industries, and a host of other global pressures degrading the environment are confounded by growing economic disparities, and inequities in the distribution of power. Increasingly grievances are being aired in the streets around the world as street theatre and protest theatrics. World festivals on themes of "sustainability" attract artists, community groups, and activist organizations. Environmental scientists and ecologists are increasingly including theatrical practices amongst their arsenal of training and outreach, to extend their educational programs and include a wider range of voices and perspectives in the fray of their debates. Activists are using theatrics to attract attention and build movements. The question to which this thesis is dedicated is this: What are the politics of such theatrical interventions?

Whereas many of the concerns surrounding industrialization, urbanization, and globalization are now framed in terms of environmental problems, relationships between problematics of environmental ecology and those of social and mental

ecologies are increasingly being drawn. In *Three Ecologies* Guattari (2000) argues that the manner in which ecologies are built cuts across environmental, mental and social strata, cultivated increasingly by what he calls "ethico-aesthetic practices". These practices call upon processes of creative experimentation in order to change the manner in which mental, social and environmental processes are seen and felt, and alter the values and logics according to which territories are approached.

Theatricality, as I use it here, refers to the theatrical qualities of interventions, such as the manner in which interventions make palpable a situation through the artifices deployed, the audience/spectator organizations and the various factors orienting the aesthetic valence of an event. Guattari's theorization concerning the importance of ethico-aesthetic practices in shaping ecologies is a useful place to begin discussion of what is at stake in the increasing usage of both theatrics and theatricality. For Guattari, the ethico-aesthetic is concerned with the cultivation of sensibilities and the production of subjectivities. As he writes:

> The aesthetic power of feeling, although equal in principle with the other powers of thinking philosophically, knowing scientifically, acting politically, seems on the verge of occupying a privileged position within the collective Assemblage of enunciation of our era (1995, p. 101).

The question, however, becomes how, in fact, such aesthetic power functions. The values enunciated by the various collective assemblages that shape our era, such as the media, educational assemblages, community development projects and the collection of networks that constitute social movements, must then be assessed from the perspective of what values and feelings they produce and how. In contemporary 'sustainable development' discourses, as noted by several theorists, there has been a tendency to reduce the politics of ecology to questions of management (Escobar, 1999; Spivak, 2003; Banerjee, 2003). 'Qualified' persons are designated to manage social and environmental ecologies, with the result that a singular system of value is imposed, organizing how social and environmental systems ought best to be managed and to what end. This tends to mean that differences in ecology are flattened and recoded according to dominant logics and ways of life that are to be 'sustained'.

Already in the early nineties, Guattari observed:

Today a new ecological power formation is appearing under our noses and, consecutively, a new ecological industry is in the process of making a place for itself within other capitalist markets. The systems of heterogenetic valorisation – which counterbalance capitalist homogenesis rather than passively contesting the ravages of the world market – have to put in place their own power formations which will affirm themselves within new relations of forces. […] Exploding the hegemony of the capitalist valorisation of the world market consists in giving consistency to the Universes of value of social assemblages and existential Territories which situate themselves, in a manner of speaking, against the implosive evolution we are witnessing. (Guattari, 1995, p. 123-4)

To speak of the ethico-aesthetics of this "new ecological power formation" means assessing the manner in which the production of sensibilities takes place to secure and/or destabilize power relations. It means assessing the manner in which ecologies are assembled: *what is deemed important, what are the conditions of visibility, what relations are formed in and by an assemblage of enunciation, and what logic and values do these instantiate?* An ecology is more than an ecosystem since it denotes the very physical and mental elements that will be taken to form a social, environmental, political or economic nexus. Underlying these choices is a system of value and a way of sensing and perceiving the world. It is in this sense that ecologies are underscored by an ethico-aesthetics, and it is by teasing out the ethico-aesthetics at work in events that secure and destabilize ecological power formations that we can begin to see what is at stake in the choices made in and through such events.

According to Guattari, the "new aesethetic paradigm has ethico-political implications because to speak of creation is to speak of the responsibility of the creative instance with respect to the thing created" (Guattari, 1995, p. 105). How the various relations, bodies, concepts and networks are woven together generate particular values and feelings. If the ethico-aesthetic dimension of theatrical interventions is concerned with what sensibilities are cultivated by a particular event or set of events, the ethico-political dimension concerns the networks that are bolstered and forged in so doing. The ethico-aesthetics of an event concerns how it abstracts certain systems of values. What relations lead to this abstraction, and the

kinds of effects it will have is embroiled in politics. A particular event might, for instance, bolster an ethic of creative capitalism by drawing in new populations to particular ways of engaging in markets. In so doing, an event might prop up (and/or be supported by) a particular power formation that encourages a particular relationship between the state, industrial development and individual creative capacity. Or an event may seek to weave together an alternative social network based on alternative ways of seeing and interacting.

The ethico-aesthetic and the ethico-political, as I will show in the coming chapters, are never radically separated. Nor, however, can they be completely conflated. What aspects of an ecosystem are abstracted as important and rendered sensible through various acts of enunciation is an *ethico-political* question in so far as, in making certain relations visible, particular ethical sensibilities are cultivated, in turn promoting the sustenance of particular ecologies. Thus, for instance, when a theatrical event draws attention to depleting potable water supplies, or the relationships between polluted water and human health, the manner in which the creative or artistic act of making visible these ecological relations has a strong ethical valence. The manner in which particular theatrical acts are able to make these visible through stylistic choices and by drawing on a range of *aesthetic* traditions, carries with it particular *ethical values* concerning how it navigates cultural sensibilities and associations. In the events studied here, the combination and borrowing of various artistic and cultural aesthetics is widespread. The manner in which trans-national relations are forged, and the particular ethical values and socio-political relations bolstered, becomes a visible aspect of the event's ethico-aesthetics.

As theorist such as Rancière (2004) and Hallward (2006) have pointed out, (each in very different and even antithetical ways), there is often a tension between the politics avowed in the content of a creative or artistic event and the actual political distributions that it occasions. Whereas Guattari tends to focus on how ways of doing or making occasion new kinds of social relations and new system of value, how this translates into new distributions of social and political power in situations always already marked by imbalances concerning who bares the brunt of environmental risks and who has the greatest say in political decision making, is not

always clear. Throughout this thesis, I will address this tension in order to tease out the complex web of relations between the ethico-aesthtics of an event concerning the systems of value it promotes, and the ethico-politics concerning the systems of social and political relations it bolsters.

Throughout the twentieth century a number of theorists and practitioners have approached creative practice generally, and the deployment of theatricality specifically as a tactic of emancipation. Avant-garde figures from Artaud and Growtowski, to Boal, to the Situationists, all variously sought to deploy artistic and creative praxis as a means of facilitating social and political freedom. However, theatrical processes can also, on the contrary, often be part of what Foucault has referred to as "disciplinary strategies", whereby populations are affectively guided to engage with the world in particular ways. The question then becomes: When do theatrics bolster eco- managerial projects, rather than challenge the hegemony of a particular managerial (and, as I will show, typically capitalist), ethic?

According to Samuel Weber (2000), one of the distinguishing characteristics of theatricality, in contradistinction to other mediums, is its orientation toward the doubling and transmutation of *place*:

> Theatre…always seems to involve *both* localization *and* the problematization of every set locality. This uneasy conjecture is what defines the status of a *setting*, *scene*, or *stage*: these are sites of events that are never simply 'natural' or 'intrinsic' to them: they 'take place' therefore, in the sense that an army 'takes' a fortress (Weber, 2000, p. 123).

The tendency of theatre to 'take place' and, in so doing, to 'stabilize a place that is insecure' and to 'destabilize' a place by occupying it, distinguishes it from many other forms of creative activities. Here I will consider how theatrical events *take place* by forging relations between people, organisms, things and concepts, and how this process alters the systems of valuation that direct them.

In order to pursue this line of questioning, it is necessary to examine the ways in which interventions *actually take place*. In order to do this, I entered and followed each of the scenes detailed above. At the 2006 *World Urban Festival* I volunteered as part of the documentations team and am grateful to the curator, Judith Marcuse, for spending time answering my questions and granting me access to the database of

unpublished documents from which I was able to supplement my own observations. Early on in the eco-health project that took place in Ecuador, I was invited by one of the program leaders to analyze their use of role-play techniques (Spiegel and Yassi, 2007). I was later invited to join the team and travel to Ecuador in the summer of 2008 to spend a few weeks assisting with other video-tapings. This allowed me to shadow the project and engage in discussions with students in the program, those living in the regions affected by the projects, as well as local and international organizers. Meanwhile, my involvement with the movement concerning the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Leak began when I spent seven months in 2007-2008 working in the documentation centre for survivor organizations, interacting with various local and international activists, as well as health professionals, community organizers, and survivors and their families. During this time I became acquainted with the workings of the movement. Informed not only by my observations at the *World Urban Festival*, but now also by my experience in Ecuador, and with greater theoretical clarify and precision regarding my research question, I returned to Bhopal in late 2009 explicitly to gather more data concerning the history and ongoing usage of theatrics, which I was able to glean from a combination of archival research, interviews and more observations.

While my discussion of each of these "scenes" can be taken to focus on particular modes of engaging with ecologies: community arts (Chapter Two), 'capacity-building'/education (Chapter Three), and direct political engagement/activism (Chapter Four), none of these modes function in isolation from one another. The politics of aesthetics (highlighted in artistic production) enters into how theatricality mediates ecological pedagogy and eco-activism. The politics of knowledge production (highlighted in educational programs) enters eco-aesthetic production and has profound implication for the focuses and targets of eco-activism. And the manner in which global eco-political networks function (highlighted in activist movements) orients how aesthetic(s) and knowledge(s) are produced. By teasing out these intricacies, the present inquiry is aimed at articulating the ethico-political tensions that surface in and through the theatricality of interventions as they engage with the ecological politics of the present.

Chapter One builds on the work of previous critical theorists and performance scholars to develop a theory of the relationships between theatricality, politics and ecology in the contemporary era of global capitalism. Here I argue that the politics of theatricality in such contexts does not lie only in the content or message of works, nor simply in changing whose stories are told and whose voices heard. Rather, I argue that in order to pursue the question of the theatricality of eco-political interventions, how events operate within their social, psychical, environmental and political ecologies, requires considering what ethic is promoted by the event, how engagement in the events alters the subjectivities of those involved, and what politics orient how the event takes place.

Chapter Two focuses on how the '*World Urban Festival'*, as the "arts and culture" wing of the '*World Urban Forum'* on sustainability, raises questions concerning popular engagement with the terms according to which social and environmental concerns are approached. I examine the politics of how artistic acts of "translating" the desires, hopes and fears concerning the state of the Earth, as articulated by populations around the world, are organized and presented. In particular, I focus on how specific techniques and approaches to the relationship between audience, spectators and subject matters orient how collectives form. I ask here what this might mean in terms of facilitating and/or curbing the creation of systems of values that alter the way social and environmental ecologies are forged.

Chapter Three analyses the use of theatricality in the articulation of eco-systems within a 'community-based' multi-university Canadian-Ecuadorian university program. The main question driving this chapter is how the theatricality of such creative 'participatory' interventions as role-play, videography and community festivals, reconfigure ways of 'knowing' and 'changing' social and environmental ecosystems. Here I consider interventions in light of changing logics of governance. Given that theatrical techniques have historically been used to discipline populations, and that creativity is currently a component of many "participatory management" strategies, I inquire into the politics of theatricality at work in interventions deployed by those who purport to use such techniques now to challenge the hegemony of a capitalist eco-logic.

Chapter Four focuses on the theatricality of protest strategies locally and internationally in the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. As I will show, it is often suggested that making visible the suffering propagated by environmental disasters can help curb the logic of capital, and that it is to this end that the theatricality of interventions lies. The main question pursued in this chapter, however, concerns not what is disclosed to whom, but rather how the theatricality of the *events themselves* alter the way global networks are formed, and how this serves to alter what eco-logic directs the future of the region.

Over the course of these chapters I therefore aim to show how the politics of theatricality is shaping the production of global ecological subjectivities, and to identify the various challenges and opportunities signalled by this trend toward *staging ecologies*.

CHAPTER ONE
THEATRICALITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF ECOLOGICAL SENSIBILITIES:

The convergence of the political, the aesthetic, and the ecological in the era of global capitalism

How does the planet come to be seen, felt, sensed? Who is involved in such processes? And what difference does it make to the future of politics concerning planetary life?

Since the late twentieth century ecological questions have been gaining increasing visibility in cultural forums around the world. Within artistic, pedagogical and explicitly political initiatives, there is a growing trend toward using theatricality as a tactic in articulating what is at stake in changing ecological conditions and the relationships between social, cultural and environmental processes. Whether in elaborate arts and culture festivals on themes of "sustainability", educational arts interventions exploring the relationships between deforestation, petroleum extraction and various plant, animal and human potentialities in the Amazonian rain forests, or street theatre articulating the effects and processes at work in the circulation of microscopic chemicals introduced into urban ecosystems, theatricality is being deployed as a tactic orienting how ecologies are staged. In this chapter I seek to develop a framework for approaching the question to which this thesis is dedicated: *What are the political stakes of theatricality in the context of changing ecological conditions?* The chapter is divided into six sections, as follows:

I begin by articulating the stakes of addressing *ecological politics as a site of theatrical intervention*. Theorists such as Agamben (1995; 2002) have raised concerns that the increasing focus on ecology threatens to *occlude* politics with "ecological management strategies". Nevertheless, I argue that this does not mean that ecological problematics should be shunned from politics. On the contrary, the very manner in which ecologies are articulated, and the practices and values that are

brought to the foreground and supported, remains deeply political. The terrain of intervention of concern here is therefore that of *political* ecolog*y*, wherein theatrical events are deployed as tactics to intervene in the process of developing systems of valuation concerning how the future of social and environmental ecologies will be understood and addressed.

In the second section I introduce some of the most common arguments concerning the politics of theatricality, namely, those concerning the politics of *mimesis*. Here I address the arguments concerning the tendency of theatre to circulate false images that then shape the social and political hierarchy. While this is an argument famously launched by Plato, it is revisited in the contemporary era by theorists such as Bhaba (1994) and Taussig (1993), who point out that, in the colonial era, mimesis was commonly used as a tactic for both reinforcing and resisting imposed social and political hierarchies. The images of the colonized were historically cast as being "close to nature" and in need of paternalistic guidance, while the colonized would often mimic or create effigies of the colonizers as a means of regaining control of their cultural development. While I argue that remnants of such political interplay remains pertinent, the politics of theatricality, as manifest in contemporary interventions, goes beyond a politics of what and how roles and images are *portrayed* to rather highlight the very manner in which *events take place*, so as to alter the potential future of a territory.

In the third section, drawing on the work of Tracy Davis (2003) and Martin Heidegger (1977), I articulate the politics of theatricality as a politics hinging on how the apparatus and artifice associated with theatre functions to *cultivate an awareness of how roles and dynamics are produced*. Davis argues that theatricality functions to cultivate a "political affect" by promoting critical engagement within civil society. However, her theory, I argue, is ill-fitted for concerns regarding political ecology, since it functions by placing the spectator, and the instigating event, outside (or at a critical distance from) the politics in question, removing the act from the social and environmental ecologies into which they supposedly intervene. In order to bring this theory into conversation with ecological thinking, I draw on Heidegger's theory concerning the revelatory nature of modern technology, developed as a way of understanding how modern technology approaches the

elements that make up its ecology. While much of the theatrics currently engaging with questions of ecology do use theatrical technologies to reflect on the relationships between modern technology and the politics of interacting with environmental ecologies, I argue that such *theories of revealing* ultimately fail to account for how the interventions *themselves* function within their milieu to produce particular political, or eco-political, subjectivities. I therefore propose that the politics of theatricality be approached in terms of how it functions within the particular ecologies to which it belongs.

In the fourth section I argue that while theatrics can become a bio-political tool for entraining populations to engage in a particular manner, cultivating particular kinds of political subjectivities, these interventions can also serve to destabilize a singular techno-scientific approach to ecology. Drawing on the work of Foucault (1973; 1978; 1991; 2008), Lazzarato (1996), Escobar (1999; 1996; 2008), and Kershaw (1999; 2007), I argue that while theatricality can become part of contemporary "participatory management" strategies for encouraging ways of "stewarding" the land through creative blending of values that actually help encourage the commodification of land and culture, it can also help to point toward alternative processes of valuation.

In the fifth section, building on Guattari's theory of ethico-aesthetic practice (1995; 2000), I go on to articulate how creative practice orients ecological sensibilities by multiplying and experimenting with systems of valorization, with the potential to destabilize the capitalist tendency to take 'nature' as resource and 'populations' as problems to be managed. Here I look to the theatricality of interventions that experiment with the *distributions of bodies in space and the invocations of memories, habits, rituals and desires from various times and places* as ways of *setting in motion alternative social networks* and a trans-corporeal ethic that might alter the terrain of ecological politics. In so doing, I suggest a way of approaching the relationship between the ethico-aesthetics and ethico-politics of a theatrical event.

In the sixth section of the chapter I identify some of the dominant tensions that persist in considering the politics of theatricality in global contexts. Specifically, I argue that while interventions of an ethico-aesthetic nature may alter the terrain of

politics, *the question of who speaks to whom remains*. In this respect, pressures concerning the distributions of who are the spectators, consumers, presenters and funders of interventions remain strong forces in orienting the political agendas that direct the future organization of social and environmental ecologies.

Each of these arguments is elaborated below:

1.1   Ecological Politics as a Site of Intervention

The concept of 'ecology' as it has come to be used, was developed in Europe toward the end of the nineteenth century. The term was coined in 1866 by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who, in his *General Morphology*, defined ecology as "the whole science of the relations of the organism to the environment including, in the broad sense, all the 'conditions of existence'" (as quoted in Merchant, 2002, p. 160). Haeckel's work set in motion what would soon become known as the science of ecology. While this science of relations began as a pursuit of the natural sciences, especially in domains of biology and zoology, the implications of thinking systematically about the relations between and amongst organisms in this way, rapidly spread to the human sciences. In the contemporary context of the early twenty-first century, while concerns about environmental ecologies are becoming widespread, the political implications of approaching environmental concerns ecologically are only beginning to be understood.

According to Agamben (1995), while this focus on ecology and the *oikos* allowed for a much greater understanding of the factors influencing the relationships between organisms, Agamben noted that the danger in ecological thinking lay in its potential to reduce human beings to bundles of biological matter to be trained and managed, as opposed to political subjects who participate in selecting the terms and manner of engagement in decision-making processes. For Agamben, once politics is reduced to the management of life, questions arise, such as "what life is worth living", "what life is disposable under what conditions", "what might the elimination of some do to the web of relations", "how to ensure 'safety' for those strains of life in need of protection".

For Agamben, the danger is that political disagreements in this situation are reduced to the question of how various conflicts amongst relational organisms might best be 'managed', presumably by those who have the required distance, knowledge, and qualifications. And rather than treating persons as agents with power to intervene in political processes and decisions, this approach treats life as mere survival or 'bare life'; existence that must be protected, while self-determination is progressively eroded in the name of 'crisis management'. In offering the state the power to exclude the population from the political decisions that affect it, not only is there no guarantee that the needs of the population will be adequately met, but the very basis of political engagement is itself eroded. He writes:

> One of the essential characteristics of modern biopolitics (which will continue to increase in our century) is its constant need to redefine the threshold in life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside. Once it crosses over the wall of the *oikos* and penetrates more and more deeply into the city, the foundation of sovereignty – nonpolitical life – is immediately transformed into a life that must be constantly redrawn (Agamben, 1995, p.131).

Given the historical usages of ecological sciences, for instance, in the development of Nazi strategies for exterminating populations, as well as colonial and contemporary "post" colonial, imperial and capitalist strategies of environmental stewardship, the threats signalled by Agamben concerning the rise of ecological discussions as a depoliticizing force are certainly to be taken seriously. My argument here, however, is that there are multiple ways of approaching ecology, and multiple ecologies, oriented by the ecological sensibilities of those concerned. The theatricality of contemporary interventions, I will argue, (re)orients the production of these ecological subjectivities by presenting an array of ways of abstracting value from the relationships that form an ecosystem as well as by forging new relationships.

When Agamben extends this analysis to address the impact of ecological thinking on contemporary politics it is premised on an understanding of ecology denoting a particular scientific understanding of the interdependence of living beings. According to this understanding, in manipulating the terms and conditions of the social and environmental milieu, a population can be better controlled or managed. The political implications of such an approach are tremendous. There are,

however, a number of practices engaged in forming and articulating the relationships that constitute an 'oikos'.

In actuality, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, ecological politics has taken many forms, with multiple movements concerned with reorienting the dynamics and distributions of power and resources, as well as ways of thinking and relating. Not only was concern devoted to questions of 'resource management' and mitigating effects of pollutants, but the processes and levels at which decision-making takes place became central. Moreover, how ecologies were understood and experienced varied markedly. In 1962 Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* brought into public awareness the effects of pesticides, the chemical industry, and pollution more generally on ecosystems and the depletion of species; Carson's work (1962) has been heralded as a major catalyst of American environmental activism. Shortly thereafter, what Garrett Hardin (1968) famously called 'the tragedy of the commons' - a situation in which individual actors, guided by self-interest, deplete 'common' resources, to the detriment of all - became a source of mass concern. Eco-socialism began to take shape as a movement, implicating the spread of capitalist logic and technology as the cause of the degradation of ecological systems (Commoner, 1971; Merchant, 1980). In the 1980s and 1990s "environmental justice" movements began to form, pointing to relationships between "justice, nature and the geography of difference" (Harvey, 1996). Race, class and global disparities became noticeable factors in vulnerability to industrial pollution, as evidenced by the 1984 Bhopal Gas Disaster and other less 'newsworthy' industrial disasters, as well as the frequency with which toxic waste dumps were, and continue to be, found near poor communities of colour in the United States and around the world (Mittman, 2007).

The multiple logics at work here, I argue, gesture toward a politics of ecology, or a political ecology. In *Cosmopolitics,* Stengers (2010) offers an explanation of the relationship between the scientific and political meanings of ecology that is instructive for understanding what is at stake in the collection of practices that engage with a particular milieu:

> For those ecologists whose commitments fall within a political register, not all 'ecological' situations are equal, especially when they include members of the other human species among their protagonists. Ecological practice (political

in the broad sense) is then related to the production of values, to the proposal of new modes of evaluation, new meanings. (Stengers, 2010)

The political understanding of 'ecology', as used by Stengers, relies on an analogy with the scientific practices, but points to the relationships not between organic beings as such, but rather to the relationships between *practices* and between the systems of valorization that they embody (33). It is in response to such questions of political ecology that all the interventions under investigation in this thesis have been launched. The question posed here then becomes one of *how* events and activities function as interventions to challenge, promote or reify political and ecological sensibilities, and moreover, what they lend to the changing terrain of ecological problematics. Here I focus on how activities abstract particular elements and relationships within a social and environmental ecosystem, and specifically on how theatricality promotes and draws attention to the systems of valuation at work.

1.2   Promoting and Destabilizing Ecological Politics: The mimetic model

In a short article entitled "*Special Effects and Theatricality*", Samuel Weber looks to theatricality as an art defined by its 'effects' in transforming social and conceptual relationships:

> In contrast to the other `arts,' at least as they are generally interpreted, theater and theatricality are defined constitutively by their pragmatic dimension: which is to say, by the effects their representations produce upon those who witness them. The representations - be they visual, acoustical, linguistic, olefactory or whatever - are never self-contained, never meaningful in the literal sense of being saturated with meaning, a sense usually attributed to the work of art, but rather take place in a place that is never closed, undivided or self-contained. This is why theater and theatricality have always been viewed with mistrust in the Western philosophical tradition, beginning with Plato and Aristotle. But it is also why theater and theatricality have never ceased to fascinate, and why, even today, they persist, albeit transformed, to mark an age increasingly dominated by electronic media. (Weber, 2000, p. 122)

Plato and Aristotle both famously argued that the dangerous power of theatricality lies in its ability to seduce the population into believing in certain versions of what is true and important, orienting ways of thinking, feeling and acting in the world. Both maintained that theatricality can be useful in encouraging

particular ways of life, and reinforcing certain social organizations, but dangerous in that it can likewise destabilize ways of thinking, feeling and seeing, challenging social and political organizations. For Plato, creative modalities perpetuate ways of experiencing and organizing the world, bringing inhabitants of a republic closer to, or further from, the "Ideal" way of life. Whereas certain dances, rituals and rhythms could facilitate an approach to the Ideal, others, particularly representational dramatic performance, threaten to infect society with the circulation of "false images", whereby fantasies are introduced into the public sphere by those who are not qualified to comment on the "Truths" to which their arts refer, thus introducing confusion into the republic. From this perspective, the introduction of images, signs and symbols representing desires and concerns, whether on the theatrical stage, in the classroom, or on the streets as a gesture of protest, is threatening in so far as it may actually succeed in altering the manner in which audiences engage with the world. This is dangerous for Plato because their representations may not in fact reflect "the truth" of the situations they depict, nor the truth of how the world "should" be organized. I argue, however, that it is precisely these politically heretical truths and logics that those engaged in such theatrical interventions *seek* to circulate, as a tactic to "take place" as an army or a war machine, catalyzing new ways of approaching the social, mental and environmental ecologies of a territory.

Framed in this way, the crux of the "threat" posed by theatrical interventions lies in its capacity to disrupt, or prop up, social and political organizations. In its more contemporary form, discussions concerning the politics of mimesis have tended to focus on the manner in which mimesis promotes and/or destabilizes social and cultural hierarchies. As will be further discussed in Chapter Three, and Four, Taussig (1993) and Bhaba (1994) have shown the use of mimesis in both promoting and resisting colonial hierarchies in Latin America and India amongst other places. The historical deployment of images and stereotypes of "noble savages" at one with nature and, like "nature", in need of paternalistic stewardship, is now a well-known legacy of colonialism. What these theorists of colonial mimesis point out is that those who orient and control the terms of what gets mimicked how, exert a power over the trajectory of identity formation, and ultimately over how interactions will take place.

Bhaba points out that strategies for encouraging the colonized to mimic the behaviour of the colonists were popular pedagogical disciplinary strategies for shaping and disciplining the colonized. However, both Bhaba and Taussig also note that the adoption of mimetic tactics also destabilizes the hold of particular images, allowing multiple ways of engaging with the world to be tried out. Who ends up mimicking and having control over whose image is, likewise, typically left open, with the colonized often mimicking the colonizer, not in order to become "like" them, but in order to show their absurdity, as a tactic to alter the politics of the territory. These dynamics, as I will show in the coming chapters, continue in contemporary interventions, whereby, for instance the politics of role-play as a pedagogical strategy (discussed in Chapter Three), remain particularly ambiguous, while the burning of political effigies in protest (discussed in Chapter Four) is clearly an act of political resistance to dominant governmental and corporate trends in the region.

However, while mimesis remains an important component orienting the theatricality of an intervention, the politics of theatricality are, I argue here, not reducible to the politics of mimesis. The 'effective' dimension of theatre means that it is engaged, not just in the representations of stable entities in the past or in the world, but is rather directed toward affecting audiences. It is oriented toward transforming the future – toward stabilizing that which is unstable and destabilizing that which has taken hold. This is why, as Weber argues, theatricality is always engaged in an act of 'taking place' – not a singular pre-existing place, but a place that the theatrical act recreates. As noted above, Weber argues that theatre "takes place" like an army "takes a fortress" – i.e. by the force of its gestures, its invocations, by the manner in which it doubles something and repeats it anew, in a new place, introducing a series of virtualities.

1.3   Theatricality and the Revelation of Political Ecology: The potential of reflexivity

The role that theatricality plays in the production of political subjectivity, and the general relationship this holds to the social order is, as with immaterial production more generally, inconsistent. According to Tracy Davis (2003),

theatricality must be distinguished from the merely *theatrical*. Whereas, for Davis, the *theatrical* threatens to subsume the spectator in its artifice, the *theatricality* of an event can be flagged when a critical approach to the action is encouraged precisely because the techniques and technologies of production are apparent to those engaged.

For Davis, the possibility of this critical moment afforded by theatricality is seminal in understanding what theatre can lend to processes of political engagement. According to this account, theatricality hinges completely on the spectator. Davis has in mind the critical engagement of the spectator, but this does not mean that the spectator is necessarily physically removed from the action. For Davis, this effect hinges on a distancing akin to Brecht's 'alienation' affect. Theatricality understood in this way is, then, a phenomenon made explicit by Brechtian theatre, with its emphasis on making the theatrical apparatus apparent in order to provoke thought, and more recently by the talk-back sessions that have become increasingly popular with "community engaged" theatre and theatre-in-education projects with themes on particular social issues.

Moreover, for Davis, theatricality is a quality that is not confined to theatre *per se*. Davis' concept of theatricality, for instance, may be at work in the use of a video camera in staging an interview in a small indigenous village in the Andes, in so far as it serves not only to record the knowledge of a tribe, but to stage the very event that it records, gathering a group to participate in and observe the 'spectacle' of what would otherwise be the rather unremarkable occurrence of a few women speaking.

The political affect produced by this sense of theatricality functions by drawing attention to the politics of communication itself, and the conditions that allow the event to unfold in the manner that it does. This kind of theatricality hinges on the activation of a critical response. An intervention has already been made with the staging of the event, but how that intervention will affect those it engages remains open. According to Davis, the capacity of the spectator to contemplate that which they encounter in the performance is a function, not of the style of the theatrical intervention itself, but of the relationship developed, and to which the spectator contributes.

However, I argue that such a form of political organization (which links the 'freedom of the political agent' to the distance from that on which they comment or reflect) gestures toward but a particular *kind* of political subjectivity. Moreover, this kind of distancing effect, (that makes the audience aware of itself), is but *one* feature of theatricality, dominant in some events, but very much dependant on the political vision and aesthetic legacy to which each belongs. There are, however, other ways of thinking of political subjectivity that would be linked to other theatricalities. From the point of view of considering ecological politics, such positioning of theatricality as something that affords a *distance from* the events on which it comments is, moreover, somewhat problematic. From an ecological perspective, as I will show in the coming chapters, events are always shaped by their own social, cultural and environmental ecologies.

Davis does not discuss ecological politics as such. Indeed, the model of politics that she uses is one avowedly based in the nineteenth century models of liberalism which, as is well known through the writings for instance of John Locke, bear the mark of a categorical distinction between the political subject on the one hand, and the natural land and resources that this individual occupies and uses, on the other. The relationship of such a revelatory model of theatricality to ecological concerns is, however, suggested in Heidegger's famous comments on art and ecology in "*The Question Concerning Technology*" (1977). For Heidegger artistic processes find value in terms of how they reveal truths or essences. According to Heidegger, the essence of technology is 'revealing', and is, as such, to be understood as a kind of *poesies* – that is, a 'bringing forth' that unveils a truth of the world inhabited (Heidegger, 1977, p.13). The human being is a cause of revealing, but only in so far as the human being gathers the various materials and forms together. The birth of machine-technology in the eighteenth century marks a shift, however, in the essence of technology. From this point on, technology becomes a mode of revealing that is bound to accumulating and storing energy. As such, it approaches the Earth as a 'standing reserve'. The human being is then called upon to use and act in relation to modern technology. As such the human being also becomes a standing reserve in the form of 'human resource'.

The mode of revealing of modern technology becomes a matter of ordering elements. Such an understanding of technology as revealing is deemed inseparable from the ways in which the materiality of the world is approached and used. For Heidegger, the introduction of machines with the industrial revolution signalled a threat to humanity, first and foremost in so far as it closed off possibilities for thinking, as it colonized the realm of production and creativity with its own logic. The one saving grace that Heidegger finds in modern technology is precisely that it draws awareness to the role of technology, and by proxy, to its own exploitative relationships with the environment that technology mediates in the creative process (p. 28-35).

The mode of 'revealing' of which Heidegger writes, is a revealing of a different nature than Davis's theatricality. Whereas Davis focuses on the ability of technology to reveal its artifice in the phenomenon she names theatricality so as to promote critical reflection, Heidegger focuses on the tendency of technology to treat the Earth as a standing reserve, but in so doing to reveal its own processes. In articulating the relevance of the "revealing" of theatricality for approaching the ecological problematics of contemporary society, it is useful however to note the convergences in the approaches. Much of contemporary theatrics oriented toward ecological questioning functions by way of catalyzing reflection on the very technological processes to which it belongs. For instance, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, productions such as *Earth = Home* function through the process of engaging youth from around the world in multi-disciplinary arts workshops to explore their concerns regarding the state of the planet, and then bringing this process to light in a theatrical production. The theatrical production itself showcases the very sense of alienation expressed by some with internet media through the presentation of chats on a screen in the space of the theatre. Images of nature, similarly removed from their context, are likewise presented on screens, and conflicts between people dramatically reproduced through dance. The entire process is then put under scrutiny in an audience talk-back session that follows.

Despite the explanatory power of considering the theatricality of interventions in terms of their "revealing", I argue that such theories of revealing ultimately fall short of offering the tools for assessing the political force of particular theatrical

activities. While an event may encourage creative and/or critical reflection depending on how it is received by its spectators, its force is not purely that of reflection. Rather, the political affect generated, while it may produce a critical reflective spirit, ultimately hinges on how it functions with respect to social organizations and the approaches it potentiates. This force is not simply a function of what is "revealed" in the act, but of how the act functions with respect to the social, political and environmental networks to which it belongs.

1.4   Theatre Ecology and the Performative Society: Discipline and creativity

In the late twentieth century, Foucault famously developed his theories on 'bio-politics' and 'governmentality' upon which Agamben builds his argument. According to Foucault, bio-politics emerged with the rise of the Nation State as guarantor and manager of the lives of its citizen, in accordance with the relationships that state institutions forged with scientific bodies. With the growth of a scientific understanding of humanity as a *species*, 'bio-power' emerged as a life force that, at this time, presented itself to be ordered or controlled, and functions through a nexus of regulative techniques, guiding the practices and institutions of social and political life. Foucault argued that not only civil conduct, but the very life - and classification - of species, had become at issue. Measures to control reproduction as well as guide the development of lifestyles and life forms, for example, had become part of the technologies of power that grew up within this bio-political order (Foucault, 1978, 135 -145).

Charged with the responsibility of caring for the population and encouraging healthy and appropriately social behaviour, disciplinary techniques were developed that were aimed at "supervising the process of the activity rather than its results" (137). Within this 'disciplinary society', behavioural practices are modified, not first and foremost through the imposition of laws that must be obeyed, but through conditioning the sphere of possible actions and through "political technologies of the body" that function primarily by promoting a particular ontology of relating through the codification of bodily movement. Knowledge becomes a function of the experience itself. These technologies of power function not only to immediately

contain and direct the body in space, but more potently, to drive a transmutation in the topology of thought, movement and the movements of thought.

If, indeed, ecological thinking is becoming an engine of governmentality eroding 'politics', then we should expect that much of theatrics in this domain are, in fact, political technologies for disciplining the world population. In Foucault's terms it would seem that theatrical interventions are the perfect disciplinary technology. In the theatrical interventions that I will analyze in the coming chapters, the cultivation of particular kinds of political subjectivities, organizing the world according to particular ecological principles and sensibilities is, indeed, a reoccurring theme.

As concerns increase about the state of the environment, projects are being undertaken to cultivate ways of seeing and knowing that are considered ecologically beneficial by those launching the various initiatives. As I already noted, such initiatives are taking many forms, and their organization is not typically centralized. Initiatives undertaken now, particularly those that consciously deploy theatrics as tactics and are aware of the theatricality of their interventions more generally, increasingly function by "empowering" those living in a particular territory to be custodians of their own land in one way or another. As Escobar (1996) has pointed out, the "post-modern" forms of capitalism, unlike the initial phase of industrialisation (which is nevertheless, still underway in many places) tends to function less by imposing hierarchies as a way of legitimizing the colonization and/or imperialist takeover of land and sovereignty from those living in the region, and more by cultivating a sense of "sustainable" management in keeping with the principles of sustaining capital resource exploitation.

From this perspective, interventions, ostensibly designed to promote "multicultural" sensibilities, such as *Earth: the World Urban Festival*, the sustainable arts festival (which, as mentioned, will be discussed in Chapter Two), or the *Masters Program in Ecosystem Approaches to Health*, that uses "creative" interventions such as role-play, video and the encouragement of traditional rituals and practices (discussed in Chapter Three) could be viewed as disciplinary regimes, making way for the new "sustainable" world order; an order that may, indeed be

moving toward an emphasis on "performativity" as McKenzie (2001) and Kershaw (2007) point out, as well as toward a new "environmentality".

In 'Post-Fordist' societies, the rise of 'immaterial labour', which is to say labour concerned primarily with knowledge and cultural production, is becoming dominant. The cultivation of subjectivity itself, alongside the emergence of new modes of sociality, has become the engine of social production. This means that, as Lazzarato puts it, "values are 'put to work'":

> The transformation of the ideological product into a commodity distorts or deflects the social imaginary that is produced in the forms of life, but at the same time, commodity production must recognize itself as powerless as far as its own production is concerned. The second consequence is that the forms of life (in their collective and cooperative forms) are now the source of innovation. (Lazzarato, 1996, p.146)

What is produced, first and foremost, is not a product to be consumed and destroyed through the process of consumption, but rather a set of social relations. McKenzie (2001) has described this as the growth of "performative society". According to Kershaw, "performative societies are found especially where democracy and capitalism meet" (2007, p. 63). Kershaw is here referring to the performance integral to marketing as well as to the swaying of public opinion and the "staged contests" woven in politics as in market capitalism, both of which tend to function in much the same manner. Kershaw has pointed to the paradox presented in using theatrical techniques that enable articulating through signs and symbols which, by design, distance the audience from immediate place-based relations (calling upon pasts, futures and/or fictions), with explicit purpose of drawing attention to place-based relations. The performative nature of the distancing effect pulls the spectator and actor away from the actual and present social and environmental ecology that the theatrical act weaves in the space and time of its enactment.

The escalation of performative societies according to which values are put to work and distance from their present situation, does not, however, imply there is a particular agenda or even set of principles fuelling or containing every possible innovation. While capitalism puts subjectivity "to work", Lazzarato points out that what it cannot remove is the "character of the event", which is to say, the possibility

of an utter transmutation in subjectivity and hence in sociality and the relations of power there inscribed. For Lazzarato, the 'event' is something that grows at a convergence of social trajectories, a reaction that takes place when myriad voices converge, throwing into question the hierarchical dynamics that had previously organized them.

If performative society weaves a particular set of values, continually calling upon "subjects" to reinvent themselves so as to maximize their performance in accordance with the nexus of values adopted – a mental ecology that becomes naturalized in accordance with the systems of exchange and model of equivalence, the character of the "event" is what allows for a radical break from this performative circle. Lazzarato discusses this in terms of the meeting of material and immaterial modes of production, and the social networks for producing subjectivity in which they are entrenched. By discussing such modes of aesthetic production in terms of social, mental and environmental ecologies in which they are entangled and into which they intervene, it becomes possible to develop a way of theorizing the potential for specific events and interventions to develop alternative trajectories and/or reinforce dominant processes for disciplining populations and controlling the development of individual and collective subjectivities in the name of managing global ecological futures.

In his *Theatre Ecologies*, Kershaw argues:

> ... a dramatised and theatricalised society encourages an awareness of the sensorium of culture as constructed through performance. Culture tends towards a kind of inorganic anti-naturalism, through which man dreams of totally mastering nature. This is not surprising, given the political and economic forces that are at the volatile heart of the performative society. (Kershaw, 2007, p. 63)

For Kershaw, theatrical intervention can catalyze a break with such a performative society, depending on the particular "theatre ecology" woven. The preliminary definition offered by Kershaw is instructive:

> Theatre ecology' (or 'performance ecology') refers to the interrelationship of all the factors of particular theatrical (or performance) systems, including their organic and non-organic components and ranging from the smallest and/or simplest to the greatest and/or most complex. (Kershaw, 2007, p. 16)

Following Kershaws insights here, and drawing on both Lazzarato's arguments regarding the uses of creativity in neoliberal society, and Escobar's observations concerning the changing nature of political ecology, I note the tension between the capture of various modes of articulation and systems of valuation for the sake of sustaining capitalist modes of exchange, and the capacity of theatrical events to engender viable alternative systems of value and of social organization. In the analysis that follows, I will focus on the theatricality of interventions deployed explicitly to alter the social and mental ecologies that take hold amidst the changing climate of global ecological anxiety. Thus, for example, as I will argue in Chapter Two, while the collective dancing of a 'traditional' African dance by young African immigrants in Canada, and its presentation at a public festival, might be a catalyst for modes of self-organization amongst the youth, and a means of sensitizing audiences to their presence as vibrant and creative members of society, the act also becomes a convenient way of integrating these youth into 'productive' society in ways that do not necessarily lead to any change in the way productive society functions.

