LEARNING, EXCHANGE, AND PLAY III

Postgraduate Experience Awards Report
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§1. EVENT/PROJECT BACKGROUND

- *Learning, Exchange, and Play (LEP)* is an on-going transdisciplinary project in philosophy, politics, pedagogy, participatory experience, and film-making. Broadly speaking, iterations of LEP are workplayshop events where participants are invited into, and asked to contribute to, experimental spaces and activities; the *classroom configured as a space of encounters*, partially in order for participants to co-create empowering experiences together.

- Each iteration of the LEP project involves the direction, production, and creation of a short film. In all cases so far, we have worked with film-maker and documentarian Ben Cook, of *Anti/Type* films and *The 12.01 Project*, in order to do this.

- Previous iterations of LEP have taken place at King’s College London (at ‘Techniques of Art and Protest,’ in September 2015) [*Learning, Exchange, and Play: Practicing a Deleuzian Pedagogy*] and at the University of Kent (at ‘Transforming Moments,’ in January 2016) [*LEPII*].

- We have premiered our previous short-films at conferences across Europe, while simultaneously presenting a collaborative paper we are working on (and are planning to submit for publication soon) on the theory and practice of our experimental pedagogy. We premiered the first film at the University of Amsterdam (‘Social Class in the 21st Century,’ in October 2015), and the second at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm (‘Undisciplined Environments: International Conference of the European Network of Political Ecology,’ in March 2016). Subsequent to their screenings, we then released the films for free online (and will continue to do so as the project moves into the future).

- For the purposes of *LEPIII*, we were awarded £1500 from the *Postgraduate Experience Awards*, and a further £1000 from *Creative Campus*.

§2. EVENT DETAILS

- The funding we received allowed us to devote time, energy, and resources into the further development of the LEP project in more ambitious and experimental directions. For *LEPIII* we wanted to create an immersive and challenging full day of activities, and create materials and ideas that could be utilised and further experimented with in the future. This included the launch of a website which will be a hub for LEP information, films, and other content in the future (*www.lep.space*), as well as the creation and promotion of the LEP symbol or brand which is used on the cover of this document.

- The event was advertised and promoted through emails, posters and stickers on campus, word-of-mouth, and social media. It was held on Tuesday 6th September.
2016 in the Darwin Conference Centre. Attendance was free, catering was provided, as well as a drinks reception at the end of the day and then a subsequent dinner in Canterbury.

- We invited and funded two guest participants: (1) Dr. Stephen Zepke, an independent academic based in Vienna, who works extensively on art, politics, and the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; (2) Dr. Erzsébet Strausz, who works in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick on storytelling, critical security studies, critical pedagogy, and aesthetics.

- The day itself involved two radically different experimental classrooms, which we divided into two playtimes: ‘Playtime I: Worldly Signs’ was the morning session, and ‘Playtime II: Signs of Art’ was the afternoon session. We then finished the day with a ‘Plurilogue’ – an experiment in collaborative discussion beyond ‘monologue’ or ‘dialogue’ – which was chaired by Dr. Iain MacKenzie, Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent.

- The event was personalised to the participants who registered online (we asked registrants to complete a form if they wished to participate). In total, the event had 14 participants, ranging across different graduate departments in the school (for example: Politics and International Relations, Film Studies, Criminology, and Mathematics). We created personalised tote-bags and journals for participants which gave them some crucial information at the beginning of the day. We hired three actors and wrote scripts for the first half of the day, which was a vital addition to the LEPIII experience intended to make it more immersive and challenging. Further, during the drinks reception, every participant received a personalised ‘goodie bag’ with mementos from the day.

- In the process of preparing for LEPIII we created a vast array of new additions to the experience, including, but not limited to:
  - We sent out a call for contributions for a satirical newspaper, and received a number of submissions from people who attended LEPIII, from other colleagues who were not able to attend, and from people who had attended previous iterations. Conor edited this newspaper, it was professionally printed, and participants received free copies. There is scope for us to create further editions of this newspaper in future iterations of the LEP space, and we are working on plans on how we might distribute this issue, and any potential future issues, further.
  - We sent out a further call for contributions where we asked participants to share with us policy ideas, desires, and dreams on the changes they wanted to see in the world. Hollie collected and edited this collection and participants were invited to read and engage with them during ‘Playtime II.’ These contributions served as a starting point for our Plurilogue. We are developing plans on how to bring these excellent contributions forward.
o Hollie created a new sculpture, which was given its first ‘exhibition’ during ‘Playtime II.’

o We devised, and Conor wrote, a script which was used by the actors during ‘Playtime I.’

o We conceptualised and created a piece of artwork-in-progress which we invited participants to contribute to, and are developing further presently.

o We conceptualised and created a large number of original stations and activities.

o The informal feedback we have received on LEPIII has been extremely positive. Many participants have commented on the immersive and thought-out nature of the event, as well as its disruptive potential and challenging format. We also have received some more constructive feedback which we will consider for any potential future iterations of the space.

§3. NEXT STEPS

o The LEP project is decidedly open-ended. We envisage further iterations and further experiments and are insistent upon not pre-defining an ‘end-point’ – to do so would be to foreclose future experiments and directions that are, by definition, unpredictable.

o We were invited to participate in a workshop entitled ‘Joyful Ontologies’ hosted by the ‘Social Theory Centre’ and the ‘Warwick Politics and Performance Network’ at the University of Warwick on 16th September 2016, based on the work we have been doing with LEP. We staged an intervention entitled ‘Fuck Excellence: Constructing a Joyous Pedagogy’ which utilised many elements that we had originally developed for LEPIII.

o We will soon continue our work with Ben Cook on the third LEP film. This will be longer and more adventurous than our previous versions. We have begun the process of planning for the premiere, which will be on the Canterbury campus at the University of Kent. We have also begun to reach out to guests we hope to invite to watch and discuss the film with.
- We will continue to work on our collaborative paper and submit it for publication at some point in this academic year.

Some LEPIII participants are here being introduced to the first space (“Playtime I: Worldly Signs”) in a morning “induction” session.