The art of 'décalage':

Encounters between artists, communities and place

Reflections on the ZEPA 2 (European Zone of Artistic Projects, 2013-2015) touring and outreach programme

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Summary

This research paper is the outcome of the observation of the outreach and touring programme of the ZEPA 2 project in the UK which targeted areas of low cultural engagement with the aim of creating new links between artists and communities across the ZEPA 2 region. Based on four months fieldwork and interviews with ZEPA partners, artists and participants, the research considers the forms of engagement and participation that were facilitated during these events, and investigates their effects on participants. This paper develops the concept of 'décalage' (from the French word for dislocation) to examine these cross-cultural projects and to open up new vocabularies for outdoors arts research and practice. In particular, it describes two dimension of décalage. First, it is suggested that street art interventions can enable community events by engaging participants in forms of creative décalage which carries notions of play, emotions and social participation. At the same time, the paper documents the different understandings and expectations of 'community engagement' that animate such projects: this is the second sense of décalage and highlights some of the challenges in cross-cultural events. The paper concludes with some wider implications for policy and practice.

This research paper is aimed at artists, professionals, funders, cultural organisers and academics in the field of culture and performing arts.

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A Frenchman in an English market town dressed in an orange lab coat and carrying a camera. This unusual scene became a familiar one during the touring and outreach programme of the ZEPA 2. I came to follow him as part of a research project that aimed to provide an account of the experiences of street art in community programmes. We will come to him in a moment.

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Introduction

ZEPA 2 (European Zone of Artistic Projects – 2013-2015) is a European outdoor arts network of seven arts organisations based in Southern England and Northern France supporting the development of transnational street art projects through commissioning, programming, artists residencies and exchanges, and a cross-border touring and outreach programme (www.zepa2.eu).

Street arts, or outdoor arts[1], cover a wide range of performance practices in the public space. It has its roots in carnival and the alternative performance, art and theatre of the 1960s, in the UK and especially in France, when theatre-makers and artists began to take performance outside of conventional theatres to explore new relationships with audiences by working outdoors and in the street (Mason, 1992; Gaber, 2009). The movement aimed to create a popular counterculture of art and theatre in opposition to the mainstream culture of the late 20th century, where the visual arts tradition dominated, especially in the UK (Kershaw, 1992). Since then, street art has evolved to include a wide range of outdoor performance practices and artistic creation, including aerial acrobatics, walkabout characters, installations, promenade shows, dance, puppetry, and many more (see Haedicke, 2013; www.horslesmurs.fr). Two central principles animate this expanding field: a desire to inscribe artistic work within public spaces and a concern with enabling more immediate encounters between the art and the audience. As it intervenes within urban settings, street arts' relationship with the audience is a dynamic one: by enrolling both assembled spectators and recruiting passers-by into the performance, it develops experimental and participatory modes of audience engagement. Following this tradition, the ZEPA 2 network pursues these same artistic objectives on a European platform, bringing together French and English professionals around a common approach (see Lee's paper in this volume).

Of the different strands of ZEPA 2, this study focuses on analyzing the impact of the outreach and touring programme on communities and on place. The outreach and touring programme targeted areas of low cultural engagement and locations lacking cultural infrastructures, "to encourage interaction between artists and ZEPA 2 communities" and increase access to the arts and culture for all: "Residents, students, volunteers and members of the general public will be able to take part in discussions, workshops or outreach projects related to the new shows toured or created by the companies invited" (ZEPA 2 brochure, 2013, p.5). This research focuses on the UK-based programmes which brought French artists to tour in mostly rural areas and market towns in Hampshire, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire[2]. It covers the touring and outreach activities led by Hat Fair (Winchester), SeaChange (Great Yarmouth) and Vivacity (Peterborough), between June and September 2014.

This paper considers the potential of street art for community engagement in the context of cross-cultural programmes. It asks: What forms of engagement and participation are facilitated

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[1] While there is a wider debate about terminology, this study uses the terms interchangeably.

[2] Since this study has only focused on a strand of ZEPA 2 over one year in 2014, it does not claim to provide a comprehensive overview of the network. More information can be found on the website, www.zepa2.eu, and the 2012 publication Over the Channel.

during street art outreach and touring events? How do participants experience street art interventions? How does performance connect with community and with place?

There is currently only limited analytical or critical academic work on street art and questions of participation and engagement are surprisingly under-examined. To date, most studies have focused on large scale events or festivals and the aesthetics of performance (see for example Haedicke, 2013). This paper seeks to address these gaps and examine the intersections between street arts, audiences and place in the context of small scale outreach projects and interventions, using the case of ZEPA 2.

The wider aim of the paper is to develop a creative vocabulary for understanding, analysing and evaluating street art outreach and touring events. It draws upon the academic fields of cultural geography and participatory theory to provide new insights on street art practices. This paper proposes the notion of 'décalage' – from the French word meaning dislocation – as a conceptual framework to examine the ZEPA 2 experience, and as a theoretical tool to consider modes of performance and the effects of audience's engagement with street art.

The paper proceeds in three parts. The following section describes the concept of décalage in relation to performance. The paper then develops this concept in empirical terms by examining the ZEPA 2 programme. In the next section, the research's methodology is presented, before moving onto the empirical analysis. Drawing in part on interviews and conversations with participants in the outreach and touring programme, the research finds that street art affords audiences with a creative sense décalage linked to ideas of play, emotions and social engagement. The research also highlights a second more ambivalent sense of décalage, linked to the different ideas of 'community engagement' that animate such transnational interventions. The paper thus contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of street arts on community and place. It provides a new lens to reflect on the cultural and social 'efficacies'[3] of this kind of performance. It also highlights the need to untangle how ideas of 'engagement' and 'participation' in the arts are understood and mediated by professionals, including artists and cultural producers, who often use the same language linked to different concerns. The concluding section highlights the broader implications of the findings for policy and practice, in particular, how the idea of décalage might be used to reframe notions of 'impact'. The notion of impact is considered in relation to the transient nature of street art: as a fleeting performance in time, it may be more appropriate to think of traces as a way to investigate the wider, longer term impact of street arts. The paper ends by offering some directions for future research in this direction.