As Lazzarato (1996) points out, however, it is this space of indeterminacy left by creative modes of production that allow for the ethical to become political via aesthetic production. Consideration of how, when and why practices are engaged, and how they are altered, is fraught with politics, but this does not mean that they should be systematically rejected by those seeking alternatives to capitalist modes of valuation. As I will argue over the course of this thesis, approaching interventions *from the perspective of the theatricality* allows for an understanding of how particular events promote sensibilities, catalyze different social networks, and (re)distribute roles between actors and spectators. This approach situates theatrics and theatricality as part of social processes of generating and sustaining systems of valuation. In this respect, attention to, and cultivation of, theatricality can become an approach for not only *revealing* or *mimicking* roles or systems of value (as I argued in the above two sections), nor simply of *disciplining* the latest capitalist workforce, but potentially, in some circumstances, *pointing to and reinforcing trajectories already at work in developing other approaches to ecology, and alternative ecologies of practice.*

1.5 Theatricality, Ecology and Cultivation of Value Systems

While, as discussed, 'ecology' was framed originally in terms of organic or 'natural' life and the nexus of relations that an animal creates to sustain itself, over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first century theories concerning the importance of mental ecologies (Bateson, 1972), social ecologies (Bookchin, 1991), cultural ecologies (Guattari, 2000; Fuller, 2005; Kershaw, 2007), and political ecologies (Latour, 2004; Stengers, 2010; Escobar, 2008) have proliferated. In approaching ecologies as multiple, the processes through which ways of seeing and engaging the world are highlighted, and myths of singular 'value-free' ways of understanding and hence 'managing' ecosystems become destabilized. Already in Jakob von Uexküll's 1934 "*A Stroll the World of Animals and Men*", considered amongst the founding texts of early ecological studies, Uexküll developed an analysis of how organisms abstract elements of their environment in order to relate to these elements in particular ways. Uexküll's ecological perspective explores the varying capacities of animals and organisms to create a subjective life-world whereby the web of relations required for their continued survival comes into focus. The life-world of the tic, spider, the gorilla, the scientist, all exist simultaneously, 'attuned' to one another, and yet separate, each creating its own circuit of signification enabling its own respective pursuits. The implications of Uexküll's life-worlds go far beyond the disciplinary bounds of scientific inquiry, pointing toward mutations in culture itself. They open the very question of how we create and alter both our environment and our relationship to our surroundings. As Uexküll puts it:

> There is no space independent of subjects. If we still cling to the fiction of an all-encompassing universal, we do so only because this conventional fable facilitates mutual communication. (Uexküll, 1992, p. 339)

In order to approach the relevance of theatricality and theatrical technologies for the formation of political ecologies, the theorization of the relationships between mental, social and environmental ecologies advanced by Felix Guattari is instructive. Whereas for Uexküll, each organism lives in a 'bubble' of its own construction, focusing on the relations that are important for its own development,

for Guattari, the 'subject' is itself always in the process of being iteratively formed through its interactions. 'Subjectivity' is an ongoing act of production. Guattari calls for an understanding of ecological issues that integrates a consideration of social relations, human subjectivity and environmental dynamics in what he calls "ecosophy" (Guattari, 2000, p. 28). This ecosophy is underscored by active engagement with the various levels of ecology, named here as mental, social and environmental ecologies. It is not a matter of teasing out a static relationship between these levels that might serve to unite them once and for all, but of identifying and experimenting with practices at all three levels. The *modus operandi* requires working as an artist or an artisan to recreate with the tools and materials found, reformulating the conceptual and material relations that create a 'home':

> The principle common to the three ecologies is this: each of the existential Territories with which they confront us is not given as an in-itself [*en-soi*], closed in on itself, but instead as a for-itself [*pour-soi*] that is precarious, finite, finitized, singular, singularized, capable of bifurcating into stratified and deathly repetitions or opening up processually from a praxis that enables it to be made 'habitable' by a human project. It is this praxic opening-out which constitutes the essence of 'eco'- art. (Guattari, 2000, p. 53)

For Guattari, the three ecologies are characterized by a fluidity that is formed and developed, making it possible not so much to live 'in' a 'habitat' in the sense of a collection of inert elements to be manipulated, but rather to develop ways of relating, developing what Guattari calls assemblages or "machines". According to Guattari, 'nature' has always been a matter of machinic assemblages, linking components together in a manner that alters the existential quality of the process, catalyzing particular ways of navigating the world. For Guattari, 'nature' and environmental ecology generally are fundamentally bound up in machinic practices:

> We might just as well rename environmental ecology *machinic ecology*, because Cosmic and human praxis has only ever been a question of machines, even, dare I say it, of war machines. (Guattari, 2000, p. 66)

Each creative act introduces a possible alteration in the manner in which the 'machinic assemblages' of an ecosystem is articulated. As such, the event enables a a process of 'machinic heterogenesis', calling on a range of concepts, bodies, techniques and signs, as well as making multiple future trajectories possible, and sparking new practices of valorization. The system of valuations that sets this

process in motion and the sensibilities that it calls forth constitute the ethico-aesthetic character of the event.

Note that ethico-aesthetic production is not so much about art standing outside of a system in order to comment upon it, but rather being entrenched within processes in which it intervenes. The key tensions for Guattari are not between the natural world and the world of post-industrial technology, but rather between the various ways in which the forces, flows and elements of environments, thoughts, and societies are constituted, and the various ethical systems these relations instantiate. Each set of linkages presents multiple trajectories for future development. Engagement at the three discrete, though related levels of ecology (the social, the mental and the environmental) acknowledges the increasingly decentralized models of power and governance that have taken hold with late twentieth century capitalism – *Integrated World Capitalism (IWC),* as Guattari calls it – and the opportunities for engagement that it affords for escaping the prescribed modes of valuation and action that it inscribes. Guattari's "ecosophy" takes as its targets the:

> imperium [Latin: authority] of a global market that destroys specific value systems and puts on the same plane of equivalence: material assets, cultural assets, wildlife areas, etc., [as well as the model of human activity] that places all social and international relations under the control of police and military machines. (Guattari, 2000, p. 29)

His proposal consists of establishing practices for experimenting with new 'ethico-aesthetic paradigms' that reorder political interactions through the micro-relations that constitute it, in ways that finally problematize the macro-political systems of exchange and dominance. Whereas, as noted, contemporary processes of "post-modern" capitalism, including what could be called "eco-capitalism", works now through cultivating creative "participatory" managements, Guattari's point is that such processes are set in motion through various networks or "machines" that link together social, material, and affective forces in particular ways. It becomes not just a question then of what power structures are set in place, but of what desires are cultivated through these, promoting what kinds of systems of value. This is why Guattari writes:

Art is not just the activities of established artists but of a whole subjective creativity which traverses the generations and oppressed peoples, ghettoes, minorities… I simply want to stress that the aesthetic paradigm – the creation and composition of mutant percepts and affects – has become the paradigm for every possible form of liberation, expropriating the old scientific paradigms, to which, for example, historical materialism and Freudianism were referred. (Guattari, 1995, p. 91)

What Guattari identifies as a tactic for the mutation of systems of valorization in the era of late capitalism, however, as I also discussed above, becomes the engine for the development of new markets, as well as the creation of new workforces capable of adapting to constant change and producing for new conditions. Guattari takes performance, and other arts in their 'performative' modalities, to be particularly effective modalities for altering the way people think and relate to various elements of the world, and as such becomes an important modality for practical explorations in micro-political relations. From this perspective, the production of subjectivity occurs here through the re-organization of social, mental, and environmental configurations.

The arts, both in their content and in the manner in which they galvanize collectives, are particularly effective in doing this. If the ethico-aesthetic dimension of an event concerns how it organizes collectives and systems of value, then the theatricality of the event would have to do with how the artifices of repetition, mimesis, role distribution and presentation of bodies in space and time facilitates particular ethico-aesthetic processes. The theatricality of an event concerns the ways in which gestures and elements from one place and time are staged in another, carrying with them, and redeploying, the values that these gestures and images suggest. In the actual synthesis and redistributions of values, and in the actual distributions of who participates in the theatrical event and how, whether as director, actor or spectator, there is a change in the system of values embodied.

To view theatricality in this manner has hardly been dominant over the course of the last century. Marvin Carlson (2002) has in fact pointed out that many "post-modern" thinkers ironically share Plato's hostility to theatre and theatricality precisely because, in repeating and re-circulating 'roles', many consider theatricality to be antithetical to processes of social change. Carlson has chronicled a long history of "resistance to theatricality", from Plato, to Sartre to Butler, which has

rehearsed suspicion about theatricality. The suspicion according to Carlson's account is by and large that theatricality functions by way of creating and reinforcing rituals, and that, as such, it serves to create a vision of the world whereby behaviour is set, roles are cast, and habits of identification are solidified. However, Carlson argues that theatricality can nevertheless become a tactic for shocking audiences *out* of these habitual identifications. In line with both Carlson and Guattari, I am arguing in this thesis that even particular acts of "mimicking" activities through theatrical repetition, or acts of "revealing" particular kinds of social or political apparatus, can serve to break with dominant modes of valorization in so far as, in the process, different social networks and practices are set in motion. It is in the particularity of the encounter that the impact of a theatrical event is located. It is in its singular repetition that it can undo the habitual patterns that it encounters, and that a genuine shock and de-habituation to trained behavioural patterns can take place.

If we approach theatricality as an ethico-aesthetic project capable of engaging with, and potentially reconfiguring, the systems of valuation orienting mental, social and environmental ecologies, then it is so precisely because each event has the potential to alter such habitual identifications, thereby disrupting relations to the places and roles it calls upon. However, this does not require a wholesale rejection of roles, rituals or identities as necessarily entrenching *status quo* modes of organization. Throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first century, adoption and adaption of various social and political rituals has afforded new ways of engaging the world that often depart from dominant capital-driven practices.

Indeed, this use of ritual is part of an approach to theatricality made popular with Artaud's "theatre of cruelty", and by much of the para-theatrical activities of the theatrical avant-garde where it is precisely the forces of bodies and the relationships between them that orient the power of what transpires. With Artaud (1970), for instance, we find a theatre that engages directly with the materiality of the body and its environment, bringing into focus the material impact of imaginative techniques and the virtual possibilities afforded by physical sensations. His strategies draw explicitly on a range of traditions and ontologies to escape codified theatrical conventions and habitual ways of interacting. Artaud's famous

(mis)reading of Balinese performance, for instance, argues that the power of theatre emanates from the sensory force of sound and image and its capacity to affectively transform the immersive environment of the spectator. In Artaud's work, as in the work of many of his successors, the artist's intervention lies in reshaping the life-world by offering an experience that presents an alternative way of organizing elements, but perhaps more importantly, doing so in a way in which the relationship that the audience creates with its environment is transformed through the affective experience it undergoes**.**

Theatricality understood in this manner does not rest on a strict distinction between the natural or authentic state of affairs on the one hand, and its theatrical representation on the other. For Artaud, the transformations of the theatre could act as a sort of plague, transforming and activating audiences through a species of 'virtual contagion', since it invites spectators and actors to engage with the world in new ways and to spread these modes of engagement and the desires that they encode through presenting and circulating them in the public place that, for the duration of an event, become a "theatre". An event that breaks with sensory norms, that shocks the senses through encounters or modes of organization incommensurable with a present mode of organizing, spreads possibilities like a virus, acting on bodies not so much through direct contact but through the virtual possibilities presented. In order to accomplish this, Artaud, like many others, looked to (often alien) rituals as ways of breaking with everyday habits.

The tendency to look to theatricality as a way of staging new potential relations, and moreover, to repeat practices from 'elsewhere' to destabilize a particular way of configuring relations, has become a mainstay of contemporary theatricality (even if it brings with it its own political problematics, as I will later discuss). This is visible particularly in the manner in which gestures and collective actions reorganize how articulation of desires, memories and social and environmental relationships within a given piece takes place, and how the re-singularization of particular aesthetic traditions within a particular production thereby orients the production of ecological sensibilities.

As I will show in this thesis, the theatricality of a particular event and the way in which an event creates a relationship to place through the invocation of potential

pasts and futures has become a particular feature of political theatrics, particularly as they focus more explicitly on transmuting social and environmental (as well as mental) ecologies. In the late 1960s, 'environmental theatre' (later to be known as 'site-specific' theatre) developed as a genre, popularized by such groups as the *Living Theatre,* spearheaded by Julien Beck and Judith Malina, and *The Performance Group,* spearheaded by Richard Schechner. The movement of theatrical activity from the space of theatre to the ostensibly non-theatrical spaces alters the dynamic of what it means to take place. This movement also alters who and what elements (social and environmental) are involved in the process and in what way, as 'actor' or 'audience' (Schechner, 1994). As Schechner (1992) and Kershaw (1999; 2007) show, the theatrics of street protest, a genre of what Schechner calls "direct theatre", has been known for quite some time to make use of such relationships to place.

According to Alaimo (2010) (as will be explored in the next chapter), much of contemporary eco-activist performance is directed at altering the ethical relationships that form the terrain of politics, specifically, she argues, by displaying what she calls a "trans-corporeal ethic". By calling attention to the relationships between bodies, and the shared vulnerability of bodies within an ecosystem, eco-sensibilities are cultivated in a way that would force consideration for the well being of ecologies, and not just to the extent that some bodies support the profit of others. If, as Alaimo and Guattari suggest, alteration of systems of value can take place through such public display and reconfiguration of bodies, it remains to be seen what exactly are the political implications of such ethico-aesthetic transformations, and how alteration of theatrical dynamics might make a difference.

1.6 The Distribution of Roles and the Dynamics of Political Ecology

The actual theatricality of events can vary substantially, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes solidifying systems of organization and identification, including the manner in which what social or environmental elements of a place come to matter. Moreover, the force and manner in which theatricality functions depends on how both the system of signs drawn upon function in context, as well as the actual

political valence of the theatricality deployed. A function of the reach of global capitalism and the processes of industrialization it enacts, is that, for better or worse, increasingly, the theatricality of interventions is such that they 'take place' by restaging or re-presenting the memories and desires from "elsewhere". This is particularly the case with theatrics that seek to engage in the intersection between social, mental and environmental ecologies, as evidenced by such popular mantras as "think globally, act locally," pioneered by ecological movements. This question is often framed in terms of ethics, or ethico-aesthetics, concerning how systems of valuation are promoted and social configurations altered. The question of *who makes what visible to whom,* however, is a political question concerned with theatrics as a tactic for altering the balance of power.

The dynamic of polyphony itself has often been championed to topple hegemonies. This celebration of multiplicity has been lauded by performance and social theorists alike (Schechner, 1992; Hardt and Negri, 2004) following Bakhtin's theory of polyphony and the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984). Indeed, this celebration of Bakhtinian polyphony, as well as the playful reversal of roles and the seizure of public space, have become refrains for those looking to radical activist culture for a way out from beneath the stronghold of capitalist logic particularly in its 'radical democratic' vein. Hardt and Negri (2004) famously championed this power of the 'multitude' as a method characterized not by the representation of a singular position formed by consensus, but rather by a "chorus" formed of disparate bodies, voices and collectives, that nonetheless "spoke in common against the global system" (288).

However, while carnivalesque theatrical appeals may indeed help destabilize the hegemony of a singular logic, they are ultimately insufficient to challenge the political distribution of power that orients the manner in which ecologies are constructed. For example, as will be further explored in Chapter Two, in the *Earth* festival on the theme of sustainability, not only are performers from around the world invited to dance and speak, dancers dance through rhythms and traditions from regions unfamiliar to them, based on source material gathered from workshops from a dozen different countries, before audiences at various times and places. When used in 'capacity-building' as discussed in Chapter Three, theatricality

becomes a tactic for staging encounters between 'clashing' traditions, whereby various systems of valorization present trajectories for future development via a range of media that alter the dynamics and relationship between both the systems of the value and those who are involved in articulating and realizing these values. And, in Chapter Four, where I explicitly focus on the use of theatricality in social movements, there are a multiplicity of ethical configurations articulated through various acts of political theatre and street protest, each of which seek to not only alter the ethical fabric and sensibilities of those engaged and addressed, but in so doing, alter the dynamics of who can speak to whom, intervening in how the politics of the territory will be approached. Many of these events take on the character of carnivalesque polyphony, mingling voices, roles and systems of value, thereby temporarily altering or reversing social hierarchies. What is less clear is how they function to alter the political ecology of a region, as they so often seek to do.

I argue here that part of the force of political street theatre, of interventions that bring groups from around the world together, and of initiatives that cultivate creative articulation that explicitly presents practices that will destabilize hegemonic understanding of ecology, is that such initiatives act to, in Rancière's terms, "redistribute roles" concerning who can speak to whom. According to Rancière (2004), aesthetics can lend to politics only what it shares, which is to say a way of distributing what is common. In the case of aesthetics this means the distribution of the sensible – of what is seen and heard, and of ways of making and seeing. In the case of theatre, and in the theatricality of events more generally, this means a redistribution of roles and sensibilities hinging on the 'split reality' of replaying one space and time in another. Performers in this context literally do two things at once: they address audiences in the space and time of the audience, but they also address the images, characters, signs symbols and 'realities' of whatever past, future, or alternative fantasy space they present, bringing that 'reality' into the present reality.

As I will argue throughout this thesis, the manner in which theatrical events redistribute roles by altering who can speak to whom, can indeed impact how social mobility takes place in particular contexts. In such circumstances they can serve to challenge the logic of the managerial apparatus that threatens to impose hierarchies of decision-making for directing ecological futures. When a specific performer, a

young dancer for instance, dances the role of a judge before an audience, he brings the scenario of judgement to the audience; when for instance a woman from the slums beside the abandoned Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, presents an effigy of a CEO before the gaze of cameras, she presents the possible future of the change in power to viewers at home.

However, as the 'ecological crisis' focuses attention on the interplay between an increasingly broad range of players, with interests and concerns as disparate as those of the North American consumer and the Indian factory worker coming into conflict with one another over ecological framings, there is an increasing tendency to place ecological perspectives into a format that can be easily grasped and mediated via a range of media and communication practices (Schechner, 1988). This often means producing in a manner that appeals to funders, or to potentially sympathetic audiences, in a manner that will make an impact (Taylor, 2003; Gilbert, 2008). This genre of political theatre tends to require returning to set categories based on politically useful and recognizable terms, even when to speak in these terms threatens to mask the heterogeneity of groups, or when those who they denote are much more than the "role" in which they are momentarily cast.

This tendency has, to be sure, been instrumental in achieving many important gains. As Gilbert points out, for example, advocacy through the groupings recognized by the system of representative democracy has been crucial for any gains made by workers, women, and the many victims of systemic racism in places like the United Kingdom where there is a tradition of this kind of mobilization (Gilbert, 2005). On a 'global' scale, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the circulation of re-enactments, mimetic objects and theatrical displays both traverse and forge networks that are always already marked by a distribution, and sensitized according to particular existing ethico-aesthetic sensibilities, while nevertheless being crucial in many cases to bringing about changes to how ecological politics are approached.

As Weber (2002) points out, who watches and who is seen encodes a complex dynamic of consumption and spectatorship, agenda setting and performance to fit the mandate of funders, consumers or potentially sympathetic audiences. Moreover, the appearance of a redistribution of roles, and the practices of social mobility that

they would seem to suggest, are not always what they seem. Theatrical tactics for "increasing social mobility" in certain situations can be part of a strategy for encouraging a particular kind of global ecology, such as the encouraging of stewardship in line with a commodification of one's own territory in keeping with principles of contemporary capital systems of valorization, as discussed earlier. Increased global visibility can, in such contexts, simply promote an ecological "managerial" ethic that utilizes images of a degrading ecosystem, and of those who suffer with it, as a reason to defer to "expert" Northern/Western, often capital-driven solutions, further entrenching existing systems of valorization and social and material distributions. It is such questions that must be raised in considering the contemporary politics of theatricality from the perspective of ecological politics, and which will direct the discussion in the coming chapters.

1.7 The Challenges of Theatricality and the Production of Eco-Political Subjectivities: *Beyond a New Eco-Capitalism*

In this chapter I have identified several trends and challenges concerning the politics of using theatricality as tactics for directing the ecological futures of territories, locally and globally. I have noted that questions concerning how the mimetic repetition of images, gestures and modes of interacting can be used to bolster or destabilize social and political hierarchies remain pertinent. However, I also argued that discussing such concerns in terms of representation and mimesis only scratch the surface of the politics of theatricality in contemporary context.

I argued that the use of theatrical tactics is becoming part of strategies for cultivating ecological subjectivities often, though not necessarily, in keeping with contemporary 'post-modern' strategies of capitalism which encourage creative blending of traditions in order to encourage a stewardship of territories that is commensurable with contemporary globalization trends. Despite this, experimentation concerning the manner in which theatrical events invoke images, memories, habits and rituals, can serve to catalyze new social networks and new systems of valorization, of an "ethico-aesthetic" order, potentially challenging the terrain upon which ecological politics are approached. The challenge then becomes

how to undertake a redistribution of roles and dynamics, given the pressures of global spectatorship and the networks of support upon which most avenues of popular change depend.

The coming chapters will be devoted to identifying and analysing the challenges and dilemmas that surface in the process of staging theatrical events in situations generating intense ecological concern, and characterized by considerable political conflict. These are events staged to explore questions of sustainability and social and environmental justice, drawing on various traditions of social and political theatrics. Throughout these chapters I will detail how the redistribution of roles takes place through the staging of various theatrical events clustered around particular sets of concerns. I will show how the events attempt to engage participants and audiences, in order to alter the dynamic of whose voices are heard and which bodies are seen by whom, and the possibilities that this affords for enacting a change in the social and environmental dynamic of the region. However, I will also show the challenges faced by each in terms of enacting the change in social, political and ethical fabric to which it seemingly purports to aspire. In so doing, my goal is not to evaluate the merits of particular events. Nor do I aspire to create a template here for designing theatrical interventions with particular political leanings. Rather, in the course of analyzing theatrics in the pages that follow, I aim to detail the elements and concerns that give particular events their political valence in a contemporary context.

Here I will identify the tensions that arise within participatory projects in the context of late capitalist globalized society and, in particular, the ways in which environmental and social ecologies are redrawn through theatrical tactics of intervention. In so doing, I aim to develop a theory of the politics of theatricality and the production of ecological subjectivity that can be of use to both theorists and practitioners aiming to understand the tensions and stakes of the sorts of ecologically oriented theatrical projects that are becoming increasingly widespread in the early twenty-first centuries. By providing theoretical consideration of the questions and tensions my hope is to provide some analytic and theoretical tools of navigation. Ultimately, it will be up to those implicated in each project to make choices concerning what tactics to use when.

Each of the cases studied here is involved in transnational networks marked by their own distributions of power and knowledge and characterized by the promotion of particular ethics and aesthetic sensibilities. In order to understand the political significance of any particular intervention that reconfigures 'ethico-aesthetic' sensibilities, it is necessary to approach its specificity and the manner in which it functions within its context. In the case of the interventions under investigation here, this means examining the theatricality of how the event goes about making palpable, and ultimately transfiguring, the ecological politics and the distributions of social roles. It will, as I will show in the coming chapters, be necessary to inquire after the processes through which experiences are translated, de-territorialized and re-territorialized through the particular events that 'take place', and to analyze how power is redistributed through this process. Finally it is crucial to look at how theatricality functions to build, destabilize, and solidify particular kinds of planetary networks currently engaged in setting the agenda for an ecological politics of the future. It is to these questions that I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

Eco-Aesthetics and the Politics of Theatricality:

Movements between 'Earth' and 'Home' at the *World Urban Festival*

In the summer of 2006, "*Earth: The World Urban Festival*" was held in Vancouver, Canada. Funded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this arts and culture festival was promoted as the 'cultural wing' of the *World Urban Forum*, and was designed to engage the public in "putting ideas into action" concerning "sustainable cities". Whereas the Forum was conceived to engage questions of sustainability as a series of policy debates, the 'arts and culture' Festival staged this problematic as one deeply entrenched in a politics of aesthetics. Thus, for the Festival, the questions of what sensibilities and systems of valorization would guide this process became paramount in articulating *whose ideas* of *what kind of cities* would be put into action *to sustain what.*

Over a hundred and twenty groups assembled at the Festival, from countries around the world including Namibia, India, Australia, China, the Philippines, and Canada. The groups ranged from well-established non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, to small community groups operating within their local areas, to a broad range of artists in dance, theatre, music and visual arts. Approximately half of the events presented at this festival were performed by trained artists; the other half of the festival consisted of presentations by community groups or social and environmental advocacy groups. The events of the Festival focused on how experiences of the world's populations would be articulated; what ecologies of thought would be nurtured; and what environmental values as well as environmental ecosystems might be sustained within a 'global' context. Broadly construed, it was a festival of 'eco-art' on a global scale.

In *Three Ecologies* Guattari defined the 'essence of eco-art' as the project of making the Earth 'habitable' through engagement with the mental, social and environmental processes that together form the conditions of the Earth (Guattari, 2000, p. 54). In approaching ecologies aesthetically, Guattari highlights the always 'partial' or 'open' nature of any encountered territory, and the artistry involved in developing and altering practices through which a home is established. The aesthetic, in Guattari's sense, and in the sense that I address in this chapter, is particularly highlighted by artistic endeavours. It is not, however, confined to artistic practices as formally circumscribed. The aesthetic in the sense used here has to do with the sensibilities, and the way certain phenomena are abstracted from the world as being of value or holding a particular resonance. Aesthetic practices are not confined to the fine arts as such. However, they are typically a focus of the arts, whether deployed in a professional context or more generally as a way of transforming how the world is seen, felt and approached.

As I will argue in this chapter, aesthetic sensibilities orient what will become salient, and what kinds of psychic, social and environmental territories will be formed and take hold of a place. Whereas there has been an increasing tendency to view questions of sustainability in terms of the management of environmental resources, here I will argue that the manner in which a territory is approached concerns a multiplicity of processes, irreducible to a set of data. Rather, at stake in the ecological problematic is the question of what social and environmental relationships will be deemed important and by whom. It is this question of ecological values and sensibilities that, I argue, direct aesthetic interventions of the sort presented at the festival.

While the process of 'ethico-aesthetic' experimentation is, in principle, politically neutral, the manner in which various roles are redistributed in the process of experimentation and the manner in which experiences are called upon and replayed in another space and time, galvanizes participants and spectators in particular ways. As questions of ecology are increasingly being addressed at a 'global' level, by a host of transnational players, the actual sensibilities taking hold are increasingly being directed and underscored by particular distributions of political power, directing what sensibilities can take hold how. Thus, as I will argue

in this chapter, while the production of particular kinds of aesthetic experience may not be tied to a political agenda as such, the relationship between, on the one hand, what is taken as important, and on the other, the distribution of roles concerning who will be involved in making these choices, is extremely political. This becomes particularly evident in considering how the *theatricality* of interventions, which is to say the way in which a situation is brought to life through dramatization, the playing of roles, and the re-presentation of phenomena in a staged event, orients the embodiment, repetition, transmutation and redistribution of ways of sensing the world. In this chapter I will pursue the question of how the theatricality of activities over the course of "*Earth: The World Urban Festival*" intervenes in the politics of cultivating ecological aesthetics.

The series of events in the Festival drew on and propagated a particular set of habits, memories and desires. I will argue that the mental, social and environmental ecologies into which an artistic work or process intervenes is not only affected by the intervention, but also by how the artistic work makes a place 'habitable', making palpable particular sets of concerns, and catalyzing particular social collectivities through the articulation of desires for the future. The question of who articulates the ecological sensibilities that will shape the future and how, is thus brought to the surface as a site of potential intervention. The pieces presented at the *World Urban Festival* rendered palpable some of these different approaches to inhabiting the planet, as articulated by the contemporary artists and community workers from around the world, who were able and willing to congregate in Vancouver. We were thus presented at the Festival with what Deleuze (1994) calls:

> a theatre of problems and always open questions which draw spectators, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious, the final element of which remains the problems themselves. (Deleuze, 1994, p. 192)

Theatre has traditionally been characterized by its split reality, harkening to roles, movements, actions and bodies that exist *elsewhere* (whether in the past, future or purely in a virtual or imaginary space) and invoking this elsewhere in the present, localizing them in the very specific time and place of the theatre. It is in this act of doubling that the modes and contents of various experiences can come

into view as distinct processes and that make visible the particular distributions of roles and modalities as mechanisms of sharing experience.

To understand what is at stake in the theatricality of particular interventions for 'putting ideas [of sustainable cities] into action', requires assessing how the medium functions to repeat and recreate experiences. Within this Festival, the theatricality both of individual pieces and of the Festival as a whole played a particular role in making visible the dynamics at work in rendering the planet 'habitable'. It also, however, made visible the tensions between, on the one hand, the various ecological strata and ways of making a home, and on the other, the social and political processes on the contemporary world scene that globalize ways of seeing and doing. In the Festival, this process of exposing tensions took place through various artistic experiments with various mediums and techniques. I will therefore begin by exploring how translating experiences via particular media and artistic techniques at the Festival actually functions to reconfigure the experience of the world and the relationships amongst those whose experiences were invoked, those who do the invoking, and those to whom the presentation was addressed as it took place.

Through an analysis of the multi-media dance theatre project *Earth = Home*, I begin by exploring what it means to posit ecologies as processes of ethico-aesthetic experimentation. I will explore the force and significance of how experiences of a territory are translated via theatrical media, and how the very act of translating experience across various media not only brings certain social and environmental relations into view, but also conditions what can be articulated and disseminated across space and time, as well as how this can be experienced. Thus the first section of this chapter addresses the cultivation of eco-aesthetic sensibilities at an *ethical* level, concerned with the cultivation of relations to the Earth and the forces, elements and inhabitants that constitute it. While I argue that the process of approaching ecologies through theatrical articulation conditions the relational dynamic at work in what and how social and environmental relations take prominence, I also argue that a gulf remains in how ecological sensibilities, as made manifest in *artistic projects*, might impact the sensibilities that direct *policy*.

Significantly, the *World Urban Festival* was positioned in relation to a forum oriented toward policy-making and political agenda-setting at the transnational level.

The second section of this chapter therefore moves explicitly to a concern with how the politics of theatricality orients the very roles and distributions that lead to political change. Here I explore the relationship between ethics, aesthetic sensibilities and the redistribution of social and political power. Through an analysis of Liz Lerman's *Small Dances About Big Ideas*, a dance exploration of the issues surrounding genocide and the law, I therefore look at how the theatrical process of rendering sensible bodily experiences can be understood to affect the relationships between sociality and politics. In particular, I examine how the relationship between social interaction and the formation of juridical and political power are coded through actual bodily movements, and the implications of such processes for granting a role to those who 'have no place' in political life.

In the third section, I go on to identify a series of paradoxes that lie at the heart of the festival as played out by the theatricality of interventions seeking to alter eco-aesthetic sensibilities as a tactic for intervening in the shaping of ecological futures:

(1) The circumscribing of dissident modes of articulation and activities engaging in the redistribution of social roles to the 'cultural' realm of the Festival, as *distinct* from the 'policy oriented' realm of the Forum, threatens to gut such activities of their ability to affect changes in orienting the political future of social and environmental ecologies. Simply put, the Festival, by providing *a safe venue for acting out dissent*, may paradoxically *neutralize its militancy*, depoliticizing activities in the name of cultural relativism, whereby what is displayed is reduced to a matter of "different cultural expressions", thereby containing the social and political challenge that it might have posed.

(2) To the extent that theatrical pieces *make readily accessible a range of practices* for approaching ecological knowledge, they paradoxically *facilitate the co-option* or 'capture' into the embrace of global capitalism of otherwise 'culturally marginal' and potentially politically dissident activities. While the Festival allows for the circulation of heterogeneous modes of valorisation, it also becomes a device for *inviting practices and productions into the apparatuses of the culture and development industries*.

(3) To the extent that *hierarchies of visibility remain* within the 'cultural' realm, and that the theatricality of a piece distributes social roles, whether in the performance event or in the process of creation, such theatrical productions paradoxically *reinforce particular distributions of power*. In other words, these theatrical activities could paradoxically serve to popularize the ecological aesthetics of those who orient the piece, such that these interventions might be taken as the cultural wing of a biopolitical project of global ecological management in a manner that *actually bolsters the existing dynamics* of global capitalism.

In addressing these paradoxes, here I investigate how the eco-aesthetics are coded and disseminated through the theatricality of festival projects, and the role of these interventions within the wider social machinery.

2.1   Between Earth and Home: Ecology as an ethico-aesthetic experiment

In June 2006, the multi-media dance piece entitled *Earth = Home* choreographed by the festival's curator, Judith Marcuse, premiered at the *World Urban Festival*, staging a convergence between many of the themes and problems that would be addressed throughout the Festival. The piece had been developed over a three-year period through a series of arts-based workshops in dance, electronic media art, video, theatre and creative writing, with the involvement of hundreds of youth in Canada and around the world. As stated in the trailer released following the premiere at the Festival, the piece is framed as a:

> translation of their [the workshop participants'] thoughts and feelings about the state of the Earth and where we are taking it… our personal connections to social and environmental issues and our desires for the future. (Judith Marcuse Projects, 2006)

This project of translating "thoughts and feelings about the state of the Earth" passed through several phases: (1) in the workshop phase participants were invited to articulate their own experience through the proposed media and following a series of guided exercises and activities; (2) the project compiled, synthesized and repeated or 'doubled' these experiences in a theatrical performance presented to audiences in various venues around the world, beginning at the Festival; and (3) following each performance a talk-back session was held, inviting audiences to interpret the piece

and relate it to their own experiences, thoughts and feelings. The challenge from an ethico-political perspective is that none of these acts of translation are neutral. Thoughts and feelings are relational articulations, enunciated via particular media in particular settings. The problematic it thus faces concerns, at its core, the challenge of translating ways of seeing and sensing the world, given that in the process of translation via the various theatrical apparatuses deployed, mutations in meaning and, ultimately, in the trans-corporeal ethics suggested occur. This problematic can be approached as what Guattari has called an 'ethico-aesthetic' experiment.

The phenomenon of theatrical translation of aesthetic experience has been at the heart of much writing concerning 'intercultural theatre' and 'cultural encounters' and 'exchange'. Pavis (1992) has theorized the challenge in terms of the relationship between the 'source' and the 'target' culture. Pavis uses the image of an hourglass, whereby the 'grains' of the source culture flow to the other side of the hourglass – to that of the target culture, settling in a new fashion, according to the shape or filters through which these grains must pass. This process, as Pavis points out, is complicated by the fact that, in the artistic context generally, and the theatrical context specifically, the actual theatrical 'cultures', and the particular aesthetics and modalities that are deployed, intervene in the manner in which cultural translation takes place.

These layers of translation are evident in *Earth = Home*. And yet, I am arguing that the very duality that Pavis deploys to explain such a process of translation, is undermined by the lack of cultural homogeneity on the part of either the 'source' or the 'target' 'cultures'. What is presented, on the contrary, is a series of heterogeneous processes mediated by the systems of exchange and the theatrical techniques of presentation and redistribution of what might become visable *as* 'culture'. What would seem to be spotlighted is how heterogeneous ways of moving and relating to the Earth might, nonetheless, relate to one another. The modes of translation and the bodies and experiences invoked become inextricably linked.

Beginning with a storm simulated by special effects, *Earth=Home* tells the story of one stormy night - a night of disequilibrium where various forces collide. In the midst of this crisis of elements, a host of dancers seek shelter. The manner in which the storm is staged itself points to the mix of media that converge to frame and

destabilise the Earth as a shared 'home'. A video montage of images of the earth is presented on screens, interrupted by thunder clasps reverberating through the circular performance space. One by one, dancers enter the space, each with their rhythms, gestures and movements derived from different traditions of dance. The simulated thunder and lightning become the prelude to a simulated image of the earth morphing into images of insects, of water and of the various cells that form the germs of life on a screen that then projects a barrage of textual information – statistics on population growth, resource depletion, inequities of distribution – a soundtrack of changing world rhythms and beats, and of course, the bodies of the dancers as they enact and transform the habits of the Earth's inhabitants. Staged in the round, in a temporary dome referred to over the course of the festival as the *shabono* (named after the temporary huts built by certain South American indigenous tribes), the piece narrates a series of encounters and conflicts between groups, styles of movement, and social types, as 'resources' such as water become increasingly scarce.

Throughout the piece, textual dialogue, images, statistics concerning global distributions, and projections regarding the environmental future of the Earth (presumably gathered from or prompted by workshop participants) are displayed on screens hung from the ceiling around the corners of the presentation space. The theatrical event synthesizes each of these media, integrating heterogeneous vectors of experience, through a series of continuous process of translation, each of which generate their own experience, and become a catalyst for actually producing the eco-sensibilities that form the substance of the production.

The three phases of experience-translation in this theatrical project each bring its own set of challenges. The process of gathering material – which is to say, in this case, of conducting a workshop, will always be generative, not only at the level of expression, but at the level of giving shape to the thoughts and feelings themselves. This means that the various artistic practices engaged in a workshop not only encode experiences and relationships – they create experience and relationships anew through the very act of making connections to social and environmental ecologies visible. Pavis' discussion of intercultural theatre in terms of source and target cultures has the advantage of being able to make sense of the omnipresent dynamic

of appropriation at work in much of intercultural theatre, whereby, the "adapter and the receptor take control of the source culture according to their own perspectives" (16). In the context of work explicitly oriented toward ecological interventions, this has often meant that source cultures deemed sufficiently 'other', are homogenized and romanticized, standing in for a primitive union with 'nature' toward which one might like to 'return'. One can see this dynamic even in the way in which certain luminaries of the European '*avant-garde*' theatre era approach and appropriate the traditions of 'other' cultures, for the sake of creating a theatre to come, opposing a totalizing capitalist logic. This is, for example, evident in Artaud's approach to the Tarahumuras Indigenous rituals in the 1930s, which he reportedly never actually visited despite his ethnographic sounding descriptions (Artaud, 1970), or in the enabling of a certain spiritual-sensory experience found in Grotowski's paratheatrical experiments drawing on the shamanic and spiritual traditions of Latin America, Japan and India (Bharucha, 1993).

Avant-garde artists have often been accused of exoticizing, decontextualizing and appropriating aspects of the theatrical traditions from which they draw in ways that often radically misconstrue the stakes of the performance for those who may continue to practice it or who have done so in the past (Bharucha, 1993; Innes, 1993). However, the continued power of the work of artists like Artaud and Grotowski lies in the manner in which the technologies of performance deployed allow for a 'becoming other' (to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) able to catalyze new mental and social formations. The multiplication of 'cultural' stories, media and engagements in *Earth = Home,* then, points not to the representation and appropriation of various always *already existing* eco-aesthetic approaches to making the Earth a home, but rather to the very challenges that lie at the heart of *forming* the relationships that constitute the ecologies that are indwelled.

In the case of *Earth=Home,* not only do we find myriad media pulled together, but this process of staging encounters *itself* became highlighted by the theatricality of the presentation. If we take the *process of creation* as central to the politics of aesthetics of *Earth = Hom*e, we arrive at an aesthetic of multiplicity and integration. Different bodies of thought are invited to co-mingle in order to produce actions that converge momentarily to produce an aesthetics that is itself processual, relating to

the singularity of actual encounters. Processes and practices are always in the process of challenging one another, forcing mutations in how a territory will be reconstructed. The process of encounters that finally is staged is the *culmination* of a multi-level process of integrating experiences of the Earth as articulated by various media, in various ways, from various places and times, and as catalyzed by particular constellations of individuals. The process of creation itself as such produces an eco-aesthetic as a *way* of rendering sensible the world such that it can be inhabited. The process itself gestures toward the manner in which environmental, social and psychical ecologies change. These are not only represented by a clash of cultures, or by an appropriation of one culture by another, but are constantly in the process of being reshaped through the intersections of media and practices through which experiences are articulated, catalyzing individual and collective subjectivities. Thus, for instance, when in the opening scene of *Earth = Home* a storm takes place, we can see a symbolic crisis happening. However, we can also see the staging of a collective experience that would re-singularize the experiences of those present as part of a series of events that contribute to shaping the future and past of whatever eco-aesthetics are being cultivated.

In symbolic terms, myriad people are being caught in the midst of a crisis of 'nature' – a storm – that of course is actually being generated by a series of technological interventions (sound, video, light) and human dancers theatricizing a series of activities that unfold under the pretext of searching for shelter. The actual theatrical event, however, is not posited as an outside representation of that onto which it sheds light. Rather, as choreographer Judith Marcuse points out, "we are all in the *Shabono* together", and this theatrical process is meant to provide a particular kind of experience, that might allow a reshaping of how we share the space of home and co-create it together.

