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**Producing space and reproducing capital in London's Olympic Park:
an ethnography of actually-existing abstract space**

Jacken Waters

PhD

University of Sussex

April 2016

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Jacken Waters

April 2016

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between the production of urban space and the reproduction of capital. Taking the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as a case study, I conducted ethnographic research during the London 2012 Olympics and the Park's first 'Legacy' year. My research proceeded from an embodied walking practice (which prompted reflection on my transgender presentation as a complicating factor), and also included interviews and archival research. My analysis centres on Henri Lefebvre, situating his work on space within a concern for the relationship between everyday life and the concrete abstractions constituted therein. Taking this relationship as essential to the reproduction of capital, I explore the production of the Olympic Park as an actually-existing abstract space that mirrors the dual character of the value form.

I open my account of this production with the Olympic festival, a total social moment mobilised towards the realisation of value. I then examine each of Lefebvre's three formants of abstract space in turn. I present the construction of the Park as the materialisation of an abstractly conceived space designed to incorporate a disordered post-industrial space into a new mode of accumulation. I frame the inhabitation of the Park in its Legacy era as a temporalisation of empty space, arguing that abstract time is co-constituted with abstract space in internally contradictory everyday practice. And I address the incorporation of the Park into a set of post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-oriented spaces that form a representational space reflective of the movement of capital in its ascendant, financialised, form. I conclude with a discussion of the Olympic Park as 'catalyst', securing the reproduction of capital by encouraging further redevelopment, but also sharpening capital's contradictions as an abstract space in conflict with its own concrete content, predicated on the subsumption of the utopian potential of everyday life.

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1 - Introduction: London, the games, and Lefebvre

1.1 - Introduction

In September 2007, an area of East London disappeared behind a brilliant blue fence, to emerge transformed at the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Nine months previously, a compulsory purchase order had been imposed to clear the 837 acre site of its inhabitants and users. Eight months later the site was cleared, and ready for construction to begin. For those five years a steady stream of planners, overseers, workers, machinery, and materials came and went from the site. When the games began, visitors flocked to the Olympic Park as their image was broadcast into homes across London, the UK, and the world, introducing a brand new space within London's built environment. At the end of the games this space was again closed off, returned to a state of re-construction for its Legacy era. A full year later it began to re-open with the fence removed, finally allowing free movement across its borders.

This thesis is the product of two periods of ethnographic fieldwork: a pilot project undertaken during the London 2012 games and a more substantial research project conducted as the Park became inhabited between summer 2013 and summer 2014. As with all ethnographic research, my focus developed and evolved throughout that process. Originally I had intended to write about resistance and social struggle within London's public spaces, but I found myself fascinated by the impact of the Olympic festival crowd on the spaces that they filled. Rather than seeking to locate a dynamic of domination and resistance, I began to explore this controlled yet genuinely animating atmosphere of festival. The tension between the mobilisation of social life towards a particular end and its ultimately expansive and indeterminable living became a central concern in writing up my pilot project (the latest version of which is presented as Chapter

3). I carried this concern on into my main research period, seeking to recognise that same tension throughout the everyday life of London's newest public space, and as such it became an overarching theme of my analysis.

This thesis therefore investigates the production of a new space within East London's built environment by drawing attention to the moulding of everyday life as constitutive of physical and social forms. I present this space as orientated towards the reproduction of a particular mode of capitalist accumulation, and explore the ways in which this moulding of everyday life is to some extent its incorporation into the reproduction of capital. However, I also understand the productive potential of the everyday as an expansive quality that escapes determination, straining against external confinement by managed practice and internal domination by the social forms it constitutes.

As this tension became central to my thinking about the Olympic Park I found the work of Henri Lefebvre particularly useful. Already familiar with *The Production of Space*, in exploring his writing beyond this text I found a rich seam of thought on the tension between alienated and dis-alienated life within the everyday, which spoke to my fieldwork experience. This thesis can therefore be read as an exploration of Lefebvre's work, as much as it can an analysis of the production of a new space within East London. Approaching the Olympics as an intervention in the ongoing transformation of London's built environment, I use this empirical case study as a means by which to unpick and relate elements of Lefebvre's work.

This approach fits within a recent 'third wave' of Lefebvre scholarship (Kipfer, Goonewardena, Schmid, and Milgrom, 2008; Stanek, 2011; Leary, 2013; Wilson, 2014). This third wave seeks to break with a first wave (centred on David Harvey) of political-economic readings, and a second wave (centred on Edward Soja) of 'postmodern' readings of Lefebvre. Instead, these writers highlight Lefebvre's heterodox Hegelian Marxism and position him not as a theorist of capitalist space or of everyday life, but of alienation and abstraction.

As such, my treatment and mobilisation of the concept of 'abstract space' follows Japhy Wilson's framing, in which it is understood as one iteration of the overarching theme of Lefebvre's work (Wilson, 2013). My fieldwork-centred approach to Lefebvre's thought also follows Łukasz Stanek's suggestion that this third wave of Lefebvre scholarship should be a 'turn to empirical studies' (Stanek, 2011; xv).

In this chapter, I provide some contextualisation for the discussion to follow, briefly reviewing existing literature on transformation within London's built environment, the Olympic mega-event as intervention in urban space, and Lefebvre's concept of abstract space. I first outline ongoing change to London's built environment, before demonstrating that the Olympic Park should be understood first and foremost as a targeted attempt to further this transformation and to produce a space that will be practiced and understood in a specific manner. I then turn to Lefebvre, detailing my approach to his work and providing an overview of recent studies that have attempted similar analysis of 'actually existing abstract space'. I finish this chapter with a discussion of the structure of the rest of this thesis.

1.2 - Ongoing change in London's economy and built environment

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games occurred at a specific moment in the recent history of London's built environment. The Olympic Park is now a nexus point of development, its 'Legacy' orientated towards extending and directing this development. In order to understand the place of the Olympic Park within this set of spatial transformations, it is necessary to understand the economic transformations that underlie them. Since the 1970s, East London's manufacturing base has declined and (almost) disappeared, to be replaced by spaces given over to the functioning of the financial sector and a recently established set of 'creative industries'. This has been one element of a broader

economic shift, that has also seen an increasing flexibility of labour and decline in job security, a greater emphasis on higher education as a prerequisite to entering the workforce, a greater role for communication-orientated forms of work, and so on. To make sense of these trends I use Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century* alongside engagement with Italian post-operaismo theorists on affective or immaterial labour.

Arrighi argues that increasingly financialised accumulation is one stage of a systemic cycle through which total capital periodically moves. He draws the structure of this cycle from Marx's general formula for capital: $M-C-M'$. In Marx's formulation, $M-C-M$ stands for 'the transformation of money into commodities, and the re-conversion of commodities into money; buying in order to sell' (Marx, 1867; 248). The M' signifies 'an increment or excess over the original value of money' – that is, surplus-value (ibid; 251). This is a movement from the fluidity and exchangeability of money, to the relative stability of the commodity, back to an increased liquidity as more money:

value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process, and, as such, capital. It comes out of circulation, enters into it again, preserves and multiplies itself within circulation, emerges from it with an increased size, and starts the same cycle again
(Marx, 1867; 256)

Arrighi's systemic cycle takes this movement from flexibility to constraint and back again and applies it to the development of accumulation processes. A period of investment in a particular productive process is followed by a period of material production that eventually meets its own limits, resulting in a subsequent 'financial rebirth' during which 'the increasing mass of money capital "sets itself free" from its commodity form, and accumulation proceeds through financial deals' (Arrighi, 1994; 8). During this financial expansion the world economy is restructured, due to the actions of blocs of governments or business agencies 'well placed to turn to their advantage the unintended consequences of the actions of other agencies' (ibid; 9). Arrighi identifies four repetitions of this cycle: 'a Genoese cycle, from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries; a

Dutch cycle, from the late sixteenth century through most of the eighteenth century; a British cycle, from the latter half of the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century; and a US cycle, which began in the late nineteenth century and has continued into the current phase of financial expansion' (ibid; 6).

The form that each restructuring has taken is influenced, as Frederic Jameson highlights, by available technology. The most recent turn to financial expansion has been 'dramatically heightened' by cybernetic technology: 'capital today abolishes time and space and can be virtually instantaneously effectuated from one national zone to another' (Jameson, 1998; 143). This role of technology is taken up by many post-operaismo theorists, proposing models of communicative, affective, and 'immaterial' labour in order to describe the forms of work that have developed in parallel with financialisation since the 1970s. Antonio Negri suggests a periodisation in which the present post-Fordist moment is characterised by the emergence of the 'social worker', contrasting with the pre-Fordist 'professional worker' and the de-skilled 'mass worker' of Fordism (Negri, 1996). Christian Marazzi similarly frames the transition out of Fordism as the incorporation of communicative work into the labour process (Marazzi, 1994; 43). Other theorisations of 'cognitive capitalism' have foregrounded the significance of education, drawing on Marx's speculation that as capital develops the 'general intellect' becomes increasingly central to valorisation (see Virno, 1996; Vercellone, 2007; Adamson, 2009).

While the shared tendency to see the law of value as undermined or thrown into crisis (see Henninger, 2007) limits these theorists' compatibility with Arrighi's model, there are points of contact between them. Citing Arrighi, Vercellone agrees that 'monetary capital invested at the beginning of the cycle (M) is characterised by its flexibility, liquidity and freedom of choice', while the commodity form of capital 'is nothing but an interruption, in the ideal short circuit (M-M')', which causes 'materialisation, rigidity and uncertainty' (Vercellone, 2007; 21). The mobility of capital under financialisation is thus paralleled by a

flexibility of labour which encourages movement between jobs, the cultivation of 'transferable skills', a focus on the mobilisation of affect and communication, and so on. As a result, the post-Fordist period of financial expansion has been paralleled by an expansion in communicative, cognitive, and creative forms of labour and methods of surplus-value extraction.

This transformation of working practices compels a parallel transformation of urban space, in order that labour and the myriad practices of everyday life that underlay it are provided for. This understanding of the built environment as shaped by dominant forms of production and accumulation is significant to Lefebvre's theorisation of urban space. Łukasz Stanek writes that Lefebvre was influenced by Engel's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in which Manchester is presented as 'at the same time a material artefact, a manifestation of the deep structure of society, and a vehicle for revolutionary experience' (Stanek, 2011; 150). In approaching the city, 'Engels analysed its morphology as structurally determined by socio-economic causes and aims' (ibid; 149). Although Engels was describing the stage of initial urban industrialisation that spaces like the Olympic Park have done away with the last vestiges of, the principle of analysis remains the same.

This transformation is recognisable in an ongoing outward ripple from the 1980's 'big bang' development of office space within the City, where change in the built environment has accompanied transformations in London's occupational structure and income distribution (Coupland, 1992). Chris Hamnett characterises this process as the 'social and spatial manifestation of the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial urban economy' (Hamnett, 2003; 2404). In recent years the shift in occupational structure towards higher-paid service sector jobs has slowed. However, transformation of the built environment has continued apace, with property prices continuing to rise and land speculation or build-to-rent property development growing (Hamnett, 2015). This change in occupational structure has seen rapid middle-class growth, with London's traditional 'cross' shaped geography of wealth distribution

eroded by resultant housing developments (Butler, Hamnet, and Ramsden, 2008).

Much of this change has been constituted by large-scale redevelopment of post-industrial spaces, often instigated by state and private capital. Adrian Smith describes this as the re-valorisation of previously de-valorised space, with the express purpose of providing a 'spatial fix' for the valorisation of capital in a changing urban economy (Smith, 1989; 244). One obvious instance of this spatial fix within London is the Docklands redevelopment. Tim Butler writes that this project represents a 'return to the city' by capital in the form of a 'new urbanism' that unites the 'social exclusiveness of gated communities' with 'a traditional sense of urban, or at least small-town, community' (Butler, 2007; 763). Meeting the needs of the transformed urban economy, this new suburbia within the city can be thought of as an 'urban dormitory for those working in the 24-hour global service economy' (ibid; 777).

Outside of these large-scale projects, spatial transformation also occurs through piecemeal gentrification driven by 'collective social action' (ibid; 766). Although planning and policy decisions play a role here, change is also the result of individual activity, for example in competition for school places (Butler, Hamnet, and Ramsden, 2013). While large-scale redevelopment projects often have the provision of space for the financial sector as their goal, East London has also seen significant collective social action gentrification related to the development of London's 'creative industries'. The presence of available property, alongside supportive public policy for 'creative' activities in economically deprived areas, has encouraged the development of 'vibrant urban areas with a creative image and stimulating cultural environment [that] are in a privileged position to attract relevant professionals, businesses and talent' (Pappalepore, Maitland, and Smith, 2013; 228).

A certain 'artistic reverence of everyday working-class life' helps to cement a connection between 'up and coming' deprived areas and an artistic, creative, or

hipster gentrification (Smith and Pappalepore, 2015; 110). As these spaces tend to become tourist destinations, attracting visitors is frequently a goal of local councils or community improvement groups wishing to see change in their area. Alberto Duman writes that 'the "street market model" is currently reproduced everywhere and it features in most renewal plans for "deprived" neighbourhoods' (Duman, 2012; 679). While these projects serve some local need, they also function as an 'incubator for local rising land values' and ultimately result in an area that is un-liveable for its existing population: 'a good school, a "vibrant" street market, a "distinctive" coffee shop, all these are ingredients for the whipped up brew of property values concocted by the merchants of domestic dreams' (ibid; 680-2).

The ongoing (and yet-to-settle) transformation of London's economy can therefore be seen to materialise itself within London's built environment, on the one hand in unified large-scale redevelopment sites, and on the other in a moving front of gentrification. Large scale redevelopment tends to transform disused post-industrial space into sites of production or reproduction for the financial sector. Meanwhile East London's moving front of gentrification is related to continuing change in communities, as mobile young professionals become priced out of previously-gentrified areas, move to new ones, and drive poorer existing communities before them. Although these are semi-independent social phenomena, they share an underlying cause in the movement of capital through a phase of financial expansion. Further, they are articulated in their function and effects: the labour of the financial sector is reproduced in the trendy bars of gentrified areas, while large-scale redevelopment sites act as salient points on the moving front of gentrification.

1.3 - The Olympic mega-event as intervention in urban space

Like other mega-events, the London 2012 games were an opportunity for a wholesale transformation of space that will shape the ways in which East London's built environment, economy, and culture develops over the coming

decades. Here, I provide an overview of this instrumentalisation of the Olympics, focusing on the mega-event as an intervention in the built environment. In doing so I address the relation of this redevelopment and securitisation of urban space to myriad other 'soft benefits' of hosting the games.

The Park is a 'catalyst for redevelopment', expanding existing gentrification and encouraging the creation of similar spaces (Harland, 2012). It is the 'unfinished business' of the 1980s Docklands redevelopment and the 1990s Thames Gateway project (Evans, 2014, 353). The Docklands redevelopment, too, was conceived as a 'spearhead' to transformation, aimed at furthering an ongoing 'reconstitution of its [occupational] class structure ... away from its traditional working-class base towards professional and managerial groupings' (Smith, 1989; 240). As such, this space ties into the functioning of London's growing financial sector, providing both necessary residences and workspaces.

At the same time, the Park's position within East London places it in relation to a moving front of gentrification. To the immediate west of the Park lies Hackney Wick, already established as a 'creative' area, while to the east lies Newham, one of London's most deprived boroughs. This ties it into the development of East London's creative industries – bolstered by the fact that it is by nature a tourist and leisure destination. Paul Watt identifies this: 'East London's contemporary third-wave gentrification involves the wholesale physical, economic and social transformation of deprived inner-city areas and is increasingly being driven by large-scale regeneration programmes such as the Olympics' (Watt, 2013; 114).

However, the Olympic Park is also distinguished from other large-scale redevelopment sites by the fact that the 2012 Olympics and their Park represent both a 'mega-event' and a 'mega-project' (Gold and Gold, 2008). 'Mega-events' are 'specially constructed and staged large-scale international cultural and sports events', with 'significant long-term pre- and post-event impacts on the

host nation across a range of dimensions of national society, particularly cultural, but also political and economic' (Roche, 2008; 286). The Olympic games are instrumentalised in a number of ways: as a means of the securitisation, militarisation, and cleansing of the built environment alongside its transformation; as an opportunity for re-branding cities and nation-states; and as a source of profit from tourism and merchandise. They also present a chance to intervene in the happiness and health of a polity, through spectacle and the ensuing opportunity for encouraging sports participation.

The redevelopment of urban space for the Olympics is well documented: for short-term festival and for longer-term 'legacy' (Gold and Gold, 2008); as an opportunity for top-down imposition of large-scale plans (Scherer, 2011); and as a re-branding exercise aimed at strengthening national position within a globalised circulation of capital and labour (Short, 2008). London saw a large area of the Lower Lea Valley transformed into the Olympic Park, expanding on existing large-scale redevelopment projects. In the design of this space 'the Olympic masterplans and CGI [computer generated] images presented a utopian vision in response to what is a somewhat dystopian narrative of a helplessly deprived, fragmented and semi-derelict sub-region of London' (Evans, 2014; 358). In an imposition of planning that John Horne and Graeme Hayes liken to Naomi Klein's disaster capitalism 'shock doctrine', around a thousand people were displaced from their homes, justified by the nationalist 'togetherness' rhetoric of the Olympic festival (Horne and Hayes, 2011).

The Park has introduced a split into its landscape, creating a Stratford of 'two halves' (Bernstock, 2014). The East Village (as the Athletes' Village became) houses mostly young professionals, setting it at odds with the pre-existing population of Newham. In a 2012 study of 18-24 year-olds in supported housing, Jacqueline Kennelly and Paul Watt found a general hostility to the games, understood as an empty promise. For example the Westfield shopping centre was promoted as a provider of local jobs but was massively over-subscribed, with 10,000 people applying for 550 Marks and Spencer's jobs

(Kennelly and Watt, 2012;154). Other communities have attempted to resist changes that the Olympic Park is precipitating. Residents of the neighbouring Carpenters Estate have sought to secure and defend their community residences, building a high-profile campaign to do so (Watt, 2013). However, even this has failed to gain foothold, and most units on the estate now stand empty.

Alongside this forceful opportunity for redevelopment is a related opportunity for the securitisation of urban space. Mega-event redevelopment has been associated with 'military urbanism' in the case of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (McMichael, 2012), or shown to facilitate the expansion of surveillance in the Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 Olympic games (Samatas, 2011). This securitisation is in part a response to real or perceived threats of terrorism or civil disorder (Taylor and Toohey, 2007; Atkinson and Young, 2012). At the same time it is also a means of cleansing space, with certain people and practices repressed and evicted. Mega-events have seen the imposition of a 'broken windows' approach to policing in which visible 'mess' is treated as a precursor to disorder and a heightened emphasis is placed on the regulation of public space (Boyle and Haggerty, 2011). This effort at regulation can be understood as an attempt to close the gap between the imagined and sanitised space of planners and the messy reality of the urban environment (Kennelly and Watt, 2011).

London 2012 occurred in a context of austerity that had seen student protest and riot over the winter of 2010/11, the August 2011 riots, and the 9 month Occupy camp at St. Paul's Cathedral. As such there was significant pressure to ensure that the games were not subject to disorder. Bernard Holgan-Howe, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, introduced the 'total policing' doctrine in summer 2012, defending the use of kettling tactics against protestors and outlining a broken windows approach to disorder (Holgan-Howe, 2012). A logical extension of the paranoid and heavy-handed policing that following the riots, this appeared as the declaration of an 'Olympic state of exception' (Hancox, 2011). This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the arrest of

130 Critical Mass cyclists on the eve of the games (BBC News, 2012a). Again, the attempt to control space lead to a 'censorship of human kinds' in order to represent total security (Boyle and Haggerty, 2009; 263). However, this securitisation was largely successful on its own terms – one study found that 'tourists overall expressed lower than average concern over security problems in general and terrorism in particular' (George and Swart, 2015; 12).

The securitisation of space was not only achieved by the temporary stationing of police, soldiers, and private contractors around London. It was also a central planning concern, and one that continues to mark the Olympic Park long after the games have ended. These Olympic spaces were created with 'secure by design' techniques in mind, in a process that 'laminated' security provision throughout London, unifying and strengthening existing security measures (Coaffee, Fussey, and Moore, 2011). The production of the Olympic Park thus granted planners greater powers for moving existing communities and for creating a securitised space than would otherwise have been possible.

The Olympic mega-event also carries its own sense of scale, to which associated projects and events are elevated (DeHanas and Pieri, 2011; Evans, 2014). This can be understood as one element of the 'soft benefit's of the mega-event. While the games carry calculable primary and secondary impacts in revenue, redevelopment and subsequent sales (Poynter, 2006), they also bring a host of less quantifiable 'soft benefits' consisting of impact on sport participation, perception of the host city, boosts to patriotism, and so on. These soft benefits stem in large part from the festival that accompanies the event. Even before the start of London 2012, the games 'seemed to carry some kind of anticipation factor' (Hiller and Wanner, 2014; 5). When they arrived 86% of respondents reported that they were either 'slightly' or 'very' positive about the Olympics (ibid; 6). Looking back on the games four months later, 78% reported that the games 'cheered up the country during hard times ... and were well worth the cost' (ibid; 7).

Harry Hiller and Richard Wanner attribute this positivity to fact that the 'Olympics opens up leisure spaces and leisure time that transforms the normal rhythms of daily urban life' (ibid; 12). They suggest that the mega-event as festival 'provides an important sense of co-presence and vibrancy or animation for urban residents and facilitates coming together, tolerance and exchange, and a sense of community and collective memory' (ibid; 14). This positivity is clearly valued by mega-event hosts. It features in the 2002 proposal for a UK Olympic bid, which discusses benefits to public health through sports participation; the 'feelgood' boost sporting success can bring; and a sense of national unity through Olympic competition (Department for Media, Culture, and Sport and Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002).

Perhaps because these positives are difficult to quantify, they are often treated in the literature as though they were a means to an end employed by states and planners. A common suggestion is that the mega-event is a distraction from, or justification for, unpopular or threatening developments. This is a simplification of the complex factors involved in the production of the mega-event, tending towards an argument that hinges not on the material interest states have in these 'soft benefits', but on a theoretically thin model of false consciousness. Ian Lindsay's recent ethnography of the delivery of the London 2012 games stands as one example of this. He suggests that the mega-event is used to 'manufacture consent', writing that 'from a Marxist perspective, it could be argued that the 2012 Olympic games became an opiate to keep the masses in stupefied happiness' (ibid; 156). Such an argument is insulting to the people that it concerns itself with, and misses the point of Marx's opiate metaphor for religion¹.

1 That is, religion as an 'opiate' isn't intended to only imply that it functions as a stupefying force, but also to draw attention to the way in which it provides a necessary relief from pain, the role of opiates in society being as much medical as recreational. That quote in full is 'Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people' (Marx, 1843).

In my approach to the London 2012 games, I avoid taking this perspective. Instead of exploring the mega-event as an exercise in generating false consciousness in order to justify spatial transformation, I am interested in the mega-event and its festival as foundational to a practice of space that lies at the heart of that transformation. Following Michael Silk's suggestion that the mega-event be seen as a moment in which capital 'remakes the totality of space in its own setting', I am interested in the way in which this remaking of the built environment conditions a practice and understanding of space that is orientated towards the expanded reproduction of capital (Silk, 2011; 737). This thesis is directed towards the exploration of a production of space that occurs not only within the waged labour of planners and construction workers, but also throughout the practice of everyday life. As such, in order to understand the ways in which the 'hard' benefits of the mega-event (the depth and scale of transformation and securitisation) have effected change, it is also necessary to understand the impact of the 'soft' benefits. I now turn to a discussion of Henri Lefebvre, as the theorist underpinning this approach.

1.4 - Lefebvre and public urban space as concrete abstraction

Drawing on Lefebvre, I frame social practice as constitutive of a form of space specific to capitalism and of the physical space in which it is expressed. Social space, Lefebvre writes, is a 'social product' – it is continually under production and is itself a condition of production (Lefebvre, 1974; 26). Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid set out the implications that this understanding of the production of space has for the way in which urban transformation is approached. They propose that the urban, rather than being conceived as an objective form, be treated as a process: 'apparently stabilized urban sites are in fact merely temporary materializations of ongoing socio-spatial transformations' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015; 165).

Brenner and Schmid focus on continual and contradictory urbanisation as their central theoretical category. They propose three moments that interact to produce urbanisation as a constant process of change and renewal. They write that 'these moments refer not to distinct morphological conditions, geographical sites or temporal stages, but to mutually constitutive, dialectically intertwined elements of a historically specific process of socio-spatial transformation' (ibid; 169). This process consists of: 'concentrated urbanisation', the intensification of urban forms; 'extended urbanisation', the spread of urban forms into previously non-urban spaces; and 'differential urbanisation', similar to Lefebvre's 'implosion-explosion' – the 'perpetual drive to restructure socio-spatial organization under modern capitalism' (ibid; 168). Complicating these three moments, they also outline three dimensions of urbanisation that interact with each of the intertwining moments. Drawing on Lefebvre's description of the production of space, they name these dimensions spatial practice, by which space is produced; territorial regulation, by which space is managed according to processes of production and social reproduction; and everyday life, through which space is used, appropriated, and so transformed.

The production of the Olympic Park presents itself as an example of both concentrated and differential urbanisation. The mega-event was an opportunity for the intensification of urban forms, within an area of East London that had become peripheral to the economic functioning of London as a whole. At the same time, the transformation of space that it facilitated was a cannibalistic restructuring of space to suit new needs thrown up by evolving capitalist accumulation processes.

Brenner and Schmid relate the three dimensions of differential urbanisation to the 'creative destruction' of existing urban agglomerations. In spatial practice, there is a pressure towards the reorganisation of 'inherited geographies'; territorial regulation presents state institutions as instruments of transformation; and the 'reorganisation of social routines' follows from and completes this reorganisation of space (ibid; 171). They relate the three dimensions of

concentrated urbanisation to the way in which the 'power of agglomeration' is put to use, facilitating valorisation through the 'spatial clustering of population, means of production, infrastructure, and investment' (ibid; 170). Spatial practices produce spaces that 'harness the power of agglomeration'; territorial regulation promotes 'rule-regimes and planning systems' that govern this power; and the playing out of everyday life results in the production of 'forms of life associated with the power of agglomeration' (ibid; 171).

This model provides a framework for understanding the Olympic Park as an intervention in London's changing built environment. However, the complexity of the mega-event as the inaugural moment of this space also prompts a deeper investigation of its production, for which we must turn to Lefebvre's dialectic. This three-termed dialectic is developed throughout Lefebvre's work, coming to maturity in his writings on space. He suggests that while binary oppositions have structured much of Western thought and philosophy, 'a triadic structure long present within the Western logos has emerged since Hegel' (Lefebvre, 1980; 50). While a binary opposition 'vanishes as it takes shape, turning into an image and a reflection', Lefebvre argues that a three-termed relationship is 'inexhaustible', resulting in dynamic change and novelty (ibid). In earlier writing he proposed a broad triad of praxis, poiesis, and mimesis. Here praxis refers to material activity productive of social relationships, poiesis to activity that appropriates and transforms nature, and mimesis to the reproduction of existing forms in such a manner that introduces difference, secreting social structure and simultaneously elaborating conflictual change (Lefebvre; 1965).

Schmid centres this presence of novelty within Lefebvre's triad. Following Marx's inversion of Hegel's idealism, Lefebvre begins with an opposition between the conceptual and the material (Schmid, 2008; 32). However, he also alters the structure of the dialectic, conceptualising *aufheben* not as a resolution, but as a third pole mediating between the other two. For this element of excess Lefebvre draws on Nietzsche, writing that this creative force 'cannot be fully defined, cannot be exhaustively determined' (Lefebvre, cited in Schmid,

2008; 31). This creative moment represents 'the unity of the finite and the infinite, endlessly determined and living' (ibid). The triadic dialectic therefore represents 'the contradiction between social thought and social action, supplemented by the third factor of the creative, poetic act', remaining open and in flux (ibid; 33).

Applying this triad to the production of space, Lefebvre names the moments spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation. Spatial practice 'designates the material dimension of social activity', while representations of space 'give space an image and thus also define a space' (Schmid, 2008; 36). These correspond to social action and social thought respectively, with spaces of representation corresponding to the creative act, the excessive element of social life that renders physical space a 'vehicle for conveying meaning' (ibid). The production of space is therefore not the 'narrow' production of commodities but the social constitution of our lived environment, through processes that encompass a tension between the concrete and the abstract, mediated by the potential for novelty and the creation of the new. Rather than an ahistorical social-constructionist image of social space as social product, Lefebvre presents a historically specific understanding of space under capitalism as a concrete abstraction: within this mediated opposition between abstract thought and social action, the abstract is dominant.

This concern for the dominance of the abstract is a unifying theme throughout Lefebvre's work, at the heart of his writings on everyday life and on social space. Japhy Wilson writes that for Lefebvre, 'abstraction is a complex and inherently violent process through which a richly differentiated socio-spatial reality is progressively emptied of its substantive content and reduced to the 'economic' abstractions of money and the commodity, the 'cultural' abstractions of quantification and calculability, and the 'political' abstraction of state power' (Wilson, 2014; 519). When Lefebvre discusses social space under capitalism he is discussing abstract space. He traces the development of abstract space alongside capitalist accumulation, as 'the result of a vast and largely

uncoordinated set of historical–geographical processes' that allow its instrumentalisation in the expanded reproduction of capital and the consolidation of state power (ibid; 519).

Wilson describes abstract space as both structural and symbolic: a set of material 'grids, nodes and networks of property, production and exchange through which the law of value exerts its abstract domination', reflected in a symbolic content representing only a homogeneous quantitative rationality (ibid; 520). This space facilitates the valorisation of capital and reflects the form of value. Like Sohn-Rethel's 'real abstraction' it arises not in thought but in the 'spatio-temporal sphere of human interrelations' (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; 19). Having been brought to life in material social relations, abstract space comes to dominate those relations.

Like the form of value, the form of space under capitalism is split, at once concrete and abstract, particular and general, fragmented and homogeneous: 'as with every commodity, space reflects the duality of the abstract and concrete aspects of labour by which it is produced' (Stanek, 2008; 70). As with time, the space in which capital is valorised is shaped by that process:

Whereas the form of the commodity characterises all commodities regardless of their specific features, the form of space is the most general relationship between locations that can be attributed to every location independently of the differences between them. Lefebvre described the form of the commodity as the possibility of exchange conceived independently of what is exchanged, while the form of space is defined as the possibility of encounter, assembly, and simultaneous gathering regardless of what – or who – is gathered
(Stanek, 2008; 73)

Here we return to Brenner and Schmid's concentrated urbanisation. The production of a space such as the Olympic Park should be understood as a process of gathering in order to mobilise the potential for centrality that defines the capitalist form of space. The production of public urban space is thus entirely conditioned by the fact that this space is a concrete abstraction that reflects the form of value. Its production is not simply a matter of material

labour, but takes in each of the three moments of Lefebvre's triad. The simultaneously abstract and concrete nature of capitalist space means that the production of space requires an instrumentalisation of spatial practice, representations of space, and space as lived and representational: 'space is produced not only by material and economic practices, but also on the level of conceptual, aesthetic, symbolic, and phantasmic appropriation' (Stanek, 2011; 149). It is this holistic production of the Olympic Park as intervention in London's built environment that I unpack in this thesis.

1.5 - Thesis structure

In describing the production of the Olympic Park I am concerned at heart with the constitution of dominating abstractions in the practice of everyday life. I aim to describe the abstract domination of capital, as an alienating and impoverishing influence on the social life in which it grows. This is a concern I share with Lefebvre when he writes 'alienation – I know it is there in the love song I sing or the poem I recite, in the banknote I handle or the shop I enter, in the poster I glance at or in the lines of this journal. At the very moment the human is defined as 'having possessions' I know it is there, dispossessing the human' (Lefebvre and Guterman, cited in Elden, 2004; 110). However, precisely this rooting of abstract domination in living practice means an indeterminable and utopian potential remains submerged within everyday life and suspended within the social forms it gives rise to. As well as exploring the constitution of dominating abstractions in (and of) space, I therefore seek to locate this utopian possibility.

In framing the Olympic games and their legacy as orientated towards embedding a particular mode of accumulation in space, I underline the way in which this materialisation of social form is intimately connected to the social reproduction of capital. Further, I demonstrate the way in which this utopian potential, rather than simply existing at odds with socially dominant forms, is in

fact essential to their constitution. As such, I look to the contradictory presence of a utopian content within the abstract forms of capitalism, as it is embodied in the material life of the Olympic Park.

I understand this space as an 'actually existing abstract space', following Wilson's description of such spaces as those that directly embody 'the structural, symbolic and direct forms of violence inherent to the process of abstraction' (Wilson, 2014; 517). Like Klaus Ronneberger, I am interested in the way in which this form of space is conditioned by prevailing global and local conditions of accumulation. His description of a post-Fordist restructuring of urban space as fragmenting urban space into laboratories for institutional innovation is particularly relevant to the Olympic Park: 'new, dense spaces that in some way combine work, residence, shopping, and entertainment are created on abandoned central city spaces (former railway and port lands)' (Ronneberger, 2008; 143). Michael Leary also applies Lefebvre to contemporary large-scale redevelopment, on a post-industrial site in Manchester. However, in seeking to locate 'the inadvertent production of differential space' Leary presents a simplistic understanding of Lefebvre's dialectic, functionally collapsing it into a binary opposition between spatial domination and resistance (Leary, 2013; 6). I am interested in uncovering similar dynamics within the Olympic Park, but cleave closer to Wilson's more sophisticated understanding of the ways in which contradictions between living content and abstract form 'constitute the incipient praxis of a differential space' (Wilson, 2014; 529). In the case of the Olympic Park, as the rupture that would realise this differential space is currently unforthcoming, I am interested in detailing the ways in which this 'incipient praxis' might nevertheless be recognised.

In the next chapter, I outline my approach to the ethnographic research that lies at the heart of this project. Here I address my choice of an embodied approach to this work, centred on practices of urban walking. I relate this methodological choice to Lefebvre's comments in *Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the*

Pavillon (1966a). I also discuss my understanding of the body as research tool, relating this phenomenological approach to Lefebvre's triad of conceived, perceived, and lived space, in order to further highlight the affinity between this methodological approach and Lefebvre's work (Lefebvre, 1974; 38).

Recognising the necessity of reflexivity within this approach, I outline my own queer and transgender embodiment, reviewing existing literature on transgender embodiment and experience of space, and illustrating the ways in which this interacted with and complicated my methodology. Drawing on Donna Haraway (1989) I discuss my approach to representation of the self and research subjects within ethnographic text and suggest some ways in which it may be productive to think further about research from the partial perspective of a transgender embodiment.

Analysis of my pilot project forms the content of chapter 3, my first substantive chapter. Here I describe the 'moment' of the games as a suspended period of festival possibility (Lefebvre, 1961; 642). While the moment is often used to theorise rupture within the everyday reproduction of capital, I present a festival moment subsumed to the valorisation of capital. Lefebvre writes that although the moment offers a glimpse at total transformation, it also has a 'specific negativity' in that it is 'destined to fail' and therefore 'provokes and defines a determined alienation' (ibid; 641). This moment expresses a tension between alienation and dis-alienation where utopian possibility (and the abstract domination it births) 'takes shape within the everyday, comes into being in the everyday, and always returns to the everyday' (ibid). I explore the origin of Olympic festival in an uncertain affective charge that resolved itself at the moment of the opening ceremony and dissipated at the closing ceremony. Positioning this festival as essential to the constitution of Olympic space, I present the production of abstract space as occurring as much in a socially 'excessive' living of space as it does in the abstract representation or the ordered practice of space. Having described the genesis of this constitutive affective charge I move through these three moments of Lefebvre's triad, relating each to the production of space at the mega-event and ending on a

discussion of the production and consumption of the mega-event as experiential commodity.

The remaining three substantive chapters originate in my main fieldwork period. In these chapters I expand on the argument that the production of abstract space takes in not only a realm of social life directly or indirectly mediated by value, but also the whole of social life as it is lived in the everyday. Mirroring my first substantive chapter I structure these chapters loosely around a further exploration of Lefebvre's triad, finding in each moment elements of social life 'outside' of valorisation that are nonetheless essential to it, and also elements that transcend or escape valorisation despite their role in its reproduction.

In chapter 4, I look back at the creation of the Olympic Park, drawing on archival documents and interviews as well as my experience of the tail-end of the Park's re-construction for its Legacy era. I foreground the way in which the production of the Olympic Park as actually existing abstract space proceeded from a conceptual production of space, a representation that was subsequently materialised. I describe the Lower Lea Valley as it was immediately prior to its transformation into the Olympic Park, using Tim Edensor's distinction between 'Dionysian' and 'Apollonian' spaces to theorise its post-industrial disorder and subsequent re-ordering (Edensor, 2005a). I suggest that the conceptual and material production of this space as a blank slate on which construction could begin represented an ordering of value-dissociated space, that would re-incorporate it into a mode of accumulation presently encouraged by the UK state. I draw attention to the ways in which the continuing reproduction of capital rests on the appropriation of social spaces and social life outside of dominant valorisation processes, and discuss the Legacy-era Park as abstract space designed to gather and dominate the practice of this newly productive space.

In chapter 5 I turn to the Park as a 'living breathing piece of the city' (as one redevelopment slogan phrases it), based on my ethnographic observation of the Park gradually becoming inhabited between the autumn 2013 and summer

2014. Having suggested the manner by which abstract space conditions practice in the previous chapter, here I explore Lefebvre's second formant – the perception and practice of space – more fully. In order to discuss the formation of regular patterns of everyday practice, I introduce a discussion of time, drawing on Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* (1992) alongside work on time as a real abstraction by Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1974) and Moishe Postone (1993). I explore the ways in which, as the Park became inhabited, different rhythms and temporalities became recognisable in its various spaces. I distinguish between spaces of leisure, spaces of exchange, and spaces of production, each characterised by their own temporality and rhythm. These abstract-and-concrete temporalities, like Lefebvre's abstract space, take a form conditioned by the form of value and are structured around its reproduction. I argue that both abstract space and abstract time are constituted through a management of everyday practice outside of the wage that complicates and contradicts the 'abstractness' of that space-time even as it re-creates it, existing as a tension between social life as dominated by capital and that life as excess that overflows any domination.

In chapter 6 I broaden my focus beyond the Park, exploring its relation to similar spaces across London. I outline a shared character of these spaces: a post-industrial past, an anti-urban aesthetic, and an emphasis on leisure uses. As such I suggest that they can be considered an emerging 'isotopia' (Lefebvre, 1974; 366). Returning to Arrighi's systemic cycles of accumulation via Frederick Jameson (1998), I relate the defining features of this isotopia to the structure and form of the financialised mode of accumulation that they are orientated towards. Here I focus on the third moment of Lefebvre's triad, the production of lived and representational space, suggesting that the aesthetic of Olympic space is characterised by a 'playfulness' that renders it representative of the movement of capital in its financialised form. Once again I locate a submerged utopian content within this representational quality, as the Park comes to appear as the capitalist city perfected, collapsing the boundaries that structure everyday life. However, I demonstrate that this utopian image is at root a

mystification, a representation that arises in the moment that it meets the reality of capitalist accumulation and dissipates, subsumed within the reproduction of its own domination.

In my conclusion I return to a discussion of the way in which the Park encourages a particular mode of life and thus acts to expand ongoing transformations within London's built environment. I begin with an examination of the way in which the Park was presented as 'catalyst' for redevelopment. I relate this to Lefebvre's concept of 'centrality', underlining that it is precisely the Park's existence as an 'actually existing abstract space' that allows it to function in this way (Lefebvre, 1974; 331). I also re-purpose this image, using it to discuss the ways in which the Park acts as a catalyst for the alienated praxis on which its role as centrality rests. I draw out the way in which this dynamic has informed each of my substantive chapters, before turning to the ways in which the utopian quality of the everyday remains as kernel within this praxis, again referring back to my substantive chapters. I conclude on the suggestion that actually existing abstract spaces such as the Olympic Park can be understood as 'catalysts' for a sharpening of tensions, contradictions, and sources of rupture that would realise the utopian potential folded into the Park's production.

2 - Methodology: walking in the Olympic Park

2.1 - Introduction

The research on which this thesis is premised can be considered a work of urban ethnography, of ethnography 'at home', and of embodied ethnography. I took as my focus a public space within London, a cultural setting that I have inhabited throughout my life. I approached this space through a solitary walking practice, orientated towards investigating the material culture of that built environment. I address each of these elements here – and also address the unforeseen complication that this research practice introduced, due to my queer and transgender embodiment. Although the argument of my substantive chapters doesn't concern gender or a queer analysis directly, in my fieldnotes a queer experience of public space emerged as an unexpected secondary narrative. I was aware before I began this project that my self-presentation would influence the interactions and experiences that constituted my fieldwork, but as I came to understand this fieldwork as an exploration of the embodied practice of space the specificities of my own body came to warrant discussion.

My gender presentation and self-understanding also evolved during my research. As I began the pilot project I identified as genderqueer² and would complicate my masculine body (beard and all) with makeup and feminine clothing as a means of expressing a non-binary gender identity. My aim was a rejection of stable masculinity rather than the coherent presentation of a feminine identity. However, concerned about the potential for this presentation of self to complicate my interactions with others I 'dressed down' to conduct my fieldwork. For the pilot project I wore jeans and t-shirts that would be read unproblematically as male (although not necessarily as straight). To some degree, such a presentation reduced potential complications of my experience

2 See Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins (2002) and Sycamore (2006) for discussion of a variety of non-binary and gender-queer identities and modes of presentation

of space, but at the same time I felt a certain distance from this masculine relation to my surroundings: a discomfort in my presentation.

By the time I began my main fieldwork period I had been presenting in a more straightforwardly feminine manner for some time. During this period I began shaving my beard and adjusting the shape of my body to conform (rather than clash) with the clothes that I was wearing. By this point I did not feel comfortable dressing in a masculine manner to conduct my research, but still appeared visibly queer, likely understood as anything between a 'man in drag' to a non-passing transwoman. This presentation had a more significant impact on my experience of space than my previous attempt to de-emphasise queerness had. Where a reversion to masculine gender presentation had rendered me normative within the space (understanding the white, cis-male body as an unmarked body), I was now marked both as feminine and as queer.

Because I chose a methodology that would foreground my embodied presence in space, this transgender quality of my embodiment became unavoidable in my fieldnotes. It would flare up as I found myself confronted as a queer presence in space, or lie as background static in my description of routes, gestures, and places. When I began my write-up I was confronted with a dilemma: I did not want to ignore or discount these interruptions and presences within my text, but at the same time they remained largely tangential to the thrust of my argument³. As my queer embodiment was more significant to my research practice than my analysis, I provide an account of it here alongside a more general discussion of methodology and writing practice. I then allow it to remain as a largely submerged theme throughout my substantive chapters, generally addressed only in methodological discussions in their introductions, or when it directly impacted a relevant account of fieldwork experience.

3 That is, while the gendered nature of space is closely entwined with the relationship between the everyday (re)production of space and of capital (for example, in the distinction between public and private that structures the spatialisation of productive and reproductive labour), to fully unpack the particular implications of a transgender experience of space within this framework would be a significant project in itself, not something to attempt alongside a more general argument.

In this chapter I present this project as an urban ethnography 'at home', premised on walking practice. I begin with a discussion of the body as a research tool, drawing on phenomenological contributions to ethnographic literature. I supplement this with a discussion of transgender embodiment, using queer and feminist theorists in order to name the specificities of my embodied ethnography. I then outline my walking practice, relating urban ethnography to Henri Lefebvre's methodological comments, the Situationists, and other theorists of urban walking. I will demonstrate a unity between the understanding of space that underlays this methodology and the theoretical framework that informs my analysis. Again, I supplement this discussion with a more specific exploration of the transgender body in space.

As the first two sections concern this project as embodied and urban ethnography, the third will consider it as ethnography at home, approached through an interrogation of 'the field' and representation in ethnographic text. I argue that the field might be understood as consciously constructed throughout the research process, here centred on the embodied presence of the researcher. I will discuss ethnographic and literary representations of urban space that adhere to this approach. To end this chapter, I turn to the way in which, informed by these principles, I went about collecting data. This is not to suggest that the principles presented here were finalised before I went to the field. I proceeded by feeling my way: looking for ways to locate myself within a space, to record my movements and thoughts, to approach people and find relevant documents. The methodological account presented here is therefore just as much the result of an iterative process of reading and writing as is the argument that follows it.

2.2 - The body as research tool

In conducting this study my primary approach to an understanding of space – its physical layout, the feel of its sub-divisions, and the rhythms of practice that

define its social life – was through my body. My fieldwork was spent moving through empty or crowded spaces, newly-constructed areas and areas marked by long-accumulated histories of practice, spaces defined by work, by consumption, by leisure, and by rest. My physical presence in space led my thought: the distinctions that arose in my embodied explorations structure my analytical framework. As such, the body itself, the body in space, and my body in particular must be considered as a starting point to this theoretical and analytical project.

Research that premises the collection of ethnographic data on an awareness of the body is fairly common. Because ethnography proceeds by physically placing the researcher amongst their participants, some level of inward attention towards embodied senses and perceptions is expected. Those studies that foreground this awareness often do so under the rubric of phenomenology, of which there is now quite a tradition. In the 1970s, James Heap and Philip Roth identified four categories of phenomenology-influenced research. The first of these 'makes use of a phenomenological philosophical perspective' and 'stresses "the primacy of consciousness and subjective meaning in the interpretation of social action"' (Natanson, cited in Heap and Roth, 1973; 362). The second 'adopts an explicit and clarified phenomenological philosophical perspective as its foundation', following Alfred Schutz's use of the concept of the life-world (ibid). The third broadens this phenomenological influence to include Merleau-Ponty and is 'predicated on the recognition that sociology is in and about the very life-world that it studies', thus making a self-reflexive move (ibid).

Finally, their fourth category is 'ethnomethodology' as a whole, based on the assertion that this approach to research already shares an affinity with phenomenological philosophy. This affinity consists of a shared attitude towards the objects that constitute the 'domain of everyday life' (ibid; 363). In both, the 'natural attitude' towards these objects (which assumes an a priori and ongoing existence independent of the social actor) is bracketed in favour of one that

treats them as inseparable from the practices by which they become known.

They write that:

The domain of phenomenological inquiry, then, consists solely of the recognisable structures of immediate consciousness; while the domain of ethnomethodological inquiry consists solely of members' situated practices which produce for themselves and for observers the sense of objective social structures

(Heap and Roth, 1973; 364)

This highlighting of the way in which the material and social world is created in the same actions by which it is made available as an object of knowledge, draws attention to the embodied position of the researcher in the field. This approach was essential to my project: as I was concerned with the production of space in the everyday activity of its users, I was keen to foreground experience of mundane practice as socially constitutive of the material world and of our understandings of it. However, while Heap and Roth's point is that 'phenomenology, properly understood, can contribute to sociological enterprises, properly understood', I do not claim to present a tightly conceived application of phenomenological philosophy to the study of space (ibid; 365). Like Burkart Holzner, responding to Heap and Roth in *American Sociological Review*, I question the significance of 'Husserlian rigour', agreeing that 'it may be sociologically more fruitful to misunderstand Husserl, than to understand and "apply" his work correctly' (Holzner, 1974; 286).

I therefore take this perspective as a jumping-off point: a spotlight on the body, its gestures, and the social as interrelated and co-constitutive. This broadly phenomenological approach to an ethnography of space and its social constitution is particularly suited to the Lefebvrian analysis that I apply. A similar appropriation of phenomenological thought influenced the second iteration of his three-termed dialectic as applied to the production of space, as perceived, conceived, and lived space (Schmid, 2008). Further, Lefebvre's appropriation of phenomenological categories provides a corrective to the potentially a-political implications of the idea that the world and its perception are mutually

constituted. Because his phenomenology-inflected triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived, relates to the production of abstract space, Lefebvre ties this approach into the analysis of concrete abstractions, and thus the abstract domination of capital.

Margarethe Kusenbach illustrates another mobilisation of phenomenological philosophy within the study of space, describing a 'street phenomenology' (Kusenbach, 2003). She writes that since 'our experience of the environment is fundamentally based on the coordinates of our living body' the living body should be placed at the centre the study of space (ibid; 455). Recognising that the strict bracketing of all preconception demanded by some attempts to incorporate phenomenological philosophy into research methods is a 'myth', she instead calls for a reflexive awareness of the positionality of the researcher (ibid; 458). This results in a double awareness, first of a material embodiment in space and second of a broader social positioning, in which the researcher 'locates themselves within the context of their research and writing' (ibid). This is the approach that I have adopted in the production of this thesis.

This doubled awareness offers a grounded means by which to approach the study of space as a process of bodily learning. It draws attention to an awareness of the position from which you approach a (social) space as a researcher, and to an awareness of the sensory and perceptual processes by which you come to know that space. Holding both simultaneously means a reflexive learning of space through the body that refuses an idea of the generic body or universally objective viewpoint.