Décalage: introducing a new vocabulary

The French term décalage has no direct translation in English. It signifies a slippage, a rift, an interval; it refers to that which is off-kilter, slightly off-the-wall. In its etymological sense, it means the act of 'unwedging' and its resulting effect. The French verb 'caler' means to prop up or wedge something (like one leg on an uneven table), so décalage is the removal of such a wedge. It can also mean a hiatus, a temporal lag – as in jet lag, with its implied disorientation[4].

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[3] Performance 'efficacies' is a term developed by Baz Kershaw (1992) in his study of alternative British theatre to consider the ability of performance to effect social change. Within ZEPA 2 the interventions were not so explicitly framed in these terms; however, in their cultural-democratic ideals, the question of impact on place and on community were central.

[4] The concept of décalage has been used elsewhere to very different purposes. The philosopher Louis Althusser employed the notion of décalage to reflect on Marx's philosophy and the relations between ideology and science; the term has also been employed in Freudian psychoanalysis (Bersani, 1986) and psychology (on the work of Jean Piaget, see Flavell, 1963). Most recently, it has been used within

The idea of décalage developed in this paper draws together these different senses of the term. Décalage is a gap, a fissure, but not a rupture. The notion of décalage highlights difference and distance but remains connected. As a metaphor and as a descriptor, its strategic coinage here aims to contribute to new critical vocabularies for analysing outdoor arts interventions in trans-cultural contexts. In particular, the term is mobilized to draw attention to the perceptual and affective shifts created during the encounters between artists, communities and place and render visible the varied practices of engagement made possible through these encounters.

There are two senses of décalage that this paper aims to develop. The first sense of décalage is an aesthetic and affective experience that occurs as street artists intervene in the social fabric of the everyday. Here, décalage is the playful sense of dislocation which becomes part of the performance and the public interaction. There is also a strong spatial dimension to the concept linked to street art's concern with investing (and reclaiming) public spaces.

The second sense décalage is the semantic sense of dislocation. It addresses the distinctions in meanings, associations and intentions which are attached to words and the different ways in which these are deployed in rhetoric and practice. As the paper will go on to show, such décalage in cross-cultural artistic projects is linked to the difficulties of translation, but also to the distinct political and social histories and cultural contexts of French and English artists and cultural producers. This can lead to a sense of mismatch between the meanings of 'outreach' and 'engagement' and the different roles of the artists and the audience in these interventions. Here décalage refers to the potential contradictions and tensions within these programmes that can dilute the possibilities for public/community engagement or exaggerate its promise.

Décalage – as a theoretical concept and as an empirical framework– therefore opens up a new critical vocabulary through which we can rethink the workings of outdoor art interventions on community and place. It offers a frame to designate a mode of artistic and creative practice and allows the researcher to examine the dynamics of a performance and the nature of individuals' participation within it. It also provides a way to consider the shifts and renewals that constitute cross-border arts practice, which revolve around the practice of translation and are constituted through points of connection and noncoincidence. Décalage presents a sense of uncertain potential with a range of consequences, sometimes positive and sometimes problematic.

Methodology

The analysis in this paper is grounded in a qualitative research methodology. Participant observation was employed and as a researcher I followed the French artists during the tours and took part in the workshop activities over four months between June and September 2014. During this time, semi-structured interviews were conducted with artists (4 companies, a total of 10 artists), 4 cultural producers[5] and 7 community partners. The research focuses specifically on the community's engagement and participation in the performance, rather than focusing on the content of performance or its artistic or aesthetic merit. As such, a mixed methodology was used to explore audiences' experiences of the outreach and touring programme, including informal conversations, 'vox pops'[6] and a questionnaire which was distributed during the

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postcolonial and diaspora theory (Edwards, 2003; Andrew, 2009). My own coinage of the term in the context of the study of street art provides yet another interpretation of the term to examine transnational cultural events and the effects of outdoor arts on audiences.

[5] The term 'cultural producers' is used quite broadly to refer to different actors in UK arts and cultural organisations

[6] 'Vox pop' comes from the Latin meaning 'voices of the people' and is media tool to provide a snapshot of public opinion, usually of people on the street.

workshops. Through this close engagement with the ZEPA 2 touring and outreach activities, it is possible to gain a deeper insight into the social fabric of these interventions[7].

The research is organised around, and oriented to, a grounded criticality that seeks to provide reflections for developing outreach and engagement work within these types of arts projects. To this end, it aims to uncover the effects – intended and unintended – of the different interpretations, configurations and practices of community engagement. Methodologically, this concern is reflected in the second part of this paper in the analysis of interviews by situating these within wider national and cultural contexts.

First décalage: encounters between artists, communities and place

The touring and outreach programme for ZEPA 2 took place over the summer 2014 across Hampshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. The programme took two main forms: the touring programme was developed in partnership with smaller local events and festivals in rural areas and market towns, and included performances by five French companies: Qualité Street's *La Fleur au Fusil*, a military general and his subordinate in a musical clowning duo; Companie Kitschnette's *Aux P'tits Oignons,* a romantic meal that goes terribly wrong; Carnage Productions *The S.W.A.T,* a Commando comedy abseil and training stunts; De Fakto's *Le Petit Bal 2 Rue*, an enchanting dance duo mixing Hip Hop and 50s music; and Les Cubiténistes' *The Museum of Everyday Life*, an interactive fantasy photography studio. A second element of the programme was a series of outreach workshops with Further Education colleges and community groups for the creation of a large scale installation-décor for the festivals at Peterborough and Great Yarmouth.