The piece, from beginning to end, is characterised by processes of metamorphoses and mixtures, as dancers seek to make a home of diverse and finite earthly matter, appropriating and mediating the stuff and images of the earth to direct the territories of the future. In the twenty-first century, it is evident that these processes span across national divides, and that at a given time and space, wherein a theatrical presentation or a workshop might take place, there is no singular 'we' or

'they' to offer or absorb cultural material. There are, rather, processes converging with increasing rapidity, forming the subjectivities that inhabit and orient the Earth. As Guattari writes:

> Vectors of subjectification do not necessarily pass through the individual, which in reality appears to be something like a 'terminal' for processes that involve human groups, socio-economic ensembles, data-processing machines, etc. Therefore, interiority establishes itself at the crossroads of multiple components, each relatively autonomous in relation to the other, and if need be, in open conflict. (Guattari, 1995, p. 36)

The making public and visible of these processes of interiority has for some time been a dominant task of theatricality. These various processes of subjectification, and various conflicts between them gesture toward the cultivation of various eco-aesthetic sensibilities, which might themselves be in conflict, even as the interactions between these vectors are themselves mediated and directed by interventions, often themselves of an ethico-aesthetic character, such as those of the Arts and Culture Festival phenomenon. Since the mid-twentieth century it has been common for theatrical productions to utilize their own theatrical apparatus to comment on the artifice of the situations into which they intervene, showing their own theatricality to be continuous with the theatricality of that which they ostensibly mimic. This is the meta-theatrical tendency, whose notable forerunners include Pirendello and Becket, and in the more explicitly political vein, Brecht and Piscator. This tendency to lay bare the theatrical apparatus and make explicit the artifices of theatrical production have become one of the chief characteristics of what is sometimes now referred to as 'post-modern theatre' (Pavis, 1992; Erickson, 2003), and one which is very much at work in *Earth = Home*.

Here, however, while *Earth = Home* tends to function by way of imitating, repeating and displaying the practices of codification that generate eco-aesthetic sensibilities across media, and by staging encounters between these codes, the actual socio-political context and dynamics of the encounter are also brought onto the stage, forcing a consideration of the ethics of the encounter between codes. Statistics concerning the state of the Earth and the global distribution of resources play a double role: (1) they highlight the global inequities that serve as the background for the encounters that take place onstage. (2) Diverse media are also used to make visible the way actual media technology functions within global

systems. The statistics thus create a 'global' image of a problematic, and set the scene according to which all other exchanges will be codified and take place.

This is not only a question of 'source' and 'target' culture appropriation, but permeates what and how workshop and performance processes will engage and redirect gestures, words and affects that shape the interactions of those with whom they come into contact. What occurs in this process, I am arguing, is an active transformation of ethical sensibilities, and a reordering of how bodies and forces engage one another. As Alaimo (2010) has argued, the performing body invites a consideration of a trans-corporeal ethic, highlighting the relationships between human bodies, but also between human and non-human or 'more-than-human' bodies, in so far as the movement between bodies (what is common, particularly in the context of shared ecological conditions) becomes primary.

While it would be overly homogenizing to insist that this trans-corporeal ethic is *always* invited by (all) performances (and I should point out that Alaimo makes no such claim), in *Earth = Home* this trans-corporeal ethic surfaces at several levels. This is evident for instance in the manner in which dancers move together in performance space in relation to the various visual and auditory media, in order to form the semblance of cultural entities through the technological and virtualizing bodies and apparatus of the multi-disciplinary theatre. Movement styles articulated by youth from Ghana, for instance, may vary significantly from those articulated by Canadian youth. The disembodied, digitalized text of the workshop participants, deterritorialized from their physical milieu, are re-presented on screen, where the bodies of the audience members and of the dancers re-territorialize the text, allowing it to take place in the *shabono*.

What is played out then across the bodies of the dancers is the various movements by which "earth" as matter becomes fashioned into a "home", and the relations that are forged in the process. Indeed, with the terms of the piece sequestered by the marker of mathematical equivalence, " = ", the title of the piece suggests a response to Earth as a quagmire or problem (in a logical, as a opposed to a normative sense) of how to stitch habitable relations, played out through the series of embodied encounters that force a change in how home is approached. These take place across various movement styles, narratives, rhythms and mediums that

combine to form the storminess of *Earth = Home*. In the encounters, new ways of forming ecologies are forged, such that it is no longer simply a case of representing experiences from around the world, but of theatricizing encounters between ways of articulating. The theatricality inherent in staging the processes of 'homing' the earth, gestures toward sensibly distinct, active forces in articulating the Earth and the intensity of the differences that constitute and complicate the very possibility of envisioning a single shared Earth/Home.

This theatricality spotlights the global ecology of Earth as a problem, or series of problems, in the Deleuzian sense, as among "those problems which demand the very transformation of our body and our language" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 192). The resonance of a tribal African dance changes when those who dance it encounter other dancers from a contemporary Western dance tradition, while the force of human bodies itself takes on a particular force when juxtaposed by the displaying of internet chats that frame bodies within the context of global concerns for depleting resources, climate change, rising poverty rates, etc. With the conflicts and tragedies that ensue when tribes and factions group, divide and confront each other to battle for territory and resources, or simply to hoard them, we find that 'culturally specific' media and movements are not only a mark of style, but a way of catalyzing group identities.

Much of performance studies literature has approached this process of embodying identity as a practice of creating, invoking or catalyzing collective memories and passing on collective practices (Schechner, 1988; Bharucha, 1993; Taylor, 2003). As Bharucha (1993) reminds us, to flatten all dances, movements and gestures to performances that can in principle be considered and presented within performance or festival venue as equivalent or exchangeable is highly problematic, since it assumes that each dance, each gesture, each gathering has an analogous social function, which is often not the case. Contemporary tap dancing practices, learned and disseminated through dance conservatories and performances, clearly have a completely different resonance from traditional Middle Eastern belly dancing, even if the latter can be, and is, often now taught in dance schools throughout North America. They are even a further cry from South East Asian ritual

dance forms that were routinely sampled by the European avant-garde throughout the twentieth century.

In *Earth = Home*, the theatrical moment in which a gesture is repeated, however, is organized with respect to the very contemporary problematic of encounters as mediated according to particular global dynamics, and against the backdrop of ecological anxieties that are themselves being recoded. This organization also relates to the imperative that the narratives of ecology (with their refusal to submit to national borders) lead to both exportation, and to the importation of often-conflicting 'solutions' for creating a future of 'harmonious' social and environmental ecologies. Bodies become highlighted as mediums for generating and transmitting ways of engaging.

Taylor's (2003) distinction between the archive and the repertoire with respect to performance is instructive here. The archive, for Taylor, is the receptacle of documents that keep cultural practices accessible as products. In the context of eco-aesthetic considerations, that which exists in archived form has a greater likelihood of being able to impact what modes of engaging with the Earth will become dominant in the future, *depending on how they are accessed.* The repertoire, by contrast, is the living process of passing on practices through actual events that engender a 'being there' and that make spectators and actors co-creators of what transpires – in its legacy if not in the actual generation of actions. Taylor expresses some concerns about the general procedures of performance seeking to access and showcase marginal voices, particularly those projects falling under UNESCO's umbrella (and we can recall here that UNESCO was among the primary funders of the *World Urban Festival* that permitted this piece to be premiered). Taylor writes:

> UNESCO'S goal seems to protect certain kinds of performances – basically, those produced by the 'traditional' and 'popular' sectors. This move repeats salvage ethnography of the first half of the twentieth century, implying that those forms would disappear without official intervention and preservation. Part of UNESCO's project involves moving materials from the repertoire into the archive ('to record their form on tape'). However, UNESCO is also consciously trying to protect embodied transmission ('to facilitate their survival by helping the persons concerned and assisting transmission to future generations'). But how will this be accomplished? (Taylor, 2003, p. 23)

Taylor goes on to express concern that, at the time she was writing, the only UNESCO project underway for assisting in the continuity of the repertoire functioned by way of protecting the "possessors of traditional cultural skill", and that, as such, may be falling into the trap of producing a species of "fetishized humanoid objects" (24). To be sure, neither I nor Taylor intend to launch a systematic critique of UNESCO; whether or not their projects past or present actually are complicit in "objectifying, isolating and exoticizing the non-Western other that they claim to address" (24), is secondary here. I raise the point here because, given the prevalence of such exoticizing trends in the most well-intentioned of cross-cultural and intercultural performance initiatives, it is a question which must be put to the *World Urban Festival*, beginning with the title piece of its curator. The integrated intercultural nature of the piece (which, we should note is *not* a UNESCO project itself, despite the festival having been sponsored by the organization), however, suggests that it was oriented precisely *against* the isolationism that has tended to characterize 'salvage' projects. The ethics at work in the project, and its movements between 'archive' and 'repertoire' were in this respect far more complex.

The workshop process of generating material for the show seemed, on the one hand, to be creating temporary archives, sampling modes of engagement and concerns from the bodies and voices whose input might otherwise have been invisible to the audiences gathered and to those (present or not) who collectively impact the future social and environmental trajectories. And yet on the other hand, of course, not only was this process generative of its own repertoire, the actual workshops were themselves part of this process. The 'voices' and practices collected during the *Earth* project were always already mediated by a process of exchange at the heart of the workshop-creation process. This becomes the framing device at work in circumscribing disparate practices of eco-aesthetic production. And of course, the conditions of production, including aesthetic production, cannot help but be already mediated by a globalizing force, directing patterns of exchange.

The piece *Earth=Home* gestured toward the 'everywhere' of the planet – pointing to the planet as a virtual space – but one that is always encountered by particular bodies, engaged in particular movements, activities and conflicts.

Through the invocation of the experiences and their re-territorialization in the particular encounters of a theatrical present, a double reality is thus invoked, one in which the present unfolding of experience is always in the process of recreating subjectivities and particular forms of sociality. In *Metamorphoses of the Body*, José Gil (1998) writes of the changing role played by the body within processes of social formation:

> While in traditional societies, dance – individual or collective – is always linked to a symbolism (a rite), this does not imply a rigorous submission of the imperatives of meaning. The dancers' energy, their flare, their singularity, their self-investment, give life to the symbols being danced. In the end, symbols are only a pretext for dance. Dancers' gestures do not sketch out representations in space, these are born of the mimetic power of the body. No doubt some being or thing is being signified, but first there is play – that is to say, a playing rhythms for rhythms, forms for their own sake, infralinguistic articulations in a pure state. As Gilbert Rouget said: 'No matter how important its nature as a sign may be, or its symbolic function, aesthetic power or ascetic possibilities, dance is still a motor activity that finds an end in itself'. (Gil, 1998, p. 165)

Staged in twenty-first century Vancouver, *Earth = Home* was clearly not a product of 'traditional societies' in the sense of the tribal communities that Gil has in mind. Eminently contemporary, the double function of dance, however, here held true, despite its changing role of movement and the body within social formations. The selection of rhythmic gestures and sequences directly referenced 'tribal' rhythms, dance styles, and rituals from around the world, and, through juxtaposition and interaction, cast the contemporary movements associated with North American youth as its own breed of neo-tribalism.

Nevertheless, the force of the dance was, ultimately, in flux, as the play of the dance itself – and more broadly, the play of the dance with the various other media with which it interacted. However, to say that the dance 'finds an end in itself' does not preclude its significance in social process, precisely to the extent that it was a praxis in itself. The tap dancer moves through space differently from the hip-hop dancer, with her sensual hip-movements and tossing of the hair. Their movements and their serialised entry in the space stage the differences in gestural quality, and differing sensations of time and space. These, in their affective, processes-oriented playfulness, act on the manner in which subjectivity and material experience were promoted. How the symbolism was in play with the movements of the dance, the

sounds and rhythms, and with the structure of the event more generally, bears upon how the performance events functioned to produce certain kinds of social and political subjectivities and, further, becomes a site for the exploration of conceptual and material potential.

The social relations that become relevant to orienting the future of even the most local of environmental ecologies are staged through media that extend across the planet but whose force returns to impact particular bodies in space and time – in this case, most immediately, in the *shabono* of the *World Urban Festival*. Through his own comparative analysis of world dance trends, Gil draws attention to a maxim that guides a socio-cultural understanding of dance: that a "change in a regime of signs – and the relation they have with the body – is reflected in dance" (165). According to Gil, the free play of bodies when framed by narratives, particularly religious texts, often signifies a stripping away of attachments to the particular worldly energies, for instance, in the case of Hindu traditions. By contrast, dances may "root the body even more firmly in the world of energies and rhythms", as in the case of certain African rituals (167). Following such analysis, and applying it to an understanding of how particular African rhythms are blended with Asian-Canadian and various other hybrid forms, we can surmise the delicate role that the affective play of such a blend suggests for the production of subjectivities as particular ways of synthesising matter to create a 'home'. The manner in which the movements of the dance draw upon actual material and states of affairs to articulate a particular series of exchanges constitutes its ecological project.

The bodies of the dancers entered into relation with the technical apparatus of all the other media they encountered, including the air that circulated in the room. Even the audience itself, seated in circular formation, formed part of the assemblage of the event, and thus became a site of production for this event of experimenting with how Earth becomes home and how the material and conceptual substances that constitute it will circulate. As the movement formations changed, so too did its symbolic resonance: a group of dancers sit together, arms moving in synchrony. As the dance continues, the movements repeat mechanically. A body breaks away to oversee the movements of the others. A number of images might be extrapolated: Is it 'team work'? The mechanisation of factory labour? The disciplining of

movement in a post-industrial age? While a certain narrative can be drawn out of the piece via a series of conflicts, the scenarios circulating are in constant flux, suggesting that there is something about the actual movements of bodies and their ability to transform the 'meaning' of a scene by the slightest gesture, the slightest reconfiguration that transforms the affective charge. Recognisable formations are forever being moved through, and this act of moving through identities flows through various mediums, various communication technologies.

I am arguing that in offering a set of technologies and practices of creative expression, the production sensitizes both workshop participants and audiences to particular ways of communicating in a global context. It proposes a particular trajectory for the cultivation of 'global' subjectivity that appeals to questions of political ecology in the era of globalization, and reconfigures the role of bodies within this process. The theatricality of the intervention is precisely in the staging of these challenges as they bump up against the material and conceptual limits of the framework in which they operate – the framework of a deterritorializing 'Integrated World Capitalism', which would render all gestures and languages interchangeable. Words on the screen appear like an Internet chat: "I am slowly beginning to feel like I don't matter". Alienation? Perhaps impotence or the dematerialisation of the body in cyberspace and the translation of impulses and intensities into standardised virtualised words? It is not merely a matter of concluding that the "medium is the message", although the manner in which movements are translated across mediums is no doubt central. Rather, it is a matter of asking how such a piece reverberates with the participants and audiences it engages. The piece leaves such questions open, returning them to the series of encounters through which they are articulated. It proposes problems; it does not seek to resolve them.

The globalizing image of the Earth and the statistics that are called upon to characterize this image, points toward a troubling paradox at the heart of ecology to which the eco-aesthetic project must face up. There is a suggestion that beneath the various rhythms and stylized gestures that characterize the different ways of engaging with the Earth, there remain the cold hard facts that 'we' are all in this together. The short trailer video for the piece closes with a quote taken from the projection screens and presumably gleaned from one of the workshop that reads,

"Everyone lives for the one moment when everyone is together". And yet, the multiplicity of the piece makes evident that any recourse to a singular 'we' – to the presumption of collective spectatorship that would form the 'target' culture, or the presumed homogenous spectatorial subject position – would constitute a form of ontological violence, what Elin Diamond calls the "violence of 'we'" (Diamond, 1992). In realist theatre, Diamond argues, the spectator is led to identify with characters, affirming the image of a 'we' symbolized through the character. *Earth = Home*, as a highly impressionist synthesis of multiple modes, media and perspectives, took the opposite approach. And yet the question of the 'we' remains as a central ethical problem that haunts the piece as an aesthetic intervention engaged in repeating and producing ecological sensibilities. As Diamond points out, the question of who 'we' are and what 'our' conditions are falls ultimately to the spectators who will engage the images and processes presented to them, transforming and being transformed by them. "We" may all be in this together, but who "we" are is hardly self-evident, and may in fact be at the heart of the ecological problematic confronted.

In actuality, the facts projected concerning the state of the world, the estimates concerning distributions of resources, and the predictions concerning the rate at which 'resources' are being, and will be, depleted, are, within the dramaturgy of the piece, but a single set of articulations amongst the wider ecology of gestures, media, and movements. This does not in any way take away from their importance, nor does it mean that all the movements and articulations staged are of equal importance or of equal resonance amongst spectators. From workshop, to casting (the selection of dancers seemed to consciously undermine any attempt to homogenize the ethnic experiences of the 'Canadian' populace), to performance and talk-back session, those who were part of this creative process were invited to alter the way they relate mentally and socially to their environment, through the very act of repeating their past experiences and future desires. The entire process gathered under the title *Earth = Home* thus forms a project that cannot be contained – spatially, temporally, and conceptually – as the staging of a 'show'; it is rather a 'showing' bound up in an ongoing movement of thought and action rife with tensions and 'problems', necessitating transformations in how we relate to one another and 'the Earth'.

Every force, every memory, image, and movement was 'translated' into the performance, tracing its own code, and staging a particular way of mediating between actual experience and virtual possibilities. The positions, the identities, the particularities of the workshop youth were themselves appropriated into a processual performance, whereby their movement were captured by the choreographer and the dancers, and ultimately by the audience members who repeat it and transmute it anew. But these, in turn, exist as part of the multiple series through which they were generated in the workshops, drawing on the memories, habits and experiences that were carried into the workshop in each case.

Indeed, part of the lure to join a workshop of this nature would have been to develop new 'creative' skills: new ways of making visible one's experience. In so doing, participants around the world learn common ways of coding experiences across space and time, traversing geo-political divides. It thus generates a particular repertoire of ethico-aesthetic experiments, which will redistribute roles with respect to what can be made visible by whom. This process of encountering and learning new modes and techniques of articulation through which experiences can be reiterated opens new possibilities for forming social and mental ecologies, and, for better or worse, for forming these 'transnationally'. This not only means forming transnational works of art. It also means reinforcing a transnational aesthetic as evidenced in the international art/performance market and its associated audiences. Most importantly, however, it points to experimentation with the very manner in which social and psychical formations are forged.

The process of experimenting with ethico-aesthetic modes of relating does not align itself with any particular politic. However, the very possibilities for experimentation, as well as the new possibilities that may or may not be opened occur within the political mode of exchange and engagement that circumscribe it. As Rancière notes:

> Artistic practices are ways of doing and making that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain between modes of being and forms of visibility (Rancière, 2004, p. 13).

By engaging youth around the world in workshops, teaching various artistic practices as 'ways of doing and making' experiences tangible to others across space and time, the general distribution of ways of making and doing that characterize the

division of labour in the age of late capitalist globalization was actively engaged in this production, and in some cases (and at a micro-scale, of course) altered. Specifically, such workshops and the performance that they inform alter the dynamics of who can participate in articulating their experiences to which audiences.

Each creative modality engages differently with space and time, including the space and time of articulating, receiving and responding to the creative act. Each modality thus encourages different ways of participating in 'the public life of the community'. Media arts, for instance might record a remote presence. Forest scenes and tiny insects not normally visible to the majority of the world's city dwellers were recorded and projected as part of the *Earth=Home* project. As a medium in itself, video can circulate in a number of ways to reach viewers regardless of what verbal language they speak, provided they have a means of watching the video, allowing communities to form across space and time, cutting across socio-linguistic categories and replacing them with socio-technical affiliations. Dance, by contrast, places the focus on the presence of moving bodies and the manner in which bodies relate to each other in space. For dance to galvanize an audience, some contact must be made with moving bodies themselves. Here the experiences of youth from around the world were abstracted according to set techniques of storytelling particular to each medium and adapted by each utterance. Each articulation originates from particular traditions, singular personal trajectories, and weaves through and suggest a reorientation of media histories, orienting the way their experience will take shape and take *place*. The process of workshops and production becomes, here, part of a movement to orient what sensibilities and aesthetics will be taken up by the bodies of future performers and spectators.

Ecology, when articulated as an ethico-aesthetic experiment, thus not only enacts an intervention into the manner in which ecological sensibilities are produced. To the extent that the very distribution of roles concerning how these sensibilities are produced is altered, the very fabric of ecology as a political project is broached.

2.2   The Promise of a Dance Exchange: A politics of theatricality

The distribution of roles concerning the manner in which ecological sensibilities are cultivated does not in itself point toward a political program as such. It points rather to ways of constituting a public, or arranging who can impact whom in what way. Theatre theorist Jon Erickson (2003) has argued that ultimately political activity must contribute to the making of just laws and policies, and that the politics of theatricality must itself be measured in terms of what it lends to such a process (169). According to Erickson, attention to the 'micro-political' dimension of politics, which is to say, to the manner in which institutions and collectivities are constituted (including at the level of sensibilities) is an important "first step" to "the opening up of a political space to formerly excluded constituencies and silenced voices". However, he concludes that it is ultimately, "*only the first step* toward dialogical participation in the development of more just political institutions and the enculturation of more just social norms" (181). For Erickson, what is often missing from analysis of the politics of theatricality is an understanding of how different voices engage and how this polyvocal engagement might reorient the manner in which social policies are formed. In this section I take up this challenge.

Positioned as it was in tandem with the *World Urban Forum*, the Festival situated itself as complementary to policy-oriented discussions, suggesting particular relationships between aesthetic practices of making the world sensible and the socio-environmental politics that both inform and are informed by how the world is seen and sensed. This coupling of the festival and the forum indicates a particular role for theatricality within the contemporary moment, concerned with cultivating 'global' sensibilities in addressing and redressing questions of social and environmental justice.

The Liz Lerman Dance Exchange took this question concerning corporeality, social power and political power as the main problematic to which their festival piece *Small Dances about Big Ideas* was dedicated. Commissioned not originally for the *Earth* festival, but rather for a Harvard Law School conference commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Nuremburg trials, *Small Dances*

About Big Ideas is a dance exploration of the issues surrounding genocide and the law, from Nazi Germany to the present day. However in focussing on the relationship between *bodies, movement* and political distributions, rather than a dialogue between 'voices' (whose political status and intelligibility as a discrete and recognizable voice would need to be already set), she suggests that the theatricality of an intervention might engage in reshaping the terms of how bodies are made visible *as* political entities. For Lerman, it is the actualization and dissemination of thought patterns, rather than the dialogue between positions, that is the primary socio-political question to be explored. It is the manner in which active involvement in shaping just norms and policies is instigated and propagated that thus becomes the focus of the piece.

The problem of genocide at the centre of *Small Dances* has not typically fallen into the rubric of ecology as promoted in the popular media. And yet, as Agamben (1995; 2002) has pointed out, the genocidal practices of the Nazis were developed with reference to what were then the very young ecological sciences. The search to understand and manipulate populations through an understanding of the elements, especially, but not exclusively, the biological factors that affect them, permitted the systematic eradication of particular genetic material, manifesting in the mass murder of populations. By constituting humanity in terms of genotypes, the human is depoliticized, and turned into a biological entity whose interactions can be naturalized and controlled through a series of disciplinary and experimental measures. *Small Dances* premised itself on a definition of genocide as not so much contained in an act or acts as such, but rather as *a thought pattern* propagating the systematic intention to annihilate a people though the manipulation of the conditions in which they live and by which they will die. The focus of the piece then became how such a thought pattern could be cultivated, developed and altered amongst and by a population.

Following an abstract narrative from the coining of the term 'genocide' after World War II, through the trials and accounts of genocide, the piece literally attempted to make sensible the bodily movements associated not only with mass extermination as such, but the processes that bring it about, investigate it and that seek redress. It thus danced a series of intersecting vignettes and stories that

invoked the memories and experiences of those who have left traces of their experiences in writing, oral testimonies and by other means. Through recreating and representing these stories in the presentation space of the theatre the question of how policies are created and generated through the movements of actual bodies in time and space was indeed brought to the foreground. However, this did not happen as Erickson suggests, through a species of dialogical debate. The approach is rather that of a deconstruction and intervention concerning the coding and patterning of movements of thought.

As the *mise-en-scène* of this theatrical piece unrolled, the question of the distribution, repetition and transformation of roles was made explicit. The process of appropriating memories and matter creates its proper theatre of problems. Specifically, it raises the question of how bodily techniques become ways of disciplining and orienting subjectivities with respect to the laws that bind, and sometimes kill, them. As the narrator of the piece, Lerman expressed her bewilderment at what she, as a choreographer, could do in the face of such weighty matters. Lerman recounted that she was told to bring audiences, both those who rarely thought of the subject and those who thought of nothing else, "back to the body". Then after a long paues, Lerman added, "or maybe she said to the bodies."

Earth = Home offers a provocation concerning how diverse experiences of the Earth, and diverse desires for the future, might be articulated and reconfigured in attempts to approach the construction of collective homes. In contrast, *Small Dances* asks the question of how bodies, with their diverse experience, might intervene not only at the level of *articulating* their world views, but in actually *intervening* in processes of changing institutionalized dynamics, where the stakes are as high as deciding who can live and who would die. Hence, this is the story of the relationships between bodies and thought patterns over time and space, and the actions that alter patterns of thought and behaviour.

With its host of characters – a prosecuting lawyer, a historian, an anthropologist, accused Nazi War Criminals, and the goddesses that live in the waters of Nuremberg – *Small Dances* relied on the repetition of actual roles to set in motion a narrative that became complicated through the movements across space and time to pose its challenge to the politics of how bodies transfigure the terms and relations that

sustain them. Encounters between characters who never could have met were thus staged. The protagonists appear to be the historical figures represented by the dancers: the lawyer at Nuremburg who brought the Nazi war criminals to justice; the anthropologist studying genocide in Germany, Bosnia and Rwanda who dug up remains of Rwanda's genocide victims; and the writer who first coined the term genocide. As the 'characters' are introduced, each dancer steps forward in turn from his or her neutral stance within a line, presenting each of the characters through a series of movements that brings them into the time and space of the present. The dancers, many of who play multiple characters (with multiple movement qualities), begin to dance together, sometimes repeating one another's movements sometimes responding, in a language of movement familiar to contemporary Western modern dance audiences. The imagery is continually brought back to the trial at which 'justice' is to be served. In this sense the piece directs our attention to the role of bodies in creating socio-political change, as well as to the role of art in making such relationships palpable.

Whereas *Earth = Home* explored the *socio*-cultural dynamics and the relationships between social dynamics, mental processes (concerning visions and thoughts about the Earth) and environmental conditions, *Small Dances* made the question of how experiences and desires are articulated by and through various bodies *explicitly political. Small Dances* was a piece that explores the relationships between the social and the political. Whereas in *Earth=Home,* the actual source material was dissolved in patterns, rhythms and processes, scattered quotes transmuted and fictionalised by dancers, here the integrity of actual historical figures were preserved, their roles and imagined desires repeated as memories that might transform the political order of the future. The judgement of the law as it is encountered relies on such given roles (lawyer, victim, expert witness…). But the roles themselves dissolve with some dancers dancing multiple roles and with encounters between historical series intermingling, disrupting a linear narrative and opening onto the intervention of the audience. This allows for a kind of thought experiment along the lines of a theatrical essay that reads: what do a Nazi Camp, the Rwanda genocide, the conflict in Bosnia, and today's assembly of spectators have in common? But it is precisely in the final terms of the question regarding the appeal to *today's assembly of spectators* that the theatricality of the performance orients us

to how patterns of thought concerning the intertwined biological, social and political future of the present will be played out, and to what the distribution of roles may be in this process.

The question, articulated by a narrative-reporter in this dance theatre production stands in for the very question of theatricality and its relationship to processes of active spectatorship: "What does the witness do with the harrowing information and the implication of responsibility?" This question is first and foremost an ethical question concerning the relationship of the spectator to the actions they witness, and concerning the manner in which social and political ecologies are constructed across space and time in a 'place' that is increasingly deterritorialized, where spectators and actors impact one another, forming an ecology from increasingly greater temporal and geographical distances. It is a question of engaging with radical alterity, with the time and space of another that nonetheless has entered one's own.

The question is *ethico-aesthetic* in the sense that it calls for altered sensibilities with respect to the social and political ecologies of others and a rethinking of the relationship between subjectivities and between bodies from one moment to another. It is, however, also a political question, in both the 'micropolitical' sense concerning how the relationships between subjects collectively contribute to a determination of shared public space, taking over the virtual and actual places of dwelling, as well as in Erickson's 'macropolitical' sense, concerning the manner in which engagement can ultimately alter law and policy. Lerman insists on the question of the role of those who may not be always already marked with a role in affecting the future, but whose movements, thoughts, and bodies nevertheless transform and are transformed by the legacy of how the political sphere is constituted and the interactions that take place therein.

Investigation into the relationship between law, bodily conditions, and the disciplining and intervention of embodied expression is not a new phenomenon, nor is it the unique purview of dance or the performing arts. Foucault's (1991) *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, could be read as a genealogy of the changing role of bodies in the face of judicial practice. The entire second chapter of *Discipline and Punish* is dedicated to the "spectacle of the scaffold", an act which he argues is to be understood, "not only as a judicial, but also as a political ritual"

(1991, p.47). Lerman's *Small Dances About Big Ideas* approaches the relationship between bodies, theatre and the law from what seemed initially to be an entirely different perspective. The 'bodies' in question, in the initial iteration of the dance, seemed to be the absent bodies of the dead and tortured, rather than the disciplined bodies of the living populace. And yet these bodies proved to be but the pretext for exploring the force of bodily relations in the present tense, and the relations of the spectral bodies of the absent to the present bodies of actors and spectators here and now.

However, while a disciplinary perspective on corporeal movement would take the body's movements as conditioned by the institutions that orient the realm of possible manoeuvres, Lerman's theatrical repetition of such conditioning opens up questions concerning agency in the face of abhorrent institutional practices – the possibility of transforming the conditions that bind through a reworking of embodied relationships. The piece invited a rehearsal of the memories of the past for the sake of the future, insisting on bodily movement as an active production of political subjectivity. Mid-way though the performance, the audience was invited to discuss with neighbouring audience members the ways in which their own society educates children on the subject. From these discussions, a series of movements embodying some of the discussion points raised was developed, repeated with the audience, and the dance resumed, incorporating these 'new' gestures: a process highlighting the material acts of creating collective experiences inherent to socialization.

The audience was then led in a collective dance using gestures presumably generated from the discussion. As the abstract narrative of the dance continued, the new audience-generated gestures were integrating into the gestural repertoire of the dance, repeated and adapted by the dancers as they continued their exploration in the manner in which thought patterns were actualized through gestural acts in space and time. As the title of the piece suggests, these were but 'small' dances, micro-interventions, rehearsing the question: can one really dance an intervention into the memory of mass murder and state violence? The suggestion, however, of returning to the body (or the bodies), and of engaging bodies in reworking relationships to weighty matters concerning the life and death of populations and the politics that

surrounds these matters. Lerman's piece therefore suggests a particular approach to social and political life, demanding a rethinking of the politics of bodily life.

According to Agamben, the 'return to the body' is a political manoeuvre that has, in fact, always been at the heart of modern democratic politics as articulated in the founding 1679 *Habeas Corpus* document or '*writ*' outlining proper judicial practice within the democratic state. Agamben points out:

> It is not the free man and his status and prerogatives, nor even simply *homo*, but rather *corpus* that is the new subject of politics. And democracy is born precisely as the assertion and presentation of this "body": *habeas corpus and subjiciendum*, "you will have a body to show". (Agamben, 1995, p. 124)

For Agamben, the increasing focus on bodies within politics threatens to remove from politics its properly 'political' concerns for rights, dignity and sovereignty as principles governing how public life will be organized, and instead puts the focus on the management of living bodies. Indeed, according to Agamben's argument, borrowed in large part from Arendt, it is precisely the focus on the body and bodies as such that allowed genocide to take place under the Nazis, since it was in stripping 'bodies' of their political status, that they were able to be managed as mere biological matter and to be experimented upon and ultimately annihilated. Whether used to permit the annihilation of a people, or whether deployed for benevolent humanitarian ends, such as depicting frail vulnerable populations whose very existence is under threat (for instance, soliciting humanitarian aid for genocide victims in the present), the same logic of stripping the bodies in question of political status and appealing for (or controlling, or exterminating) their bare life, is what allows these cycles of oppression to continue. In the theatricality of her appeal to bodies, Lerman's strategy was not, however, to highlight the vulnerability of 'bare life' (or biological existence) under threat, but rather to point toward the creative capacities, never wholly abandoned or abandonable, and the capacity of living bodies to not only be subject to the law, but to shape laws and norms. Lerman's body is always, already, a thinking body, or at least, a body capable of thought. Moreover, it is a body whose thought develops in relation to other bodies, through a series of gestural articulations that actualize and transform thought patterns.

By theatricizing the corporeal relations, the piece made visible certain relationships between the body or bodies and the formation of socio-political

futures, including the ways in which life is valued. Indeed, in making moving bodies the key locus of attention within an exploration of political violence and its legacies, particularly within the context of a trial focusing on addressing wrongs through legal means, Lerman's dance suggests that the division between biological and political life be approached as a processual movement that is in the process of being re-choreographed. Moreover, the dance staged the proposition that the manner in which bodies engage this process is itself political. To be sure, as a theatrical presentation, *Small Dances* did not propose itself as an actual mechanism of policy intervention, so much as a way of doubling and making visible the questions concerning the embodied politics of thought patterns and their actual ramifications. Bodies, and their movements, became pivotal to the fabric of political life woven.

The court of the theatre is not ultimately a court of law but a court of a temporary public assembly in which the bodies 'on trial' (and implicated by the trial) are mimetically doubled. Invoking the Nuremburg trials, bodies from the past were put on trial before the assembly of theatregoers. What was really put 'on trial' here, however, was not individual subjects, but socio-political processes made palpable through the bodies that repeated, and potentially transmuted, received ways of thinking and acting. This problematization of roles, relationships and the very status of bodies within the public arena of theatre, raises anew a series of questions that continue to haunt world politics. In this light, Tracy Davis' argument (discussed in Chapter One) concerning theatricality of this sort as a kind of political affect, can be re-articulated as inviting the social movements of everyday life to become political, in so far as the theatricality of the piece allows that which had been taken as given to appear as constructed via the deliberate movements and organizations that allow them to be seen. There is no attempt to ask the audience to suspend disbelief, to take the dancer for the 'real' lawyer at Nuremburg and to lose themselves in the details of that trial. Rather, in a Brechtian manner the contingencies of the roles and actions taken on are displayed as an extension of a social process that cultivates values and actualizes thought patterns.

According to Agamben, the invocation of human rights, codified and implemented by the Nuremburg trials amongst others, has tended to focus on what is

sometimes discussed as 'passive rights', the rights that all humans are meant to receive - the rights that ought to be protected by public establishments. These are the right, in other words, to the basic necessities for the survival of biological life. For Agamben, this signals the death of politics since it would appear to offer up the body as part of a naturalized ecology whose conditions are to be managed – the only question becomes what are the management goals and how best to achieve them. Lerman's focus on the body, and the bodies, is markedly different. By focussing on bodies and bodily interactions as the translators, transmitters and transmographers of experience between social, political and biological registers, *Small Dances* not only represents or reflects on, genocide and human rights, but rather points us to questions concerning the politics of gesture and processes of making sensible experiences, concerns and desires – and the manner in which participation in the public life of the community takes place. In particular, Lerrman's piece points us to the reconfiguration of 'active' and 'passive' roles with respect to shaping public establishments and codes of conduct.

By focusing on the body as a transducer of codes (between the biological, the social and the political), what Lerman put on display was the potential alive in bodies and in the relationships between bodies to move in different ways, disrupting the dichotomies between actors (and their social correlates as active agents of change) and audience (as passive consumers of the spectacle, or speaking in a political register, as passive receivers of rights and regulations). Rather than asking about the basis of rights or the facticity of their infraction, *Small Dances* inquires into the process through which political subjectivity is formed.

The movement of the piece stages an appeal to international regulatory bodies (the International Court) to manage the globe in a just manner, while calling into question the very processes through which regulatory bodies (whether inflicting violence or genocide, or defending rights) obtain their power. The piece asked what sort of movements, what sorts of organisation of thought and of matter can articulate and actualise political rights; what sort of interventions might allow those who do not participate in political articulations to become active in orienting, rather than being managed by, political bodies and the laws that reify them. Bodies are made visible thus as carriers of codes: biological codes (the locus of life itself), and more

specifically genetic codes (subject to genocide), social codes (manners of relating which are always formed through relationships), and political codes (both in the sense of being subject to policing and of being potential agents of political change).

By theatrically doubling the roles that are played in establishing codes of interaction at work in genocidal regimes, the thresholds between merely biological codes, social codes, and political codes are proposed as active processes that the spectator is invited to complete. In *Small Dances*, the spectator was implicated, not as the passive observer reflecting from a distance on the representation of historical events long since past, but rather as part of a living social machine, engaged in recreating the habits, memories and desires of the present and future, thereby orienting the future of biological/social/political life and how these will influence one another. This concentration on the social codes perpetuated by bodily movement points to the heart of the biopolitical project as well as to its potential breaking point. As one reviewer of Lerman's piece writes, referring to the moment of audience participation:

> Although 90% of the audience participated in this follow-the-leader dance, I found it difficult to participate whole-heartedly. It seemed to suggest a common experience and way of processing the intensity of the material, but really it served to pull us out of the intensity and back to dancing, as if synchronized dancing is a unifying experience, when Lerman and I both know that stories, bodies, and gestures are loaded with positions and identities that are more exclusive than inclusive (Hennessy, 2009).

Erickson's insistence on dialogism as the stuff of political theatre is perhaps designed in part to guard against the flattening of social and political positions to a singular code of conduct that would colonize the 'private' space of individual experience. If the political is taken as a regulatory system imposed on the range of actions (and even thoughts) that are permitted, these concerns are certainly valid. However, it is worth considering the politics of theatricality against the conditions under which phrases such as 'the personal is political' were popularized – namely that when entire categories of the population are segmented and excluded from having political status, then to preordain the boundaries of the private and the public only reinforces a prevailing political system of engagement. The tension in Lerman's return 'to the body" or "the bodies" is this tension between the development of codes of conduct and the politics of intervening into codes – and

memories – that have already been set. Like *Earth = Home,* the question of the appropriation of memories and gestures resurfaces, but here, as an *imperative* necessary not only for reinforcing codes and memories as they have been passed down, but more importantly, for adapting them, and using them as fodder for creating – and questioning – possible future codes and trajectories.

We can think of this transformation between social codes and the bodily relationships that Lerman choreographs in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) discuss as the relationship between micro and macropolitics – which is to say the difference between the formation of collectivities or masses, and their ossification in categories, classes, roles and regulations. The Nuremburg laws, for instance, that delineated categories of people (Jews, Gypsies, gays) and stripped them of the rights of citizens, occurred at a macropolitical level, through governmental policies. But these laws were made possible by the reconfigurations of collectives that formed following the first world war in relation to collective desires, allowing for the entrenchment of the categorical distinctions these suggested. Likewise, from the 'new' Nuremburg categories, new collectivities formed, including, for instance, resistance networks.

Whereas representations tend toward preformed molar categories associated with macro-politics – categories that can be represented publicly by and for the ordering of particular political regimes, micro-political movements often form that elude representation, and yet are the function of the processes of collective movements. The same gestures by dancers invoking genocides in disparate socio-historical contexts, for the sake of a present audience, stage an inquiry into how future patterns of thought and action might be altered by 'remembering the bodies'. Through the present gestures of the dance, and its attempt to relate audience members: 1) to the material of the past, 2) to the dancers in the space, and 3) to one another, the dance itself functions as a catalyst for creating social codes informed both by the memories of the past and by the desires of the present gathering of people.

We can then read *Small Dances* as a guide to unravelling how the movement of bodies takes hold of political codes, a question haunting not only the legacy of the trials at Nuremburg, but the very dynamic at work in the festival during which it

took place in those few days of June 2006. For, in raising the question of how bodies translate and transduce codes, mediating between the social, biological and mental as well as the relationships between such processes of codification and their ossification in policies and laws, we can begin to develop a way of approaching the relationship between the festival as a site, on the one hand, of experimentation and presentation of different experiences of the Earth, while on the other hand, of the fears and desires that it invokes. In spotlighting processes of generating and translating experience, the distribution of roles - spectators, subjects, actors - involved in bringing about socio-political change are made visible.

In the first section of this Chapter I argued that the multi-media, multi-dimensionality and multiple phases leading to the staging of *Earth=Home*, when articulated as an ethico-aesthetic experiment, revealed an intervention into the manner in which ecological sensibilities are produced. In this section, through discussing *Small Dances,* I showed that the theatricality of an intervention may catalyze a transmutation in the political dynamics at work in taking over a space or place via the actualization of codes of interaction in so far as it alters the way bodies interact with one another.