To take three examples of ethnographic research that foreground bodily experience, Elisabeth Hsu writes about learning to perform acupuncture, Robyn Longhurst, Elsie Ho, and Lynda Johnston discuss communal food consumption, and Loic Waquant describes learning to box. Hsu provides a description of the embodied learning of a delicate skill, the initial apprehension of needling giving way to the 'joy,' 'empowerment', and extension of self to include tools that

accompanied mastery (Hsu, 2006; 157). She writes that 'the experience of emotional elation, empowerment, and trust in one's tools, techniques and knowledge, which is likely to escape the participant observer, fundamentally transforms the attitude of the researcher engaging in 'participant experience' towards her subject of learning' (ibid; 158). Wacquant's description of learning is similar, suggesting that it is important to move beyond 'the contemplative and de-temporalising posture of the theoretical gaze' (Wacquant, 2004; 58). He argues that 'boxing makes sense as soon as one gets close enough to grasp it with one's body' (ibid; 7). Finally, Longhurst, Ho, and Johnston position the body as an 'instrument of research', in order to 'examine what embodied senses such as smell and taste can add to our understanding of relationships between people and places' (Longhurst, Ho, & Johnston, 2008; 214). They investigate the sharing of national dishes amongst a group of migrants, exploring the senses of distinction that are encoded in bodily reactions to particular flavours and tastes.

These studies illustrate the way in which an embodied approach to research is not simply an attitude towards bodily sensation but a cumulative process of learning, by which the body comes to recognise distinctions that may have passed the researcher by. These learned distinctions often register beyond a merely physical set of sensations, taking in affective states and embodied experience of social significances. My own practice of spatial exploration was deliberately repetitive, both to observe gradual change, and in order to develop a sense of the Park's distinct sub-spaces. It provided me with a means by which to study otherwise mute materialities. The body as research tool engages with others via objects and also with objects and material culture directly, allowing the exploration of empty, abandoned, or unfinished spaces as well as those filled with crowds or inhabited by particular communities.

This bodily learning constitutes one half of the doubled awareness of embodied research – to complete it, a reflexive consideration of the researcher is also necessary. I have conducted this research from the particular perspective of my

own body: a white, able, and queer body. While significant literatures exist around each of these modalities of embodiment⁴, here I want to concentrate on providing a description of transgender embodiment. While my body as white and as able is unmarked, as transgender it is riven with tensions both in the way in which it is externally represented and read, and to some extent in the way in which it is inwardly felt.

Much of the literature around transgender embodiment centres on the modified body, either related to other forms of body modification or sharply differentiated from them by the complication of gender identity. Nikki Sullivan represents the first approach, likening physical transition to practices of cosmetic and 'alternative' bodily modification. She suggests that 'in one sense at least, all of these forms of embodiment could be said to constitute and to be constituted by, transmogrification: that is, a process of (un)becoming strange and/or grotesque, (un)becoming other' (Sullivan, 2006; 561). Bernice Hausman takes the opposite approach, highlighting the difference between transition and body modification by drawing attention to common narratives of transgender autobiography. She writes that the central significance of medical transition is necessarily contradictory in these narratives, as the body is understood simultaneously as inconsequential to gender as a 'psychological construct disconnected from physiology' and yet is central to its living – otherwise 'sex reassignment surgery would be unnecessary' (Hausman, 1995; 352).

Both poles of this literature present the transgender body as one defined by an 'otherness' and a conflict between the existing categories of sex, gender, nature, and culture – either through the simple fact of body modification or in the contradiction between gender as identity and gender as physiology. Donna Haraway makes a similar argument in *The Cyborg Manifesto*, claiming the transgender body as one image of the cyborg identity that she imagines precipitating the collapse of boundaries between human and animal, organic and machine, physical and non-physical. While this emerging cyborg world

4 See Alcoff (1999), Macey (1999), and Mills (2014) on race, and Breckenridge and Vogler (2001), Siebers (2010), and Snyder and Mitchell (2001) on dis/ability

threatens 'the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet', at the same time 'a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints' (Haraway, 1991; 107).

While physical transition was not part of my bodily experience during this research project, these discussions highlight the contradictory boundary-crossing that forms the heart of social understandings of what it is to be transgender. This quality of otherness is central to the ways in which the transgender body is read, categorised, and reacted to. Susan Stryker: 'transsexual embodiment, like the embodiment of the monster, places its subject in an unassimilable, antagonistic, queer relationship to a Nature in which it must nevertheless exist' (Stryker, 1994; 248). Rather than an experience of the transformed body, Stryker focuses on 'the subjective experience of being compelled to transgress what Judith Butler referred to as the highly gendered regulatory schemata that determine the viability of bodies' (ibid; 253). This inevitable transgression of categories is both internally felt and materialised in interactions with others.

Riki Anne Wilchins provides an account of the way in which reactions to her began to change as she was read more consistently as feminine. She writes:

that my body became the site of all kinds of social inspection and pronouncements didn't surprise me. But the virulence did. I was accosted from every direction: from the men who hissed at me on street corners; to the man on the train who leaned over and said, "nice tits", as I boarded; to the construction workers who whistled or yelled, "faggot!"; to the driver who rolled down his window at a crowded intersection, the very first time I went out in a dress, to shout, "God, you are uuug-ly!"
(Wilkins, 1997; 548)

The experience of these mixed and contradictory reactions to her queer body meant her body, 'heretofore just a place to put food, carry out certain operations of pleasure, and get me from point A to point B, had overnight become an

armed camp which I surveyed at my peril' (Wilchins, 1997; 548). This instability of categorisation and inability to predict how the body will be read results in a hyper-awareness of the body as signifier and a gradual distancing of self from it. For Wilchins, the central experience of transgender embodiment is not a direct experience of the body at all, but a concern for way in which others perceive it: 'it becomes successively less important what her body feels like than how she feels about it' (ibid; 549). The transgender subject is denied a stable self-image and is therefore denied immediate self-knowledge, always relying on (and yet unsure of) the reactions of others.

This hyper-awareness of the body as surface and collection of signifiers comes through in my fieldnotes, as does the transgression of categories as provocation for abuse. Like Wilchins, I can name a set of instances of transphobic harassment – a builder shouts 'what it is? We'll never know!' to impress his sniggering friends; a man follows me around the post-office demanding to know if I am a man or a woman; another man propositions me in an off-licence, then says 'I love winding you girls up, or you boys up, or whatever you are'. These moments of explicit confrontation represent points at which a more generalised unease spills over into active hostility. This relationship between the transgender body-as-surface and its surroundings becomes encoded in space itself. On one level this occurs through the accumulation of experience and memory: spaces in which previous abusive encounters have occurred become more anxiety-provoking, while other spaces feel safer. On a second level certain spaces seem to act through an unconscious provocation of anxious or relaxed affect, playing off subtle social signifiers and modes of inhabitation. Some spaces encourage a heightened awareness of the body-as-surface while in other spaces it fades into the background.

Here, Hausman's description of the tension between gender as intangible 'psychological construct' and as an experience of the physiology of the body is useful. This contradiction between gender's two modes is played out across bodily surfaces. Stryker's writing demonstrates that external reactions to the

body shape its internal experience, while at the same time a particular experience of the body itself drives transgender desire for self-representation in the 'transgressive' manner that provokes those reactions. The transgender body can thus be understood not only as a modified body or a body marked by the transgression of social categories, but as a body riven by a tension between gender as physiology and gender as identity, mediated by the way in which each is derived from a wider set of relations structured around social reproduction. This mediation of gender as identity and experience by gender as objective structuring abstraction relates that internal contradiction to oppositions between public and private, active and passive, culture and nature. In doing so it renders the subjective navigation of transgender social position productive of a particular mode of embodiment and experience.

An embodied approach to this research project, then, has helped orientate me towards a doubled awareness, both of my physical embodiment in space and my social and political location within 'the field'. It has helped me to develop a process of learning space through the body, and has drawn attention to the presence of distinctions that register on differing levels of embodied perception. It has also prompted me to consider the significance of my own embodiment and bodily representation. The tensions, contradictions, and juxtapositions of multiple gendered signifiers that my queer and transgender body presents has meant that I attract particular attentions, and feel my body and the spaces that I inhabit in particular ways. This research project has been informed by an awareness of space filtered through a bodily surface on which tensions between gender as social abstraction, as personal identity, and as bodily material unfold.

2.3 - Studying space

In the *Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the Pavillon*, Lefebvre encourages an embodied approach to the study of space, relating such an approach to his developing understanding of the production of space. He writes that there is a 'double system' to space, wherein the 'palpable and verbal, "objectal" and

semantic' lie in parallel (Lefebvre, 1966a; 126). Between these two systems 'there are always gaps, discrepancies, even hiatuses', which develop separately due to the way in which 'events that alter or overturn society act differently on objects and the language, and on the various partial systems' (ibid). In order to understand these 'two messages', the researcher must attend to systems of overt signification and also to mute systems of spatial arrangement. In this manner 'the system of objects enables us to delimit and analyse the system of verbal significations, and conversely' (ibid; 128).

Here, Lefebvre provides a political content to the process of bodily learning that characterises embodied ethnographic research. The recognition of gaps, discrepancies, and points of tension is a key method by which the contradictory unfolding of capital might be recognised. The study of space as a fractured and contradictory concrete abstraction demands an approach that attends to these parallel systems by which it is apprehended. Lefebvre calls for a 'materialist theory of knowledge' that would undermine or escape the bourgeois idealism by which capital represents itself (Lefebvre, 1933; 72). The apparent diversity of bourgeois culture masks a fundamental homogeneity – a 'unity in dispersal, [and] monotony in fragmentation' that mystifies the observer. Locating internal contradiction exposes the real content reflected within this mystified and inverted appearance.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre presents a body-space relationship in which both are constituted by the expenditure of energy in gestures, marks, and traces (Lefebvre, 1974; 174). These actions create space and the conditions of possibility for knowledge of space at the same time, constituting an 'intelligence of the body', that came 'long before the analysing, separating intellect, long before formal knowledge' (ibid). From this collection of actions springs a tripled space⁵. This space is defined first by the 'production of goods, things, objects of exchange' (concrete practice), secondly by the 'productive process considered at a higher level, as the result of accumulated knowledge' (abstract

5 Once again these three formants of space correspond to the structure of Lefebvre's triadic dialectic

representation), and thirdly by the 'signifying process' (space as concretely representational) (ibid; 137).

Under capitalism the third of these, 'the freest creative process', is constrained, existing only as a 'seed' (ibid). Instead, the dominance of conceived and represented space means that bodily experience is made secondary to the abstract idea of space: 'living bodies, the bodies of “users” – are caught up not only in the toils of parcellised space, but also in the web of what philosophers call “analogons”: images, signs, and symbols' (ibid; 98). Of course, bodily experience of space is not erased. Space, despite the dominance of its representation, remains a *real* abstraction continually re-made in concrete practice. It is for this reason that attentiveness to embodiment can help unpack the nature of space and its constitution, bringing to the fore tensions between its three formants.

As an ethnography of an urban public space this project also draws on a tradition of urban ethnography. Originating in the Chicago School's transferral of anthropological theory and technique onto a newly-identified internal 'other', urban anthropology initially simply applied kinship models of social organisation to urban life (Jaynes, 2009). Since then, work on the urban has turned towards a theorisation of urban space itself rather than the social structures that space 'holds'. However, it remains an area of study lacking clear definition. It has been variously described as 'undertheorised' (Low, 1996; 383); 'among most contentious of fields' (Short & Hughes, 2009; 398); and as beset by an 'unnecessary, self-inflicted identity problem resulting from a lack of consensus on how it should be defined' (Whiteford, 1994; 12). Reading Lefebvre alongside this body of work evades some of these problems by establishing at the outset an understanding of 'urban space', its constitution, and the ways in which it might best be grasped. Blurred distinctions between 'the city' and 'urban space' lie close to the heart of this identity problem. It is therefore useful to tease apart these conflicting approaches to the city and to focus on ethnographic practice orientated towards urban space.

Lefebvre rejects discussion of the 'city' in favour of 'urban society', writing that the city 'appears to designate a clearly defined, definitive object' while the urban appears 'not as an accomplished reality, situated behind the actual in time, but, on the contrary, as a horizon, an illuminating virtuality' (Lefebvre, 1970; 16). Urban society originates in the fact that 'commercial exchange became an urban function, which was embodied in a form', that then 'gave urban space a new structure' (ibid; 10). However, the urban fabric that comprises the space of this society is an 'uneven mesh' rather than a unified totality (Lefebvre, in Elden, 2004; 131). In extending beyond the 'city' to the whole of social space, the urban 'loses the features it inherited from the previous period: organic totality, belonging, an uplifting image, a sense of space that was measured and dominated by monumental splendour' (Lefebvre, 1970; 14).

Given that the city as graspable object melts away just at the moment of its ascendancy, the identity crisis that plagues urban anthropology is unsurprising. This characterisation of the urban as a problematic that 'imposes itself on the world scale' re-orientates an approach to urban anthropology (Lefebvre, in Elden, 2004; 131). These studies can be enriched by acknowledging the continual (re)production of space, attending to the urban as process and horizon within a specific set of capitalist social relations.

Understanding the urban as process suggests the necessity of an awareness not only of the spatial but also of the temporal. Jack Katz promotes one such approach, writing that 'the key question for urban ethnography today is not whether to work on a macro- or micro- level, or whether to embrace theory over grounded data, but to realise that we start participant observation at the current end of a temporal continuum on which the relevant past is elaborately obscured' (Katz, 2010; 41). Further, attending to the social production of space allows for an image of the urban fabric as elastic, transforming according to its use and inhabitation. Radice (2011) provides a discussion of this style of research within anthropology, noting the difficulty of studying public spaces and streets, as they

either fragment into more specific and small-scale places or dissolve into broader and vaguer notions of neighbourhood. Within urban society, space is ultimately contingent, so a methodological approach that looks to describe these processes is required.

An embodied approach to the study of space lends itself well to these theoretical and methodological demands. Sarah Pink discusses ethnography as place-making practice, arguing that as individuals are always embodied and 'emplaced', so are ethnographers (Pink, 2008). Reflexive ethnography can play off this, seeking to 'understand how others remember and imagine through their own immediate embodied experiences' (ibid; 193). Walking practice is a common theme amongst researchers who attempt an embodied approach to the study of urban public space, often taking influence from the psychogeographic concept of the *derive*. Keith Basset provides an overview of this tradition, concentrating on urban walking as an 'aesthetic practice and critical tool' (Basset, 2004). He cites a diverse set of related figures and practices: the flaneur; the Dadaist 'event'; Surrealist 'deambulations' Walter Benjamin's urban exploration; the Situationist 'derive'; 1960s land artists; and Ian Sinclair and contemporary London psychogeography.

These walking practices emphasise the experience of space as a series of juxtaposed similarities and differences – as 'ambient spaces' that the walker slips between and through. Gregory Dart likens this movement between spaces of contrasting feeling to the act of daydreaming. He suggests that the urban is 'a space in which the highly systematic nature of late capitalist work-discipline is always, however inadvertently, giving birth to its opposite – fantasy, reverie, daydream' (Dart, 2010; 79). This irrational extrapolation (both as material journey and as mental imagining) presents itself as escape, following whim rather than plan. However, it also originates in the commodity form of space. Drawing on Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, Dart suggests that the daydream-quality of walking originates in 'the commodity itself as a kind of daydream, containing all the hopes of humanity, but in fetishised, inaccessible form' (ibid;

89). This is reflected in Lefebvre's description of the space of the *pavillon*, in which 'the resident consumes significations', and as such 'everything is real and everything is utopian, without clear difference; everything is nearby and everything is far away; everything is "lived" and everything is imaginary' (Lefebvre, 1966a; 133).

Walking as research practice draws attention not only to embodiment in general, but also to the specific ways in which the researcher is embodied in space. Monica Degen and Gillian Rose propose walking as a means of investigating 'how the embodied inhabitation of urban spaces feels' (Degen and Rose, 2012; 3273). Applying this technique to a comparison of public space in Bedford and Milton Keynes, they note that the sensory response goes beyond registering objective presences, as 'materiality is not simply what is physically present' (ibid; 3280). Michelle Duffy, Gordon Waitt, Andrew Gorman-Murray, and Chris Gibson conducted a similar study of festival spaces, drawing attention to the way in which physical presence in these spaces as a walker attunes the researcher to their rhythm (Duffy et al., 2011).

However, there are also dangers to be aware of in drawing on these traditions of urban walking. Chris Jenks and Tiago Neves note that the figure of the flaneur privileges the gaze, as a masculine orientation towards space that renders women 'a part of the urban spectacle or drama' to be observed, while the city is approached as 'male territory, sometimes even as men's hunting ground' (Jenks and Neves, 2000; 6). Alexander Bridger also suggests that 'the situationist approach to psychogeographical research retains a masculinist bias' (Bridger, 2013; 286). As a means towards escaping this residually patriarchal relationship between researcher and space (and recalling Kusenbach's doubled awareness), he suggests that it is 'important to consider bodies and embodied experience in relation to place', and that further the researcher should understand that 'sexualities are geographical' (ibid; 288).

Doreen Massey writes that 'space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through' (Massey, 1994; 186). The gendering of space (and spacing of gender) operates within the material organisation of space, the lived practice of space, and the symbolic meaning attached to particular spaces. Massey highlights this quality of space as a concern of Lefebvre's, pointing to the way in which he 'traces the history of what he calls the male and female principles within transformations of space', with the abstract space of capitalism dominated by geometric, visual, and phallic formants (ibid; 183). Martina Löw describes the way in which 'gender may be seen as inscribed, via body practices, in the production of spaces' (Löw, 2006; 129). This gendering of space 'finds expression [...] in the predominance of the visual – and the implicit masculinisation of a sense posited as the primary one' which 'regulates the process in which objects are synthesized to form spaces' (ibid).

Space, then, is gendered in its function, practice, and signification, and its gendered character is reproduced in bodily gesture and perception. As such, the presence of bodies in space is intimately bound up the way in which space is gendered. This must be taken into account when discussing the embodied study of space. Further, the gendering of space can be understood to interact in specific ways with queer and transgender embodiment, and is therefore particularly relevant to a reflexive consideration of my research practice. Massey suggests that the organisation of space 'takes the form of a dichotomous dualism' (Massey, 1994; 255). She goes on to argue that 'these dualisms which so easily map on to each other also map on to the constructed dichotomy between female and male' (ibid; 258). This dualism of (masculine) presence and (feminine) absence provides a basis for examining transgender experience and practice of space, in which the imperfectly gendered body disrupts that strict binary.

Lucas Crawford complicates the suggestion that dualisms of space and gender map directly onto each other, arguing that 'the fraught historical relationship

between gender and architecture has always been underpinned by a variously elided sense of gender-crossing' (Crawford, 2010; 516). From this perspective, 'transgender is already inherent and repressed by conventional architecture', a presence recognisable in spatial metaphors that often structure transgender autobiography (ibid). Crawford particularly discusses the idea of 'home', and the sense that transition is a 'coming home' to oneself at the same time as it estranges from 'home' in other senses. This 'architectonics of the body' reflects a particularly transgender experience of space (ibid; 517). The specificities of how this plays out vary, with some spaces claimed as semi-stable places of queer and transgender signification while in others the presence of a single queer body remains disruptive or troubling.

In walking through the Park I would often find (particularly in the first half of the year, before it was inhabited) that approaching or passing construction sites would result in jeers or jokes at my expense. Here, in the otherwise 'blank' and uninhabited space of the Park's concrete expanse, I would find myself confronted by the strongly masculine presence of the construction site (not only a place of work, but one also largely staffed by men). While the gendered perception of my body had slipped from my awareness in the unmarked spaces of the empty Park, in these encounters it was brought sharply to my attention, recalling Wilchins' indirect relationship to the transgender body. In these encounters, particularly those in quiet streets or empty spaces, the possibility of violence is always present. Viviane Namaste provides a comprehensive account of the risk faced by visibly transgender people in public spaces – particularly those who fail to pass successfully as either gender. She terms these attacks 'gender-bashing', framing them as regulatory enforcement of a dualistic gendering of both space and the body (Namaste, 2000; 587).

Thankfully, even the most confrontational encounters that I have experienced have not developed into physical violence. However, the threat feels real, and I found myself often noting down a 'transgender paranoia' in the fieldnotes I took for deserted spaces.

Conversely, within the highly gendered space of the Westfield shopping centre I would generally feel safer and less scrutinised than in open space, despite an inward hyper-awareness of my body as collection of gendered signifiers. Other than confused, interrogative, and occasionally hostile gazes, in this space responses to my queer presence tended to be studiously blank. Passing between the micro-divisions of a space riven by a multitude of gendered functions, practices, and significations, the contradictory gender-markings of my own body were perhaps easier to resolve and ignore. Confronted by a man at the end of my own street on the way to the Park one summer day, I realised on arriving that I only fully relaxed on entering the (by then very familiar) atmosphere of the Westfield. These less fraught encounters are described by Petra Doan as informed by a 'complex feedback relation' between the gendering of space and of the body (Doan, 2010; 638). This results in a continual and contingent construction of identity within specific spatial encounters. She writes that in walking within a shopping centre, 'I experienced my gender as a sort of moving target, like one of those opposing moving sidewalks in modern airports. I was moving in one direction and the spectators were moving in the other, and somewhere in between my gender was constructed and re-constructed with each fleeting movement' (ibid; 645).

In my walking practice a negotiation of gendered space and gendered bodies (my own and others) was a background constant. My inhabitation and practice of these spaces was conditioned by the particularities of my body as transgender, marked as neither fully male nor female. Although the way in which I was aware of myself as a queer presence in space changed according to the gendering of space itself, this awareness never fully left me. Walking, as a methodology that conformed with my theoretical approach to this space, also introduced an element of my own embodiment into the text of my fieldnotes. This is fundamentally related to the way in which walking allows a spontaneous movement between spaces and the exploration of atmospheres of unity and disunity. The construction of an internal image of space that this practice

facilitates thus reflects Lefebvre's call to approach the urban fabric as an 'uneven mesh' traversed by contradiction.

2.4 - Ethnography, representation, and the place of the ethnographer

The idea of 'ethnography at home' deserves qualification, as all ethnographic work occurs along a continuum between 'home and strangeness' on which adopting the academic stance of the researcher is itself an estrangement (Sarsby, 1984; 132). This project was thus 'at home' to the extent that it was conducted in a cultural setting in which I felt 'at home', and because the 'strangeness' of my presence was largely due to my academic purpose within the space. That said, my queer self-presentation complicates this continuum of home and strangeness, introducing the mode of estrangement I have detailed in my discussion of transgender embodiment in space. Here, I turn to examine the ways in which the notion of ethnography at 'home' complicates the 'field' and interacts with queer estrangement, and the ways in which reflexive representation of the researcher can act as a point around which ethnographic text is organised.

Ethnography 'at home' necessarily blurs the distinction between 'the field' in which research takes place and 'home' spaces in which the researcher can abandon an ethnographic perspective. However, for urban ethnography in particular this blurring of distinction is exacerbated by the disappearance of the city as graspable object. This is reflected in Frederic Jameson's comments on the difficulty of producing cognitive maps in contemporary urban space: 'distance in general (including "critical distance" in particular) has been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates' (Jameson, 1991; 48). For Jameson, this dislocation within extensive and unknown networks of capitalist circulation

presents the "'moment of truth" of postmodernism' (ibid; 49). As such, the embodied presence of the researcher must be a starting point not only for learning the field, but also for actively constructing the field in the first place.

In my case some distance between 'home' and 'field' was inscribed in my daily travel across London to the Olympic Park. I also began my research year by making the classically ethnographic move from the academy to 'the field' – as the short journey from Brighton to London. Once situated in London the Park acted as a focal point for my research rather than a bounded 'site', and I consciously compared my experiences there to other sites across the city (including my 'home' neighbourhoods) and made an effort to understand London-wide contrasts and similarities. This meant an additive approach to the field in which adjacent, similar, and contrasting spaces emerged and were incorporated into my understanding of the space as it evolved. This resonates with Vered Amit's discussion of the way in which the field is marked by 'instability' and must be negotiated by the researcher, who (particularly in multi-sited research) becomes a 'central agent in the construction of the field' (Amit, 2000; 14).

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson provide a similar critique of 'the field' as an objective site awaiting discovery and of the ethnographic premise of othering distance that implies. Instead they suggest an approach that highlights a concern for 'location' rather than a reification of 'the local'. Ethnography thus becomes 'a mode of study that cares about, and pays attention to, the interlocking of multiple social-political sites and locations' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; 37). George Marcus provides a framework by which these interlocking sites might be consciously identified in the research process, suggesting a practice of 'following', around which fieldwork might be structured. He writes that the ethnographer should organise their research around 'chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence' (Marcus, 1995; 105). This idea of 'following' was influential for my thinking around urban walking, as an

ethnographic methodology in which spaces of similarity and difference are identified, and their related or conflicting production and reproduction is an analytic focus.

These approaches reflect (and often reference) Haraway's 'partial perspective' (Haraway, 1988). She argues for 'politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality not universality is the condition to be heard to make rational knowledge claims' (ibid; 589). This foregrounding of partiality is a useful connecting concept, drawing together (transgender) embodied methodology and a Lefebvrian understanding of urban space with a critique of the field. It calls for an interrogation of the way in which ethnographic text is produced, prompting the researcher to represent their positionality and active role in constructing the field. Often, the process of writing is a process of removing 'mess' as the contradiction, confusion and non-sequitur of the field notebook is tidied away into a clean argument. John Law calls for an embracing of this 'mess' in research, as a means of 'elaborating quiet methods, slow methods or modest methods' and in order to 'develop methods without the accompanying imperialisms' (Law, 2004; 15).

Ethnographic research itself is an iterative process of writing – of note-taking from existing texts and in the field, transcribing interviews, drafting and redrafting. In order to preserve the embodied presences that are often more characteristic of fieldnotes than final write-ups, Alan Rumsey calls for an interrogation of the tropes that structure ethnographic writing. Often, this writing presents arrival in a 'strange' place followed by a becoming-familiar that sees the ethnographer recede from the text in favour of an 'objective' stance. The initial truth-claim of arrival only serves to reinforce a later return to Haraway's 'god trick', the 'view from nowhere' that positions the researcher as master subject (Haraway, 1988; 589). Instead Rumsey suggests that 'to advance the anthropological project' it is necessary for anthropologists to develop a 'critical appreciation of other kinds of tropes at play within ethnography, and of their potential for enriching our ethnographic descriptions' (ibid; 288).

This restructuring of ethnography around alternate tropes offers an opportunity to continually return to the ethnographer, reinforcing a partial stance informed by embodiment within (social) space. Charlotte Davies calls for just such a reflexive integration of the researcher's subjectivity into their text, explicitly positioning the researcher in relation to their subjects (Davies, 1999). Similarly, Ruth Behar suggests that incorporating alternative styles of representation into the unstable genre of ethnographic writing may afford an opportunity to 'insert our participating-and-observing selves into the story so we are embodied as subjects' (Behar, 2007; 150). This presence of the researcher within ethnographic text renders them a centre-point around which argument and representation turns. In my case incorporating this embodied subjectivity means incorporating the transgender subjectivity which underpins the position from which my research was undertaken and from which I write.

Elizabeth Tonkin positions this presence of the researcher as a prerequisite for the study of the everyday, suggesting that knowledge must 'come from individual encounters and include a mass of informal background which cannot be acquired without personal involvement' (Tonkin, 1984; 220). Similarly, Carolyn Ellis and Michael Flaherty call for focus on the 'ethnographically particular' using creative genres of presentation to convey the 'complexity, paradox and mystery' of this subjective lived experience (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; 5). Situating the embodied researcher within the particularities of the everyday unifies the way in which texts are written and the way in which the field is consciously constructed in the research process. Foregrounding the researcher as embodied subject can act as a thread by which these disparate elements are linked, presenting 'the field' as a social context that is variously strange and familiar, consisting of multiple connected and contrasting localities.

For this project the question of an approach to writing that faithfully represents the researcher and the field is bound up with my central methodology. Walking practice lends itself to an approach to writing that lies in parallel with

ethnography. Basset argues that 'such an exercise can thus raise issues about how we read the city, but also about how we write and represent the city' (Basset, 2004; 408). Jenks and Neves provide a similar commentary on the flaneur, as a figure that 'stands in a relation: to people; to text; to fact and to tradition' (Jenks and Neves, 2000; 3). They discuss the way in which Benjamin's *The One-way Street* presents itself as a 'fragmented, invertebrate text in which every section would make sense on its own', a text that attempts to realise Baudelaire's dream 'of a poetic prose, an ideal born in the big city, as a result of the experiencing of a myriad relations' (ibid; 12). This 'fragmented, invertebrate text' inspired by walking practice lends itself well to Marcus' conception of the field as 'chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations'.

Examples of the city as represented from the particular perspective of an embodied author are available often in more literary than strictly academic contexts. For example, Jonathan Raban's *Soft City* opens in the first person: 'I come out of the formica kebab-house alone after lunch, my head prickly with retsina' (Raban, 1974; 3). He continues to weave this perspective through his discussions of the contingent and malleable relationship between the city and individual identity. The book is replete with information on the sights, smells, and tactility of the city, alongside affective responses to its various spaces. Ian Sinclair's writing on London presents a similar image of the city organised around the walker, in which 'London's topography is reconstituted through a superimposition of local and literary history, autobiographical elements and poetic preoccupations, to create a highly personal vision of the city' (Coverley, 2006; 122).

In contrast, Georges Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* contains little information about his own embodied responses to his surroundings, presenting instead a list of objects, events, and passers by over three days spent in Saint-Sulpice. The majority of this listing is dispassionate: 'An 87 goes by, almost full', 'A man carrying a crate goes by'; 'A man carrying a plank goes by' (Perec, 1975; 26). However, occasional information about his own

experience of this endeavour is introduced, interrupting the flow of the list: '(I'm cold, I order a brandy)' (ibid; 19). Between these interruptions and the single perspective emphasised in listing that which crosses his eyeline, the sense of a firmly emplaced and embodied observer emerges. Perec's singularity of perspective highlights the way in which knowledge of the city at street level must always be partial and limited.

If this illegibility of the city (and of the capitalist world system that conditions the production of the city) is characteristic of contemporary urban space, then attempts to understand it can only begin from the partial perspective of a situated subject. As such, as well as beginning from the subject and including the subject, text that attempts to represent urban space must also recognise the difficulty of grasping connections at a greater distance. Here, Law's call for the inclusion of 'mess' in social science research might again be relevant. Equally, it is important to represent spaces as in a state of flux and development, rather than as a static reality. Reflexively representing the embodied researcher as a gathering-point around which ethnographic text is organised offers a means by which to achieve this. It allows a making-explicit of the way in which the field itself is constructed throughout the research process. When married to a research practice based on urban walking, this opens up an approach to space that seeks out similarity and difference within an uneven urban fabric, incorporating that juxtaposition within ethnographic text rather than relegating it to a 'background' process de-emphasised in the process of writing. Further, it opens up space within the text for other complications of the research process to be recognised and represented – in my case, the impact of a transgender embodiment on an embodied study of space.

2.5 - This project: walking, talking, reading, writing

This research project has always been focused on the Olympic Park, but from the start took in exploration of other areas of London. During my pilot project I circumnavigated the Park and began familiarising myself with Hackney,

Stratford, Leyton, and Bow. I travelled across London visiting other centres of Olympic activity – venues, redecorated tourist attractions, and transport hubs. At the end of the games I supplemented this walking practice with interviews and archival reading. I arranged to speak with people who had attended Olympic events shortly after the games themselves, and conducted more interviews at a further remove. I also followed media coverage of the events, sourced planning and marketing documents, and thus began to contextualise my own experience of these spaces. My main fieldwork period again centred on walked explorations of the Park and its neighbourhood, gradually extending these further afield as time went on. After a couple of months familiarising myself with the Park in the early days of its Legacy era (and as it began to host its first inhabitants) I started interviews again. Likewise, I broadened the media coverage that I was reading, and deepened my reading of planning and marketing documents.

To round off this discussion of methodology I will provide an overview of each of these three sets of activities, relating them to the principles of embodied practice and subject-centred writing that I have outlined. During both fieldwork periods I resided in south London and travelled regularly to the Park. For the pilot project this meant a journey by London Overground train, although I would also travel into central London and vary my routes of approach. For the main project I would similarly travel by train, taking an Overground train and then changing to the Jubilee Line. This travel to and from the Park informed my sense of 'the field', the position of my focal-site within London, and the significance of related spaces around the city. I would travel on quiet trains during working hours, with a handful of others going to the Westfield; during rush-hours, the train packed with commuters; or on weekends, with increasing numbers going to visit the Park as the year went on and days got warmer.

I would navigate the variously crowded and empty spaces of the Park and its surroundings, sometimes with a clear plan in my head, sometimes moving on a route dictated entirely by whim. The early days of my fieldwork were taken up largely in developing an understanding of spatial layout, the ways by which the

Park opened onto its surroundings, and the different textures of those spaces. I began building up knowledge of this network of dissimilar spaces, each marked by its own tactile, auditory, olfactory, and affective character. I began to understand my routes around this space as movement across and between varying similar and different areas of a fractured whole. As my fieldwork went on this sense of a patchwork mesh of similarity and difference extended. I began incorporating other areas of London into my mental and bodily schema – either by design, visiting specific spaces mentioned by interviewees or in my reading, or by accident as I spent leisure time in other areas of London.

In these explorations the presence or absence of other bodies became a defining element in the sensory distinction of individual spaces. I would often note my movement from spaces defined by crowds to deserted spaces, or from spaces in which people were acting as a unified group to spaces in which people were still or confused in their movement. For the pilot project I was exploring spaces either marked by festival crowds or by an unusual emptiness, meaning that the affective presence of the crowd took centre stage in my write-up. The Olympic Park was largely deserted for the first part of my main fieldwork period. When I began in November 2013 the southern half of the Park was closed and the first few residents were only just beginning to move into the largely unfinished East Village. Besides the Westfield and two cafes, there was no social focus to the Park and the only individuals I would encounter were people on their way elsewhere or construction workers moving between sites.

As my fieldwork went on these spaces gradually opened, becoming inhabited and social. Spaces that had previously felt desolate, by the time the southern Park opened in Easter 2014, felt like they had re-captured some echo of the festival affect with which they were imbued during the games. The Timber Lodge cafe in the north of the Park, previously an isolated outpost, became a hub of social activity as the Tumbling Bay playpark and routes through the East Village opened up next to it. 'The Street' outdoor area of the Westfield shed some of the apparent hubris of its name, and took on genuine qualities of a

social thoroughfare, opening the shopping centre to the Park and the Aquatics Centre. This gradual development of inhabitation, experienced immediately in embodied movement through empty and crowded spaces, forms the central thread of my account of the everyday constitution of the Olympic Park.

Finally, this movement through spaces of differing texture, inhabitation, and affective atmosphere produced an experience of space that was at all times filtered through my queer and transgender embodiment. Exploring the deserted spaces of the Park or Victoria Docks felt both freeing and unnerving. Navigating the more crowded spaces of the Westfield, I would be aware of my appearance, posture, and clothes – but also more relaxed, slipping between bodies and gazes, keeping an eye on myself in the reflective surfaces of shop windows. In the residential streets of Stratford and Leyton I would feel out of place: although my academic purpose was not necessarily visible, my queer body was.

This walking practice was a predominantly solitary activity. I would stop and talk to the occasional passer-by when asked for directions, when I looked lost and was offered directions myself, or when stopping at a cafe or to look at some feature of the Park alongside other visitors. However, aside from these encounters I would be by myself regardless of the number of others I was sharing any particular space with. I therefore turned to unstructured interviews as a means of deepening my knowledge of the Park and its history, and of comparing my experiences with those of others⁶. The topics of discussion covered in these interviews were wide-ranging, and varied according to the relationship each interviewee had to the Park. During the course of each interview I would explore my interviewee's history with the Park, their experience of the 2012 games (if any), and their attitude towards the Park as it stands now. During these discussions the conversation would inevitably turn to other topics and meander its way back to my focal points fairly naturally.

6 See Appendix A for list of interviewees

In my pilot project I chose to run group interviews with two, three, or four individuals in discussion, as it was fairly simple to find groups of friends and family who were interested in talking about their experience of the games together. However, for the main project I was faced with the more difficult task of recruiting interviewees based solely on the geographical location of their home or work, and therefore decided to run individual interviews rather than complicate the recruitment process. While interviewees were recruited informally for my pilot project through family, friends, and friends-of-friends, for the main project I was initially confronted by a lack of obvious ways into discussions with people. For a while I thought I might be able to simply approach people in the Park and strike up conversations. However, I abandoned this tack having come to realise that these impromptu discussions did not afford the depth of consideration that I was looking for.

I identified several groups of individuals I wished to speak to. These included people who work at the Park in various capacities: service industry workers, architects or planners, and managers of one or more spaces within the Park. I was also particularly interested in residents of the East Village, and others who live nearby and make use of the Park. In the end, I managed to contact and speak to 16 people for the pilot project and a further 16 for the main project. There is of course an issue of self-selection in these groups, and particularly in the second set of interviewees as (aside from cafe staff who I could approach directly) my main means of contact was by posters and flyers. My interviewees tended to be fairly affluent, although this is to some extent a reflection of the demographic of the East Village. They also tended to be white, which is not a fair reflection of the Park's demographic, and an issue I was aware of in writing up. Over the two sets of interview participants there was a fairly even gender balance, but most of the women I spoke to appear in the pilot project. This is presumably an artefact of the differing recruitment methods I used, with women more likely to respond to a request for help by a friend of a friend, and men more likely to feel comfortable responding to a stranger's request to discuss their opinions on a given topic.

A significant proportion of my interviews were conducted within the Park, in cafes during the colder months, and out in the Park itself as summer arrived. This gave them a quality of emplacement that helped to increase the immediacy of our discussion. There was a sense in these interviews that we were engaging with our direct context, gesturing to examples when they were relevant, introducing elements of the park by acknowledging where they were in relation to us, and so on. This afforded for some poignant comparisons, as when I met an ex-resident of the Clays Lane estate, who, looking across the Park from the Viewtube cafe, was able to point out some placeholder landmarks for where the previous layout of the space intersected with the overlaid Park. Even when interviews occurred outside of the Park they were still in spaces relevant to the interviewee in the wider context of their relationship to the Park. For example, meeting a landscape architect in his office in central London meant an orientation in our discussion towards the Park from that space of work upon it. Likewise, meeting a resident of Homerton in a cafe there rather than in the Park drew continual comparisons between the two places and their processes of change over the last few years.

As with many of the encounters that constituted my fieldwork, these interviews were shaped by my transgender presentation. On one level this posed some mundane practical problems. When arranging interviews I was faced with the necessity of giving interviewees a description by which to recognise me in a public space. These would inevitably gender me one way or the other ('I'm tall with a shaved head' or 'I'll be wearing a long black skirt'), in a manner that I generally wished to avoid. On the other hand having avoided giving such a description, a couple of interviewees seemed taken aback at my initial approach to them. Once conversation had started, my queer presentation was generally quickly forgotten and the interview would proceed smoothly. Occasionally, however, it would provide an off-topic distraction often returned to.

One interview participant in particular made a few cryptic comments about my appearance during our interview ('obviously, I'll talk to *anyone*'), and warned me that she felt it would be a barrier to recruiting interviewees ('especially Muslims' – whilst identifying herself as a Christian). Having invited me to visit her apartment in the East Village to get a sense of the interior of the buildings and courtyards, she proceeded to probe me about my presentation. Under an over-friendly barrage and having found myself back-footed as an accidental interviewee in her flat, I politely answered increasingly personal questions: Do I ever find that this presentation gets me into difficulty with strangers? How is my relationship with my family? Am I on hormone replacement therapy? How does my partner identify? What is my partner's 'biological sex'? Eventually, this interrogation became too much and I cut off the discussion, sending the interviewee a carefully worded apology and set of resources that might answer further questions the following day, although I did not receive any further communication from her.

As well as acting as a jumping-off point for interviews, my physical explorations of the Park and related spaces directed my reading of primary and secondary accounts of the Park and its creation. Again, much of this reading was conducted within the Park itself. I would spend afternoons in a cafe in the Park, reading and observing the slow comings and goings of their clientele and walkers outside. This situatedness of my archival and theoretical reading meant that in my fieldnotes I would often be reflecting on the day's reading alongside my spatial explorations or interview discussions. I approached the texts as an extension of my 'reading' of space, as one register on which those spaces might be engaged with and rendered comprehensible.

When faced with mute space, especially in the newly-created Park, it was often difficult to get a sense of the historical development of that urban site. I therefore looked to planning and marketing documents to fill in an account of the genesis of those spaces. Secondary texts allowed me to put the topography of the site – the railways and canals that shape the space today – into a

historical context. Planning documents allowed me to understand the way in which the space was cleared of its previous inhabitants and how the Park was developed. I also looked up accounts of the history of these spaces in the media, and kept an eye on current media discussions of the spaces as they are now. These ranged from architecture criticism, details of events, comment pieces on the direction or success of redevelopment, and news stories reporting on further development.

Planning documents stand as one representation of space, comprised of abstract images of the space produced prior to its realisation. Marketing materials provide a set of texts that extend and compliment the representation of those spaces in the abstract and the representative nature of the physical space. These documents both proved useful as rarefied or distilled images of the particular sense of place that the designers and managers of the Park wanted to evoke. While the experience of those spaces was always complicated by the particularities of my own embodiment and by the interruptions and disruptions of space generated in everyday practice, these texts exist as purified images of space. News reporting and commentary allowed a further temporal expansion of my understanding of that space and provided contextualisation in detailing future developments or subjective appraisals of existing spaces. As such they allowed comparisons with my own embodied experience with those spaces.

At the same time I was continually expanding my academic reading as a response to these experiences. While I had the basis of a theoretical foundation in place before I went to the field, many of the perspectives brought to bear in my write-up originate in literature that I familiarised myself with during my research. As such, when I came to begin writing up I found that the previous iteration of my writing – my fieldnotes – stood as a record of the development of my thought, just as much as an account of my research. Organising this writing was as much a process of reading as it was of writing. I treated my own fieldnotes in the same way that I had treated primary and secondary archival

texts – identifying themes, grouping similarities, noting tensions or contradictions to be explored.

In this process I aim to have brought together the various methodological threads presented here: the embodied research practice on which this work is premised, an understanding of urban space as uneven and fractured, and an awareness of the construction of the field in the material navigation of this space. While transgender embodiment has been a focus of this methodological discussion, it will remain a background presence in the next chapters. While I aim to position myself within this text as a gathering-point around which my argument turns, that argument is nevertheless addressed towards the space under consideration. As such a theoretical consideration of that space now takes precedence. The methodological discussion presented here therefore serves a double purpose, as a means of expounding the approach that I took to my research, and as an opportunity to present the principles of representation that inform the rest of my text. This chapter stands as a making-explicit of that which for the remainder of the thesis will be largely implicit: the way in which the body is conceived within research practice, the way in which urban space is understood as an object of knowledge, the specificities of my own embodiment as they shaped my research experience, and the ways in which I aim to approach this text as ethnography.

3 - London's Olympic moment

3.1 - Introduction

The summer of 2012 saw the Olympic and Paralympic games arrive in London. 11 million tickets were sold for Olympic events, 12 million people watched the games on public outdoor screens, and 10 million attended cultural events related to the games (Chappelet, 2014; 143). Huge numbers of people worked on the games: 46,000 people were employed in the construction of the Olympic Park (International Olympic Committee, 2013; 7) and of 240,000 applicants, 70,000 people were employed as volunteer 'Games Makers' (Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, 2013; 28). Security personnel numbered 12,500 police officers assigned to Olympic duty alongside 13,500 military personnel and 10,400 private security guards (BBC News, 2012b). To pay for all of this the official budget for the games grew from £2.4 billion in 2005, to £9.3 billion in 2012 (BBC News, 2013).

This was a mass crowd event within London's public space, broadcast across the UK and the world. In this chapter I am concerned with these crowds as producer of Olympic festival and as consumer of the Olympic commodity. I will describe the production of Olympic space in representation, material practice, and lived sociality, while tracing the genesis and development of the affective charge that lay at the heart of this activity. Having described the production of the Olympic festival, I will turn to the role that this festival played in rendering the Olympics productive in an economic sense, as a means by which capital was valorised.

These games came exactly a year after the riots of August 2011, in the midst of an economic crisis the effects of which are still playing out. They were presented as a turning-point for London, an opportunity for the neglected post-

industrial north east of the city to be redeveloped and re-invigorated. My pilot project fieldwork began two weeks before the games, and ran through to the closing ceremony. During this time I stayed in a friend's empty house in Brockley, South London, travelling most days up to Hackney and Stratford on the borders of the Olympic Park, or to central London and the Olympic sites around Trafalgar Square, St. James' Park and the Embankment. I gradually familiarised myself with the alien activity of fieldwork, as well as with the transformed spaces of London's Olympic festival.

Nervous about the potential for a non-normative gender presentation to interfere with this activity, I took the decision to pass for the majority of this period as male, wearing nondescript t-shirts and jeans. The central experience around which this chapter is based – of seamlessly melding into Olympic crowds – was certainly influenced by this decision to avoid being visibly marked as queer and transgender. On the one occasion that I dressed femme in central London during this time I found myself photographed by a gaggle of tourists, rendered spectacle and distanced from their shared collectivity as audience.

This chapter follows a temporal structure reflective of that pilot study, from the arrival of the games through to their aftermath. This structure facilitates a discussion of the hopes and fears that preceded the games, followed by a discussion of the ways in which those hopes and fears were resolved into a festival atmosphere in the production of Olympic space and the encounter of the Olympic crowd. As Olympic commodities live on after the event itself, carrying some vestigial after-image of that atmosphere, I end on a discussion of the way in which this affective charge was mobilised towards the realisation of value in the exchange and consumption of those commodities. In spatial terms, this chapter describes a navigation of festival spaces across London. I begin around the borders of the Olympic Park before the games, travel to Harrow to watch the opening ceremony, and explore central London and the entrance to the Park during the games.

My theoretical structure is drawn from Henri Lefebvre's three moments of the production of space, and therefore mirrors in miniature the structure of the following three chapters. My argument turns on the internal relationship of these three moments, particularly focusing on the third moment – the 'lived' component of space – and its capacity to be 'charged with images, emotions, affectivity, and connotations' (Schmid, 2008; 36). This presents a framework for exploring the Olympic festival as the mobilisation and capture of the excessive content of everyday spatial practice in the valorisation of capital. Rather than describing this festival moment as straightforwardly utopian, I highlight the ways in which this excess of life is essential to the reproduction of existing conditions even as it overflows them, existing within the commodity itself as submerged utopian tension that the games as commodity played off.

Having outlined the various hopes and fears attached to the games, I draw on Ernst Bloch and non-representational theory to describe the material movement of these hopes and fears as affect. I then move through the three moments of Lefebvre's three-dimensional dialectic. I begin with the production of the Olympics as a conceived and represented space, unified and prepared for the arrival of the crowd, then discuss London 2012 as a single festival space realised in the material perception and practice of this crowd, and finally as a lived space made to represent the festival affect generated in the crowd encounter. Having traced the materialisation of this affective charge within the spaces of London 2012, I will discuss the centrality of that excess to the commodity life of the mega-event, and its internalisation within the exchange relationship that allowed the games to realise value.

3.2 - Hope, fear, and the coming mega-event

In the weeks immediately preceding the games there was a sense that London was holding its breath. In Hackney's public spaces banners were hung from lamp-posts, bunting was up, and the colours of the games proliferated. In residential areas of Hackney Wick the minor disruptions of space that had

accompanied the construction of the Olympic Park were multiplying. Street signs warned of parking restrictions and bus route diversions while military helicopters passed low overhead. Wandering in the summer drizzle past a kebab shop, the word 'Olympic' in its name obscured by order of the Brand Exclusion Zone, this felt like a moment of suspension. One interview participant remarked that it felt as though 'a tidal wave was approaching London.' Whether this oncoming wave would bring a successful Olympic festival (perhaps even positive change) or further upheaval was difficult to tell. While much discussion of the games focused on scandal, missed deadlines, and ever-growing budgets, there was still a palpable air of excitement as they drew closer.



Fig 1. The back of the Aquatics Centre, viewed across an empty concourse in the week before the games (DG 2012a)

On the hopeful side of this double anticipation, it is possible to identify three main themes. The promise of the games was received as heralding a potential return to economic prosperity, a patriotic revival of the nation, and a transformation of the social fabric of London. These hopes were strongly influenced by the context of economic downturn in which the Olympics occurred. In late July the Office for National Statistics reported that UK GDP had

dropped 0.7% in the second quarter of 2012, confirming ongoing recession (Elliot, 2012). The Olympics stood as a potential force for the reversal of these fortunes, with the possibility of an economic boost widely discussed in the media. As the games neared, these predictions became more solid. In July 2012 the Lloyds Banking Group predicted a total boost of £16.5bn to UK GDP (Lloyds Banking Group, 2012; 40). In the same month government figures predicted £13bn of Olympic revenue over the next four years, with Prime Minister David Cameron urging to businesses to 'turn these games into gold' (Hennessy, 2012). Walking through East London in the week before the Olympics began, the medium by which these games were to be transformed 'into gold' was ever-present, with seemingly every shop playing host to Olympic merchandise. Key-rings, pin-badges, t-shirts stood alongside fast-food meal deals and the official television set of the games, waiting for the breaking of the Olympic wave that would complete their transformation into profit.