The reflections presented in the following section are grounded in a broader engagement with these performances, field observations, and interviews and informal conversations with participants and audiences. Since *The Museum of Every Life* (hereafter *The Museum*) was the piece with the most repeated performances (including a solo tour over 5 dates in Hampshire), and since this company was the only one to lead the workshops, much of the empirical commentary is linked to this piece. However, the aim is not to evaluate the artistic merit of this

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[7] This study is therefore written from the perspective of the researcher as participant observer. As such the views presented in the paper are my own as an independent researcher and not those of the wider ZEPA 2 network. It is worth noting that the cultural differences observed in the ZEPA 2 (the second sense décalage presented in this paper) also revealed cross-cultural differences in relation to research approaches, academic thought, fieldwork methodologies and writing conventions in a French and UK context. Whereas the French styles of intellectual argument tend to place a stronger emphasis on theoretical issues, Anglo-American writing has tended toward empirically-driven and deductive argumentation (see Galtung, 1981; Ventola and Mauranen, 1996). Another distinction is the use of the first person singular 'I' perspective in English which is often avoided in French. This distinction is not solely linguistic but it is also cultural one (see Vassileva, 1998). In fact, language-and-culture (as ontologically linked) are central questions in this research and so it is therefore useful to establish my own position in relation to this research and my own presence in the text. I am writing within an academic tradition influenced by post-trsucturalist and post-modern philosophies, wherein much of the humanities and social sciences now emphasise the situated nature of knowledge and a socially constructed reality. Herein, the possibility for 'objective' or value-free research no longer has any serious purchase. Within this study qualitative methodologies including participant observation and interviews with artists, cultural producers and participants were used to derive findings; theories most common to human geography are used to frame the discussion; discourses and theories of participation focus the interpretation; and the researcher's position is openly situated in a commitment to cultural access and inclusion (and against an elitist and exclusive view). The aim of this research is not, therefore, to present a 'scientific' study of street art, nor a comprehensive review, but rather to examine certain elements of a specific project at a specific time through the (equally specific) lens of participation.

particular performance; rather, the aim is to investigate the affective and social dimensions of street art performances and their effects on participants, and use *The Museum* to illustrate the potential of street arts more generally for creative community engagement.

Before turning to an analysis of ZEPA 2, it is useful to situate this study within the current literature.

Framing street art in theory

Contemporary research on street art has examined the role of performance in rendering visible and re-working the city. Street art offers more than outdoors entertainment: reality and imagination comingle to confuse, subvert and challenge the meaning and functions of everyday activities and urban spaces (Haedicke, 2013). As Jen Harvie has noted, outdoor arts "bring people together in live, shared encounters and offer people opportunities performatively to influence urban life" (2009, p.7). The very form of street art means their interventions are sites of multiple possibilities with the potential to offer intriguing, unexpected and exciting experiences for audiences; indeed, street art shows and festivals are frequently promoted along such terms. Much of street art also has an overtly political tone, linked to the art form's roots in radical theatre. Susan Haedicke's work, from an English perspective, is particularly relevant here: reviewing an extensive range of interventions (many from French companies), she argues that street art performances can provide politicised theatrical spaces that engage with people's emotions/feelings and enable the audience to rehearse democratic practices (2013, p.2). She posits that since the boundaries between performance and everyday are so porous in street art, public engagement and participation in street art performances can then translate into a critical engagement and participation in civil society. In the ZEPA 2 project, the touring and outreach programme has focused on collaboration with cultural institutions rather than contestation: the street art interventions aimed to encourage community gathering and promote wider access to and inclusion in the arts. As such, the defined scope of the interventions was positivist and supportive rather than dissentient. In fact, as Shannon Jackson (2011) also remarks in her own review of performing arts, if we only think of disruption in oppositional terms, we also risk losing sight of the other ways by which art practices can lead to a re-imagining of place and of the social. This paper addresses such alternatives, drawing in particular from theoretical approaches most common to cultural geography. Cultural geographers have analysed the intersections between aesthetic practices and locale (Foster and Lorimer, 2007; Mar and Anderson, 2012; Hawkins, 2013) in order to advance a more complex understanding of place and of community: simply put, place and community are produced rather than just existing as something to be discovered (which is sometimes how they understood in art works). From this perspective, art can be seen to actively contribute to the processes that generate the changing qualities of place (Massey and Rose, 2003). Another focus on geographer's engagement with place has been an engagement with the notion of 'play' in the city – a theme that emerged strongly within the ZEPA 2 study.

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<center>*It is time to return to the Frenchman with the camera.*</center>

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The ZEPA 2 encounters: three modes of engagement with street arts

During the performance of *The Museum,* the street is transformed into a photographic studio where anything can happen. The five Cubiténistes – 'philosophes de l'absurde' – dressed in bright coloured lab coats invite passers-by to take part in their show. With a few words of 'Franglais' and often enthusiastic gesticulating they explain *The Museum*: "We want to take your picture. You are the work of art, the masterpiece in this museum". The Cubiténistes coax and entice the public into their outdoor studio. Simple correx[8] props, or 'objects' as the artists refer to them – a glass of wine, a sun and a trumpet – are used to invite people into the performance. They are lined up in a customised trolley, waiting to be picked up and passed on to a passer-by; upon receiving these the audience is encouraged to animate the objects, to 'act out' a scene within a wooden frame. The public are invited to strike a pose, to smile widely or pull a funny face for the camera, often leading by example as they jump into the picture. In the largest frame (some 2 by 3 metres wide), groups and families are 'pegged up': washing line pegs on strings are used to hook people up – by their clothes and by their hair[9]. The result is hundreds of portraits and group photographs, many with a surrealist feel: www.cubitenistes.com/spectacles.html. The photographs are printed and plastified in A4 format and as the day goes The Museum takes form as the many faces of the community are displayed side by side.