The question of how creative interventions orient social codes is, however, not only a question of what codes are generated within the performance or what codes are portrayed. It is not even only a question of how the process of producing a particular piece engages those involved (such as the youth in the workshops). As the Festival made evident, each piece took place as part of the series of events that constituted the Festival. Moreover, the festival and the many events that comprised it took place as part of the wider socio-economic and political assemblage of the Festival-Forum coupling and the manner in which this larger event operated as part of *global processes of social, cultural and economic exchange that propagate particular eco-logics*. It is to this question of how the events of the Festival function as part of larger global processes, tinged with their own politic, that I now turn.

2.3   The Production of Eco-Aesthetics: The Politics of theatrical circulations

In the final chapter of his *Chaosmosis*, Guattari asks:

How do we invent social practices that would give back to humanity – if it ever had it – a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival, but equally for the future of all life on the planet, for animal and vegetable species, likewise for incorporeal species such as music, the arts, cinema, the relation with time, love and compassion for others, the feeling and fusion at the heart of cosmos? (Guattari, 1995, p. 120)

From a certain perspective, the entire *Earth* festival followed from the unspoken premise that showcasing different experiences of the Earth (and the social and environmental challenges articulated by various populations) itself presents a response to this line of questioning. Every piece in the festival presented it own mode of synthesising experience, its own techniques and trajectories of abstracting and repeating memories and habits, its own traditions, and its own libidinal economy generated by the motor activities it adapted. In the above discussion, I showed the challenge of articulating and translating disparate experiences via particular media. I argued, for instance, that while the sharing of techniques and technologies of 'making visible' allows for a potential democratization with respect to who can participate in shaping collective sensibilities on the world scene, the spreading of techniques and technologies also sets the terms according to which experiences will be shaped, and thus how subjectivities (ways of thinking and interacting) will form. I also argued that the doubling of experience that occurs with the theatricalization of experiences allows for the redistribution of roles, in ways that alter the relationship concerning who participates in public life – as well as how this is conducted.

The *modus operandi* of the Festival includes, as I have shown, articulating a range of experiences within a larger public arena in ways that alter what ethico-aesthetic sensibilities might circulate how. This happens, however, not only with the professional productions I have been analyzing, but across the spectrum of creative interventions endeavouring to theatricize experiences. Thus in keeping with the scope of the various presentations and performances of the Festival, the repertoire included the practices of immigrant youth in Canada, as well as women from the Indian countryside; youth 'everywhere' who one day may, but do not yet, have a political 'voice'; animals from a Zambian waterhole portrayed in dance theatre; and the list continues. These interventions function in the first instance by catalyzing gatherings, encouraging individuals to engage in collective acts that shift codes of interaction and the associated distribution of roles.

One local community group from a cultural centre for recent refugees and immigrant youth living in the Vancouver area, presented a series of cultural dances, mainly from various regions of Africa, including a South African Gumboot dance, which, they explained, was developed within African mining communities. As staged at the Festival it is the implications of learning and practicing a dance to which they had some cultural affinity, and the implications of taking such actions within their own (often new) local contexts, that mattered.

The dance presented by the immigrant youth and refugees staged an intervention in the micro-politics of interaction focussed on the affective quality of dancing together a dance with its own particular legacy and associations. This, to be sure, was not designed as the presentation of a work of art, of a theatre piece *per se*. Perhaps it was still being danced, but the contemporary politics of mining in Africa was not discussed. However, the repetition of the dance within the context, first of the community centre, and secondly of the Festival itself, suggests a particular manner of forming a collectivity out of disparate immigrant youth, from diverse parts of Africa, and a display of their new collective identity. The Gumboot dance had been danced by miners, and the youth wore large rubber boots in their stamping. It matters not at all that some of the 'memories' and traditions called upon may not actually be proper to the lineages of the youth that repeat them together and before the watchful gaze of a festival-going audience. The dance was used as a way to pull youth off the streets and into a room together, where they could dance together, and create a rhythm of their own.

In presenting their activities, the group attempted to draw audiences into their dance, to experience in passing what was important to them. While it may de-contextualise the dance itself, drawing in the audience redeploys some of the patterns of interaction - celebration, and in forming subjectivities – or collectivities – through the development of collective practices, reshaping social ecologies, and redefining the terms according to which participation in public life might occur. Through such practices of transforming social ecologies, new forms of political subjectivity form, whereby alienated youth, many of whom had come as African orphans, could dance first together, and secondly in public, challenges potential assumptions concerning cultural legacies and stereotypes concerning immigration.

Their dance also served as a catalyst for drawing attention to the need for resources within the urban environment to better support new-immigrant, Afro-Canadian youth – for the group, like so many others, relied on precarious public funding bodies to continue to meet.

Other performances, such as a Zambian-Dutch youth theatre collaboration, made the question of social and environmental ecologies more explicit in the terms generally ascribed to debates regarding 'sustainable cities' (recall - the organizing theme of the Forum). Their piece "the water-hole" had young actors beginning the piece as animals around a water hole and then slowly transforming themselves into animal-like 'human' tourist resort personalities, staging the ecological-economic trajectory as a comic-tragic adventure of the human appropriating the animal ecology, whereby money is eventually exchanged for money, passing through the actual capital of the tourist resort.

On the world scene, ecological discourse and the question of sustainability has increasingly become about the circulation of 'resources' and the preservation of systems to allow such exchanges to take place. Within such a system of exchange and the commodification of, not only environmental, but also social networks and the bodies and forces that constitute them as 'resource', the cultural sphere becomes its own domain of circulation and exchange. Within the context of emerging 'global' cultures as manifest in such events as world festivals, as Spivak writes, "to think globality is to think the politics of thinking globality" (1999, p. 364). At *Earth*, groups gathered from around the planet to present their experiments and share their experiences, each presenting particular ways of articulating ecological relations, each via their particular mixtures of media languages, techniques and technologies, each presented as specific products of cultural expression, and each circulating within the cultural network of an 'arts and culture festival'.

In translating experiences across languages, we find the codification of experience, and the morphing of experience as those codes are translated into other codes. As Deleuze and Guattari write, however:

> Speech communities and languages independently of writing, do not define closed groups of people who understand one another: if there is language, it is fundamentally between those who do not speak the same tongue. Language is

made for that, for translation, not for communication. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 475)

The challenge encountered earlier was that, in seeking to give voice to those who normally have no place in the decision-making structures, particularly those managing global relations and the increasingly overarching vision of 'globality' that is setting in, I argue that the mediums and processes deployed in rendering them translatable *stage their own relations*, bringing them into the very processes of 'cultural exchange' that are always already marked with global inequities. Festival organizers and artists for social change here and elsewhere know very well that those in low and middle income countries have modes of making palpable their experience and of cultivating ecological sensibilities that are just as developed as those of wealthier countries. This is not the issue. The issue is in how these can then be circulated and to what end. The gestures that inscribe social and cultural relations, as well as the experiences and mental ecologies of groups and individuals across the Earth, are not exempt from these environmental flows and flows of capital.

The strength of the Festival is that it was able to repeat this dynamic in order to highlight potential 'other' ways of translating experience that are not necessarily tied to capital exchange. Its challenge, however, was that it can simply not function outside this system. The dynamic of the exchanges that took place could not help but permeate the festival. Indeed, this is a problematic that haunts the 'art-for-social change' movement as a whole: the act of translating the experiences of those who have no part (or very little part) in public life (whether by teaching new communications skills or by incorporating experiences of the disenfranchised into professional works) in order to facilitate the entry of these desires and voices into the public sphere is dogged by a political economy that not only governs the 'art world' but extends to how human (and in some cases 'non-human' or 'more than human') experiences are valued and encouraged to circulate. Even in the service of 'social change', experiences themselves often are 'put to work' – relegated to the 'private' realm, only acquiring 'public value' once they can be taken up by a recognized industry, whether in the corporate sector or by government service departments.

Groups are often dependant on meeting the mandate of a funding organization, donors, or paying-audiences in order to stay afloat. Thus, the pervasive temptation to instrumentalize experiences – and ways of making this experience sensible – haunts the Festival, and increasingly all arts-for-social change initiatives under market and state pressure to 'justify' their existence. The festivalization of culture threatens to become its own 'capture device', in the model of what Brian Holmes (2006) calls the "artistic device". This device unifies activities into a recognisable mode of engagement, a site for the production of subjectivity increasingly familiar to late capitalist cosmopolitan sensibilities – a problematic inescapable for the artists intervening in global dynamics and encountering the paradoxes of cultural politics on this scale. The experiences are continually wrested from their political and social context to be placed in a global flow of narratives, rhythms, information and affects.

The Festival, as I have been approaching it, was a site for reconstitution of social, mental and environmental ecologies through the staging of actual and virtual encounters. For what is abstracted, what is rendered visible is never neutral. Moreover, the very *processes* of abstracting and rendering visible, quite apart from the 'new' information they seem to present, enact an intervention into the life of a 'community', by actually proposing new ways and terms according to which communities might be delineated, brought into existence and transformed. Staging encounters between various experiences of the Earth, and various ways of making visible social and environmental ecologies, not only makes sensible the scope of political ecologies and the relationship between various ecologies. Such staging itself concretizes new social groups, networks, and cultivates sensibilities, as well as redistributes roles concerning how desires and courses of action for the future will be constituted. In this 'world' event, a particular politics of aesthetics stages what becomes possible to sense as it actively distributes roles within this process.

However, several challenges encountered by such 'art-for-social-change' events can be identified, impeding their ability to effectively intervene in mental, social and environmental ecologies and to ultimately catalyse the mutations they promise. The first is the threat of 'appropriating resistance' that Spivak flags when she warns that the "broad politics [of global development is] the silencing of resistance and of the subaltern as the rhetoric of their protest is constantly appropriated" (1998, p. 333).

The political tension within the context of the festival is inherent in the constraints of event production itself: the manner in which voices, gestures, movements, refrains of thought and action are amalgamated and repeated within the event.

The theatricality of the event makes public the refrains of various collectivities, providing a mechanism for their circulation and a means of intervening in global mental and social ecologies, orienting the manner in which social relations are developed. However, in so doing, the event also repeats the dynamic whereby some bodies produce ways of engaging with the materiality of the earth, including ways of protesting persistent power dynamics, only to have these then 'managed' by other bodies. In dancing the Gumboot dance, for instance, there is no guarantee of producing a particular kind of political subjectivity; no particular position vis-à-vis immigration or funding to community centres that is a prerequisite to dancing. One may experience the dance, while dissociating it from the social ecologies that catalyzed its presentation. The dance becomes a mechanism for transforming the phenomenon, quoted in *Earth = Home*, of "beginning to feel like I don't matter anymore".

The role that 'the arts' play within the political machine here is that of *opening* such ways of 'mattering'. In so doing however, it also serves to *contain*, and to a certain extent– *appropriate* and *neutralise* such ways of mattering within existing models of decision-making. If the Festival offers a capacity for disrupting socio-political relationships, and transforming the balance of power between those playing various 'roles' within society and the state, the manipulation of theatre as antidote to potentially 'disruptive' potential is just as pervasive. As Peter Hallward points out:

> To the threat of democratic disorder, the Aristotelian response…is to seek the political incorporation of people's 'excess', the part of those who have no part, through the controlled supervision of appropriately managed institutions. The result guarantees the deference, if not absence of the people themselves in a dispersed, 'corrected' democracy. It is no accident that the sort of state which is most tolerant of, because most secure against, the theocratic disruptions Rancière equates with politics is precisely that liberal-constitutional state whose origins go back to Aristotle's *Politics*. (Hallward, 2006, p. 124)

The Festival staged a polyvocal situation, offering to those traditionally 'outside' the political sphere access to the public sphere. Moreover, it even allows experimentation with different regimes of distributing roles and power. The

question is the extent to which this experimentation can actually traverse the confines of the festival. The potential that it might is suggested by Lerman's focus on the politics of gesture, and specifically the suggested capacity for mental and social gestures to transform policy. However, within the context of the assembly of the festival, it remains unclear that this actually takes place. This theatrical experimentation may indeed set in motion circulations of thought and movements that galvanize powerful social networks. But it equally serves as a safe way to legitimate claims toward the development of an integrated vision of sustainability that may, in fact, keep dissent on the sidelines as aesthetic window dressing, as opposed to allowing the *ethical* sensibilities to permeate the *political* and orient political organization.

In invoking the image or even the movement of 'the sub-altern', of those who are not active, affective or effective as 'participants' in political processes, I argue that it does not necessarily follow that a movement in the politics of ecological determination is being invoked. The question – or problematic – to which no formulaic rejoinder can respond, concerns the leakages of codes, and their capacity to be contained in a properly 'social' and 'apolitical' realm. And it concerns the point at which the theatrical doubling and disseminating of experiences of those excluded from politics do subvert the distribution of roles encountered, providing an alternative circulation of energies that set in motion modes of forming collective subjectivity with the potential to reconstitute the social ecologies of those involved. Finally, it concerns the manner in which those who 'have no place' in contemporary politics enter and engage in the politics that touches these ecologies.

Earlier, drawing on Rancière's politics of aesthetics, I showed how community arts projects, particularly in their pedagogical capacity, cultivate ways of seeing and doing. Equally, however, the role that redistribution plays within the codes of exchange, and the assemblage constructed between the social, the political and the ecological, becomes integral not only in, but also through, the intervention. The problem of appropriating voices and movements for an overarching politic is closely related to a second problematic encountered with the increasing trend toward the use of performative techniques as affective intervention into the socio-political fabric. This is what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call "capture devices" - a series of

continual re-appropriations of images, rhythms, even questions, opening up new ways of doing and seeing, even alternative forms of political subjectivisation, but with no substantial transformation in the distribution of power within this process. This ultimately leads to what we might call the sustaining of existing relations and trends of 'development', here through the use of an artistic device functioning within a particular subset of the culture industry closely tied to the development industry (Epskamp, 2006). In the case of the *World Urban Festival*, the curatorial philosophy of unity-in-plurality points to a tension concerning what creative exchanges actually produces on a political level. A balance is proposed, not in the sense of imposing a model of thought, or a particular social, or genetic organisation, nor a way of creating the 'ideal ecology' once and for all, but in the sense of proposing a potential way of abstracting and distributing the sensible, of approaching sensation, and through a series of practices, developing patterns of exchange.

In experimenting with new 'ethico-aesthetic paradigms', the aspiration would seem to be to finally problematize macro-political systems of exchange and dominance that orient the manner in which social, mental and political ecologies are constructed. The first challenge had to do with a politics of oppression, of the silencing of particular persons or groups, who cannot be heard within prevailing modes of political organisation. It is of course, precisely *against* such kind of social oppression that the interventions of the Festival are largely directed. And yet, in the breaks that persist between the movements of social and political power, the circulations set in motion by such cultural interventions always threaten to be circumscribed, offering themselves up as 'safe havens' for the articulations of social discontent, serving a sort of therapeutic function, while leaving the distributions of political power relatively unaffected.

A fuller consideration of these intertwined "development" trajectories will be presented in the following two chapters, when I discuss in greater depth theatricality in educational programs and in explicitly politicized contexts, respectively. What is important to consider now is the extent to which the organization of a festival guided by the desire to integrate disparate approaches to the articulation of experiences might itself inadvertently cap or at least orient experimental possibilities. As many

performance studies scholars have pointed out, the style of creating a festival in which every group is individuated and has its presentation moment, is very different, for instance, from a religious festival in which a shared experience of a spiritual realm is rehearsed, initiating alternative senses of space and time (Schechner, 1988; Bharucha, 1993; Bharucha, 2000). While allusions to such rituals may enter the sphere of a world festival, it does so on entirely different terms. Thus, for instance, we see elements of indigenous tribal dance integrated into dance theatre, and Hindu songs sung on stage between theatre-of-the-oppressed style skits concerning the gender discrimination in India. Within the organization of the festival, however, the force of the actions shifts from a religio-cultural ritual to a socio-political technique.

There is here an implicit drawing out of themes and questions that form the *cultural ecology* of 'world networks' and condition the manner in which the particular events will be codified as contributions. This allows their contributions to be translated into sensible experiences for audiences, in light of the various other performances and other life experiences they bring to bear. We might then ask whether this mode of re-circulating political affects is particular to liberal democratic distributions. If so, what possibilities are opened for the transmutation of the social and political relations by those whose experience is "translated" via various media and artistic modalities, in ways that inevitably alter their force and significance? By cultivating ways of translating and circulating experiences in these ways, systems of valuation have the potential to change on a global scale. As "who speaks to whom, how" is altered, this same process also creates new ways of reaching potential markets and labour pools.

Thus the Festival was presented at the crossroads of a world politic that, on the one hand, seeks to heighten possibilities for reshaping cultural sensibilities that might permeate political changes such that they may become more responsive to the experiences that have been articulated and translated, while on the other hand, it also threatens (despite the intentions of artists and community workers who tirelessly work to respond to the nuances of the desires of the communities with which they work) to swallow differences in the ever expanding logic of capitalist democracy that celebrates 'difference' by putting it to work to sell what may amount to a fairly narrow vision of sustainable political ecologies in the service of (economic)

development. In other words, there is a danger that, in making experiences readily "translatable" without paying due attention to the political economy of cultural transactions, the very acts of adapting and "translating" experiences and desires for new audiences become unwittingly complicit in the swallowing up of alternative ways of rendering the planet habitable as 'home'.

The cloistering of 'alternative' forms of political participation as 'merely' cultural, sometimes commenting on the political, yet with little political force, may occur within the work itself, or as a result of the manner of its containment as 'art'. Neither the *World Urban Festival*, nor the Forum that it accompanied are about money, or about capital, but they are both haunted by it, in the sense that the spectre of the impossibility of equal exchange confronts every piece that challenges the manner in which mental, social and environmental ecologies are 'given'. To be sure, very few of the events at the Festival were about money. Indeed they seemed to be about almost everything but money. And yet the ecological and the economic have a way of circulating around one another as logics and 'laws' orienting the site of production.

In *The Time Image* (1989), Deleuze writes, "what defines industrial art is not mechanical reproduction but the internalized relation with money" (77). Deleuze here is writing of cinema, an art form immanently more "industrial" than the art of the festival and that is exploding internationally as a site of *cultural* exchange. However, the internalized relationship with money here is just as pervasive, even as it is immanently more paradoxical. This arts-for-social-change festival, as well as the various groups that performed therein, relied heavily on funding from government, charities, and NGOs, each of which with its own mandates according to which it funds groups and events. Art and culture can now only be "exchanged" if space and time is bought or donated. Thus Deleuze's insight, borrowed from Marx, remains applicable:

> If it is true that movement maintains a set of exchanges or an equivalence, a symmetry as invariant, time is by nature the conspiracy of unequal change or the impossibility of an equivalence. It is in this sense that it is money: in Marx's two formulations, C-M-C is that of equivalence, but M-C-M is that of impossible equivalence or tricked, dissymmetrical exchange. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 77-78)

As "the official arts and culture festival accompanying the *World Urban Forum*" the Festival appeared to already stand in a subordinate relation to the Forum, relying on it for sustenance, even as it provided the affective work of outreach, generating the social and mental ecology for the Forum to sustain its goals and reproduce its debates within the 'cities' it seeks to make 'sustainable'. The festival thus, in many ways, serves as the 'creative' catalyst for generating and reproducing the aesthetic sensibilities needed for a 'world' project oriented toward the adaptation of social and environmental ecologies. On the one hand, challenging, on the other, reproducing attempts at singular ecological governance in the name of sustainability.

Creativity, as theorists such as Lazzarato (1996) and Gilbert (2008) have shown, is rapidly becoming an engine for liberal ethics and neoliberal economics, and this notwithstanding the often leftist, utopian, and/or subversive aims of practitioners. Holmes (2006), as mentioned earlier, calls this the 'artistic device' pointing to the manner in which artistic projects are always already positioned within a nexus of institutions and practices that not only condition what can be said, but also what practices are reproduced through the act of generating and displaying the critical, creative or artistic material. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari articulate the challenge posed by 'minorities' to the axioms of market capitalism and to the modes of social organization that re-align in accordance with its logic. Whereas it is in principle possible to appropriate and neutralize minority struggles by creating for them enclosures to safely express themselves, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> There is also always a sign to indicate that these struggles are the index of another, coexistent combat. However modest the demand, it always constitutes a point that the axiomatic cannot tolerate: when people demand to formulate their problems themselves, and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 520).

The question of distributions, of how roles and materials are distributed and circulate, and of the relationship between 'cultural' production on one hand, and the generation of decisions concerning policy and law on the other, resurface as a question of how movement and media modulate relations of exchange. Alternate codes of interactions are proposed, but always rife with a series of tensions

concerning the impossibility of equitable exchange. This is a question to which I will return in the coming chapters.

2.4 Conclusions

Events such as the *World Urban Forum* on 'sustainable cities' signal both the increasingly 'global' scope of ecological questions and the increasing trend and desire toward involving a wider range of voices in addressing the social and environmental challenges collectively faced. The question is this: how is this being done, by whom, and to what end? The challenge that is raised by events such as the *World Urban Festival* is that of finding ways of circumventing the perpetual risk of being folded into the globalization of culture, and the dynamics of financial exchange that underscore it. Globalization has brought with it radical changes in the distributions of power that present new problematics for both the ethics and the politics of aesthetics. Most acutely, a tension persists between attempts to intervene in the sensibilities that orient political conditions, and the risk of forcing acquiescence in ways of making sense of what is at stake.

The theatricality of highlighting the relationships deemed important within particular socio-geographic contexts via the event of repeating its action patterns within another context has often been discussed in terms of transcultural ethics. As Pavis puts it, the grains of one culture, when placed in the container of another, are significantly altered. What I have argued here, however, is that the very manner in which these 'cultures' are produced and reproduced is itself a function, in part, of aesthetic practices. It is not a case of one self-contained culture being put on display in the arenas of international cities. On the contrary, what the events of the *World Urban Festival* show is that 'cultural' sensibilities, even with all of the particularities of socio-historical, rhythmic and gestural ways of approaching the Earth and its inhabitants, are themselves in flux. "Cultural" articulation is mutating in response to both changing economic pressures as well as the circulation of new creative practices – as particular theatrical techniques and the integration of multimedia, for instance, become ubiquitous. Events like the *World Urban Festival* open an

important space for those who are affected by ecological change within their respective milieus to articulate and reach out to others to reorient the stakes of the debates and the *values* that permeate what changes to the social, economic and environmental conditions will be made. However, the role that 'arts and culture' is coming to play within institutionalized practices of ecological pedagogy and policy implementation must itself come under scrutiny.

While the events serve to catalyze various voices and collectivities, offering a platform for altering the systems of valorization that orient the future of ecology and the reconstitution of social and environmental organization, the institutionalization of artistic devices as enclosures for 'free expression' threatens to become the latest in Aristotelian catharsis, creating non-threatening (and potentially political neutralizing) spaces for dissent. Moreover, in cultivating 'creativity' within the populace in the name of exploring 'more sustainable' social and environmental dynamics, a real danger persists that what is in effect being cultivated is a more 'sustainable' form of globalization, that may ultimately serve to "sustain" a hold on a new diversity of markets and workers, reducing systems of valuation to cultural commodities. While there is certainly nothing wrong with celebrating and promoting cultural diversity, to the extent that such 'diversity' takes centre stage as the main value to be promoted, it runs the risk of effacing questions of political organization and the distribution of power. The challenge is to continually examine how cultural circulations function within the social and political assemblages in which they operate and into which they purport to intervene.

As artistic production, and the formation of new ways of approaching ecologies through modes of 'creative expression' are actively integrated into strategies for social and environmental outreach, the pedagogical role of theatrics and theatricality is becoming increasingly salient. It is to this question of how the adoption of theatrical media is affecting transnational and trans-cultural eco-education, in order to cultivate future approaches to the politics of ecosystem management, that I will now turn.

CHAPTER THREE

ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE NEW PEDAGOGICAL THEATRE:

Globality, Biopolitics, Theatricality

The late twentieth and early twenty-first century has witnessed a dramatic increase in international health and environmental science 'capacity-building' projects. Transnational 'expertise' is being supplied to populations around the world, in order to help support them in building the "capacity" they require to adapt to changing conditions. As cultural critics have often noted, however, such educational programs carry with them particular conceptions of what "capacities" ought to be developed, and what approaches to 'health' and 'environment' ought to be bolstered (Werry, 2008; Escobar, 2008). Functioning within global systems characterized by profound disparities in power and resource access, such initiatives often *themselves* repeat and ultimately reinforce this dynamic with respect to *whose* knowledge, expertise and sensibilities will be promoted. Implicit in this is a strong bias toward the expertise of those from Northern, wealthier countries, thereby perpetuating the global inequities in power that they often claim to redress (Escobar, 1996; 2008; Ferguson, 1994).

While pre-existing inequities in access to material and professional resources and training have been exacerbated with the perpetuation of late capitalist globalization (Peet and Watts, 1996), the strategies most commonly adopted to alter this distribution, paradoxically, run the serious risk of imposing an increasingly globalizing knowledge of experts as disseminated by Northern scientific, educational and policy making institutions. Regardless of how sympathetic these expert practitioners may be to the plight of others, the epistemological perspectives they carry often occlude philosophies, epistemologies and sensibilities germane to the populations that they seek to help with their expertise (Escobar, 1996; 2008; Ferguson, 1994; Werry, 2008).

As theorists such as Stengers (2010), Guattari (1996), Spivak (2008), and Escobar (1996; 2008) remind us, the multiplicity of practices of engaging with a particular milieu is at risk of being occluded or subordinated to an increasingly globalized vision of the earth, perpetuated by the inscribing of practices to meet the systems of global financial exchange that are set up through this process. In response to this state of affairs, these theorists have pointed toward the need to "think transversally" across social, mental and environmental ecologies, experimenting with new ways of approaching the relationships between organisms (Guattari, 2000). Some theorists encourage the development of what Stengers (2010) calls an "ecology of practice", whereby *various* approaches can be simultaneously cultivated without being strangled by the most 'profitable' of state sanctioned sciences.

A variety of pedagogical strategies are now being developed, ostensibly to cultivate such an "ecology of practice", and to explicitly support practices currently being dwarfed by the logic of capital expansionism. 'Participatory' strategies, such as 'participatory action research' and 'community-driven' learning initiatives, are now becoming increasingly common as approaches to encourage 'bottom-up' teaching (Berlinck and Saito, 2010; Parkes and Parnelli, 2001). In addition to their aim of reducing hierarchies in agenda setting, many such projects also strive to "promote ownership" of projects (Berlink and Saito, 2010; Fraser et al., 2006; Perez et al., 2009). Increasingly this trend is including 'creative' pedagogical methods that might afford new ways of addressing the complexities in different practices of coding ecosystems and the dynamics involved in seeking ways to integrate, combat, or dialogue between the various, seemingly incommensurable practices that operate within any given milieu (Yassi et al., 1997; Epskamp, 2006; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001). Well-intentioned Northern experts are increasingly turning to theatrical techniques to try to cultivate mental, social and environmental ecological subjectivity through their international capacity-building programs, including those devoted to teaching health and environmental sciences.

Over the course of the twentieth century, participatory education was primarily popularized by South American practitioners, most notably, Freire (1972). Participatory theatre itself was popularized especially by Boal (1985) and even much

earlier by Moreno (1946). Such pedagogy (Freire) and theatre (Boal) "of the oppressed" was developed as a means to help 'empower' disenfranchised populations to articulate their desires and challenges, and to bring these into the public realm where they could become a force for change. These approaches have since been deployed by a number of organizations, institutions and international bodies throughout the world, to various ends, with radically different politics. For example, role-play is used for purposes ranging from training in the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Colborn-Roxworthy, 2004), to youth empowerment (Mavrocordatos, 2007), to literacy campaigns (Boal, 1985). Theatrical techniques more generally have become increasingly popular in 'participatory development' projects in nearly every sector (education, health, environment, etc.) to encourage "ownership" of development programs on the part of those for whom the programs are intended (Epskamp, 2006). As other theorists (for example, Conquorgood, 1988), have noted, the intent in using such techniques is to help promote development in accordance with the sensibilities, as well as the systems of signs and practices, familiar to those engaged.

In a similar vein, videography in the hands of 'marginalized' groups has become increasingly popular internationally as a method of 'community development', with diverse eco-political objectives. The promotion of "photo-voice" projects, as well as more 'low-tech' theatrical techniques, have also become part of global development projects by organizations including the World Bank, in the name of community empowerment and resource building (Epskamp, 2006). This turn toward creative media in pedagogy and 'capacity-building' has important implications for how populations are now being trained to address social and environmental challenges.

In his lectures on *Biopolitics*, Foucault (2008) argued that, whereas market capitalism tends to promote a radical individualism that erodes social networks needed for the instituting of health services and policies promoting the "stewardship" of shared environments, networks of governmental and non-governmental programs have often been a necessary complement to ensure the possibility of continued participation in the economic life of the market. As I discussed in Chapter One, in the contemporary era, the increasing tendency toward encouraging "participatory management" of resources might then be viewed as the

latest form of ecological capital-driven management (Escobar, 1996). And, as Lazzarato (1996) has shown, increasingly "creativity" is itself being encouraged as part of these projects, harnessing and directing the creative capacity of a populace.

To address these dynamics, Samuel Weber (2002) has suggested that theatricality provides an important approach to understanding the contemporary dynamics of globalization, whereby the manner in which audiences and actors are configured becomes important for orienting the nature of political relations. Building on the arguments of Escobar, Lazzarato and Weber, here I examine how the theatricality of particular initiatives within an international capacity-building program in Ecuador orients the way social and environmental ecologies take hold. In particular, I look at the implications of theatricality for orienting how the relationships between place, people and conceptions of health and environment are mutated in light of simultaneous trends toward the expansion of capital-driven production particularly in the extractive sector on the one hand, and the anti-neoliberal reform with which it is being met in Ecuador on the other.

In 2004, a "*Master's in Health with an Ecosystem Approach*" program was initiated in three Ecuadorian universities with an international team led by Canadian university professors as "train-the-trainer" instructors for the first cycle, with the intent that future iterations would be led by Ecuadorians. This "eco-health" program, as it was called, was an extension of a World Health Organization (WHO) initiative that began in 1995, when the WHO engaged a team of environmental health experts to develop new training materials and methods to better prepare the workforce needed to apply a more 'holistic' approach to health (Weinger, 1999). The approach constituted a turn from the focus on the wellbeing of individual human subjects toward concern with the broader nexus of relations that affect the mental, biophysical and social experiences constitutive of bodily existence. The program drew heavily on 'creative' and 'interactive' pedagogical techniques such as role-play and videography (Yassi et al., 1997).

Ecuador, like most Latin American countries, has also been a 'recipient' of many international (United Nations and various non-governmental organizations [NGOs]) 'development' initiatives. The specific context for introducing the *Master's in Health using an Ecosystem Approach* was the intensification of "a range

of global and local driving forces, such as expansion of the petroleum, mining and agro-industrial sectors which have led to worrisome implications for social and environmental conditions in Ecuador" (Parkes et al. 2009, 2) that were seen to be "accelerating" health inequities (Breilh and Tillería, 2009). As summarized in the article published in the *WHO Bulletin* about this program, the Master's program aimed to:

> ...build human resources and institutional capabilities for improving social and ecological determinants of health, particularly in marginalized populations (e.g. rural and indigenous communities); and to demonstrate that associated health impacts can be reduced. (Parkes et al., 2009, p. 2)

The project of "promoting health" and preventing the spread of illness in relation to increased socio-economic disparities and massive projects of resource extraction has historically instantiated two sides of a biopolitical legacy of globalization, beginning with colonization, whereby the land is exploited as resource and the people are educated to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic order. Accordingly, as noted by prominent critical theorists, *health* becomes a biopolitical project of cultivating ways of seeing, knowing and interacting consistent with the needs of this new order (Foucault, 2008; de Certeau, 1984; Werry 2008). In evaluating the program, the authors of this article (also facilitators of the program itself) concluded with an appeal "to cultivate the principles of responsibility, respect, relevance and reciprocity that are critical in responding to health issues in marginalized communities" both during and after training (p.6).

The series of initiatives to which this Master's program belongs was explicitly initiated as a *counterforce* to the processes of global industrialization and its consequences such as widening income gaps, environmental degradation precipitated by the agrochemical and extractive industries, and the rise in illnesses associated with these. Specifically, during the same period in which the program was being implemented across the country, a new constitution was being developed and would be voted into acceptance by a popular referendum. The new constitution, gesturing toward a change in the sorts of initiatives that would be promoted institutionally and highlighting the potentiality for new modes of engaging with ecosystems, was the first internationally to formally accord rights to "nature". Moreover, as phrased in the constitution:

> Nature or *Pachamama*, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution. Every person, people, community or nationality, will be able to demand the recognitions of rights for nature before the public organisms. (Ecuador Constitution, 2008) [1]

This newfound legal recognition of non-human ecologies having public status over and above utility value or status as private property is indicative of the socio-political climate in which the eco-health program developed. The government had been elected on an explicitly anti-neoliberal platform, suggesting an opening of possibilities for engaging with ecosystems in a manner not necessarily bound up with the logic of neoliberal profit in the extractive sectors and related industrial production (Breilh and Tillería 2009). Many critics have since pointed out, however, that such may have been little more that a symbolic concession to win over grassroots indigenous movements that had been growing in influence, with subsequent decisions of the government having promoted traditional "pro-development" policies (Wilson, 2008; Denvir, 2009).

The program was being partially run by some of the same scientists and researchers publicly endorsing the new constitution. The broadening of ways of understanding health ecologically becomes a double-edged enterprise. In the name of health, social and economic relations are examined and alterations considered. On the one hand, this offers services to those otherwise marginalized for social and economic resources, while at the same time increasingly systematizing various aspects of life. Implementation of changing policy therefore required the cultivation of sensibilities in the populations that would both receive and administer the required services. It is in this respect that the theatricality of interventions becomes relevant.

Global industrialization relies on cultivating particular ways of ordering ecologies, including cultivating the workforce and population base to sustain this economic system. As one of many initiatives designed to prepare and support the population in pursuing health and environmental policy changes, the *Master's in Health with an Ecosystems Approach,* like many educational programs, functions as

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[1] The translation presented here is an unofficial translation found at
http://www.greenchange.org/article.php?id=3104. The official constitution can be found at
http://www.asambleaconstituyente.gov.ec/

both a critical enclave and a site for producing the workforce according to a particular vision. In the case of this Masters program, the vision is to cultivate practices for supporting health and environmental equity (Webb et al., 2010). The development of policies and practices surrounding the procedures promoted and sanctioned concerning the health of a population and the stewardship of ecosystems have been heavily inflected by the politics of resource allocation and accessibility, as well as by changing philosophies of what constitutes pathology and which" treatment" would be taught. With the widespread adoption of ecological thinking and its slow entrance into the health sciences, this has meant a changing vision of what constitutes a 'determinant' of health – a process increasingly bound up with changing analyses concerning how organisms interact with their environment (Waltner-Toews and Kay, 2005). Given the troubled political history of international interactions, a question nonetheless arises as to what the subjectivation tactics and strategies of such programs actually afford to processes of redistributing roles and power amongst those involved and affected.

Considering the arguments of theorists such as Guattari, Escobar and Stengers concerning the importance of particular practices for cultivating the sensibilities and subjectivities that will orient the future of a territory, my view is that the dynamics inscribed by the theatricality of current interventions within global ecological pedagogy must now be rethought. Although the use of theatrical techniques in capacity-building is a relatively new phenomenon, it is important to note that the role of theatrics in education has indeed been a subject of debate for centuries. This chapter enters these debates to ask: what are the political implications of theatricality in the *contemporary context of transnational health and environmental education?*

In the first section I examine how processes of mimetic production of a theatrical variety affect capacity building. Through the analysis of a role-play scenario utilized in the eco-health Master's Program concerning a court-hearing on the impact of Texaco-Chevron in the Ecuadorian Amazon, I argue that while role-play does function through the temporary adoption and recirculation of the identities and logic of 'others', its main force within a capacity-building program is as a technology of subjectivization. In so doing, I differentiate between the force of theatricality and that of mimesis, which I argue, is but a component of theatricality.

The politics of theatricality I argue, do not hinge directly on how things are represented but rather on the force that the repetition of gestures and images has in context. In this case, I argue it functions to promote a particular kind of social mobility through the cultivation of a kind of "spokesperson".

In the second part of the chapter, drawing on Rancière's theory of spokespersons and Weber's theory of theatricality as a way of approaching global distributions, I develop an analysis of how the theatricality of interventions participates in the cultivation of spokespersons. Here I look at how the staging of encounters through the act of creating videos based on interviews conducted by the students with local practitioners captured and circulated the knowledge and sensibilities of various Ecuadorian thought to have a "stake" in changing social and environmental conditions, amongst experts and policy-makers, as well as local citizens. I examine two video productions in depth and argue that each constitutes an intervention in the informational milieu that orients local and global sensibilities, while simultaneously being part of it. Here I argue that the 'split reality' characteristic of theatrical initiatives of articulating and representing activities of the past and future is intensified by the medium of video. I show how videography in this context can orient the way participation in decision-making occurs. Moreover, I argue that here the use of videography cultivates techniques and technologies of articulation through which social mobility can be *seen* to take place, and points to the implications of this "taking place" for directing the manner in which social and environmental ecologies are re-framed.

In the third and final section of this chapter, I analyze a day-long festival organized by some of the Indigenous eco-health Master's students from a small indigenous village in the Andes as a means of demonstrating to their instructors the impact and reception of their work. Here I argue that the manner in which "traditional" practices are integrated into a theatrical display of changing ecological sensibilities indicates the cultivation of a specific mode of subjectivity, serving as tactic for "lessons" to be taken up and appropriated by the local villagers. Performance theorists such as Richard Schechner have argued that ritual dances often organize the social and environmental ecology of a region. Here I extend the argument to show that the theatricality of repeating such activities in this context

draws it into another process, commensurate with the production of global ecologies and the particular "creative" subjectivity characteristic of late capitalism, as well as of some of the most promising attempts to circumvent the stronghold of its logic.

Through the analysis of these eco-health capacity-building initiatives I will assess the politics of theatricality as means of approaching the production of ecological subjectivity and the tensions that surface through it.

3.1   Playing Roles: Theatricality and the stakes of ecological role re-distribution

As Marvin Carlson (2002) points out, theatricality, with its association with mimesis, has repeatedly been approached with suspicion. The crux of the suspicion, according to Carlson, is the schism between the "true" and the "false" that the split reality of the theatre seems to invoke. Does it propagandize populations with falsehoods? Does it encourage emotional responses to overtake reasoned principles? Does it disturb the distribution of roles in society by encouraging people to inhabit new roles and perspectives? These concerns, made famous by Plato, were repeated throughout the twentieth century by those as distant from one another as Soviet policy-makers, art theorists, Artaudian experimental theatre and performance artists, and critics who sought the immediacy of experience. When it contributed to projects of subjectivation, theatricality was considered as a ritualistic repetition of the same, solidifying identities and images. Theorists, from Sartre to Butler, concerned about the confinement of particular populations to pre-determined identities and roles have therefore frequently shunned theatricality. Nonetheless, as Carlson points out, theatricality can *also* be taken as a force in the production of novel processes of subjectivation, and novel ways of approaching, critiquing and forging new ways of engaging a milieu.

In launching the eco-health training program, a role-play scenario was chosen to permit students to engage with different perspectives concerning the social and environmental ecologies of the region (Spiegel and Yassi, 2007). A high profile court case was underway at the time to assess damages inflicted by the multi-national petroleum company Texaco (later purchased by Chevron) through its activities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and to decide upon reparations (Langewiesch,

2007; Berlinger, 2009). Since some of the scientists involved in launching the Master's program were involved in this case as expert witnesses, and since it was a case that was receiving much media attention, the 'Texaco in the Amazon' scenario was selected as the context for a theatrical role-play exercise, whereby students were invited to assume the roles of the various parties involved in the dispute. The role-play was invoked to destabilize the dynamic of a singular axis of meaning, and to open a site for engaging with multiple possible trajectories for approaching what is at stake with respect to ecological change and its impact on health (however this is conceived).

The role-play can roughly be summarized as follows. Each student was assigned to one of six groups: the Chevron-Texaco group; an environmental NGO; the group of "independent" scientific experts testifying against Chevron-Texaco; a group of scientific experts hired by Chevron-Texaco; the media group; and the people of the Amazon group. It was left up to the students to further define their roles. The systems of signs and the relations between them were mimicked: the group playing Texaco portrayed themselves as a cigar smoking American with poor Spanish, a private security guard, and a sexy secretary continuously attempting to pay off the "judge". The group playing the scientific experts spoke calmly in highly technical language, incomprehensible to most. The group playing the media spoke continuously according to prepared scripts, paying little attention to what was actually going on. The NGO group continuously handed out flyers to all present, including the group playing "the people of the Amazon", despite the fact that they were unable to read it because it was in rhetorically dense written Spanish, and not their oral native language. The group playing the people of the Amazon, for their part, objected every few moments to what was being said in the courtroom by everyone else, while being shot at by the Texaco security guard (Spiegel and Yassi, 2007).