Alongside these economic hopes existed a collection of hopes around UK national identity, a patriotic upsurge capitalising on the royal wedding of April 2011 and the Queen's diamond jubilee in June 2012. Alongside merchandise in the pink and purple branding of the games were countless red, white, and blue items, scattered through supermarkets and off-licenses. The right-wing press seized on the spread of union flags to assert the importance of British identity, with the *Telegraph* pleased that 'after years of pretending not to care, Britain is braced for an outburst of patriotism' (Mount, 2012; 24). This spread of the signifiers of British identity was also taken as an indicator of a more inclusive patriotism. The *Express* hailed a 'golden summer' that could 'unify us all', suggesting that 'there is nothing remotely jingoistic, exclusive, or dominating about all the euphoria' (Mckinstry, 2012). The *Guardian* described this as a new patriotism, 'soft and civic, rather than naked and aggressive' (Freedland, 2012). Interview participants reported feeling included ('yes! I am part of this country!'), or overcoming the discomfort of union flags to join in with celebrations.

These economic and patriotic hopes were joined by hopes for urban transformation. At their vaguest, hopes around the economy and around national identity seemed to touch upon a general utopianism. Here, this utopianism was expressed more directly. One interview participant in the aftermath of the games expressed disappointment that they did not herald the 'change in society' that they had promised, and that the same conditions of austerity in which the games occurred still held sway a year later. Remembering the riots of August 2011, the *Sun* in January 2012 hoped that the games would 'end the riots forever' by 'inspiring a generation' (King, 2012), while the *Telegraph* reported at the start of the Olympics that London was 'unrecognisable from the riot-torn city of 12 months ago', and that the games 'have a role to play in tackling' the 'deep social problems' behind the riots themselves (Marsden, 2012).

The same context from which these hopes sprung also coloured fearful anticipation of the coming tidal-wave. While hopeful associations with the games focused on escape from these conditions, several anxieties predicted the worsening of those same conditions. Again it is possible to identify three key areas of fear around the games: fear of (particularly economic) disruption, fear of protest and riot, and fear of terrorist attack. In January 2012, the *Guardian* was warning that the games would disrupt the economy by distracting people from work and making travel difficult (Stewart, 2012). As the games neared this perspective was bolstered by a report by credit ratings agency Moody's, which suggested that long-term benefit would only be felt by certain brands (Ruddick, 2012a). By the time the games started this view seemed almost confirmed as central London remained eerily quiet outside of event-spaces (Moulds, 2012). In Hackney Wick, where Olympic disruption had been common for several years, graffiti declared 'everyone here hates the Olympics'. On Mare Street Transport for London staff distributed maps warning residents to avoid the most crowded parts of the city.



Fig 2. A restricted lane of the Olympic Route Network, the week before the games (DG, 2012b)

The student protests of winter 2010-11 and the riots of August 2011 were both fresh in Londoners' minds. These unruly crowds stood in collective memory as the inverse image of the celebratory crowds of the royal wedding and diamond jubilee, and newspapers were keen to link the riots with the coming Olympics. One report highlighted the involvement of a 16 year-old 'Olympic Ambassador' in the riots, turned over to police by her own mother (Gregory, 2011). A *Guardian* article linked the promise of the games with the riots, noting that their 'very nature makes the sensibly measured management of expectations unlikely, perhaps impossible' (Hill, 2011). The *Mirror* called the Olympics a 'perfect riots storm', predicting that 'London will be at breaking-point and everyone will be crossing their fingers' (Hanna, 2012). In central London a couple of days before the opening ceremony, I was approached by someone who, somewhat suspicious of my field diary (whether I was taken for a journalist or an agitator I was not sure – perhaps both are equally dubious), wanted to warn me against sparking trouble during the games.

London 2012 was also associated with terrorist threat from the moment it was confirmed, as the 7/7 bombings of 2005 followed a day after the announcement

of London as host city for the Olympics. The press continually ran stories of obscure threats or minor plots thwarted. In May 2012 the *Daily Star* reported that 'Olympic bosses' feared the potential poisoning of athletes food (Hughes, 2012). The *Telegraph* reported on a security failure during a test in January 2012 with the declaration that the scale of the Olympic operation was overwhelming (Sawer, 2012). One interview participant who worked at Earls Court during the games was 'convinced there was going to be a terrorist attack', this fear reinforced by ever-present security.

The shadow of the London mob, in various forms, hung close over these games. Hopeful associations centred on the power of the festival crowd to boost the economy through spending, create a sense of national belonging, or transform the social and urban fabric that it inhabits. At the same time this crowd took on a darker aspect in games-related anxieties, as chaotic disruption of London's space and economy, as riotous mob, or as target for terrorist attack. The moment before the games felt open-ended, pregnant with divergent futures yet conditioned by past events. Ernst Bloch provides a framework for conceptualising this moment. Bloch's 'unenclosed' present is described by Kathi Weeks as existing 'in relationship to both the lingering past that constitutes its denizens and their expected, imagined, desired, feared, dreaded, or longed-for futures' (Weeks, 2011; 189). For Bloch, hope is constituted by glimpses of the not-yet-become within the present, images of 'concrete utopias' whose conditions of realisation already exist (Bloch, 1959; 116). Ben Anderson describes this hope as constituted by 'various "premonitions" or "presentiments" that are neither present nor absent' in the mind (Anderson, 2006a; 695).

Hope is the rooted in the 'not-yet-conscious', 'the psychological representation of the not-yet-become in an age and its world, on the front of the world', with specific hopes representing a bringing-to-consciousness of this expansive sense of utopian possibility (Bloch; 1959; 127). In this process the full nature of the not-yet-conscious is often lost – the total potential for rupture and emancipatory transformation is rarely brought to consciousness outside of a

revolutionary moment. However, Leszek Kołakowski notes that Bloch recognises some seed of utopian hope within even the 'lowest level' daydreams that 'relate simply to immediate private ends such as wealth, glory, or sexual satisfaction' (Kołakowski, 1976; 1130). In the anticipation of the Olympic mega-event, some vague hope for social transformation was often expressed, but more mundane (or in some iterations reactionary) hopes were more common: for an economic upturn that would bring personal financial security, for a sense of belonging within a national polity, or for a more liveable urban environment.

Weeks distinguishes the concrete utopia of the not-yet-become from 'idealisms of the status quo', pointing out that 'although such dreams ... may tap into utopian longings, they remain for the most part better visions of the present rather than radically different worlds' (Weeks, 2011; 196). Dreams of the mega-event heralding 'change without rupture' (ibid) are discussed by Ben Anderson and Adam Holden. They describe the advent of the mega-event as a moment in which hope exists as a 'state of suspension', a 'blank' followed by 'a multiplication of what should be and what could be hoped for' (Anderson & Holden, 2008; 153). This multiplication of hope is crystallised into specific hopes, most commonly around governmental redevelopment projects that function as the 'focal point for particular institutional strategies' (ibid). This putting-to-work of utopian hope in the context of the Olympics resulted in a wish for urban redevelopment, return of health to the economy, and bolstering of national identity.

Weeks also draws out Bloch's opposition between hopeful and fearful subjects, in which hope is characterised as an 'open and expansive model of subjectivity', while anxiety is 'diminishing and disempowering' (Weeks, 2011; 198). Hope and fear are both rooted in the affective temporalities of being. While the hopeful subject is future-orientated, for the fearful subject 'the past looms large, overshadowing the possibility of a new and different future' (ibid; 199). Fear is a seizing of the present by the past, just as the future makes itself felt within the present as the not-yet-become. This opposition can be observed in Bloch's

treatment of night-dreams and daydreams. The daydream serves as a case study for the bringing-to-consciousness of hope. The ideal-type daydream is self-directed and 'within our power' as a 'clear road' (Bloch, 1959; 88). It leaves the ego intact, finding it 'animated, even striving' (ibid; 90). It remains open to the outside world and imagines that world improved. The night-dream, however, 'lives in regression, it is indiscriminately drawn into its images' (ibid; 99). It is concerned with the 'dregs of the day', going over the past (ibid; 79).



Fig 3. Victoria Park cycle hub, awaiting the bikes of games attendees in the days before the opening ceremony (DG, 2012c)

Olympic fears were all rooted in the potential for recurrence of recent events: economic downturn, the 7/7 bombings, the riots of August 2011, the student protests of November 2010. Each of these past crowds lived on in expectations of the games, just as real as the coming celebratory crowd. Anderson writes that the conditions that make it possible to hope are the same that cause anxiety and fear: 'becoming hopeful takes place from within specific encounters that diminish or destroy' (Anderson, 2006b; 748). Olympic fear reflected an anxiety that current conditions could not be overcome, that the future could only hold a repeat of recent upheaval. At the same time Olympic hope was premised

on a wish to transcend these conditions, either in temporary festival or through the transformative potential of the games.

Work on affect from within non-representational theory can illuminate the centrality of the coming Olympic crowd to these hopes and fears, drawing attention to their physical circulation through spaces and bodies. These theorisations of affect share an affinity with Bloch in the idea of an excess of feeling beyond the conscious. Bloch's not-yet-conscious exists 'beneath the threshold of fading, yet also above the threshold of dawning' (Bloch, 1959; 115). Similarly, Brian Massumi presents affect as an 'intensity', to some extent captured as conscious emotion, but always also existing beyond consciousness, as 'non-conscious, never-to-be conscious' material (Massumi, 2002; 25). Conceptualising hope and fear as bodily intensity helps to spatialise the movement of these feelings through the crowd in which they circulate.

Nigel Thrift writes that cities 'can be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect', wherein 'affects like anger, fear, happiness, and joy [...] continually manifest themselves' in urban everyday life (Thrift, 2008; 171). Anderson also presents the everyday as the site of affective contagion, creating a tripartite division of hope, as unconscious affect, as immediately recognised feeling, and as conscious emotion. He drawing out parallels between work on affect and Lefebvre's writing on the everyday to argue that 'emotions and feelings ... can never coincide with the totality of potential affective expression' (Anderson, 2006b; 738). This unconscious excess structures everyday life itself: 'the "living" of "everyday life" always exceeds closure and thus creates a constant transversal "more"' (ibid).

This overspill of affect ensures its movement. Affect as excess is 'the pure tendency of an unconditional escape that at the moment of movement between contexts is without either origin or destination' (ibid). The circulation of affect in urban everyday life is therefore the circulation of affect through and between bodies. Thrift presents affect as 'a set of embodied practices that produce

visible conduct as an outer lining' (Thrift, 2008; 175). Massumi discusses the embodied movement of affect from the unconscious level of autonomic reaction to a 'conscious positioning of oneself in a line of narrative continuity' (Massumi, 2002; 25). The spatialities of affect are determined by constellations of bodies, wherein 'the relations between bodies, from the encounters that those relations are entangled within, make the materialities of space-time always-already affective' (Anderson, 2006b; 736).

This circulation of affect can be recognised in the position of the crowd within Olympic hopes and fears. The coming crowd was felt in advance and in memories of similar crowd events, both celebratory and threatening. The Olympics as festival were predicated on this crowd, and to exist in London in the weeks before the games was to exist in a space preparing for inhabitation by the crowd. The task of those overseeing the games was to make this affective charge productive – to subsume excess to the production of a festival atmosphere that would encourage consumption of the Olympics as experiential commodity. Over the next sections I will examine this process, first exploring the conception and representation of Olympic space in the run-up to the games, then turning to the material realisation of this space in practice and perception, and finally describing Olympic space as it was socially lived. I will then unpack the production and consumption of this lived space as an experiential commodity.

3.3 - Conceiving and representing Olympic festival space

As the games approached and anticipation grew their space began to emerge. This network of event sites, tourist attractions, hotels, and Olympic Route Network lanes was matched by its shadow in re-directed traffic, prohibited spaces, and buildings requisitioned to serve as security headquarters. These individual instances of disruption within an urban fabric always defined as much by blockage as by smooth movement were initially experienced singly, as minor

inconveniences or interesting transformations of familiar sites. London 2012 as a unified space was summoned into being through repeated and insistent representation of London as Olympic host. This effort to make London space legible as Olympic space can be understood in Lefebvre's terms as the production of a representation of space.

Under capital conceived and represented space is ascendant, dominating both the perception and practice that secretes material space and the living of space that renders it representational. Japhy Wilson writes that this abstract representation of space becomes 'progressively materialised in lived material reality' (Wilson, 2013; 374). The conceptual production of Olympic space conditioned the way in which it was understood and practiced, mobilising and directing the affective charge of the games. Although Lefebvre writes that 'lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is conceived of' (Lefebvre, 1974; 51), Wilson reminds that 'abstract space is riven with contradictions, arising from the residues of the social spaces that preceded it, and from its simultaneous tendency towards fragmentation' (Wilson, 2013; 368). This excessive lived content of space is never fully 'vanquished', and indeed such a victory would result only in stasis. The production of Olympic space thus occurred in and through living bodies and was animated by a mobilisation of the excessive content of that living activity. We must therefore attend to the organisation of these bodies in space.



Fig 4. The shape of the Park emerges in restricted zones and closed routes (DG, 2012d)

The planning of space was key to London's bid for the games. In 2002 the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport and the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit jointly published the *Game Plan* report, setting out the case for making an Olympic bid. In this document the affective content of the games takes a central role. It notes that hosting the Olympics is not likely to be cost-effective in immediate economic terms, but that it will help to achieve sport participation and redevelopment targets by 2020 (Department for Media, Culture, and Sport and Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002; 15). The report also notes that the mega-event will produce a 'feelgood factor'. Public celebration will feed into regeneration, sporting legacy, tourism, and social and economic benefit (ibid; 62). Plans for Olympic space took the need to foster a celebratory atmosphere into account from the start, paying careful attention to the feel of the crowd.

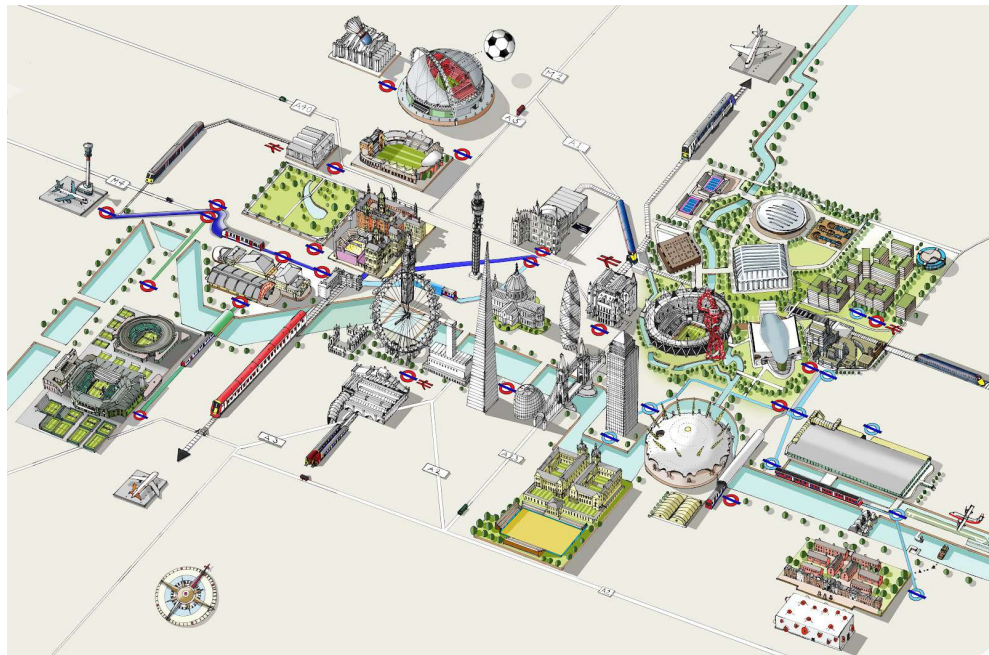


Fig 5. Stylised map of London, showing venues and landmarks only (Baxter and Potter, 2012)

A conceptual Olympic space emerged in the articulation points of crowd movement. The planners of Olympic space had to meet logistical requirements of the crowd, establish the conditions for commodity exchange within Olympic space, and ensure that the crowd was secure. However, they also had to allow the space to breathe, in order that the crowd might inhabit and transform it into a single celebratory manifestation of the Olympic festival. The architectural firm Arup produced a detailed crowd model using data from Wembley Stadium, Crystal Palace, Paddington Station, Kings Cross Station, and the Beijing Olympics, while extra transport to and from Stratford was planned to ease movement around Olympic spaces (Arup, 2013a; 12). As the games neared, representations of their space proliferated. Images of London as Olympic host were common to merchandise, advertising, posters on the underground, and maps. These depictions of the coming festival shared a focus on images of the crowd, either in a positive light or as warning to take into account this new obstacle to navigating the city. Maps produced for games attendees imagined London as a spidery network of transport links between Olympic sites, oversized and rendered in colour against a backdrop of London, greyed-out or pushed into the background.

The representation of London 2012 was also made participatory, a collective imagining before it became collective practice. One interview participant worked with a primary school during the Olympics. She described, in the run-up to the games, an assembly in which pupils were instructed to spend a minute of silence thinking about 'how exciting it would be to be in the stadium for the opening ceremony'. Later supervising a school trip to the Olympic Park itself she felt that this same 'hying-up exercise' continued: 'the imaginary excitement was still being created in the entry area.' The participatory conceptualisation of Olympic space was not only a geometric one, mapping connections and locations across London, but also an affective one, imagining the experience of festival space before that festival was even brought into being.

This collective participation came to its apex in the opening ceremony. Having spent the day making my way slowly across London, I travelled up to Harrow where I had arranged to watch the ceremony with family, aware of the shared nature of this moment of incipience. With the Olympic Park hosting its first crowd, those maps and signs across London were about to take on their full function and meaning. One interview participant describes her experience of the Olympic opening ceremony as follows:

We knew the opening ceremony was happening that evening, and hadn't planned to watch it. But we ended up in a pub on London Fields [in Hackney], and they had a big screen, and there were crowds of people gathered around watching it... then there was this really beautiful moment – we were getting drunk – and there were the Red Arrows. We could see them on the screen, flying over the stadium, and just as we saw them fly across the screen, we looked up and they were right above our heads. So we were looking at the screen and there was a shot of the planes flying, so you could see the whole of London, and then we looked up and saw the planes flying over us, so we got this really weird perspective of the whole of London. It was really really beautiful and really exciting

At the moment of the opening ceremony, all those collected impositions on London space, all those plans, maps, and images of London 2012, were unified and completed. Many interview participants' stories of that moment resonate with this account of seeing the Red Arrows pass overhead. Another recounts an

experience of getting home to Bow mid-way through the ceremony, only to move immediately from the TV to his window to watch the fireworks. Even in the far north-west of London, I was struck by a sense of the city re-orientated towards the Olympic Park.



Fig 6: Red Arrows fly over the Olympic Stadium during the opening ceremony (DG, 2012e)

This collective imagining might be characterised as a moment of strategic perspective over London. De Certeau describes this perspective lifting its viewers 'out of the city's grasp,' transforming 'the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes' (de Certeau, 1980; 92). It is this unexpected clarity of perspective that my interview participants found beautiful and exciting. London 2012 represented an attempt to transform the multiplicity of messy, layered, fragmented London into a univocal festival moment. Ian Buchanan distinguishes between strategy as a 'technique of place', and tactics as a 'technique of space' (Buchanan, 2000; 89). Tactics respond to the absence of a locus, a mode of action for individuals appropriating the maze of urban space from within. Conversely, strategy is unifying, directed towards the production of place through placing limits on practice. Representations of Olympic space, culminating in the opening

ceremony, positioned London residents and Olympic attendees not within London but above London 2012, observing a coherent festival space as spectators.

Ian Sinclair described the Olympic Park fence as a 'faultline where the virtual collides with the actual,' and the mega-project of the games as a 'perfected storyboard taken backwards into reality' (Sinclair, 2008; 20). Likewise Edensor, Christie, and Lloyd point to varied techniques used in constructing the Olympic Park 'that highlight, mount, display, and label things [to] banish epistemological and aesthetic ambiguity' (Edensor, Christie, and Lloyd, 2008; 289). The opening ceremony was one such technique, imposing an understanding of the city wherein the Olympic Park was established as a central hub in a network of Olympic sites that included central London, the ExCel Centre, Greenwich Park, Wimbledon, Wembley Stadium, and St James' Park. This conceived event-space of the Olympics was produced and disseminated as representation, superimposed on, and then lifted away from, London itself.

This moment of collective imagining was also materially enforced to ensure its unity and hegemony. In Harrow, watching the opening ceremony and following on Twitter, I was presented with a second unfolding spectacle. London's monthly Critical Mass bike ride, which had emerged as a focal point for opposition to Olympics, disobeyed police conditions, resulting in mass arrest. On the Friday of the opening ceremony attendance at the cycle ride (as much a celebration of cycling as a protest around environmental issues and urban planning) was particularly large, with one interview participant estimating 6-700 cyclists. There is never a pre-established route, but on that night they cycled towards the Olympic Park, defiantly breaking a pre-emptive ban on crossing the river. Near Bow they were strung out in several smaller groups and the police took their chance to move in, disperse, and arrest one group of 182 cyclists.

This felt like an inverted mirror of the opening ceremony, the most open that crackdown on protest got during the games. The following day's march by the

Counter Olympics Network, along a route agreed in advance, was allowed to go ahead with no disruption by police. However, this unpredictable and chaotic transgression of the unity of Olympic space at the moment of its realisation warranted a response. The simultaneity of these two events underscores the significance of efforts to produce an image of Olympic space as unitary. As the opening ceremony finalised a unitary and abstract representation of space an instance of material practice that threatened that abstract unity was neutralised. The spaces of the games were represented as crowd spaces, as unified spaces, and finally as secure spaces. This defence of the purity of Olympic space as representation was carried over into the material practice that produced it as a concrete and lived space, but also as one abstracted from its surroundings, set apart from the mess of London.

3.4 - Perceiving and practising Olympic festival space

On the morning following the opening ceremony I travelled back from Harrow through central London. This was my first experience of Olympic space as it became realised in practice. While representations of that space had amounted to its symbolic production, the presence of the crowd gave it a material existence. Within this crowd it felt as though the whole of London was transformed. One interview participant, a resident of Homerton near the Olympic Park and an organiser of the Cultural Olympiad, remarked that London felt like it 'opened up' during the Olympics. She remembered with some sadness the sense of that openness evaporating once those crowds disappeared.

At the end of the games the *Telegraph* made a comparison between the riot crowds of 2011 and the Olympic crowds of 2012: 'last year was (the London) riots, this year was just a riot. Tonight was absolutely brilliant, tonight you saw a different kind of flame, it was organised, it was enlightening' (Telegraph, 2012). The summoning of the Olympic crowd stood as a breaking-point for the affective

horizon of the games. Hopes and fears associated with that crowd, previously projected into an uncertain future, resolved into a festival atmosphere.



Fig 7. Crowds gather in front of the 'Park Live' screens in the Olympic Park (DG, 2012f)

Lefebvre's linking of perceived space and spatial practice draws attention to the way in which practice is inseparable from the bodily perception of space that informs it. To enter Olympic space was to experience the Olympic crowd. Travelling across London on the first day of the games felt like inhabiting one of the maps disseminated in the previous week. I moved between points that had been rendered empty by the previous night's making-legible of London. Passing through the network hubs of central London these spaces were more vibrant, more noticeable, more central to that perspective on the city thanks to the crowds who inhabited them. Within these hubs it was impossible to avoid the crowd. Wandering through Trafalgar Square I found myself drawn in. Unconsciously flowing with the crowd as a path of least resistance I became caught up in movement heading towards the St. James' Park stadium. Navigation of this space rested on becoming a part of the crowd, weaving

through a mass of bodies, submitting to the uni-directional circuit the crowd was moving in.



Fig 8. Two games attendees pose with an armed policeman (DG, 2012g)

This crowd was carefully managed in order that the correct atmosphere of controlled festival might be produced. Just as volunteers in their pink and purple uniforms were ever-present within Olympic space so too were police, private security, and soldiers. In Trafalgar square, as at other Olympic sites, I was struck by the fact that people would continually approach soldiers and armed police for photographs, asking them pose with their weapons. Philip Boyle and Kevin Haggerty identify that 'the social significance of [security] efforts is not confined to their ability to reduce threats, but also involves an effort to ease public anxiety. Security, like justice, must not only be done, it must be seen to be done' (Boyle and Haggerty, 2009; 271). In perceiving the spaces of the crowd, it was important that those spaces were felt as 'safe', secured from those threats of the unruly or vulnerable crowd that constituted Olympic fears.

Stephen Healey describes the affective atmosphere of the mall as one that encourages a 'involuntary vulnerability', rendering shoppers malleable (Healey, 2012). Healey writes that malls are designed as spaces of comfort and ease of movement, as spaces characterised by a monotonous atmosphere, and as 'thin places' which signify only a limited range of social relationships. Together these elements have the effect that 'retail spaces, such as malls, render shoppers potentially vulnerable to influences specifically designed to induce shopping above and beyond any original purposive intention' (Healey, 2012; 40). While the spaces of London 2012 were characterised by a more complex affective atmosphere than the single purpose design of malls, a similar 'involuntary vulnerability' and directed movement was felt in London's Olympic spaces.

Healey's use of affect is a useful reminder of Anderson's warning that we should be attentive to the ways in which affects have the capacity to 'diminish' as well as to act as 'expansive' influences upon the subject (Anderson, 2006b; 740). Once the uncertain affect of the Olympic approach had resolved into a positive festival, this undercurrent of utopian feeling within the crowd was mobilised to produce a 'correct' perception and practice of space. For one interview participant, moving within the crowd produced a sense that everything was 'deliberately super carefully planned; they didn't need spontaneity so they didn't let it happen'. Individuals arriving in Olympic space were to understand that space as festival – they were to hear the crowd, have their movement dictated by the movement of that crowd, see the Olympic and national colours that characterised the games. The spaces of the games were defined by the collective perception of the crowd, creating the conditions for their production as festival spaces set apart from the everyday life of London.



Fig 9. Games Maker volunteers direct the crowd in the Olympic Park (DG, 2012h)

This space was prepared for the arrival of the crowd and worked-upon by various forms of waged labour. It was secured by the erection of barriers and walkways, signified by an embellishment of existing spaces with the markers of London 2012, and staffed by huge numbers of volunteers and workers. These workers and volunteers became ubiquitous during the games, moving among the crowds, standing behind barriers to direct them, or sitting up on tall platforms to observe movement below. Uniformed volunteers were often the most visible presence of the Olympics outside of Olympic spaces, and it became unusual to take a bus or a train within London without sharing it with at least one volunteer coming or going from an event. One interview participant suggested that this meant that arriving in Olympic spaces had a strange sense of theatre to it, in that those uniforms suddenly took on their full meaning, assuming the role they have only previously implied. Around Olympic event-spaces it was the job of these volunteers to ensure the smooth movement of the crowd, allowing everyone, as the same interview participant put it, to 'walk in calmly, cheer for whoever you're cheering for, leave calmly'.

However, it was only within everyday practice that this production was completed. Representations of the Olympics mobilised a broad and utopian hope, rendering that affect as narrower and more specific hopes for economic prosperity or national pride. In the same way, management of the crowd was orientated towards governing the expansive potential of that crowd, directing it towards a specific practice of space. De Certeau characterises the movement of pedestrians within the city as a 'chorus of idle footsteps' that 'weave places together' (de Certeau, 1980; 97). While de Certeau presents this pedestrian practice as appropriative and resistant, these footsteps were far from idle. Here, the collective productive capacity of the crowd was carefully directed and put to work. In this instance, de Certeau's 'pedestrian speech acts' are as implicated in the reproduction current conditions as they are transformative or resistant, with the strategic image of London represented at the opening ceremony materialised precisely through the tactical activity of the Olympic crowd.

The 'narrow' production of Olympic spaces through waged labour was therefore orientated towards establishing the conditions necessary for this 'broader' production of festival space in everyday social life. The utopian potential of the Olympic crowd, that which animated the hopes and fears that preceded the games, stemmed from this 'broad' productive capacity. As such the 'narrow' production of Olympic space was concerned with constraining and directing this potential. This relationship is one of abstraction: a literal separation of Olympic spaces from the urban fabric of London was achieved through labour, as a sphere of activity removed from the everyday. At the same time, however, this abstract and alienated activity rested on a certain everyday practice, and determined the terrain on which the living activity of the crowd would unfold. The a-social, the alienated, rests on the social even as it comes to dominate it: 'while "flowers and trees" of the (alienated) non-everyday grow out of the "soil" of the (non-alienated) everyday, they also cast long and dark shadows on their native ground, and disintegrate into it, altering its composition and fertility' (Goonewardena, 2008; 129). This abstraction was only achieved through

tapping into a utopian potential within the everyday itself – the possibility for transformation inherent within everyday practice.

As the crowd emerged to complete this production, the games' uncertain affective charge resolved into a festival atmosphere through the disciplining, guiding, and securing of the Olympic crowd. However, although this control of the crowd served to manipulate and mobilise the affective charge of the games, that affective charge remained, submerged in and essential to the festival atmosphere of London 2012. It is this festival atmosphere that I now turn to, in order to describe the games not only as they were conceived and represented or perceived and practiced, but also how they were lived, and thus made to represent.

3.5 - Living the representational space of the Olympic festival

Approaching the hubs of Olympic space during the games carried a sense of anticipation. The spaces of the games were always conceived and represented as exciting or exhilarating. Rendered material, they were inhabited by the crowd, imbued with this sense of festival. As the IOC President, Jacques Rogge, declared in his closing-ceremony speech: 'you, the spectators and the public, provided the soundtrack for these games' (Rogge, cited in Chappelet, 2014; 141). One interview participant remembered that during the games the space was 'never quiet'. The sound of the crowd carried to those approaching the space, while nearer the sites of Olympic events the individual became subsumed within it. Joining the crowd outside Stratford station, I moved in unison with them up the steps towards the Westfield, following the correct route of circulation over the bridge into the shopping centre. Even when inside movement was within and with that crowd at all times. On leaving each new crowd-front would stop at the top of the steps to survey the same view of Stratford before continuing downwards, pushed on from behind.

Incorporation into the crowd meant a unification of rhythm, of the way space was seen and felt, and of the sociality of that space. The affective character of this space was defined by that unification, as was the nature of London 2012 in total. A common description of the spaces of London 2012 was that they 'didn't feel like London', a useful summation of the divergence between experience of London and experience of Olympic space. People were more likely to smile at one another, to stop and talk, even (according to some interviewees) exhausting retail work generated a positive collective affect. The unified movement of the crowd was not simply that of well-directed trudging – these spaces were alive with their own sociality, lived in a broader sense than that conveyed by the image of crowds obediently to-ing and fro-ing from events.



Fig 10. The Olympic Torch bus surrounded by crowds on Oxford Street towards the end of its journey to the Park (Press Association, 2012)

The third element of Lefebvre's tripartite dialectic is lived space, corresponding to a 'surplus' or 'remainder', ultimately 'inexpressible and unanalysable' within the lived experience of space (Schmid, 2008; 40). This remainder of the 'totality within the everyday' is, for Sarah Nadal-Melisió, 'an as yet unfulfilled potential for change', that yields both 'flexibility' and 'vulnerability' (Nadal-Melisió, 2008;

164). The sense of festival that existed for the crowds moving through the Olympic Park or sitting on grass in front of the outdoor screens in Hyde Park originated in this spilling-over of sociality. People consuming the Olympics were not just spectators to an event, but constituted a crowd collectivity. Interview participants described inhabiting London 2012 as 'a real buzz', reporting that people felt friendlier and more approachable than normal, and that there was a sense of community unusual both for London and for specific event sites (people attending events at Wimbledon, for example, are usually 'sombre' but here were 'excited').

Nadal-Melisió argues that the everyday can be conceived as 'an encounter between the contingent and the possible' (Nadal-Melisió, 2008; 164). Her use of the term 'encounter' here spatialises the open-ended nature of the everyday, pointing towards Lefebvre's attempt to define moments at which this unenclosed character is felt. Andy Merrifield has recently taken up the encounter in terms that feel similar to de Certeau's valorisation of 'pedestrian speech acts'. He presents the encounter as moment of resistance, citing the Occupy movement, Paris 1968, and flash-mob protests. The encounter gives content to empty urban space, and therefore carries the potential to transform that space, but can never 'endure' for long. The political question for Merrifield is thus how to 'sustain' the encounter, to allow it to become 'harmonised with a continuous political evolution' (ibid; 92). At the same time, however, Merrifield also provides a more ambiguous description of the encounter, noting that 'history takes hold because of encounters between immanent objective forces' and that capitalist relations of production can be understood as one such encounter that 'took hold' (ibid, 55).

This ambiguous nature of the encounter – filled with the potential for transformation and yet ultimately reproductive of existing conditions – was essential for the production of Olympic festival space as a lived abstraction. In the direction of crowd perception and practice, in the capture of affect as a hopeful festival atmosphere, the Olympics were orientated towards the

governing of excess as productive force within everyday life. Łukasz Stanek writes that 'for Lefebvre, what is at stake is to [...] theorise the consequences of the fact that the reproduction of this mode is based on its own exception' (Stanek, 2011; 167). This contradictory presence of externality within (and essential to) capitalism is discussed by Lefebvre in relation to leisure spaces. He asserts that under capitalism leisure is 'as alienated and alienating as labour' (Lefebvre, 1974; 383). And yet within spaces of leisure, the body also 'behaves [...] as a total body, breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labour' (ibid; 384). These spaces are ultimately orientated towards the reproduction of bodies as labour power, but at the same time are experienced and lived as more than that, as utopian moments not just of leisure (work's opposite) but also non-work (work's final overcoming).

Inhabiting Olympic spaces as a member of the crowd meant encountering the city and those who constitute it in unusual circumstances – London ceased to be London and temporarily became something else. However, this is not to romanticise the Olympics as a moment outside of capitalism. Quite the contrary, access to the hubs of Olympic space was sold as a commodity, and the whole of the games was orientated towards the valorisation of capital. This valorisation can never occur without a relationship to that which is external to it, and the Olympics stood as a mobilisation of this externality not only as the mute potentiality present in everyday life, but as quasi-utopian festival. Living Olympic space meant imbuing that space with a multivalent set of significations. However, as with the totality of the everyday, only those that maintained the reproduction of capitalist social relations 'took hold' within those spaces. The excessive content of the Olympic festival stood as a moment in which 'possibility offers itself', seeks to become 'freely total', but 'exhausts itself in the act of being lived' (Lefebvre, 1961; 642).

The lived content of Olympic space rendered it socially significant and signifying – in Lefebvre's terms a 'space of representation'. This representational content of space refers to 'something else: a divine power, the logos, the state, masculine or feminine principles, and so on' (Schmid, 2008; 37). As it was

socially lived and imbued with life, Olympic space was made to express multiple, often contradictory, meanings by those who inhabited it. These social significations spoke to both the actual and the possible, reflecting the expansive nature of the encounter. Within the festival atmosphere that resolved the hopes and fears associated with the mega-event this double-sided charge remained, submerged within the affective content of Olympic spaces.

Schmid writes that representational spaces relate to a 'field of projects and projections, of symbols and utopias, of the *imaginaire* and [...] the *désire*' (Schmid, cited in Stanek, 2011; 129). It is in this sense that the hopeful projections into the future that characterised the arrival of the games lived on within Olympic space. The Olympic crowd as celebratory collectivity embodied, for its brief existence, the broad hopes attached to the games. The narrower expressions of these hopes – for national or patriotic rebirth, for economic prosperity, and for social or urban renewal – were present in the forms that the crowd took. The flag-waving crowd seemed to confirm a new collective embrace of British national identity. Within the crowd, austerity and crisis could for a moment be forgotten. The spaces of the crowd suggested renewal of the urban fabric and the social life of the city. Each of these expressions of hope originated in and returned to a broader, all-encompassing hope, a collective sense of the not-yet-become. The crowds of the Olympic festival were engaged in joint daydream, the carnival vision of a world transformed.



Fig 11. The ubiquitous red, white, and blue of the Olympic crowd (Kington, 2012)

At the same time the Olympic crowds carried forward the anxieties that preceded the games. Representational spaces 'relate lived time to the past: individual past [...] collective history [...] and imaginary origin: the primordial nature' (Stanek, 2011; 131). This backwards-looking element of representational space identifies and names the collective social life that animates it. However, in referencing collective histories of London, the representational space of the games inevitably also referenced those crowd events that lay at the root of Olympic anxiety. As well as living Bloch's 'animated and striving' daydream, the Olympic crowd lived the regressive and anxious night-dream. The figure of the riotous London mob continued to stalk the image of the Olympic festival: the *Telegraph's* choice of comparison demonstrates this clearly in defining the Olympic crowd primarily against the crowds of the August 2011 riots. Similarly, remembering the 7/7 bombings, acceptance of heightened security was in part due to a continued awareness of the crowd-as-target. This contradictory affective charge, submerged within the sociality of the crowd, animated the Olympic festival. The encounter that produced the carnivalesque atmosphere of the Olympics drew its open-ended sense of possibility from these contrasting senses of the crowd as simultaneously utopian and threatening.

Olympic space itself was designed, represented, materially constructed and practiced in order to capture the affective charge that heralded the arrival of the games. The production of Olympic space as representational space was therefore achieved in part through the crowd encounter and in part through the material form of the space itself. This materiality – as monumental space – created the conditions for representation of Olympic festival. The Olympic Park, with its wide open spaces punctuated by 'iconic' venues, reflects Lefebvre's suggestion that in the shifting 'balance of forces' between the monument and the building, monumentality is reinstated 'within the sphere of the building itself [...] restoring the old unity at a higher level' (Lefebvre, 1974; 223). Monumental space, Lefebvre writes, 'does not have a "signified" (or "signifieds")'; rather, it has a horizon of meaning' (ibid 222). The representational quality of space is less akin to 'text' than it is to 'texture', and is 'acted' rather than 'read' (ibid). This 'representation' operates on a level below and above that of conscious or legible meaning: 'the affective level – which is to say, the level of the body, bound to symmetries and rhythms – is transformed into a "property" of monumental space' (ibid; 224). In this way, the monumental space of the games was able to hold multiple and contradictory meanings at once, submerged within its festival atmosphere. However, monumental space also serves to impose unity by projecting to 'each member of society an image of that membership' (ibid; 220).

The inhabitation of Olympic monumental space by the crowd meant the appropriation of that space: spaces of representation are those that "the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (ibid; 39). This imaginative appropriation of a lived space takes meaning from 'symbolic objects, attendant images, mythic narratives', animating material space (Stanek, 2011; 131). However, this appropriation of space exists in tension with the domination of that space, wherein that domination is determinant under capitalism. Appropriation, here, aligns with production in its broad sense. Spaces are appropriated collectively, transformed through everyday practice to 'serve the needs and possibilities of a group' (Lefebvre, 1974; 165). The domination of

space, on the other hand, aligns with production in its narrow sense, and is 'invariably the realisation of a master's project', wherein 'technology introduces a new form into a pre-existing space' (ibid). Olympic space was always a dominated space, the production of which proceeded through specific acts of narrow production orientated towards economic ends, and was inhabited and animated as a socially significant space only in the final moments of its production.

In inhabiting dominated space, the body itself is similarly constrained: 'dominated by overpowering forces, including a variety of brutal techniques and an extreme emphasis on visualisation, the body fragments' (ibid; 166). Within Olympic space, this domination of space and the body existed in tension with the living crowd's appropriation of space. The ways in which this social space was made to signify were multivalent and complex, but they were also subsumed to a number of dominant representations expressed in the monumentality of Olympic space. The unity of Olympic space was maintained even as it was rendered concrete in the social life that animated it. Indeed, this unity and abstraction of London 2012 was completed only through the living of that space by the crowd, who provided the festival transformation of the everyday through which this space was defined.

3.6 - Producing and consuming London 2012 as experiential commodity

The design, representation, construction, practice, and lived inhabitation of Olympic space as festival was all orientated towards one end – the realisation of value. This capture and mobilisation of social life was intended to produce a context consistent with the exchange and consumption of Olympic commodities. Within and beyond these spaces, the games comprised a vast array of merchandise. The Olympic park contained 5,900m² of retail space, with 80 more shops in other event sites and 35 outside of them (Dennis et al, 2014; 125). There were 65 licensees of official merchandise, and a total of 10,000 distinct

items of merchandise on sale (ibid). More than 100 million products were sold, resulting in profit in the vicinity of £1 billion (ibid).



Fig 12. Toy Olympic mascots on sale in the Olympic Park (DG, 2012i)

In these commodities the tendency in the production of Olympic festival space towards unification and abstraction was completed, with access to some spaces constituting a commodity in itself. 11 million Olympic tickets were sold, making a total of £659 million, with a further 10 million tickets available for cultural events (Chappelet, 2014; 143). Access to those spaces was also sold to commercial interests: the sale of broadcasting rights to NBC alone earned the IOC \$2 billion (Sportcal, 2012; 7). Spending on outdoor advertising space in London increased 30% during the games compared with the same period in 2011 (Sweney, 2012). To attend, watch, or engage with the Olympics was to consume them as commodity, and presence in Olympic space was itself an indirect involvement in the exchange of Olympic commodities.

This inescapable entanglement of Olympic attendees in the commodity life of the games poses a problem for understanding the mobilisation of this crowd.

Should the crowds' active role in producing festival space imply an active role in producing the Olympics as commodity? It is not unusual for commentators to suggest this: Jean-Loup Chappelet states in an off-hand manner that spectators 'co-create value with the athletes' (Chappelet, 2014; 141). This line of argument concerning the place of affect in the realisation of value often follows theorists with roots in Italian operaismo, as expressed in Mario Tronti's assertion that in our post-Fordist moment 'all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society' (Tronti, cited in Thoburn, 2003; 78). This theoretical tradition draws on elements of Marx's thought including the real subsumption of labour under capital (Endnotes, 2010), the development of the general intellect (Virno, 1996), and the collapse of the law of value (Negri, 1996), in order to theorise changes to production that accompany the growth of 'cognitive capitalism' (Vercellone, 2007), and financialisation (Marazzi, 2011).

The result is an understanding of contemporary capitalism as one in which distinctions between work and non-work collapse, with all of social life directly implicated in the valorisation of capital. This tradition has drawn heavily on explorations of affect, putting them to work in the concept of affective labour (Hardt, 1999). Here the collapse of a distinction between work and non-work is understood to result in the reconstitution of much of our social interactions as 'immaterial labour', a communicative, symbolic, and affective activity that does not produce material use values, but valorises capital nonetheless. Some theorists follow this further, concluding that the end of a distinction between work and non-work means the collapse of the law of value rendering this subjective and non-quantifiable content as the substance of value itself (Vercellone, 2007; Marazzi, 1994).

From this perspective the argument that the crowd actively produced the festival commodity that they simultaneously consumed appears reasonable. Here the production of Olympic space as festival would fully coincide with the production of the Olympics as commodity. However, the immaterial labour hypothesis is not

without its flaws. The most significant of these for the present argument is expressed by Max Henninger. Critiquing the supposed collapse of the law of value, he argues that maintaining a distinction between the qualitative and the quantitative is essential to the analysis of modern capitalism, noting that for Marx the commodity itself 'refers precisely to an object that has both a qualitative and a quantitative aspect' (Henninger, 2007; 171). Rather than presenting social life as a uniform plane on which all activity is always-already directly productive of value, Henninger calls for 'an empirically grounded effort at re-locating the ever more unpredictably shifting lines between necessary labour and surplus labour and, more generally, between work and non-work' (ibid; 174).

Identifying this distinction between work and non-work, and more broadly between the quantitative and the qualitative elements within the social, is essential in the case of the Olympics as it is in this distinction that the excessive quality of lived space originates. The affective labour hypothesis is correct in positioning affect as fundamentally irreducible to quantity. However, a much richer theoretical perspective can be explored if the incorporation of affective life into the realisation of value is understood as heightening a tension between quality and quantity, between life captured by capital and life lived beyond it. Emma Dowling illustrates this distinction in a study of the ways in which her affective labour as a waitress is rendered quantifiable by a variety of management techniques. She writes that the social relations between waitress and customer created in that labour were 'completely altered by the active presence and active intervention of capital' (Dowling, 2007; 125). The valorisation of capital always requires human creative capacity. However, as capital lives 'vampire-like' on this life, it must cease to be lived fully, subsumed to the needs of capital rather than lived in itself (Marx, 1976; 343).



Fig 13. Games Makers arriving for a shift in the Olympic Park (DG, 2012j)

This internalised relationship of externality lies at the heart of the way in which Olympic space was produced as festival, and subsequently the way in which that space was rendered a commodity. It is useful here to return to a distinction between 'broad' and 'narrow' production. The encounter of the Olympic crowd that resolved affective ambiguity into a festival atmosphere occurred within the realm of the everyday, as the social production of space in its broad sense. However, this encounter was conditioned by 'narrow' material and representative production of Olympic space. Here, social life outside and beyond quantification was mobilised by means of activity immediately directed towards the production of value. The broader production of Olympic affective space was indirectly orientated towards the valorisation of capital but was also distinct from it, lived as a fully and directly social space and of necessity distanced from the reductive quantification of value.

The production and exchange of Olympic commodities was thus the work of specific individuals in and around this space. The experience of this labour was conditioned by that festival space, just as the consumption of Olympic

commodities was. Interview participants who worked at Olympic sites reported that they felt unusually upbeat at work, as though they were included in the festival atmosphere, despite long, busy hours. One participant stated that she 'wanted to do it for London', anxious to be a part of the healing influence of the games twelve months after the riots. This is similarly reflected in the huge numbers of volunteers that the games were able to draw on. Labour on this commodity and its exchange was in no short supply, thanks to its overlap with festival celebration. However, this labour was ultimately an impoverished mode of interaction with the Olympic festival – working in a shop at the Olympic Park may have felt friendlier and more exciting than working in any other shop, but the substance of that activity was still stacking shelves, scanning barcodes and so on. It is in the full participation in this festival as a consumer that the nature of those commodities and their relation to festival reveals itself.

Charles Dennis, in a study on the experience of shopping at London 2012, writes that 'the atmosphere of the crowd and media amplified underlying motivations to consume excitement, eustress, and hedonism within the Olympic experience' (Dennis et al, 2013; 133). He remarks that 'the consumption experience of the London games was one laden with perceived idealism', and that many were 'purchasing merchandise as a representation of the overall Olympic experience' (ibid; 132). He cites interview participants who reported that the 'huge buzz around Olympic venues' inspired them to 'want to buy', or to 'want to take a souvenir home', 'to be able to say I had been and tell my children about it' (ibid). The festival atmosphere of the games, so carefully cultivated through the narrow and broad production of Olympic space, was ultimately directed towards this end. The crowd as a whole was engaged in this realisation of value through the exchange and consumption of Olympic commodities.



Fig 14. Games attendees buy commemorative pin-badges from an official vendor (DG, 2012k)

These Olympic commodities carried the celebratory affect of the games, imbued with the atmosphere of the space in which they were bought and experienced. Terming London 2012 an 'experiential' commodity intends to highlight this content, either as the defining element of the commodity (a ticket bought in order to gain entry to an event), or as a secondary characteristic (a souvenir tea-towel which carries significance through association with the mega-event). Highlighting this affective content draws attention to the fact that it was in the consumption of these commodities that the affective ambiguity of the games found its final resolution. The exchange and consumption of these commodities also stood as the completion of the abstraction and unification of Olympic space. While the production of the games as commodity was a function of narrow production, a specialised activity distinct within the everyday terrain of broad production, the exchange and consumption of this commodity was co-extensive with the broad social life of those spaces.

Goonewardena writes that for Lefebvre, the everyday is 'not just *bourgeois*, but *human*' (Goonewardena, 2008; 121 [emphasis original]). This sense that the

totality of the everyday is rich with possibilities and contains all the creative potential of social life is found in 'even the most alienated manifestations' of this everyday life (ibid, 122). As such, there is a utopian content at the heart of the commodity, 'an unconscious revolutionary desire for an unalienated life sublimated in commodity form – a utopian promise that remains to be redeemed' (Goonewardena, 2008; 123). Lefebvre addresses this in his *Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the 'Pavillon'*, writing that the *pavillon* (French new-build suburbs of the 1950s and '60s) represents a utopian space from which people expect 'nothing less than happiness' (Lefebvre, 1966a; 132). The consumption of this space, Stanek writes, 'takes on the half-real, half-imaginary existence of commodities, appearing cut off from the practices that produced them' (Stanek, 2011; 127). For Lefebvre, 'the *pavillon* is experienced as not only beyond, but also against the world of labour', just as was the Olympic festival (ibid). It is precisely in the consumption of these spaces as commodities that this submerged daydream comes to the fore – it is paradoxically the 'consumption of space that conveys a hunch of an everyday beyond the society of consumption' (ibid; 128).

The root of this submerged utopian daydream is to be found in the nature of the commodity fetish, in that social substance borne by the commodity which 'transcends sensuousness', causing, in Marx's example, a table to 'evolve out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas' (Marx, 1976; 163). This supra-sensuous substance is value (expressed as exchange value), determined by the number of hours of socially necessary labour time that went into the commodity's production. This reflects a certain quantity of abstract social labour, the collective creative capacity of society, crystallised as the transcendental substance of value. This creative capacity is ultimately collective, but is only indirectly social, its collectivity masked as a social relation between things. It is in this obscured collectivity that the fetish character of the commodity lies, giving birth to its submerged daydream of a realised collectivity. The commodity indicates towards the collective creative capacity of society, embodying the

excessive quality of the everyday even as that possibility becomes closed off, reified in social relations of production and consumption.