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<center>*'You are a collective masterpiece. Un chef d'oeuvre!'', exclaims the Frenchman in the orange coat.*</center>

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In Hampshire *The Museum* was toured in four small towns over the three last weekends of June 2014. Over this period, over a thousand people participated in the Museum and over 400 pictures were printed. Les Cubiténistes also performed as part of small festivals in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk where they engaged several thousand more. Because of the extremely transitory and short-term nature of the audience engagement, often lasting only five minutes, the time to pose and snap a picture, from a research perspective there were challenges in terms of collecting in-depth audience feedback: supple research methodologies were adopted instead, including observation and gathering 'vox pops' from participants through short, open-ended questions As a researcher I followed the artists and took part in the performances; as I observed these events and discussed the show with audiences, three main elements of performance and their affective dimensions came to the fore: play, emotions and social forms of engagement.

Play

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[8] Correx is a type of plastic board.
[9] Having taken part on several occasion, I can personally attest that no one was harmed in the process!

'Play' was an important theme to emerge in terms of the audience reception of the performance. The work inserted itself into the everyday in order to make the familiar strange – parks and street corners were transformed into spaces for play, where people were invited to become a part of this transformation. During the ZEPA 2 tours, participants spoke with excitement about their experiences, as intriguing, unusual and unexpected encounters with artists. The playful nature of performance broke down some of the barriers in terms of elitists and exclusive perception of the arts: "it's an easy-going thing; really accessible and approachable" commented one participant, and this sentiment was echoed by many.

Play has often been undervalued as an area for enquiry, generally applied only to children's activities; however in geography there has been a growing interest in considering the ludic in relation to the everyday. Rather than a specific set of actions, play is characterised by freedom, openness and experimentation (Stevens, 2007). According to Woodyer (2012, p.322), playing is "a form of coming to consciousness and a way to be otherwise": as such it is replete with a transformational potential. Certainly in how I observed the audience's behaviour, and in interpreting their reflections in our conversations, play presented a distinctive mode of engagement with *The Museum*. Participants often engaged with the performance in families or in groups: together they engaged in moments of play, often interacting with strangers. This was enabled by the interaction with the props and wooden frames, and the playful acts performed by the artist-photographers in their orange lab coats. This was not always easy or straightforward for the artists, as passers-by were often reticent to engage at first – some assumed they were busking for money, or were trying to sell them something. The energy of the performance was therefore key to creating these distinctive atmospheres for play[10]. In doing so, in the various public spaces where *The Museum* was performed, it revealed the potentialities that public space offers, by pointing to its non-functional uses (see Stevens, 2007): turning park, pavements or the courtyard of an estate into a whimsical living museum. One community partners reflected that "we don't have any community facilities yet [in the estate] so it's difficult for people to go out and meet. [These events are] what helps to create the 'speciality' of this estate. And as you can see people are coming …" In this way, simple acts contributed in some way to altering people's everyday experience of place.

Emotions

A second dimension of performance observed during the tours was the emotional experiences it afforded participants. The Cubiténistes spoke about their work in these terms: "we want to bring joy and happiness" and "to connect with people's feelings". While play represented the energetic dimension of performance, *The Museum* produced unexpected encounters which invited a more intimate and reflexive engagement. Two particular experiences are illustrative of this emotional engagement:

A young couple approach The Museum. They hang around for a while, but they aren't interested in taking part. As I start to talk to them, the young man – probably no older than 22, tells me he has broken the terms of his release, and has a court hearing tomorrow: he expects he will be sent back to jail. His girlfriend, about the same age, is currently pregnant after two recent miscarriages. After chatting with me for a while the guy asks whether he can have a picture taken to give to his girlfriend for when he is inside, something to remember him by. In his picture, he holds a hand-written sign that reads 'I love Becki and bump'.

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[10] John Wright's (2006) writings on physical comedy, 'Why is that so funny?' provides a useful avenue to further explore this theme, in particular his ideas of intensity, and the notion of 'complicity' in leading the audience into performance.

On another occasion, there was a young man who stayed with us several hours and part way through, began to Skype the performance to his friends on his phone. He was a recent migrant to the UK, and with very little English our conversation didn't go very far. But I waved to his family and somewhere across the world they also joined in the performance.

These are just two specific examples in the diversity of interactions that made up *The Museum.* As examples they draw attention to the unexpected points of emotional and intimate connection created by the unusual, out of the ordinary nature of performance. For many participants, this emotional engagement seemed to connect them with others: with friends, family, and for some, with a wider sense of community, as one audience member commented: "when they put up all the pictures I thought it was beautiful. It did stir up an emotion in me actually. It really made me think 'that reflects the community' ". The photographs enabled immediate commentary and discussion, as people scanned the different faces, pausing and pointing when they recognised themselves and others in the image. This strong representational element of performance was an important element through which performance was activated and further connected to community.

Social engagement

Although people's engagement with *The Museum* was fleeting, despite this transience the performance seemed to help produce moments of sociality and conviviality. Reflecting on play, the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1996) has argued that playing creates a space and time apart, with its own logics, which produces its own social relations. A third feature of *The Museum* was the distinctive forms of social engagement it enabled. This was apparent in the ways in which the performance brought together, if only momentary, families, friends, assembled passers-by, in fleeting moments of connection, an ephemeral sense of 'togetherness' captured in the photograph.