Scientists and educators have traditionally thought of theatre and other forms of creative production as providing a medium for the representation of new concepts and the relaying of complex ideas for different styles of learners (Perry et al.,1999). This is a model that focuses on content as nuggets of information to be disseminated and absorbed. Audiences, whether student or otherwise, would then learn to repeat

and reproduce the information and the modes of interaction on display. In this approach, theatricality is grounded in the conviction that theatre can represent and disseminate a truth, by presenting theatre as an imitation of life that might, in turn, serve to promote an imitation of the 'message' of the piece.

Here we might view the 'message' as one concerning what groups have a stake in processes of ecological change and what relationships exist amongst them. According to those playing the scientists supporting the people of the Amazon, this community was experiencing unprecedented levels of disease such as cancer and birth defects attributed to the activities undertaken by Texaco, whereas the scientists hired by Texaco denied this allegation. Those playing Indigenous activists consigned themselves to the role of angry bystanders, intervening only as agitators, with no place to contribute their knowledge or experience within the structure of the court case.

In order to make sense of the politics of such interventions, it is worth recalling the systems of subjectivation that preceded them and to which they can be seen to be partially responding. The colonial model, as is well known, functioned by creating hierarchies whereby the colonized are characterized "as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhaba, 1994, p.101). The practice of circulating ('false' or 'totalizing') images has tended to be commonplace in propagating such hierarchies.

Now, in accordance with concerns regarding the dangers of stereotyping, one could view such a scenario as entrenching particular identity formations with respect to each group represented, circulating particular images of the systems of gesture and modes of valuation deployed by each as they play-out their respective 'social roles'. This view would be in keeping with the analysis of role-play used in FBI training presented by (Colborn-Roxworthy, 2004). In his *Mimesis and Alterity*, Taussig (1993), however, writes of mimesis as "reality's sensate skin" whose "mischief" can "both actualize and break, to say nothing of superseding universals" (44). The particularities of ways of knowing, grounded in borrowed gestures and imagined ideational structures of an other, regardless of the accuracy with which it approximates the other, destabilizes (if only temporarily), the hold of a particular

privileged epistemology as unquestionable universal truth. Taussig locates the mimetic enunciation of a position as entangled in a series of socio-political events constraining what can be said, seen and taught.

Viewed in this way, the manner in which the role-play dramatized the tensions between the various ways of approaching the ecosystem and the schism between the stakes each group had to the trial, offers a way of breaking with hegemonic logic, in so far as it allows for students to "try out" different ways of knowing and seeing the situation. Both Taussig and Bhaba ultimately point to an ambivalence at the heart of what mimesis makes possible. According to Bhaba, mimicry is the:

> ... sign of a double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate; however, a difference or recalcitrance, which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers. (p.123)

As Bhaba points out, the colonial model has often involved a 'colonial play' absorbing aspects of the local culture to ensure successful administration of new policies and programs. In the context of health and environmental policy, the 'colonial play' has historically meant embracing certain visible markers of the indigenous culture, while ensuring that prevailing models of hygiene were promoted, making the region hospitable to colonists and visitors while presumably improving the lot of those who dwell there (Werry, 2008). The legacy of these models, implemented no less for the 'greater good', has meant the imposition of particular ways of construing 'health', as well as particular ways of seeing the relationships amongst human bodies and human and non-human aspects of the environment. From this point of view, repeating roles within an exercise that schematizes them can thus serve, on the one hand, to stabilize and survey the field, while on the other hand, to signal avenues for destabilizing processes of knowledge production by indicating alternate systems of signification.

For Taussig, practices of mimicry, which are no doubt central to activities like role-play, can exert a power over that which is being imitated, orienting how the

sensible world is organized, ultimately directing the politics of knowledge. Imitating the perceptual apparatus of another, the student could potentially take control over the image of the other in a manner that may ultimately allow control of the destiny of those being imitated. Taussig's examples are largely examples in which there is a dichotomous relationship between groups (colonizer and colonized for instance, or Jews and anti-Semites) in which the desire to control or exert a power *over* can be taken as more or less given.

While the ambivalence of mimesis to which these theorist point is, I agree, at work here, in the "post" colonial situation of the eco-health program launched in solidarity with current Ecuadorian, ostensibly "anti-neoliberal", reforms, I am arguing that the politics of theatricality here is not reducible to the politics of mimesis, and certainly not to the politics of mimesis as made visible under colonial rule. The politics of theatricality here rather engage with the politics of mimesis as a moment in the production of subjectivity, aimed at enabling a kind of "becoming-other". In this case, the stated desire and ethos of the program, seemingly runs contrary to the ethos driving the colonial legacy of mimesis. And yet we can see here the continuation of the 'colonial play' to which Bhaba refers, in which the production of subjectivity functions by way of cultivating a creativity that always has the potential to at once serve a biopolitical agenda of orienting the manner in which a population will interact, while at the same time destabilizing the stronghold of the market logic that currently orients environmental change.

While the contemporary situation of neoliberal globalization bears the mark of this history in the hierarchies inherited, the dominant model is no longer to discipline through the entrenchment of social roles and disseminating "messages" in a top-down fashion. Thus, while the question of whether or not role-play encourages dangerous stereotypes remains relevant, I am arguing that this is not the dominant question to ask concerning the politics encouraged by such a tactic within the context of a program seeking to cultivate ecological sensibilities. According to Escobar, the contemporary "postmodern form of ecological capital" involves "a novel internalization of production conditions" whereby "nature and local people are seen as the source and creators of value – not merely as labor or raw material" (Escobar, 1996, p. 56 – 57). For Escobar, the contemporary situation does not

function primarily by way of denigrating local populations (though this, he points out, also happens), but rather by encouraging them to think in a certain way about their relationship to their environment, so that they can become "better" stewards:

> This is the reason why communities – particularly ethnic and peasant communities in the tropical rainforest areas of the world – are finally recognized as owners of their territories (or what is left of them), but only to the extent that they accept seeing and treating territory and themselves as reservoirs of capital (Escobar, 1996, p.57)

The role-play can be considered amongst an arsenal of tactics for orienting ways of "seeing and treating" territories and the 'subjects' within them. However, the role-play situates *itself* as a tactic for intervening in how this system functions through its invocation, deconstruction and multiplication of systems of signs, value, meaning and evaluation at work in producing and intervening into social and environmental ecologies. Now, in the case of this role-play, the actual conflict - amongst capital logic (as imaged by Texaco CEOs), expert scientific health and environmental discourses, (as imaged by the group playing scientists both for Texaco and as "independent" experts), NGO activists, and indigenous people - is represented. This would suggest that what is actually being entrained, in this case, is not so much the logic of capital, but a way of approaching the ecology of practice implicated by an investigation of the relationships between health, environment and territory.

In role-play, one is ultimately engaging with a series of sign systems to which one has access in order to stage an event that will transpire (Boal, 1985; Blatner, 2009). Indeed *if* a change in the biopolitical dynamics of governance is desirable (such that, for instance, a greater role for indigenous knowledge, interests and desires be afforded in 'development' initiatives undertaken in particular regions where these initiatives are sure to affect them) then one point of intervention lies with the cultivation of a future environmental health workforce sensitized to these concerns. This, however, also means that practices need to be reframed in a manner that allows them to be integrated into a more or less harmonious ecology of practice. The education of students from this perspective means cultivating practitioners able to conform, or at least able to make themselves intelligible and 'effective', *within* the

terms of practices of governmentality as they persist (the demands of an educational, judicial, and health management system, for instance).

By dramatizing a scenario according to which disparate ways of approaching ecology are mediated by a juridical system, the role-play became a mechanism for addressing this tension. As an initiative within the *Ecosystem Approach to Health* Master's program, this nexus of relations, as well as the mechanisms through which they are mediated, were presented as part and parcel of a biopolitical apparatus that orients the future of the 'health' of the region. It is not necessary to begin here with an understanding of what constitutes health. It is only important that it be understood that these relations together conspire to form the thorny terrain through which health is constituted and metamorphosized.

What was repeated in the role-play I described above was a way of synthesizing signs, and thus transmuting what might be felt to be at stake in approaching ecological problems or questions. As Taussig points out, in mimicking disparate systems of signs and modes of relating – each gesturing toward the various practices embodied by their representatives - an epistemic experiment is underway. This was one in which universes of value, of gestural repertoires, of the systems of signs and signification associated with the engagement of others within their respective milieus (Amazonian Indigenous activist, Epidemiologist, Business Man…) are invited to pervade the mental ecology of the student, such that the ecologies at work begin to fracture.

Arguably, most practices are learned at least in part through imitation, as when a child learns to speak, or a gymnast learns a new trick. However, what theatricality lends to the process of learning, in this case, is something more than indoctrination through the use of 'imitative' art. As an exercise, a role-play neither guarantees the authenticity of the 'representation' of the roles, nor does it offer evaluative criteria. What it does is set out and put into play the roles as they are distributed. In repeating this scenario, it allows the student-as-actor a certain agency in temporarily appropriating and 'trying out' the role, thereby breaking fixed divisions of identity and role distribution. Its *modus operandi*, as mentioned, passes through a 'becoming-other', through the temporary adoption of alien signs, gestures, relationships to things and modes of interaction. The theatricality of the Texaco-in-

the-Amazon court case scenario lay in the manner in which the various roles were repeated in the classroom *via* the repetition of particular systems of signs and particular relational dynamics. There is, in this process, a multiplicity of ways of engaging with an ecosystem, destabilizing the hegemony of the dominant logic of a market driven science. As a pedagogical exercise in experimenting with heterogeneous roles, I am therefore arguing that role-play in this case acted as a *social technology* for cultivating practices and encouraging the formation of heterogeneous collectivities, through acts of "becoming-other" that exceed the structure of mimesis as a repetition of the same.

To the extent that learning was taking place through the exercise, it was not in the memorizing and reproducing of these principles, but in restaging the meeting between systems of signs and gestures within the collective apparatus of the policy-making machine. The exercise belongs to a series of acts whose sphere of impact is potentiated by the material conditions in which it operates, namely: the terms of the courtroom it represents and the positing of what discourses would be recognized; the dynamics of the classroom in which it functions; the material conditions of which bodies can be present and how; the scientific theorization of what factors influence which bodies and how; and the choices involved.

In repeating the roles circumscribed by the court, the concerns and dynamics were abstracted by the students and repeated in the classroom itself, directing the learning toward transforming practices of knowing and engaging with an ecosystem via a mimicking and repetition of the practices of imagined spokespersons. Each party represented in the theatricization of the court-case worked with an entirely different way of framing what was at stake: finances, health, rights, "science" - which the activity of engaging in a role-play made explicit. Engaged theatrically, however, such positions and roles are broken down into a system of signs that is encountered, and that is always being changed through encounters in the actual *taking place* of the event.

As Guattari writes, commenting on role-play in the 'therapeutic' setting, "this multi-faceted theatrical aspect allows us to grasp the artificial and creative character of the production of subjectivity" (Guattari, 1995, p.8). This highlighting of the theatricality of roles – and the actual particularities of systems of signs and gestures

that would be repeated – points to the artifice and the cultivation of subjectivity at the heart of pedagogical practices. At the heart of such an exercise is a process of sensibly registering the *differences* involved in carving out the stakes in question. The theatricality of the exercise draws out questions such as "whose desires shape ecological policies?" and "whose health is considered, according to whose terms?" This process highlights the relevance of questioning how and why a territory might be occupied in a particular manner, and what sets of ecological relationships are important to whom. However, we can also see here a disciplinary regime at work, whereby a particular (albeit heterogeneous) manner of approaching ecological conflict is entrained. The essence of my argument, then, is that the role-play in this case acted as a strategy of subjectivation *that relied not on claims to represent truths, but rather in making visible a series of possible trajectories and dynamics at work, and opening them up for re-evaluation.*

Theatre historian Tracy Davis (2003) has located the emergence of theatricality as a process of critically reflecting on social roles during the rise of liberalism and the cultivation of civil participation in governance that liberalism promotes. Theatricality, according to Davis, promotes a kind of critical subjectivity commensurate with a certain version of liberal democracy, premised on cultivating individual critical engagement with governmental apparatuses. In this case I agree with Davis, although with the caveat that it is only a particular kind of theatricality that works in this way, and that one must locate an event within its social ecology in order to really make sense of its theatricality. In the case I described, the roles, as they were organized in and around the law court, offered a scenario to be repeated for the purposes of scrutiny, encouraging a critical awareness of the differences at stake. The theatrical reproduction of the court in this case highlighted the farce within the court's claim to present an impartial venue for adjudication, wherein only particular modes of synthesis were permitted, and wherein the presentation of 'positions' was always already circumscribed by the social, political and judiciary system.

By invoking the artifice of theatre, the courtroom became an analogy for the various dynamics that needed to be considered in engaging in interventions concerning health using an "Ecosystems Approach" – and specifically for the

multiplicity of processes and tensions likely to emerge when attempting to apply this integrated approach. In other words, the challenge that the role-play presented was that of traversing radically different ways of approaching and articulating an ecosystem. In staging different systems of signs and different ontological approaches at the level of gestural articulation, a process of subjectivation is proposed. This process thereby continues a biopolitical process of cultivating heterogeneous modes of sociality that has been present within liberal traditions for centuries.

In identifying the stakes and dynamics at work in this particular case, an analogy was implicitly made to the dynamics possibly encountered across a range of ecological disputes in which questions of human health would be implicated. It allowed the dynamics and roles of another time and place (namely, the court and the abstracted legal system there instantiated) to be repeated such that an encounter with these dynamics could affect the process of orienting which knowledge practices would be relevant to whom and why. Repeating these roles within the pedagogical situation of a role-play serves to denaturalize both the systems of signification associated with each disciplinary practice invoked, as well as their relationships to one another, calling into question who can play what role how, and how roles are distributed within a collectively inhabited milieu.

However, the tactic itself always threatens to also become part of a strategy for developing a particular kind of mobile and amenable workforce, through which, following Escobar's insights, traditional identifications can be easily blended with a dominant (capital-driven) manner of approaching an ecosystem. The theatricality of the intervention can then ultimately be seen to pose a series of problems to the formations of mental and social ecologies, which those concerned with the future of the territory must address: (1) at the level of exterior repetition of roles as representatives of various ways of engaging and constructing ecologies; (2) at the level of signs, that actually transmute what gets sensed *as* 'group', 'role' and ecology; and (3) at the level of how the particular theatricality of the intervention intervenes in the cultural and social ecology in which it is situated. What needs to be examined, then, is how altering the manner in which 'spokespersons' are invoked, and ultimately "trained", actually functions within the wider social, cultural

and environmental ecologies of the territory and the networks that orient its future. I address this challenge in the next section.

3.2 Staging Frames: Theatricality and the cultivation of mobile "spokespersons"

According to Rancière (2000), the potential of transmutation in the political dynamics of expression can be found in transforming what he calls the 'logic of the spokesperson', specifically by disturbing the division of roles in and between practices:

> In traditional logic, the "spokesperson" is the one who expresses the thought, feeling, and way of life of a group. I showed, on the contrary, that a spokesperson is first of all the person who breaks this logic of expression, the one who puts words into circulation—that is, who uproots words from their assigned mode of speaking or of being, according to which workers should speak in "workers' style" and the masses should express themselves in "popular culture." The basic problem was to show that many efforts that believe they "respect others' differences" by entering into "their" language and "their" ways of thinking, only repeat Plato's adage that one should stay in his/her place and do his/her own thing. (Rancière, 2000, p. 5)

By engaging multiple spokespersons in addressing questions concerning the terms according to which shared ecologies will be constructed, approached or transformed, it becomes possible to layer multiple epistemologies or ways of 'knowing' the world. Rancière's point is that in assigning ways of knowing to particular groups in the name of pluralistic respect, one may in fact be further entrenching a social hierarchy of roles, whereby everyone has their role, which is to be respected, as long as they do not seek to change the manner in which roles are assigned. Or, in other words, everyone can learn and express themselves in their own way as long as they do not disturb the political system according to which social systems are held in place.

Thus, for instance, one could view the court case as staging a 'participatory' scenario, integrating a range of spokespersons, utilizing different systems of signs and ways of approaching the territory in question. However, it is only when a transformation takes place in the roles that each collection of practices actually

plays, that the 'representative' becomes effective *as* spokesperson. To the extent that theatricality can be seen as a process of engaging with such a transformation in the logic of spokespersons, it is not enough that certain ideas are *represented and circulated*. The pedagogical process of repeating the systems through which ideas and knowledge are generated is generally towards *either reinforcing or transforming* particular practices of engagement with the world.

The political tension at work in the role-play as pedagogical technique then lies in the manner in which, on the one hand, mimesis is harnessed, in the first instance through repeating and consolidating a distribution of roles by encouraging students to adopt and mimic the ways of approaching the situation of 'others' (thus potentially reifying roles and behaviours). However, in the second instance, mimesis becomes a tactic for moving between systems of signs and breaking with these "traditional" distributions. This breaking with traditional logic seems, for Rancière, to act as an emancipatory strategy, thus setting in motion a mutation at the level of the sensibilities that inform processes of knowledge creation.

The role-play was, in many ways, a preparatory exercise for staging future encounters, constituting a moment in the training of students before they were sent out to develop their individual projects. This did not, however, mark the end of theatricality in the capacity-building project. In the summer of 2008, video documentation was employed in the Master's program as a means of aiding students both in gathering data as well as articulating and disseminating their research to date**.** Such videotaping was to serve as a means of documenting interviews with those whose knowledge and practices were deemed of interest to reorienting the manner in which social and environmental ecologies were being reshaped. Thus, as I will describe below, in the process of videotaping, spokespersons were not only selected. By staging and making sensible the encounters between the various practices in which each interviewee was engaged, students were also intended to facilitate a process through which 'stakeholders' could, in effect, become *stake makers*, reorienting the manner in which decisions were to be made and sensibilities regarding what was at stake formed, and thus becoming "spokespersons" in Rancière's sense.

The theatricality of role-play, as I have argued, functions by way of a split reality that acknowledges and highlights the artifice of adopted roles in order to induce a certain transmutation in modes of seeing, sensing and knowing the world. Video does much the same thing. However, its audience need not be physically assembled in the same time and place. Theatricality, as Weber (2000) has pointed out, is typically characterized by its effects:

> The representations – be they visual, acoustical, linguistic, olfactory or whatever – are never self-contained, never *meaningful* in the literal sense of being saturated with meaning, but rather *take place* in a place that is never closed, undivided or self-contained. (Weber, 2000, p. 122)

The theatricality of an intervention functions in several ways: first by way of appealing to the pasts conjured up by the repetitive iteration of actions (the actions in the court hearing, for instance); but also, secondly, by way of the actors and audiences whose previous experiences and future desires orient the manner in which the intervention takes place; and thirdly by the "meanings" that will be attributed to the events that take place, and thus to the future set in motion. But *how* these repetitions occur, and the manner in which they echo and interrelate with the other events and processes, significantly alters their force, resonance and 'meaning'.

Videography further dislodges norms of who can speak to whom, whereby elements from one time and place are directed at another, thus intensifying the 'split-reality' traditionally associated with theatre and theatricality (Weber, 2004). Videography, as a second order moment of theatricality, does not only 'capture' the moment of interaction, it intervenes in the moment and becomes implicated in the very process of staging a series of events. This is why Weber has argued that theatricality is even more ubiquitous in the age of electronic media, despite the seemingly lesser role played by theatre as entertainment in its traditional form (Weber, 2004). Theatricality, thus, for Weber, becomes a way of approaching "globalization", wherein the world as process is constituted as a self-contained 'globe': "a process by which the world of possibilities is at the same time totalized and restricted" (Weber, 2002, p. 701). Those who are not integral to the processes driving globalization are, according to this model, constituted as audience and consumer.

Videography when approached as part of the pedagogical process here, stands in uneasy relation to this model. The interviews when staged, framed, captured and disseminated, re-present various systems of signs and gestures that present glimpses into various ways of addressing social and environmental relationships so as to encourage 'health'. With the use of video, students in sanctioned, degree-granting programs are able to document practices not represented in mainstream Western institutions, as well as provide documentation of inquiries into the sensibilities and desires of populations alienated by dominant governmental programs and practices (hospital practices, recycling programs, etc.). As student-practitioners, apprenticing to a range of health and environmental practices under the rubric of an "ecosystem" approach to health, the theatricality of creative interventions was thus galvanized as a means of cultivating spokespersons able to address multiple audiences.

For instance, I was invited to film a series of videos for the eco-health Master's program: a student interviewing indigenous midwives as they explained the significance of retaining 'traditional' birthing methods, another student interviewing recognized 'community leaders' articulating concerns regarding pesticide use in agriculture, another student interviewing women who worked in a waste disposal site, and a series of other interviews and events, so that video documentation could be made and circulated. Of the various videos made to support the student projects, two have (so-far) had English subtitles added and have been presented not only locally but also at international academic conferences: 1) *Is progress always progressive? A discussion of several community action research projects related to environmental, cultural and economic concerns in Ecuador;* and 2) *Birth practices among indigenous women in the context of Ecuador today: A Study in the communities of Santa Rosa de Totoras and Ambrosio Lasso*. (Orrego, 2010; 2010a)

These videos archived the process of inquiry and became a medium for making the practices and sensibilities of those interviewed visible. The videos point to the dynamic between what Taylor (2003) calls the 'archive' and the 'repertoire'; the repertoire being the collection of practices that evolve and are passed down through live transmission, whereas the archive refers to the documents that memorialize a practice. In the last chapter I briefly touched on a concern, raised by Taylor, regarding the contemporary tendency of international bodies to fund and pursue

cultural 'salvage' projects, reminiscent of the 'salvage ethnographies' of the early and mid twentieth century. The supposition that practices would disappear were they not supported and documented by external bodies, for Taylor, raised a concern that the cultural practices were gaining visibility in so far as they could be promoted *as* traditional to and by external spectators. The question here is, then, does this kind of archiving repeat this trap?

While both the initial event and the future replay of the event to audiences in unspecified times and places invoke the split-reality and the artifice of repetition to be seen, the impact of each is altered by the pressures of the audiences and circulations into which it seeks to enter. In terms of content, the first video focused particularly on one student-led project, assessing the environmental and health consequences of improving solid waste disposal practices with the ultimate goal of creating a municipal recycling system to reduce health hazards and environmental contamination. This project, assisted with European Union funds to help expand recycling and reduce negative impacts from poorly designed waste storage locations, provides an illustrative example of the kind of issues encountered in this training program. In the rural farming community of Curgua, Ecuador, the adjacent municipal government (in Guaranda) was operating a garbage disposal site where all the solid waste from the town was being taken. In this setting, however, the student leading the project met a group of "*minadores*" (Spanish for "mine diggers" but referring to those who "mine" the waste) who had been sorting and collecting materials from the town's garbage for reuse, recycling, and resale.

Health professionals within the eco-health program were concerned that the *minadores*, often including children and pregnant women, were being exposed to biological hazards, sharps, and a host of other risks from organic and inorganic wastes. Nevertheless, the *minadores* were wary of any intervention, even if the intent was a much safer recycling system and stable employment conditions in a proposed micro-enterprise, for fear it would deprive them of their livelihood. The aim of the project was, effectively, to make visible the social and environmental assemblages constitutive of the ecology of these landfill sites (for example, contamination of groundwater from poor management of the wastes). However, the process was fraught with a politic concerned, not only with the distribution of

knowledge, but with what the re-distribution of knowledge might mean for implementing changes. Concretely, documenting 'environmental health risks', implementing the recycling program and cleaning up the waste site could have overlooked the wishes of the *minadores* to retain their access to the garbage disposal site, as these families would have suffered further economic hardships if the site were closed.

In the video, the student articulates a desire to avoid marginalizing the desires of the *minadores*, and struggled amidst institutional constraints to treat them not simply as information providers, but rather as subjects akin to 'spokespersons' in Rancière's sense of breaking with the logic of hierarchies concerning who can speak to whom how. In the video, the student, who is also a municipal government worker, is shown speaking with the women who work at the garbage site, convincing them that when their jobs are formalized, things will be much better for them, despite their concerns that when things change, they run the risk of losing their livelihood. Later in an interview, he declares the importance of having participation in the project so that everyone can take ownership and he also expresses a firm commitment not to break his promise to the women working in the dump. The video ends with a closing shot of the women, having been promised that the new garbage program will mean they no longer have to deal with hazardous waste and that they will have showers on site, expressing their excitement. "It's going to be fantastic. For us at least", says one of the women.

The video presents not only a testimony of how one can go about creating a 'participatory multi-stakeholder' project – it stages the actual encounters, bearing witness to the encounters, and the promises made. The very act of staging 'knowledge' alters the relationships between players, inviting a repetition of knowledge that changes the way the circumstances would be articulated. If ecological knowledge has to do with the manner in which relations to and within a milieu are approached, then we can see that what was at work here is a rendering visible of the encounters between the practices of garbage selection and all of the desires and investments that, as practiced by the women interviewed, this brings with it. The ways of seeing cultivated here have as much to do with the modality of transmitting knowledge as they do with the practices being recorded.

Foucault argues in *The Birth of the Clinic,* that changes in health practice that occurred in Europe in the eighteenth century with the standardization of health and medical practice, as grounded in empirical observation and interaction with patients, were themselves due to changes in regimes of seeing and knowing. As knowledge comes to rest increasingly on what can be seen and experienced - what is visible to the physician or articulated by the patient - and less on theoretical knowledge, the cultivation of medical practice, and health practices more generally, come to be increasingly bound up with cultivations of an aesthetic order. As Foucault writes,

> This aesthetic not only defines the original form of all truth, it also prescribes rules of exercise, and it becomes, at a secondary level, aesthetic in that it prescribes the norms of an art. The sensible *truth* is now open, not so much to the senses themselves, as to a *fine* sensibility. (Foucault, 1973, p. 171)

What is to be cultivated is a kind of attentiveness and precision in observation. Moreover, as Foucault points out, it is not only ways of sensing, but also *sensibilities* that are to be cultivated, both within the health workforce and within the populace that it serves. Processes of governmentality were put in place to sensitize the public and health providers alike. As de Certeau (following Foucault) explains:

> A change in sociocultural axioms occurs when the unit referred to gradually ceases to be the body politic to become the individual body, and when the reign of a *juridical* politics begins to be replaced by the reign of a *medical* politics, that of the representation, administration, and well-being of individuals. (de Certeau,1984, p. 142)

Bodies are individuated, examined and, through selected regimes, institutions and patterns, these bodies become marked as individual medicalized bodies, whose health is accordingly, to be promoted. The tools offered by this popularization of the notion that "the body can be repaired. It can be educated. It can even be fabricated" remains with us even with the growing "cybernetic models" of politics, which take a more integrated look at the connections that inform subjects, and in so doing these models provide a way of tracking more widespread networks of social and physical conditioning (p.142 – 143).

In this sense, ecological models find resonance with cybernetic models. Contemporary practices for training a population and health workers in ways of seeing, however, are now adapting to cultivate a far broader and ever changing set of

relations than previous 'medical' models. As I discussed in Chapter One, and mentioned again above, human health and the physical environment are increasingly being appreciated within an integrated ecological framework. It is within this context that "creativity" is now being encouraged in pedagogical approaches oriented toward addressing the relationship between health and environment, opening onto investigations of social and mental ecologies. With the globalization, not only of corporate industry, but also of regimes of health, systems of knowledge and ways of seeing are again undergoing a transmutation as they engage new practitioners and beneficiaries. Not surprisingly, then, video is becoming instrumental in these transitions.

Ecological investigation, as various theorists have also noted, increasingly is directed not only to the biophysical or naturalized relationship concerning organism interaction, but rather highlights the social and mental contingencies that contribute to the manner in which one actually goes about constituting a home (Bateson, 1972; Guattari, 2000; Latour, 2004; Escobar, 2008; Fuller, 2005). This entails a process of multiplying the ontological, epistemological and aesthetic possibilities for seeing, knowing and engaging with a milieu. As adopted in Ecuador, the *Ecosystem Approach to Human Health* is commensurate with what has been brought forward by prominent Ecuadorian researcher Jaime Breilh as "*Critical Epidemiology*" (Breilh, 2008), which seeks to widen perspectives from traditional concerns, (for example with the study of epidemics as primarily contagious diseases transmitted) between individuals, to an approach that seeks out the connections between living and non-living beings and the manner in which the social and environmental dynamics of the system affect the overall functioning of the ecosystem and health of its inhabitants. It also involves taking into consideration that there are a number of social ecologies orienting trajectories, shaped in relation to class, gender and cultural heritage, each of which affects the ways in which an ecology is assembled, and what elements of an ecosystem are abstracted as pertinent.

Adopting Weber's theory of theatricality as an approach to understanding globalization suggests that these practices are in the processes of being appropriated into the spectacle of globalization. Through such acts of video production, they are captured and disseminated by way of the camera, whereby the video as mimetic

object will be presented to spectators around the country and ultimately the world via networks of health and environmental experts, while also situating and categorizing practitioners of 'health' and 'environmental stewardship' that fall outside of dominant global strategies as spectators and recipients (or students) of dominant and 'new' approaches being circulated.

The capture and dissemination of practices in this manner constitutes part of the theatricality of globalization. However, I am arguing that this process of capture and dissemination also situates itself as an *intervention* into this system, seeking to destabilize hegemonic visions through a pedagogical attempt to reform if not break from a totalizing vision of the globe. Here this functions by returning the specificity of ecological approaches to the territories from which they are generated, much in the spirit of Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. If videotaping itself acts as an event catalyzing a series of interactions between individual persons, professionals, practices, territories, institutions, technological objects and collective audiences, spanning across time and space, the question I pose here concerns the extent to which this mutation ultimately reinforces globalization in the sense of making all spokespersons of alternative logics into resources to be captured, or consumers and/or audiences of globalization precisely by appropriating their practices into systems of global circulation.

According to Kershaw (2007), theatricality is able to reveal the dominant dynamic of role distribution at work in what, drawing on Baudrillard's "procession of simulacrum" and following McKenzie's analysis of the movement from 'disciplinary' to 'performative' society discussed here in Chapter One, he argues orients and consolidates ways of constituting the relationship between "nature", "culture" and "humanity". If theatricality can be used as a way of understanding the dynamics of globalization, interventions that *highlight* and *challenge* this dominant distributions of roles and sensibilities can act as events to transmute these dynamics. The question then becomes how to situate and assess practices.

The taking place of an event is, as I have argued, always dependent on its role within social and mental ecologies. The manner in which theatricality takes place within the wider social, cultural, and informational milieu becomes, as I have already stressed, a pivotal factor. There is a pedagogical strategy at work in

collecting and presenting practices in this way, making them visible at once to students, regional inhabitants (who gather to watch the interviews being filmed), and future audiences who will see the videos produced by the Master's students within the capacity-building project. While the creation of the video as mimetic object would seem to be recording and disseminating the interviews as a means of modelling the manner in which desires can be integrated in a single ecological vision, the title of the video presentation at one of the international conferences where it was presented, "*Is progress really progressive*?", puts this reading into doubt, invoking the theatricality of the event of recording as one designed to cultivate critical engagement.

The pedagogical technique itself alters the knowledge-transmission-event through the very way it makes the practices in question sensible. In the staging of interviews and community meetings, events unfold in a fashion inextricably linked to the camera. Not only are a host of gestural and affective material captured alongside the verbal, the events themselves become possible through the filming and the assemblage that it catalyzes. Such videographic techniques not only record and disseminate, but also in this way contribute to the formation of subjectivities. Videography sets a rhythm for assembling, as well as acting as an impetus for gesturing and for articulating a thought. It thus functions to implicate the very process of enunciation and what can be enunciated. As Guattari explains:

> Just as social machines can be grouped under the general title of Collective Equipment, technological machines of information and communication operate at the heart of human subjectivity, not only with its memory and intelligence, but within its sensibility, affects and unconscious fantasms. (Guattari, 1995, p. 2)

Here there are multiple layers of techniques and technologies that combine to form the event of knowledge production. The education process here is bound up with the research process, in the sense that research here is the mode of acquiring knowledge of practices in the process of cultivating new *approaches* to how these practices might be repeated and engaged in the future and in relation to one another. The video documents the student policy-maker rehearsing his desire that these women really be listened to, suggesting that both his own subjectivity and the policies he hoped to implement would be transformed by the encounter.

As Terranova puts it:

> A cultural politics of information addresses both the development of forms of knowledge and power that explicitly address not only the field of communication but also the potential of the event as it erupts within the closed circuit of communication or the power of the invention to displace the closed horizon of the communication channel. (Terranova, 2004, p. 70)

It is in erupting within closed circuits of communication – the policy making circuit, the pedagogical circuit, the ethnographic research circuit -that the politics of the intervention can take place. The act of videotaping served as a catalyst for the interviews, and collected both a determinate audience in the present, and the promise of a future audience, yet unknown, thus setting up a series of assemblages of collective subjectivation.

As it turned out, with the new recycling program operational, much of what was promised by the student decision-maker was never delivered and many of the women's fears concerning loss of livelihood did come to pass. The videotaping may well have archived the roles of the women, and set into circulation the repertoire of their daily practices through the act of producing a double of their words and images as well as archiving the desire of the student. However, while the video interviews with the *mineadores* staged a process through which the promises of formalizing labour were propelled through cultivating a set of desires (showers on site, and a guaranteed daily wage, for instance) and cultivating an assemblage for producing desires via this 'participatory process', the very act of recording this process marked it as an artifice that may or may not lead to these desires being actualized.

In this case, the political stakes are all too obvious; the camera is being used to gather information for a policy-oriented 'student' project – but one in which the student not only will become, but actually already is, in a 'policy-making' position. The apparatus of the camera becomes the medial device forging a channel between the student and the *minadores* through which each becomes visible to the other in new ways. Moreover, the production of the video as a mimetic object in which both the interviewer and the interviewees are recorded, and know themselves and others to be recorded, opens the process to undisclosed spectators. These spectators may then both witness the process and reinterpret it, drawing it into a series of broader social and political assemblages.

Whereas the knowledge and practices of garbage workers has little affective impact within contemporary social and environmental discourses, indigenous practices are coming to have a great deal of impact. This is particularly the case within the climate of current more anti-neoliberal, pro-Quichuan reforms in Ecuador, to which I alluded earlier. The question now is how, given the pervasive history and current situation of imperial and neoliberal intervention, such practices are being addressed. In the second video I will discuss here, the knowledge and practices encountered in examining indigenous childbirth practices in comparison to the 'Western style' Ecuadorian medical system, gestured toward a (post) colonial legacy and the attempts to transmute the inherited dynamic at work in the country as it adopts a new constitution.

The student in this case conducted in-depth interviews with a nurse from a hospital, two community midwives, two women who gave birth in the traditional indigenous method without any external medical assistance, one woman who had her children in a hospital, and one woman who experienced both childbirth practices. The practices relating to sexual reproduction, as articulated in the video by mothers and midwives in Santa Rosa de Totoras, located in the highlands of the Ecuadorian province of Bolivar, for instance, typically include burying the placenta in the earth where the placentas of their ancestors had been buried – a practice not followed within the region's hospitals. Other traditional practices not observed in the Westernized clinic include vertical (as opposed to horizontal) births, among others. According to Elena Orrego, the director of the videos and instructor in the Master's program, the video would later be taken up as a tool to train and educate healthcare practitioners on ancestral practices of childbirth, as well as a means to introduce alternative methods of reproductive health, for example, incorporating vertical childbirth in some hospitals that did not previously accept these ancestral practices (e.g. San Luis Hospital in Otavalo, Ecuador).

With both videos we find a staging of knowledge, whereby the roles of knowledge makers and knowledge transmitters are played out, over and above the playing of their usual roles or their usual settings. This theatricality is implicated in the explicit staging of knowledge practices that took place over the course of the interviews filmed for this video, through which spokespersons were invoked and

summoned, calling to the villagers to witness the event along with the promised future viewers that the presence of the video camera suggests. While the practices described and repeated before the camera took place regardless of the spectacle of *showing and telling* to onlookers, it is this staging which allowed encounters to take place *between* practices, stitched together as an event that displays the encounter in a light to be assessed as such. The theatricality of the intervention of interviewing and videotaping these practitioners, within this remote village, thus, already constitutes an intervention that would *take place* in the sense of potentially catalyzing a mutation in how social, mental and environmental ecologies would be forged.

Videotaping interviews placed into circulation an articulation of practices of Quichuan midwives, and the relationships these weave between generations. An obvious example of this is the explanation given by one of the midwives interviewed concerning the relationship to place and to ancestors that is consolidated by burying the placenta. The series of video interviews staged an encounter between Quichuan and 'Western' urban practices. For instance, in the video on traditional birthing, women across three generations arranged themselves before the camera, and the scene takes place: slowly, members of the village, mostly women and children, congregated on a rock, the camera the locus of attraction, while midwives and mothers were interviewed. On the same rock on which a hospital administrator had been filmed alone speaking with the interviewee, the camera later framed three generations: when the midwife spoke, her daughter joining her, and her mother appearing in the frame and joining the interview halfway through as the previous midwife from whom the current midwife learned the trade.

Whereas the role-play represented the interactions of social parties, while simultaneously staging actual encounters between students who were forced to work together to develop their portrayals and to improvise interactions, the video reversed this cycle of representation and encounters, where the mimetic product would be produced in the future as archive to be circulated. It enacted a dynamic concerning who speaks to whom how, and instils this, offering particular catalysts for the production of subjectivity (the indigenous interviewer, for instance, translated for the camera for those interviewees who did not speak a fluent Spanish).

The production of the birthing video, moreover, staged a series of encounters between practitioners for multiple present and future audiences. Future mothers (both those witnessing the filming of the interviews, but more widely, those watching the interviews on their at home television), as well regional, national and international professionals, students and funders, would become the spectators of the video. In re-circulating these images and roles in a virtual manner, the actual ecology of possibilities that would seem plausible to audiences is respectively altered.

The educational process here takes as its starting point the student project – a student whose subjectivity is already over-coded as multiple. Here the student is a trained nurse, from the indigenous village in which the interviews take place, currently residing in the nearby city of Guaranda and now earning a Master's degree. Through the project she becomes a 'spokesperson' (in Rancière's sense), at the intersection of these various processes and trajectories. In staging video interviews in this way, multiple trajectories and audiences are galvanized simultaneously. This galvanizing of audiences through the more theatrical elements of pedagogy gestures toward pedagogy as a serial process, whereby learning takes places through cultivating ways of approaching roles and producing subjectivity in the sense discussed by Guattari. I am arguing that what is being framed here is therefore inextricably linked to the dynamics of the event of knowledge acquisition itself, and the multiple audiences it anticipates, generates and reshapes in the process.

The politics of why and how techniques are utilized here teases a thread by which cultural politics is bound to the politics of education, which is itself entangled in the changing web of practices of governmentality concerned with caring for and cultivating social and environmental ecologies. What is being cultivated through the theatricality of a video interview – its staging and its display to audiences across time and space – is a way of intervening in ways of seeing the relationships between organisms and the manner in which ecologies are created and navigated by practitioners. The irony here is that this occurs through altering the way in which stories, roles and practices can be repeated *across time and space* to enter into the global networks that bear upon the *local territory*.

This repetition before multiple future audiences signals the double practice of disciplining and potentiating change that comes with the pedagogical intervention of framing and recording an encounter between practices. This plays itself out at multiple levels simultaneously. In showcasing local practices, and more specifically in having practitioners repeat or reiterate their practices before the promise of audiences present and future, the practices themselves are opened to processes of capture and mutation on the part of the audiences. This repetition is shaped in anticipation of the interpretations of its audiences. The question to which I now turn, however, concerns what effect this changing dynamic and tactic of theatricality has on local ecologies.

3.3 Theatricality and the Invocation of Ecological Ritual

If the theatricality of knowledge production has to do with the dynamics according to which signs, relations and symbols are repeated in new contexts, then the transformation of practices of engaging the world hinges not only on the knowledge produced in the classroom amongst students and teachers. Rather, the trajectory of knowledge production as 'capacity-building' depends on how and what "capacities" are cultivated within the regions in which they function. I have argued above that what actual "capacities" are cultivated, and what systems of exchange and valuation they bolster, are oriented by how they operate within the wider social ecology. Ultimately, however, what theatricality lends to a pedagogical program for capacity-building depends on how the theatricality of actual interventions are taken up and operate within the territory in which capacities are to be 'built'.