In the Olympic commodity this submerged daydream was brought close to the surface. The collective consumption of Olympic space briefly re-socialised the indirect sociality of the commodity. This was emphasised in the case of the Olympics precisely because the collective affect of the crowd transformed the space in which that exchange and consumption occurred. The production of the games involved an effort to represent them as collective endeavour, in which the crowd produced the spectacle as much as the designers and builders of the space. The realisation of these commodities as value (that is, their exchange) was reliant upon this symbolic content of London 2012. The narrow economic production of the commodity was set within the context of a broader production of space that lent meaning to that narrow production. The production of festival imbued Olympic space with a sense of transformative promise that would over-spill this alienated separation of labour. The Olympic commodity was exchanged on the basis of this contradictory promise of the erasure of its own conditions of existence.

However, the production of the games as a collection of commodities also re-inscribed these very conditions. The exchange of the Olympic commodity was predicated on not only the materialisation of festival affect, but also the games' abstraction from the everyday as the site of that celebratory collectivity. As with Lefebvre's description of the world of the *pavillon*, the spaces of the games present a world that is abstract (constituted by significations) and concrete at the same time: 'everything is real and everything is utopian, without a clear difference; everything is nearby and everything is far away, everything is "lived" and everything is imaginary (lived in the world of the image and the sign)' (Lefebvre, 1966a; 133). The symbolic production of the Olympics conditioned the practice of their space, and thus the social life and representative nature of that space. Lefebvre writes that in the *pavillon*, 'arrows point to invisible "realities", half real and half imaginary [...] these are latent contents, in the

social “unconscious” or “imaginary” (ibid). This latent content corresponds to Lefebvre's lived and representational space, while the material and symbolic production of that same space serves to constrain that content, to ensure that it remains latent.

3.7 - Conclusion

London's Olympic festival stands as a contradictory moment, one in which the excessive overspill of festival was carefully planned and mobilised towards the realisation of value. However, as consideration of the production, exchange, and consumption of that commodity shows, that internal relationship of capital to something external is far from extraordinary. In fact, the open possibility of the everyday is the fertile ground on which capitalist relations of production and exchange are continually recreated. The commodity itself therefore contains a submerged utopian tension, a reflection of those social relations that it reifies. The contradictory moment of the games, then, was simply one in which existing contradiction was brought to the surface.

The foregrounding of this tension was a strategy employed by the planners of the Olympic mega-event, a means of creating a festival atmosphere that would motivate particular kinds of labour and imbue Olympic commodities with extra significance in order to realise their value. The spatiality of the games was determined by their status as a crowd event, for and through which public spaces across London were transformed. This coming crowd influenced the affective atmosphere of the games even before they began, colouring those hopes and fears associated with their arrival. While Olympic hope tended towards a broad and utopian wish for transformation (a fore-shadowing of the crowd encounter as festival), it was brought to consciousness in reaction to the context of the games as specific hopes for economic prosperity, patriotic revival, and urban rebirth. These forward-looking hopes were mirrored by anxieties around the re-play of recent crowd events, a perspective gripped by the past

that saw only return of greater economic and everyday disruption, riot, and terrorist threat.

The 'narrow' production of the games thus proceeded in planning and representing of Olympic space in such a way that would contain and put to work this ambiguous affective charge. The games were conceived and planned as a crowd space that would be conducive to a festival atmosphere. They were also represented as a unified space, imposed on and lifted away from London as canvas for a legible festival space. This representation of Olympic space was materialised, first through waged labour in various forms, and then in the practice of the crowd itself. This 'narrow' material production determined the perception of Olympic space, further directing the behaviour of the crowd, but it was the crowd's inhabitation of that space that completed its production in the broad sense. In this inhabitation, the space gained its festival atmosphere and its unified and abstract character was materialised.

However, the inhabitation of Olympic space also went beyond the controlled materialisation of a conceived space. The production of this space as festival rested on the encounter of the crowd as means by which the ambiguous affect that preceded the games was resolved. The encounter of this crowd gestured towards the open-ended possibility of the everyday even as it re-inscribed the closure of that possibility. In this utopian glimpse the festival found its affective kernel – however, the ambiguity that preceded the games remained. The space of the games was rendered representational by this inhabitation, an appropriation of space that existed in tension with the 'narrow' domination of that space. As representational space, the Olympics folded-in the hopes and the fears that preceded them, both looking forward and gripped by the past within the festival moment.

This materialisation of affective charge through the excessive character of the crowd encounter was ultimately mobilised towards the realisation of value. Utilising the same distinction between broad and narrow production, it is

possible to recognise a distinction between the broad production of a spatial context for the exchange and consumption of Olympic commodities, and the narrow production of those commodities themselves. It is in the collective consumption of these commodities that the festival character of the games was fully materialised, resonating with and bringing to the surface the submerged utopian content of the commodity itself. It was also in the exchange of these commodities that the unified and abstract character of Olympic space was completed, not only as symbolic and physical abstraction from London, but also as an abstraction that mirrors the form of value itself, fragmented but also unitary, and quantified but also unquantifiable.

The glimpse of utopian possibility summoned into being by this crowd event has continued to shape the ways in which the transformation of the Olympic Park has been viewed. Those hopes and fears that preceded the games have been transposed to the after-life of the park, with the mega-event positioned as catalyst for lasting change. The apparent entanglement of the Olympic crowd in the production of the Olympic commodity blurred lines around the way in which capital was valorised by the games, obscuring the source of their transformative influence. However, it is possible to distinguish two senses in which the games were 'transformative' – the first in a broad but short-lived sense, within the festival encounter of the crowd; the second in a narrower but more lasting sense, in the way in which this festival moment stood as the foundational moment of a new space within East London's urban fabric.

It is to the creation of this space, in its mega-event and Legacy forms, that I turn in the next chapter. In this chapter, I concentrate on the first moment of Lefebvre's triad, picking up and expanding some elements of the argument made here concerning the narrow production of Olympic space as a space intended to hold crowds and become imbued with festival affect. Further, the dynamic introduced here by which the reproduction of capital is premised on a relationship with social life outside of valorisation is recognisable again in this

narrative of construction, this time in the form of the primitive accumulation of a value-dissociated space.

4 - Creating the Olympic Park

4.1 - Introduction

Before the Olympic Park could hold the festival crowds of the mega-event, it had to be prepared for their arrival. In the seven years between the successful Olympic bid and the start of the games a site was chosen, cleared of its previous structures, and re-created for London 2012. Permanent and temporary stadia, wide concrete concourses, and the necessary infrastructure of the games was constructed. After the games finished this site was once again closed to the public, to be re-made for its Legacy era. Narrower footpaths were carved out, new beds and trees were planted, temporary stadia were removed and access roads created. As the Park began to open again in 2013 further work continued on the south of the Park and the East Village (as the Athletes Village was renamed). As the south Park opened in spring 2014 work was getting underway on Chobham Manor, the Park's second residential development. All the while work has continued on the Crossrail site and DLR station at Pudding Mill Lane. Further work is now beginning on the commercial and residential buildings of the International Quarter and the Manhattan Loft Gardens tower, and is shortly to begin on a UCL campus and a new Victoria & Albert museum site, all expected to open between 2018 and 2020.

In this chapter I provide an account of the genesis of this construction. As the period in which the Park was created pre-dated my research, and its post-games reconfiguration lay between my two fieldwork stints, this chapter makes heavier use of archival data and interviews. The process of writing this chapter was one of reconstruction – gaining an image of a disappeared space based on discussions with people who knew it, descriptions of it in academic texts, and writing about it in official and press documents. While the design and implementation of these plans was largely complete before my fieldwork began, it wasn't fully so. As I started my explorations of the Park in November 2013 I found a space still divided by Heras fencing and under construction in many

places. Likewise, as the Park encourages convergence along its borders, more spaces take on a similar character and serve as useful points of comparison. I was able to explore the towpaths of the Lea and the Limehouse Cut to the south of the Park, wandering among boarded up warehouses readied for the construction of Ikea's 'Strand East' district, reminiscent of descriptions of the Lower Lea Valley immediately prior to the erection of the Olympic fence.

This reliance on archival and interview data, alongside explorations of empty spaces within the incomplete Park and its surroundings, meant that awareness of my gender presentation felt less sharp during the work that went into this chapter. In the busy spaces of the mega-event I presented as unproblematically male in order to avoid comment, and during my later explorations of the inhabited Park and the Westfield my trans-feminine presentation was a continual presence in my consciousness. By contrast here I was largely left to myself, reading at home or in Hackney and Stratford archives, wandering through deserted spaces, or having one-to-one discussions with interviewees in cafes⁷. My consciousness of self-presentation therefore slipped somewhat into the background as my ethnographic technique became less focused on recording a bodily sense of present space and more directed at the mental reconstruction of a disappeared space.

Due to the manner in which the Olympic Park was created – as a mega-project backed by state money and presented as an act of salvage on a hopeless place – this process of reconstruction was complicated by a web of existing narratives. While marketing and media representations of the Lower Lea Valley prior to the games largely presented it as a desolate and empty space, the voices of campaigners against the compulsory purchase order told another story. Likewise, new residents of the Olympic Park generally understood the space before their arrival as one devoid of life, yet the compulsory purchase order itself listed myriad small businesses and community concerns. I have

7 At the same time, the difficulty I experienced in approaching construction workers is perhaps the single most significant constraint placed on my research by my gender presentation, especially for this chapter.

picked a path through these narratives, aware that the reduction of a complex lived space to a single image or story is always going to be simplistic.

I also have my own narrative concerns: I am interested in the imposition of order on space, the production of space as a lived abstraction, and the incorporation of space into specific modes of capitalist accumulation. In this chapter I am again interested in the way in which material that lies outside of the immediate valorisation process becomes its animating resource. In the previous chapter this played out as the mobilisation of social excess towards the realisation of value at the Olympic festival. Here a similar dynamic is found in the coerced appropriation of space, an example of primitive accumulation as the 'permanent premise' of capitalist accumulation (Bonefeld, 2001; 5). The post-industrial space of the Lower Lea Valley had been characterised by a set of formal and informal practices that largely acted to reproduce life and labour-power outside of an accumulation process that had left them behind. As the London economy shifted from a manufacturing base towards a financialised and creative service sector these spaces emerged as a twilight zone. Their gradual dis-ordering can be understood as the necessary emergence of a space outside of valorisation, self-constituting as a resource upon which that process can draw, both in the reproduction of labour power and in its eventual re-absorption.

In this chapter I will sketch out a history of the Lower Lea Valley and detail the everyday life that had evolved there before the compulsory purchase order was levelled. I draw on Tim Edensor to characterise this space as 'Dionysian' and disordered, appropriated towards the production of value using post-industrial waste and waste spaces, or towards the reproduction of labour-power in informal residential and leisure spaces. I then describe the clearing of this space, in representation, legal fact, and material reality, that was necessary to the production of the Olympic Park. This process, I argue, can be understood as an imposition of order that proceeds from the imposition of abstract quantity on a space previously dominated by qualitative use. This imposition of abstraction

is a conceptual move that becomes concretised in the levelling of the Lower Lea Valley ready for the creation of the Olympic Park.

Having described this creation of a blank space, I will explore the creation of the games-era Park as the production of an actually-existing abstract space. I will draw on Henri Lefebvre's three formants of abstract space to unpick the relationship between the geometric, visual, and phallic character of the Olympic Park. I demonstrate that their interrelation produces the Park in its material existence as an abstract space, a space ordered in such a way that it constrains and directs the actions of the Olympic crowd to reproduce this existence. In the final section I turn to the Legacy-era re-construction of the Park, focusing on the ways in which this period of production has tied it into a new regime of accumulation. This act of incorporation thus completes the imposition of order that the Olympic mega-project represents, by acting once again on the spatial perception and practice of those who will come to inhabit it. Where the games were a specific ordering of life within a single festival moment, the Legacy-era Park is produced to organise and direct ongoing everyday life towards a specific set of productive and reproductive practices.

4.2 - Before the games: the Lower Lea Valley as disordered space

The social life of the Lower Lea Valley has seen a number of transformations over the last century or so, with the games standing as the most recent - and most drastic – of these changes. The River Lea, canalised in part to curtail its tidal flooding of the Lea Valley's marshy plain, once served as a transportation artery, making the area a heartland of London's industry. This role was expanded with the rise of the railway, with significant rail works situated in Stratford. After Olympic transformation the topography of this space still bears the marks of this industrial past: railway lines and canals remain, dividing the land into multiple segments. These lines of transportation supplied raw materials and exported goods to the Thames docks in the Lea Valley's industrial

heyday, but in the period of post-industrial decay that followed, proved more a barrier to movement than a facilitator. Since Olympic transformation they have come to play new roles, with canals and rivers becoming adornments for luxury housing, and train lines shuttling people, rather than goods, into Canary Wharf and the City of London.

As early as the 10th century the Lea was put to use powering mills and providing transport through the marshes, but it was following the Navigation Acts of 1425 and 1571 that the Lea Valley began to develop its industrial character (English Heritage, 2012; 2). These acts encouraged the harnessing of rivers for transport, leading to the creation of the Lea Navigation canal. At the height of the Lea Valley's industrial period these waterways had been split and re-split to form a network of canals that included the Hackney Cut, the Three Mills River, the Channelsea River, the City Mill River, and the Waterworks River.

Throughout an inhabitation that stretches from Bronze Age roundhouses (Payne and Spurr, 2009) to World War II artillery posts (Robertson, 2008) this landscape has been transformed by the industry facilitated by its waterways. Pre-Olympic rescue archaeology next to the Tumbling Bay stream found a 17th century mill-powered furnace, an 18th century calico print works and terraced cottages, and 19th century reclamation of land from the stream in order to expand existing housing and works (Douglas and Spurr, 2009).

In 1910 a survey of businesses in the Lower Lea Valley recorded 'at least 335 manufacturing, engineering, and constructional firms, among which the largest groups were those concerned with chemicals (102), engineering and metalwork (91), food, drink, and tobacco (37)' (Powell, 1973). The development of this industry was encouraged by the arrival in 1839 of the railway, with the Great Eastern Railway works standing as one of the Lea Valley's most significant enterprises. Opening in 1840, by 1900 the works employed 6,800 people (Freeman & Aldcroft, 1988; 98). However, by 1947, this workforce had shrunk to just over 2,000 people (RailUK, 2014). The main works closed in 1963, matching general shrinkage in industrial land use in Stratford Marsh (ibid). By

1969 14% of Lea Valley industrial land was standing 'derelict or vacant' (Powell, 1973). A remnant of the works continued operating as the Diesel Repair Shop until 1991, but then closed as well (RailUK, 2014).

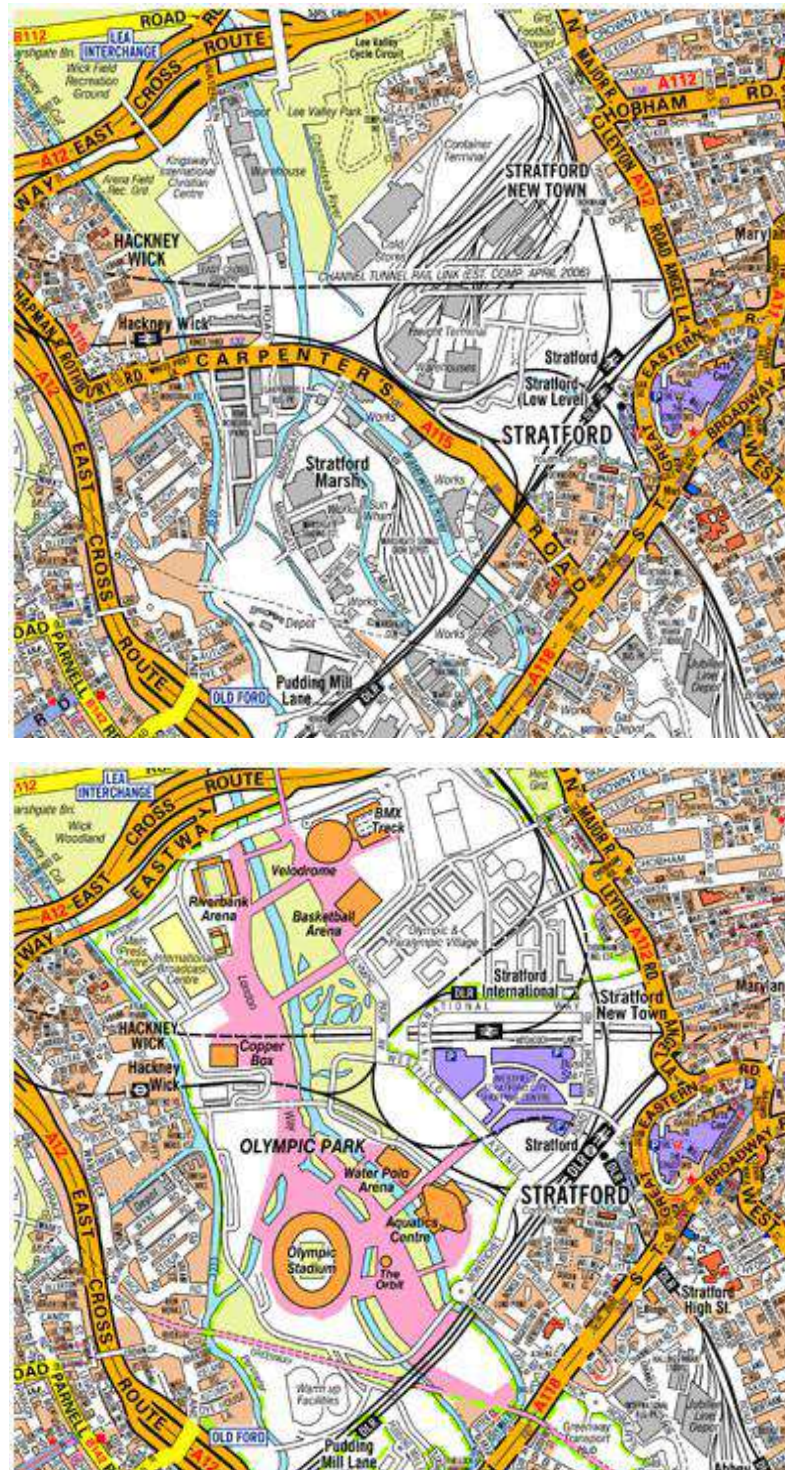


Fig 15. The Lower Lea Valley immediately before and after redevelopment – note the retention of waterways and railways (A-Z Maps, 2012)

Esther Leslie describes the city as 'an immense machine for creating waste' (Leslie, 2010; 233). She writes that 'oldness lingers': 'the city's inhabitants ingest, eject, digest, disgorge, discard, acquire, stockpile' (ibid). While the city's human inhabitants produce waste through inhabitation, this sediment is merely a top-layer of silt in comparison to the landscape-shaping movements of capital. Cast-off by industry as it ceased to be a profitable space, the Lower Lea Valley was itself subject to becoming waste. However, space never remains waste for long. The Lea Valley was immediately appropriated for new uses by new inhabitants, and then by capital investors looking once again to maximise the profitability of this space. By the late 1990s the land on which the rail works had stood was mooted for the future site of the Westfield shopping centre, the earliest-planned element of the complex of developments that have become the Olympic Park and its immediate surroundings.

By the time London won the Olympic bid in 2005 the social and economic life of this area was distant from that of its industrial prime. Land that had been profitably served by railways and canals fell into under-use, awkwardly divided by transport links that no longer directly related to its activity. The LDA reported in 2007 that Newham contained 15% of London's brownfield sites (Poynter, 2014; 155). However, this is not to say that the land stood empty. When the compulsory purchase order was levelled to make way for Olympic redevelopment 200 small businesses occupied cheap post-industrial warehouses (ibid). Beyond businesses, the site was also home to 450 people in the Clays Lane housing co-operative, two Traveller's sites, the Eastway cycle track, and the Manor Gardens allotments.



Fig 16. A view along the river near the Eastway cycle-track in 2005 (Marshall, 2005a)

However, many of the ways in which this space was inhabited fell outside of these official uses. Reading and speaking to people about life in the space that was to become the Olympic Park, a sense emerges of this space as one containing multiple possibilities. The Lower Lea Valley was adapted and claimed for use in multiple ways, yet also remained open to further appropriation. Jacob, an ex-resident of Clays Lane and campaigner against the compulsory purchase order, described to me his impression of the Lea Valley on moving to the site 15 years previously. While at first this space seemed 'ropey', and 'run-down' to him, he also came to understand areas such as the Eastway as 'beautiful, wild, open'. The cycle track, standing between a motorway and a freezer plant, nevertheless had the Channelsea river running through it, meaning that 'there was a place where you could walk along the side of the river and you couldn't hear anything at all, apart from the stream, and the birds, and that was really magic'.

This was a space that afforded opportunities for its users to claim and shape it in finding their own modes of interaction with it. The withdrawal of industry as an ordering influence on this space opened up interstices in which new forms of life could exist. In a photo-essay documenting the disappearing life of the Lower Lea Valley in 2008, Tim Edensor, Caroline Christie, and Bobby Lloyd describe 'allotments, traveller encampments, and homeless shelters, run down sports facilities, inexplicable fixtures and found objects, hangar-sized evangelical

churches, a defunct dog-track, expanses cluttered with car boot sale debris, and suspicious car bodywork workshops' (Edensor, Christie and Lloyd, 2008; 285). This was an 'informal space', epitomised by the allotment 'in which vernacular creativity and pleasure mingle' (ibid; 286). The flourishing informal life of the Lower Lea Valley made it, for Jacob, 'the most memorable place I've lived'.

These uses were not all visible to outsiders – informal space is rarely readily legible to those unfamiliar with its hidden uses and minor transformations. Interview participants who lived near the site often reported a sense that the space was empty and threatening. Kara, a resident of the East Village who previously commuted to work in Newham, told me that her overriding impression of the space was as a 'desolate' site, hard to access and best avoided. Ivy, a resident of nearby Homerton reported that she generally found the site intimidating. Her only excursions into the space were to wander along the canals, enjoying the sense of exploring amongst 'urban decay'. Some went further – Adam, now a manager of the new healthcare centre in the Olympic Park, described the space as a 'horrible land, on fire, full of gangs and toxic waste that no-one ever went in'. He believed that the Olympic Park has managed to decontaminate and re-connect this space with its surroundings, re-introducing life to it. Because of these impressions of the Lower Lea Valley Jacob was careful not to be misunderstood in his use of the terms 'ropey', or 'run-down', pointing out that this image of the space has been amplified in the construction of the park. Regardless of the Lower Lea Valley's appearance before its transformation, life went on all the while, moving in and re-purposing space.

This, in Edensor's terms, is an example of the 'Dionysian' tendency at work in the life of the city, a continual movement towards disorder in opposition to the ordering 'Apollonian' tendency of planners and state (Edensor, 2005a; 53). These are spaces in which 'surplus materialities and meanings swarm with the ghosts that have been exorcised elsewhere' (Edensor, 2005b; 834). While Apollonian spatial ordering seeks to render spaces legible and uni-vocal, these

marginal spaces are 'like palimpsests' in that they 'bear traces of the different people, processes and products which circulated through their environs at different times' (ibid). The 'attempted erasure of the past' that is characteristic of Apollonian spatial management is incomplete here, meaning that 'the ghosts have not been consigned to dark corners, attics, and draws, or been swept away, reinterpreted, and recontextualised' (ibid; 836). There is an 'uncanny' quality to those spaces that form the interstices of the ordered city that is both attractive and threatening, as demonstrated in Ivy's desire to explore abandoned canals. While the space was intimidating in its dereliction this was also a reason to visit, to enjoy the sense of a half-forgotten space.

Some of this is rooted in the way in which disordered spaces are characterised by the accrual of memory. While ordered spaces attempt to direct memory through 'special sites for collective remembering' or areas marked as 'historic', these are spaces of plural memories (ibid; 830). For those who lived and worked there, the Lower Lea Valley was imbued with memories pertaining to an ongoing everyday life that continually shaped and re-shaped its space. Where ordered spaces are resistant to the markings and mouldings of inhabitation or appropriation, Dionysian spaces bear those marks in lingering graffiti and debris. These memories are subjective, relating to individual and community life, the triggers of which are embedded in their surroundings. Other memories in these spaces are less voluntary, 'rekindling the past through unexpected confrontations with sounds, "atmospheres" and smells' (ibid; 837). These memories 'take possession' of the body, imposing themselves on the wanderer. Edensor discusses this with reference to the abandoned factory, writing that 'spectral bodies' are 'summoned' by 'signs of their impact on space', or in 'machines and discarded tools [that] implicate the embodied skills of the workers' (ibid; 841). When Jacob described the Lower Lea Valley as 'the most memorable place I've lived', this sense of present and pressing memory is evoked.



Fig 17. 'Happy Bidet Cecil' – Graffiti on Marshgate Lane, 2005 (Marshall, 2005b)

Edensor's use of the abandoned factory and absent worker to illustrate a Dionysian space is apposite. He writes that 'production always generates its negative, a formless spatial and material excess which rebukes dreams of unity' (Edensor, 2005c; 317). The valorisation of capital, as well as producing its own world of things, also always produces its opposite: spaces and things that become waste, falling outside of processes productive of surplus value. The Lower Lea Valley, before its redevelopment, was one such 'marginal site', 'bypassed by the flows of money, energy, people, and traffic within which they were once enfolded' (Edensor, 2005b; 829). Edensor's description of these spaces as 'excessive' also indicates in this direction. Disordered and disused spaces exist by their nature at some distance to those social relations and practices that valorise capital. The abandoned factory stands quiet, the allotment is cultivated for individual consumption, the canal serves weekend wanderers instead of supplying workshops.



Fig 18. A disused factory beside the Waterworks river (Marshall, 2005c)

Yet even the most disordered spaces are implicated in the wider reproduction of capital. Some areas of the Lower Lea Valley were directly incorporated into the circulation and realisation of value – its warehouses and yards housed small businesses, tenants in Clays Lane and other residential sites paid rent, and so on. Beyond these direct engagements with capital, even those spaces of the Lower Lea Valley most distanced from valorisation were incorporated into a broader set of processes that reproduce the relations of production. Indeed, these spaces were significant to the valorisation of capital precisely due to their distance from its immediate process. Rosa Luxemburg highlights the necessity of this 'outside' to the expanded reproduction of capital, focusing on the way in which 'capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organisations', but at the same time causes the 'progressive disintegration' of those non-capitalist forms by their forced integration (ibid; 397). Claudia von Werlhof takes this insight as starting-point for a feminist exploration of reproductive labour, framing it as a 'process of continuing 'original' [primitive] accumulation as a logical and fundamental part of capitalist relations', that can be 'traced straight to the last micro-relationship between a man and a woman' (von Werlhof, 1988; 15).

Maria Mies, a contemporary of von Werlhof, writes that this inside-outside relationship is recognisable in the division between waged, productive labour and unwaged, reproductive labour, a division that structures gendered object-relations to nature and to the body (Mies, 1986; 53). While waged labour valorises capital, reproductive activity rests upon the 'direct production of life' that occurs within the private sphere, associated with nature, the feminine, and the bodily (ibid; 217). More recently Roswitha Scholz has made a similar argument, defining the relationship between productive and reproductive spheres as one of 'value dissociation' (Scholz, 2009; 127). The reproductive sphere 'is a necessary aspect of value, yet it also stands outside of it and is (for this very reason) its precondition' (ibid; 128). Again Scholz understands this division as the basis of the gender distinction under capitalism, using it to examine a moving dissociation of certain practices from valorisation as the fluid basis for an ever-shifting constitution of gender.

Each of these discussions of the necessity of an 'outside' to the functioning of capital contains spatial implications. The valorisation of capital always results in the production of its other, and this outside is materialised in space as soon as it is realised within social relationships. The Lower Lea Valley prior to the arrival of the Olympics can be understood as one such space. Here a Dionysian disordering followed the withdrawal of industry in a manner that encouraged multiple practices of everyday life to evolve. Despite their distance from valorisation, these practices served as its premise by contributing towards the reproduction of labour-power. Before redevelopment this space was a complex patchwork of small businesses and rentier landlords each aiming to grow their capital, but it also contained emptiness, wildness, forgotten spaces and disused buildings, and in these interstices new life developed that inevitably fed into capital's reproduction.



Fig 19. 'Welcome to the lost boys club' – graffiti on steps between Hackney Wick and the Greenway, 2014

Edensor writes that disordered spaces 'are replete with latent possibilities and greater scope for conviviality, experimentation and expression' (Edensor and DeSilvey, 2012; 478), but at the same time can also be characterised by 'danger, deprivation, fear and anxiety' (ibid; 475). Both of these perspectives come through in reading and talking about the Lower Lea Valley before the coming of the games. As the other to productive space, these appropriated gaps in Apollonian space took on characteristics reflective of the gendered nature of value dissociation. As these spaces fell out of the 'stabilising networks' that rendered them productive of capital, they emerged as excessive, as charged with memory, as a space of nature within the city (Edensor, 2005c; 313). The inhabitation of such spaces reflects this: 'with nobody to supervise movement [...] the body may explore the potential for expressive manoeuvres and open up to multiple sensations present' (Edensor, 2005b; 838).

Ascending the steps to the vantage point of the Greenway (the grassy bank that covers the Northern Outfall Sewer and now forms the Park's southern border), graffiti reads 'welcome to the lost boys club'. While the intentions of its author are obscure, that which it evokes is appropriate: the otherworldly space of

Kensington Gardens after 'shutting-out-time' and the 'betwixt and between' figure of Peter Pan, neither boy nor bird⁸ (Barrie, 1906). Here some sense of the space that the Lower Lea Valley once was remains. Before redevelopment this space was both within and outside of relationships of valorisation, abandoned and put to new uses. As an other to the productive and ordered space of valorisation, this space afforded some room for excess, for a reproduction of the life on which that valorisation is premised. However, with the coming of the games this space was subjected to an Apollonian ordering: an incorporation of its productive spaces into new modes of accumulation, a rationalisation of its reproductive space, and a smoothing-over of the tactile transformations and sedimented significances that it had acquired over its inhabitation as a Dionysian space.

4.3 - Ordering space: the Lower Lea Valley as blank canvas

The construction of the Olympic Park began not with the erection of fences or the tearing down of buildings, but with the production of a conceptual space: the empty Lower Lea Valley. The builders of the Park proceeded with the erasure of the concrete life of the Lower Lea Valley in representation and in legal fact, simultaneously representing this space as empty and leveraging a compulsory purchase order on existing businesses and landowners. This erasure was a necessary clearing of obstacles (material, symbolic, and social) and a radical imposition of order. At heart it represents an act of abstraction, separating a purified conceptual space away from a disordered everyday life. Previously a Dionysian space of possibility, this act stripped the Lower Lea Valley of life and its signifiers so that it could be re-made. As this conceptual space was materialised the Park would become unified and focused, orientated towards a new regime of accumulation.

8 Perhaps this association with the liminal or marginal, as disordered space, also goes some way to explaining the way in which my gender presentation became less conscious in the portion of my fieldwork spent exploring the Park still largely under construction and its abandoned surroundings awaiting their clearing.

As the everyday life of the Lower Lea Valley was always only semi-legible to outsiders, the effort to represent the Park-to-be as desolate ensured that this image took hold amongst the wider public. Speaking to Simon, a chef at the Timber Lodge cafe and long-term resident of the area, he recalled the space as previously 'unused', yet almost in the same breath recounted a number of business relationships with food suppliers who used to operate out of its warehouses. This erasure of recent social life is manifested in the Olympic Park's self-narration. Throughout the Park stand various art-pieces, many of which in some way commemorate the history of the space or of the games. Exemplary of this are Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey's *History Trees*. These trees are ornamented with large metal rings, each of which is inscribed with lists of seemingly disparate objects, places, and events – a historical archive or inventory related to its location. While only glimpses of these lists are visible from the ground, partial transcriptions of them are available at several points in the Park, as well as on the artists' website.



Fig 20. One of Ackroyd and Harvey's 'history trees' (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park)

These lists have the effect of flattening the history of the park into a generic and romanticised 'before'. Recent and ancient inhabitations of the Lower Lea Valley are made equivalent, presented alongside objects and phenomena of natural history so as to render their story other to the present culture of the Park. On

one ring, 'Network Rail infrastructure' and 'electricity pylon and substation' appear alongside 'three close-to-vertical neolithic stakes', 'milled gunpowder', and 'rams horn snails' (Ackroyd and Harvey, 2011). The Lower Lea Valley prior to redevelopment is imagined as a space existing in a permanent state of overgrown mess, in which meaningful distinction between historical moments, or even between culture and nature, becomes impossible.

Similar representations of the Lower Lea Valley abounded in the media, as newspapers became suddenly interested in this area of London. Several months before the opening of the games the *Daily Mail* ran a report on the Park's construction using aerial photographs charting its transformation from a 'desolate wasteland' in 2001 to 'sporting metropolis' in 2010 (Oliver, 2012). Aerial photography is a suitably blunt instrument with which to present the creation of a thriving centre of urban life out of the 'empty' Lower Lea Valley. Outside and above the semi-legible life of this space, it appears deserted. Businesses operated out of nondescript warehouses and yards, wandering explorers made their way through disused industrial lands, residents came and went from a variety of dwellings. In these images all those uses are erased and inhabitation of the space appears to begin only once the new structures – recognisable from the air – are in place.

Again the language used in this article naturalises and empties the Lower Lea Valley. It is introduced as a 'desolate landscape in an unloved part of the east end', in contrast to the 'metropolis' that will result from the Olympic redevelopment (ibid). The prior life of the Lower Lea Valley is opposed to the urban, the living, and the social, all of which characterise the coming mega-event. This image of the Olympics summoning life into an empty space is an often-repeated motif of the redevelopment of the Lower Lea Valley. Even once construction had begun, this article describes the transformation of space in naturalistic terms – the foundations of the stadium become a 'crater' (ibid). Again, this confusion of the emptiness created in order to erect Olympic

structures with the imagined emptiness of the Lower Lea Valley is often encountered in discussions or representations of Olympic regeneration.

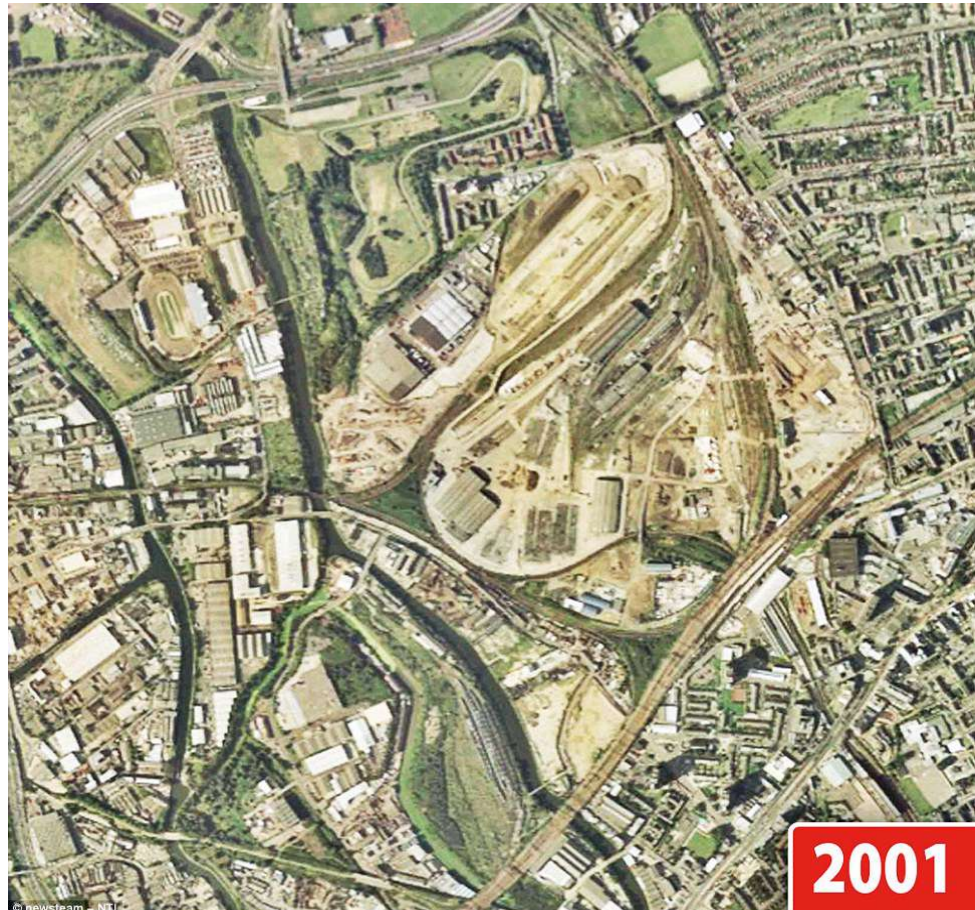


Fig 21. The Lower Lea Valley in 2001, captioned as 'desolate' in the *Daily Mail* (Ordnance Survey)

Walking in the Park once it had reopened in 2013, I stopped in front of a fence marking-off an expanse of concrete decorated with an image of the coming International Quarter office-blocks. Talking to a couple of teachers visiting the Park from Cornwall during their half-term break, they described the Park as 'a good use of desolate space', while looking over the clearly 'desolate' unused plot. At this point the Park itself stood largely empty – the East Village apartments were mostly uninhabited, the Stadium and Aquatics Centre in front of us were undergoing further work to prepare for re-opening. My field-diary from this day notes that 'I get the impression that while many people locally involved with the site in one way or another place emphasis on the need for it to

be lived, to build up a community, to have people inhabiting it, for tourists it is enough to see the buildings and the space, regardless of whether or not it feels lived'. As with the *Daily Mail's* aerial photography, it was the construction of legible signifiers of life that mattered most – life itself was simply assumed to follow.



Fig 22. The Olympic Park in 2010, captioned 'coming on' by the Daily Mail (Ordnance Survey)

Lefebvre writes that abstract space is always a 'product of violence', often 'instituted by the state' (Lefebvre, 1974; 285). Abstract space is never inert – it is both a product and productive, 'a result and a container' (ibid; 288). This act of abstraction transforms concrete space, determines and shapes it – abstract space is 'unlimited, because it is empty', and yet is 'full of proximities' (ibid). The homogeneous but fragmented nature of abstract space allows it to gather and juxtapose its concrete content. While the concrete experience and use of space is absolute and localised, the abstract life of space is fundamentally relational,

'stemming from the connections among locations' (Stanek, 2011; 155). This is the space of the plan, the schema, that space in which 'the tendency to homogenisation exercises its pressure and its repression with the means at its disposal: a semantic void abolishes former meanings' (Lefebvre, 1974; 307). This is an abstraction that takes on a material existence, to act as 'the locus of nature, the tool that would dominate it and that therefore envisages its (ultimate) destruction' (ibid).

The slogan of the Olympic Delivery Authority (the non-departmental public body given responsibility for the Olympics) for the start of construction in the Lower Lea Valley was 'demolish, dig, design' – curiously naming material processes of clearance and the abstract act of creation, but failing to cite any physical construction. John Horne and Graeme Hayes draw out parallels with Naomi Klein's 'shock doctrine' to name the 'creative destruction' of Olympic redevelopment, highlighting that this is a process of accumulation by dispossession in which the privatisation of public spaces and public funding of private profit are justified by the mega-event (Horne and Hayes, 2011). In this moment the erasure of existing spatial forms and practices was paramount. John Armitt, chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, described the need to clear the 'contaminated, industrial landscape' of the Lower Lea Valley in order to release its 'great potential' (Armitt, in Olympic Delivery Authority, 2007; 5). This process, he writes, will make the Lower Lea Valley into a 'blank canvas' for construction (ibid).

This production of the Park as empty space in representation and in fact, as a materialisation of the architect's drawing-board, demonstrates the movement between the abstract and the concrete that characterises the continual reproduction of abstract space. Stuart Elden highlights Lefebvre's assertion that 'there can be no pure abstraction. The abstract is also concrete, and the concrete, from a certain perspective, is also abstract' (Lefebvre, cited in Elden, 2004; 36). Here a conceived space is imposed on concrete space, forcing it to conform to its own representation. This erasure of existing life and its

appropriated spaces is a reassertion of space as value. This space was always-already a value, but one in which the shifting tension between use and exchange is visible: as a largely non-profitable space the Lower Lea Valley's concrete life as a use value had recently come to the fore, and its existence as an exchange value had receded. With the planning of the Park the life of this space 'as a medium of exchange (with the necessary implications of exchangeability)' once again became dominant, as it space was made an object of work and prepared to be sold (Lefebvre, 1974; 307).

The compulsory purchase order represents the moment in which the abstract space of exchange became ascendant over the concrete space of use. While the exchange of land as a commodity is an eternal element of capitalist accumulation, as Horne and Hayes note the transformation of mega-event sites into exchangeable commodities can often be understood as examples of accumulation by dispossession, standing slightly outside of normal capitalist accumulation. As a space characterised by value-dissociation, the Lower Lea Valley was primed for a coerced re-incorporation into capitalist accumulation as resource and then as functioning element of new circuits of capital.



Fig 23. One of the Lower Lea Valley's small businesses campaigning against the compulsory purchase order (Marshall, 2005d)

Again drawing on Luxemburg, Werner Bonefeld describes the way in which the reproduction of capital continually replays primitive accumulation as its 'permanent premise' (Bonefeld, 2001; 5). For Marx, primitive accumulation refers to the process by which capitalist relations of production were established: 'the process of divorcing the producer from the means of production' (Marx, 1867; 875). Bonefeld suggests that this moment should not be understood as a singular historical event, but as a process 'suspended in capitalist economic forms' that continually remakes a 'logic of separation' as 'the secrete constitution of capitalist relations' (ibid; 6). The reproduction of capital involves both 'primitive' and capitalist accumulation processes. Primitive accumulation, in both its 'original' and ongoing forms, has often been presented in spatial terms – for example as the broader 'accumulation by dispossession' or 'accumulation by extra-economic means' (Glassman, 2006; 617). Likewise, Giovanni Arrighi describes accumulation by dispossession as a spatial 'fix', whereby the scope of the system of accumulation is expanded through forcible expropriation (Arrighi, 2003).

In 2003, *Property Week* described the compulsory purchase of the Lower Lea Valley as a 'prime opportunity for the property industry', uniting and re-dividing the 250 separately-owned parcels of land that previously constituted the space (Wilson, 2003). This process of reincorporation into ongoing accumulation meant rendering that space as an abstract quantity, as a rationalised conceptual space organised to function as a bearer of value. Those small businesses that fought for greater compensation for their eviction opposed the specifics of this valuation. In contrast, many of the residents of Clays Lane and allotment holders at Manor Gardens opposed this reduction of concrete space to value in the first place, futilely asserting that the lives they had built in that space should be privileged over its existence as an exchange value.

The imposition of value on space represents a perfect Apollonian spatiality, empty but for its abstract representation as quantity, its messy realities

smoothed over. A piecemeal gentrification of the Lower Lea Valley, mired within the untidy tangle of existing uses of space, would never have achieved this Apollonian perfection. For this sweeping imposition of abstract order the justification of the Olympics and the intervention of the state were both necessary. In this transaction the physical life of the Lower Lea Valley was suspended, its use ended by an act of exchange backed up by the power of the state to evict those who did not consent to their dispossession. This act of ordering is at once an imposition of quantity on a space previously defined by concrete quality, and the incorporation of a space previously associated with reproductive appropriation into relations dominated by production.

Following this Apollonian clearing, the primitive accumulation of this value-dissociated space meant the imposition of a new concrete form on the Lower Lea Valley. Lefebvre links the character of abstract space to its inclusion within capitalist accumulation, writing that it emerges as 'space in its entirety enters the modernised capitalist mode of production, there to be used for the generation of surplus value' (Lefebvre, 1974; 347). Łukasz Stanek demonstrates the parallels between Lefebvre's abstract space and Marx's treatment of labour power. Labour has a double existence, as the specific actions of a particular worker ('concrete' labour), and as an abstract quantity measured in time spent labouring ('abstract' labour). Equally, space under capitalism has a concrete existence, as specific and tangible materiality, and an abstract existence, as 'isomorphic space without any privileged orientation or direction' (Stanek, 2011; 145). Just as labour proceeds in a manner determined by its abstract character, so too is space produced and shaped by its abstract existence – this abstraction of space thus becomes 'true in practice' (ibid).

The compulsory purchase order and clearing of the Lower Lea Valley represents the first moment in this material production of the Olympic Park as an actually-existing abstract space – not just an abstractly conceived space, but an abstract space given concrete life. This constitution of abstract space proceeds from a system of representation that depicts comparable and

commensurable 'pieces of space' rendered 'isotopic, boundless, singular' (ibid; 152). At the same time, abstract space is also 'split into multiple spaces [...] pulverised and sold off in parcels, fragmented into functions that represent "needs" as simple, purified, and fractured into boundaries' (ibid). This is exactly the conceived space that the Lower Lea Valley was reduced to, first in representation then in reality.

The completion of this process of clearing, of creating a blank canvas, was the cordoning-off of that canvas in order to work on it. The area that was to become the Olympic Park was not only emptied of those who lived and worked within it, but also removed from London's wider urban fabric. The Olympic Delivery Authority gained a vacant possession order in 2007, allowing them to close off all access to the Olympic site. At this point, the area of the compulsory purchase order had transitioned entirely from a space host to myriad uses, to a space of a single use – as raw material in production of itself as commodity. As the site was redefined as an object of work its separation from the informal and everyday uses that once defined it was complete. In *Ghost Milk* Ian Sinclair describes the way in which the fence 'shadowed the towpath, accompanied the Greenway, stuttered through Stratford, marked out the half-abandoned estate due for demolition on Clays Lane' (Sinclair, 2011; 63). In contrast with the informal character of the space before it was closed off, he writes that 'suddenly there are places where you can't walk freely' (ibid). This is a different kind of mess – the mess of production: 'Pylons are being disassembled and cables buried. A patch of wild wood is tamed with screaming chainsaws. Concrete-producing tubes cough and spew' (ibid; 64). Here, the park as blank canvas became the park as object of labour, transformed and valorised as commodity.

4.4 - The Lea Valley at the games: producing space for the mega-event

As the Lower Lea Valley became an object of work it was re-constituted as a single space, its internal differences flattened out save for the landmass-forming

divisions of canals and railways. This re-shaping of space was directed towards the production of the Olympic Park as event space. Temporary and permanent stadia were constructed alongside open concourses designed to hold fluid crowds. Public transport was expanded alongside the fortification of barrier fences. Railway sidings and electric cables were hidden to remove unsightly intrusions, while waterways were renovated as attractive features. This was not a divergence from the abstract character imposed on the Lower Lea Valley but rather an unfolding materialisation of this abstraction. Lefebvre writes that abstract space is 'the reduction of the "real", on the one hand, to a "plan" existing in a void and endowed with no other qualities, and, on the other hand, to the flatness of a mirror, of an image, of pure spectacle under an absolutely cold gaze' (Lefebvre, 1974; 287).

For Lefebvre abstract space has three formants that determine its social character. The first of these formants is the geometric: space as dominated by and organised according to the two-dimensional plan (Stanek, 2011; 155). The second is the visual: space perceived by a metaphorical or metonymic logic in which text and that which is seen stand in for space in total, so that 'all of social life becomes the mere decipherment of messages by the eyes, the mere reading of texts' (Lefebvre, 1974; 286). These first two formants are 'complimentary in their antithesis', ensuring that space is emptied, flattened, and homogenised (ibid; 287). The third formant, the phallic, 'fulfils the extra function of ensuring that "something" occupies this space, namely, a signifier, which, rather than signifying a void, signifies a plenitude of destructive force' (ibid). Despite the pull of the geometric and the visual, concretely practiced space cannot be reduced to pure abstraction and calls for a 'truly full object'. The phallic formant furnishes this object in the form of a symbolisation, and actualisation, of 'the brutality of political power' in 'phallic erectility' (ibid).

These three formants of abstract space relate to Lefebvre's triad of the conceived, perceived, and lived. The represented content of abstract space can be understood as geometric, Euclidean, and flat. The perception of abstract

space is reduced to the visual and to text. Finally, the lived content of space is dominated by the phallic, the 'heavy cargo of myth' that makes space socially significant (ibid). In these formants lie the ways in which abstract space is materialised as 'the expression and the foundation of a practice, at once stimulating and constraining' (ibid; 288). This stimulating and constraining quality of abstract space was at the centre of the production of the Olympic Park for the 2012 games. Having dominated, cleared, and ordered the informal spaces of the Lower Lea Valley, the Olympic Delivery Authority set about producing a space that would be conducive to the realisation of value by the Olympic festival crowd.

This unity of function was expressed in the spectacular nature of the space. The Olympic Park was built around a cluster of venues – the permanent structures of the stadium, the Copper Box, the Aquatics Centre, and the Velodrome, and the temporary Water Polo, Riverbank, and Basketball arenas. At the centre of the Park stood the ArcelorMittal Orbit, the largest public sculpture in the UK. In *The Times* Martin Fletcher described this space as a 'wonderland, a visual and sensory delight, a statelet where ordinary mortals can escape their humdrum lives to consort with sporting demigods and witness acts of drama and heroism' (Fletcher, 2012). He describes entry to the Park as dominated by the sight and sounds of these venues: 'stunning new stadiums - the Aquatics Centre, the Water Polo Arena and, straight ahead, the giant coronet of the Olympic Stadium. Great roars of excitement periodically erupt from within them' (ibid).