This playful sense of sociality was also apparent in the community workshops delivered by this company. The workshops were based on the concept of the 'objects' of *The Museum*, which were to be scaled up into a city-wide installation to provide the décor for the festivals in Peterborough and Great Yarmouth. Les Cubiténistes were joined by three local artists to deliver workshops with different community groups. The sessions were principally delivered in two colleges, and also included a session in a young person's homeless housing centre, an adult arts group, and a self-led mental health service user group. Overall the workshops engaged several hundred participants. The theme for the installation was chosen by the artists – in the absurdist and unusual vein of their art, they chose eye and mouths in Peterborough and an eclectic seaside scene for Great Yarmouth – and participants were invited to participate in painting the installation.

Key themes to emerge from the interviews with participants in the workshops were the materialities and physicality of the engagement, of the painting itself, and feeling the textures of the paints on the surface of the correx; the scale of the creative endeavour, in terms of the ambition to produce a city-wide installation; and the processual nature of the repeated work, painting board after board in a very short time frame in order to realise this ambition. Many reflected on enjoying this sense of being together, and painting together. This sort of chain work linked those participating through their collective labour of creation. The events also seemed to activate and encourage each participant's creativity. As one local artist commented: "It is very noticeable how some students have found something in them. It's been lovely to see some of them be quite bold (...) and by the end of they had produced some beautiful pieces of work".

All the participants spoke with excitement and anticipation about seeing their work transform the city. One participant commented: "we are involved in setting the stage – re-imagining the city. It's nice that [the local authorities] involve local people". In this way, the workshops enabled a connection between and place: indeed, many participants in the workshops, who had never attended the festivals before, stated they would come to see their installed work and would bring friends and families[11].

Street art encounters as décalage

In this overview of the touring and outreach programme, I have highlighted three elements of performance: playful, intimate and social. I suggest that each of these effects can be seen as emerging within a first sense of décalage produced in the encounters between artists, community and place. The first sense of décalage presents a sense of performance which playfully disrupts as street artists intervene in the social fabric of the everyday. The performance offered something entirely unusual, slightly off-the wall, subverting the real with imagination. The cross-cultural nature of the programme added to this sense of décalage, as different languages and cultures also produced a humour-filled disorientation. Here, décalage is a device for play that becomes part of the public interaction. The unpredictable meaning of the event is emergent and formed in the moments of encounter between artist and audience, and amongst audience members. Different people will inevitably respond differently to a particular street art intervention; however, I want to suggest that décalage provides an important concept for framing the audience experience of performance, as an experience that is both deeply personal and intensely shared. Décalage also has the potential for enabling participants to reflect on their identities, communities and sense of place. Décalage also provides a frame to examine the workshops, as an exploration of collective creativity enabled through the material engagement within a process of artistic creation. This allowed participants to become part of the décalage that would re-imagine the city by dressing it up for the festival.

Research on street art has tended to focus on the political, radical dimension of performance. By introducing the concept of décalage as a way to frame these encounters, I want to draw attention to other forms of interaction, where play and frivolity are often overlooked but are equally important features and vital parts of being together. The effects of performance I have presented are more modest than entirely transformative or utopian; yet, these modest claims open up avenues for further practice in outdoor arts interventions. These other modes of engagement can help to produce ordinary yet powerful new sites of cultural politics.

Second décalage: the language of community engagement

While the events can be seen to have produced potential sites for a productive décalage for audiences, what emerged from my own involvement and observation were sites of artistic creativity that might also be understood to exist in a tension – a tension that particularly revealed itself in the diverging meanings and purpose of 'community engagement', 'outreach' and 'participation' that have animated the network. This is the second sense of décalage, which takes us into the backstages of cultural production and its organisation.

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[11] While it was not possible to track participants, I saw 10 participants in the crowds over the festival weekends, accompanied by friends and families.

At a first glance, it could seem that these terms all describe a self-evident 'good': the desire to create meaningful encounters between artists and audiences. However, the interviews with ZEPA 2 partners, artists and community partners reflected multiple meanings, emphases, purposes and expectations for each term. This incoherence is significant for understanding the effects – intended and unintended – on cultural practices' sites of intervention and the ways that it is translated into organisational practices on the ground. In other words, the argument put forward here is that the social and cultural 'efficacy' of street art in a community setting is, to some significant degree, mediated by professionals' interpretations, including artists and cultural producers, who answer to different sets of priorities and use the same language linked to different concerns[12]. I also suggest that these interpretations are linked to debates pertaining to the social turn in the arts; as well as the broader the national and organisational specificities of the French and UK cultural contexts. The theory of décalage offers an analytical framework to consider these effects.

In the sense that community engagement is also an organisational practice, the effects of a dislocation in relation to the meaning of the terms first has consequences for the organisation of such projects. However, rather than to focus explicitly on the details or issues of each ZEPA 2 outreach and touring event across the three UK regions, it is more interesting to look at these divergences in terms of trends and tendencies and how these relate to wider cultural policy debates. This also enables me to situate this paper in relation to these debates in the concluding section. The following accounts, drawn from interviews and observations across the project, provide an overview of the multiple configurations of the ZEPA 2 outreach and touring programme.

For the UK partners, the focus of the programme was to develop new audiences, working with groups considered to be largely disengaged or excluded from culture. One UK ZEPA 2 partner commented "the aim of outreach is to create connections with community, and you can do that through arts (…) It's about different people and different ages coming together. Introducing communities to new things, things that they are sometimes a bit isolated from. And it's about making a difference to people". For this partner, engagement through the arts was explicitly framed as having a social function. The UK partners also viewed the project as part of their ambitions to promote inclusive festivals and increase local community ownership of the events. While to some small extent this may have been facilitated – for example, in the workshop participants coming to the weekend festival for the first time – a reflection made in several of the interviews with the UK partners was that that the community engagement element of the project may have been limited from the outset because the short timeframe of the project prevented a deeper community consultation and involvement. Indeed, this is a common criticism levelled at projects that claim to engage communities in a meaningful way but ultimately end up as more tokenistic gestures.