Amongst the sites of the community-based projects in the *Ecosystem Health* Master's program are a number of Andean villages (San Rafael, Quilloac, etc.) in the province of Cañar that constitute the agricultural cooperative known as Tucayta. These communities hosted several projects of students from the Master's program– some of whom from the small indigenous communities themselves, and one, a young physician from a nearby city who initiated work with the community through involvement in the Master's program. During the visit of the international team in July 2008, the students' main intent was to demonstrate their research and its impact

to date. Their projects included two aimed at protecting the water supply, another on reducing pesticide use, and a major project conducted to reduce the inappropriate use of antibiotics, in view of concern about growing antibiotic resistance. In the face of the over promotion of patented and privatized knowledge in the form of pharmaceuticals (that even according to contemporary mainstream medical protocol are often neither required nor used correctly, thereby contributing to the antibiotic contamination and drug-resistance, harmful to both the environment and human health) and agrochemical interventions, amongst other forces, the students sought to probe 'traditional' herbal medicines, health and farming practices that could be promoted within the communities. To welcome the international team and demonstrate the impact of their work, the students decided to organize a day of festivities, food, and a series of 'traditional' dance performances with the villagers, accompanied by a series of speeches directly addressing the student projects.

There is a long tradition of anthropological writing exemplified by the work of Victor Turner (1982; 1986) and Richard Schechner (1988) that traces the ritualistic use of various dances and performances in 'tribal' society, tracking what Schechner (1988) has called the "efficacy" of performance within the circumstances in which it is deployed. Though a discussion of the kaiko dance of the Tsemba of the highland of Papa New Guinea, for instance, Schechner explained the ecological significance of performance:

> The rituals of the Tsemba are ethological as well as cultural. They are also ecological: the kaiko is a means of organizing the Tsemba's relationships to their neighbors, to their lands and goods, to their gardens and hunting ranges. (Schechner, 1988, p. 115)

For Schechner, the use of the ritual as ecological intervention places it in what he calls the "efficacy-entertainment braid" (1988, p. 112). According to his theory, performances such as the traditional Andean dances performed at the festival here are situated as either having a ritual "efficacy" (what the performance *does* in a practical sense) and/or an entertainment value. At the festival children were brought out to dance the harvest dance before the international program team. However, while the dance invoked a means of organizing ecological relationships, its "efficacy" in this situation cannot be explained though an ontologizing of this

traditional relationship. Neither, however, did it function as pure entertainment. Within the context of the festival the ecology organized by the dance was theatrically put on display, not as pure "entertainment" but as a way of staging an encounter between "traditional" ecologies and the knowledge and strategies for meeting contemporary ecological and health challenges in which the students were being trained. The display became a key interface for this encounter, wherein the theatricality of the encounter became pivotal in how "capacity-building" might alter ecological approaches through a redistribution of roles and tactics utilized to "take place", orienting how pedagogical lessons were to be disseminated, appropriated and displayed. It thus became a tactic for cultivating a particular kind of ecological subjectivity within villages such as this one.

As I have already discussed, the *Ecosystem Health* project was initiated and unfolded in response to the growing tendency of large-scale multinationals in the extractive, agrochemical and (to a lesser extent) pharmaceutical industries to orient practices concerning the future of Ecuador's social, mental and environmental ecologies. The avenue and concept of health in this project as characterized by the 'Ecosystem Approach' became a way of making sense of these trends and their implications for inhabitants, human and nonhuman alike. The use of theatricality, I have been arguing, became a vehicle for supporting the heterogeneous development of practices that could not be collapsed into the logic of capital accumulation and that, as the mimetic exercise of the role-play showed, in some cases might even be directly at odds with the spread of corporate logic. Students were encouraged to engage with practices that would enter and intervene in the milieus currently being affected by such practices. In a capacity-building program however, the processes of subjectivation are not only directed toward those students in the training but toward the wider social networks to which they belong.

While a particular logic of transnational, market-driven science was taking hold, the practices engaged and displayed sought to make visible an alternate range of 'healing' practices, and engagements with the ecosystem. A sound system had been rented and over the course of the day, speeches, dances and musical acts took place, oscillating around the ecology of the community and its potential trajectories. This event was a place for presenting the projects and illustrating the impact that they

were having on the community. The proposition staged by the festival as such was to do away with the antagonistic binaries between 'traditional indigenous' practices and 'Western scientific' practices, and to instead find ways for them to co-exist. In the last chapter, I explored the manner in which aesthetic sensibilities cultivated via an arts and culture festival can serve to both challenge and reify the distribution of roles as they are encountered. Here the festival put on by the inhabitants of this indigenous community was entirely different in structure and intent to that of the *World Festival* previously discussed. However this double-edged potential to both challenge and reify roles remains.

Here there were encounters staged between two delineated collectives – delineated indeed in and through the encounter as a greeting ceremony to put on display what was being learned through the interactions with the program. Yet, as I have been arguing, multiple roles and trajectories are simultaneously cultivated and gestate within and through the series of encounters staged, wherein a movement between modes of knowing and belonging is being undertaken. In the context of the festival organized by the students, this problematic, concerning how 'traditional' practices were represented and altered within a changing social, environmental and political ecology are catalyzed. As Guattari points out, how a system of valorziation takes hold depends on how the presentation of different systems of valuation (such as those presented in the role-play) and different practices of engagement (such as those captured in the student videos) functions within the wider social ecology and communicative network. He writes:

> The system of heterogenetic valorization – which counterbalance
> capitalist homogenesis rather than passively contesting the ravages of the
> world market – have to put in place their own power formations which
> will affirm themselves within new relations of forces. Artistic
> assemblages, for example, will have to organize themselves so as not to
> be delivered, bound hand and foot, to a financial market itself in
> symbiosis with the drug market. The education market cannot remain
> absolutely dependant on the State market…. (Guattari, 1995, p. 124)

There is a lineage in thinking about the dynamics of role distribution in performance that shares many of the same principles and assumptions of contemporary 'capacity-building' approaches prominent, for instance, in participatory action research and collective management approaches previously

discussed. According to this logic, the more the gap between actor and spectator is effaced, the more empowering or emancipatory is the event. This is the philosophy underscoring Boal's theatre of the oppressed as a participatory practice for making visible concerns and desires, and rehearsing ways of implementing them. Writers like Boal (1985), and Bakhtin (1984) with his valorization of polyvocal events and the carnivalesque as a way of challenging social distributions of power, have touted festivals as a site for changing the social relations through visceral, bodily interactions that allow participants to bring their own experiences and desires into public space. This is the philosophy that has led to the popularization of 'participatory' and 'process-oriented' educational initiatives, with their increasing focus on 'creativity', and their concern with redistributions of roles in educational development.

In reflecting upon his own theatrical intervention concerning the environmental health situation in a refugee camp, theatre practitioner and performance ethnographer Dwight Conquorgood (1988) lamented that he was not able to address the healthcare providers, his task as delineated by the camp officials being to educate the refugees, whom he engaged in constructing the actual content and form of the piece. According to Conquorgood:

> The ideal is for the two cultures, refugees and relief workers, to enter into a productive and mutually invigorating dialog, with neither side dominating or winning out, but both replenishing one another. (Conquorgood, 1988, p. 202)

Referring to Baktin's theory of polyvocal events, Conquorgood argues that: "intercultural performance can enable this kind of dialogical exchange between Self and Other," (p. 202). While the logic of the festival repeats this movement toward 'cultural exchange', the situation is far more heterogeneous than Conquorgood's binary (and the previous binaries of oppressor/oppressed, colonizer/colonist, upon which much of earlier performance analysis has been grounded). In principle, the attention to sensibilities seen in the use of explicitly 'creative' and 'theatrical' media within the capacity-building program was designed to open the possibility for such multi-directional learning to take place, potentiating heterogeneous logics and responses. In the Tucayta community, the initiators of the Master's program no longer *appeared* to be driving the scene. One might think then, that the festival thrown here indicates a crowning moment in the success of the educational initiative

to redistribute power and foster the desired "values of respect and relevance" that the initiators of the program sought to attain.

However, here again I argue that the power of actual distributions becomes apparent in the manner in which the theatricality of an event itself draws on and responds to the existing power dynamics that orient it. While the festival was overtly staged *for* the International team, the team was itself on display as much as the community speakers and performers, though the manner in which each group was involved differed significantly in keeping with the dynamics of the relationship. We were seated on display at the centre of the presentation area, before the beating of the sun became too intense prompting a re-location to the sidelines for cover. One student reported to the program leader that the interventions of the program and the student projects they encouraged had themselves served to revive and validate "traditional" practices of healing and celebration which were finally now, after decades of denigration, being deemed worthy.

The statement points to the paradoxical relationship that persists despite the semblance of altered role distribution. The students, having been trained to encourage the development of 'local' knowledge amongst the villagers (in some cases, their own families and peers), no doubt fell into the trap that Taylor and many others fear, regarding the tendency of international programs to now systemically reward 'traditional' practice, with the result that practices become ossified into roles and images to be reproduced.

What the theatricality of this festival helped make apparent is the manner in which 'communities' are assembled (and re-assembled, and disassembled) by practices, and by the ways in which practices are stitched together, making different kinds of mental ecologies possible. While a large group gathered for the festivities, oriented to discuss the dynamics of health and the environment as affected by all, the prominent role was played by the organizing students and the community leaders, who were at the heart of bringing these ways of seeing to fruition. Those from the village who refused or could not participate in the festivities, sat across the field peering on.

Since the mid-twentieth century, it has become widely recognized amongst 'development' workers that transformations in practices are more likely to be adopted if they can be fused and adapted to and with 'familiar' 'cultural' practices (Epskamp, 2006). This is a tactic that has been known to interventionalists for a long time, and, as mentioned earlier, is what Bhaba has referred to as the 'colonial play' (Bhaba, 1994). Werry (2008) has noted that this play was at work during the early colonial periods in pushing through sanitation programs in Australia. Indeed, there, Werry argues that the liberal pluralistic agenda encouraged 'traditional' practices, but in a manner that subjected the population to a biopolitical project of sanitization according to the standards of the colonial government. The festival here, with its institutional inspiration, thus raises the spectre of such liberal biopolitical projects. In this case, these practices were presented and discussed by local leaders as needing to flourish 'alongside' the 'Western' models of health by which they have likewise been surrounded for some time.

With the play of role distribution and the split realities of student eco-health workers and practitioners of various sorts, the binary is exploded into a milieu with multiple possible 'development' trajectories. Here there are multiple discordant processes of subjectivation at work, although institutional demands continually return to stratify roles into compartments and hierarchies, as well as identity formations (degree-bearers, government-sanctioned health workers, empowered policy-makers, etc.). The tension that is played out in the festival, in its apparent portrayal at once of continuing 'traditional' practices, and at the same time of processes of industrialization, is this tension between various trajectories of subjectivation. The villagers here were both subject and teacher to the students, and made the festival a site for publicly reinforcing a range of practices of inquiry and intervention, *taking place* in different ways, and instituting new relations of power and distributions of role with respect to one another.

Most assessments of popular media and 'community voices' within development projects tend to argue from one end or the other of a binary perspective (Escobar, 2008): either it is argued that the hegemonic 'development engine' – exemplified by the World Bank and the globalizing capital interests it is taken to serve – is becoming ever more strategic in its appropriation of grassroots resistance

and the ways of knowing and articulating that the economically marginalized develop (Ferguson, 1994; De Mars, 2005); or on the other end, to the extent that there is growth in creative and participatory pedagogical strategies, this is taken as a sign of a flourishing and successful grassroots movement (Holst, 2002; Hardt and Negri, 2004). The tensions displayed here, however, suggest a more ambivalent situation. It suggests a situation in which heterogeneous practices of health and environmental stewardship are being actively attempted in a manner that at least calls into question the ability of the market to propose solutions. It also suggests a situation in which the pedagogical practices called upon to develop and promote these practical experiments are being actively explored in ways that alter the nature of social and professional relations locally and across the country and world, in what is sometimes discussed as situations of 'participative management'.

According to Lazzarato:

> Participative management is a technology of power, a technology for creating and controlling the "subjective processes." As it is no longer possible to confine subjectivity merely to tasks of execution, it becomes necessary for the subject's competence in the areas of management, communication, and creativity to be made compatible with the conditions of "production for production's sake." Thus the slogan "become subjects," far from eliminating the antagonism between hierarchy and cooperation, between autonomy and command, actually re-poses the antagonism at a higher level, because it both mobilizes and clashes with the very personality of the individual worker. (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 135)

Lazzarato's discussion is primarily oriented toward 'post-industrial' 'Western' societies. Nevertheless, the trend and suggestive tension that he identifies is readily discernable in the contemporary trends of 'capacity-building' initiated as part of 'international development'. The manner in which "traditional" practices are courted to inform and engage with dominant Western practices of "seeing and knowing" through "creative" combinations, become a part of the process. Even when this is initiated to challenge the dictum of "production for production's sake" in regions still newly colonized by industrial projects such as those of the extractive sectors expanding in Ecuador, the implications of such interventions in the production of subjectivity via a redistribution of what is seen and done by whom are significant. The students' organization of the festival extends the participatory creative project of subjectivization, cultivated through the use of various theatrical

and media techniques such as role-play and video. In so doing, the act of organizing the festival engages in what Lazzarato refers to as "collective practices of learning" whose function is ultimately "no longer a matter of finding different ways of composing or organizing already existing job functions, but of looking for new ones" (1996, p.135)

In the case of this kind of capacity-building, such functions extend to how approaches to ecological production are generated and altered. *If,* as earlier discussed, Escobar (1996) is correct in his assessment that contemporary 'postmodern' forms of capital function increasingly, not by removing land from populations, but rather by orienting how they will arrange their ecologies and treat their territory so as to be able to integrate into world markets, *then* invoking heterogeneous ecological rituals in theatrical displays as a tactic for intervening in the way relationships between territory, social interaction, and globalization are metamorphosized can have a range of results.

Whereas theatricality, as noted earlier, has often been shunned as ritualistic, consolidating set roles and role-distributions, what I have shown here is that, on the contrary, the repetition invoked can, at times, be utilized as a catalyst for intervening in social formations and producing subjectivities to navigate between different social and environmental ecologies. I have also argued, however, that the politics of novelty are themselves ambiguous with respect to the political implications of the alterations it suggest for the future of particular ecologies. If such projects are to avoid repeating the old dynamic of exporting and entraining the eco-logic of those claiming to know how best to care for the land and its people, attentiveness to the desires and processes actually driving such interventions is essential.

3.4 Conclusions

It should be clear that my intention here has not been to criticize attempts to disrupt the hegemony of capital-driven logics of exchange or systems of valuation through the generation of new trajectories for development. Rather, it has been to help articulate some of the trappings that popular, and often useful tactics, tend to fall into, so as, in the words of Guattari, "not to be delivered, bound hand and foot,

to a financial market itself …" (1995, p. 125). With the new model of 'capacity-building' and the use of theatricality in approaching and framing problems of "health" and "environment" ecologically, wherein diversity and heterogeneity are valorized, a series of such tensions have surfaced. These tensions, and indeed paradoxes, are what I have been attempting to elucidate.

I have argued in this chapter that, while once deemed a revolutionary practice of 'empowerment', the promotion of 'creativity' and 'participation' through the use of theatricality in education has far more complex socio-cultural implications. As Bhaba and Taussig have pointed out, mimesis has historically been deployed in colonial situations as a means of educating "the natives", even if it has also been deployed by the colonized to destabilize the system of rule. I showed that in the contemporary situation of international "capacity building", the threat remains of repeating colonial role distributions and stereotyping via the use of interventions like role-play, or the videotaping of health and environmental practices. However, I argued that theatricality, as invoked here, sought to make use of mimetic technologies as part of a process of 'becoming other' that actually draws attention to its own artifice, as a tactic intervening in the production of subjectivity.

The politics of theatricality, as I have argued throughout this chapter, is therefore not reducible to what systems of knowing are being mimetically repeated (whether in live form or through the production of mimetic objects). Rather, in this kind of pedagogical setting, what is crucial has to do with *how the relationships* between learners and teachers are either reinforced or altered. I argued that here the theatricality of interventions functioned to cultivate spokespersons able to navigate between roles, thereby altering the logic of role distribution. In the midst of rapidly changing national and global strategies concerning ecological politics and the development of processes of subjectivation for "participatory management" of ecosystems, the creativity encouraged in populations must be taken in light of how this creativity functions within wider social and political systems.

As Weber (2002) points out, theatricality becomes a way of approaching the dynamics of globalization whereby those who fall outside of dominant systems of exchange are positioned as consumers or spectators of the process. Following this approach, I argued that the theatricality of capacity-building interventions draws

practices and populations into networks of decision-making, in ways that often shape the very processes through which relationships within local ecologies will form. In this case, I argue that those who had not hitherto participated in the production of "global" systems of knowledge have a tendency to be positioned as "recipients" of new capacity-building models, as students of the system. This model affords a kind of social mobility even as it circumscribes how change is to take place.

Kershaw (1999; 2007) notes, theatricality is not only a *modus operandi* of neoliberal globalization, but also as means of shedding light on the dynamics at work, and thereby opening a space for new (and 'old') ways of organizing ecologies that are being dwarfed by the tendency to view "nature" and even human populations as sources of capital. While I agree with Weber and Kershaw to a large extent, my point is that this dynamic is not always straightforward. Practices do not always line up according to a capitalist/anti-capitalist binary, or a globalization/anti-globalization binary, even when their "messages" might seem to argue for one side of the equation.

It is important to take note, as I have argued in this chapter, of the fact that the interventions here were explicitly intended by their organizers toward putting into question the hegemony of market logic and to cultivating alternative value systems able to bolster other approaches to 'health' and 'environment'. I showed, however, that, despite the desire to empower multiple modes of articulating health and environmental practices, the persistence of networks of experts, funders, teachers and adjudicators, orients the manner in which events for displaying and reinforcing practices are actually played out. Thus, for instance, when practices are reiterated and put into dialogue with one another before a camera and disseminated across a network as well as before television-viewing audiences nationally and internationally, the pressure of anticipating who would be the ultimate viewers not only orients the kinds of dialogue staged but that would be articulated in the first place.

There are currently global movements toward valorizing certain kinds of practices and certain kinds of ecological rituals over others. Indigenous rituals, now that they are seen to be on the brink of 'disappearance', are more frequently

valorized by international agencies and recuperated in what Taylor (2003) has pointed out, often amounts to a "salvage" project. This is particularly the case with knowledge and rituals considered to be of particular ecological significance, such as, for instance, the harvest dance discussed here. The trouble with this is that the value seen in theatrical showmanship of 'traditional values' does not necessarily correspond with contemporary social and environmental ecological concerns, even amongst those for whom these are supposedly traditional. Moreover, the ecological sensibilities that are encoded by those who practice these 'traditional values' are not always consistent with the manner in which they are captured and fused within overarching health and environmental strategies, even at the level of sensibilities. When, for instance, birthing rituals are disseminated to Western medical facilities as a means of encouraging indigenous women to enter the mainstream medical system, one might ask what vision of health, social, or even environmental ecology this is serving. When a harvest ritual is used to show to teachers how empowered a village has become by a project, what does this really show?

Given the extent and stakes of neoliberal expansionism in countries like Ecuador; the stronghold of the logic of industrial development via agrochemical, pharmaceutical and extractive industries for example; and the burden of illness that they tend to carry; as well as the polarization in income levels that tend to be promoted with their expansion, experimentation with new modes of valorization and new modes of sociality that might cultivate and strengthen the capacity of populations to orient the ecologies to which they belong is surely worthwhile. In this regard, the program is no doubt an important contribution to movements in Latin America, and in Ecuador specifically, that are increasingly being recognized as leaders in anti-liberal reform.

If the politics of theatricality in the building of capacity to address problems 'ecologically' is, in part, oriented by how the pedagogical networks into which they intervene engage students to display their sensibilities, then the resonance of these interventions is clearly inextricably linked to national and international networks of environmental health, including government, national and international researchers, funders and so on. In the next chapter I therefore turn to an analysis of the dynamics at work in the use of theatricality in the making of a global ecological social

movement that must itself draw on "expert" knowledge and practices. There I will discuss how the politics of theatricality are oriented, and orient, political ecologies within a climate of capitalist industrial globalization.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STAGING OF GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL POLITICS:

Theatricality and the Making of Eco-Political Movements
After the 'World's Worst Industrial Disaster'

Theatre is not, by design, a policy-making tool; it is not through altering the theatricality of an intervention that the misuse of pesticides will cease, or that a factory will or will not be built in a particular way – at least, not directly. And yet, theatricality has been of interest to political theorists and political activists alike for about as long as history has been recorded. From Plato's renunciation of the mimetic arts as a destabilizing force in the *Republic*, to Aristotle's cathartic usages of theatre to quell unrest, to Bakhtin's potentially revolutionary usages of the theatrics of the carnivalesque, theatrics have resonated in very different ways throughout the history of political thought. In the twentieth and early twenty-first century, however, theorists such as Debord (1994) and more recently Kershaw (1999; 2007), McKenzie (2001), Weber (2002), Schechner (1992), Beller (2006), and Graeber (2005) have suggested that we now live in the "society of the spectacle", in which theatrics have become a dominant modality in the production of political subjectivity. Now, as ecological questions are becoming dominant and are beginning to sweep the political landscape, theatrics are increasingly becoming a means of intervening in ecological politics, and theatricality a means of intervening in the social dynamics at work in political ecologies. In this chapter I explicitly examine the politics of theatricality and the role that theatrics are playing in the making of 'eco-political' social movements following the 1984 Gas Tragedy in Bhopal, India, widely considered as the worst industrial disaster the world has seen.

On the night of December 3rd 1984, a valve in the Union Carbide pesticide factory sprung a leak, releasing 40 tons of toxic gas (composed mainly of methyl isocyanate) into the surrounding neighbourhoods. Estimates of mortality vary considerably, from 2,000 to 15,000 in the initial period and up to hundreds of

thousands since then. Considerable illness has also been linked to environmental exposures related to the factory and the gas leak. In the days, weeks, years and decades that followed, social movements formed locally, nationally and internationally, seeking redress. Within this process theatrics and theatricality were, and continue to be, extensively used as tactics. Here I ask how the theatricality of these tactics intervenes in the political ecology of the situation.

The question of 'what happened in Bhopal' and 'what *continues* to happen (or not happen)' there, is extremely political. Bogard has pointed out that the "Bhopal tragedy", already by 1989 had been the subject of thousands of pages of analysis from various critical perspectives, each of which push for a different language of description and different frame of interpretation (Bogard, 1989, p. 2 -3). Mukherjee, after interviewing experts, survivors, professionals and politicians in Bhopal, assessed that, "attempts are being made to put together parts of a jigsaw puzzle, but the picture that emerges is so smudged that it cannot appear real from any angle" (2004, p. 9). National and international scientists render the world sensible according to particular practices, particular systems of signs, and particular logics; the governmental policy-makers deploy others; the corporate publicists yet others; the NGOs still others; and the multitude of organized and singularized 'survivors' still others (Bogard, 1989; Fortun, 2001; Mukerjee, 2004; 2010; Scandrett et al, 2009).

The Bhopal tragedy clearly marks a grave failure of the techno-scientific processes of industrialization to integrate into the social and environmental ecology of the region in a positive manner. However, as many have pointed out, the problem is not strictly one of techno-scientific blunders but rather the manner in which social and political processes promote certain values to the exclusion of others, and the manner in which these values lead to decision with far reaching consequences (Bogard, 1989; Morehouse and Subrameniam, 1986; Fortun, 2001). A mark of eco-activist theatrics deployed in this situation is that they must traverse bodies of knowledge and systems of signification in order to transform what will be seen and felt to be important and what policies will take hold. As approached here, this is a question not simply of *what messages are broadcast*, and thus have a chance to capture the imagination and rage and/or sympathy of the public, but ultimately, of

what kinds of social networks and relationships are formed and, in the process, how these alter the terrain of ecological politics.

In his book *Theatre Ecologies*, Kershaw (2007) has pointed out that the theatricality of eco-activism as it occurs is riddled with paradoxes. Commenting on the motivation behind late twentieth century tactics, Kershaw writes:

> Ecoactivist protest in the final decades of the twentieth century, in common with most other kinds of protest, increasingly was shaped by overt performative tactics. Part of protest's purpose in turning to performance was, of course, to gain high-profile media space: resistant representations to raise general ecological awareness. But also there was for some eco-activists a more radical agenda, and one which was well aware of the contradictions involved in such dangerous dancing with the prime agents of cultural commodification – the press, TV, film and so on. (Kershaw, 2007, p. 255)

The paradoxes that remain, however, have to do for Kershaw with a dynamic by which, in raising "general ecological awareness", the actual aesthetics of theatricality at work tend to focus on human dramas, wherein "nature" acts as a backdrop for competing logics of "stewardship". Moreover, theatrics in presenting themselves for particular audiences, often run the risk of having the images they present become objects of consumption, occluding political force. Whereas this dynamic is pervasive in situations of the destruction of "nature", the political stakes are further complicated in a situation like Bhopal where it becomes a question of "environmental justice", in which victims are "the poor". Here questions of social, environmental and mental ecologies overlap.

In the late 1980s, Guattari argued:

> Wherever we turn there is the same nagging paradox: on the one hand, the continuous development of new techno-scientific means to potentially resolve the dominant ecological issues and reinstate socially useful activities on the surface of the planet, and, on the other hand, the inability of organized social forces and constituted subjective formations to take hold of these resources in order to make them work. (Guattari, 2000, p. 31)

For Guattari, what is required to address dominant ecological issues is a transmutation of social and mental ecologies, a transmutation concerning how systems of valorization function and how social organizations form to address questions. The tactics advocated by Guattari are those which I have been discussing

throughout this thesis, namely experiments of an ethico-aesthetic nature, that intervene by catalyzing new possible ways of approaching the problems at hand. The ethical and political questions raised with respect to the theatricality of interventions must therefore address the paradoxes that permeate attempts to enter and alter social and political ecologies characterized by social organizations that tend to endlessly reinforce existing systems of valorization, curbing redistribution.

Political ecologists have long since been aware of a multiplicity of logics in 'stewarding' the planet (Peet and Watts, 1996; Escobar, 1996, 2008; Latour, 2004; Harvey, 1996). As I argued in the last chapter, at stake is rarely 'simply' a case of scientific dispute. Rather, as Stengers (2010) puts it, political ecology is forged in circumstances:

> where the consequences of the meanings we create, the judgments we produce and to which we assign the status of 'fact', concerning what is secondary, must be addressed immediately, whether those consequences are intentional or unforeseen. (Stengers, 2010, p. 34-5)

Following her fieldwork in Bhopal, anthropologist and activist Kim Fortun writes of the "aesthetic challenge" concerning systems of valorization, and the need to navigate from within rather than finding totalizing, disaffected representations. "Being well versed *in* the world became much more important than having an intellectual hold *on* the world", she writes (Fortun, 2001, p. 54). Ecologies may be oriented by epistemology or policy. However, as Stengers, Guattari, and Fortun all variously argue, they are ultimately bound up with aesthetics concerning what will be visible, important or noteworthy. These aesthetic questions are, moreover, also ethical, concerning what relations will form around these meanings and judgments. Fortun's account is largely descriptive, providing ethnographic accounts of the various constituencies and analysis of the challenges and tensions faced in "enunciatory communities" articulating the stakes (p. 20).

The question I ask here, however, concerns how such "collective enunciation" is galvanized through the theatricality of events such as protest antics, street theatre, and political plays, that seek to catalyze mutations in the social, mental and environmental ecologies. In this respect, while the content of what particular theatrics invoke is relevant to directing the attention of particular audiences, it is

ultimately, as I have been arguing, the force that they play within the wider social ecologies that is key.

In the first section of this chapter, I focus on how activist theatrics or 'direct theatre' as it is called by Schechner (1992) stage relationships between scientific bodies, local survivors and activists, as well as local and international media in order to launch an ethical appeal with regard to how policies are made concerning the ecological future of a territory. Whereas performance theorists such as Schechner (1992) and Kershaw (1999) argue that such protest antics function by promoting reflexivity, I argue that this reflextivity is but a moment in what ought to be understood as a generative project of ethico-politics. Through an analysis of an event ironically titled "*A Benign Buffet*" I argue that the manner in which scientific knowledge is appropriated by those living around the abandoned factory puts on display their vulnerability in order to promote what Alaimo (2010) has called a "trans-corporeal ethic" amongst spectators that serves as an intervention into what practices and bodies will be taken to matter in the political ecology of the region.

In the second section, I draw on Agamben's critique of the rise of ecological concerns within political decisions in order to show how the theatricality of promoting a trans-corporeal ethic can have troubling political implications if it is premised simply on the cultivation of care for others. Here I examine how the tensions between the ethics of caring for the vulnerable and the politics of redistributing roles is staged in the political drama, *Bhopal*, written by Indo-Canadian playwright Rahul Varma (2005). The play, about a Canadian Doctor who tries to help those living around the factory, was produced in theatres in Canada and throughout India a decade and half after the disaster. Here I argue that the actual manifestation of theatrical events intercedes in the ethical domain of altering systems of valorization in a manner that also disturbs and/or re-inscribes who can make what visible to whom, and what kinds of political subjectivities and political formations are catalyzed in the process. How the catalyzing of such networks by theatrical events occurs depends on how they intervene in the social and political ecologies of the region.

In the third section, drawing on the analysis of Deleuze and Guattari, I argue for an approach to theatricality as a means of recoding and reorienting social ecologies,

galvanizing collective memories and redirecting material flows of capital and social organizations. Here I focus on an earlier production, *Killer Karbide*, a street-play produced by the Bhopal branch of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) immediately after the disaster. In contrast to Varma's play, *Killer Karbide* was produced by and for those living in Bhopal and surrounding areas, to address the nature of the corporate crime. I argue that the impact of the production lay in how, guided by a sense of the political stakes, it was able to catalyze a mutation at the level of social organization, altering the eco-logics directing the future of the region.

In the fourth section, I build on this argument by analyzing the role of theatrics as social ritual, consolidating and destabilizing power through the articulation of collective desires for change. Focusing on a series of activist protest theatrics featuring effigies of corporate icons and political figures, I argue that these events theatricize the hegemonic logic of authority that takes hold with the corporate managerial approach to directing the future of a territory. Drawing on Gil's analysis of the relationship between social ritual and power, I show how theatrics redistribute power by altering the ways in which bodies interact. However, I argue that the actual theatricality of the interventions deployed by various groups and at various times and places vary significantly from one another, thus presenting a range of trajectories each coloured by their own ethico-political sensibilities, and redirecting the distributions of power in different ways.

In the fifth and final section I revisit the role of theatrics in forging international relations and participating in shaping political ecologies. I analyze the role that the anti-globalization trickster duo the *Yes Men* have played in altering the ethico-aesthetic fabric of the movement and in dramatizing and transforming the politics of the issues that persist following the Gas Disaster. Within these antics I argue that particular modes of theatricality tend to instantiate particular systems of valorization that, at times, run up against local modes of theatricality. These modes of theatricality are not necessarily antithetical. Indeed, I argue that the aesthetics and ethics at work are formed through transnational and transcorporeal networks, giving rise to a particular approaches to ecological politics. Eco-logics and movements do not coalesce along national or ethnic lines, but rather around desires for change and tactics for its actualization. The array of theatrics thus form a "theatre ecology" that

is produced iteratively in response to changing social, political, environmental and cultural conditions. An understanding of the ethics permeating tactics of presentation and the politics of visibility there inscribed, will, I argue, help to disentangle the various logics and systems of valorization that cloud the controversies concerning what is seen and felt to be important in shaping the future ecologies of a region.

4.1   Science, Policy, Theatre: *A Benign Buffet*

Eco-activist theatrics tend to address environmental and social ecologies simultaneously, though in a variety of different ways. Here the legacy of scientific studies (and the lack there of) has been deeply political, with many of the questions of concern to those living in the region remaining unaddressed, and/or misconstrued according to survivors and their supporters (Morehouse and Subrameniam, 1986; Hanna, Sarangi and Morehouse, 2005; Mukherjee, 2010). For many, part of the horror of the event is that it could have and should have been avoided- and that the very existence of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) plant was itself a consequence of an attempt to build technical-scientific solutions to social disparity. UCC built the plant in 1969 to produce a pesticide using methyl isocyanate (MIC) as an intermediate and in 1979 added a facility to manufacture the MIC it needed for this production. This was part of the "Green Revolution" which sought to address problems of famine through increased use of agricultural chemicals (Varma and Varma, 2004; cf. Shiva, 1991).

By the early 1980s, demand for this toxic pesticide - as well as for its very toxic precursor, MIC - had fallen, making the plant less profitable. In the years leading up to the disaster UCC had been ignoring safe practices, overfilling its holding tanks beyond recommended levels, cutting down on required equipment maintenance, and even switching off safety systems to save money. UCC also failed to develop an emergency plan despite the location of the plant in a densely populated area (Eckerman, 2004). The multiple warnings and the attempts of many to take preventive measures went unheeded (Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, p. 9 – 21). Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the disaster UCC failed to inform authorities, and concealed the gas contents (Morehouse and Subramemiam, p. 22; Eckerman, 2004). Thiosulphate injections were denied to those who had incurred

exposure, (which could have allowed excretion of toxins, thereby reducing the health effects, and could have contributed evidence that the toxic impact was more than to the eyes and lungs); pregnant women were also denied tests that have would have helped them to decide whether to terminate pregnancies (Sarangi, 2008). The lack of access to information about the contents of the cloud, let alone information for medical personnel on how to treat affected individuals, severely compromised the health of the community (Eckerman, 2004). Thus from the very beginning those living in the regions, accompanied by those who had come from across the city, country and world to help, found themselves taking an activist stance to obtain information. The subsequent stoppage by the Indian Government of longitudinal studies to identify and monitor effects further exacerbated this situation (Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, p.126).

In the years following, reports from independent scientists and groups such as Greenpeace suggested active ongoing contamination of the soil and groundwater in the surrounding area. For instance, a report by Greenpeace (Labunska et al., 1999) documented the presence of "severe contamination with heavy metals and/or persistent organic pollutants" in the groundwater. It further suggested that areas affected by water contamination may have been increasing yearly as the factory continues to actively leak. For the past several decades, survivors had thus been campaigning for proper clean-up of the factory site and for compensation, appropriate medical care, and rehabilitation programs, not only for those affected by the gas leak, but also for those who are now being affected by water and soil contamination (Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, 2005; Scandrett et al, 2009; Mukherjee, 2010).

In an effort to have the environmental situation in the area around the factory addressed by governmental policy, an event staged in front of the factory less than a week before the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy, theatricized the relationships between mental, social, and environmental distributions at work in current policy-making approaches. The event staged by two survivors' organizations and one solidarity organization - Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh; Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha; and the Bhopal Group for Information and Action - was called, ironically, *A Benign Buffet*.

Invitations had been sent to members of the state cabinet as well as to the Director of the Defence Research Development Establishment and the Director of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, who had certified Union Carbide's chemical wastes to be orally ingestible. The menu of the *Benign Buffet* parodied that of a high society dinner, with which these officials would presumably have been familiar, but dramatized the state of the soil and water that survivors consumed regularly. The invitation promised delicacies prepared "with extracts from Union Carbide's Factory". The menu on the invitations read:

> Semi-processed Pesticides on Watercress
> Naphithol Tar Fondue, Reactor Residue Quiche
> Sevin Tar Soufflé
> Lime Sludge Mousse,
> all served with a complimentary B'eau Pal Water Cocktail.

Invited officials were conspicuously absent at the banquet. Nevertheless, the 'feast' was served to their empty places before the watchful gaze of the media. On the table sat a large paper-machée crow, a symbol of deceit harkening back to the Hindi proverb: "Jhoot bole kaua kaate" (crow bites liars) invoked as a part of a campaign to "nail the state government's lies" (Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, 2009).

The event here was a classic case of what Richard Schechner (1992) has called "direct theatre": an event in which "large public spaces are transformed into theatres where collective reflexivity is performed, fecund and spectacular excesses displayed" (477). The "reflexivity" to which Schechner refers here is manifest in the act of exposing the logic that is staged in the event as commentary and intervention into the way the social and political arrangements orient the future of the territory. This "reflexivity", as an element of what I am calling here 'theatricality', however, is not simply a function of mirroring the gross negligence or inadequacies of governmental policies. Its affective force as a theatrical intervention, rather, rests in how it catalyzes new forms of organization. As explained by several activists interviewed in December of 2009 and January 2010, a major impetus and measure of success for such events was their capacity to renew involvement and commitment of those living in the region to pursuing answers and solutions to their grievances, as well as to act as a means of reaching out to the

younger generation (unpublished interviews, translated by Sanjay Verma and Sadna Singh).

Here the event sought to expose the "State government's lies" concerning the quality of the soil and water. More generally, however, it sought to expose the logic of decision-making instantiated by the declaration and policies of the government concerning the legacy of the factory and the tragedies that it had, and continued, to spur. The reflexive function of theatricality was therefore deployed to shed light on the social assemblages that orient current policy-making decisions. While the 'object' of the intervention here was the governmental policies concerning both research and interventions with respect to soil and water quality around the factory, the force of the event rested on the theatricality of both mimicking and reversing roles regarding who engages in these circumstances, and how. As Kershaw (1999) points out:

> Contemporary protest in a mediatised world almost always assumes an audience, onlookers for whom the events are 'played out'. Contemporary protest therefore is always other-directed, and therefore often reflexively aware of the symbolic potential of its own, sometimes all too real, action. It follows that in the analysis of protest events we should always be alert to the particular ways in which they are reflexively articulated to their socio-political context. (Kershaw, 1999, p. 98)

There is little question that the event was staged as a way of presenting alternative images of the situation to be "ingested" by the roving eyes of cameras. How such an intervention engages and deconstructs hierarchies, however, is more complex. As theorists and activists know well, the pandering to cameras and usage of the mainstream media apparatus brings its own set of challenges and contradictions, as performers struggle to make their images bear the force and significance intended, and the media, for its part, re-spins the story to fit its own mandates (Graeber, 2005; Schechner, 1992; Kershaw, 1999; 2007). By presenting bodies as images before the gaze of the camera, images not only become objects of spectatorial consumption (Phelan, 1993), there is also a pervasive pressure to articulate stakes in a manner and according to the terms of the spectator (Taylor, 2003; Graeber, 2005; Schechner, 1992). The "other-directed" nature of such protests means that an enormous amount of pressure is placed on actors and activists to articulate themselves in terms that will be covered by the media and be favourably

received by a variety of spectators. This, in turn, often alters the articulation and spread of the desire for change itself.

As I argued in the previous chapter, hierarchies persist in how systems of knowledge and power direct whose terms and perspectives will be taken as valid (for instance in this case, first-hand experience versus particular techniques of scientific testing that include a pre-selection of what tests to conduct and what factors to include in a study). The event here staged an iterative relationship between scientific knowledge, political analysis, and the singular experiences of survivors to enact an appeal to spectators to reassess the ethics of risk sanctioned in the political process. The "reflexive" function of the event must be situated as part of campaigns to make possible different trajectories for development and different social organizations. Here the intervention was oriented toward decoupling the scientific knowledge machine from a corporate-governance agenda and using it to pursue the desires of those living in the region. Weeks before the 25th anniversary of the Gas Tragedy, with the gaze of the nation and world turning once again to Bhopal, the Minister of Environment had enraged survivors by publicly declaring the soil and water around the factory to be safe and fit for human consumption despite the evidence (Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachir Sangh et al., 2009).

In contradiction to the government statement, a report released the day after the event by the Centre for Science and Environment (with whom the survivors organizations had been in communication) reported the presence of "chlorinated benzene compounds, organochlorine and carbamate pesticides, and heavy metals – toxic chemicals that were either used as ingredients or were in the wastes generated or were the products of the plant", and concluded that their tests "prove that the plant site is highly contaminated and has contaminated the groundwater of the surrounding areas" (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 15). At the press conference, attended by members of the local, national and international media, as well as many filmmakers, activists and researchers including myself, a spokesperson for the Centre for Science and Environment, Sunita Narayan, noted the instrumental role of activists in insisting that rigorous scientific studies be conducted on water and soil quality. Moreover, she compared the situation of Union Carbide in Bhopal, to that of Texaco/Chevron in the Amazon (discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis),

suggesting that the relationship between the Center for Science and Environment might be approached in a similar way (and with similar complexities) to the relationships between scientific experts and local residents previously discussed.

The staging of the *Benign Buffet* clearly suggests that this dispute is not simply a techno-scientific dispute concerning the chemical composition of the soil and water in the region, but is rather symptomatic of the manner in which social assemblages function and the manner in which these assemblages encode political stakes. 'Liberation ecologists' Peet and Watt have discussed such tensions of the sort presented in the *Benign Buffet* in terms of differences in the 'environmental imaginaries' at work. "The environmental imaginary," write Peets and Watts, "emerges as a site of primary contestation: critical social movements have at their core environmental imaginaries at odds with hegemonic conceptions" (1996, p. 263).