Of these structures, the most eye-catching was the ArcelorMittal Orbit. The tower was designed by Anish Kapoor and funded largely by Lakshmi Mittal, the UK's richest man (Harris, 2010). Likening it to the Tower of Babel, Kapoor said 'there is a kind of medieval sense to it of reaching up to the sky, building the impossible. A procession, if you like. It's a long winding spiral: a folly that aspires to go even above the clouds and has something mythic about it' (Kapoor, cited in Brown, 2010). This 'something mythic', however, is left blank. Libby Purves, writing in *The Times*, referenced Kapoor's description of the

structure as 'a deconstruction of the tower ... the refusal of a singular image' (Kapoor, in Purves, 2012). Ultimately concurring with this description, she writes that the Orbit appears to her as 'a piece of vainglorious sub-industrial steel gigantism, signifying nothing' (Purves, 2012).



Fig 24. Artists impression of the Orbit prior to its construction (Arup)

In the (largely negative) initial critical reaction to the ArcelorMittal Orbit, the accusation that this structure is simply a vanity project was common. In the Guardian John Graham-Cumming wondered 'to what extent the ArcelorMittal Orbit is being built for the glory of Boris Johnson, Kapoor and Lakshmi Mittal' (Graham-Cumming, 2010). In this accusation the significance of the Orbit is made obvious. It stands as the result of a confluence of state and private capital, taking on a form dictated by the spatial and social particularities of the Olympic Park as the site of a mega-event. It is in this context and in relation to its own conditions of production that the only symbolic content of the Orbit lies. It looks expensive, impressive – but that is all that it evokes. The curling iron structure implies a certain fluidity, a flow, and a sense of power, but this feels

more than anything like a congealed representation of the movements of capital that lie behind its existence.

Commenting in *The Times*, Tom Dyckhoff writes that 'the pointless icon — the folly — is the architectural object of our age' (Dyckhoff, 2010). As 'free-market money slops around the world, and globalised consumer culture renders every place the same', homogenised space calls for these icons, and has to be furnished 'with "landmarks" and "gateways" with the "wow factor"' (ibid). In playing this role within the Olympic Park the Orbit fulfils the functions of Lefebvre's phallic formant of abstract space. It gathers together otherwise flattened and homogeneous space, providing content that signifies only power. The ARUP artist's impression of the Orbit persists as a perfected vision of the structure in this role, uncomplicated by compromise with real space. Here the Orbit stands as phallic object gathering the space of the city, standing out against the empty concourse around it and blank sky above it. The other structures in this image – the squat stadium beside it, the cluster of Canary Wharf tower-blocks in the distance – are bleached white, rendered uniform to greater emphasise the role of the Orbit as 'phallic erectility' ordering space.

Kapoor stated that his aim in the design of the Orbit was to create 'the sensation of instability, [of] something that was continually in movement... it is an object that cannot be perceived as having a singular image from any one perspective. You need to journey around the object, and through it' (Kapoor, in Glancey, 2010). This, and the very name 'Orbit', speaks to its role as gathering-point in Olympic space – this is a structure to be approached, to be circled, made a reference point. The Orbit functions to define not only a space, but also a practice of space. It stands as the 'expression and the foundation of a practice' (Lefebvre, 1974; 288). It stands as a lynch-pin around which an abstractly conceived space is rendered concrete and imposes a spatial unity that not only guarantees the Park's suitability to the mega-event, but also its longer-term orientation towards new processes of valorisation.

In contrast to the Orbit, the stadia of the Park reflect Lefebvre's recognition that under capitalism the building takes on the role of the monument, carrying meaning intended to be read. This monumentality privileges the visual. It 'embodies and imposes a clearly intelligible message' and carries a content that is 'designed to conceal [...] the phallic realm of (supposed) virility' (ibid; 143, 147). Dyckhoff asked why the Olympic Park needed the Orbit when it already had 'plenty of, hopefully, useful icons, venues of inevitable spectacle designed for the world's cameras' (Dyckhoff; 2010). However, this is a mis-reading of the space. The juxtaposition of the Orbit and the stadia is not an unnecessary doubling of similar structures but a separation of spatial function. While the stadia naturally hold the meaning of the Olympics – it is within their bounds that the games will be played out – their 'reading' forms a secondary engagement with space, following the 'blind, spontaneous, and lived obedience' demanded by its phallic content.

Steve Pile addresses this in a discussion of Lefebvre's 'psychoanalysis of space' (Lefebvre, 1974; 99). Unpacking the psychoanalytic workings of Lefebvre's relationship between the monumental and the phallic, he argues that the monument 'as a "selective" sign and "pure" surface masks the modalities of power that produced it' (Pile, 1996; 213). As such, while monuments 'appear to make space transparent and intelligible, they actually produce it as opaque and indecipherable' by 'closing off alternative readings and by drawing people into the presumption that the values they represent are shared' (ibid). This works by two simultaneous processes, that of displacement, 'implying metonymy, the shift from part to whole', and that of condensation 'involving substitution, metaphor, and similarity' (Lefebvre, 1974; 225). Again, these are the two modes by which the visual formant of abstract space functions, and it is here that the contradictory but complimentary relationship of the visual and the phallic operate to produce the dominating power of abstract space.

The stadia of the Olympic Park represent sites of condensed festival. They were the focal points of the mega-event. They thus fulfilled the displacing function of

visual space, portraying the space of the Park as celebratory and shifting focus from the wide open spaces of the Park onto their rapturous crowds. In doing so they obscured the bare force that imposed them on the Lower Lea Valley: the image of the empty Lower Lea Valley was retroactively confirmed in the image of the crowd-filled stadium. At the same time they played a condensing role, substituting their flowing forms for the static order that had been imposed on the disordered Lower Lea Valley. The wave-like shape of the Aquatics Centre, the curve of the Velodrome roof, and the exploded support-struts of the Stadium all reflect and reinforce the fluidity of the Orbit, implying a continuous movement that was in fact constrained and restricted in the production of the Park.



Fig 25. Bonvicini's RUN sculpture serving as a mirror outside the Copper Box (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park)

The stadia in the Park were designed not only to hold these meanings at the games, but to also to ensure their continuation beyond the mega-event. They were intended to become receptacles for Olympic memory. The permanent stadia were always destined to recall the foundational event of this space, bearing the marks of the moment in which it was re-ordered, re-purposed, and re-incorporated into new modes of accumulation. They call on their new users to imagine their activity as a continuation of the mega-event in miniature, carrying an imperative to participation. Jo Shapcott's poem *Dive in* snakes its way up from the Lea to the Aquatics Centre, ending in the encouragement 'swim your heart out for you are all gold' (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; 6). Outside the Copper Box arena stands Monica Bonvicini's nine-meter high RUN sculpture, both an imperative and a 'vast mirror for you and your surroundings' (ibid; 26).

These structures and their attendant symbolism serve to homogenise space, standing as metaphor and metonym for the whole of the Park. They privilege image over other sensory experience, serving to 'relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive' (Lefebvre, 1974; 286). This work of metaphor and metonym is both spatial and temporal. The stadia become focal points of the Park both in geographic extent and in historical memory, rendering the utopian festival of the Games as temporal focus. The Park therefore retains its character as a transformative space defined by the mega-event that founded it. In the flattening of time and space, the period prior to the construction of the Olympic Park is reduced to a single indefinite moment, as witnessed in Ackroyd and Harvey's *History Trees*. In contrast, visitors are continually reminded of the games and asked to imagine themselves and the space in relation to this moment. As such the fact of the imposition of order is erased while the order that currently stands in the Park is rendered natural and eternal.



Fig 26. The Olympic Park as it was during the games, concourses clearly marked and legible (Press Association, 2012)

During the games the Park's submerged phallic content (the power exerted as ordering and gathering-point) was thus masked by a visual flattening of time and space affected by the symbolic character of its monumental structures. The homogenising triad of abstract space was completed in the Park's legibility as a geometric space. The Park was designed for the games in such a way that it would hold crowds, direct them to their destinations, and be easily navigable. As such the representation of space in the Park was coterminous with the Park itself. Its concrete concourses stood as wide open plains guiding the eye towards the stadia, perfect mirrors of the maps distributed to visitors. This was a space designed and constructed for a single event only. The freedom of movement that would have seen the evolution of sedimented practices wearing new paths in lawns, neglecting certain routes and over-using others, did not have the time in which to evolve. Instead, the Park existed exactly as planned, a perfectly realised schematic.

In this sense the Park corresponded directly to Lefebvre's geometric space. Rather than existing as a tactile substance to be interacted with and transformed through practice, these concourses were characterised by 'the reduction of three-dimensional realities to two dimensions' (Lefebvre, 1974; 285). The key exception to this experience of the Park was of course the observation platform of the Orbit, serving to reinforce the mutually constitutive relationship between the geometric and the phallic formants of abstract space. In ascending the Orbit, visitors escaped the two-dimensional movement of the concourses, only to have it re-instated at its summit. On looking down at the Park from this height, its geometric character was laid out before the observer lifted above it.

This quality of Park space ensured that it was seen and experienced as a single unified and uniform space. While the stadia stood as separate sites within it, the space itself was rendered continuous and homogeneous, ordered according to a single plan and purpose. This purity of purpose was facilitated by the Park's production for the specific event of the games, strongly reinforcing the realisation of abstract homogeneity. Out of the Apollonian order of the Lower Lea Valley reduced to abstract quantity as exchange value rose the Olympic Park, the realisation of an abstract space given concrete form. However, this space could only exist as such in the suspended moment of the games themselves. In its Legacy era the Park was transformed once again, in order to take up a more fully-rounded position within an evolving everyday life orientated towards a new set of productive and reproductive practices. This is the end towards which the Apollonian ordering of the Lower Lea Valley's Dionysian space was ultimately directed, and to which I turn now.

4.5 - After the games: the Park in a new regime of accumulation

The Lower Lea Valley always had a role to play in the reproduction of capital. In the Clays Lane estate, traveller sites, canal boats, and squats people engaged in the reproductive activity of the private sphere. Allotments allowed people to

grow food and engage in relaxing activity; abandoned warehouses played host to explorers, games, and churches; tow-paths became routes for walkers. Each of these snatched moments outside of work provided means for the renewal of labour-power that underlies valorisation. Equally, the Lower Lea Valley provided space for the production and realisation of surplus value. The compulsory purchase order records a variety of business interests, from the East London Bus and Coach Company, (Rose, 2005; 39), to the Wannis Cash and Carry, the Workman's Cafe, Club Dezire, (ibid; 43), to Freightliner Heavy Haul, Priest Brothers Furniture, Bywaters Waste Management, and Parts Plaza (ibid; 338). Just as the withdrawal of unifying industrial enterprises allowed informal reproductive appropriations of space, it also facilitated smaller capitalist enterprises, operating as the dregs of industrial production within its fractured and decaying space.

With the creation of the Olympic Park, however, there came a fundamental shift in this land-use. The final remains of the Lower Lea Valley's industrial past (and the communities that called it home) were swept away. In their place was created a newly unified space orientated towards a new mode of accumulation already dominant in the financial centres of the City and Canary Wharf and in the 'creative' centres of Silicon Roundabout, Soho, and Shoreditch. The unfolding imposition of an Apollonian conceptual space on the Lower Lea Valley took it from a disordered and Dionysian space, to a blank space in representation and in fact. On this space was created the univocal concretised abstraction of the games-era Park, and finally a space designed to mobilise everyday life towards the reproduction of a particular form of accumulation.

This space would become a space of production, reproduction, and circulation, following the designs of London's economic planners. It was intended to lose its singular quality and merge back into its surroundings, in order to encourage a convergence of those surroundings with its own forms and practices. In this Legacy period the practice of space would be directed in a manner that it never was in the disordered life of the Lower Lea Valley or in the excessive moment of

the games. This remaking of the Park was therefore an attempt at a lasting formalisation of practice that would ensure it remains useful to capital, via a further determination of concrete space by its abstract counterpart.

The shifting emphasis in London's economy is the result of targeted state and local government policy. The strengthening of financial capital within the UK and London economies following the Thatcher government's 'Big Bang' restructuring in 1986 was encouraged by the simultaneous redevelopment of Canary Wharf. This spatial transformation provided not only the office space that the expanding financial sector required, but also residential and leisure spaces suited to new modes of productive and reproductive practice. The constitution of London as a financial centre rested not only on economic policy and opportunity, but also on a directed production of space that was itself profitable. In the creation of the Olympic Park it is possible to identify a similar state-facilitated production of space, again orientated towards an expansion of London's established financial sector but this time interweaving it with a growing creative sector.

Andrew Harland, of the landscape architecture firm LDA Design, names three key stages of the production of the Olympic Park for its Legacy era: removal (of fences and temporary structures), connection (building roads and pathways), and completion (the development of 8,000 homes and 8,000 jobs in commercial areas) (Harland, 2013). This is an ongoing process – the Legacy plan for the Park predicts construction work though to 2030, and the inevitable secondary transformation of the Park's surroundings is likely to continue beyond that. This aim was clear to Jacob, who described the compulsory purchase order as a strategic attempt to develop a 'tabula rasa' onto which the Olympic Delivery Authority and London Legacy Development Corporation (the mayoral development corporation given responsibility for the Park post-games) could summon new life. He explained that watching the plans to evict him and his community develop, the games felt like an attempt to interrupt the piecemeal gentrification that was taking hold of neighbouring Hackney Wick, and instead to institute a single island site as the centre of a deeper urban transformation.

The first two of Harland's processes, removal and connection, are both intended to facilitate movement around the Park and between the Park and its surroundings. They are the means by which the Park, as salient point on a front of redevelopment, is reorganised to tie into the wider flows of capital, labour, and commodities that constitute a financialised and creative process of accumulation within London's economy. These connections included road construction alongside the creation of foot-paths and bike-paths between Hackney Wick and Stratford. Sam, a current employee of Get Living London and previous employee of the Olympic Delivery Authority, pointed out the extent of this work: 'one of the most interesting things for me, working on the construction, was that of these amazing venues and stuff that they built, one of the single biggest expenses was roads and bridges'. He described the Park as a through-route as well as a destination: a development that, he hopes, will transform 'social barriers' by removing physical ones.

This concern for 'social barriers' is reflected in the Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework, produced in 2007. This document ties Olympic transformation into the Greater London Authority's London Plan. In a foreword, then-Mayor Ken Livingstone described the Lower Lea Valley as 'fragmented, polluted and divided by waterways, overhead pylons, roads and railways' (Livingstone, in Mayor of London, 2007; i). He hoped to 'transform the Valley into a new sustainable, mixed use city district, fully integrated into London's existing urban fabric' (ibid). This work of connection was therefore aimed at addressing 'issues of local severance and inhospitable routes which currently reinforce the fragmented character' of the Lower Lea Valley, in order to 'link open spaces and other amenities with surrounding communities' (ibid). These connections draw people into and through the Park, encouraging movement between residential spaces and spaces of work and exchange – the Westfield, Hackney Wicks' 'trendy bars' (as Sam put it to me), and so on.

The Park imposes its conceptual order not only on the Lower Lea Valley, but also the surrounding area. Adam, an employee of the Sir Ludwig Guttmann Healthcare Centre, explained to me that the centre is on the edge of the East Village as they wanted to be close to the existing population. The healthcare centre serves a very real need – Newham has some of the worst rates for tuberculosis, dental decay, and teenage pregnancy in the country. However, it also presents an opportunity to transform some elements of its surrounding area. Alongside providing needed healthcare, they have a focus on 'social prescription', that is, community-building use of the Park and its facilities led by volunteers. Adam hopes people might 'be interested in staying, thanks to the attraction of the Park'. Jansi, an employee of Triathlon Homes, has similar hopes, noting that the presence of Chobham Academy (placed, like the healthcare centre, along the edge of the East Village) might encourage a lasting community will emerge within the East Village that will influence its surroundings.

This shift in everyday life that the work of connection is intended to spread is underlaid by the change in the ownership and management of space indicated in Harland's 'completion'. Prior to redevelopment, the largest concentration of dwellings in the Lower Lea Valley was the Clays Lane estate, established and funded by Newham Council and the University of East London as a cooperative, and transferred to the Peabody Trust in 2000. In 2013, the East Village was the first residential development to open in the new Olympic Park. Its construction as the Athletes' Village had been tendered to Lend Lease, with the Olympic Delivery Authority providing £324m of public money to cover extra costs after the 2008 financial crisis (Kollewe, 2011). After the games, one third was transferred as 'affordable' housing to Triathlon Homes, a joint enterprise of the East Thames Group, the Southern Housing Group, and investment company First Base (Triathlon Homes). The majority was sold in 2011 to Get Living London, a rental management company owned by Qatari Diar and Delancey (Delancey). The East Village is thus majority owned by the same company who own the Shard (Hatherley, 2013). At £557m, the sale of the East Village left the

Olympic Delivery Authority with an estimated loss of £275m. This loss was justified by a spokesperson for Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt on the basis that building costs were never expected to be met: 'it was an entirely empty site, it didn't have any infrastructure, roads or parks. There was always going to be a public sector contribution to help put those in' (Kollewe, 2011).

Here the role of the state in the transformation of the Park as a material space and container for everyday practice is central. The compulsory purchase order that facilitated a primitive accumulation of under-used space also set up conditions for the ongoing realisation of value within and through that space. In 2013 and 2014, Get Living London produced a pair of reports that outline their business strategy and further illuminate this link between private business interests and state economic priorities. In *Making Sense of Large-scale Investment* they highlight that despite booming rental demand landlords tend to have relatively small property portfolios based on piecemeal purchase of existing stock. Identifying student housing, new build apartments, and 'new villages' as appropriate market segments, they point to the scale economies that await exploitation by investors in 'build-to-let large scale schemes' such as the East Village (Ball, 2013; 5).

Core Renters in London's New-build Market and the Future of the London Economy provides insight into the role of their target demographic within London's labour market. They argue that increased demand for rental properties has been driven in part by 'the nature of London's economy' which centres 'large numbers of relatively young, highly skilled, mobile people' (Ball, 2014; 4). These residences were thus designed with different modes of work in mind than those the Lower Lea Valley previously supported. Where the economy of this space previously revolved around post-industrial warehouses and yards, renters are now expected to work in 'professional and technical activities, information, communications, and construction' (ibid; 20). Aside from construction (currently booming as a result in growth in these other areas) these are sectors of the economy associated with London's financial and creative industries.



Fig 27. A banner hangs on fencing around space awaiting development in the Park – the buildings highlighted in red will be the International Quarter business district

The transformation of housing within the Lower Lea Valley from informal, charitable, and small-landlord properties to large-scale private investment represents a transformation of the extent to which this housing is directly profitable, with more rent collected by larger private interests. It also represents a re-orientation of that space towards new modalities of economic production. Get Living London conclude their second report with the warning that 'housing shortages for the London economy are the equivalent of too much cholesterol on the human body', and that if the problem is not addressed 'London is likely to become known as a place that is too expensive to do business in' (Ball, 2014; 30). Of course, the housing shortage they are referring to here is a shortage for the very specific demographic that they intend to cater for. They are offering a means of keeping business costs down because they are offering space suitable for the reproduction of the specific kinds of labour-power those economic sectors rely on. These reports are as much aimed at policy-makers as potential clients, reminding local and national government of the need for material spaces that cater for the economic sectors they wish to privilege.

The homes built look to house residents working in the City, the tech-enclaves of Silicon Roundabout, and the creative centres of Shoreditch, King's Cross, and Hammersmith. The workplaces of Here East and the (yet to be built) International Quarter will recreate these environments. Equally, the work of connection was intended to link the Park to these places and to draw its surroundings nearer, that they might similarly be transformed. Much of this work was done in the initial construction of the Park and in the Stratford City programme that predated it. The Stratford and Stratford International stations provide access to the London underground, overground, Docklands Light Railway, national rail, and Javelin train services. Following the removal of the Olympic barrier fence, the Park is now accessible from Hackney Wick and Pudding Mill Lane stations, with a Crossrail trains due to stop at Stratford once construction is completed.

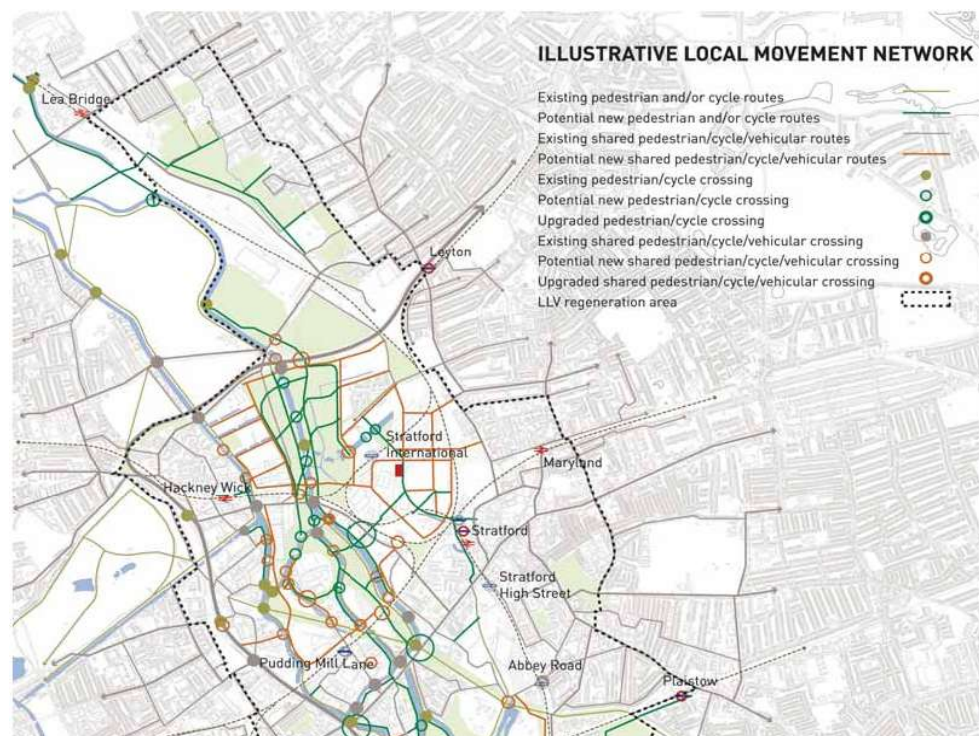


Fig 28. The Park as thoroughfare in the Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework (Mayor of London, 2007)

The location of the Park was selected for precisely this purpose. Placed within the Thames Gateway scheme and on top of the Stratford City plan, the Park

was conceived as a bubble of advanced urban transformation that would catalyse similar change in its surroundings. It is this potential that David Cameron was referring to when he argued that the games were not an 'expensive luxury in tough times' but a necessary response to tough times – a means by which to extend and reinforce London's dominant mode of accumulation (Lister, 2012). This was the ultimate aim towards which the imposition of an Apollonian order on the Lower Lea Valley was orientated. The incorporation of this space into the flows of capital, people, and commodities that serve London's financial and creative industries ensures that it has transitioned from an informal post-industrial space to one that has shed the last of its connections to a previous mode of accumulation. Just as the practice of everyday life that this space facilitates feeds into that means of realising value, so too does the space itself: the continuing sale and production of the Park as a set of commodities will likewise rest on the successful development of community within the Park and its surroundings.

4.6 - Conclusion

The production of the Olympic Park meant the materialisation of an abstract space. This space, in its concrete form, is a manifestation in physical reality of an abstractly conceived plan. It is a representation of space given substance. As such in this chapter I have been concerned with the first of Lefebvre's three moments of the production of space. The festival moment of the games represented a holistic production of space, simultaneously taking in a representation of space, a lived practice, and a social effervescence which escapes determination by the basely material. Nevertheless, this moment occurred within a material space designed and built to hold it, the role of which was significant in facilitating the affective atmospheres of the games.

Following the games, the Olympic Park was re-configured for its Legacy era. A secondary conceptual production of space had again laid the groundwork for this production – the creation of an idea of space as it would be inhabited not by festival crowds but by workers, residents, shoppers, and visitors in the

everyday. This was an image of a space designed to hold and encourage specific forms of life. That is, a space designed to take its place within the circuits of capital, commodities, and people that make up London's post-industrial economy. The goal of this conceptual production was always the incorporation of the Lower Lea Valley into this regime of accumulation. From this perspective the Olympic mega-event simply represented an opportunity for state intervention in London's urban fabric that would embed a set of hegemonic economic practices within that space.

In this chapter, I have stepped back from the games themselves to the work of construction that occurred either side of them, in order to explore the material production of their space. As such, I have concerned myself not with the holistic, broad production of the games' moment, but the narrow production that facilitated, constrained, and guided it. This conceptual production meant the establishing of a specific space in idea and in representation, of creating the links between state and private business that would realise it, and in sweeping away existing uses of space in order to build anew from that idea. The end-point of the production was the creation of a space in which the everyday practices of a new regime of accumulation were embedded. Here 'embedded' means not only a setting-in-stone of post-Fordist productive and reproductive activities, but also the incorporation of space itself into ongoing financialised accumulation. Previously a dead-space of low rents and neglected exchange value, the Olympic Park is now traded as commodity and invested in as future source of rent and profit, tied into the financialisation of urban space. In this sense the conceptual production of the Olympic Park was not a singular event, the creation of a plan to be implemented, but the establishing of a forever-renewed idea of this space as quantity, as a value abstracted from its material form.

The Lower Lea Valley prior to the games was sharply differentiated from this abstract space. Although ultimately subsumed within a conceptual understanding of space that finds its genesis in the value form, this space was primarily one of a use-orientated and tactile concreteness. As a post-industrial

space the Lower Lea Valley had been gradually appropriated and transformed, laying a sediment of subjective understanding and collective memory that amounted to a Dionysian disordering of space. At the same time this disordering, originating in a dissociation from valorisation, came to render the space useful to a reproduction of labour-power. It was precisely this distance from accumulation, however, that made it appropriate for a re-incorporation into the valorisation processes privileged by national and local state policy.

This act of re-incorporation proceeded with the clearing of the Lower Lea Valley, a radical imposition of order that razed all existing life within that space. The compulsory purchase order, as an abstract yet socially-real transformation of ownership rights over that space, made the physical clearing of the site possible. This was accompanied by the production of an idea of that space as always-already empty, a representation of space that portrayed the Lower Lea Valley as desolate and deserted. In the compulsory purchase order, the abstract exchange value of this space was brought to the fore for the first time – as such, the Apollonian ordering of this space can be understood to flow from the erasure of use and of the concrete that this reduction to quantity demands.

Following this production of a blank space, the creation of the games-era Olympic Park represented the establishing of an abstract space not in idea or in social fact, but in material reality. The form of the Park is such that the interplay of its geometric, visual, and phallic formants constitutes it as an actually-existing abstract space. It is this space into which the affective atmosphere of the games was introduced, and through which that affect was mobilised and organised. The space existed as the direct manifestation of an abstract plan: legible, logical, and pulled together by a phallic power expressed by the ArcelorMittal Orbit. In contrast to this, the Legacy-era Park was designed to allow the inhabitation of space, its minor appropriation in an evolving everyday practice that nonetheless remains orientated towards a specific regime of accumulation. To this end, the Legacy-era production of the Park proceeded from the Apollonian order imposed in the clearing of the Park and extended in its original

production, tying it into its surroundings in such a way that they would be drawn into its orbit. It established spaces for work, leisure, and exchange that would be amenable to particular modes of practice.

The creation of the Olympic Park laid the groundwork, that is, for an ordered everyday life in place of the disordered everyday that had preceded it. It is to this everyday inhabitation of the Park that I now turn, in order to explore the ways in which the everyday life of a space continues and reinforces its production as an actually-existing abstract space. Here I move from the first moment of Lefebvre's triadic dialectic of the production of space to the second: from the conceptual production of space to the practice of space. In doing so, I will consider the temporalising effect of practice on space, distinguishing several modes of social rhythm and temporality. I will demonstrate the simultaneous production of abstract time and abstract space in everyday practice, and their centrality to the constitution of the Olympic Park as a space in which a particular mode of accumulation is embedded.

5 - The Olympic Park as 'living, breathing piece of the city'

5.1 - Introduction

In the autumn of 2013, just over a year after the 2012 games, the Olympic Park stood largely empty. Newly re-christened the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, it had begun to re-open in July of that year, leading with the meadow-planted beds and grassy banks of the river Lea that comprise its northern half. Over the following year the rest of the Park followed in stages, gradually becoming host to a rich everyday life for the first time since the Lower Lea Valley was cleared to make way for its construction. In November 2013 the Athlete's Village, now named the 'East Village', accepted its first tenants. As construction was completed on subsequent buildings those first few slowly gained neighbours. By the spring of 2015 the East Village website was celebrating the arrival of their 1000th tenant - 'Christin Ender, a 25 year old digital marketer from Bow' (Get Living London, 2015).

As these residents began to make the Park their home, its public spaces and attractions also became accessible. The Copper Box arena opened with the north Park in mid-2013, and was joined in March 2014 by the VeloPark and the Aquatics Centre. To coincide with Easter holidays the southern half of the Park opened in April of that year, complete with its play-parks and the ArcelorMittal Orbit. In June the Lea Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre at the far north of the Park also opened. However, other areas remained closed – most conspicuously the Olympic Stadium, which would only briefly open for the Rugby World Cup in October 2015 as it underwent an extensive re-kit in order to become home to West Ham United football club. Additionally the Park contained a number of fenced-off areas: expanses of concrete ear-marked for future development, construction sites veiled by tall billboards, and areas that appear to be wasteland, too small or too awkward to have attracted the attention of developers.

My main fieldwork period covered this time of gradual inhabitation. My initial experience of the Park was as a space largely deserted or forbidden, divided between construction sites, empty plots, and open parkland with little to attract visitors. As my fieldwork went on these barren and confused spaces were transformed. Incorporated into the everyday practice of their new inhabitants, they became animated but ordered. No longer differentiated only by a stark contrast between the presence and absence of social life, multiple interlocking spaces emerged, distinguished by their constituting practice.

In order to describe the differing ways in which practice animates contrasting spaces, in this chapter I introduce time as a second plane through which everyday life is played out. The temporal presents a means by which the character and practice of contrasting spaces within the Park can be understood as related to the reproduction of capital. It thus provides a link between the practical constitution of social space and the Park's function within a financialised and creative mode of accumulation. Further, in treating time, like space, as a concrete abstraction, I argue that practice simultaneously produces space and time as they are perceived and inhabited. This practical production is constrained and directed by the abstractions that it constitutes, but also conflicts with and over-spills these abstractions. I therefore identify contrasting temporalities of space within the Olympic Park, pointing to the ways in which their juxtaposed modes of practice play out this tension central to the constitution of the Olympic Park as 'actually existing' abstract space.

Rooted in an ethnographic perception and practice of space, the content of this chapter corresponds to an investigation of the second moment in Henri Lefebvre's triad of the production of space. In order to relate discussion of temporality to Lefebvre's work on space and on the everyday, it also draws on his 'rhythmanalysis'. This approach to understanding the everyday foregrounds social rhythm through 'experience and knowledge of the body' (Lefebvre, 1992; 67). Elden writes that Lefebvre intends to use the body and the idea of rhythm

to explore 'the push-pull exchange between the general and the particular, the abstraction of concepts and the concrete analysis of the mundane' (Elden, 2004b; viii). This theoretical framework is therefore one suited to ethnographic fieldwork, and especially to the embodied walking practice on which my research centred.

Unlike my pilot project, during this period I chose to present consistently in a feminine mode. As such my sense of contrast in moving between spaces felt heightened. The Westfield was for a time the most highly gendered space I traversed in my fieldwork. The north Park and surrounding sites were empty, both of inscribed gender signification and of those sedimented practices that would mark them as masculine or feminine. These spaces felt freer and simpler to navigate, although they also contained points of possible confrontation in encounters unrestricted by the collective presence of others. This situation changed as the Park became inhabited. As the various spaces of the Park settled into their contrasting characters they acquired gendered qualities, again informed by the relationship between their determining practice and the reproduction of capital. Movement through these spaces became movement between finely-graded sets of associations: with the public and private, masculine and feminine, active and passive, productive and reproductive. In hindsight my own gender refinement and solidification feels to some extent a response to this experience – an attempt to find my place within these granular distinctions of spatialised gender. My impression of the ways in which practice has determined the development of these inhabited spaces is therefore closely bound up with the specificities of my transgender identity and embodied methodology.

In this chapter, then, I describe the gradual inhabitation of space in order to explore the ways in which its production is determined not only by design and construction but also by practice and perception in the everyday. I am interested in the complication, interruption, and troubling of abstract space by practice, but also in the ways in which practice nevertheless reproduces its own abstract

domination. In exploring this relationship I will employ Lefebvre's distinction between 'dominated' and 'appropriated' space, understood as opposing modes of practice that must be balanced in the reproduction of capitalist space. I will demonstrate that this balancing of everyday practice is intimately implicated in the production, circulation, and realisation of value, constituting localised space-times uneasily layered upon each other. The Olympic Park, as a newly-created space, offers a chance to observe these everyday practices emerge and settle in a space designed to privilege certain modes of action whilst prohibiting others.

In order to unpack this tension between the interruption and reproduction of abstract space, I will describe the development of rhythms of practice within the Park. I will highlight contrasting spaces in terms of their temporality and rhythm, and describe the relationship between practices of space and the valorisation process. In doing so I will draw on Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis alongside Alfred Sohn-Rethel and Moishe Postone's theorisations of 'abstract time' to complement Lefebvre's 'abstract space'. I therefore treat the practice of space as its temporalisation: an introduction of repetition and change that both reproduces and challenges the dominance of abstract space-time. This chapter expands my discussion of the Park as an actually-existing abstract space beyond the ways in which it was conceived and represented by architects and planners, to the ways in which it is practiced and reproduced in the everyday. In doing so, the conflictual character of abstract space is brought to the fore, as is the internal connection between abstract space-time and the value form.

5.2 - The Park re-opens: introducing life to empty space

Outside the Timber Lodge cafe stands a display case containing a stylised three-dimensional representation of the Park, constructed from cut-up black and white maps and layered card. The sides of the structure bear slogans – 'from a stadium to a tourist hot-spot', 'turning a 30-year plan into a reality' – alongside artists' impressions of the finished Park and photographs of the construction

process. On the front, text reads: 'E20 will become a living breathing piece of the city'.



Fig 29. Announcing E20 as a 'living breathing piece of the city'

Here the Olympic Park is hailed by postcode as a segment of London's urban fabric. Of course, this postcode itself betrays the fact that this recently defined space is newly-inserted into that fabric. 'E20' is the fictional postcode in which *Eastenders* takes place, applied to the Park in reference to the soap. Having rendered this space (and its postcode) material, granting a concrete existence to abstract plans, the developers and managers of the Park wish for it not only a tangible and thingly existence, but a 'living, breathing' one.

The Park in November 2013 stood in stark contrast to its festival liveliness during the games. The wide spaces that had held crowds wandering between stadia, eating picnics, watching events on huge screens, and perusing merchandise, now stood empty. The avenues between residential blocks in the East Village were silent save for the occasional sounds of ongoing construction work and most windows opened onto bare apartments, loose cables trailing

from ceilings. The southern part of the Park was completely closed, and the northern part was still frequented mostly by workers finishing the winter planting. The fact that this was still visibly the Olympic Park – marked by the sweeping architecture of the stadia and the twisting shape of the Orbit, by the Olympic rings that crown the northern Park and banners hung from lampposts – made this sense of stillness all the more eerie.



Fig 30. The empty Aquatics Centre concourse, in February 2014

This was not a 'living breathing piece of the city' but a space characterised by its lack of life. In comparison with Camberwell where I was living, and with neighbouring Hackney Wick and Stratford, the Park was marked by an absence of social interaction. Wandering across these spaces I was often a lone figure in a wide landscape. Meanwhile the Westfield, even on weekday afternoons, felt bustling and busy: defined by bodies crossing paths to look in shop windows, queueing for food, or passing through to Stratford station. Outside it was possible to wander for hours without passing another human, the curving lines and smooth surfaces of the Park uncomplicated by encounter with others. Where the Westfield was carefully climate-controlled (never too cold or too hot, so atmosphere faded from perception) in the Park the weather was amongst the most significant variable factors in the experience of space. In the early days of

my winter fieldwork I found myself often remarking on this weather: 'Outside is desolate – the cold exaggerated by a strong wind across the empty space of the park, despite the clear sunshine'.

In interviews with residents of the East Village the initial emptiness of the Park was a commonly cited experience, characteristic of moving to E20. Speaking to Daniel, a worker at the Viewtube cafe and long-term resident of East London, he remarked that 'it's a bit weird – all these big new buildings. East Village has been empty for a long time, so it feels even more like that – like a zombie movie or something'. Similarly, John, a new resident of the East Village and current employee of the Crossrail project (having also worked for the Olympic Delivery Authority during the construction of the Olympic Park), described his view across the empty side of the East Village as akin to a 'ghost town'. At the same time the sense that this space and community were just becoming established, just beginning to develop a social life, was one draw to the Park for many of the East Village residents I spoke to. Peter expressed this: 'I was one of the first to live here, and when we arrived there was such little community, so much building work still around us. But it feels like, you're kind of creating something, which is a responsibility in itself'.

Alex, another resident, recently finished his Masters degree and moved to the Park from nearby Bow on the basis that he could 'get on the housing ladder' as a part-ownership tenant of Triathlon Homes. He explained to me in early summer 2014 that for him the key attraction of the East Village was that it is 'something of an enclave in Newham'. For Alex, perhaps more than for those residents who only rent, part of the attraction of the Park is that his property is likely increase in value over time. The East Village, he argued, is distinct from its surroundings partly due to 'a significant effort to keep it that way' on the part of the hands-on management of Triathlon and Get Living London. He hopes this would ensure it avoids 'any sort of disintegration, or anti-social behaviour associated with other places'. For Alex the fact that this space represents Olympic Legacy and stands as centre-piece for a wider transformation of East

London inspires a confidence that it will develop in a certain way. However, this hope is always expressed alongside a related anxiety that the Park might become tainted by its proximity to the relative poverty of Newham. Peter described his experience of this anxiety:

I think it's gonna come down to the community in the East Village. When I first mentioned to people that I was gonna come live here, a lot of people said that because it's in Stratford, it's gonna get run-down, not be very nice. So in 5 or 6 years, it'll be who lives here, what it's like. It could go a few ways – it could get run-down, but I think there's too much money around it for it to do that. It could become really cold and lifeless, particularly through the fact that apart from Westfield there's no reason for people from Stratford to come through. Or it could become a thriving community, because there's a lot of money coming in, a lot of eyeballs on it in government, not just in the UK, there's people globally looking at this as a test-case, and if it doesn't work, there'll be questions asked.

In these potential futures of the Park it is possible to understand the insistence of the assertion that 'E20 will become a living breathing piece of the city'. For the owners and managers of the Olympic Park, the Westfield, and the East Village, the risk that the space will remain 'cold and lifeless' is just as dangerous as the possibility that it will become run-down or disordered. Managing the Park consists of treading a line between the encouragement and the organisation of social life.

Lefebvre's categories of appropriated and dominated space are useful here. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre describes 'domination' and 'appropriation' as two related but antagonistic modes by which nature is transformed by human activity. Dominating practice and its associated space is ascendant under capitalism: 'instances of such space are legion, and instantly recognisable as such: one only has to think of a slab of concrete or a motorway' (ibid; 164). This mode of practice creates spaces that are 'closed, sterilised, emptied out' (ibid; 165). In contrast, appropriation proceeds more organically by the actions of a social group – 'time plays a part in the process, and indeed appropriation cannot be understood apart from the rhythms of time and life' (ibid; 166). While 'history – which is to say the history of accumulation – is also the history of their

separation and mutual antagonism', domination and appropriation are always found together, as two tendencies within spatial practice (ibid). While the domination of space subsumes its appropriation, the imposition of dominated space is always 'modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group' (ibid; 165). That is, appropriation, even when 'utterly subjugated', cannot fully disappear (ibid; 166).

This antagonism between domination and appropriation is that which is expressed in the opposition between sterility and disorder that characterises anxieties about the Park's future. As Daniel put it to me: 'there is a risk that that community will only ever exist in the imaginations of planners who produce posters with photoshopped images of smiling people. If there is the opportunity for people to produce community, then it might happen, but it is never certain'. The production of spaces like the Olympic Park necessarily proceeds in a 'dominated' manner, as the 'realisation of a master's project' (ibid; 165). However, the appropriation of those spaces – their inhabitation and use, transformation and adaptation – is necessary for those spaces to be reproduced in the everyday. The Olympic Park, to fulfil its purpose as a space of production and of reproduction, had to become a 'living breathing piece of the city'.

Lefebvre's concept of the appropriation of space owes a debt to Martin Heidegger's 'dwelling' (Stanek, 2011; 87). However, there are significant differences to the ways in which these ideas play out. For Heidegger, to 'dwell' expresses an essential relationship between the human subject and space: 'space is not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience' (Heidegger, 1951; 154). Instead, dwelling is the 'stay within the fourfold among things' (ibid). This 'fourfold' consists of the earth, the 'serving bearer' of dwelling; the sky, the eternal 'vaulting path of the sun'; divinities, the 'beckoning messengers of the godhead'; and mortals, human beings, who dwell and die 'on earth, under the sky, before the divinities' (ibid, 147-8). The position of the human subject within this fourfold unity springs from the act of dwelling, which is at root a gathering, and 'preserving' of that unity (ibid; 149).

Heidegger illustrates this with the example of a bridge which 'gathers the earth and landscape around the stream' (ibid; 152). The bridge produces a location around which space comes into being. Building is thus a prerequisite for dwelling, that produces space in 'letting appear' the 'simple oneness' of the fourfold (ibid; 156-7). For Heidegger dwelling is precarious, risking an existential homelessness. Against this threat Heidegger presents a static and rooted understanding of the ideal relationship between space and the human subject. This emphasis on rootedness and its attendant shadow of Heidegger's fascist politics led Lefebvre to remark that 'mass graves are outlined on the horizons of Heideggerianism' (Lefebvre, cited in Elden, 2004a; 78).

However, despite the dangerous implications of Heidegger's politics, Stuart Elden writes that Lefebvre aimed to 'ground Heidegger, to make his analyses more real' (ibid; 79). Japhy Wilson discusses this use of Heideggerian elements in Lefebvre's understanding of abstract space. Here Heidegger's existential homelessness becomes an expression of spatial alienation. In the reproduction of abstract space the accumulative nature of capital comes into conflict with the non-accumulative nature of everyday life. Rather than making a 'dangerous appeal to the "rootedness" of "traditional" societies', Lefebvre shifts 'from Heidegger to Marx', in order to position appropriation as creative (Wilson, 2013; 371). Where Heidegger sees a precarious dwelling under threat from modernity, Lefebvre sees a more concrete conflict between the dominated and alienated production of abstract space and an everyday life that appropriates and thus makes that space liveable. As Wilson describes, for Lefebvre humans 'dwell poetically' when their 'inhabiting is in some sense [their] creative work'" (Lefebvre, 1966; 130).

In the *Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the 'Pavillon'* Lefebvre writes that Heidegger warns against the 'economic or technological', those influences on the production of space that Lefebvre groups under 'domination' (Lefebvre, 1966a; 122). However, he goes on to suggest that Heidegger cannot offer an

escape from this 'world ravaged by technology', save by pointing to 'another (as yet unperceived) world' (ibid; 122). The aim of the study of the *pavillon*, in contrast, is to 'seek a route by which a solution could be sketched out, to appear on the horizon' (ibid; 123). This avenue of movement in a world increasingly determined by dominated space is the concept of appropriation. Significantly, in the atomised suburban new-build homes of the *pavillon* Lefebvre still finds appropriation, writing that 'appropriation is the goal, the direction, the purpose of social life' (ibid; 130). This living creation without which 'social development, properly speaking, remains nil', is 'always a social fact, but is not to be confused with the forms, functions, and structures of society' (ibid; 130-131).

Just as capital is characterised by the subsumption of concrete praxis by social abstractions, so too does dominated space subsume and determine the appropriation of space, conditioning its own reproduction in the process. For Lefebvre, concrete space, 'the space of gestures and journeys, of the body and memory, of symbols and sense' corresponds to 'dwelling', and thus to appropriated space (ibid; 189). At the same time this concrete space is 'misunderstood by reflexive thought, which instead resorts to the abstract space of vision, of geometry' (ibid). This is not a mistake but a reflection of the social constitution of space itself, in which the dominating and the appropriated, like the abstract and the concrete, are related dialectically: space is a 'realised' abstraction, and a mode of domination remade in appropriative practice (ibid).

The relationship between appropriation and domination as modes of spatial practice therefore offers a means by which to explore the relationship between concrete and abstract space. However, this distinction alone does not fully capture the contradictory constitution of space as a concrete abstraction. Lefebvre's suggestion that the appropriative 'cannot be understood apart from the rhythms of time and life' indicates the missing element from this understanding of practice. To this discussion of the dialectical relationship between abstract and concrete space, Elden introduces the temporal. As

concrete space is constituted by an appropriative practice ('gestures and journeys') that occur in time, this concrete content of space is always also 'time inscribed in a space' (Elden, 2004a; 189). As spatial abstraction is conditioned by a material domination of space it too can be expressed in this inscription of the temporal on the spatial. It is therefore to the time and rhythm of practice in the Park that I will now turn.

5.3 - Inhabiting the Park: temporalities of leisure and reproduction

The image of the Park 'breathing' as it becomes inhabited is useful not only in highlighting the significance of living movement to the production of space, but also in that it presents that movement in rhythmic terms. The breath of a space is a potent metaphor for its expansion and contraction in shifting patterns of use over the course of an hour, a day, or a year. The idea of the breath of the city also contains a productive contradiction between the organic, bodily, and cyclical connotations of breath, and the fixed, structured, and linear characteristics of the city and its time. As it contains and constrains the living movement of breath, the inorganic city is animated and transformed by it. Within this image of living movement as animating but constrained, productive but circumscribed, lies the interrelation of appropriation and domination as modes of spatial practice.

This practice defines space by defining the social rhythm of that space. Within the Olympic Park it is possible to identify several contrasting temporalities of space. The open parklands and residential avenues move at a different pace to the shops and escalators of the Westfield, and again to the construction sites and routines of workers. While these spaces are characterised by contrasting rhythms, they are nonetheless subsumed within the time of capitalism – an abstract time that corresponds to the form of value and to abstract space. In *The Rythmanalytical Project* Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier suggest that this 'homogeneous and desacralised time has emerged victorious since it supplied

the measure of the time of work' (Lefebvre & Régulier, 1985; 73). Lefebvre identifies it with exchange: '(social) space and (social) time, dominated by exchanges, become the time and space of markets' (Lefebvre, 1992; 6). This is the time of the commodity, that which transforms all social practice towards itself, imposing measure, quantity, homogeneity, and divisibility.

While this linear temporality is an abstraction, like the capitalist form of space it is an abstraction reified in practice. The temporal dimension of practice, like its spatial dimension, repeats capital's central tension between dominating abstract forms and their concrete content: a tension that aligns with the contradiction between exchange and use value internal to the commodity form. However, other modes of practice also persist, standing outside of or parallel to the activity of work in which this dominant time is constituted. As such, the topography of social rhythm is a highly uneven one, with different temporalities juxtaposed, layered, and clashing. The various spheres of practice that together reproduce capital and its dominating abstractions give rise to fragmented and conflicting space-times. Lefebvre writes that 'the everyday is simultaneously the site for, the theatre of, and what is at stake in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat' (Lefebvre, 1985; 73).



Fig 31. The East Village, approached by bridge across the Lea in the north Park

Within the Olympic Park the most evident of these clashing temporalities is that of leisure. Much of the Park's public space is dedicated to the reproduction of life and labour power, standing outside of work and exchange. These are the open spaces of the north and south Park, in which people wander slowly or take exercise to relax and reclaim their bodies after work. They are the residential spaces of the East Village where children ride bikes and play in mini-playparks, and the cafes where groups of young mothers meet to socialise and share the burden of toddler-minding. These spaces of leisure, consumption, and reproduction are characterised by a concrete and cyclical time, determined by repeated patterns of practice. This time exists in conflict with abstract and linear clock time, although that externally-originating time nonetheless compels synchronisation to the activity of work that this reproductive sphere is defined against. Similarly, this activity appropriates space. It makes use of space and transforms it in that use, but it does not impose a plan and stands in contrast with the dominating practice that furnishes it the terrain on which it exists. This reproductive activity thus constitutes a localised space-time that stands in a relationship of externality to those dominating abstractions of space and time that, constituted in a concrete practice to which this activity is other, nonetheless shape and mould it.

The initial emptiness of the Park meant that the emergence of these rhythms was particularly noticeable over the twelve months of my fieldwork. In the winter its open spaces were arrhythmic, unpredictable in their motion due to a lack of repetition and routine. Their time was concrete in the sense that it was determined entirely in relation to a subjective movement through space. As my fieldwork went on the Park began to open, the fencing gradually receding, visitors arriving, and the private spaces of the East Village accumulating tenants. By the summer these spaces had evolved a set of regular, tidal rhythms – predictable flows of people filling and emptying space at similar times across the day and week.



Fig 32. Small groups enjoying the sun beside the Waterworks River (DG, 2015)

The North Park remained empty for the winter of 2013/14. Often, I was a solitary figure walking along the river-bank or past the closed Velodrome. Once the days began to grow warmer and sunnier, its landscapes became animated by the movement of bodies across bridges and behind hillocks. The Timber Lodge cafe became a more popular destination for walkers, who spilled out onto outdoor chairs and tables. At weekends as summer approached, movement through the Park became not only visually informed by the presence of others, but actively shaped by it. The slopes down to the river were dotted with clusters of people, the flatter areas were crossed by footballs and frisbees, the playpark was clambered across by children while parents filled benches around the edge.