For many of the community organisations and local partners, the opportunity to work with French artists was welcomed but it was not necessarily organised within the community organisations' agendas; "arts centres need to know in advance, for example to staff [the centre] on a Saturday or Sunday, to put it into their programmes and advertise it" (interview with ZEPA 2 UK partner). Indeed, there is high level of backstage and organisational work that is required for community engagement work, which is often invisible and rarely acknowledged (and indeed rarely written about in academic publications). This includes the time that is required to build up meaningful partnerships with communities. When partnerships are hurried along for the sake of short term benefit, this can end up diminishing the strength and impact of the artistic intervention, and the risk is that all parties are left disappointed.

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[12] In a paper about the policy reception of 'social inclusion' in museum, Tlili (2008) develops a similar argument drawing on Goffman's sociological perspectives (Goffman, 1990).

As I have already described, the overall experience of the community participants was very positive. However, if we consider their engagement from a theoretical perspective on participation, the actual active participation of individuals within the artistic process was more limited. Within *The Museum* the invitation to participate could be seen as limited to audience interaction with a set performance piece. Within the workshops, the parameters of engagement were similarly largely pre-set, in terms of the art form and its subject. The invitation to participate was framed first within the terms of the performance rather than in the terms of the community.

For the artists, some involved in the touring programme commented that while the tours were reaching new audiences, as straightforward touring performances, these could not be considered directly as engagement or outreach practices in their view, which would have required more embedded or longer term work in communities. There was also a distinction that needed to be drawn: between performance as participatory art – as in *The Museum,* and other interactive street art performances – and social-engagement arts projects in community settings. The artists also commented on the need for a mediator within social projects, especially when the artistic intervention is short and when it is conducted on behalf of an arts organisation. Nonetheless, the model developed for the ZEPA 2 workshops, which involved local artists as facilitators alongside the French companies, offers one approach that may usefully enable shorter projects to become more embedded in community.

In this way, the research conducted on the ground highlighted different meanings, roles and purpose in relation to the outreach and touring programme. This is where I situate the second sense of décalage, as a semantic décalage: it signifies the slips and rifts that appear in language and translation. It addresses the different meanings, expectations and intentions which are attached to words. What appeared under the surface was a lack of clarity across the different parties in terms of the different levels at which the project was supposed to operate – was it at the level of community event or audience development? Was it aimed towards artistic transmission, intervention or collaboration? Was the project about responding to community needs and conditions or was it about artistic authorship?

These questions can be posed as open questions if we want to take seriously artists' and arts agencies' commitment to working in community contexts. I would argue that it is crucial to discuss, analyse and compare such work critically as participatory actions and events. Here I am less interested in a consideration of the formulas for individuals' participation only (see Mason, 1992; Cohen-Cruz, 1998; White, 2013 for some thought-provoking reflections) but on the wider dynamics and ethics of arts programmes in community contexts. However, there are currently no clear criteria by which to assess social practices in outdoor arts interventions – for example, describing the terms and indices of engagement, how to assess models of collaboration, and how to describe and support the labour of sustaining participation – a labour that is both logistical and emotional. A lack of clarity – often unacknowledged – can lead to confusion over the different roles of the artists, the cultural producers and the audience in these interventions. Here, décalage refers to the potential contradictions and tensions within these interventions that can dilute the possibilities for community engagement or exaggerate its promise.

 "[The project] needed a way to communicate across partners" reflected one interviewee. The substantive issue here is not simply about communication for project management; it also requires that we untangle the negotiated values, norms and ideations that underlie the configurations of 'engagement' in community-based programmes. As I have argued in the opening of this section, such configurations are dependent on the contingencies of different actors' situations and concerns. Communication therefore also relies on the need to translate between different modes of operation. I suggest that we need to look at two broader areas to understand this underlying tension: first, the wider debates about the social turn in the arts; and second, at a much wider scale of analysis, the different national contexts of cultural policy in both France and the UK. I address these two areas briefly in turn.

The Social Turn in the Arts

The concept of 'participation' has a central place in historical theories of contemporary arts[13]. The development of participatory arts practice across the 20th century has focused on the activation of the audience as artistic collaborator and breaking away from models of passive spectatorial consumption This broad shift has been qualified as the 'social turn' in art-historical terms and has been extensively discussed (Bourriaud, 1998; Kester, 2004; Bishop, 2012). The expanded field now goes by many names: relational aesthetics, social practice, community, socially-engaged, interventionist or collaborative arts, amongst others (see Frieling, 2008). In performance studies there has also been a reconsideration of the ways in which public space is theatricalised and how audiences are constructed (see McConachie, 2011; Jackson, 2011; White, 2013). In both cases, the participatory impulse seeks to create art that contributes both to a social and artistic experience.

Within the social turn, two broad distinctions can be drawn, around participatory art per se and participatory art projects. This separates participatory practices in contemporary art with social engagement projects based in community contexts. With participatory art, the outcome is still a significant 'work of art', the value of which is recognised as such by the 'art world' and its critics. The participatory art project, however, tends to emphasise process, focused on ethical criteria – about how and whom to work with – and broadly downplays aesthetics – the value here lies in the experiences of participants. It is less about the artistic outcome and the focus instead is on questions of social change, framed within an explicitly ethico-moral discourse. Such a distinction indicates that social and artistic judgments are not easily compatible (Bishop, 2010). Instead, they are constructed according to different criteria, which have evolved through a series of binary oppositions: between artists and community, private interest and public needs, creative expression and social engagement, the demands of practice and the demands of policy, and so on. While there are strong arguments to be made against such a reductive dualism, it also seems that in rhetoric such binaries persist. As Claire Bishop summarise: "This impasse surfaces in every printed debate and panel discussion on participatory and socially engaged art. For one sector of artists, curators, and critics, a good project appeases a superegoic injunction to ameliorate society; if social agencies have failed, then art is obliged to step in. (...) For another sector of artists, curators, and critics, judgments are based on a sensible response to the artist's work, both in and beyond its original context" (Bishop, 2010 online). Simply put, there is an antimonic relationship between artistic freedom and the social function of art.