This concept of environmental imaginaries, grounded in particular situations, and the 'situated knowledge' (as it was dubbed by Haraway, 1988) of those who produce them, points to the discordances at work. As Gilbert (2008) points out, the major achievement of social movements, however, is, of course, not in the realm of the 'imaginary' as such, but rather in the manner in which a reconfiguration of what is at stake takes hold. I have been arguing over the course of these chapters that this occurs not just as a battle over representations of the state of the environment, but rather through active intervention into how these images are constructed and how they interrelate with their social and political contexts as part of wider assemblages of interventions and activities.

In this case, the controversy plays out as a classic battle between the logic of "economic development" as framed by the state and industry, and that of social, environmental, health, and economic concerns of those living in the region. As Escobar puts it:

> Capital's threatening of its own conditions of production elicits manifold and contradictory attempts at restructuring those conditions in order to reduce costs or defend profits. Conversely, social struggles pit the poor against the rich as both cultural and economic actors; there is an 'environmentalism of the poor' (Guha, 1994; Martinez-Alier, 1992) which is a type of class struggle and, at the same time, a cultural

struggle, to the extent that the poor try to defend their natural environments from material and cultural reconversion by the market. (Escobar, 1996, p. 56)

In the wake of a disaster of the magnitude of the Bhopal Gas Leak, and the claims of ongoing water contamination, the question becomes one of how the "restructuring of conditions" will take place.   The imagery projected to local, national and international spectators became a cultural battleground upon which the currents extend beyond the reach of the actual flows of water and chemicals in question, appealing to publics and actors across the planet. As part of this 'cultural' struggle, theatrical interventions have tended to function through galvanizing attention in ways that shift the stakes of the debate and put pressure on policy-makers, inserting voices and sensibilities, repeatedly marginalized, into the public arena, largely by way of 'direct theatre'.

As activist and long-time support worker Satinath Sarangi points out, a major force of the movement is its capacity to ensure that the "continuing disaster" receives attention (Sarangi, as quoted in Mukherjee, 2010, p.100). The actual movement – its gestures, its events, its acts – directs the kind of attention the tragedy will receive, and the framing of the questions and problems that remain. It is in this respect that the theatricality of the gestures and events take centre stage. The question that permeates such events is how the theatrical acts of those who have relatively little social standing or power can manage to make a difference.

Alaimo (2010) has argued that the performing body exerts an affective force by directing attention to the vulnerability of the material body, and in so doing, "extends the parameters of the political domain by seeking an ethical recognition of vulnerable, interdependent, interwoven, human and non-human flesh." (p. 15). As Alaimo puts it:

> Humans are vulnerable because they are not in fact ''human'' in some transcendent, contained sense, but are flesh, substance, matter; we are permeable and in fact, require the continual input of other forms of matter – air, water, food. (p.24)

The 'servers' of the *Benign Buffet* events were primarily women survivors of the 1984 Gas Leak, still living in the area surrounding the now abandoned factory. What they placed on display was the vulnerability, not of external surfaces and skin,

but rather of internal fluids, and the continuity between environmental flows of groundwater, chemicals flowing from the factory, and the corporeal flows of fluids within the human body.

From this perspective the women here can be seen to enact an appeal to the absent policy-makers through a display of their own traditional role as cooks who regularly must serve the fruits of the factory to their families, drawing water from wells full of whatever run-off the factory provides, and who, this time, seek to extend their hospitality to the absent officials. The politics that issues from the performance of vulnerability is a politics that hinges on the ethics of engagement, whereby to act ethically requires a change in political positions and policy regarding the ecological future of a territory.

As Alaimo points out, there is an enormous amount of courage and tenacity involved in presenting ones vulnerability before the public gaze (p.26). In this case, I would go further to point out that such display of vulnerability is edged on by militancy, that could be described here as a vulnerable militancy, or a militant vulnerability that these women cultivated over the decades in response to the gas leak. Up until the night of the gas leak, women living in the areas surrounding the factory tended to stay at home and take on primarily domestic responsibilities. A large percentage of the families living in the region are Muslim and the majority of Muslim women in these neighbourhoods at the time would leave the house only under the cover of a Burka. After the gas leak, however, priorities began to change, and typically with the permission of their families, women began to take leadership roles in social organizing. The modesty of the Burka for many no longer seemed practical and women began to take a militant stance in the public sphere, insisting on their rights and the rights of their families to health, clean water and livelihood. In the years that followed, women would form the majority of most of the active survivors organizations oriented toward raising public awareness and putting pressure on the government to respond to the needs of those affected by the gas leak and by the ongoing situation of site contamination (Suketu Mehta in Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, p. 211; Mukherjee, 2010). One of the groups, forming Chingari Trust, had taken on and popularized the slogan "we are flames not flowers"

to indicate their commitment to their fight despite their semblance of vulnerability (Rashida Bee in Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, p.117).

The challenge that events like the *Benign Buffet* thus pose to politics is the challenge of politically making space for the life that has been "vulnerable", but whose appeal will not allow for diminishment of the status of these lives as less than political, to be managed by those supposedly more qualified, who have nevertheless repeatedly neglected their demands and desires.

4.2 *Bhopal* and the Ethico-Politics of Theatricality

While in the *Benign Buffet* it was the poor women survivors who were on the frontlines before the cameras, an entire network of political relations, scientific and political concepts, and social and political analysis was implicit in their act. As I argued in the previous chapter, those who have control over the manner in which an event is archived and passed down, not only shape its reception, they often orient the manner in which an event transpires in the first place. Those who need to reach an audience in order to make a political intervention, or attract funds for their movement, or simply be effective in altering the sensibilities of those they seek to reach, often need to alter their movements accordingly.

As multiple theorists remind us (see McMaster, 2007, or Phelan, 1993, for example), placing the bodies of the vulnerable on public display, in itself, does little to alter the political dynamics and can on the contrary often be quite detrimental to those displayed. For instance, at the height of the colonial era Native Americans were frequently toured around Europe as a 'curio'. Their increased visibility, far from galvanizing political power, was staged to bolster and legitimize a series of myths concerning the noble savage, amongst others (McMaster, 2007). And as Peggy Phelan (1993) pointed out in the early nineteen-nineties, if corporeal visibility in the media were the only criterion for the assent to power, scantily clad white women would be ruling the country. But of course, scantily clad white women can scarcely be said to have been ruling American politics in the 1980s and '90s, just as ailing brown children can scarcely be said to be ruling global political agendas of the early twenty-first century, despite the increasing prevalence of their images on the

world scene. Images of ailing, famished and disfigured children as well as poor desperate women are now ubiquitous on the televisions of the world. But the role that is played by the circulation of these images in altering the balance of power or the manner in which global or local politics takes place is hardly straightforward. The question then becomes one of how and when rendering bodies visible before a media gaze can galvanize a change in social dynamics and instigate the formation of effective social movements.

If, as Alaimo (2010) has argued, the display of the vulnerability of bodies functions by way of an ethical appeal that seizes political space precisely by focusing on the precariousness and inter-corporeality of life, how this display of vulnerability might give rise to a new politic remains somewhat obscure. Are the vulnerable, whether the vulnerable ecosystem or the vulnerable poor, simply bodies to be cared for by those with more social and political clout? This is clearly not Alaimo's point. And yet, it is this very question that now haunts global ecological debates, as images of vulnerability are increasingly brought to the public.

Bhopal, a play written by Montreal-based Indo-Canadian playwright Rahul Varma (2005), stages the ethical and political questions that arise when professionals manipulate the image (and bodies) of those living around the Factory, even if for the sake of improving material conditions. The play's protagonist is a Canadian doctor and researcher investigating health effects of the factory in those living in the area. At one point she wants to take some of her patients back to Canada with her to illustrate to the world the effects of water contamination on peoples' lives. She is told by the government minister in the play: "The children of my country are not your showpieces." – i.e. should not be used to illustrate the importance or her own research agenda – to which she responds: "Nor should they be the victims of Carbide's poison". The invocation of a poor mother who has lost a badly disfigured child goes a long way in affecting public opinion, illustrating a particular argument concerning causal relationships between health and environmental conditions. However, as Agamben (1995) has pointed out, this kind of ethical appeal threatens to occlude the political stakes of the matter.

Agamben argues that the act of showcasing the abject misery of disenfranchised populations – the act of which Varma's doctor is accused – perpetuates a situation that:

> ... can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, [humanitarians] maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. (Agamben, 1995, p.133)

In this case, the Canadian doctor is staged as the Western humanitarian at odds with the Indian State, whose leaders are themselves in conversation with Canadian diplomats as well as Indian and International CEOs, with the fate of those living around the abandoned factory left to the negotiations amongst this global network of professionals. The ethical appeal to care for the vulnerable would seem then to be disconnected from attempts to alter the dynamics between players in co-creating an ecology. Here Varma is of course commenting on the ethical and political dynamics that frame what research gets done and how, and the many questions that arise, particularly in cases where the specialists in question are foreign to the country, and are associated by some with the baggage of paternalistic colonialism.

We should take note, however, that in staging the predicament as a kind of debate between ways of approaching the ethics and politics of intervention, the play itself is implicated in the dilemma staged. Not surprisingly, perhaps, when the play was staged in Bhopal it was directed by one of the country's more famous directors, Habib Tanvar, a resident of Bhopal and former student of Brecht (famous for cultivating the 'alienation effect' as a process of encouraging active spectatorship through the theatricality of his plays and the manner in which they make their own theatrical apparatus apparent). The cultivation of what Davis (2003) has called a 'political affect' here rests on the recognition of the discordance between that which is being staged and the present social reality of the spectator. Through recognition of this discordance, the spectator becomes an active critic of the action that unfolds. According to Davis, theatricality cultivates a kind of political affect of viewing that occurs when the spectator, realizing that he or she is watching a show, is called upon to be conscious of his or her own role as spectator of the scene and to thereby engage in political critique (p. 153). This, Davis argues, is analogous to a political situation, and cultivates a form of political subjectivity as spectators are called upon

to pass judgment on the scene – and thereby to be critics of sorts, asking whether they agree with the positions and framings of the situation offered.

The dilemma played out in the dramatic structure of Varma's play is an example of what Erickson has put forth as the crux of political theatre, namely the staging of dialogic predicaments (Erickson, 2003), discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. In Varma's play, a confrontation is staged between ethical codes as instantiated through two intersecting social assemblages. This conflict is re-articulated by particular characters playing roles within the social assemblages. There is the ethic of what we might call the corporate-state machine, with its assemblage of governmental officials, foreign diplomats and national and international CEOs. This is the ethic of economic development as the engine of social development, wherein the success of the capital enterprise is believed to translate into the success of those living in poverty. In opposition is the ethic of the foreign researcher and doctor, who attempts to draw the experience and image of the poor to the attention of spectators so as to galvanize public support in order to care for the biophysical needs of the poor. If the politics of theatricality simply hinged on how a piece reflects and makes visible the dynamics of a situation, then it would seem that the spectator (and the piece itself) would always be placed *outside* the political ecology on which it comments. This, however, is not the case.

In my view, theatricality of that sort would rather, fall into the trap identified by Kershaw, of objectifying that which was put on display, making the objects of the spectacle vulnerable to the gaze and manipulation of the audiences for whom it is staged. The bodies and suffering of others form the backdrop against which spectators can play out their own politics. Theatricality of this nature, in other words, removes the theatrical event (and those whom it gathers) from its own wider social, political and theatrical ecology. If, rather, what is at stake in eco-sensitive theatrics, is, as Alaimo has suggested, a (trans-corporeal) ethic that might alter the terrain of politics, then to the extent that the theatricality of the production promotes a political affect of *standing outside* the drama (so as to presumably gain a perspective from which to consolidate a position and act), the theatrical event would seem to be counter-productive to cultivating a "new" ecological terrain for politics.

It is, I am arguing, possible to approach the theatricality of this production as entering a social and political ecology. It is possible to read in Varma's play not only the vulnerability of that which is placed on display, but rather as a vulnerable militancy, that offers a trajectory for the spectator to follow. The ending of Varma's play points to the development of a survivors movement that cuts across religious and class lines. Indeed, as the existence of the play itself suggests, the movement and the instantiation of its practices of reaching out to audiences and supporters to help bring about change in social and environmental ecologies cuts across geographic markers as well. It is, however, at this point that the Doctor's dilemma becomes self-reflexive of the performance itself. Varma gestures toward a grassroots local movement, but his plays are performed largely for middle class audiences, whether in Bhopal, Delhi, or in Varma's home in Montreal, Canada, thereby growing public awareness within these populations.

Middle class audiences have indeed been important players in the creation of national and international social movements potentially capable of confronting multinational industry. The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal has active membership throughout Western Europe and North America and has been instrumental in putting pressure on Dow (as purchasers of Union Carbide) to take responsibility for the damages in Bhopal and exposing their ongoing "greewashing" campaigns until they do (Boydani in Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, p. 226-227; Bhopal.net). This network of activists tends to draw heavily on the arts for both raising public awareness and for gathering funds to keep the grassroots efforts of activists in Bhopal supported. Varma's play, however, confronts the poignant asymmetries that persist within social movements, particularly at the level of cultivating ethical sensibilities through the use of aesthetic modalities that pass through the ways of seeing and knowing of recognized "experts" and the network of professional and middleclass supporters that constitute much of the play's audiences. Varma's play stages the debate largely as a question of social politics. Here it is, however, a social politics heavily laden with the ecological problematic that hang over the contemporary debates concerning the legacy of Bhopal. The illness and death of the poor, in his play, are prefigured by the deaths of animals surrounding the factory. Moreover, even the middle classes are affected by the disaster: an environmental disaster may affect classes differently, however it does not do so in a

clean or absolute manner. It is in staging the convergence of the social, the political and the environmental, that the play stimulates debates of an ecological order, opening the very question of paternalism in ecological care and demanding a more political response.

In the final scene of Varma's play, the girlfriend of an Indian Executive Officer of the pesticide plant, having just survived the Gas Leak, lost her "illegitimate" child and rendered blind, decides to join the poor women who have begun a movement in protest, shifting her alliances as it were, and becoming part of a new emerging collectivity. Staged is the development of a movement, wherein mobilization occurs through the proposition of new trajectories for development across time and space, and across ethnic, national, and class lines. It is in this sense then that we can see in Varma's play a movement from vulnerability to militancy, or to a vulnerable militancy as mentioned above, whereby, the vulnerability of bodies in ecological crisis is staged as a militant appeal to alter the political terrain in the manner described by Alaimo (2010). This is a vulnerable militancy that Varma, as a playwright writing over a decade after the disaster had occurred, would already have known to be manifest in the streets of Bhopal, where survivors had regularly taken to the streets to stage their grievances, often on pain of arrest and police violence.

However, the paradox that remains, I argue, cuts to the heart of the double-bind concerning how theatricality intervenes in political ecology. This is the dilemma of asymmetrical appropriation of images, words and movements, for the sake of building a movement and of actualizing change. The question is, to what extent the theatrical interventions undertaken propagate rather than transform the social ecology. To the extent that the women performing in the *Benign Buffet* were only enacting the roles that they had been instructed to perform by well-meaning scientists and professionally-educated activists, the critique levied against the Canadian doctor by the character of the politician in Varma's *Bhopal* might be equally used to weigh the gestures of survivor activists: the women would become themselves the showpieces of another's agenda.

This pervasive pressure to build and recode social and environmental ecologies by way of public appeals to various local and global audiences points to a persistent tension. As I argued in the previous two chapters, the theatricality of globalization

itself tends to inscribe particular distributions of actor/spectator relationships and therefore often frames and circumscribes the force of interventions. Thus, as Weber (2002) suggests, while globalization tends to either appropriate within its logic (as media spectacle or cultural commodity, for example), or to situate those that do not participate in global capital exchange as passive spectators, or in this case, as recipients (for instance here of the 'goods' of industrial development, and later of charity), or as objects of spectatorial consumption, the challenge is to enter a territory that is being overtaken by this logic and to take place differently, as force.

4.3 Theatricality and the Politics of De/territorialisation

India, of course, has a long history of negotiating external forces of a colonial, imperial and neo-liberal variety that has marked the manner in which cultures of political interventions have developed. The formation of the Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA) played a particular role in cultivating political sensibilities and has had a strong influence on the development of political theatre throughout the country. Founded in 1942 alongside direct action tactics oriented toward Independence, according to former Bhopali IPTA members, popular theatre was nevertheless associated with the Communist Party of India and tended to stage street plays with a strong focus on class politics and social justice, sharing in an aesthetic which was at once distinct to the folk traditions of India while sharing in the growth of the people's theatre movements that were at that time happening around the world. The Bhopal branch of IPTA has a much shorter history. According to interviews with two founding members of the Bhopal branch, their group was founded, as it happens, in 1984 – only a short while before the Gas Leak ravaged the city, affecting many of the members of the small theatre collective. The group's inaugural production was thus, not surprisingly, a street play called *Killer Karbide* that toured the region for years constituting the single most sustained theatrical project launched by those living in Bhopal.

The lack of documentation of the performance, or even of the script used, makes a close reading of *Killer Karbide* impossible. Nevertheless, the general strategy of codifying and representing the contemporary logic of capital can be teased from the title, as well as from the fragmented memories of the actors involved. The play, as

recalled by its members, staged a commentary on the relationships between capital logic and the destiny of those living around the factory, their lives destroyed and families ripped apart after thousands were killed by what was and continues to be perceived as the criminal negligence of UCC and its CEOs whose main concern was generating profit. The aesthetic at work here departs substantially from that of Varma's much later *Bhopal*. *Killer Karbide* would seem to have nothing of the ethical questioning that is staged in *Bhopal*. Rather, this was 'agit-prop', popular theatre, staged in the streets by amateur actors, and ending in a song to retain the attention of onlookers and mobilize a response to the dire state of affairs.

In understanding the ethico-political implications of this piece, it is crucial to note that the play was thrown together quickly following the Gas Tragedy, and that its presentation was part of a popular outcry for justice and for answers, early on, before any organized movements existed. Early presentations were staged in front of the factory grounds, and at the end of the performance, when actors scaled the flagpole they were promptly arrested. In the months and years that followed, this play toured to small nearby towns, playing on streets, town centres and areas not typically frequented by the high-society art-world, for crowds that were not necessarily accustomed to theatrical presentations at all.

Thus, while the content of *Killer Karbide* offered a way of making sense of the recent events, as an intervention the play was itself part of a process for building a movement in accordance with a desire for change, that this mode of sense-making edged on. It became a way of coding the socius, akin to what Deleuze and Guattari have called a "territorial machine" (1983, p.141), producing and disseminating collective memories that will themselves serve to orient the future of a movement.

It is the theatricality of the play as territorial machine, fostering and coding memories, that I am arguing allows it to 'take place' as an act of ideological warfare. It carries and catalyzes memories of a place. But it also deterritorializes, repeating the dynamics of the horrible night and the events leading up to it *out of time and out of place*, as a means of generating another trajectory. In this much, Varma's *Bhopal* functions in a similar manner, even if the theatrical aesthetic, and the distribution of spectators and actors it gathers, are drastically different. *Killer Karbide* was born out of the immediacy of the disaster, the anger and sorrow of those living, as well as

the ongoing efforts by some of those involved in the street play to fight against imperialism. In the years following the gas leak and the initial performance of the play, survivors groups would begin to formalize around different tactics and strategies. However, at the time when the play was launched, the movement still functioned in a relatively unorganized, informal, yet more or less united manner. As explained by a poet and activist who had been involved in the staging of the play, the piece attempted to connect what had happened to the ongoing dynamics of American Imperialism (unpublished interview, translated by Sanjay Verma).

In their narratives, both *Killer Karbide* and *Bhopal* implicate the logic of capital that replaced concern for the environmental flows and the trans-corporeal relations between inhabitants of the region and the water and air breathed, with a concern for capital accumulation and profit. However, their focuses and their aesthetic differed, as did their target audience. In the case of *Killer Karbide*, the narrative focuses on the environmental mainly by implication: it was, of course, by gas leaking into the air that the corporate murder took place. The ecological concern became a question of what kind of logic will take hold of the socius. In the case of *Bhopal*, the ecological extended more explicitly to the relationship between the social and the environmental logics, with the social and political questions surrounding biophysical and biomedical categorisations and research taking the spotlight. What is thus staged in each of these pieces is a way of coding the political ecology of the region. However, each piece also seeks to intervene in this logic at the level of social organization, concerning how social groupings are catalyzed and systems of valuation promoted. Thus it is not only a matter of coding territorial flows to organize collective memories and social organizations locally; it is also a tactic for decoding the capitalist logic that has taken hold.

This process of recoding social memories, desires and concerns, ironically but perhaps necessarily in this case, passes through the logic of monetary exchange, as a system for redistributing roles. In an interview I conducted in early 2010, one of the IPTA actors told a tale of performing their play *Killer Karbide* one evening in a town not far from Bhopal. After the play, as was their practice, they would lay out a white bed-sheet on which to collect donations that would then be distributed amongst survivors. One night a man stopped to watch the play on the way home

from the bar. His story is illustrative of the combined act of fundraising and movement building in which the piece was engaged. After the play he donated a hundred rupees – what must have been the man's entire earnings for the day. The actor asked the man if he was drunk, that he gave so much when they were only asking for one or two rupees. The man responded that he was not giving so much because he was drunk, but rather because it might help his children somewhere in some way as it might help change the system. That was the reason he was donating so much.

For the actor, the donations and the conversations had in the process of collecting donations become an indicator of audience response. It became a small gesture of engaging with and contributing to the formation of a collective movement, a joining of forces – if only temporarily – with the imagined future of those who were made victim to corporate globalization and the havoc wreaked on social and environmental ecologies. What the drive toward fundraising and toward the creation of transnational social movements (of which fundraising is always a part) makes evident is the extent to which the deterritorialized nature of the socius also needs to permeate these 'counter' movements. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> Capitalism is in fact born of the encounter between two sorts of flows: the decoded flows of production in the form of money-capital, and the decoded flows of labour in the form of the "free worker". Hence, unlike previous social machines, the capitalist machine is incapable of providing a code that will apply to the whole of the social field. By substituting money for the very notion of a code, it has created an axiomatic of abstract quantities that keeps moving further and further in the direction of the deterritorialization of the socius. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 33)

The reflexive function of theatricality here occurs through the repetition of collective memories and galvanizing of collective desires for social and political change, but also by way of orienting the flow of capital and the logic according to which it flows. The *Killer Karbide* play itself codes the situation as a failure of the logic of capital, whereby the most immediate response becomes one of a re-orientation of capital in order to redress the situation.

There is, of course, an irony, even if an unavoidable one, in the call to charity in response to capital failure, wherein the 'solution' becomes an appeal to the private

desires of individuals to 'support' the vulnerable, even it *they* also identify with the vulnerable. What is worth noticing, however, is how this appeal functions with respect to an ethical appeal to alter politics. These theatrical events themselves cannot be extricated from the double flows of capital as well as the processes of local and global governance into which they intervene. Both plays here work by way of insertion into the collective public consciousness, in so doing altering the organization of a community – or even, serving to produce collective sensibilities and catalyze collective action through a reorganization of codes. They thus work to explicitly break the codes that had previously organized the socius. By extension, this means intervening in the manner in which environmental ecologies are approached. It means introducing trajectories for modes of social organization that can be extricated from the paternalism and de-politicized notion of ecology inherent in the corporate-governmental alliance that currently threatens to occlude questions of the distribution of power as well as the desires of those living in the affected territory.

4.4   Taking to the Streets: Theatrical rituals and the managerial apparatus

While those involved with IPTA had pre-existing political sensibilities (as evidenced by their prior commitment to an avowedly political theatre tradition), as explained by other activist organizers, the majority of survivors would develop their sense of national and international politics only through their attempts to have their needs addressed and their demands respected (Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, 2005; unpublished interview with Jabbar, translated by Sanjay Verma).

Events like the *Benign Buffet* and the earlier *Killer Karbide* leave little doubt that those affected by the Gas Tragedy and ongoing situation of water contamination are, and have for some time, been actively circulating their grievances and desires so as to gain the attention of the public and galvanize a social movement. The trickier question concerns how such interventions alter the lines of social mobility. Gil has pointed out that in a social democracy, social power and political power are intertwined. The power to orient political arrangement hinges on the social organization of bodies, where 'power over' and 'power to' are supposed to converge (Gil, 1998, p.31).

I have already begun to show some of the tensions that permeate the framing of ecological problems in the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Leak, and the complexities of the relationships between this 'power over' and 'power to', wherein the appeal to social forces passes through uneven relations in order to sway those who have the power over the territory. I have been arguing that this relationship is what is being staged and challenged by the theatricality of a range of interventions launched by artists and activists. Following Gil, it becomes possible to view these interventions as a struggle for authority, which Gil defines as the ability to *author* power (p. 32).

This 'authoring of power' has taken many forms. According to Gil, traditionally it is held in place by rituals according to which an obedience contract is played out. Obedience in this sense, however, is a 'sham' because, in actuality, it rests on force, but dresses itself in signs and symbolic rituals: "It is embedded in the direct relation of body to body, force to force, which speaks immediately of obedience" (p. 34). According to Gil, power tends to be stabilized by a series of rituals that recognize it as such (p. 34). As mentioned in the previous chapters, theatricality itself has often been accused of being complicit in stabilizing relations of identity and role distribution because of its tendency to repeat and reinforce roles in such ritualistic practices.

There are, of course, rituals that hold power in place. However, I have been arguing that the theatricality of activist interventions is aimed at destabilizing these. In the context of street theatrics I am arguing that these function by actively and visibly challenging obedience to these logics and the norms and laws that hold them in place, in a manner that courts others to do the same. In this way, such theatrics act as 'counter-rituals' of sorts, challenging those who have taken 'power over', and calling for a transmutation in the manner in which political power operates. The politics of organization rests on how signs and symbols are deployed to alter the system of values in place, and to thereby direct the general social and political arrangement governing a territory. In general, political power has tended to line up with the capital exchange logic. The redeployments of signs, however, highlighted this tendency of politics and economics to go hand-in-hand in the theatrics of the *Benign Buffet* and of *Bhopal*, in order to challenge the logic.

As Schechner has shown in his analysis of the array of 'direct theatre' events, which range from public industry-sponsored celebrations to the most political of demonstrations, theatrical interruptions in the general way of organizing social relations can serve to destabilize or solidify any number of socio-political regimes. According to Schechner, however:

> The more political the direct theater, the more it is staged as, or ends in swirls, vortexes of activities moving spirals and circles with not-easy-to-locate centres or heads. Multivocal and multifocal, a popular deconstructing of hierarchy, often blasphemous, irreverent, and obscene, full of small-scale dramas and guerrilla theatre, the direct theater plays to the roving multiple eyes of many cameras simultaneously ingesting images (Schechner, 1992, p. 479).

This near orthodoxy that has taken hold of performance studies analysis of political protest events as carnivalesque (with its 'swirls' and 'vortexes' of activity), often fails to actually take into account exactly how the event interacts with its political ecology. Protests, unlike carnivals, as Kershaw points out, are not typically licensed much less sanctioned (Kershaw, 1999, p. 101). The particular distributions and aesthetics circulated in the theatricality of acts enter these arrangements through intervention into social relations, but, as I have already begun to argue, in a manner that alters the terrain of politics by suggesting different logics of organization. These logics of organization, moreover, pertain not only to the manner in which social relations are constituted amongst humans. The manner in which the relationships between human and non-human entities is approached *itself* becomes integral to the system of valorization at work, making ecology an inherently political problematic.

Earlier I invoked Guattari's call to address ecological problems, not just as problems for techno-scientific resolution, but as problems necessitating a transformation of social and mental ecologies of an ethico-aesthetic order, rearranging sensibilities and altering the very processes by which subjectivities are formed. For Guattari, ethico-aesthetic interventions are oriented toward challenging the manner in which an ecology is constructed, and social formations congealed, introducing new existential refrains that might interrupt the social and personal habits that had previously prevailed. If the general mode of industrialization driven by global capitalism had functioned by way of maintaining the silence and disposability of the life in low and middle income countries, with the promise of

greater economic profits and capital accumulation, the alteration in ethico-aesthetic modalities disturbs the hierarchies of visibility, and in so doing, makes way for other modes of valorization.

In Bhopal, and around the world, the act of taking to the streets, breaks with the social codes of passive obedience to the manner of distributing roles, goods and environmental contamination - when previously there had been no culture of doing so, and women had rarely left the home (Mukherjee, 2010; unpublished interviews translated by Sadna Singh and Sanjay Verma, 2007-9). But what does this suggest for the codification and decodification of political ecologies and the processes of authoring political futures?

In 2007, a campaign had been launched by local Bhopali activists against the Indian-based multinational corporation, Tata. According to a letter dated October 9, 2006 from Ratan Tata to Dr. Montek Singh Aluwalhia of the Prime Minister's Office, obtained by International Campaign for Justice for Bhopal activists via a Right-to-Information request, Tata had made a commitment to Dow to help pave the way for business by resolving "legacy issues" like the Bhopal Gas Disaster. The minutes of the meeting obtained revealed that CEOs of Tata and Dow were looking to work together to make India a more viable place for industrial development and a more attractive place for ongoing foreign investment.

This Indian multinational corporation had offered to begin a charity to clean up the abandoned factory site in an effort to curb the ongoing water contamination. According to many members of Bhopal activist organizations, however, while all agreed on the dire need to stop water contamination in the region, many activists felt that such a charity could serve to hastily close the case, removing all legal liability, and would not in itself constitute a legal commitment to take on this burden. The group of activists objected that the logic of corporate charity –particularly from a corporation whose social and environmental track record was considered dubious at best - naming itself to 'take care' of the local ecology and of all those living in the region, was deeply flawed. They pointed out that Tata's offer would be re-inscribing a distribution of power in which those who were in a position to accumulate capital were those with the power to chose if and how those exploited would have their basic needs cared for. The activists called for a re-distribution of

power and re-organization of politics according to an alternate logic, instantiating systems of valorization irreducible to those of capital accumulation.

A highly theatrical carnivelesque style ritual was devised in which those living and working in the areas surrounding the abandoned factory could take part. A giant effigy of the Tata logo – which happens to be a smiling dog – was built by the local effigy-maker and wheeled through the streets. But unlike in the Tata advertisement, this version of the dog was built with one leg raised in the classic canine urinating position. The paraded dog stopped at every small shop, and the shop owners were invited to throw all their Tata products for the dog to "piss on", cheered on by a procession of protestors. The march ended, as countless others had before, near the factory where effigies of CEOs of Dow Chemical and Tata were burned under the watchful gaze of various media outlets.

As an act of 'direct theatre', this demonstration functioned at multiple levels to cultivate and display (and to cultivate through display) new political collectivities, organizing according to an ethic and a series of sensibilities that rejected that of capital-driven management. The symbolism at work in this action was clear: the collective rejection of Tata's bid - a statement that profit and sales would not be allowed to take precedence over justice as articulated by the community affected. Tata's own symbol was thus turned against it: the symbolic life of Tata's dog urinating on Tata's own consumer products. While the symbolism here is pivotal, it is the actual force and threat of the gathering that suggested a mutation at the level of how power would be authored here, and how the political ecology of the territory might be re-coded.

The capital-driven offer of a corporate charity to clean up the abandoned Union Carbide Factory site is emblematic of contemporary approaches to 'sustainably managing' regions in which alternatives would seem to have been all but obliterated by industry. At best, this offer was a techno-scientific intervention to further bolster the capital logic of development. Cleaning up "legacy issues like Bhopal", as negotiated between CEOs, fails categorically to take into account the transformation in socio-politics that needs to take place in order to transform not only the situation of environmental risks, but the entire social ecology that propagates the situation – characterized by a lack of access to either material means of production, or to

political channels of altering these means. It is into this situation that this highly theatricized ritual can be seen to intervene. However, rather than simply 'dramatizing' the issues, this theatric became the harbinger of a very real threat to global capital expansion: namely, the refusal of shop-owners to do business with companies that perpetuate a managerial eco-logic that refuses to take into account the desires of those living in affected areas.

The threat conjured here is akin to Boal's famous vision of theatre as "rehearsal for revolution" (1985). It is a 'rehearsal' that cultivates a political subjectivity amongst those who take part. However, its greater force lies in its particular theatrical manifestation, which is to say, in the manner in which it projects itself outward so that that its threat can be *seen* by others. By reaching out beyond the immediacy of those presently participating to solicit a wider audience, the threat of intervening in the coding of socius becomes indeterminate: it may not just be the slum-dwellers rejecting the logic of capital management of their territory but a potentially indeterminate network of active spectators.

This challenge cultivates a very different set of social relations and sensibilities than Varma's play, and can be constituted as one response to the conundrum staged. If the 'postmodern' form of capitalization of nature takes place via the commodification of 'life and nature' (Escobar, 1996), this process is completed through the rituals of capital accumulation and re-circulation, including the cultivation of 'new' markets and the cultivation of 'new' workforces – of which India at the turn of the millennia now signifies a major frontier of both.

The tension between the double flow of capital taking hold in the globalization processes plays out not only in the dramas staged, but, as I have been arguing, in the very aesthetic of theatricality that takes hold to organize the socius and who will be involved in making what visible how and to whom. It is worth noting, however, that despite the creative use of theatrics as political intervention at the local and global level, the most common and sustained ritual of collectively making visible community stakes has resisted self-defining as 'theatrical', despite its pervasive use of visual elements of display. I am referring here to that of the political procession.

Following a tradition of political effigy-burning popular in India, protests continue to occur in which effigies of Union Carbide and Dow Chemical CEOs are burned and battered by survivors, along with effigies of Indian politicians whose policies are thought to be directed by corporate interests. Every year, at the anniversary of the Gas Disaster, all of the major activists groups (usually there are several different processions) march to the factory grounds and, outside of the factory gates, burn an effigy of a CEO; the men will then typically beat the burnt effigy. There are variations of the ritual – the effigies change year to year, but the general structure tends to remain. Here, while the use of signs and symbols is pivotal to galvanizing force, it is the "the relation of body to body, force to force" (to repeat Gil's phrase) that becomes the locus for rearranging political power. Clearly we are not speaking here of a theatrical intervention of the same nature as plays such as *Bhopal* or *Killer Karbide*.

The leader of one of the survivors organizations, Abdul Jabar Khan, makes this distinction clear:

> We do not do drama when we are in the streets, we protest, and demonstrate with all of our anger in us, so there is no possibility of having any kind of drama in it. We do protests at different times on different issues. We often burn effigies of the Prime Minister and Chief Minister of the State to express all of our anger. We usually protest with placards that have many slogans on them. We go against the State, and the Centre Governments, and also against the Judicial Judgments. (unpublished interview, January, 2010, translated by Sanjay Verma)

This differentiation between 'drama' and the public actions of ritual effigy-burning is crucial for demarcating what is at stake in such collective actions. In burning an effigy there may indeed be a demonstration of anger, but it is not a *representation* of it; they are not representing the anger of survivors as, perhaps, does the final scene of Varma's play when protesters gather together. Jabar suggests that the ritualistic burning of the effigy built of the offending figure is a collective embodiment, demanding a transmutation in the actual state of affairs. The act of effigy-burning might be symbolic, but the anger made manifest in the conflagration of the image of those who embody the managerial apparatus through which conditions are maintained is actual.

For Jabar, it is far more important that those living in the region understand what is at stake and what can be done, than it is for the wider local, national or international networkers of viewers or potential supporters to be kept up-to-date. As Jabar explains, "All the publicity can only be accessed by a small percentage of gas victims. This, however, seems to be less dues to any hostility toward these audiences and networks and more a question tactical deployment of limited resources (Jabar Khan in Scandrett et al., 2009, p. 81).

We should not think that the direct articulation of anger toward which effigy-burning supposedly gestures constitutes a binary opposition with the explicitly dramatic activity of the self-declared 'theatre world'. The anger of IPTA actors, also self-identified as survivors, though very much here dramatic actors, is also actual; their demonstration also an actual embodiment of discontent. There is no categorical difference between the anger of the actor, the anger of the effigy-maker, or the anger of the activist. In these cases, they all also declare themselves to be survivors of the event and the aftermath to which their work and activities are directed. There are, as we have seen, also others engaged as actors, object makers, and activists throughout the broader network that are not survivors of the Gas Leak (nor current inhabitants of the area surrounding the abandoned factory) – but this is not the distinction to which theatrical designation gestures. The differentiation refers rather to the particular manner in which those engaged make palpable aspects of the world and cultivate particular kinds of ethical relations and political subjectivities.

Of course, what occurs in the streets in these processions ought to fall under the general definition of 'direct theatre' that Schechner offers. Jabar's resistance to such terminology – a sentiment anticipated by Bharacha's critique of Schechner's tendency to consume all under of the rubric of theatrics despite the diverse legacies, traditions and sentiments that they manifest (Bharucha, 1993, p.3) – points, however, to an equivocation at the level of the currents driving the acts. Whereas notions of theatricality tied to the alienation effect, or even toward the galvanizing of media attention, tend to prioritize acts of *showing*, embracing whatever artifices are necessary in this process (Weber, 2004; Davis, 2003), Jabar's claim suggests that the collective acts of effigy-burning functions as a social and political event for

rearranging political organizations through appealing to collective social desires. However, what his comment ultimately suggests to me is a rejection of the logic of representation, and not of theatricality as such.

There are, to be sure, important differences between the modalities of organization and the theatricality of the interventions here. In the case of IPTA's street theatre, the actors themselves take on different roles, telling a story through their gestures to those who pass, unfamiliar with the tale. These performances act as reflexive gestures in order to present a version of the ecological movement as dictated by capitalist logic, and activate spectators to become part of a collective movement to destabilize this logic. In Varma's play, the tale is told similarly but to the middle class audiences of theatre-goers, whether in India or Canada. Even between these two works, the aesthetic varies greatly, as I have argued. This is not only in terms of who plays what to whom, but in terms of how gestures, words and images are repeated in relation to the systems of production into which they intervene. In one, the play depicts the embodiment of a problematic tension that persists (Varma's *Bhopal*), whereas in the other, the play constitutes the repetition of a tale of a murderous company (*Killer Karbide*).

The theatricality of the activist demonstrations works somewhat differently from the theatricality in the plays, in that here the actors are socio-political actors – they are people playing themselves and acting (not re-enacting) their desires. The situation is just as fabricating as in the plays, but this time, gesturing not to the past but to the future: repeating what will be done. The theatricality of the interventions varies, producing different collectivities through the manner in which the territory is seized and the acts 'take place'. However, in each of these cases what is retained is the character that I understand Jabar to be gesturing toward, the character of what Lazzarato (amongst others) has called the "event".

An 'event' utilizes signs and symbols, but it does not do so in order to represent, but in order to introduce new possibilities into the world. As Lazzarato summarizes, with the event:

> Images, signs and statements are thus possibilities, possible worlds, which affect souls (brains) and must be realized in bodies. Images, signs and statements intervene in both the incorporeal and the corporeal transformations.

> Their effect is that of the creation and realization of what is possible, not of representation. They contribute to the metamorphoses of subjectivity, not to their representation. (Lazzarato, 2003)

Whereas, the traditional way to view *theatre* is to understand it as a (more or less accurate) representation of a state of affairs, I have been arguing that here we can view the *theatricality* of theatrical interventions (whether or not they are 'theatre') as an event of taking place, entering into the ecology of a situation in order to change it. In this respect these events have a ritualistic quality, shared with rituals like political processions, in so far as they are repeated to exert a power over the space that they occupy to bring about a change in the systems of social production. In each case, as I also noted earlier, 'power to' and "power over' are re-inscribed, redistributing the power to alter the ecosystem, and to intervene in social and political processes. The formal 'dramas' play out this signifying ritual through a codification readily identifiable as political theatre, invoking a particular style of cultivating subjectivity familiar internationally as a means of producing 'active spectatorship' in a Brechtian manner, reaching out to those who may have no prior knowledge of the situation but will gather to see a play. The acts of 'direct theatre' galvanize audiences, but through an aesthetic of multiplicity, gathering a multitude in the streets, typically of those who understand themselves to have a stake in the issue, either directly or as part of a concerned social network. In so doing, the theatricality of direct actions serves to challenge the manner in which systems of valorization circulate and gain force. According to several activists interviewed, even when such events failed to bring about a substantial immediate policy change, they were still viewed as successful to the extent that they became a collective articulation of resolve (unpublished interviews, translated by Sanjay Verma).