These collective rhythms were repeated daily. Each lunchtime the southern half of the Park would see small groups wander across the road and onto the grass to eat, read magazines, check Facebook or chat on their phones. By half one or two in the afternoon, they would return to their workplaces. As the school and work day ended these groups would again emerge to wander around the Park or visit the climbing frames. Just as this rhythm repeated daily, a weekly rhythm saw larger numbers migrate to the Park at weekends, in larger groups, to settle

on the grass or explore. As such these rhythms of use were determined by the rhythms of work, the Park's emptier lulls defined by those times in which most people were submitted to the linear measurement of their working activity.

Even outside of the time of work, its linear temporality structures use of the Park in deeper ways. Many of the East Village residents I spoke to discussed the Park as a destination for picnics, play, or relaxing, and as a space in which to exercise: running, cycling, or visiting the Aquatics Centre or Velodrome. Peter told me that since moving to East Village he'd started running, doing circuits around the Park, and had recently bought a bike. He made use of the Our Parks sessions, which ran 'every day, first thing in the morning, lunchtime, after work. It's free and sponsored by the guys who run the Park and Get Living London, so I get involved in that stuff.' Adam, a manager of the Sir Ludwig Guttman Health Centre on the edge of the East Village, described to me the ways in which the health centre aimed to make use of its proximity to the Park. He explained that 'once per week we do walks with a walk leader around the Park, just to encourage people, show them that the Park exists and that it's a lovely area, and to give them a bit of exercise and team-building'.

This use of Park as rest area, as exercise destination, and as a 'social prescription' for various physical and mental health complaints highlights the multiple levels on which this practice is orientated towards a reproduction of self necessary for work. Those residents of the East Village and surrounding area turn to the Park for an engagement with space that appears to be the very opposite of work: a self-directed, cyclical practice that turns on a concrete, bodily experience of space and rhythm. However, this other of work is at the same time necessary to the reproduction of labour-power, and is shaped by the spectre of that linear temporality. This minor appropriation of space and immersion within a cyclical time is ultimately determined by the abstract space-time of the clock and the plan, the Park's leisure spaces designed precisely for a reproduction of self in the service of work.

While the majority of this activity must occur in snatched opportunities outside of work, the Park is also witness to moments of a more fully appropriated time. These moments recall the festival mega-event of its inception, in which a crowd of participants briefly escape the determination of linear time. During my fieldwork these events included the Grand Depart of the Tour de France and the opening weekend of the Southern Park, as Easter sunshine ensured that every green space of the Park was filled with people. Lefebvre and Régulier describe such moments as the 'time which forgets time, during which time no longer counts (and is no longer counted)' (Lefebvre & Régulier, 1985; 76). This time 'arrives or emerges when an activity brings plenitude' and is 'in harmony with itself and with the world' – it is 'a time, but does not reflect on it' (ibid; 76-77). Mark, a resident of the East Village, described the opening weekend: 'I visited the South Park at the opening weekend, and there was still the same air of excitement as the Olympics had'.



Fig 33. The Tour De France crowd line the road in front of the Copper Box Arena

In the *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II*, Lefebvre describes an antagonistic relationship between accumulative and non-accumulative social processes. While capital operates on a linear accumulative logic, capitalist society must

'also reproduce the social relations between its members', a process that despite its subordination to the reproduction of capital 'repeats itself in cycles' (Lefebvre, 1961; 611). In pre-capitalist societies this non-accumulative reproduction informed a dominant cyclical time. However, the development of accumulation 'profoundly modifies and overturns the previous process', encompassing it without abolishing it (ibid; 617). As these cyclical reproductive processes exist within and alongside linear processes of production, 'everyday life lies at the ill-defined, cutting edge where the accumulative and the non-accumulative intersect' (ibid; 629). Lefebvre writes that:

It is as though cyclic time scales have been ripped asunder by the linear time of the process of accumulation and have been left to hang in tatters within us and around us. And yet symbolisms, cyclic rhythms and the shattered or degenerate nucleuses continue to organise the everyday; they represent its stable centre and maintain the illusion of a pre-ordained harmony
(Lefebvre, 1961; 630).

Following Lefebvre's argument we can add a distinction between cyclical and linear to our existing distinctions between appropriation and domination and the concrete and the abstract. Each of these oppositions map onto each other, although none of them are fully coterminous with their parallel terms. Just as the abstract and concrete and the dominating and the appropriative are internally related to each other, so too are the linear and the cyclical. Repetition produces cyclical temporalities even when subsumed to the linear time of accumulation, so the cyclical underlays the linear just as appropriation underlays domination. These rhythms of social practice arise in the repetitive gestures of the everyday. At this micro level there is an 'antagonistic unity' between cyclical and linear processes: 'the circular course of the hands on (traditional) clock-faces and watches is accompanied by a linear tick-tock' (Lefebvre, 1992; 8).

The rhythm of the public spaces of the Park is dominated by the abstract and linear time of work but also strains against it, due to its rootedness in the cyclical and concrete time of the everyday. Further, this tension within the everyday practice of the Park lays the groundwork for those rare moments of

collectively appropriated that interrupts the everyday. These moments, as fractal reflections of the Park's inaugural festival, represent a fuller unfolding of the concrete and cyclical content of appropriative practice, normally subsumed within the linear and abstract form of the Park's space-time. However, this leisure time is not the only temporality of space within the Park. I will now turn to explore the rhythm and temporality of the Westfield and the Park's spaces of exchange, relating Lefebvre's distinction between cyclical and linear time to Sohn-Rethel's distinction between concrete and abstract time.

5.4 - Shopping in the Park: temporalities of exchange

The Olympic Park exists in the shadow of the Westfield shopping centre. It is the easiest route of pedestrian access from the east and the Park's point of connection to London's underground and overground trains. Further, the Westfield serves as a destination in itself, exerting a pull at least as strong as the Park's open spaces and stadia. With the surrounding outdoor shopping areas taken into account, the Westfield is the largest shopping centre in Europe and attracts visitors to match, taking £4 million during its first 24 hours (Peart, York, and Grainger, 2011). Opening a year prior to the games, its first 12 months saw 47 million visitors (9 million of whom came during the games themselves), a volume of shoppers 'equivalent to almost the entire population of England' (London Evening Standard, 2012).



Fig 34. The Westfield – as the day turns to dusk outside, its internal atmosphere remains unchanged (Buchan Group, 2016a)

The temporality of this space exists in sharp contrast to that of the reproductive spaces of the Park. This space is characterised by an abstract time that, rather than presenting a linear and divisible homogeneity feels still, the most prominent markers of its passage erased. In the artificial environment of the mall a sense of time is obscured and confused. Walking into the Westfield from Stratford station, as the majority of its visitors do, means passing through an underpass, up an escalator, and directly into the shopping centre. At the entrance of this tunnel hangs a large clock – one last public display of time's progression before the suspended time of the Westfield is entered.

Jon Goss has persuasively outlined the ways in which the architecture and atmosphere of the mall is manufactured to encourage 'targeted users to move through the retail space and to adopt certain physical and social dispositions conducive to shopping' (Goss, 1993; 31). According to Goss the shopping centre is designed to attract consumers and keep them within its bounds for as long as possible (ibid; 22). This is an 'idealised social space free, by virtue of private property, planning, and strict control, from the inconvenience of the

weather and the danger and pollution of the automobile, but most importantly from the terror of crime associated with today's urban environment' (ibid; 24). The Westfield stands as one such space, an anti-urban centrepiece within the Park's cluster of anti-urban spaces, highlighting the irony of naming its outdoor extension 'The Street'.

The Westfield's peculiar temporality is at the heart of this anti-urban character. The city is the original domain of clock-time's extension into social life, and the street is defined by the complex rhythms of the everyday. The Westfield, however, closes off the linear progression of the clock and does away with rhythm as far as possible, replacing it with an easy drift. To this end, the Westfield follows all the conventions of effective mall design. It is protected from the elements and maintained at a comfortable temperature; movement is facilitated with as little exertion as possible by escalators; security are always visible and reassuring; and the natural light of the high glass roof is supplemented with a gentle and steady artificial glow. Each of these elements serves to encourage a calm comfort on the part of the shopper and contributes to the erasure of a sense of passing time.

Goss remarks that 'for the postmodern consumer, temporality has collapsed, time is an extension of the moment' (ibid; 37). This is perfectly expressed in the basic shape of the Westfield's concourse, designed in the gentle curve often used in mall design because it 'fosters a sense of anticipation', pulling the shopper on while disguising the length of the walk (ibid; 33). This sense of anticipation is exactly that of the suspended moment – an anticipation forever delayed in order to distract the shopper from the concrete passage of time measured by their footsteps. Along with the homogenising influence of architecture and atmosphere, this extended anticipation is fundamental to the temporality of the Westfield, fostered by its material form but realised in the practice of its users.

Goss also highlights the liminal sociality of malls as exchanges spaces, arguing that this liminality is related to the way in which 'the marketplace thrives on the possibility of "letting yourself go", "treating yourself", and of "trying it on" without risk of moral censure' (ibid; 27). This social licence constitutes the mall as a space of 'potentiality and transgression', played on by the careful manufacture of a nostalgic sense of carnival (ibid). Bordering the Olympic Park (and gate to the games during the mega-event), the Westfield has no lack of material to draw on when presenting this face. It bolsters this reflection of festival atmosphere with regular performances by live musicians outside the food court, attractions themed around public holidays, and a sense of cosmopolitan sociality encouraged by the restaurants and boutiques that populate 'The Plaza' and 'The Street'.

The suspended temporality of this space is intimately related to its liminality. Goss draws heavily on Victor Turner's 'communitas' in describing the sociality of the mall, a central feature of which is the suspension, along with social hierarchy, of the normal passage of social time: communitas is a 'moment in and out of time' (Turner, 1969; 96). The genesis of this suspended temporality can therefore be illuminated through an understanding of the liminal atmosphere that it contributes towards. For Goss, this is a direct result of the needs of retailers. It is advantageous for them to encourage a sense of possibility as it makes shoppers more likely to part with their money. This is undoubtedly true to some extent – the atmosphere of the Westfield facilitates the realisation of value just as the games' festival character did. However, the liminality associated with spaces of exchange also has a deeper root, originating in the structure of the exchange relationship itself.

In Volume I of *Capital*, Marx remarks that the market is a 'very Eden of the rights of man', the 'exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham' (Marx, 1867; 280). Here, buyers and sellers of commodities (including labour-power) confront each other as 'free persons' unconstrained by hierarchy and able to exchange that which they have the right of property over on the basis of

relative value alone. Spaces dedicated to the facilitation of exchange⁹ might be understood as akin to spaces of Turner's 'normative communitas', in which a certain liminality (within strict confines) is engendered as conducive to the reproduction of structuring social relationships. The Westfield therefore expresses and materialises the perfect conditions of consumer commodity exchange, reflecting this sense of freedom and equality.



Fig 35. The Street at the Westfield, decked out for Christmas (Sweetpea London, 2013)

The mall, as physical site of commodity exchange's normative communitas, becomes imbued not only with a liminal sense of equality and freedom (expressed as Goss' carnival possibility), but also with its attendant temporality. This temporality similarly arises from and plays a specific role within the structure of the exchange relation. Sohn-Rethel highlights the way in which the abstract nature of the exchange relation imprints itself not only on the objects and the actors within that relation, but also on the time and space in which it exists. He argues that the physical activity of exchange is itself abstracted from the rest of social life, in that the use and exchange of a commodity are mutually exclusive (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; 46). Further, the commodities exchanged are

9 That is, the marketplace both as a social sphere defined by the bourgeois values of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*, and as a physical space that comes to express the fullest embodiment of those qualities

themselves abstract, in that they are considered equal in value regardless of their different material forms and uses (ibid; 47). This constitutes a double abstraction in which exchange is predicated on a separation from other spheres of social life and a negation of the physical qualities of that which is exchanged.

The time and space of the exchange relation reflects this double abstraction. Sohn-Rethel writes that the time and space associated with use – that of 'nature and the material activities of man, with the ripening of crops, the sequence of the seasons, the hunting of animals, with man's birth and death and all that happens in his lifespan' – is cancelled within the moment of exchange, which 'forces abstraction from all of this, for the objects of exchange remain immutable for the duration of the abstraction' (ibid; 48). The time of exchange is therefore 'emptied of all the material realities that form its contents in the sphere of use' (ibid). It attains a quality of stasis that reflects the way in which exchanged objects are assumed to be unchanging, their materiality supplanted by an abstract quantity. The shopping centre takes on this sense of time at a standstill, filled with eternal objects perversely suspended by their existence as bearers of value. Just as the architecture and atmosphere of the mall play on the *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* of the market in encouraging a sense of liminal possibility, they also play on this abstract time in promoting a sense of the homogeneous present.

These qualities of the Westfield come through in my fieldnotes. Travelling by train from Peckham, the shopping centre was my point of arrival within the Park for the vast majority of my fieldwork excursions. Initially it presented a bustling and layered social space that felt overwhelming to try and get to grips with, as there seemed to be no pattern to its use. As my fieldwork time went on I began to understand that this was characteristic of the space itself. Ivy, a resident of the Matchmaker's Wharf new-build apartments across the Park from the Westfield felt this same strangeness, describing it as 'Oz' and 'Wonderland' in our interview – a world apart in which time and space follow different rules. Sohn-Rethel: 'in the market-place and in shop windows, things stand still. They

are under the spell of one activity only; to change owner' (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; 25). This spell extends itself to human activity to the extent that 'even nature herself is supposed to abstain from any ravages in the body of this commodity and to hold her breath' (ibid).

However, the suspended time of exchange is not universally dominant within the Westfield. This space is marked by social rhythm, but those rhythms are layered on top of its internal temporality. They originate elsewhere, introduced by the socially-embedded nature of the shopping centre. Christmas decorations, football World Cup screens, and holiday activities for small children all come and go, playing off the vestigial carnival of the mall, but the Westfield and the movements of its shoppers ultimately remain unchanged. Contrasting practices juxtapose other temporalities with the drifting and distracted circulation that animates the shopping centre. This represents a conflict between modes of practice and the space-times that they constitute. The suspended time that originates in the material activity of exchange is interrupted by other navigations of the Westfield's space.

The cyclical time of the Park's leisure and residential space is felt in the Westfield, cemented by the location of Stratford Station adjacent to it. The passage of commuters on their daily journey from the Park's residential areas carries a flow of people through the Westfield, filling its central walkways at twice daily rush-hours. Like the public spaces of the Park the Westfield as a leisure destination is influenced by work as a drain on people's available time, meaning that greater numbers of shoppers emerge after work and at weekends. This tidal movement of shopping crowds introduces an undercurrent to the a-rhythmic temporality of the mall: a weekend swell and a rush-hour drag. The linear development of the Park outside the Westfield added to this sense of the Westfield as a thoroughfare, further complicating its temporality. As the public spaces of the Park opened more people used the Westfield as a conduit, cutting through crowds rather than drifting into shops.



Fig 36. The Plaza at the Westfield (Buchan Group, 2016b)

On top of this the necessary presence of retail workers, security, cleaning staff and so on means that the Westfield is always traversed by individuals whose practice is deeply determined by a linear clock time, regardless of shoppers' distraction from it. These workers move with a rhythm that marks them out from the consumers around them, completing repetitive movements between till and barcode scanner, storeroom and shelves, that breaks time down to a set of repeated gestures. This presence of activity determined by the wage and the measurement of linear time underlines the way in which the suspended temporality of the Westfield is predicated on a dominated spatial and temporal practice, not only in its initial construction, but also in its everyday existence.

The delicate balance between domination and appropriation that the Park must maintain depends on the interweaving of these temporalities. However, it must also manage an internal contradiction in the constitution of the Westfield's abstract temporality. Sohn-Rethel characterises the time and space of exchange as 'marked by homogeneity, continuity, and emptiness of all natural and material content, visible or invisible' (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; 25). Paralleling Lefebvre's 'concrete abstraction' of space, this time is a 'real abstraction' – a social form that is fundamentally abstract despite its genesis in and

subsumption of material practice. Sohn-Rethel is clear about the nature of this contradiction, explaining that 'in exchange, abstraction must be made from the physical nature of the commodities and from any changes that could occur to it', but at the same time 'the act of property transfer involved in the transaction is a physical act itself, consisting of real movements of material substances through time and space' (ibid; 56). This means that 'the negation of the natural and material physicality constitutes the positive reality of the abstract social physicality of the exchange processes' (ibid).

This inseparability of the concrete and the abstract reflects the relationship between domination and appropriation. Living appropriative practice makes manifest that which the domination of space seeks to secure. Within the leisure and residential spaces of the Park it is possible to witness one playing-out of this relationship, as the cyclical time of reproduction becomes subsumed to the external influence of dominated and linear abstract time. Within the Westfield we discover another temporality similarly cut across by abstract linear time, but also abstract itself due to its origin in the exchange relation. This abstract temporality nonetheless springs from a similarly appropriative practice of space. Sohn-Rethel highlights that the abstract nature constituted in exchange 'has no existence other than in the human mind, but it does not spring from the mind' (ibid; 57).

In the mall the moral and spatio-temporal qualities of the exchange relation extend beyond their origin as social abstraction in the act of exchange, and beyond their reflection as ideal abstraction in thought, to furnish a material space with its character and atmosphere. Goss grasps this in Lefebvrian terms, suggesting that the shopping centre expresses 'a representation of space masquerading as a representational space' – 'a space conceptualised, planned scientifically and realised through strict technical control, pretending to be a space imaginatively created by its inhabitants' (Goss, 1993; 40). That is, the Westfield is a dominated space that encourages a living practice which then comes to furnish a sociality of its own. This sociality, as a controlled

appropriation of space, animates the shopping centre with a sense of liminality, facilitating the realisation of value.

However, this practice stands in contradiction with the space-time it constitutes and is cut across by the cyclical rhythms of reproduction and the linear progression of work, both of which are also essential to the reproduction of the Westfield and its functioning as a space of value realisation. The cyclical rhythms of everyday life define the reproductive activities out of which people step into the exchange space of the Westfield, to cease for a moment their own circulation as labour-power and engage in the circulation of capital and commodities. Simultaneously, the linear tick of work time provides the background rhythm on which the Westfield's staff work. It is to this linear time, in both its concrete and abstract existence, that I now turn as the final mode of temporalising practice that animates the Park's abstract space.

5.5 - Working in the Park: temporalities of work and production

The final spaces of the Park are those of work – the spaces of the 'hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there hangs the notice "No admittance except on business"' (Marx; 1867; 280). These spaces tend to be shut-off from everyday life and its residential, leisure, and exchange spaces. They are gated construction sites, the storerooms and cashier's desks of the Westfield, the kitchens of the Park's cafes, the East Village and Chobham Manor marketing suites and maintenance rooms. Like the Westfield, many of these sites were active before my fieldwork began and remained just as active throughout it. Like the Westfield, they exist in relation to the leisure and residential spaces that became inhabited during my fieldwork, and to some extent structure the activity that defines them.



Fig 37. The Stratford One building under construction

However, the way in which this space, its defining activity, and the temporality that springs from it, relates to those other areas of the Park is quite different. The activity of the Park's reproductive spaces constitutes a concrete cyclical time that exists in conflict with a structuring but external abstract linear time. The exchange spaces of the Westfield constitute an abstract suspended time that is both internally contradictory and externally interrupted by cyclical and linear temporalities. The productive spaces and practices of the Park, on the other hand, constitute an abstract linear time that ultimately dominates and subsumes the temporalities of these other spaces. Once again this time is internally contradictory, and once again it is disrupted by other social rhythms that are nonetheless essential to its reproduction.



Fig 38. The clock outside Stratford Station (Moxon, 2016)

Where the previous two temporalities unfold from a set of localised rhythms and practices, this linear temporality already exists beyond the workplace. Rather than directly constituting a specific space-time, the practice of these spaces stands as one instance in which a totalising clock-time becomes grounded in concrete practice. In exploring the relationship between these three temporalities, it is possible to recognise the way in which everyday practice becomes subsumed to the valorisation of capital, both within and beyond the direct process of production. It is in this subsumption of everyday practice that the significance of the Park as a 'living, breathing' space lies. In encouraging life into the Park, capital organises that life as a source of sustenance, submitted to the constitution of specific space-times through which the reproduction of capital takes place.

The time of production is measured, quantified, and divisible. It is the time expressed by the clocks at the entrance to the Westfield and outside Stratford Station. This time is carried on watches or smartphones and in mental schedules and deadlines. Even submerged in the cyclical bodily rhythms of leisure or deep in the artificially still atmosphere of the mall, this time presses itself into thought as the reminder not to lose your place within it, not to miss that train or be late for work. This time, like abstract space, is a concrete abstraction that becomes mirrored in thought as a conceptual abstraction. It embeds itself in a relationship to the external world to such an extent that it becomes inescapable. It leaves its mark on the material world, just as its concrete content – labour – transforms objective reality. For the inhabitant of Park space the passage of this time was present internally as concept, and also visible externally, in the gradual development of construction sites.

Postone argues that this time came into being with the development of capitalism, transforming previous concrete modes of time which remain suspended within it. Where clock time is an independent constant by which tasks are measured, these concrete temporalities were flexible according to task and season, flowing from everyday activities: 'the time required to cook rice or say one paternoster' (Postone, 1993; 201). Each of these temporalities becomes subsumed to the all-enveloping time of work which, along with the capital relation that birthed it, quickly becomes totalising. The development of abstract time thus accompanied the development of an abstract mode of domination. Abstract time appears to be objective, exerting a compulsion on all simultaneously due to the way in which it 'extends to all areas of life' (ibid; 215). This objective and independent character of abstract linear time renders it dominant within the Olympic Park, despite the Park's heterogeneous practices and space-times.

The genesis of this totalising temporality is in socially necessary labour time. It is independent and objective because it originates as the time by which labour, and thus value, is measured. For Postone, capitalism is unique in that it makes

labour socially mediating, and this socially mediating character ensures labour's time extends to the whole of social life. Commodities lead a double life for the producer – as use values to someone else, and as exchange values to their creator. Labour is therefore also experienced as double, concrete in that it produces a particular use value, but abstract in that it exists as a general exchange value and means by which other use values are accessed: 'the specificity of the producers' labour is abstracted from the products they acquire with that labour' (ibid; 149). Labour is socially mediating in that it embodies this social relation between producers and as such 'constitutes a social medium in lieu of overt social relations' (ibid; 150).

Socially necessary labour time, then, is 'social' and 'necessary' in that it pertains to this function of labour as social mediation. Socially necessary labour time is the 'labour time required to produce any use value under prevailing socially normal conditions of production and with the prevalent socially average degree of skill and intensity of labour' (ibid; 190). This socially average measure determines the magnitude of value crystallised in a commodity, and constitutes a 'general temporal norm, resulting from the actions of the producers, to which they must conform', amounting to a 'quasi-objective social reality with which the producers are confronted' (ibid; 191). The objective and independent temporality that emerges comes to govern the actions of its creators, as they are made to submit to the demand to work more efficiently, to work for longer, and to be aware of the relentless passage of uniform time. Postone: 'this process, whereby a concrete, dependent variable of human activity becomes an abstract, independent variable governing this activity, is real and not illusory. It is intrinsic to the process of alienated social constitution effected by labour' (ibid; 215).

Here, Postone locates the origin of an abstract space-time and of the value-form in capitalist labour, disputing Sohn-Rethel's location of those forms' genesis in the act of exchange. This difference accounts for the divergent emphasis placed on stillness and linearity in their assessment of abstract time.

Postone accepts similarities in their political project and theoretical approach, but criticises Sohn-Rethel for this locating of capitalist 'social synthesis' in exchange. He argues that positioning the value abstraction as a phenomenon of the market makes it extrinsic to commodity-determined labour, meaning that establishing a classless society would simply consist in the unfettering of labour. By contrast, Postone is concerned with demonstrating that the abolition of capital would mean the abolition of labour itself, along with the value-form that it constitutes (ibid; 178).

However, Lefebvre's understanding of everyday life as 'residue' from which various specialised activities are abstracted offers a means by which the two might be productively read in parallel. Norbert Trenkle argues that in making the value abstraction 'identical with the act of exchange', Sohn-Rethel fails to account for either 'the content of this ominous value' or 'the scale by which it is measured' (Trenkle, 1998; 8). He suggests that the act of exchange is not the location of abstraction but the 'place where the value represented in the products is realised' (ibid; 9). Instead, Trenkle argues that labour itself 'as a specific form of activity in commodity society, is per se already abstract because it constitutes a separated sphere, withdrawn from the rest of social life' (ibid; 4). Further, labour 'primarily means a fundamental extraction of vital energy and in this respect is thus an extremely real, actually existing abstraction' (ibid). Here, he parallels Sohn-Rethel's suggestion that the physical activity of exchange is abstracted from the rest of social life. Using Lefebvre's understanding of the everyday there is no reason that these two abstractions of activity from the life that supports them cannot be understood to exist alongside one another. Work appears as a social sphere removed from the everyday, in which 'vital energy' is poured into the material creation of use values and the social constitution of value. Exchange, likewise, appears as a social sphere removed from the everyday, in which those values are realised in being made commensurable, their abstract quantities of value dominating their concrete qualities of use.

Trenkle writes that 'abstraction in the realm of labour also reigns in the form of a highly specific rule of time that is both abstract-linear and homogeneous' (ibid; 5). However, this reign of abstract-linear time does not rule out the existence of other contrasting and conflicting temporalities of social practice. The temporality of socially necessary labour time imprints itself across the whole of social life, but, just as value must 'go through different levels of mediation before it appears at the economic surface in a mutated form', so too does the movement of value produce internally conflicting social rhythms and temporalities (ibid; 12). The concrete and cyclical temporality of reproduction that characterises the everyday life of the Park's leisure spaces stands outside of the immediate valorisation process but is still essential to it, and ultimately subsumed within its ruling time. Likewise, in the Westfield's exchange spaces a space-time associated with the realisation of value is materialised, but this again is cut across by the continual reappearance of clock time. These minor social rhythms represent specific temporalisations of place necessary to the reproduction of capital, but are of a different order to the totalising and general time of work.

However, this abstract-linear time is also concretely produced and materially visible within the Park. As well as being represented in public clocks and personal smartphones or internalised in thought, this time is recognisable in the movements of retail workers within the Westfield, maintenance workers across the Park, and in the progressive construction of the Park's structures. Trenkle writes that 'the concrete, material side of labour is thus nothing other than the tangible form in which abstract labour's diktat of time confronts the workers and forces them under its rhythm' (Trenkle, 1998; 10). This is true both within the sphere of production, in which workers are directly forced to synchronise their gestures with the demands of abstract time, and outside of the immediate world of work, as the terrain on which everyday life occurs bears the marks of its production. Within the Olympic Park, the minor temporalities of leisure and exchange exist within a social and material context defined by the abstract-linear time of work.

This interplay of temporalities completes an image of the interplay of domination and appropriation. Lefebvre's description of domination emphasises that its currently prevalent forms are those of a technological, ordered, and logical regime of space. That is, the domination of space is materially effected by a mobilisation of waged labour which also produces a domination of time, resulting in the concrete abstractions of homogeneous space and linear time. This, paradoxically, means the mobilisation of a practice that, as the living activity of everyday life, is also always appropriative. As well as reproducing a dominated space-time, this living practice takes ownership of elements of that space-time, troubling the real abstractions it constitutes as their contradictory concrete content.

Abstract-linear time, as a totalising temporality, therefore both aligns with a domination of space and rests on a controlled and mobilised appropriative practice. Further, within the Park's actually-existing abstract space-time there exist multiple conflicting pockets of temporalised space, each reflecting the Park's fragmented practice. This gets to the heart of the Park as a 'living, breathing' space: it is intended as a space that lives and breathes the various rhythms of practice by which capital is reproduced, and the interaction of these temporalities highlights the way in which capital draws on everyday life as the substance by which it reproduces itself.

5.6 - Conclusion

The wish that the Park should become a 'living, breathing piece of the city' can be unpacked by way of Lefebvre's distinction between appropriation and domination as modes of the production of space. This slogan illuminates the way in which the Park is produced as an actually-existing abstract space through the mobilisation of living practice in multiple forms. In exploring the complex dynamics of this everyday practice, it emerges that the Park holds a set of divergently temporalised spaces, each constituted by its own social rhythms. At the same time, Lefebvre's opposition between the appropriative and

the dominating maps onto a structuring opposition between the concrete and the abstract. This correspondence indicates the way in which each of these temporalised spaces is related to the form of value and is thus internally contradictory in a manner that reflects the commodity.

Each of these temporalities, the practices in which they originate, and the spaces they define, feed into the reproduction of capital. They therefore express the Park's function in expanding and deepening a particular mode of accumulation within East London. The public leisure and residential spaces of the Park are indirectly tied into the valorisation process, as spaces of consumption and use. Due to their relative distance from the immediate process of production, circulation, and exchange, they can be thought of as the spaces of everyday life in which labour-power is reproduced. This reproduction of labour power rests in an appropriative practice that takes hold of space, renders it liveable, and transforms it towards individual and collective need. These spaces exhibit a concrete and cyclical temporality generated in the repetitive gestures of an everyday practice that follows the movements of the body, the day, and the year. However, these spaces remain externally determined by the linear time of work and the abstract form of space – their appropriative content is played out under the influence of a dominating practice, which structures the ways in which it animates the actually-existing abstract space of the Park.

Within the Westfield there exists a contrasting rhythm of practice, suited to its role as a space of exchange. This space reflects the abstract form of exchange value in its suspended temporality and liminal atmosphere. Unlike in the reproductive spaces of the Park, the dominating abstraction here is generated by the concrete practice of shoppers within the Westfield. Here there exists a different relationship between the concrete and the abstract and between the appropriative and the dominating. The appropriative practice of the Park's reproductive spaces occurs on a terrain established by the domination of space and is determined externally by a linear time it did not produce. Conversely, the Westfield also relies on the control and organisation of an appropriative

practice, but this appropriative practice gives rise to its own dominating abstraction in the form of a suspended time, predicated on a prior domination of space that is similarly reproduced in the everyday. While this space-time is cut-across by the linear time of work, it is also internally contradictory in a way in which the cyclical time of reproduction is not.

The productive spaces of the Olympic Park represent the material presence of the dominating abstraction of linear time. While this time, as a totalising reflection of the value form, would envelop the Park regardless of its concrete practice within that space, the presence of these spaces of production serve as a reminder of its ceaseless progression. As the concrete content of a real abstraction, these space-times, like those of the Westfield, are internally contradictory. Once again, in the sphere of work, like those of reproduction and of exchange, an appropriative living practice is determined by a domination of space that expresses itself simultaneously as material terrain on which that practice occurs and as the real abstractions of space and time. As the Park provides a specific configuration of this terrain, with a specific balance between each of these modes of practice, it ensures not just the reproduction of capital in general, but the expansion of a specific mode of accumulation within London's urban space. It is to the ways in which this mode of accumulation is embedded in spaces across London that I turn in the next chapter.

In this assessment of the Olympic Park as a 'living, breathing' space, it becomes clear that the opposition between appropriation and domination presented by Lefebvre should not be understood as two opposing modes of the production of space. The Olympic Park as a 'living, breathing' space is identical with the Olympic Park as an actually-existing abstract space. The appropriative and the dominating do not map onto spaces of control and resistance: Lefebvre is clear that these are instead the related but antagonistic modes of practice that produce the unified space of capitalism.

However, there is nonetheless a potential for the development of antagonism within the Park's mobilisation of the appropriative practice of everyday life – this is the delicate balance that the design and management of the Park has to strike. As the Park became inhabited, the introduction of everyday life to that space warmed it, humanised it, and introduced minor alterations. This life therefore threatens to disrupt that order but at the same time reproduces its own domination. There is a truly utopian potential subsumed here within the reproduction of capital – the creation of difference within the reproduction of the same. This space, defined by the interaction of cyclical, suspended, and linear frames of social time, contains a tension between them as the playing out of deeper tensions between appropriation and domination and between the abstract and the concrete. In the next chapter I will address the ways in which this utopian potential perversely comes to be associated with the space and its mode of accumulation itself, constituting the Park as a representational space of capital. However, in my conclusion I will return again to the potential for this contradiction to explode and prove transformative.

6 - The Olympic Park as isotopic and representational space

6.1 - Introduction

In the early days of its Legacy era the Olympic Park stands as a singular space within its immediate surroundings. Its stadia and manicured parkland are markedly different to the yards and warehouses of Hackney Wick, the terraced streets of Stratford, or the open fields of the Hackney Marshes. However, the Park bears a striking resemblance to other London spaces: the towers and plazas of Canary Wharf, the venues and hotels of the Royal Victoria Docks and Greenwich Peninsula, and the new green spaces of Burgess Park, Northala Fields, and Gunpowder Park. These spaces share an aesthetic and atmosphere that marks them out and links them together. Their architecture and landscaping signals both a post-industrial urbanism of plate glass and steel and the return of a bucolic pre-urban rurality. In the melding of the two lies a specific playfulness, an emphasis on leisure and the idea of a creative capitalism perfected. These spaces imagine a mode of life in which distinctions between play and toil, home and workplace, the urban and the rural, have lost their significance.

These qualities of space are intimately related to its role within the reproduction of a financialised and creative mode of accumulation. The image of a frictionless life-work mix that they present is the ideal image of the movements of capital, labour, and commodities that make up the profit regime into which the Park is tied. Embedding this mode of accumulation within East London's urban space, the Olympic Park engenders an everyday life mirrored and confirmed in its material aesthetic. This everyday life is directed towards forms of work that place emphasis on self-directed and 'creative' production, or on managing the fluid movement of financialised capital. It encourages forms of leisure centred on consumption of 'artisan' goods and collective enjoyment of experiential commodities. It is built on forms of rest and inhabitation that are temporary, mobile, and tied into the collection of rent by large-scale property investors. In

short these spaces are designed to facilitate the movement of capital through the autumnal phase of Arrighi's systemic cycle. In doing so they are made to express an image of this return to fluidity rendered almost utopian, as the material aesthetic of an aspirational lifestyle.

This chapter originates in an expansion of focus towards the end of my research period. During my fieldwork I would travel to the Olympic Park by Overground to Canada Water and then by the Jubilee Line to Stratford. I would share cramped trains with bleary-eyed morning commuters, with the same commuters tired on their way home, or with scattered individuals travelling during the day. On weekends, winter saw large numbers disembarking for the Westfield, while summer saw an increased number arriving with the newly open Park as their destination. These movements of passengers were the only significant variable in this journey, which otherwise remained the same, in contrast to my explorations of the evolving Olympic Park. Through repeated navigation of these spaces, I came to understand a set of fine-grained differentiations within the Park and its surroundings, noting similarity and contrast as structuring elements of this space as it was transformed by inhabitation. In my journey there and back, however, I would be enclosed within a single stable environment and oblivious to the spaces of London through which I passed.

As my fieldwork went on, I became curious about the Park's more distant surroundings. I began breaking my journey to explore places the train passed through, or finding alternate routes to the Park. My regular journey created a sense of unity to space that obscured the fractured and dissonant nature of East London's ongoing redevelopment. This movement under the city presents a skewed representation of its spaces, skipping over (or under) large areas of residential space, disused space, and space dominated by construction. Instead, it encourages the passenger to imagine their city as comprised of a number of similar spaces distinguished only by the time of passage between them, the materiality of their distance obscured. Travel in this mode reinforces a

sense of unity to those spaces, eliding those contrasting spaces that would undermine it. I became interested in locating the elements by which this unified space is distinguished from the spaces it forgets, and in thinking about the ways in which this appearance of unity is significant.

At this point in my fieldwork year, the Olympic Park had to some extent grown into its inhabitation. The south Park and all venues save the Stadium were open, and attracting visitors. The arrival of summer meant crowds spilling out of the Westfield onto its outdoor dining areas and into the Park. The East Village was lived-in, with children establishing friendship groups, forming alliances, and organising games in the squares between blocks. Rather than a lone presence in empty space I was another walker along the side of the Lea or between Stratford and the Westfield. As such, the relation of my gender presentation to these spaces felt different. Rather than experiencing seclusion as a freeing influence, I looked for ways to feel confident and secure in my feminine presentation within inhabited space. This expansion of focus therefore also meant an attentiveness towards the ways in which my gender presentation was received in contrasting spaces.

In this chapter, then, I examine the Olympic Park as one of a network of similar spaces across London that stand in contrast to those older spatial forms that make up most of the built environment. In doing so, I turn to the way in which the Park relates to the reproduction of a particular mode of accumulation. I suggest that the Park, as well as encouraging an everyday life orientated towards the practices of this mode of accumulation, becomes in its material form a mirror for the ways in which these movements of capital are imagined. As such, this chapter addresses the third moment of Lefebvre's triad, that of lived and representational space. This objectification of capital in space produces a representational space that can be understood as specific to contemporary financialised and 'creative' capitalism.

I begin with a discussion of the spatial continuities and discontinuities that characterise the Park's relationship to other elements of London's urban fabric, framing these in terms of Lefebvre's 'isotopia' and 'heterotopia'. The following three sections then discuss the key elements of the Park as isotopia: its post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-orientated qualities. In each section I will explore the ways in which the material production of the space has contributed to these qualities. I will also outline the ways in which these qualities relate to relationships of production and reproduction that the Park contains, alert to the fact that representational qualities of space are expressed precisely in the ways it is 'lived'. Finally, I will demonstrate that each of these representational qualities can be understood to express the underlying structures of accumulation that have produced this space. Here, I will draw on Frederic Jameson's work relating Giovanni Arrighi's systemic cycles to modes of cultural production. I will conclude with a discussion of the Park as a representational space of financialised capital, drawing out some of the contradictions of this status.

6.2 - The Park in its surroundings: continuities and discontinuities

Walking between three similar spaces – Canary Wharf, the Royal Victoria Docks, and the Olympic Park – reveals the fineness of the strands that connect them. The first leg of the journey runs between the glass towers of Canary Wharf and the developing leisure destination of the Victoria Docks, dominated by the ExCel Centre. This connecting strip weaves between the concrete pillars supporting the overhead Docklands Light Railway line, through new-build apartment complexes, and past the great pit of a Crossrail site. From here the spidery thread of the Emirates Air Line stretches back across the Thames to the O2 Arena in Greenwich. Both the DLR and the Air Line hold together residential and leisure spaces with the work spaces that they feed: those glass towers that dominate the western horizon. Walking the route instead of gliding above it, it becomes obvious that this strip is surrounded on either side by older terraced

housing, redbrick estates, or under-used industrial space awaiting eventual purchase and transformation.



Fig 39. The DLR viaduct crossing industrial works and abandoned tires over Bow Creek (My London Diary, 2004)

Cutting along the towpath where the river Lea meets the Thames I transition sharply from smooth concrete surfaces to a path cracked by weeds and scattered with abandoned objects. Past the line of shops that constitutes Canning Town's older centre I follow a single road alongside train lines up to Stratford. As I approach, the twisting red metal of the Orbit appears and disappears between terraced houses and Victorian school buildings. As I reach West Ham station I'm among older housing stock and scattered low-rise estates.

Walking in the heat of an early summer afternoon the Park seems to recede as I near it. By the time I approach Stratford I have removed my hoodie and cardigan, down to the dress I am wearing. A car honks at me and the passenger smirks as they pass. My feet ache and I've slowed to an amble, swinging pendulum legs. I eventually find myself on the Greenway, having taken an overgrown gate up a side street. I sit and admire the Abbey Mills Pumping Station, remembering that the Greenway itself, now incorporated into the post-

industrial leisure space of the Olympic Park, is still also a cover for Bazalgette's Northern Outfall Sewer, the Victorian engineering that still underlays and shapes East London.



Fig 40. One of several benches in Hackney Marshes used as a source of free wood

Between these spaces there are obvious contrasts. Terraces and estates stand opposite tall apartment blocks with curved facades in bright colours. Warehouses and mismatched small businesses face office blocks and sites repurposed for the creative industries. Established formal parks oppose meadow-planted green spaces amongst large events-venues and hotels. This divide is felt by those who live in and around the Park. Ivy, a long-term Homerton resident now living in the Matchmaker's Wharf apartment block across Hackney Cut from the Park, suggested that the open space of Hackney Marshes feels freer than the carefully maintained Park. Describing erecting tents for a children's birthday party there, she suggests that they feel more 'feminine' than the ordered masculinity of the Olympic Park. Peter and Mark, both residents of the East Village, feel the same but from the opposite direction. Peter describes the Park as a 'bubble', and Mark suggests that it is 'not really a part of East London', and 'not a part of Stratford' either. Jacob, who lived at the Clays Lane

estate prior to the compulsory purchase order, feels this viscerally, describing the stadium as a 'spaceship' that has descended upon East London.

This dissonance between an older and a newer form of space is not a stable one. Everywhere there are signs of approaching transformation, more distant in some places, nearer in others. The Olympic Park stands as a network-hub, connected to and recalling similar spaces across London, often feeling closer to these than it does to its immediate surroundings. The unevenness of economic transformation towards a 'cognitive', 'communicative', or financialised capitalism is visible in the way in which the Park sits uneasily alongside its immediate surroundings. The older Stratford shopping centre is hidden from the Westfield by a cluster of metallic shapes, *The Shoal*, by Studio Egret West. Daniel, who works at the Viewtube cafe on the Greenway, is scathing: 'they say it's a shoal, but we know it's a screen. "It's fish!" No, it's a screen'. The Park is positioned as a centre around which local transformation can take place. This is already occurring, for example in the red fences that mark off old industrial space near the Three Mills Lock (on the other side of Stratford High Street from the Park), where the Ikea-funded 'Strand East' development is planned.



Fig 41. *The Shoal* by Studio Egret West, outside the Stratford Centre (Dezeen, 2012)

In a corner of Victory Gardens, between the northern Park and the East Village, stands one of many art pieces commissioned to add interest to the landscape. Designed by Jeppe Hein, mirrored slabs stand in several concentric rings

forming a small maze. The first time I came across this work I was taken aback, unsure of what I was seeing when confronted with an apparent optical illusion hanging in mid-air. It wasn't until I glimpsed my reflected movement that the shape and distance of the mirrors resolved themselves before me. These structures reflect the trees and grass around them, seeming to both melt into their background and project it forward. They introduce sharp lines and artificial surfaces into their organic surroundings while dissolving into the green themselves. As the publicity puts it, 'the many reflections that play out across the multifaceted surfaces produce a fragmented view of the space that can feel both disorientating and playful' (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; 45).



Fig 42. Jeppe Hein's *Mirror labyrinth* (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park)

Hein's *Mirror Labyrinth* appears as a perfect monad for the aesthetic form of the Olympic Park and its related spaces. The way in which the worked forms of the mirrors and their leafy surroundings appear duplicated, fragmented, and unified, evokes and summarises the blending of the built and the organic that characterises the whole of the Park. The 'playful' character of the piece

summons some vestige of the festival moment that birthed the space and still defines its sense of self. Its resemblance to a cluster of glass-clad towers provides an image of the future of the Park as it awaits the construction of International Quarter and other business centres, and recalls the reflective surfaces of the Shard, Canary Wharf, and the City. This final image links this corner of the Park not only to those physical spaces that it resembles in miniature, but also to the flows of capital that create and define them. It brings to the fore the fact that the Park's blend of the urban and the organic is a particularly post-industrial mix – one in which the smooth movement of capital and labour through sanitised space is imagined to have supplanted the dirty industrial production of yesteryear.

Lefebvre's concepts of isotopia, heterotopia, and utopia are useful for exploring the qualities of continuity and contrast that define the interrelation of these spaces. Lefebvre proposes this tripartite 'conceptual grid' in order to 'decipher complex spaces' that consist of 'isotopias, or analogous spaces; heterotopias, or mutually repellent spaces; and utopias, or spaces occupied by the symbolic and the imaginary' (Lefebvre, 1974; 366). Stuart Elden writes that this division of spatial interrelation by same-ness, difference, and potential transformation is a quality specific to urban space, as that space which develops out of an older industrial organisation of space. While the rural organisation of space-time focused on a cyclical time and local particularities of space, and industrial space-time developed according to 'a tendency towards homogeneity, towards rational unity and planning', urban space-time 'appears as differential' (Elden, 2004; 146).

Urban space is riven by overlaid relationships of similarity and difference that together produce utopic spaces as 'an illuminating virtuality already present [that] will absorb and metamorphose the various topoi' (Lefebvre, 1970; 131). The urban form is 'defined only in and through this consolidating unity of difference', in which those 'differences [form] a whole' (ibid). The Park and related spaces are isotopic, then, in that they share structuring influences and

mutually reinforcing aesthetics. They stand opposed to heterotopic spaces of an older mode of social and economic organisation, spaces 'simultaneously excluded and interwoven' with them (ibid; 128).

This constellation of isotopic spaces can be felt in the way in which the towers of Canary Wharf and the Shard appear on the Olympic Park skyline, making London appear as a set of vectors between these glass, steel, and concrete forms. However, walking up onto the Greenway transforms the view – distance opens up between these spaces and the intersecting heterotopia becomes visible in terraced houses, industrial works, and storage warehouses. At the same time so does the site on which the Pudding Mill Lane Crossrail tunnel is being constructed, a reminder that the relationship between isotopic and heterotopic spaces 'can only be understood dynamically' (ibid; 129).



Fig 43. Looking across disused land and older structures towards the towers of the City, from the Greenway

While the utopic in urban space tends to appear in the interstices opened up by the conflictual juxtaposition of isotopia and heterotopia, Lefebvre also writes that some spaces take on a stabilised element of the utopic in themselves: 'the u-

topic would appear as if it were incorporated in certain necessary spaces such as gardens and parks' (ibid). The Olympic Park can be understood as one such space, its utopic qualities existing as a defining tension of its isotopia. This utopic quality is intimately related to the way in which the aesthetic form of the Park can be expressed in the idea of representational space. Here, once again, the third terms of two of Lefebvre's triads map onto each other.

The representational formant of space 'overlays physical space, making use of its objects', and 'tends towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs' (ibid; 39). It originates in the ways in which a space is lived and appropriated and also in its physical signification, including the remains of previous systems of signification. This means that representational space is often associated with 'the clandestine or underground side of social life' (ibid; 33). However, as has been argued in previous chapters, a central dynamic within the production of the Olympic Park has been the incorporation of living appropriative practice into the reproduction of capitalist accumulation, via the creation of a particular form of space. This dynamic finds its ultimate expression in the way in which the utopian potential of the everyday becomes the animating quality of the Park as a space of financialised and creative accumulation. The Park and its isotopic spaces can be understood as living and representational spaces of capital. Here, those aesthetic qualities that spring from their position within the reproduction of capital summon a paradoxically utopian image of capital itself.

The defining characteristics of this utopic isotopia are those indicated in Hein's *Mirror Labyrinth*. The Park is a fundamentally post-industrial space in its material genesis and productive role; it is defined by a blending of the urban and the organic and thus presents an anti-urban urbanism; and is associated with leisure and a blurring of the divide between work and life. It is characterised by an overarching emphasis on mobility: the mobility of capital in the financialising phase of its systemic cycle, a movement between the productive urban centre and a reproductive non-urban home, and a movement between

the social spheres of work and leisure. Each of these qualities are manifested not only in its physical form but also in the living movement of its inhabitants.

Following Lefebvre's suggestion that the interrelationship of the isotopic, the heterotopic, and the utopic is a phenomenon specific to urban space, this development of a utopic isotopia can only occur in the production of post-industrial spaces such as the Park. The Park's post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-orientated qualities are inter-linked. In this narrative, the dirt and weight of industry is replaced by smooth, clean surfaces of concrete, glass, and steel. This post-industrial character feeds into its anti-urban sensibility, as the space presents itself not only overturning industrial production but returning to an eternal bucolic rurality. The Park is imagined as a space differentiated from the dirt and mess of the city. The two are further united in a leisure-orientated aesthetic of creative play. Thanks to its foundational moment in the Olympic festival, the Park will always bear an association with the the spectacular. However, the image of the Park as post-industrial space also implies that it has transcended the strain and stress of industrial labour in favour of the 'immaterial' labour of the creative and financial industries. Likewise, the rurality of the Park's anti-urban character is not the rurality of agricultural labour, but an imagined rurality of rest and relaxation, a space of retreat away from the city of work.

Of course, none of these representational qualities can be said to refer directly to material truths of the Park's living activity. However, neither are they simply ideological mystifications of that activity. They are the ways in which the lived Park is animated as representational space of capital. That is, they are expressive of the Park's relationship to the financialised and creative flows of capital, labour, and commodities that it embeds in London's urban space. In holding and facilitating these flows the Park contains an everyday life that is itself representational of particular ideals, and comes to express those ideals in its material aesthetic. In the next sections, I will discuss each of these qualities in turn, exploring their relationship to the mode of accumulation from which they

spring, and the social life in which their representational manifestation is grounded.