Street art, because of its particular form, can bring a certain nuance to these debates. Street art has evolved as an experimental practice in the public sphere: its participatory strategies are based on the dynamic between the work and the audience and its location in the street environment. By intervening in everyday life, it is a form of event as participation, where the public figures centrally. As one artist commented: "it's the audience's cultural curiosity that feeds our creativity". In this sense, artists' motivations for pursuing their practice outdoors and in the street tends to be underwritten by a common claim to activate the public in a variety of ways: to entertain, to shock, to disturb, to regale, to engage emotionally and cause the audience to reflect.

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[13] It should not however be confused with the more sociologically-oriented documentation of 'social participation in the arts'. For an example, see the Cultural access and participation special Eurobarometer 399 report by the European Commission (2013)

However, there are also certain enduring assumptions within this idea of the 'public' in street art, which can have paradoxical effects and which further complicate the art or social work debate (see Blet et al., 2012). Firstly, it cannot be assumed that simply being in a public space can guarantee inclusion, access or engagement. As studies have shown, there are different barriers – sociological, cultural, and symbolic – which means audiences do not always have the so called 'cultural capital' (after Bourdieu 1990) to engage with or take part in the performance. Second, there is a more problematic and patronizing inflexion to these assumptions, especially within the connotations attached to 'outreach', as bringing edification rather than viewing culture as vibrant and co-produced. These tensions further underline the necessity of untangling the language of community engagement in community-facing arts programmes.

Alongside this art theory perspective, in the context of a cross-cultural, Anglo-French programme, it also important to take into account the specific political and cultural frames of reference of each country – which I suggest have some effect on influencing the underlying sense of décalage. In the following section I present a (necessarily brief) overview of some of these contexts, focusing attention particularly on the UK side, since this was the context of the study.

The Policy Background

In France, the infrastructures for street art are notably more developed than in the UK. It has been suggested that this can be linked to favourable cultural policies, certainly until the late 1990s, and the decentralization of the arts in France (Gaber, 2009). This period was marked by considerable support from the Ministry for Culture, which enabled the development of the sector's institutional infrastructures, including the designation of nine 'Centre National des art de la rue' to support the development of street arts and artists. These so-called 'lieux de fabrique', or creation spaces, were set up with the backing of local authorities to provide support as well as resourcing artists' time for making work. These years were marked by a parallel professionalization, including the 'intermittent du spectacle' work status, which have afforded the sector with a degree of recognition and autonomy[14]. Today the sector has gained a strong prominence within the French national and local cultural landscape.

In the UK, such infrastructures are far less common. In recent years however, there has been a ready adoption of outdoor art forms by official policy-making bodies as instrumental methods of cultural intervention (Arts Council England, 2008). Within this context, participation and community engagement have become central tenets of cultural policy (both left and right of the political spectrum). Increasingly, with pressing political debates about public value, community involvement, cultural participation and citizenship, artists and art agencies have become enrolled in government-sponsored programmes and strategically situated as having a civic role. Within this rhetoric, arts funding is directly linked to access, engagement and participation which are imagined in certain ways and towards certain aims. Arts activities have been re-oriented towards community development, social cohesion, tourism and urban regeneration (Landry et al., 1996). Typically, projects are framed as opportunities for participants to develop their skills and confidence, and the focus is on the process, especially in terms of community consultation and decision-making. In this sense, the arts activities are oriented towards building links within communities, with the artist as facilitator, to promote (preferred) notions of place and identity. Artists and arts agencies have gained experiences of such ways of working over the

[14] Since 1968 France has maintained a system of social benefits specific to workers in the cultural and entertainment industries. Under this system, cultural workers must work 520 hour approximately to qualify for unemployment insurance. Such a programme recognised the seasonal, or intermittent, nature of work in the cultural sector. Nonetheless, the situation of these workers is still considerably precarious, and in recent years, there have been a number of strikes and demonstrations linked to proposed cuts and reforms.

years, in a mark of prudent pragmatism. Or, as many commentators, including artists, have stated, this shift away from the cultural-democratic and oppositional beginnings signals a decline of the artform which has been co-opted by government programmes and is losing its political core as it accommodates the status quo. Indeed there are very pertinent critiques to highlight here: about social control and a political rhetoric which dovetails all too nicely with an overtly neoliberal agenda of replacing government-run services with artists offering creative entrepreneurial solutions (see for example Harvie, 2013). Within the government discourses of urban regeneration, tourism and economic development, the art is no longer enough, and the outcomes are to be measured quantitatively through 'value for money' and other marketplace measures.

It is not possible, within the scope of this paper, to engage in more depth with these complex debates. In fact, presenting these two national contexts through such a brief narrative risks oversimplification. However, within my observation and analysis of events and meetings within the ZEPA 2, there were resonances of these distinctive philosophies: of a UK side more pragmatically accepting of the instrumentalisation of the arts within community-based projects, and a French party, including artists, more focused on artistic freedom and authorship. This distinction, or décalage, can be seen to also reflect the distinct categorisation of the shows within the outreach and touring programmes: as participatory projects based on arts activities facilitated by artists or as artistic endeavours that include participatory modalities of performance.