In each case, the interventions become ritualistic by repeating certain norms and distributions. But unlike 'state' rituals, they do not do so to consolidate existing distributions. On the contrary, they draw on preceding images and distributions in order to destabilize the hegemony of an overarching mode of exchange under global capitalism, and the distributions it sanctifies and that bolster it Whereas Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "desiring-machines" is typically presented as an antithesis if not an antidote to ritual, I am arguing that the ritualistic disturbances launched by the political theatrics investigated here, function by circulating desires and affects so as

to orient the terrain of politics. These, as discussed earlier regarding the *Benign Buffet*, function through a series of ethical appeals that seek to break into the logics of governance by way of altering the systems of valuation. Affects such as anger, sorrow and vulnerability cultivate new collectives, challenging the distributions of power (whether chemical or capital).

As Deleuze and Guattari point out, and as briefly discussed in Chapter Two, in some situations, the most modest of demands, when articulated and circulated, can pose a threat to the stratifications of power (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 520). Here, the demand to have a say in orienting the social and environmental ecology to which one belongs, even when drawing on the most accepted of theatrical protest rituals, becomes a catalyst for those engaged to forcibly take over the region, if momentarily, with an insistence that another political logic is not only possible, but is already in the process of being cultivated.

4.5 Theatricality, Globality, Eco-Politics: Can the *Yes Men* Fix the World?

In his short genealogy of survivors movements following the Gas Leak, Sarangi (1994, as reproduced in Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, 2005) writes of three stages: that of spontaneous protests; organized response (typically led by middle class organizers from various organizations and associations); and finally, activities and protests organized by survivor-led organizations. Through this genealogy we can trace an invisible trajectory of subjectivation through which eco-political sensibilities are developed, via a series of practices through which rage and sorrow are channelled into productive efforts, not unlike those undertaken by the capacity-building efforts analyzed in the previous chapter. Sarangi, (who himself works with "the Bhopal Group for Information and Action", a group that provides support to survivors, as well as operating a clinic and documentation centre that serves survivors), concludes his genealogy by stating:

> Through their repeated marches and rallies, they [survivor-led organizations] demanding justice and a better deal for survivors, have kept Bhopal alive in the public mind. (Sarangi, in Hanna, Morehouse and Sarangi, 2005, p. 218)

But, of course, as I have already shown, survivor-led organizations do not work as islands unto themselves. In her piece, "*Righting Wrongs*" Spivak offers as a shorthand definition of the subaltern as "those who are removed from the lines of social mobility" (Spivak, 2004, p. 531). Spivak points out that one of the problematics that face global efforts to redress inequities is that they tend to repeat the very power distributions that they argue need to change. In the above discussion of the ethico-politics of displaying the vulnerability of others, I have already shown how this question can be approached through the lens of theatricality. I have also shown how the manner in which theatricality engages with social and political *ecologies* poses a particular challenge. On the one hand, it tends to indicate a trans-corporeal ethic wherein biophysical futures of all are intertwined, while, on the other hand, the politics concerning the desires that will orient the future of ecological developments are localized and tend to function via a particular capital-driven logic. Attempts to intervene in this logic are thus left in the paradoxical situation of using existing modes of organizing, including existing distributions of actors and spectators, to suggest alternative eco-logics.

The networks of agenda-setting surrounding the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy – as well as the industrialization of low and middle income countries and the future of the ecologies of the 'Global South' more generally – have, as I have now shown, clearly become transnational in scope. The question now is this: What does this mean for international involvement in altering the logics according to which social and environmental ecologies are shaped?

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the Yes Men, a then little known American-based duo of anti-globalization tricksters, had duped the world when they appeared on BBC claiming to represent Dow Chemical, now the owners of Union Carbide, announcing that Dow would finally be accepting full responsibility for the disaster and would be compensating victims and paying for remediation accordingly. Of course, the company had no such intentions. The Yes Men actor, unqualified to play the role of the CEO, but who was nevertheless contacted via the virtual channels through which images, information and affects now circulate (i.e. the BBC contacted the Yes Men via a website that the Yes Men had created to mirror Dow's website – which the BBC mistook as Dow's

own). The stunt (which would later be featured in their 2009 film *The Yes Men Fix the World*) was described by the Yes Men as articulating the logic that Dow 'should' be following, and was hugely successful in giving international exposure to the gulf between the desires of those living around the abandoned Union Carbide factory site, and actual corporate actions. According to the Yes Men, for a short period, Dow's stock prices dropped dramatically, possibly in accordance with a more generalized public spectatorial response to the theatrics. Needless to say, Dow did not follow the example provided to them by the Yes Men.

The theatricality of the intervention was not, however, read in the same way by everyone. The BBC reporter rebuked the Yes Men, not only for publicly embarrassing this major news station and one of the world's most powerful transnational corporations, but for supposedly giving Bhopalis "false hope" making it a "cruel hoax". As Kershaw writes:

> On the global stage created by mediatisation, representations of the performance of protest become part of the struggle between different versions of the democratic process around the paradigm cusp. (Kershaw, 1999, p. 119)

The question then becomes what *are* the politics, and the effects, of circulating such "false hope" of theatrically propagating 'what should be' as if it were actually possible? If we consider this kind of theatrical intervention as an event in Lazzarato's sense, then the question becomes, what did the introduction of these statements make possible?

Once the theatricality of the gesture became evident stock prices reverted to their previous levels. This phenomenon is explained by the Yes Men as indicating the stronghold of the contemporary logic of capital and the complicity of 'spectators' worldwide in sustaining this logic (Yes Men, 2009). As they point out, when corporations are seen to "do the right thing" and take responsibility for the violence they have reaped (even if the admission turns out to be a hoax), spectators around the world withdraw their support for the corporation and the stocks plummet. The theatricality of the Yes Men intervention, then acts to highlight the performative structures that tend now to govern capitalist logic - increasingly removing from consideration the actual environmental and social flows it directs in particular

territories like Bhopal, much in the manner that Kershaw (2007) suggests that, at times, it might.

Literally speaking, the Yes Men staged a possibility: another course of action which *could be*, a representation of what many might like to see happen. Their BBC statement was the logical embodiment of what activists for decades had been lobbying for, and an action which if done would presumably have set a massive global precedent. Moreover, the intervention by the Yes Men launched a now longstanding collaboration between this New York-based duo and the International Campaign for Justice for Bhopal (ICJB), which consists of several groups in England, Europe and North America as well as several survivor-run organizations and supporting organizations in Bhopal. (It bears mentioning that the local groups affiliated with ICJB were those that had launched both the *Benign Buffet* and the *Tata* dog events.)

Whereas performance and cultural theorists alike are often quick to point out that the ethical and aesthetic configurations are often culturally specific (Diamond, 1992; Pavis, 1992; Bharucha, 1993), and that the manner in which a technique or image resonates cannot be universalized, Kershaw makes the important point that, in building global movements, it is also important to recognize that the values and collectives that form are also not regionally determined:

> Through globalisation, protest may become a phenomenon that partly transcends cultural difference and strengthens resistance as a universal possibility. Whilst we may gladly accept that there are no transcendental signifiers in the dramaturgy of protest, or any other discourse, it does not necessarily follow that where politics and ethics meet, post-modern relativism rules the world. (Kershaw, 1999, p. 119)

As an aesthetic process in the domain of political theatrics, this kind of repetition and re-localization of tactics and imagery is hardly a new phenomenon. In the context of twentieth century 'radical' politics, Kershaw (1999) documented a large number of such occurrences whereby, for instance, theatrical strategies were redeployed in different parts of the world, in order to 'take place' precisely by de-territorializing and destabilizing the stronghold of capitalist logic that directs the distribution of social and environmental ecologies.

I have already shown how, through repeating particular events and engaging particular images, the manner in which what is at stake in the social and environmental ecology of the region can be restaged. In this case, it functioned by repeating images and gestures across space and time to set in motion a global 'anti-capitalist' aesthetic. Here the cocktails of B'eau Pal water, for instance, which appeared on the menu in the invitation to the *Benign Buffet*, was an invention borne of an ICJB/Yes Men collaboration in the United Kingdom when the Yes Men circulated bottles of water, claimed to be bottled at the source of the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, with logos parodying the red triangle of the Dow logo and a small warning that read "not fit for human consumption". Clearly there is a far different resonance when Bhopalis offer their elected officials a sip of the water they drink daily, than when the Yes Men and their volunteers offer a mimicked bottle of B'eau Pal to pedestrians on the streets of a major world centre like London (International Campaign for Justice for Bhopal, 2009).

Through such political theatrics we see virtual collectivities forming in a manner that cannot be described strictly along national or ethnic lines. Nor is it sufficient to describe these movements along class lines as was historically done, or even along the lines of professional affiliation (as for instance, producing particular modes of knowing). Yet, while networks form across national and *cultural* lines, as I have already suggested, this does not imply homogeneity of logics or aesthetics across movements. In his *Territories of Difference*, Arturo Escobar (2008) points out that within social and environmental movements, there is often a tension between local groups and the international movements that support them. Whereas local groups tend to focus on local policies and conditions, targeting local audiences and intervening in the politics of local constellations of power, international movements tends to be oriented toward the trajectories and flows of international trends and global circulations – flows that have far more to do with abstract and virtual power dynamics (for instance, the power structures of transnational corporations and their role in influencing governmental decisions, proliferating industrial pollutants, etc.) than in the day-to-day implications of policy changes on the lives of those living in particular regions of the world**.**

Jabar Khan, as leader of one largest survivor organization, and one that works independently from any international network explains:

> I feel that we somehow could relate to the everyday problems and hardships of victims, we touched those problems in ways that the others could not. […] The others looked for ways to give issues political twists and attract national and international attention. Issues of prosecuting UCC [later bought by Dow] and Anderson were on top of the agenda for them: in that scheme of things, the issues that we raised, about employment, rations, medicines, they were dwarfed or incongruous. Their canvas was large and these issues were small on that canvas. But these were the issues that brought our organisation success from 1986 to 2000. It did mean that we did not raise other larger issues but these small issues were a priority for us. (Jabar Khan in Scandrett et al. 2009, p. 77)

Jabar further elaborates on how this focus tends to go hand-in-hand with different (often more overtly theatrical) tactics:

> The stunts which some groups get up to are very impressive and I support their aims, but it seems to me that they are mainly designed to getting international publicity. And in response to that publicity, the groups attract more money from abroad…. (p. 81)

In many ways, as I have already begun to show, Jabar is no doubt correct in the international focus of many of the more "impressive" stunts. The Yes Men, in collaboration with ICJB activists and other groups, including, for instance, groups targeting the legacy left by Dow's Agent Orange in Vietnam, launched a parody of Dow's environmental public relations campaign "Live Earth" concerning the Planet's water protection. For many years, survivors organizations as well as their supporting organizations had been liaising, not only with the Yes Men (a relatively recent and tactical collaboration) but also with these other international organizations (see Bhopal.net). Dressing up as Dow executives, they responded to the media on behalf of Dow with the message "run for your life", alluding to Dow's tendency to run away from their legacies of contamination (International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal et al, 2010). This event, in keeping with their usual aesthetic (as chronicled for instance in their first film *The Yes Men,* directed by Olman, Price and Smith, 2003), was a parody of the corporate managerial ethic that publicizes environmental charities as an alternative to actual changes in political eco-logics, while continuing to run from the environmental legacies that they leave in places like Bhopal and Vietnam.

In Bhopal itself, however, practical change has often meant not focussing on deconstructing the logic of capital, but rather in generating movements for influencing existing political apparatuses at the level of policy. As Fortun (2001) has noted, engaging with and appealing to existing governmental formations has been crucial to the advances made by survivors, including accomplishments as basic as gaining access to clean water, as well as whatever meagre compensation, rehabilitation and medical care that survivors have managed to access. Events such as the *Benign Buffet,* however, which were launched by the local survivors groups involved in the ICJB, targeted the logic of policy-making, rather than the logic of capital flows, even if an implicit relationship between the two was drawn.

Other groups and interventions locally have been more targeted still, as for instance, elderly women of Bhopal Gas Peedit Nirashrit *Pension* Bhogi Sangharsh Morcha, a group dedicated to widowed pensioners in the region. When they deploy theatrics, these tend to have very specific governmental policy objectives, as for instance, eating grass in order to draw attention to the fact that the compensation and later pensions that they have received after being widowed and/or incapable of work was not even enough to feed themselves. In this case, the theatrical interaction with the environment (grass eating) was, of course, purely symbolic, drawing attention to their immediate needs (unpublished interview with Balkrishna Namdeo, translated by Sadna Singh and Sanjay Verma). This organization grew out of a pre-existing organization dedicated to helping the elderly obtain the means of substance via pensions. Other groups (such as that of which Jabar spoke) focused on economic rehabilitation and job training first and foremost; and others focused on the greater questions of social and environmental justice; however none focused on the elderly. After the gas leak, as there were then many new widowers and people unable to work, and as there was no special pension for gas victims, the organization took on the cause of gas victims as well, concentrating on the questions of pensions for gas survivors, who had no other means of subsistence (Namdeo in Scandrett et al, 2009, p. 123). The focus, and the theatrics, of this group were therefore far more modest in scope than some of the others.

The title of the section is, of course, deliberately ironic, referencing the Yes Men's own tongue-in-cheek film title. The questions to which it gestures – not so

much concerning the Yes Men *per se*, but rather concerning the question that, for those who have lived chemical annihilation and who fear that the worst might not yet be over, is hardly trivial: What is the future of ecological transformations and what sensibilities might take hold to propel a new ethic and a new politic?

The tactics of the Yes Men are exemplary (if extraordinarily so) of 'anti-capitalist cultural jamming'. Its power is to reveal and deconstruct the logic of capital through the use of the channels of communication and the imagery that are proper to the capitalist mode of production itself. Such tactics, as I have shown, can be hugely powerful in terms of galvanizing audiences and launching a critique of capitalist logic and sensibilities. Moreover, the manner in which they catalyze movements across space and time, introducing possibilities for social organization beyond those of capital-driven globalization is instructive. Nevertheless, the question is how to approach the multiplicity and complexity of movements in a manner that allows for effective intervention into hegemonic processes of corporate managerial ecological solutions proposed, amidst a situation in which the distribution of roles and the orientations of logics and ethico-aesthetic sensibilities are always already fraught with the politics of the situation encountered.

In the previous chapters I analyzed projects in which aesthetics and concerns from around the world were combined to address social and environmental problems from international and transnational perspectives, as well as projects that utilized theatricality to support changing popular and governmental concerns. Each of these brought to the foreground questions regarding how the aesthetics of theatricality cultivated particular political sensibilities and the ecologies to which they are aligned. With the activist theatrics discussed in this chapter I have aimed to show how the politics of aesthetics catalyzed through the theatricality of events is forming an array of alternative social networks capable of shifting the political landscape in particular ways.

4.6 Conclusions

In the double flows characterizing the logic of capital, Bhopalis living in the slums surrounding the factory now no longer play a particularly significant role: not

wealthy enough to be consumers and no longer of use as 'free labour'. Since the self-destruction of the pesticide factory, survivors of the gas leak in Bhopal had become either fodder for the growing 'development' and related outreach industries, or that of a 'wrench in the capitalist machine', acting as a constant reminder of what remains when the machine breaks down.

In the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, as I have been arguing here, the use of *theatricality* has become a tactic for redirecting the sensibilities according to which the ecology of the region is seen and felt. I showed that, while the majority of theatrical tactics deployed have been launched by those living around the abandoned factory, it takes an entire apparatus of heterogeneous actors to actualize this reminder. Countless books have been written from countless perspectives, the vast majority by Northern/Western authors or highly educated Indian professionals (most of whom live far away from Bhopal, with a few notable exceptions of course). An entire network of artists and activists working around the country and around the world, and, of course, the local, national and international media all play their part. Any recoding of the socius that occurs in these contexts, however, occurs by drawing on the experiences of those falling outside the logic of capital.

Theatrical tactics, I have argued, intervene not only in *what* is made visible or felt to be important, but also through the ways of relating that these theatrical interventions encourage. Thus, for instance, the health threat from chemicals leaking from the abandoned site, to those living in the surrounding areas, was brought into the public eye through the 'direct theatre' event of the *Benign Buffet*. This threat was also brought into the 'public eye' – albeit the eyes of different 'publics' – by the range of political plays and various other street theatrics and media antics locally and internationally. Visibility, however, does not equate to political power, and ethical appeals do not immediately translate into political formations or policies.

To the extent that *politics* can be found in the various theatrics through which movements catalyze and appeal to spectators, as I have argued, it lies in *how the roles become redistributed* through the act of intervention and the putting on display of what is at stake. In the case of the *Benign Buffet*, for instance, the way of seeing the intersection of social, political and environmental ecology which had previously

been coded according to a particular assemblage of economic development interests, bolstered by a select line of scientific argumentation, and disseminated to the media via governmental officials, was made visible in a theatrical display that satirized the governmental claim that the water and soil was indeed fit for human consumption.

The politics of theatricality here thus has to do with how social mobility is organized via the theatrical apparatus. The questions of who can speak to whom, who can intervene in the social ecology in what way, and how the aesthetic of theatricality itself cultivates political subjectivities by putting particular audiences/actors into contact with one another, become key to understanding the politics of theatricality at stake.

Thus, for instance, in the plays produced abroad for international theatre-going audiences, such as Varma's *Bhopal*, the theatricality of the intervention focused on cultivating critical engagement with questions of international intervention, global ecological ethics and their relationship to the global corporate assemblage. In the case of street theatre produced locally in Bhopal, such as *Killer Karbide*, which toured to nearby areas in the streets amongst those who were not typical theatre-goers, the piece was oriented toward the building of local movements concerned with corporate expansionism and corporate crime locally. The way in which roles are redistributed through the theatrics engaged becomes a mark of the system of valorization and the very eco-logic at stake.

Whereas it is possible and indeed typical nowadays to treat an ecological crisis as a situation to be managed by experts, the grassroots theatrics of direct theatre here suggest an overturning of this kind of managerial apparatus in order to intervene not only in how an environmental ecology is to be approached, but into how the politics of decision-making takes place. In Chapter Two I had argued that the concentration of dissident political voices into the realm of 'arts and culture' could, paradoxically, serve to constrain the development of potential social movements. This occurs, I argued, in so far as energies are thereby localized toward the cultural, rather than the political domain, where their dissident or radical content can continue to circulate within the systems of exchange designated for this purpose without posing a real threat to existing processes of capital accumulation. Moreover, as I argued in Chapter Three, to the extent that such events continue according to traditional role

distributions, whereby professionals and experts amongst the world's elites lead 'the rest' in the production of the sort of subjectivity deemed necessary for the salvation of future ecologies, the capacity of these events to alter the social arrangements is inherently limited. In this chapter, drawing on the work of Davis, Kershaw, Weber and Alaimo, I argued that the heterogeneity of processes deployed across geopolitical space, largely through the theatrical apparatus of presenting a split-reality whereby roles are portrayed out of time, introduces 'new' voices and new logics into the political arena through an ethical appeal that demands a new approach to politics in the face of ecological change.

Tensions, schisms, and paradoxes to be sure can be found throughout: there is no totalizing vision of what political formations ought to look like that might be gleaned from the collective of theatrical events taken from across the movements and examined here. What I have argued is that activist theatrics function by catalyzing a series of assemblages and networks that together seek entry points into prevailing techno-managerial approaches to development, in order to alter both the ethics and the politics concerning the future of the territories being shaped by industrial and post-industrial development under late capitalism. In these fragmented but sustained efforts another set of sensibilities is being nurtured. Their actualization will depend on how successful they are at altering the eco-logics, not only in the imaginations of those to whom they appeal, but in the way they can actually redistribute the roles concerning how the politics of the region takes place. This is a task that calls for an ethical re-valuation of terrain for approaching the politics of the future, and it on this level that the theatricality of interventions might well make a difference.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAJECTORIES AND CONCLUSIONS:
Eco-Theatrics and the Politics of the Future

When, in 1866, Ernst Haeckel coined the term "ecology" he never could have imagined that this term, and the relationships between living and non-living organisms to which it gestures, would, by the late twentieth century, become ubiquitous, not only as a domain of study, but as a concept that would shape, and be shaped by, political agendas around the world. The questions that are now becoming paramount concern how ecological problematics are to be approached include: How will relationships between and amongst organisms and other forces be seen? What will be taken to matter in these processes? And what values and systems of valuation will be embodied and promoted? In this thesis I have argued that in shaping the terrain of these questions, theatricality has become increasingly prominent, orienting how social and mental ecologies take hold, and what sensibilities are being cultivated around the world.

This thesis has been dedicated to articulating some of the paradoxes faced in these situations. In Chapter Two I focused on the *World Urban Festival*, designated as the 'official arts and culture festival' accompanying the *World Urban Forum* on sustainable cities with the theme 'putting ideas into action'. In Chapter Three I focused on the use of theatricality within a 'capacity-building' project launched as a *Master's Program in Ecosystem Approaches to Health* in several locations throughout Ecuador, by a team of 'international experts' based largely in Canada. And in Chapter Four I focused on theatricality within the making of social movements locally and internationally following the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy, widely considered to be the worst industrial disaster of the twentieth century, and whose social and environmental consequences continue to devastate local populations.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown that the theatricality of particular interventions varies substantially, each event carrying with it its particular ethical, aesthetic and political sensibilities. Moreover, the force of each intervention varies

depending on how it fits and functions within its wider social, political and cultural ecology. Nevertheless, a number of trends, challenges and trajectories can be identified. I now summarize these below:

5.1 Re-staging Ecological Sensibilities: The ethico-aesthetic paradox

As theorists such as Stengers (2010), Guattari (1996), Spivak (2003), and Escobar (1996; 2008) have all variously argued, there are a multiplicity of practices now at risk of being occluded or subordinated to a globalized vision of the earth. This is a vision of the Earth perpetuated by the systems of financial exchange and the encounters that are established through this process.

As increasing attention is placed on questions of 'sustainability' and 'stewardship', a trend is emerging globally whereby both the stakes of the 'ecological crisis', and the strategies and tactics for approaching ecological futures, are being narrated by a global network of scientific experts, funding agencies, corporate management, and government officials. There has been a tendency to approach environmental challenges in terms of techno-scientific solutions that often naturalize the state of the world in accordance with hegemonic understandings that tend to view 'nature' as a 'resource' (Escobar, 1996; 2008; Peet and Watts, 1996; Spivak, 1998; 2003) and its 'disasters' only in terms of their immediate repercussions for human health, where the terms of health are often already set in accordance with a particular regulatory regime (Foucault, 1973; Breilh and Tillería 2009; Werry, 2008).

Theorists of ecology, however, have shown that the manner in which entities, organisms and other bodies relate is as much a function of mental processes or ecologies of mind or thought (Bateson, 1972; Guattari, 1995, 2000), social ecologies (Guattari, 1995, 2000; Bookchin, 1991) and media ecologies (Fuller, 2005), as it is of "human health" or even environmental ecologies *per se*. In this thesis, drawing on Guattari's insights regarding the importance of *ethico-aesthetic* experimentation for challenging the hegemony of the logic of capital in the production of social, mental and environmental ecologies (Guattari, 1995, 2000) and Kershaw's preliminary work on theatre ecologies (2007), I have argued that there has been an

increasing focus on theatricality in interventions designed to alter (or in some cases reinforce) social and mental ecologies. These, I have argued, function by appealing to, and problematizing, the sensibilities according to which ecologies are approached on the social, ethical and political level.

What Guattari has called 'ethico-aesthetic practices' and which I understand as creative interventions and 'experiments' with the manner in which social configurations are organized and modes of valorization catalyzed, are, as I showed, increasingly being proposed as a means of altering a situation deemed catastrophic by many for the future of social, mental and environmental ecologies. Projects such as *Earth = Home* catalogue many of these anxieties, whereas the theatrics that have proliferated in the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy present themselves as chilling reminders of what happens when the capitalist ethic occludes other systems of valorization.

In Chapter Two I showed that by presenting experiments in modes of interacting, artistic pieces such as *Earth = Home* and *Small Dances for Big Ideas* explore the formation of modes of valorization and the manner in which small gestures and movements codify ways of interacting with the world and the various ideas, entities and organisms within it. Spectators are engaged to become part of the network of social assemblage through which ethics are re-coded. In Chapter Three I argued that it is this valorization of the 'participatory' approaches to environmental health that is a major guiding force in the usage of creative media in the ecosystem health project investigated here. From this perspective, the use of creative media to explore and disseminate different ways of seeing and knowing an ecosystem is entraining an ethic of 'multiplicity' as a means of cultivating alternative practices, whereby the promotion of health and environmental change can be approached in accordance with the changing social dynamics occurring in Latin America at the present time. All of the interventions analyzed in this thesis presented themselves as critical of the general tendencies of global capitalism to subjugate social and environmental processes to profit-generating enterprises. However, even such critical theatrics could not help but be marked by the very global politics into which they intervene.

There is, at present, an inherent disequilibrium between dynamics of power that is unavoidable within any network or movement functioning in a predominantly capitalist economy, whereby the knowledge and skills called upon are unequally distributed. This pervasive power dynamic presents a particular challenge in the articulation of ethico-aesthetic appeals. As Taylor (2003) points out, there is often a pressure to appeal to those across not only space and time, but also ethico-aesthetic systems of relating; this often means the orienting of articulation to appeal to funders, supporters, experts, politicians and spectators from across the socio-political spectrum.

In keeping with current trends toward decentralized industry and its harnessing of creativity as a source of market innovation, the deployment of theatricality as a means of cultivating alternative mental and social ecologies may, in some cases, serve to cultivate a new creative workforce. This can serve multiple ends as I have shown. It can, for instance, serve to cultivate a workforce well versed in the rhetoric of heterogeneity and multiculturalism, crucial for the success of globalizing projects. Theatricality may then be used as a tactic to win over others with sensitivity to ethical concerns, in a manner that is easily cloistered from disturbing market flows. Indeed, at the extreme, such processes might even ease the capture of new markets and new workforces. New populations become 'empowered' in the modes of articulation dominant in Northern high-income countries, and for the sake of social mobility and driven by the promise of social change, convert their desires into the terms of their ever-more-distant audiences.

This is not always a bad thing. As has been discussed (Hardt and Negri, 2004; Lazzarto, 2003; Gilbert, 2005, 2008), the surface resemblance between international networks and social movements on the one hand, and the global capitalist mode of production on the other, does not necessarily mean that all will be delivered up eventually to the capitalist agenda. Movements work with the tools and processes available, and the future is not writ. In all of the examples discussed in this thesis attempts were being made to overturn the logic of commodification in favour of new forms of approaching social and environmental ecologies. The strategies and tactics deployed, however, varied a great deal.

I argued that thinking theatricality as ethico-aesthetic interventions leads us into several paradoxes that can be subsumed under the general rubric of the usurpation of the potential of theatricality for catalyzing a transmutation in the manner in which ecologies are approached. These paradoxes concern the potential of ethico-aesthetic practices of subjectivation to cultivate creativity in a manner that may in fact serve as a cathartic device that, while potentially destabilizing the hegemony of the capitalist ethic, may also, as Hallward points out (2006), provide a 'safe space' for experimentations in dissent, ultimately confined to the artistic or cultural milieu. Once constrained in this manner, the concerns and desires made visible in such theatrical events can then be potentially captured and integrated into dominant modes of socio-political organization to legitimize the spread of totalizing systems in the spirit of "inclusivity".

Despite this threat the politics of theatricality within this context, I argued that it is also possible to consider theatrical tactics as intervening in the ethico-aesthetic terrain upon which ecological politics are based. In particular, I argued, following the work of Alaimo (2010), that such acts highlight and intervene in the way trans-corporeal relations are approached, through catalyzing new social networks organized around systems of valorization that take seriously questions concerning the desires and values promoted by social and political trends.

With regard to theatrics deployed in social movements following the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, for example, the ethico-aesthetic tends to function through the highlighting of the vulnerability of life and the trans-corporeal nature of social and environmental ecologies. Repeatedly survivors present themselves, and are presented by others 'in solidarity', as materially vulnerable to the flow of elements and chemicals being forcibly altered by industrial development, leading to death and illness amongst those living in the region. I have shown repeatedly how this occurs, both in protest events and political theatre performances locally and internationally, and how it serves to catalyse and reinforce social movements.

To care for the environment and to care for the futures of humans is, in this respect, presented as intertwined. The promotion of a trans-corporeal ethic through theatrical engagements, however, raises the issue of the trap, flagged by theorists like Agamben, of reducing politics to ecological management under the rubric of

care, whereby the desires of those affected cease to direct the future of their territory, and the manner in which the ecologies in which they situate themselves are cast. The problematic thus faced is how theatrics might contribute to orienting ethical sensibilities in a manner that actually alters political dynamics.

5.2 Contemporary Theatricality: Beyond 'interculturalism'

I have argued throughout this thesis that a mark of the theatricality of interventions is the manner in which they call one time and place into another. In all of the theatrical events analyzed here there is a movement beyond a singular aesthetic tradition, and a movement between geographical places. Whether in the artistic realm, the pedagogical, or explicitly political domain, the theatricality of interventions launched tends to draw heavily on processes of translating experiences through media that traverse space and time to varying degrees. The *ethics* and *politics* of translating aesthetic experience is thus a question repeatedly confronted in this thesis. Most of the theatrical events discussed in this thesis synthesized various media, integrating heterogeneous vectors of experience through continuous processes of translation. Each theatrical intervention catalyzed the formation of particular eco-sensibilities through the encounters staged by the event.

As I argued in Chapter Two, in the contemporary context, much theorizing approaches the question of theatrical translation across time and space as a problematic of 'intercultural theatre' and 'cultural encounters'. Pavis (1992), for example, theorized that this process is complicated by the fact that, in the artistic context generally, and the theatrical context specifically, the actual theatrical 'cultures', and the particular aesthetics and modalities that are deployed, intervene in the manner in which cultural translation takes place. When a piece or a performance technique is presented in a new context, it must be adapted for new audiences. In the context of the *World Urban Festival*, for example, we might be inclined to argue that the variety of pieces and techniques presented from around the world were repeatedly adapted in this way for Vancouver audiences, who were then presented with an 'intercultural' theatre experience. At the level of individual pieces as well, heterogeneous processes of creative production, drawn from various geographical

and cultural milieus would appear as likely candidates for description as 'intercultural theatre'. *Earth = Home,* for instance, drew on the experiences of youth as articulated in a series of creative workshops held around the world, through a range of different media, and compiled them together into a single piece that was then premiered at the Festival before going on tour.

To speak of these in terms of interculturality, however, misses what I have been arguing is the thrust of these interventions: namely, that in this process, or rather series of processes, there is a production of multiple heterogeneous subjectivities as well as numerous modes of engaging and building the ecologies of the future. Despite the undeniable heterogeneity inherent in these events, I argued here that the popular 'intercultural' model of theatrical encounters fails to adequately make sense of these events, due to the lack of cultural homogeneity within the supposed 'cultures' that are said to be interacting, as well as the lack of 'cultural purity' of the creative techniques sampled and combined.

The problem with approaching theatre and the theatricality of interventions in terms of 'interculturality' is threefold: (1) Analytically, it generally fails to account for the living and heterogeneous nature of practices and 'traditions'; (2) in approaching practices in terms of how they represent cultural legacies, a pressure is often placed on practitioners to display and valorize expression thought to typify a 'culture' or system of valorization particular to a region, especially if their audiences, funders or educators aim to "promote diversity"; and (3) many practitioners themselves do not fit squarely into one "role" or "culture", such that to look to an event in terms of its past, rather than the futures that it potentiates, runs the risk of serious distortion.

I have argued that there is no singular (or even well-defined 'multiple') 'source' or 'host' cultures, to use Pavis' terms. Rather, what is played out within events are a series of heterogeneous processes mediated by the systems of exchange and the theatrical techniques of redistribution of what might become visible *as* 'culture'. "Culture" in other words, is itself always already a process, or convergence of processes, re-inscribed and re-invented with every intervention. What memories, hopes or desires are called forth is shaped by the event itself. Even how the techniques are called upon or reshaped depends on the context of their invocation.

Thus, for example, in Chapter Two, I showed how workshops through which youth from around the world were invited to articulate their thoughts and feelings regarding the state of the Earth via dance, theatre, electronic arts and writing sessions not only facilitated an 'intercultural' exchange, but actually forged its own aesthetic. In so doing, it was not so much an artistic translation of preformed thoughts and feelings, but rather a catalyst for generating sensibilities in a way that moved between facilitators, youth, artists and audiences.

In Chapter Three I showed that the invocation and repetition of roles in a theatrical manner (as in the role-play about Texaco-in-the-Amazon) could lend itself to a process of articulating what is at stake in engaging with a milieu. Particular 'roles' may invoke social groups or categories in a manner that is expedient in destabilizing the notion that there is a single way of approaching, understanding or navigating an ecosystem, and may be useful in presenting the multiplicity of desires and concerns that drive processes of ecological change at the political level. However, as Colborn-Roxworthy (2004) warns, we run the risk of stereotyping and entrenching social hierarchies if we take too seriously the roles that are presented in any given performance. What was evident in the case of the role-play, given its explicitly pedagogical frame and the fact that there were actual (or potential future) 'representative' of each of the groups portrayed in the class itself, is that in actuality most juggle multiple 'roles', navigating between various cultural practices and modes of 'seeing and making'. Indeed, it is the manner in which the multiplicity of processes can be navigated and integrated that becomes a major component of what is cultivated within the capacity-building project.

Not only are the processes through which the world is encountered translated through various media multiple, and the actual apparatuses used manifold, (including for instance, video, dance, and theatrical scripts), but, as I have shown, the particular approaches to theatricality also vary substantially. I recall, once again, the insight of theatre historian Tracy Davis who argued that theatricality as a concept began to be formalized in the eighteenth century, specifically underlining the artifice involved in representing the world theatrically. Theatricality, in Davis' sense, became part of practices of subjectivation integral to the production of civil society in so far as it encouraged critical engagement with modes of social and political

decision-making. Through the cultivation of active, critical spectatorship, audiences learn to judge for themselves what was taking place.

As I have shown, this kind of "political affect" is now a hallmark of a particular current of contemporary theatre aiming to engage in processes of social and political change. For instance, the now common 'talk-back session' and the regular 'breaking of the fourth wall' and encouragement of 'audience participation', discussed in Chapter Two, as well as the usage of role-play in education, discussed in Chapter Three, and the more formally 'dramatic' pieces of political theatre discussed in Chapter Four, (following the Brechtian and 'popular theatre' traditions), all engage the distancing technique of Davis' theatricality in a manner that facilitates the production of particular kinds of critical encounters or processes.

If the actual techniques and modes of articulation at work change, and the social and political contexts vary, so too does the *valence of theatricality* itself. Theatricality, in so far as it opens trajectories for altering sensibilities concerning what will be seen and felt to be important, and concerning what trajectories for the future will be possible, sometimes functions by way of cultivating critical spectatorship. However, it also sometimes functions by way of actually altering who can relate to what how, by presenting images and possibilities in new ways and to new audiences. This process follows many different trajectories, and redistributes roles in a multitude of ways. In many cases, the traditions of political theatrics called upon function by way of creating collective memories and group identities, as for instance described in Chapter Two, when immigrant youth congregated to learn, dance, and ultimately publicly present and teach a Gumboot dance. Here the teaching of the dance became a tactic for publicizing their desire to generate their own modes of articulation within a wider society in which they seek to carve a place. More militantly, much of the protest theatrics discussed in Chapter Four were oriented toward the gaze of external spectators, presumably cultivating a collective experience between actors and spectators of sorrow and/or fear. This cultivation of affect serves as an ethical appeal to alter the ground upon which the future of the social, environmental and political ecologies might be built.

In order to assess the politics of theatricality in an increasingly *global* and *globalizing* context, it is therefore insufficient to look at the manner in which

cultural traditions are displayed, or even particular cultural systems of valorization maintained and disseminated. It becomes necessary to consider how the theatricality of interventions functions within the social, political, environmental and informational ecologies to which they belong and into which they intervene. As McKenzie (2001) argues, global markets are increasingly pressuring global citizens to "perform or else", such that how one presents oneself on the "world scene" is increasingly a determinant of the available possibilities. However, *how* one engages in such a process is, I have argued, as much a function of the sorts of desires pursued and networks engaged, as it is of the territorial position and cultural group in which one may be categorized. Local environmental ecologies in this process remain important in so far as the actual material conditions present offer their own limitations and possibilities. A desire to take control over how the aftermath of an industrial disaster occurs differently for those who drink water that makes them ill than it does for those who seek to "boost economies" and increase profit.

The politics of theatricality in such cases is not a question of discrete cultures interacting, but of how particular articifices are called upon to set in motion different trajectories and different systems of valuation. Interventions become a matter of creating new social and political assemblages, often by way of media documentation and the circulation of recordings of the event.

5.3 Theatricality and Political Ecology: The transmutation and re-distribution of roles on the 'world' scene

Throughout this thesis I have shown that there are a multitude of voices that remain obscured by dominant processes of ecological management. To gain some kind of political power there is enormous pressure for 'groups' to form and to present themselves in particular ways in order to be seen and heard *at all*. Thus, whether in the domain of arts and culture, international 'capacity building', or the forging of a social movement capable of taking on the forces of corporate globalization, new hierarchies and new ethico-aesthetic orthodoxies threaten to entrench themselves, even despite the best of intentions of those involved. Who has

the power to shape even the critical 'alternative' networks examined in this thesis, is often, as I have shown, extremely political.

Spivak (1988) famously theorized that the subaltern cannot speak because the systems are not in place for those who do not speak to the experiences and sensibilities of those in power to be heard. In this thesis I have argued that the theatricality of popular interventions is, on the contrary, becoming a popular tactic of articulation precisely because it catalyzes new kinds of social relations able to cultivate collectivities for re-articulating sensibilities in a manner that alters the politics of the networks engaged. I pointed, for instance, to theatrical activist rituals such as those launched in Bhopal. These, I argued, catalyze collectives around modes of valorization that destabilize the hegemony of capital-driven industrial development and the managerial approach to the ecosystem, by inviting both 'locals' and spectators from afar to symbolically reject the symbols of capital. In so doing, all involved are invited to become active in insisting on the power of those living in a given territory to direct the future of their social, mental and environmental ecologies.

This is not to sing the praises of theatrical interventions as inherently liberatory. As shown in this thesis, a danger always remains that the images and experiences of others may be captured to legitimate a particular project further entrenching a particular mode of eco-political organization, even as the circulation of these experiences introduce the potential of new organizations. Throughout this thesis I have argued that while there may be no immediate change in political outcome attributable directly to a theatrical intervention, the redistribution of roles and the forging of new sensible sets of relations (for example, creating an alliance between the local justice-for-Bhopal survivor organizations and the New York-based Yes Men) already suggests a transformation in the politics of the situation.

Drawing on Rancière's politics of aesthetics (2004) and Weber's use of theatricality as a way to understand the politics of globalization (2002), I have been arguing that politics permeate the manner in which certain roles and logics circulate. Thus, for instance, the very bringing together of artistic and community interest groups from around the world to stage their desires alongside a forum on sustainability, alters the relationships concerning who speaks to whom, and who is

seen by whom. Such redistributions concerning desires and ways of framing questions of 'sustainability' and cultural politics affect the dynamics of spectatorship and cultural consumption. It is a politic that promotes the circulation of these affects, signs and ethical considerations, potentially altering the mental and cultural considerations that spring to the surface when one thinks 'sustainability' and seeks to 'put ideas into action' as the Forum tag-line suggests. However, while the Festival may seek to find ways of organizing that move beyond models of commodification and consumption, it is not necessarily a gathering likely to affect change directly at the level of policy.

As I showed in Chapter Three, in the face of changing political allegiances concerning the organization of ecosystems and their relationship to social and cultural ecologies, theatricality is now being harnessed to alter the dynamics of who has a voice in shaping the workforce of the future. While the integration of various ethical configurations and modes of organization promises to change the way social and environmental ecologies are maintained by the future workforce, this is not always as 'liberatory' as its practitioners might like. As writers such as Lazzarato (1996; 2003) have pointed out, while this kind of creative participatory approach might allow for greater social mobility amongst those it engages, it also threatens to further control and colonize the sphere of potential, funnelling all relevant creative energy into these larger projects of governmentality, linking all to the latest vision of governance, even if, as is the case in Ecuador at the moment, the vision is far more 'anti-neoliberal' than those of previous regimes and certainly than those of the resource extraction industries that function in the area.

If we want to avoid the trappings of continually returning authority soley to a set of professional "experts", we had better look not only at what is being represented in the diverse articulations that form the mental ecologies of the inhabitants of a region, but also to the very manner in which such interventions into this 'public realm' might participate in transformative processes. If we want to know what theatricality in a given context might now offer to the future of ecological politics, we must continue to ask these questions concerning the re-distribution of roles and the power that remains with both actors and spectators of these interventions. It is to highlight the importance of such questioning that this

dissertation has been devoted.

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