6.3 - *The Park as a post-industrial space*

Jacob, a former resident of Clays Lane, understands the Park as an 'explicitly anti-industrial project', reminding me that the Lea Valley's industrial past was in no way distant. There were multiple workshops and scrapyards operating within the space at the time of the compulsory purchase. However, the narrative that the Park and its isotopic spaces forward is one in which a dirty and distant past is replaced by clean and flexible accumulation through the financial and creative industries. Andrew O'Hagan expressed this in the *London Review of Books*, characterising the Lea Valley as 'a site of old warehouses and weedy dereliction' (O'Hagan, 2012; 39). He groups together everything from 'stones from the Roman road that led from London to Colchester' and 'bones from people who died in the Great Plague' to 'printworks, iron foundries, fertiliser factories and distilleries' (ibid). The only significant historical break comes with the arrival of the Olympics, that which marked the transition from past to present: 'when I went back to Stratford the other day that smell had gone, to be replaced by the ambition of London 2012' (ibid).

The origin of this post-industrial character can be traced on two key levels. On the most immediately tactile level the re-use of industrial land shapes its redevelopment. Soil must be cleaned, waste material must be re-used, and the waterways and railways of industrial infrastructure must be factored into its shape. On a second level, the form a space takes is shaped by the relationships of production and reproduction that it contains – that is, by the everyday practices that animate it. The space of the Park expresses a lived quality determined by its orientation towards the financialised reproduction of capital. On both levels the Park comes to display signifiers specific to the socio-economic conditions under which it was created. Following Stanek's discussion of Manchester in Engel's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, these

qualities of the Park can be understood to reflect 'the deep structure of society' (Stanek, 2011; 150). It becomes a representational space both in the manner in which it is lived and in the way in which it is ornamented, reflecting the ideals of its mode of accumulation. As this signification presents a perfected image (nonetheless anchored in a lived everyday) it carries some element of the utopic, perversely associated with the process of accumulation that it strains against.



Fig 44. The Velodrome rising behind Tumbling Bay playpark in the Olympic Park (Landscape Institute, 2013)



Fig 45. The mounds of Northala Fields with spiral pathways (Londonist, 2011)



Fig 46. The playpark in Burgess Park (LDA Design, 2013)

Interviewing Aaron, a landscape architect who worked on the Olympic Park in its mega-event and legacy-era forms, he explained that the design of this space proceeded from an awareness of its industrial past. He suggested that the Park shared an 'aesthetic unity' with other projects that the same firm had worked on across London, based on a shared historical function of space:

they're all post-industrial spaces, so decontamination has to be a consideration – it drives things in the way you make up ground. There is an awareness of scarcity of resource, so using materials that are less scarce. For example using subsoils rather than topsoils. And in the use of recycled materials – such as recycled concrete. In the Olympic Park you can't move for recycled concrete

Beyond these pragmatic constraints he suggests that

there is a particular way that we use topography, because all of these places have a strong geometric topography, and a spatial arrangement – an aesthetic – that tends to be more angular than the sublime of Brown or whatever. That, I think, is more a reflection of contemporary design, and a response to the city, which is kind of harder, more awkward, less flowing

The post-industrial character of the Park emerges in design responses to the character of the land on which it is constructed and to its urban surroundings. Those post-industrial parks that Aaron cited as aesthetically unified share particular elements: bold geometric shapes next to curving lines, small hills or mounds used to create movement between levels of elevation. Aaron, on the Olympic Park:

it was always our desire to bring the park up and back down again. This fulfilled a number of functions for the new park, but also broke into those two levels, so it was always about moving around so as you moved from one level to the next, you'd lose sight of something, and then gain it again. So the landscape would give you a framed view and then another framed view

The Park resonates not only with other similar parks, but also with other areas of disused industrial land put to use as leisure destinations, luxury apartments, and centres of financial capital. This sense of movement through a landscape in which sight is interrupted by surrounding structures mirrors the experience of movement through those spaces. While older city spaces are characterised by uniform residential streets or enclosing facades that guide the eye in a single direction, the long-ubiquitous towers and plazas that originated with the International Style afford a greater freedom of movement and confound the gaze with irregular intervals and obstacles.

Just as the spatial form of the Park and similar sites arises from the interplay of a previous function and contemporary surroundings, so too does the way in which they are ornamented. This is the fate of the waterways that run through the Olympic Park, Canary Wharf, and the Victoria Docks. No longer primarily of use for transport, they now form an attractive 'feature' for the built landscape to play off. Their new function is as decoration for the space in its capacity as a network-hub in the financialised reproduction of capital. Other disused industrial constructs similarly adorn these spaces. Outside the ExCel Centre in the Victoria Docks and along a canal in the centre of Canary Wharf stand rows of cranes. Shorn of their use they are odd memorials, more curiosity than monument. Rather than summoning memory in order to preserve, they project

an image of the past in order to distance it from the present. In contrast to these heavy iron structures, the glass curtain walls that tower above them in Canary Wharf seem to hang weightless.



Fig 47. Ornamental cranes in Canary Wharf (Routledge, 2009)



Fig 48. Ornamental cranes in Victoria Docks (My London Pics, 2012)



Fig 49. Ornamental steam train outside the new Stratford Station (wrecksandrelics, 2013)

The naming of post-industrial spaces also expresses a desire to simultaneously recall and diminish their past. The apartment block across the Hackney Cut from the Park bears the name 'Matchmakers Wharf', summoning an image of the industrial site on which it stood – despite the fact that Bryant and May's match factory stood down the canal in Bow, 'Matchmakers Wharf' being situated on the site of a Matchbox Cars toy factory. As evidence for the dirt and brutality that this space has moved away from, the matchgirls' strike of 1888 is commemorated within the Park in Lemn Sissay's poem *The Spark Catchers*, carved into the wooden housing of an electricity transformer. Just as the process of transforming the land itself involves cleaning soil and re-using waste materials, so naming and decorating that space frames it as newly-clean, in contrast with its potentially ugly past.

The industrial residue of this space represents a particular relationship to the past. It provides a reminder of an (apparently) distant past, in contrast with the present form and use of the space, producing a narrative of progressive development at the forefront of which are the businesses and individuals that own, rent, and use that space¹⁰. This ornamentation appeals to a particular

¹⁰ This dynamic operates not only within large-scale corporate redevelopment, but also at the level of small-scale transformations of space – it is no accident that a significant portion of the hipster aesthetic is reclaimed and re-used materials that speak to an older mode of sociality.

demographic of resident, worker, and visitor and thus acts to encourage a particular mode of life within this isotopic space. Some insight into this mode of life and its relationship to the reproduction of financialised and creative accumulation can be gained in reading Get Living London's policy documents related to their management of the East Village.

This residential development was built for sale and management by private interests, and as such is designed to realise ongoing profit in the form of rent. *Making sense of large-scale rental investment*, Get Living London's first policy document, notes that 'over housing market cycles, rents fluctuate far less than house prices meaning that rental income yields have particularly low volatility', while 'depreciation is typically less in residential than in commercial' property (Ball, 2013; 4-5). Together with the fact that large-scale rental developments (which are still fairly rare) 'benefit from large number effects', this type of investment is evidently appealing to companies seeking to make money on London's property market. It is therefore unsurprising that the first Legacy-era development completed in the Park is the Stratford One block, built and owned by Unite student housing in order to collect rent from the 1001 students who are now its residents.

The creation of these residential spaces for rent is one instance of the way in which this space is made productive in its post-industrial reconstruction. Beyond this, the everyday life of the residents of these spaces also contributes towards the productive role of the Olympic Park's isotopia. Get Living London's second policy document describes their target demographic, as 'relatively young, highly skilled, mobile people' (Ball, 2014; 4). It is the everyday life of this demographic that animates the space and begins to furnish it with its representational qualities. The dynamic in which a present cleanliness and mobility is opposed to a historical dirt and weight originates in the qualities ascribed to the everyday practice of these residents in their productive and reproductive activity.



Fig 50. The Matchmaker's Wharf apartment complex

The aesthetic qualities of this space reflect and solidify these senses of movement, connectivity, and creativity by which the everyday life of the ideal imagined tenant and worker is characterised. As such, there is a representational unity between the physical form of the space, its ornamentation, and the movement of its inhabitants. This unity between the representational and lived formants of the space, alongside its role within the reproduction of capital, renders it a representational space of capital; a utopic imagining of capitalist accumulation perfected. Jameson points out that 'of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic, with which, in the form of commissions and land values, it has a virtually unmediated relationship' (Jameson, 1991; 5). Here, it is possible to see the way in which the aesthetic and representational qualities of a space are defined not only in its immediate relationship to valorisation, but also in the ways that it mediates in the wider reproduction of capital.

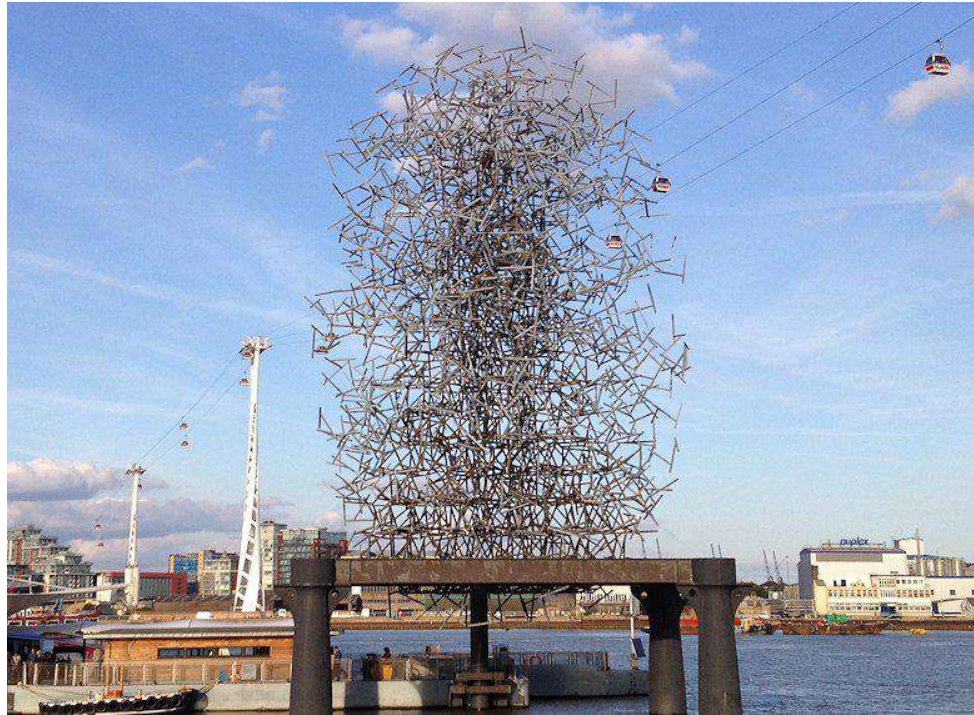


Fig 51. Anthony Gormley's *Quantum Cloud*, seen with the Emirates Air Line cable-car in the background (Lusas Civil and Structural, 2013)

These qualities are particularly captured in the prevalence of ornamentations that, beyond presenting distance from an industrial past by re-purposing industrial structures, actively transforms those materials and structures. Here, the most common theme is the becoming-plastic, flexible, or weightless of those materials. Just off the Greenwich Peninsula next to the O2 Arena, stands Anthony Gormley's *Quantum cloud* – a chaotic cloud of steel bars seemingly frozen in mid-explosion, with the blurred outline of a human figure at its centre. Gormley's statements on this piece relate it to an idea of 'the body as a field' with 'branching connections, positioning the original bodyfield within a wider field' (Gormley). However, the most striking aspect of this work in the context of its post-industrial space is the juxtaposition of that which it represents – movement, connection, inter-relationship, and agency – with the steel that it is constructed from. Next to the heavy, static iron cranes, this metal is made to move, to call forth not the weight of the (industrial) past, but the weightlessness and fluidity of the (post-industrial) present.



Fig 52. Malcolm Robertson's *Railway Tree* on Stratford High Street (Newham Council)

On Stratford High Street, Malcolm Robertson's *Railway Tree* presents a similar and even more direct image: train tracks, displaced from the rigid parallel deployment of their intended use, are rendered flexible and stood on end in a cluster. Newham Council website explains that this is intended to 'symbolise Stratford as a focal point of arrival and departure' (Newham Council). From the perspective of Stratford's post-industrial present this reads more as a claim to its position with regards to the mobile capital and labour of the creative and financial industries than it does a serious consideration of Stratford's past (which of course saw Stratford hosting a significant railway yard, but a less significant terminal or 'point of arrival and departure'). In the Park itself, this aesthetic theme is continued in Anish Kapoor's *ArcelorMittal Orbit*. Again, metal is made to appear flexible and mobile, caught in motion.

In their depiction of that which was formerly solid rendered supple and mobile these ornamentations complete the narrative of their space. In place of the industrial past stands a present characterised by a flexibility and movement of both capital and labour that is lived in the everyday and reflected in the built environment and its adornments. The remaining residue of this industrial past is shorn of its original relationship to space: waterways become quiet reflectors of

neighbouring glass panels, cranes and chimney-stacks become curious oddities. Contemporary public art is commissioned that expresses the new sense of movement and weightlessness. These ornamentations appear to express not only a utopian narrative of the dirty, dark past and a cleaner, brighter present, but also reflect an image of the workings of financialised capital perfected.

In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Jameson associates 'postmodern' spaces with an 'aesthetic populism', noting 'the effacement in them of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture' (Jameson, 1991; 3). He suggests that high-modernist architecture, as an architecture orientated towards a utopian future, had expressed a violent disjuncture between itself and its surroundings as that which would 'eventually transform its surroundings by the very power of its new spatial language (ibid; 41). By contrast postmodern architecture 'repels the city outside' in reflecting it back on itself in the sheen of its glass facade, but is at the same time 'content to "let the fallen city fabric continue to be in its being"' (ibid; 41-2).

Recalling Kathi Weeks' 'idealisms of the status quo', in the case of the Olympic Park and its isotopic spaces we are presented with a utopianism of the existing, rather than of any projected future (Weeks, 2011; 196). The Park thus sits within a set of spaces that reflect and reinforce each other, repelling their heterotopic other. This spatial form exhibits the fragmentation and juxtaposition characteristic of postmodern culture, wherein the temporal is rendered on a fragmented spatial plane. Jameson's descriptions of the 'conveying [of] "pastness" by the glossy qualities of the image' in nostalgia films could easily apply to the collapsing of a multitude of past times into the post-industrial signifiers that are scattered across the Olympic Park and its isotopic spaces (ibid; 19).

Jameson suggests that this transition from modernism to postmodernism (like the previous transition from realism to modernism) can be accounted for in an examination of the conditions of accumulation. At root, the 'dynamics of abstraction in postmodern cultural production' are related ultimately to 'the money form – the fundamental source of all abstraction' (Jameson, 1997; 162). As such, he suggests a periodisation of cultural production, in which the historical sequence of realism, modernism, and postmodernism, is linked to Arrighi's systemic cycle of accumulation. Realism, originating in the moment of the Enlightenment, represents a 'more realistic interest in the body of the world and in the new and more lively human relationships developed by trade' (Jameson, 1998; 146). This is a response to the ascendancy of exchange value and the abstraction of quantity coming to determine sensible quality, 'a leap and an overturn from quantity to quality' (ibid; 148). In contrast, modernism develops alongside the totalisation of exchange value, as 'the force which generated the first realism now turns against it and devours it in its turn' (ibid).

Postmodernism is a cultural development following this same trajectory, growing out of the becoming-independent of individual cultural fragments that mirrors the development of the division of labour. In the post-Fordist moment, the whole of cultural production is founded on older modernist forms that no longer shock, so 'the anxieties of the absurd [...] are themselves recaptured and re-contained by a new and postmodern cultural logic, which offers them for consumption' (ibid; 150). This is a dialectical transformation of affect by the money form – where once it inspired 'new interest in the properties of objects' in realism, and then privileged the shock of the new and the transformative novum, it now pushes towards a 'withdrawal from older notions of stable substances' in total (ibid; 151).

For Jameson, following Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 'abstract flows of money determine a whole new and more abstract way of thinking and perceiving, radically different from the object world of the older merchant cities and countryside' (ibid). Thus, with the ascendancy of finance capital, defined as

'a play of monetary entities which needs neither production (as capital does) nor consumption (as money does): which supremely, like cyberspace, can live on its own internal metabolism and circulate without any reference to an older type of content', there develops a form of everyday life and cultural production that reflects and expresses this movement of the capital abstraction (ibid; 161).

This post-industrial isotopia is characterised by a unity of physical form, animating lived activity, and representational content, originating in their shared relationship to the evolution of financialised accumulation. This space contains a multitude of references to the becoming-independent and becoming-mobile of capital. It is shaped by an image of the movement of capital – a movement, Vercellone reminds us, that is never as divorced from material practice as it strains to be. The representational content of this space therefore gestures towards the 'ideal short circuit', imagining capital as self-valorising without need for recourse to the 'interruption' of labour and exchange (Vercellone, 2007; 21) It does so precisely by imagining that those real individuals involved in its reproduction are fully subsumed within it – flexible, mobile, and 'creative' in their leisure just as they are in work. As such, this space makes the productive and reproductive activity of its inhabitants the core of its representational content, with the result that the utopian potential of the everyday appears, inverted, as a utopian image of capital.

6.4 - *The Park as anti-urban space*

The historical narrative of cleanliness and dirt expressed in the Park's post-industrial character is also central to its anti-urban quality. Again this representational content originates in the interaction between the material history of the space, and the everyday relations of production and reproduction that it contains. Again both of these relate to the 'deep structure' of its originating conditions, as they are reflected and refracted through its material form and everyday life. On the first level this quality is related to a shift in the position of nature in relation to accumulation within London, and the way in

which the reclaiming of post-industrial space has meant the reintroduction of the natural to the city. On the second level it derives from the way in which the relationship between home and work has been blurred in living this space. Together these amount to the development of a lived and material aesthetic in which the natural and the technological, the built and the organic, blur into each other. The Park and its isotopic spaces, in their existence as anti-urban spaces, imagine themselves as elements of emergent 'natural cities'. In this character they are orientated towards the natural and towards the rural, distinguishing them from the urban heterotopia that surrounds them.

Aaron's description of the landscaping of the Park began with discussion of the work that went into decontaminating the soil and recycling waste materials. There is a strong sense in his and other descriptions of this work that Olympic redevelopment restored an original, natural, purity to the site. This purity had been undermined or polluted by the intermitting industrial period, wherein the 'industrial', as in O'Hagan's piece, takes on its broadest possible definition – a vaguely 'historical' material production. The basic form of Park space and the aesthetic that flows from it therefore resembles an overcoming of industrial history and a return to pre-industrial pre-history. Aaron's comparison with the nearby Victoria Park emphasises the 'natural' character of the Olympic Park, commenting that 'the Olympic Park provides a lot more interaction with nature – Victoria Park doesn't really have that'. While the 'contemporary' quality of the Olympic Park grants it this more natural character, it is the 'historic' origin of Victoria Park that renders it more urban, its natural character either artificial or constrained.



Fig 53. One of AOC's re-purposed phone boxes in the north Park (BDonline, 2012)

In the Wetlands at the north of the Park there stand a couple of eviscerated red telephone boxes. These strangely re-purposed images of a particular historical Britishness have been made to appear as features of the natural landscape. Besides being fragmented signifiers of London's past planted amongst the reeds of the Wetlands, these telephone boxes have images and words cut into or welded onto their frames. One bears an image of a tree, its metal frame dissolving into branches. Another contains lettering, almost hidden around the edges of the glassless window frames, describing in romantic terms the ways in which the wetlands are returning this space back to its pre-industrial state as marshland around the Lea. This is, of course, contrasted to the dirty and wasteful legacy of industrialism: 'from this spot could once be seen the legendary Fridge Mountain of Hackney Wick. This local landmark – a precarious

pile of steel, white plastic and insulating foam — was one of Europe's largest dumps of discarded refrigerators' (Londonist, 2012).

This same desire to return the polluted city to a seamless relationship with the natural is visible in the marketing materials of the landscape architecture firm Arup, who helped to design the Olympic Park. They speak of constructing 'natural cities' that will 'reconnect people with nature to enrich lives and well-being' (Arup, 2013b; 10). The park has long been understood as a civilising factor within the city, a means by which managed rurality might be imported into the urban as a mitigating influence against its dirt and disorder. Hence the 'formal' character of Victoria park cited by Aaron. Kasia Boddy references Frederick Law Olmstead, the architect of New York's Central Park, as stating that his aim in designing that space was to 'completely shut the city out' (Boddy, 2010; 219). She describes the park as functioning as a 'ruralised retreat' and 'civilising influence' on the city (ibid). Here, however, this relationship is changed. Rather than existing as an isolated pocket of rurality, spaces such as the Olympic Park fully integrate a sense of the natural into the urban.

Arup's description of their aspirations in this direction as the construction of 'natural cities' makes clear the fact that this is an element of the Park's isotopic character with other spaces in London. Where previously the civilising influence of the park was intended as a retreat, spaces such as the Olympic Park intend an anti-urban integration of the rural with the city. Rather than existing as an exception, this anti-urban urbanism appears generalisable across a certain kind of urban space, and potentially across the urban as a whole. This is recognisable in Arup's plan for Earls Court Roundabout, and in LDA Design's redevelopment of Battersea Power Station, both set amongst gardens and parklands. This potential for the integration of an idea of the natural into the urban originates in the retreat of industry as a force predicated on the domination and exploitation of the natural as resource for accumulation. As the Park's self-representation makes clear, in this imaginary the shift towards post-industrial accumulation creates the conditions for a historic return of the natural

and a 'healing' of the polluted city. However, this mode of spatial design and planning also has a specific relationship to the practice of everyday urban life – the street disappears in favour of the park, transforming the imagined sociality of space from an urban to an anti-urban mode.



Fig 54. Arup's artist's impression of a redeveloped Earl's Court roundabout (Arup, 2013b; 12)



Fig 55. LDA Design's artist's impression of the redeveloped Battersea Power Station site (LDA Design, 2015).



Fig 56. Arup's artist's impression of the Park as it enters its Legacy era (Arup, 2013b; 10)

This takes us to the second level on which the Park's anti-urban character is expressed. As the marketing of the East Village makes clear, the imagined return of nature to the city has implications not only for the spatial form of this isotopia, but also for the everyday practice of space that it facilitates and expresses. Get Living London describe their target market as increasingly mobile 'young professional' workers (Ball, 2014; 4). They argue that London's labour market has a structural need for spaces such as this, as 'outer suburban commuting faces both housing supply and infrastructure constraints', and therefore will not be able to continue growing to meet demand for housing (ibid; 24). They suggest that because 'the internationalised affluent professional London workforce is highly mobile', often with 'no sentimental or family attachments to London', this poses an active threat to London's economic sustainability (ibid; 23). The proposed answer to this threat, as evidenced by the Olympic Park, is to fold the rurality of the commuter belt into the city itself, as an anti-urban home-space within the urban environment – a place of retreat that nonetheless remains connected to the amenities of the city.

This image of an anti-urban home within the city lends a bucolic edge to the twee, hipsterish, and semi-bohemian aesthetic of the East Village's marketing materials. The name's associations with Manhattan's historical counter-cultural heartland is surely intentional, given that this angle (in watered-down and slightly inane form) is so prevalent in its advertising. In the centre of the marketing suite stands a wooden model of the East Village inscribed with declarations like 'East London is buzzing with boutiques, art spaces, parks, and music venues' and instructions like 'stroll along the canals to Hackney Wick'. Around it, the walls are decorated with displays that feature a bike (complete with wicker basket and rolled-up newspaper), a garden table with open book and potted plants, a picnic hamper, and tree branches with wooden birdhouses and paper birds. Television screens cycle through images of show apartments, in which Jordan's Muesli and wooden building blocks feature heavily. Outside, the billboards advertising the East Village are composed of wide-angled photos of the green space of Victory Gardens, overlaid with 'hand-drawn' annotations: 'farmer's market today', 'fresh fruit', and so on.



Fig 57. A detail from the wooden model of the East Village in the marketing suite



Fig 58. Bike with wicker shopping basket from the East Village marketing suite

The Olympic Park, as a space that opens up the possibility of a mode of life that goes beyond the urban, is central to this presentation of the East Village. The Park here is akin to a village green, a space of leisure and social life that avoids the mess (and potential danger) associated with the street. Instead of a mixed urban sociality, the Park presents a rustic space in which the individual, the family, or the small friendship group exists within an open space of leisure, untroubled by the complexities of the city. While the marketing of the East Village presents this unproblematically, it feels odd, especially when juxtaposed with the Park's own claims that 'E20 will become a living breathing piece of the city' or when contrasted with the surrounding urban hubs of Stratford and Hackney. This is an image of the city with an absent centre. In this anti-urban urbanism, the built environment is characterised by structures that face only inwards, limiting and privatising their social aspect, as does the Westfield mega-mall and the East Village apartment blocks, constructed around closed courtyards. At the same time, the external social space of the street is replaced by the leisure space of the Park: social in aspect, but also limited in terms of the confrontation it forces with the multitude of the city.

Rachel Bowlby writes of a 'divided or at least a twofold self' inherent in the act of commuting, marked by the distance between home and work (Bowlby, 2010; 44). She suggests that a clear distinction between the 'domestic' and 'professional' spheres of life are fully cemented in the shuffling backwards and forwards of the office worker in the late 19th century. However, in the Park and its imaginary of work carried out amongst the green spaces and happy crowds of the ex-Olympic site, this distinction appears to be undermined to some extent. With the folding of the commuter-belt back into the city, the Park suggests a potential seeping-together of work and home. Bowlby suggests that the 'authenticity' of the home self is undermined by its doubling with an 'artificial' work-self. Perhaps here it would become impossible to imagine either self as fully authentic, as work loses its distinction from life.

The significance of a local movement between home and work supplanting a more distant commute between the two is recognisable in landscape architect Andrew Harland's description of the way in which the the Olympic Park was intended to 'wrap across the historical divide of industrial lands' (Harland, 2012a). In stitching together that gap, the Park was intended to introduce new 'blue veins' of footpaths and 'red arteries' of roads to East London, allowing a new ease of local movement between home, work, shops, and spaces of leisure (ibid). Equally, the Park is already host to work spaces in the Here East complex, with the International Quarter office blocks currently under construction. In this move the anti-urban Park sees a unification of home and work within a single space. Instead of a structuring separation of residential and productive areas connected by streets, this anti-urban urbanism is orientated around green parkland that holds them both. In the streets around the Park people move from the residential areas in which they live to the miniature scattered centres in which they work around London. By contrast, in the isotopic space of the Olympic Park itself, movement between home and work appears less distinct, within the grassy natural-ness of the the Park or by underground conveyance, skipping over the intervening city.

Like the material form of the Park as an anti-urban space, this mode of everyday life relates to the way in which the retreat of industrial production has opened up reclaimable spaces, to which an idea of the natural can be 'restored'. As the city has become associated with an industrial mode of accumulation predicated on the exploitation of natural resources, the post-industrial life of the city must be set against that image. The redevelopment of these spaces imagines itself 're-introducing' a form of space orientated around open green areas, rivers, and waterways in place of the street, making explicit the way in which the natural has ceased to be central to these spaces' accumulative role. Where previously the Lea Valley was a site in which a variety of industrial processes transformed, transmuted, and transported natural resources into material goods and profits, it is now a space in which a post-industrial process of accumulation occurs side by side with a replenished 'nature'. Here we find the relationship between each of these levels on which the anti-urban character of this isotopia is expressed, as representation of the 'deep structure' of its originating conditions.

This anti-urban trajectory of development relates to Jameson's suggestion that 'this latest mutation in space – postmodern hyperspace – has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world' (Jameson, 1991; 44). The isotopic network-space of which the Park forms a hub, in introducing an anti-urban urbanism, erases the distinction between recognisable urban and non-urban places, extending the non-urban into the urban and implying or imagining its reverse. A distinction between home and work within the city is similarly undermined as a bleeding-together of work and life is compelled by the convergence of work and home space. Jameson argues that this erasure of sensible location 'stands as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great multinational and decentred communication network in which we find ourselves caught as individual

subjects' (ibid). The result, ultimately, is that 'their essential content – the city itself – has deteriorated or disintegrated to a degree surely still inconceivable in the early years of the twentieth century' (ibid; 33).

Following Ernst Mandel, Jameson identifies three 'generations of machine power' that have developed since the rise of capitalism and industrialisation (ibid; 35). These are steam power, becoming ascendant after 1848, supplanted by combustion motors in the early 20th century, which were themselves displaced by electronic apparatuses in the middle of the 20th century. These correspond to 'three fundamental moments in capitalism, each one marking a dialectical expansion over the previous stage' – early market capitalism, followed by 'the monopoly stage or the stage of imperialism', followed by our own period, 'wrongly called post-industrial, but what might better be termed multinational, capital' (ibid). Again this periodisation relates to the movement from realism to modernism and postmodernism as cultural forms, with the current postmodern moment in cultural production reflecting the position of technology within the production and reproduction of capital.

Where the industrial moment in Western capitalism was characterised by 'the excitement of machinery' (Jameson cites 'Marinetti's celebration of the gun and the motorcar'), technology in this postmodern cultural moment 'no longer possesses this same capacity for representation' (ibid; 36). Instead, the defining technology of our age, the computer, has an 'outer shell [with] no emblematic or visual power' (ibid; 37). However, at the same time, this technology suggests 'faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network that are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism' (ibid). In this way, technology under the present conditions of accumulation comes to stand where nature used to, as a sublime other to society, an 'adequate shorthand to designate that enormous properly human and anti-natural power of dead human labour stored up in our machinery' (ibid; 35).

This same movement by which the smooth surface of electronic technology becomes representative of the sublime creates conditions under which the natural can be reintegrated into urban life. The anti-urban character of the Park and its isotopic spaces is a direct result of this movement. The disappearance of the machine behind the smooth screen of the computer, the dispersal and generalisation of technology throughout work and non-work results in the development of a technological sublime, as other to society that is at the same time a representation of the totality of capital. As this happens, the natural is folded back into the social, and the urban and the non-urban lose their distinctness. The natural city that the architects of Arup imagined when they were creating the plans for the Olympic Park and its isotopic spaces is the representational space of this development. Further, as this movement is predicated not on an ideal development of ideas, but on the real transformation of everyday practice, it is the lived space of this mode of accumulation. Just as the smooth surfaces of the built and the natural merge and fragment in the reflections of Hein's *Mirror labyrinth*, so too does the natural fold back into the urban. The Park takes on a bucolic aesthetic that is at once urban and anti-urban, 'natural' yet shaped unnaturally, a non-urban home in the city for commuters as the distinction between home and work itself is growing thin.

The bucolic, anti-urban, rural quality of the Park is specific in nature – there is a managed and ordered character to its green spaces, clearly defined borders to its meadow planting, slightly unnatural angles to its hillocks. That is, the imagined 'reintroduction' of nature is, by necessity, one that originates in a blending of the organic and the technological. It is not and cannot be a genuine 'revival' of the natural after the receding of the industrial, because pure 'nature' doesn't exist. Instead, this is the creation of a natural aesthetic that responds to the material history of the space, the lived inhabitation of the space, and the deep structure of that space's conditions of production. The waterways that cut through the Park are built structures that have come to represent the organic, with the guided and constrained River Lea divided, canalised, and re-

incorporated at various points. Daniel, searching for a comparison for the sense that he got from the landscape of the Park, settled on Telly-Tubby Land as the closest fit. However, in the Park's representation of itself, this claim to naturalness is taken seriously, as though the built landscape of the Park had arisen organically once the restraining pollution and mess of its industrial period were removed.

6.5 - The Park as leisure space

The Park is defined by its formative moment, the Olympic mega-event. Although this event was singular in its scale and complexity, the Park is not alone in this event-association. Many of its isotopic spaces trace their history back to establishing events (as in the redevelopment of Greenwich Peninsula around the Millennium Dome) or are defined by their role as host to events-venues (as in the ExCel Centre at the Victoria Docks). Like this space's post-industrial and anti-urban character, its leisure-orientation is rooted at one level in its material history. Again this leisure orientation also operates on another level, as expressive of the relationships of production and reproduction that constitute the everyday life of this space. An aesthetic playfulness speaks to the breakdown of distinction between work and leisure, itself related to the blurring of work and home central to its anti-urban character. Once more these two, together, illuminate the way in which this aesthetic is representational of the 'deep structure' of its originating conditions. The playful fragmentation and blurring of boundaries expressed in Hein's *Mirror Labyrinth* recalls an image of capital as fluid mobility, as it is captured in this living and representational content.

The foundational moment of the games can be felt in the landscape of the Park, in its decoration and in the dominance of the stadia. It is indicated in the names of the East Village streets: 'celebration', 'victory', 'champions', 'cheering', and 'anthems'. When these references to the games are explicit, they are often framed as encouragement to engage with space in a particular way. Along the

path that cuts through the south of the Park there are starting-blocks marked on the ground so that visitors who wish to imagine themselves as Olympic athletes can race each other. In one corner of the south Park there is a small post, which when a button is pressed plays the noise of the Olympic crowd, summoning a ghost of the festival mega-event. This spatial history, living on not just in memory but in a material encouragement to engage with space in a particular way, defines the final feature of the Park's isotopic character.

This is a history shared with similar spaces – the Olympics, of course, touched much of London beyond the Park itself. The zoning of Olympic venues saw events hosted at the ExCel Centre, Greenwich Park, and the O2 Arena as elements of the River Zone, while Central Zone events made use of Horse Guards Parade, Earls Court Exhibition Centre, Wembley Arena, and so on. Many of these spaces also continue to host large-scale events, and are centred on their own sets of permanent venues and leisure facilities. Those parks that share an isotopic character with the Olympic Park are also by nature orientated towards leisure and defined by that practice of space and time that marks them as leisure spaces. Even in areas such as Canary Wharf, highly dominated by spaces of work, a significant area is given over to luxury shops and boutiques, forming its own style of leisure.

Andrew Smith, discussing the developing character of the Legacy-era Olympic Park, notes that there is a tension between its status as a 'green park' (implying both open space and a commitment to environmental sustainability) and its movement towards being a 'theme park' tourist destination (Smith, 2014). He writes that throughout its Legacy re-design and re-construction, the Park has developed 'towards a more bombastic, iconic landscape that is organised and promoted as a destination' (ibid; 315). He terms this quality 'theme park urbanism', summing it up in an image of the ArcelorMittal Orbit next to the helter skelter that now also stands outside the Stadium. Smith even notes that 'as the main entrance / exit is through a new Westfield shopping mall, the ultimate stereotype in theme park design is also present: exit through the gift shop' (ibid;

320). Rowan Moore, architecture critic for the *Guardian*, passes similar judgement on the Park, suggesting that it feels 'Disneyfied' – 'there is a frenzy of wacky light fittings, of playground installations, of seats, tree species, sculptural lumps of granite, kiosks, railings and coloured surfaces' (Moore, 2014).



Fig 59. Smith's 'view across the South Park towards the ArcelorMittal Orbit' (Smith, 2014; 319)

While the mega-event provides the originating cause of the Park's leisure-orientation, as the games recede in memory the space becomes no less leisure-oriented. As it ceases to be marked out as a singular space, it converges more closely with its isotopic spaces due to this shared everyday leisure practice. The memory of the mega-event is most prevalent for visitors from further afield, rather than those who live or work in the area and regularly spend leisure time in the Park. Ivy, who lives across the canal from the Park and often walks through it to go to Stratford or the Westfield, reported with amusement the experience of taking her young niece and nephew to the Park. For these visitors, the space was so imbued with excitement related to the mega-event that it appeared to charge even the most mundane objects – one of them cherishing a stone as her 'Olympic pebble'. For a couple of teachers visiting

from Cornwall over the spring half-term of 2013, the presence of the stadia on its own was enough to draw them to the Park as a tourist destination. By contrast, the marketing for the East Village does little more than mention the location of the apartments on the edge of the Olympic Park, and dwells more on the contemporary leisure facilities and destinations than on the history of the space.

The Park epitomises a mode of spatial production that aims at the creation of tourist destinations, at the same time emphasising leisure and play for those who live and work in the area. This space consists of a mix of leisure facilities and events venues, alongside hotels, residences, student halls and campuses, shopping complexes, and office space. In this space, it is imagined that, like the distinction between work and home, the boundaries of work and leisure become porous, with people passing seamlessly from home to work to park to events. This understanding of the space is expressed by Harland in LDA Design's *Life and Legacy of the Olympic Park* document, which describes their aim as creating 'the best environment to live, work, and play' (Harland, 2012b; 3). Likewise, Arup's *Landscape* document defines their approach to 'public realm' design as one that balances 'functional requirements' with 'ecology, heritage, and engineering challenges' in order to 'leave a legacy of flexible space that supports community, events, play and relaxation' (Arup, 2013b; 13).



Fig 60. Artist's impression of the International Quarter (with Westfield in distance) (The International Quarter, 2011)

This flexible space encourages a particular practice of everyday life, constituting the second level on which this space expresses its leisure-orientated character. This aspiration is particularly explicit in plans for the 'Olympicopolis' that will see £141 million of public funding put towards the construction of 'a Sadler's Wells dance theatre, a second exhibition space for the Victoria & Albert Museum and extra university campuses for University College London and the University of the Arts London, dedicated to art, design and engineering' (Ellis-Petersen, 2014). This expansion and diversification of the forms of leisure practice possible within the Park is intended to sit directly alongside state of the art work space, allowing a smooth movement between the two. It will encourage those workers within the space who do not already live in the vicinity to remain there longer, and will also draw visitors from further afield, to mix with the crowds of commuters and students passing through these spaces.



Fig 61. Artist's impression of Here East (complete with neighbouring circus big-top) (Here East, 2015)

Additional to these developments work is already underway within the Park, transforming the Broadcast Centre into Here East – a complex that markets itself as a 'place of immense possibility: 1.2 million sq ft of commercial space, set in a beautiful canalside location in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park' (Here East, 2015). Here East already hosts the BT Sport broadcast centre, the InfinitySDC data centre servers, and a Loughborough University postgraduate campus. As it is expanded and completed, marketing materials suggest that it will contain 'innovative businesses and creative startups', an 'education hub', and 'restaurants, pop up food retailers', as 'space to refuel' (ibid). Similarly, construction is beginning on the International Quarter development, in a plot between the Westfield and the Aquatics Centre. Across its two Olympic Park sites, the International Quarter promises 4 million sq ft of 'flexible workspace', a 'brand new 4 star hotel', 52,000 sq ft of 'shops, bars, and restaurants', 330 new homes, and of course 'beautiful public spaces', 'access to Stratford International and DLR stations', and 'spectacular views overlooking the Aquatics Centre, Culture and Education Quarter, the Stadium and beyond to the City skyline' (The International Quarter, 2011a).

These developments present themselves in terms that emphasise and exaggerate the idea of a transformed mode of work in which financialised capital is matched by the expansion of creative or artisan work in place of large-scale industrial production. These creative industries are as much digital as material, imagined as centring on a process of free invention that is matched and facilitated by the playful, leisure-orientated space in which it occurs. The marketing material of Here East outlines this transformation of work in enthusiastic terms, even avoiding the term 'work' itself, preferring to present itself as a place in which 'making' takes place:

Making is the future. This belief defines Here East. Now the emerging breed of innovators and digital makers, in companies big and small, need a habitat to call their own. Somewhere they can cluster, grow and thrive alongside each other
(Here East, 2015)

In order to contextualise this image of an 'emerging breed of innovators and digital makers', Here East suggest that 'this is a unique time for business. New digital tools and techniques are disrupting and challenging established models, and creating entirely new ways of doing business' (ibid). An article about Here East on the *Urban Strategies* design and architecture website agrees, going so far as to say that 'pool tables and cafes are key creative infrastructure' (Iannucci, 2014). *Urban Strategies* are keen to point to the way in which the design of Here East facilitates flexibility in its work space, allowing 'innovation and collaboration among technology pioneers' in such a way that will 'bring the DIY culture into the technology sphere, encouraging the creative use of practical skills for invention and prototyping' (ibid).

The theme of flexibility and mobility that characterises the movement of financialised capital is rendered as the representational content of the Park's isotopic space in the living practice of those who inhabit it. The playful aesthetic of this space, materially embodied in its leisure-orientated elements, is reinforced by the way in which it is animated by those who work, play, and live in it. In recognising that once again the material aesthetic and living animation of the space, as two halves of its representational content, share a common origin, we can understand the way in which the leisure-orientation of this isotopic space is as a reflection of its structuring conditions.

Here, Vercellone's reading of Arrighi's systemic cycles of accumulation provides an insight. Rather than the phase of financial expansion standing as a 'sign of autumn' for a particular arrangement of production, for Vercellone this is the moment at which capital attempts to leap over and escape material production. Always seeking to short-circuit the uncertainty and constraint of its material grounding, the phase of financial expansion is the point at which capital achieves a greater flexibility. From this perspective, it is entirely logical that financial expansion in the current moment is accompanied by the growth of small-scale and creative production, without significant material investment in land, resources, or labour. In those analyses that term this mode of

accumulation 'cognitive capitalism', emphasis is placed on the way in which knowledge itself becomes a resource for mobilisation, directly applied to the valorisation process. As such, great effort (and many thousands of words of management theory) has been put into the creation of workplaces that encourage the use of this mental resource.

Paolo Virno writes that in this moment 'language itself has been put to work', drawing attention to the way in which knowledge, which was previously made productive largely through its materialisation in technology, now becomes productive itself, with communications technology becoming facilitator rather than realiser of that productive potential (Virno, 1996; 270). This shift in emphasis, for Virno, has implications for the relationship between work and leisure, as the productive use of language and personal knowledge involves the worker in a much fuller way in their work: 'it is precisely when production no longer seems to offer an identity that it projects itself onto each and every aspect of experience' (ibid; 271). As work activity projects itself outside of the workplace, it makes sense that the workplace itself should seem to swallow the outside world, with this mix of leisure, education, dining, and relaxation spaces existing either within or in close proximity to the site of production.

This is recognisable in the way in which the International Quarter boldly names itself 'London's feelgood workplace' (The International Quarter, 2011a). The 'vision' statement of this development describing an intention to:

transform working and living in London through exemplary workspaces and innovative design that has the promotion of health and wellbeing at its core. It will be a place with spirit, space, community and culture, with a proud Olympic past and an equally inspiring future
(The International Quarter, 2011b)

This emphasis on the workplace as a place of fun, wellbeing, and community reflects a concern for finding the optimum conditions for a particular kind of intellectual labour. A recent *Guardian* article suggests that there is a tension here between the creation of greater amounts of office space (a market currently booming in London), and the gradual dissolving of the office itself into

various forms of remote working (at home, in coffee shops, etc). This tension is visible within the Olympic Park and its isotopic spaces, as offices proliferate alongside the combined leisure-work spaces that appear as a more aspirational or ideal place to work and thus threaten their function.

For this very specific sector of the labour market, there is a 'Silicon Valley trickle-down' in workplace culture: 'we all want to work somewhere with soft-play breakout areas and a slide in the atrium, and so big companies need more space to accommodate us' (Bland, 2015). Again, this fits with the analysis of post-operaismo theorists who present the shift from material to financial expansion as a response on the part of capital to workplace struggle and the refusal of certain forms of work. Antonio Negri describes the way in which, since the 1970s, capital abandoned the factory and turned towards the expropriation of social knowledges as a consolidation of the refusal of work that concluded the crisis of Fordism (Negri, 1996; 167). Of course, this flight away from material production and towards the exploitation of intellectual labour is only felt as an increase in the merging of work and leisure within highly specific areas of the economy. For many it is simply expressed in the heightened regulation of social interaction that characterises the service and hospitality industries, for example.

However, the fact that 'Olympicopolis' is framed as hub of the creative industries demonstrates an understanding of this space on the part of planners as a prime site of those industries that are at the forefront of this development in the systemic cycle of accumulation. As such, the Park as a whole must reflect this transformation of the productive process – or, better, give the impression that the whole of work is now characterised by a mixing-through of leisure spaces and practices. While the built structures of the Park contain a mix of uses (so you can leave your job in a tech startup at Here East to attend a theatre performance, also at Here East), the whole aesthetic of the Park reflects and recreates this sense of a porous boundary between work and leisure. The North Park and Victory Gardens are both organised around low hillocks and small clusters of trees that create multiple secluded spots that might as well be

'breakout areas'. The South Park is already used during the week as a place in which to come and catch your breath and a bite to eat at lunchtime by small groups of people in suits – a sight that will certainly increase once the International Quarter is constructed. The positioning of these workspaces on canals and next door to sports venues and facilities is also already named as a significant draw in their advertising materials.

This concern for a representation of playfulness alongside work, combined with the Park's history as host to the Olympic mega-event, ensures that the Park is characterised by an aesthetic of leisure. The specifics of this aesthetic are also further shaped by its other defining qualities – as a post-industrial space and as an anti-urban space. The post-industrial emphasis on fluidity and movement, along with the anti-urban collapsing of categories of the natural and the built, all play into the production of the specific 'playfulness' exemplified by Hein's *Mirror Labyrinth*. This theme-park urbanism refuses the key defining feature of the theme-park – that is, that it is a space away from the everyday, which one visits only occasionally as an escape from life and work. In the Olympic Park, the festival of the games is rendered almost eternal, splintered and fragmented in myriad references around the site, and reincorporated into a mode of labour that imagines itself as ludic and communal. Just as the glass plates of *Mirror Labyrinth* appear to melt into their surroundings but remain coldly solid, however, this transformation also exists only as appearance, with a definite distinction between work and life, between the production of capital and the reproduction of self, persisting beneath.

6.6 - Conclusion

The aesthetic, feel, and structure of the Olympic Park is rooted in financialisation, as the moment (within an expanding systemic cycle of accumulation) in which capital tends towards a return to the initial flexibility and mobility of its money form. Each of the characteristics that define the isotopic space of the Park can be traced to these underlying conditions. The material

genesis of these spaces and the ways in which they contain and express certain modes of everyday practice both reflect and refract the 'deep structure' of their originating circumstances. Each of these spaces are post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-orientated, and in these qualities are distinguished from the heterotopic spaces by which they are surrounded.

These spaces are post-industrial in that their construction reclaims and transforms previously industrial space. They are also post-industrial in that the life by which they are animated expresses the productive and reproductive activity of a post-industrial economy. This physical quality and lived practice is made representational in an aesthetic of mobility and plasticity, reflecting the movement of capital embodied and completed in that space. Each of these spaces are anti-urban, in that they are designed to 're-introduce' an element of rurality in their green spaces. They are also anti-urban in that they are responsive to the way in which traditional binaries of work and home are undermined by a shifting relationship between production and reproduction. Again this anti-urban quality becomes representational in an aesthetic that folds the natural into the city at the same moment that technology itself comes to stand as a sublime other, supplanting the place of nature. Finally, each of these spaces are leisure-orientated in that they were inaugurated in the hosting of an event, continue to hold smaller events, or contain everyday leisure spaces. They are also leisure-orientated in that the living productive practice they facilitate is one imagined to bleed into leisure itself, as self-directed and creative work. Once more this leisure-orientation becomes representational in a 'playful' aesthetic, in which the free movement of capital and labour in the moment of financialisation comes to appear not only as an expansion of accumulation, but as an expansion of human freedom.

As such, the Park stands in stark contrast to its surroundings, which continue to function at a further distance to this shift in accumulation. Where the Olympic Park was a project of total transformation in which previously-existing structures were razed in order to build from scratch, these heterotopic spaces bear the

marks of a more uneven and evolutionary change in practice. Hackney Wick's warehouses are gradually claimed for apartment conversions, forcing out the hipster artists and tenacious small businesses that were previously using them. In Stratford, estate agents described to me the transformations driven by the expansion of Stratford station and the construction of Crossrail. Increasingly investment comes from businesses and individuals overseas, looking to create buy-to-let portfolios in London's long property boom, expanding a piecemeal redevelopment clustered around a few hotspots. The Olympic Park was constructed specifically to play the role of one of these hotspots, but by nature is therefore marked out as distinct from this piecemeal transformation. Its surroundings, by contrast, are slowly emptied of their previous function as individual land owners and investors spot opportunities for profit.

While these piecemeal spaces may exhibit some of the qualities that characterise the Park and its isotopic spaces, it is only here that they emerge fully-formed and unified. It is therefore possible, in traversing this space, to gain a sense of place that evokes its relationship to its underlying structures. The sense of disjuncture triggered by movement between these heterotopic and isotopic spaces, or the sense of continuity gained in movement within this isotopia, allows a mapping in space of the living activity of a transforming mode of accumulation. This continuity and discontinuity is not just dependent on a sense of the physical space, but also on the way it moves with the practice of its inhabitants: the way it has become a lived space, as well as a conceived and perceived one. In understanding this, it is possible to understand the key presence of utopian possibility that renders this space, as a lived space, a representational space of financialised capital.

Walter Prigge provides a useful discussion of Lefebvre's concept of representational space as it appears in *The Urban Revolution*, placing at the centre of this approach the idea that spatial form at once embodies and fails to fully represent social relations. He frames Jameson's understanding of postmodernism, the post-operaismo understanding of post-Fordism, and

Castells' 'information society' all as insights into the spatial logic of contemporary capitalism, arising in capitalism's 'epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial' (Prigge, 2008; 50). The result of this epochal shift, in which abstract space becomes dominant, is a 'crisis of representation': 'the thread has snapped between the real and the symbolic, between the existential experiences of everyday space and their representations in ideology, science, and culture' (ibid; 51).