Décalage: Prospects and problems

Fundamentally, for the artistic community, arts managers, cultural producers, policy makers and alike, the nature of the 'engagement' in community- facing programmes (especially those programmes sustained by public funding) generates complex questions that need to be addressed in any project, about the possible meanings and social purposes of art in relations to the politics of the context in which is it located, and the ethical dynamics of the artist-participant relationship. Not addressing these questions is likely to work against the objectives of facilitating encounters between artists and communities, however defined.

Critically, engagement needs to be discussed at the start of the project to ensure that all parties, including the artists, agree on the definition of engagement in the context of the project. These conversations should also include community partners to ensure the strength and authenticity of partnerships. Practically this should include discussion of costs and time to ensure the projects are adequately resourced. Equally the question of facilitation – or 'mediation' to use the French term – needs to be addressed, especially whose role this is and how to support this work.

In suggesting that we take seriously the question of engagement, I am not arguing for subordinating the art work or artistic authorship; neither am I arguing for an exclusively participatory ethics. The case of the ZEPA 2 underlines, for me, the necessity of further investigating this tension in both theory and practice. Following Claire Bishop, who herself draws on Felix Guattari and Jacques Rancière, the aim is not to collapse or reconcile art and the social, but to imagine "alternative frameworks for thinking the artistic and the social simultaneously" (Bishop, 2010, online). This paper suggests a theoretical engagement with the idea of décalage – which uncovers complexity, nuance and contradiction – can help develop a new grammar for critical reflection on artistic engagement and the notion of social engagement in outdoor arts. As dislocation this is not a rupture – rather it is a productive sense of imbalance and uncertain potential.

Conclusion

In this paper I have used the case of the ZEPA 2 outreach and touring programme to problematise the notion of 'engagement' in community-based street at programmes. In the first part I described the affective atmospheres and collective intensities of performance. I argued that these effects were produced through playful sense of dislocation with the potential for enabling participants to reflect on their identities, communities and sense of place. In the second part of the paper I drew the level of analysis back towards the means of cultural production to highlight the divergent ideas and definitions of community engagement that have animated the programme.

The concept of décalage put forward in this paper provides a theoretical framework to consider these effects and to consider the impact of street art interventions on community and place. It provides a frame for understanding, articulating and evaluating the efficacies (both affective and effective) of audience's engagement with street art. It also demands that we continually unpack the particular configurations from which community engagement is configured, mediated and practiced. Décalage names the uneven, contingent and ongoing articulations of performances and their relationships with audiences and with place that challenge and expand our understandings of culture and the contemporary role of the art.

Through the ZEPA 2 study, this paper presents another critical commentary to the emerging field of research on street arts, and adds to debates around performance practices in community settings (Jackson, 2011; Bishop, 2012; McAvinchey, 2013). In her own research on participatory art Shannon Jackson has called for research to "emphasise the infrastructural politics of performance" so as to develop a critical art practice that "join[s] performance's routinized discourse of disruption and de-materialization to one that also emphasizes sustenance, coordination, and re-materialization" (Jackson, 2011, p.29). Following this call, the theory of décalage aims to offer both a critical vocabulary for research *and* a concept to be developed in performance practice.

Thinking of performance along these terms also requires that we shift our understandings in terms of 'impact' – a key area for policy. As a cross-border Anglo-French programme of artistic exchange, ZEPA 2 also provides a case for considering the question of cultural policy at a European level. As this paper has shown, transnational arts practice are constituted through the practice of translation, which is both about modes of operation and, more prosaically, about language. Language is a key way in which we experience Europe. European cultural projects must navigate multiple national languages in order to establish commonality and translation can offer a solution to this[15]. But what kind of translation? As the ZEPA 2 network has show, cross-cultural programmes are generative of new ways of working (see Lee's paper in this volume). These require new kinds of translation that can address adoption, exchange and amalgamation without subsuming difference or collapsing it into linguistic approximations. By preserving the French term décalage, this paper has aimed to begin to address this question.

Within ZEPA, another word emerged as significant. This was the notion of 'traces' – a fortuitous word which this time is the same in French and English. Traces are what is left behind after the events: marks, fragments, or other indications of the existence or passing of something. Indeed, the very nature of street art interventions is ephemeral – it shakes up a space and then it disappears. Its effects are often unpredictable. But it also has the potential for leaving behind embodied memories for the audiences who experience it, a fact that other research supports (Haedicke, 2013). The idea of traces is poetically linked to the first sense of décalage – in terms

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[15] A special issues in Transversal Texts, entitled 'a communality that cannot speak: Europe in translation' (2013) addresses this theme through a number of different perspectives.
http://eipcp.net/transversal/0613

of its links with emotions – as well as the intention of the second sense of décalage – the desire (sometimes conflicted and contested) of having an impact. There have been some more tangible traces of the ZEPA project: in one town a local museum has put on a display of all the community photographs, inviting participants to view and also pick up their images. In one sense this new event recreated something of the sociality experienced during the performance, and as material traces the photographs may come to play a role producing a shared, collective memory. Considering the longer term impact of street art by investigating its traces, both material and immaterial, is an important if challenging area for future research.

Talking of traces, of play and of décalage, as I have in this paper, opens new ways for how we think about the cultural agenda in terms of identifying impact. The agenda that has dominated over the past decades has applied instrumental methods for evaluating value. There is no process of translation for the evaluation to register the social experience or the playful dimensions of outdoor arts highlighted in this paper. Projects like ZEPA 2 open up the question of culture in a creative Europe and highlight the importance of developing new vocabularies for analysing street art and for addressing policy. My paper ends, then, with an invitation: an invitation to continue thinking and feeling dislocations and décalage as a way to access new imaginaries and new languages for translating the impact of the arts and culture.

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