For Prigge, Lefebvre's triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space correspond to the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary as formants of social space. In the current crisis of representation:

there is no coherent representation of space (the symbolic) that mediates between existential experiences in the spatial practice of urban life-worlds (the real) and the spaces of imagining the world and nature (the imaginary). Image, concept, and reality are dissociated
(Prigge, 2008; 59)

In the Olympic Park and its isotopic spaces, these representational elements of space appear divorced from their conditions of production. They seem to render the social relationships of production and reproduction that created them and that they sustain immaterial, as elements of aesthetics. Prigge names as constituent parts of a 'symptomatology of the present', a simultaneous 'de-temporalisation (loss of historicity), de-totalisation (heterogeneity of life-worlds), and de-naturalisation (fusion of man, machine, nature)' (ibid; 59). Each of these is recognisable in the transformation of the Park's industrial history, its relationship to nature as the other of the city, and in its melding of work and leisure.

Lefebvre is clear that the representational formant of space goes beyond the visual, to include the ways in which space is felt, understood, made to carry unspoken meaning. He writes that 'the "reading" of space is thus merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot, a rather superfluous reward to the individual for blind, spontaneous and lived obedience' (Lefebvre, 1974; 143).

Prigge highlights this in order to position representational space as a mediation between the constraining structure of conceived space and the agency implied in spatial practice. The representational formant of social space can therefore be understood as 'experienced and describable imagined spaces of the existential experience of domination' (Prigge, 2008; 54). Space as lived, as imagined, and as rendered representational emerges in the interaction between the macro structuring forces that determine its production and the micro forces of practice that ensure its reproduction.

The Park exists as a representational space of financialisation due to the tension between these two levels of social phenomena. This is one ground on which the movement of the value form comes to take on physical presence in social practice and in the built environment. This space expresses, in a semi-concealed and sometimes contradictory manner, an underlying structure of accumulation. However, the way in which this underlying structure comes to form the representational content of this space is ultimately related to its embodiment in practice: in the social activity that created the physical space of the Park, and in its inhabitation. It is here that its relationship to the everyday as utopian substance again reappears. The animating activity that lends the Park its character is at the same time the animating activity of the mode of accumulation that it expresses, and this mode of accumulation rests on a mobilisation and exploitation of the utopian potential of living practice. Lefebvre's linking of representational and lived space recognises exactly this. It is to this presence of the utopian within the alienated everyday that I now turn, in my concluding chapter.

7 – Conclusions: The Park as catalyst

7.1 - Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have presented an account of the complex processes by which the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is constituted as an actually existing abstract space. The immediate material production of this space proceeded by labour in planning, design, and construction; investment in state funding of the Olympic Delivery Authority; and exchange in the procurement of materials. The ongoing life of the Park takes in labour in cleaning, grounds maintenance, and staffing venues; investment of private interests (UCL in their future campus, Lend Lease in the construction of the International Quarter, and so on); and the exchange of commodities within the Park's transactional spaces. These features of the daily life of the Park constitute elements of a 'narrow' production, each a specific moment in the valorisation of capital.

This 'narrow' production, however, rests upon and creates the conditions for a 'broader' production. This broad production of space has been my focus. Looking beyond the direct valorisation process, a wide range of social practices are revealed as constitutive of their own social grounds. These include the rest and leisure activities that make up the reproductive content of the Park's activity; the myriad navigations that make it a transport hub and connecting space; and the daily minutiae that accompany the Park's status as home to a growing community of residents. In sum, the ongoing production of the Olympic Park is premised on those practices that make up the whole fabric of everyday life. These activities, despite their indirect relationship to valorisation, remain conditioned by and constitutive of the dominating abstractions of capital: value, space, and time, among others. Functioning on an abstract logic that is nonetheless given material life within them, these practices create the space of the Park as an actually existing abstract space, at the same time as they conflict with and contradict that form.

In each substantive chapter I have applied this everyday dynamic of concrete abstraction to one facet of the Olympic Park's production. Following Henri Lefebvre's application of this Marxist insight to the theorisation of space, I have read Lefebvre alongside heterodox traditions of Marxist thought. As such this thesis should be understood as both an ethnographic account of the Olympic Park, and an empirical exploration of Lefebvre's work.

I began my analysis with a discussion of the Olympic games as festival moment. Presenting a network of Olympic spaces centred on the Park, I argued that in this moment the ambiguous affective charge associated with the games was resolved into a positive mood of celebration. This excessive social effervescence was mobilised towards the production of Olympic space and the realisation of value. In discussing this festival atmosphere I utilised Ernst Bloch's writings on hope and theorisations of affect drawn from non-representational theory. I then worked through each of the moments of Lefebvre's dialectic of the production of space, demonstrating the ways in which the subsumption of this festival affect into particular modes of conceiving, perceiving, and living space created the conditions necessary for the realisation of value through the mega-event as experiential commodity.

In my second substantive chapter I turned to the clearing of the Lower Lea Valley and the construction of the Olympic Park. Where the previous chapter had introduced Lefebvre's tripartite dialectic, this chapter concentrated on its first moment: the production of conceived space and representations of space. I described the creation of the Olympic Park as the imposition of a conscious abstraction, first in the image – and then in the reality – of the Lower Lea Valley as blank canvas. Drawing on Tim Edensor, Marxist feminists, and value-form theorists and I described this as an Apollonian ordering of space. This ordering was aimed at the re-incorporation of the Lower Lea Valley, as a value-dissociated space, into circuits of valorisation privileged in economic policy – financialised property speculation and the 'creative', leisure, and financial

sectors. I showed that the imposition of conscious abstraction in a conceived space accompanied the imposition of a real abstraction. This act of ideal and material abstraction rendered space as a commodity in the compulsory purchase order, and then as an object of labour. Through this labour the physical space of the Lower Lea Valley became dominated by a social abstraction embodied in the visual, phallic, and geometric formants of its design.

In my third substantive chapter I addressed the gradual inhabitation of the Legacy-era Park. Here I concentrated on the second moment of Lefebvre's dialectic: practiced and perceived space. In order to theorise the development of regular patterns of practice I introduced the temporal as a second structuring concrete abstraction. I therefore drew on Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* alongside the work of Alfred Sohn-Rethel and Moishe Postone in order to unpack the ways in which everyday practice is structured by and expressive of an internally contradictory and multiply layered abstract time. I argued that the inhabitation of the Park has produced contrasting spaces, defined by differing temporalities of practice associated with reproduction, exchange, and production. I suggested that those rhythms of practice are the means by which the Park has become embedded within the circuits of capital, labour, and commodities that it was designed draw into the urban fabric of East London.

Finally, I turned to the position of the Park within ongoing transformations of London's urban fabric. This last substantive chapter concentrated on Lefebvre's third moment: lived and representational space. Describing the Park as isotopic with other recently redeveloped spaces, I argued that the defining characteristics of this isotopia express a shared material history and a unified set of productive and reproductive practices, each reflecting common underlying conditions of production. I cited post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-orientated qualities as these defining characteristics, and used Frederic Jameson and post-operaismo theorists to relate each to the way in which the Park further embeds financialised and creative accumulation within East

London's space. I argued that the Park stands as a lived space of capital, a representational space that reflects the relationships of accumulation that structure it as an actually existing abstract space.

In each of these chapters I have unpacked the relationship between social abstraction and the concrete practice in which it is manifested. I have explored the holistic production of an abstract Olympic space within the affective festival moment of the games; the material imposition of an abstract representation of space; the production in practice of an abstract space-time; and the lived constitution of a representational space of capitalism. However, my analysis has also been informed by a concern for the utopian within everyday life. While the alienated everyday forms the terrain on which concrete abstractions are reproduced, Lefebvre's understanding of the everyday is also as 'a utopian substance that points to all that is possible contained and hidden in the real' (Goonewardena, 2008; 24). As such, I have sought to draw attention to the varied ways in which the utopian potential of the everyday remains submerged within the concrete abstractions that traverse it.

In this concluding chapter I will draw out these two threads, examining the ways in which the internal relationship between concrete abstraction and the utopian everyday has played out in the production of the Olympic Park. In doing so I will take this chapter as an opportunity to consider the broader significance of this production of space. Derek Kerr suggests that Lefebvre's writing on space should be understood as an attempt to explain the continuing survival of capitalism (Kerr, 1994; 20). Kerr writes that for Lefebvre this is a question of the continuing reproduction of the relations of production, increasingly manifested in the production of capitalist space. In bringing out the internal tension between the reproduction of capital's abstractions and their own premise in the utopian everyday, I will set my previous discussions of the Olympic Park within this context of the survival and expansion of capital within London's urban space.

In approaching this discussion, a useful central image is that of the Park as 'catalyst'. This image was repeatedly foregrounded in much of the planning and marketing material for the Olympic Park – the games were expected to herald a transformation of their surroundings, expanding and accelerating redevelopment in East London and tying together existing redeveloped spaces. This image makes explicit the relationship between the Park (*qua* actually existing abstract space) and the rejuvenated reproduction of capital. The Park is expected to not only embody certain modes of accumulation and their associated everyday practice, but also to act as facilitator of an expanded accumulation. It therefore indicates the way in which abstract space substantiates a social domination of the individual by the conditioning of practice. However, in doing so it also indicates the way in which, in the production of space, the reproduction of capital rests on an incorporation of the utopian potential of the everyday. Further, it contains a future-orientation that furnishes a perverse image of the Park as perfected capitalist urbanity and thus indicates this submerged preservation of the everyday as 'utopian substance'.

In this chapter I will expand on this image of the Park as catalyst. I will begin with an exploration of the Park as catalyst for redevelopment, characterising it in Lefebvre's terms as the production of the Park as 'centrality'. I will then discuss the way in which this production of centrality rests on a conditioning of praxis rooted in the internalisation of lived abstraction. I thus present the Park, on a second level, as catalyst for the development of a particular mode of praxis. I will relate this discussion to each of my substantive chapters, demonstrating that the practical constitution of abstraction underlies the way in which the Park ensures the ongoing reproduction of capital. Finally, I will discuss the way in which the conditioning of praxis is also related to a utopian presence within everyday life that it can never fully dominate or separate itself from. Uncovering this irreducible presence of the utopian in each of my substantive chapters, I will again use the image of the Park as catalyst. On this third level I suggest that, as the survival of capital rests on the appropriation and internalisation of utopian

potential, the Park might be understood as a sharpening of contradiction: a catalyst for future rupture and transformation.

7.2 - The Park as catalyst for redevelopment

In a document from 2012 detailing the 'life and legacy' of the Olympic Park, landscape architect Andrew Harland states that the Park 'has acted as and continues to be a major catalyst for the regeneration of East London' (Harland, 2012). Discussing the Legacy-era expansion of the Park in December 2013, Boris Johnson stated that 'we want to use Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as a catalyst for the industries and technologies in which London now leads the world' (Johnson, cited in Evening Standard, 2013). More recently, a 2015 review of the Olympic Park noted that 'a key pledge of those who brought the Olympics to London was that they would be a catalyst for regeneration in the Stratford area and beyond', judging the current development of the site a success on this criteria (White, 2015).

The Olympic Park was consistently presented as having created an opportunity for the development of a particular mode of life in East London. This representation of the Park as catalyst can be understood on one level as simply a summary of its effect. The Olympic mega-event provided an opportunity for drastic redevelopment by compulsory purchase order, for the investment of state funds, and for the creation of a space that will appreciate in value as others invest in it. The games and their site were an intervention in urban space that wouldn't otherwise have happened in the unified manner that it did. This catalyst role was planned into the design of the Park and materially facilitated in its construction. At its heart, it concerns the way in which the Park encourages particular types of productive and reproductive activity – the modes of work and rest eluded to in Boris Johnson's reference to 'the industries and technologies in which London now leads the world'.

However, this reference to the activity that the Park contains also indicates that this image is to some extent a mystification. The idea that a space in itself can act upon its surroundings reflects a certain fetishism. Like any commodity the Park comes to express 'the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves' (Marx, 1867; 164). As a space (rather than a singular commodity) the productive activity that constitutes this particular fetish must be understood in its broadest sense as the general activity of everyday life. Because the transformation of East London's urban fabric catalysed by the Park is materialised in practice, the Park's catalyst role is bound up with the way in which it functions to organise everyday life. The Park acts as a gathering-point for a set of spatial practices – a role inaugurated at the Olympic festival – and through this comes to appear as catalyst for the attendant changes that practice brings.

The creation of this space as a gathering-point was conditional on the investment of significant amounts of capital, for which the mega-event was a justification. Alice Sampson, contextualising Olympic redevelopment alongside prior projects, writes that 'back in 2005 Jack Straw explained in the House of Commons that the Olympic bid was successful because the Games would be 'a force for regeneration' (Sampson, 2011; 2). Ten years before London's Olympic bid victory, it was hoped that Stratford City Challenge would help 'kick start' a wider redevelopment of East London (ibid; 5). This project was continued in the Olympic Park, connecting existing redevelopment plans in neighbouring Temple Mills, Leabridge, South Leytonstone, and Hackney Wick. The Park's ability to be 'developed after the Games as one of the principal drivers of regeneration in East London' was made one of its key success indicators (ibid; 8).

The Park's function as catalyst was predicated on bringing together existing nodes of redevelopment, unifying the practice of everyday life that they encourage. The Park serves to connect and integrate its immediate surroundings and join a network of further-flung spaces in new constellations. With the Park next door Hackney Wick orientates itself towards the higher-

investment cultural production of its neighbour. The Westfield shopping centre brings together nearby residents with commuter-consumers who break their journey home or make dedicated trips to Stratford. The open parkland draws visitors from the surrounding area to a new social space. The Park acts as a network hub, existing within and helping to define an isotopic space. The Mayor of London's post-games review features this role prominently, linking the transformation of Silvertown, the Royal Albert Dock, and Battersea Nine Elms to the success of the Park (Mayor of London, 2013; 47).

This work of connection means the Park increases the profitability of neighbouring space. In an interview, landscape architect Aaron stated that the Olympic Park was intended as 'a centrepiece that adds value to the land around it – the Park is surrounded by development sites, and then you have the existing communities, that is absolutely fundamental'. The expansion of transport links to and from Stratford that preceded and accompanied the games will have a similar impact on property prices, as will the eventual arrival of Crossrail. Where the original construction of the Park required state intervention to part existing landowners with their property, the presence of the Park is now likely to encourage others to do the same, selling up as their business plots become more valuable as building sites than in their current use.

At the same time the Park gathers and facilitates particular productive practices. This 'Olympicopolis' is touted to eventually house 'a world class education and cultural district' that will 'bring together outstanding organisations to showcase exceptional art, dance, history, craft, science, technology and cutting edge design' (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, 2015b). Two sites at the Park – one to the south of the Stadium, the other to the north of the Aquatics Centre – will become university campuses for UCL and University of the Arts London, plus new sites for the Victoria & Albert Museum and Sadler's Wells. The International Quarter will contain 'four million sq ft of flexible, modern workspace' along with 'over 300 new homes, 275,000 sq ft of hotel provision, and 52,000 sq ft dedicated to neighbourhood retail' (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, 2015c). On

top of these yet-to-be completed projects, the Park already hosts the Here East complex in the old Broadcast Centre, its existing stadia, cafes, and Westfield.

These sites complete the Park's integration into those modes of accumulation privileged within UK economic policy. The incorporation of universities into the Olympic Park site is particularly illustrative of this. Their presence will mean that the Park becomes a centre for the reproduction of particular forms of labour power (Adamson, 2009), for the financial circulation of student debt (McGettigan, 2013), the valorisation of space as site of capital investment (Engelen, Fernandez, and Hendriske, 2014), and specific forms of cultural production (Raunig, 2013). The other productive spaces of the Park tie into similarly financialised and 'creative' modes of accumulation, or the realisation of value in leisure and cultural consumption. The expanding transformation of urban space around the Park therefore centres the creation of links within the circuits of capital and labour-power that characterise London's financialised and creative economies.

Each of these ways in which the Park is designed to function as catalyst for ongoing redevelopment is related to the way in which the Park constitutes a point of centrality. Centrality, for Lefebvre, is a key characteristic of abstract space within capitalism. He writes that it comes to 'inhabit every aspect of the problematic of space' as abstract space becomes a social reality (Lefebvre, 1974; 331). Centrality represents the capacity of abstract space to gather objects and practices: it is 'defined by the gathering together and meeting of whatever coexists in a given space', and as such is 'a form, empty in itself but calling for contents' (ibid). The constitution of a centrality also implies the constitution of a periphery, and thus speaks to the way in which abstract space is homogeneous yet fragmented. It is the potential of abstract space to form centralities that Łukasz Stanek addresses in his suggestion that 'the form of space is the possibility of gathering independently of what is gathered' just as 'the form of the commodity is the possibility of exchange independent of what is exchanged' (Stanek, 2011; 156).

In the idea of centrality Lefebvre demonstrates the way in which abstract space functions within the process of valorisation, as exchange represents the momentary constitution of a centrality. He brings this together with the way in which space is produced, as the possibility of gathering is itself predicated on the interrelation of the three moments of his spatial triad. Finally, he ties this into the conflictual nature of abstract space, noting that the dialectic of centrality and periphery, as the dominance of a social abstraction over concrete space, expresses the contradictions inherent to 'the production relations embodied in space as a whole' (Lefebvre, 1974; 333). Centrality, as a temporary and contingent quality of a specific space, must be produced and reproduced in practice, at once drawing other spaces into its orbit and relegating them to peripheral positions. Crucially, within this production of centrality lies the reproduction of capital.

The Olympic Park represents centrality as a gathering point for capital investment, commodities exchange, and the expenditure and reproduction of labour-power – that is, for the practice of everyday life as it is structured by these processes. The Park is a connecting space and network hub that contains mutually reinforcing leisure, work, retail, and residential spaces, facilitating a practice that ties it into other spaces across London and draws its immediate surroundings into its orbit. It is designed and constructed with this purpose in mind, but it is the practice of everyday life that completes and realises this centrality.

The 2012 Olympic games stood as the foundational moment of this centrality, the point at which the Park made its entrance into London's urban space and enacted its reorientation of that space. This festival moment separates the Park from similar redevelopments, granting it a greater transformational power within London's built environment. As a space inaugurated in this festival moment it draws some of its centralising influence from the affective charge of that moment. This fully social production of space – of the Olympic Park as a

concrete abstraction and as a point of centrality – unfolds from a social practice that entails a specific relationship between that space and the practising body. The function of the Park as constitutive element in the ongoing survival of capitalism, then, can be summed up in the figure of the Park as catalyst for similar transformations of space, that is, of the Park as centrality. In understanding the Park as centrality, as content-less form given shape by those practices and objects that it gathers together, it is vital to understand the capacity of the Park to shape and condition this practice.

7.3 - The Park as catalyst for praxis

Lefebvre approaches socially-constitutive practice in the idea of praxis: 'first and foremost act, dialectical relation between man and nature, consciousness and things' (Lefebvre, 1966b; 45). The concept unifies social thought and social action, referring to practice that simultaneously constitutes social relations and the material things in which those relations are embedded. Praxis always means the production of both abstract ideas and concrete things, but with the social ascendancy of value there comes into being an abstract form that dominates its own concrete content. Under capitalism, 'the form is fetishised. It appears to be a thing endowed with boundless powers. The form reacts upon its own content and takes possession of it' (ibid; 47). Praxis, as a simultaneous process of social objectification and subjectification, is therefore alienated and productive of fetish forms – one of which is abstract space.

This relationship between praxis and its reified fetish forms is the basis of the way in which abstract space conditions its own practice. Chris O'Kane argues in his doctoral thesis that fetishism is 'interpreted by Lefebvre as a socially constituted concrete abstraction that functions as an alienated, quantified, autonomous and inverted form of social domination mediating and compelling individuals' action' (O'Kane, 2013; 169). Abstract space conditions thought and action on a general level in that it constitutes a shared social reality: the abstract relations it expresses come to determine a social understanding of the world. As

an abstraction embodied in material spaces it also conditions praxis on a more particular and granular level, through the mute disciplining of bodily practice by this concrete materiality. Here I will provide a short discussion of the general constitution of thought by social abstraction. I will then turn to the ways in which a more specific conditioning of praxis can be observed in 'actually existing abstract spaces', exploring the ways in which this dynamic has informed my account of the production and practice of the Olympic Park.

Sohn-Rethel and Postone are both useful in grasping this general manner in which alienated praxis forms the 'the locus and origin of concepts', as each addresses the basis of consciousness within the socially constitutive activity of capitalism (Lefebvre, 1965; 26). While these authors differ in their identification of this activity, the dynamics by which they understand reified social abstractions to become foundational to thought are broadly similar. Sohn-Rethel writes that 'the socially necessary forms of thinking of an epoch are those in conformity with the socially synthetic functions of that epoch', naming the exchange relation as that 'socially synthetic function' under capitalism (Sohn-Rethel, 1978; 5). Capitalism's 'socially necessary forms of thinking' flow from the commodity abstraction (ibid; 34). The concrete and abstract character of the exchange relation constitutes a material 'first nature' and a social 'second nature' (ibid; 57). This 'second nature' is the intellectual reflection of the socially synthetic quality of the exchange relation, the 'ideal form of cognition through abstract concepts' (ibid; 61). This represents a transformation of the real abstraction of exchange into an ideal abstraction of thought, culminating in the Kantian 'transcendental unity of the self-consciousness' as a 'fetish concept of the capital function of money' (ibid; 77).

Like Sohn-Rethel, Postone roots an understanding of alienated consciousness in the constitution of the value form. He presents a 'theory of labour's constitution of social forms that mediate people's relations with each other and with nature and are, at once, forms of being and consciousness' (ibid; 220). For Postone, it is labour's double character as simultaneously concrete and abstract

that constitutes the commodity as 'the fundamental structuring principle of capitalism', and as such labour that becomes socially mediating under capitalism (ibid; 155). Postone's theory of consciousness, as one that 'analyses thought, or, more broadly, subjectivity, in terms of historically specific forms of social mediation' situates the origin of the socially mediating abstraction of value, and the thought that mirrors its form, in the practice of labour and its experience as a practical abstraction (ibid).

Both authors are clear that they are not simply arguing that practice determines consciousness. The point around which their arguments turn is the social nature of that practice, as one which constitutes abstract categories that determine both practice and thought. Both authors describe the ways in which these abstractions take on a life of their own, animating the foundational categories by which we perceive our social and material world. Both authors are also concerned with time as a real abstraction, demonstrating the ways in which abstract time comes to dominate social life outside of the sphere in which it originates. Here they connect with Lefebvre, as the concrete abstraction of space similarly determines thought and action beyond its originating practice.

In *The Metropolis and Mental Life* Georg Simmel identifies the city with the money economy, describing its reflection in metropolitan thought as a 'faithful subjective reflection of the completely internalised money economy' (Simmel, 1903; 52). He writes that the 'quantitative aspect of life is transformed directly into qualitative traits of character' (ibid; 56). In doing so he points to the way in which the value abstraction becomes embedded in the totality of urban life, acting as generative of a particular mode of thought through this dispersal throughout the urban form. This material existence of abstraction in the physicality of urban space indicates the second way in which the fetish forms constituted by praxis come to determine it. While abstract space exists as a social abstraction and is reflected in the ideal abstractions of thought, it also exists as a material form of space, and is directly interacted with on this tactile level.

Stanek draws out a distinction in Lefebvre's work between 'practical abstraction' and 'lived abstraction' (Stanek, 2011; 149). We can understand practical abstraction to refer to the way in which real abstractions are fully embedded in their originating practice, and lived abstraction to refer to the way in which broader elements of social life, structured by this concrete abstraction, take on a similar form. Space is practiced as an abstraction within its immediate production as a commodity, but also lived as a materialisation of that abstract form throughout everyday life. As a lived abstraction, abstract space 'involves a shift on an emotional and personal level' that parallels the way in which abstract labour 'finds its counterpart in the "economic" subjects: buyers and sellers, if only of their own labour power' (ibid). Lefebvre's account of the abstract form of space thus positions it as constitutive of thought, just as Sohn-Rethel and Postone position the value abstraction. These authors seek to locate a single social practice through which the value abstraction and its attendant mode of consciousness are simultaneously produced. However, Lefebvre draws attention to the way in which the fetish forms of alienated praxis come to dominate the whole fabric of social life and through this *lived* existence shape consciousness.

Space, as a lived abstraction, is 'lived' through the body – it is perceived, experienced, practiced, and both consciously and unconsciously thought. Lefebvre writes that 'bodies - deployments of energy – produce space and produce themselves, along with their motions, according to the laws of space' (Lefebvre, 1974; 171). His phenomenology-derived triad of the conceived, perceived, and lived production of space draws attention to this body-space relation. Because abstract space is not a construct of the mind but one constituted in social relationships, it must be rooted in social and bodily practice. Because of this, abstract space is contradictory, in conflict with its own concrete character: 'abstract space is instantiated in myriad abstract and quantitative phenomena – ranging from forces of production, to consumption, political, ideological and reproductive space – and opposed by the concrete content this

abstraction cannot determine' (O'Kane, 2013; 191). This opposition is itself inherent to spatial practice, 'where abstract space transforms "lived experience" and "bodies" into "lived abstractions"' (ibid; 192). Lefebvre states that 'under the conditions of modern industry and city life, abstraction holds sway over the relationship to the body' (Lefebvre, 1974; 204).

This dynamic, in which embodied social practice produces a real abstraction of space that ideally and materially conditions its own constituting praxis, has been at the heart of my account of the production of the Olympic Park. The function of this space as a point of centrality rests on the way in which the Park is daily re-created through certain modes of labour, leisure, and inhabitation. These forms of activity encompass a holistic everyday production of space that is conceived and represented, perceived and practiced, lived and representational.

The fact that the constitution of centrality arises from a bodily encounter in space was clear at the Olympic Park's foundational moment, in the affective charge generated by the Olympic crowd. This charge marked Olympic space, gathering those individuals and practices necessary to the realisation of value through the mega-event. The conceptual planning of space focused on crowd dynamics and flow, while the representation of Olympic space emphasised the crowd and its festival atmosphere. The practice and perception of this space proceeded from within the crowd, with security designed to ensure a necessary sense of safety. The lived experience of that space, and the way in which it became representational, was as a moment of utopian day-dream manifested in the festival crowd. Here every movement of the body was directed towards a specific production of space. In this careful management of practice, the relationship of the body to space was conditioned by its own fetishised abstraction. In navigating the sites of London 2012, the crowd brought into being temporary centres within an open and homogeneous space. In inhabiting that space, they granted to it the image of the Olympic festival, the exhilarating crowd whose roar could be heard outside of the blue fence that ringed the Park.

The groundwork for this body-space relationship was laid in the redevelopment of the Lower Lea Valley. Here, the wider intention of this state intervention – bringing an existing space within policy-privileged circuits of value – comes into focus. The imposition of emptiness on the Lower Lea Valley in the idea of the space as blank canvas and in the reality of the compulsory purchase order, was aimed at the production of a body-space relationship that would condition practice in the Park. This shift is captured in Edensor's distinction between 'Dionysian' and 'Apollonian' tendencies within lived urban space. Previously host to informal and appropriative modes of spatial engagement, this shift involved a transformation of the practice of everyday life. While none of the informal or appropriative practices that characterised the Lower Lea Valley stood outside of the abstract space of capital, their accumulated sediment had created a set of spaces that were granular, tactile, and embedded with signs of their inhabitation. They centred a concrete relationship to the body through which an abstract idea of the space as legible plan was difficult to develop. With the production of the Olympic Park the space was smoothed over, flattened, and opened up. In this way, the Olympic Park was created as a space in which, in Lefebvre's terms, 'bodies are transported out of themselves, transferred and emptied out, as it were, via the eyes' (Lefebvre, 974; 98).

As an attempt to incorporate the Lower Lea Valley into new circuits of accumulation, this state intervention also rested on the production of a particular temporality of practice. The relationship between the body and space engenders rhythms of practice – spatial temporalities that gel with those of similar spaces across London and ensure a harmonious incorporation of this space into their expanding constellation. Like space, time leads an existence under capital that is at once concrete and abstract, sharing those characteristics of homogeneity and divisibility that are central to the form of value. Abstract time, like space, is central to the production of value as a social form and to the valorisation of capital. The function of the Park as a space drawing together circuits of value therefore rests on an everyday reproduction of these

abstractions in bodily practice. That practice is constrained by a rhythmic adoption of the temporalities of the Park: the cyclical time of its leisure spaces, the suspended time of the Westfield's transactional space, and the linear time of the Park's construction sites are all given life by the movement of bodies. However, the simultaneously concrete and abstract nature of these space-times is also embedded in their practice, defining their interrelation and lending them a contradictory nature.

In unifying the Park with its isotopic spaces across London, this actually existing abstract space-time guarantees an expanding financialised circulation of capital, labour, and commodities. This space-time must ensure its own reproduction, sustaining its internally contradictory practice in a lived mediation of the concrete and the abstract that results in its production as a representational space of capital. The Park's isotopic spaces share a post-industrial aesthetic, an emphasis on leisure, and an anti-urban mode of spatial organisation, expressing features of the mode of accumulation that they are built to contain and facilitate. The conditions of accumulation that underlie the production of the Park are thus reflected in both its material form and in the life that animates it. This is a simultaneous materialisation and idealisation of financialised capital as aesthetic and cultural form, the reification of a fetish form and its reflection in thought.

For Lefebvre this lived and representational formant of abstract space, as the third moment in his tripartite dialectic, stands for the creative potential embodied within the reproduction of forms, the kernel of excessive social life that gestures beyond the dominant abstraction of capital. In the Olympic Park, however, the social life of space is determined by an abstract plan and the lived potentiality of everyday life is mobilised towards the valorisation of capital. Nonetheless, the living practice of those who inhabit the Park embodies a suspended contradiction, as the lived concrete content of a dominating social abstraction. To fully understand this playing out of the contradiction between the concrete and the abstract, we must turn to the utopian presences that lie at the heart of

this dynamic. Having explored the production of the Park as centrality through its production as catalyst for alienated praxis, I will now explore the final way in which the Park might be understood as catalyst – as a space of heightened contradiction within which transformative rupture exists as potentiality.

7.4 - The Park as catalyst for transformation?

In this account of the dynamic life of capitalism the minutiae of everyday praxis form the ground on which dominating abstraction is embedded and reproduced. The value form and its associated abstractions originate in practices that place the body in relationship with other individuals, spaces, and objects. They appear naturalised, giving rise to thought and consciousness that reflects their abstract form, and take on a set of physical forms that directly constrain bodily practice. In this way, abstract space and time condition their own constituting praxis both as general abstractions and as the specific dominated content of those abstractions. However, while my account of the creation, inauguration, and inhabitation of the Olympic Park demonstrates this dynamic, it does not amount to an assertion of the total domination of life by capital. At the heart of this dynamic is the contradictory but essential presence of a utopian possibility inherent to everyday life.

Kanishka Goonewardena provides a useful discussion of this quality of the everyday in Lefebvre's work. The everyday is understood as residual matter, those practices and experiences that remain when nameable phenomena are discounted. It exists in relation to the 'higher and specialised spheres studied by academic experts: the state (the object of political science), the economy (the domain of political-economy), and culture (the province of anthropology)' as the foundational ground on which these phenomena are premised and which these phenomena shape (Goonewardena, 2008; 124). It is that which 'points to all that is possible contained in the real' (ibid).

Praxis can be understood as the substance of the everyday – the material content of social life. It is the constituting premise of those social relationships that take on abstracted, alienated, and fetishised forms. However, as these forms cast their long shadows across the everyday, it cannot be considered non-alienated. Lefebvre understands all praxis as determined by its alienated form, yet also as containing a kernel of something beyond that. O'Kane writes that 'in interpreting fetishism as a "concrete abstraction" Lefebvre fuses these theories of praxis and alienation' in order to produce a materialist theory of social dominance that centres on the fetish forms of capital (O'Kane, 2013; 167). Alienation therefore 'resides in the (relative) autonomy and (incomplete) detachment of "elevated" activities from everyday life' (Goonewardena, 2008; 128).

Lefebvre preserves a tension here. Because separation from the everyday is always incomplete, the everyday as 'utopian substance' can never be fully determined by the abstractions it gives rise to. O'Kane writes that Lefebvre 'posits that qualitative content always internally opposes these quantitative forms, and that it resists becoming entirely determined by them' (O'Kane, 2013; 172). The quantitative forms of the non-everyday, those alienated structures given life as reified fetishes of human social relationships, can never abandon the human relationships that animate them:

The abstract thing, the form (commodity, money, capital) cannot carry the process of reification ("thingification") to its conclusion. It cannot free itself from the human relationships it tends to dominate, to distort, to change into relations between things. It cannot fully exist *qua* thing. It remains an abstract thing for and through active human beings (Lefebvre, 1966b; 48).

The character of the everyday as utopian substance is submerged beneath its dominating fetish forms yet is inextinguishable within them – despite their abstracted nature they are ultimately inseparable from it. This position of irreducible human activity resonates with the Open Marxism of Werner Bonefeld, Kosmas Psychopedis, John Holloway and others. Grieg Charnock draws out this parallel, writing that as Open Marxism 'highlights how human

content (labour) is suspended (*aufgehoben*) in economic forms and categories as a determining force, within and against its negation (capital)', so too does Lefebvre seek to 'uncover and reinvigorate the negated human content of economic forms and structures' (Charnock, 2010; 1283-85). Bonefeld, quoting Marx in the *Grundrisse*, writes that labour in its broadest sense, as 'purposive productive activity' is a 'form-giving fire', that 'exists against itself as a value-creating, abstract wealth-producing commodity' (Bonefeld, 1995; 205). As such, human productive activity exists within and against capital.

For Lefebvre abstract space appears as an alienated power over praxis. He distinguishes between pre-capitalist social space as a 'work' (*oeuvre*) with a representational content, and capitalist social space as 'a dialectical category, a negating concept' imposed on and suppressive of the potentiality of the everyday (ibid; 1293). The irreducible element of human activity exists within and against this negating power – abstract space is not only a 'negating concept' but is the negation of its own negation. It is precisely as this negation that spaces such as the Park ensure the ongoing reproduction of capital. The contradictory and conflictual nature of this reproduction can be fully grasped in Lefebvre's third moment, following his discussion of lived or representational space back to his writing on praxis, poiesis, and mimesis. Where praxis is the originator of social relationships and 'the locus and origin of concepts', poiesis is the appropriation of nature and 'creation of works' (ibid 26-27). Mimesis is both 'a level of praxis' and 'related to mimesis', as the interrelation between repetition and invention – the introduction of difference in the re-creation of the existing (ibid; 28). Mimesis 'secretes structures' that embody 'the uneven, chequered, and conflictual character of becoming' (ibid; 29). In this third term the interweaving of the material and the ideal holds together a tension between repetition and rupture.

In its lived formant that the Park, as catalyst for redevelopment, is revealed to also be Park as catalyst for potential rupture: as a point of contradiction. Here it is possible to most fully recognise the way in which the utopian potential on

which abstract space is predicated remains preserved within within that space. Derek Kerr expresses this when discussing Lefebvre's 'contradictions of space'. He argues that contradiction in the form of abstract space is an expression of the presence of labour within capital. The utopian potential suspended within abstract space is precisely the presence of living human labour within (and against) capital:

the form, nature and very existence of "capitalist space" expresses and adheres in and through the contradictory and antagonistic presence of labour in capital. This is the dialectic, not one of time nor of space but of the presence of the power of labour within capital, a negative dialectic, a dialectic of negation with no certain synthesis
(Kerr, 1994; 33)

Grasping this character of the third moment suggests a necessary rejection of the idea that 'resistive' spaces might be easily identified, or that any individual space (outside of a moment of true revolutionary rupture) might be thought of as utopian. Instead, the utopian potential for difference is present throughout abstract space, folded into even those spaces most completely subsumed to the reproduction of capital. Lefebvre most often discusses the representational formant of space as that which embodies contradictory social meanings, particularly those of past spatial forms that remain as residue within abstract space. However as the formant that equates with lived space, representational space also expresses tensions inherent to capitalism. The way in which space is lived under capital renders it representational of capital itself, but this means it is also representational of the irreducible 'form-giving fire' of living praxis, of the open potential of everyday life that capital is predicated on the appropriation and subsumption of.

The constitution of the Park as a representational space of capital, as a lived space in which capital has come to dominate a praxis that nevertheless imbues it with a suspended and uncontainable excess, is at the heart of my characterisation of the Olympic Park as an 'actually existing abstract space'. Each of my substantive substantive chapters were concerned with the ways in which the utopian potential of everyday life is mobilised in the production of

abstract space and remains as a point of tension within it. The sequence of these chapters describes a narrative by which this utopian potential can be understood to be folded into every element of the Park's production.

The affective charge of the Olympic crowd encounter can be understood as an instance of future-orientated hope. This expansive sense of the 'not-yet conscious' as a glimpse of already-present 'concrete utopia' recalls Lefebvre's characterisation of the everyday as 'utopian substance' (Bloch; 1959; 127). The Olympic festival represented a summoning of utopian possibility, predicated on the circulation of a hopeful affect through bodies and spaces. The mega-event offered a sense of a better life to come: through a temporary suspension of work in favour of leisure, and through the promise of a longer-lasting transformation of urban space. The expansive nature of the not-yet conscious was carefully channelled into imagining Olympic space as capitalist urbanity perfected. In this image the festival moment is perversely united with an everyday life that appears as the seamless life of capital. Work, leisure, and consumption lose their distinctness, becoming moments of valorisation and nothing more.

Of course this image is a mystification – individuals employed at the games worked just as they always work and, exhausted, returned home to reproduce their labour-power for the next day. However, the mystification is illuminating in that it projects an image of the Park's aspirations as a productive and reproductive space that emphasises the flexibility of a play-inflected 'creative' labour. The 'broad' production of the Park as utopian space in the crowd encounter laid the groundwork for what it was to become. While the Park was constructed in cognitive and manual labour, its living inhabitation initiated it as centrality, indicating the way in which it would become a catalyst for redevelopment. As such this utopian image, despite its perverse and inverted form, has roots in a truly utopian possibility: that of everyday praxis at its most expansive and irreducible.

The clearing of the Lower Lea Valley, as intervention in London's urban fabric, created as a space that would direct and mould this expansive everyday possibility towards its intended function as a space of accumulation. The Lower Lea Valley had previously been a space that afforded a subjective and meandering engagement with the abandoned or overgrown spaces between its warehouses and small businesses. It was a space appropriated and shaped in the living of everyday life, bearing the marks of the openness of praxis that remains when structuring elements retreat. With the construction of the Park a space was created that through its geometric, visual, and phallic qualities gathered certain forms of praxis and excluded others. As the materialisation of a representation of space, this was also a materialisation of the social forms on which that representation of space was predicated. It amounted to the (re)embedding in space of a particular set of social relationships that ordered praxis around them, acting upon the way in which the utopian in everyday life is incorporated into the valorisation of capital.

The way in which the incorporation of this 'form-giving fire' shapes the spaces that it animates can be understood through the way in which that space becomes temporalised. The emergence of rhythms of practice in the inhabited Park indicates a development of routine out of the various existing possibilities of social life. This routine is what Lefebvre refers to when he describes praxis as repetition of forms, and social relations are reified precisely through this repetitive praxis. Similarly, Goonewardena writes that Lefebvre distinguishes between 'the everyday' as 'incomplete, embattled, yet actually existing "species being"', and 'everydayness' as "'the homogeneous, the repetitive [and] the fragmentary" forms of being-in-the-everyday of modernity' (Lefebvre, cited Goonewardena, 2008; 129-130). The formation of rhythms of practice in the Olympic Park represents this dominance of the homogeneous, repetitive, and fragmented, conditioned by the space in which it developed.

However, despite the imposition of everydayness the everyday retains some element of its 'utopian substance'. The space-time produced in the practice of

the Park cannot be fully uniform or fully abstract due to its rootedness in practice. Movement between contrasting rhythms and temporalities within the Park attests to this. Equally, the tension at the heart of leisure time (a temporality central to the Park) makes palpable the contradiction between the concrete and the abstract, as cyclical and bodily reproductive rhythm clashes with the suspended time of exchange and the linear time of production. It is this aspect that gives snatched moments of leisure their utopian quality of retreat from oppressive repetition: leisure is an instance of the everyday against everydayness. Within the practice of the Park, then, the 'utopian substance' of the everyday, on which it is founded and through which its function as a catalyst for redevelopment is animated, remains tangible.

The lived and representational quality of the Park is therefore at once alienated and utopian. As the Park comes to maturity so too does its inverted utopian presence within abstract space, recalling its character at the moment of the games. This sense of utopian potential remains tangible within the practice of the Park, and becomes associated not with the open possibility that it gestures towards, but with the Park itself. The playful, fluid, and organic aesthetics of the Park integrate this sense. Its post-industrial, anti-urban, and leisure-orientated character implies a narrative in which the hard manual labour of the past is replaced by a an artistic engagement with creative industries (forgetting, of course, that a small army of manual labourers maintain the Park daily).

These aesthetic qualities unite the Park with a set of isotopic spaces, in which a unified practice constitutes a space through which capital, commodities, money, and labour circulate. It is this isotopic space that the Park was intended to expand as catalyst. As such, there is a direct link between the Park's function as a catalyst for redevelopment and its evocation of a utopian presence within the everyday. The tension that this space must navigate – and that in the early years of its Legacy period it appears to be navigating successfully – is that between the utopian everyday and repetitive everydayness. The utopian everyday animates the Park as centrality, informing a practice of space

predicated on a future-orientation and an imaginary of leisure. However, the inculcation of an ordered and directed praxis is also essential for the successful management of this utopian potentiality.

The London Olympic Park's successful navigation of this tension stands in contrast to other recent Olympic mega-projects. The Park has retained an element of its foundational festival affect, but also woven this into the quotidian life of everydayness. Other Olympic developments have seen their affective charge dissipate, leaving their spaces empty and mournful, or else were predicated on such open violence that the affective charge of their games was never resolved into the festival that London experienced. This is not to say that the London Olympic Park is clean of violence: the clearing of the Lower Lea Valley meant displacing communities, destroying informal spaces, and enclosing a significant area of East London's freer space. The very purpose of the Park as catalyst for redevelopment is a violent one – the promise of greater returns on investment and higher rent is sure to price out existing communities. The Park's navigation of this tension is therefore always insecure, and while it presents for its residents and users a vision of the contemporary capitalist city perfected, it has not been greeted as such universally.

The Park as catalyst for redevelopment must therefore be understood in terms of the Park as a sharpening of contradiction, a dynamic that is perhaps inevitable as capital grounds itself within everyday life but at the same time seeks to short-circuit its need for materialisation. This contradiction, as capital simultaneously burrows into the everyday and strains to escape it, summons forth a utopian image of capitalist production as flexible and creative play that suggests an escape from capital all together. At the same time, it provokes a divide between communities, between those drawn into the Park and engaged in its modes of work and rest, and those held outside it, unable to spend the time or the money necessary to fully enter into its everyday life.

This divide, expressed as one between the 'old' and 'new' East End, was a regular feature of interviews with residents of the East Village. They were aware of their orientation towards the Park's isotopic spaces, and their absence of engagement with Stratford and Leyton. As the Park establishes itself as a catalyst for redevelopment it creates itself as centrality and also constitutes its own periphery. As the contradictory nature of the Park's lived space unfolds, it may also stand as a catalyst for a more fundamental transformation. This is true of every attempt made at prolonging the life of capital. That which extends and expands its reproduction must also carry internal consequences. How these might play out within the Olympic Park, and London in general, is difficult to predict, but it should not be forgotten that a year previous to the inauguration of the Olympic Park, London was gripped by unrest and riot. This shadow followed the games and, more distantly, follows the Park still.

7.5 - Conclusion

For the Park to act as centrality, as gathering-point for flows of people, commodities, and capital, it must inculcate particular modes of practice in those who inhabit, use, and traverse its space. This instilling of practice is at root not a disciplining of the body (although this does come into it) but a more fundamental constitution of the individual's relationship to an external world comprised of reified social abstractions. The everyday practice that the Park has encouraged contains particular elements of this abstract spatiality and embodied self-understanding. In each of these, as a space defined by the Olympic mega-event, the Park has played on the incorporation and control of a utopian potential as animating life-force. As such the Olympic Park, as a catalyst for redevelopment, must also be a point at which a glimpse of something else is caught, a sharpening contradiction that might serve as catalyst for a rupture that would explode this contradiction and birth a disalienated social life and its attendant differential space.

My account of the production of the Olympic Park is an account of the creation and integration of a gentrifying mega-project within London's urban fabric. It is an account of the way in which capital ensures its expanded reproduction through the continual transformation of spaces to suit the needs of an evolving accumulation. I have described the way in which this production of space mobilised hope and an irrepressible future-orientation in order to gather and manage praxis towards the reinforcement of a particular mode of accumulation. While the Olympic Park is a stark example, this dynamic is recognisable in many of London's existing redevelopment projects. Further, mine is an account that proceeds from a perspective focused on the practices and experience of space within everyday life. Situating my study within public urban space has allowed me to concentrate on this residual quality of the everyday, and therefore to construct a narrative of mega-project redevelopment that foregrounds the relationship between practice and the social forms that it constitutes.

The character of space under capitalism as a lived abstraction renders it particularly amenable for exploration by ethnographic means. O'Kane argues in his conclusion that a fruitful combination of Adorno, Lukács, and Lefebvre's work on abstraction can provide 'a good basis for integrating other elements of society into an account of how the socially specific form of capitalist social production constitutes and reproduces itself', pointing out that 'Lefebvre's concept of 'abstract space' and his ideas proposing a sociological study of abstract forms might be a good example of how to embed such theory in empirical reality whilst allowing for some type of internal resistance and contestation' (O'Kane, 2013; 213).

This ethnographic project approached the study of space through the body and through the specificities of my own transgender embodiment. While this complication of an embodied research paradigm has not featured heavily in my analysis, it has informed the way in which I conducted my research. My experience of space as a transwoman has implicitly conditioned my understanding of space as a concrete abstraction. This deserves further

consideration and examination, particularly of the way in which the gendered quality of space constitutes an element of the way in which this real abstraction is 'lived' and made representational¹¹. My own experience of the Olympic Park was an experience of a (material) conceived space as it came to be lived and rendered socially concrete, and this experience necessarily intersected with an experience of my own embodied gender identity. Reading back over my notes, an initial sense of freedom from scrutiny in the uninhabited spaces of the park gives way to a greater awareness of the way in which I am perceived and a sense that I need to make coherent my feminine presentation, mirroring the development of a sense of 'everydayness' within that space.

This study of the Olympic Park should be understood as one engagement with this call for empirical studies of the way in which the 'socially specific form of capitalist social production constitutes and reproduces itself' through the production of space as an actually existing abstraction. As an ethnography of space that engages in a sustained exploration of Lefebvre's work, this thesis should also be understood as an argument for a communist urban studies. This praxis-focused and ground-up urban studies would take the concrete abstraction as a central concept, reading Lefebvre alongside similar works from other traditions of Marxism in order to deepen and expand this insight, as I have done here. Further, as the scattered comments regarding my experience of this space from the perspective of a transgendered embodiment has indicated, this approach to the urban would provide a fruitful base from which to incorporate a study of the intersection of gender, race, and other social stratifications with the reproduction of capital.

11 Alongside Lefebvre's own comments on the gendered nature of abstract space (for example, in its phallic formant), elements that might feed into this analysis include writers schools of thought that I've drawn on here, including: certain Marxist queer theorists (see Floyd, 2009), value-form theorists (see Scholz, 2009; and Trenkle, 2008), and materialist feminists of the communisation current (see Gonzales, 2011; Valentine, 2012; and Endnotes, 2013)

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Appendix A: Interviewee table

No .	Interview date	Name	Relationship to Olympic spaces
1	13/11/12	Betty	Olympics attendee (as teaching assistant)
2	13/11/12	Samantha	Olympics attendee
3	16/11/12	Liam	Olympics attendee
4	22/11/12	Catherine	Olympics attendee, employee at Olympic site
5	24/11/12	Mallika	Olympics attendee
6	05/12/12	Edward	Olympics attendee
7	05/12/12	Lara	Olympics attendee
8	06/12/12	Abigail	Olympics attendee
9	15/02/13	Hannah	Employee on Cultural Olympiad project
10	15/02/13	James	Hackney resident during games
11	15/02/13	Imogen	Olympics attendee
12	15/02/13	Daisy	Olympics attendee, employee at Olympic site
13	15/02/13	Nathan	Olympics attendee, employee at Olympic site
14	15/02/13	Theo	Critical Mass participant, photographer of Olympic site
15	17/02/13	Martha	Olympics attendee
16	17/02/13	Sally	Olympics attendee
17	19/02/14	Adam	Healthcare Centre worker, prev. Olympic healthcare provider
18	19/02/14	Ivy	Homerton resident, worker on Cultural Olympiad project
19	19/02/14	Simon	Olympics attendee, employee at Timber Lodge cafe
20	21/02/14	Tim	Stratford estate agent
21	20/02/14	Jacob	Clay's Lane resident
22	27/02/14	Sam	Get Living London employee
23	28/02/14	Daniel	Viewtube Cafe employee
24	21/03/14	Jansi	Triathlon Homes employee
25	09/04/14	Mark	East Village resident, Olympic attendee
26	25/04/14	Kara	East Village resident
27	29/07/14	Alice	East Village resident, vicar for the Olympic Park
28	11/08/14	John	East Village resident, employee of Olympic Delivery Authority
29	12/08/14	Peter	East Village resident, Olympic attendee
30	19/08/14	Alex	East Village resident, Olympic attendee
31	21/08/14	Aaron	Landscape architect for the Olympic Park
32	27/08/14	Jane	East Village resident