

**In/extensive Topologies:**  
*(Working script with additional descriptive elements)*

a Performative paper given by

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at

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This presentation was an experiment in using choreographic practices as a means of articulating theoretical ideas about space. Taking the form of an improvisational workshop, in the presentation we asked delegates to explore the ideas through a range of movement activities, and to observe others as they acted the ideas out, having introduced them in the context of the theoretical focus that we were invoking on the occasion of each activity.

What follows is the 'score' we followed for the workshop, interspersed with an outline of the information we were intending to convey verbally as the exercises were enacted, and quotations from theorists that resonated with the activities. (These were distributed after the workshop along with the bibliography.) This 'score' might not tally with the actual words we used, as, inevitably, we improvised as the workshop presentation developed.

*General Introduction to frame the In/extensive Topologies performative presentation.*

The centre of the room is sparsely furnished with a few chairs, facing at different angles in order to set up different implicit lines of sight in the space. People are asked to sit or stand, but not move the chairs back against the wall.

***When the group is gathered in the room, they are asked to note what their immediate sense of the space is, without voicing it. They are then asked to hold onto that thought as we would be returning to it as the session progresses.***

We noted that the session was concerned with the dialogue between the experiential and the observed, and with the space that lies between, yet permeates inside and the outside.

Each speaker introduces themselves.

### **Sarah Rubidge**

*I have two main choreographic interests. The generation of informal choreographic activity in installation spaces that I create in collaboration with other artists, and the creation of installation spaces that generate a primarily **sensate response** in the individual participant/viewer. These choreographic interests are generally articulated through performative installation environments (frequently interactive), usually involving the use of choreographic concepts as a starting point. To put this another way, I am interested in both intensive and extensive space. For this session my main focus is on exploring means of reconfiguring the architecture of a space through the movement of a group of people in that space.*

*The principles that underlie this practice are grounded in the notion that, in a choreographic context, dancers shape the space in which they move. That is as the dancers move the **viewers perceive** a shifting in the apparent form of the stage space as they observe the shaping of the dancers' movement, their placement on the stage as individuals and a collective, for example, as they gather together in tight groups, or disperse across the stage and reform into another group. They observe the dancers surrounding and cutting through the space as they travel across and around the stage ... drawing the attention of the audience this way and that, emptying and filling different areas of the space as they move.*

*In the installations this shaping of the perception of a space is achieved not through the movement of live dancers, but by distributing the video projection surfaces (screens) and/or loud speakers, and thus the visual or sonic imagery, through the built environment in order to draw the participants' attention to different areas of the installation. The placement of the screens and speakers, and the content and timing of the digital imagery that appears on them and sonic images, are designed to create potential trajectories in the participating audience from one screen, area of the environment, or speaker to another. None of the trajectories are givens, but all are possible choices that the participant can make as they move through the installation space.*

*Note: Sensuous Geographies (2003) and Passing Phases (1994-1999) are examples of such installations. Details of these can be accessed on:*

*[www.sensedigital.co.uk/sg1htm](http://www.sensedigital.co.uk/sg1htm) and [www.sensedigital.co.uk/pph1.htm](http://www.sensedigital.co.uk/pph1.htm)*

### **Chris Jannides**

*My current research examines the way space informs and at the same time is formed by movement. Set in everyday public settings such as streets and malls, its focus is on an interface between architecture and circumstance that I am labelling 'socio-kinetic'. Closely observing the interpenetrating and interdependent interactions between environments and behaviour, my process analyses everyday activity in order to extract movement principles that I can then play with according to choreographic desire and interest. Fundamentally, I am stripping and de-familiarising the familiar in order to mutate and reconfigure it stylistically. My artistic intention is to warp the topologies of the commonplace in order to generate new aesthetic possibilities and outcomes.*

What follows are some of the ideas that are impacting on our individual choreographic researches at present.

- ◆ **SR>>** *Movement as an animating principle that enlivens environments via ephemeral inscriptions and dissolving energy traces.*
- ◆ **CJ>>** *The intertwining of inside/outside > **In/ex-tensive**: the permeable boundary... two movements that intersect, involving both delimitation and transgression.*

- ◆ **CJ>>***The Chiasm or Fold*: the place of mediation between interiority and exteriority/alterity.
- ◆ **SR>>***Deleuze's notion of the diagram*, the abstract machine – which can be can be interpreted in many ways: here I see it as a site of potentials; a dynamic abstract system subject to interruptions in its flows as other systems intersect with it.
- ◆ **SR>>***Relational space*, which is defined not by external relations, but by intrinsic relations.
- ◆ **CJ>>**Arakawa and Gins' notion of *the Architectural Body* ... which they also call 'sited awareness' ... and *procedural architecture*. The architectural body refers to the co-extensivity of the environment and self.
- ◆ **CJ>>***Gibson's notions of affordances of the environment* – what it offers, what it provides or furnishes animate beings.
- ◆ **SR>>**The writings of *Henri Lefebvre* particularly his thinking on the *production of space* and *rhythmanalysis*.

### Introduction to the performative element of the presentation

In this session we will be exploring the qualities of and shape-shifting potentials of intensive and extensive space through performative practice. It is very much an experiment, and takes on board Nigel Thrift's recommendation that dance is a prime candidate through which to investigate issues emerging from non-representational theory (Thrift 2007). Non-representational theory focuses on practices, on formations being enacted or performed - not simply produced. Here we offer some of choreographic explorations which seem to articulate some of the ideas he explores in his writings.

During this session, through a selection of simple movement activities, we aim to set up the conditions to enable you to create and experience some of the intricacies of 'choreographic' space. Specifically, the session will explore the way we generate both intensive and extensive space through our movement, and the shifts back and forth that accompany this process. We will also explore the way in which we generate a topology within a space through movement behaviour.

**CJ >>** Artists Arakawa & Gins, whose work *The Architectural Body* explores this terrain, suggest that when entering a space you enter a "pulsed array of possibilities to be pursued" (*Gins & Arakawa, 2002, p. 42*). We will be using this **as** notion as a starting point for some of the movement activities during this session.

**CJ>>** The movement activities we have chosen are taken directly from our choreographic (and teaching) practice. The activities are permeated with resonances of theoretical debates undertaken by the above. Although often hailing from different disciplines and philosophical and political perspectives, these theorists, are addressing very similar issues, issues that, it became clear, we have both been addressing implicitly in our choreographic practice for some 30 years.

**SR >>** Improvisation is a central feature of this performative practice. The systems that are used in our improvisational practices are, I would suggest, analogous to abstract machines. They constitute open-ended movement systems, and thus systems of thought, that are activated in the moment, and

generate a performance, and/or performative event. As such the improvisational system serves as a choreographic diagram, using diagram in a Deleuzian sense.

In its extreme forms the participants in such improvisations can be both performers and audience, their attention shifting within a single performance occurrence from an experiential (intensive) perspective, to becoming momentarily a viewer or witness of the event from without – during which there is time to note the characteristics of the extensive environment that flows around you. This shifting back and forth between the intensive and extensive environment lies at the heart of choreographic practice.

**CJ>> On improvisation.** As a choreographer who uses improvisation to explore and generate movement material, I am very interested in any perspectives that invigorate my understanding of this dance-making tool. Improvisation in dance involves spontaneous interaction between dancers and situations/environments. It requires a state of active awareness that is tuned to unfolding events – its focus is receptive and dynamic. It is like a predator – watchful, alert – but not dangerous, wanting only to construct and play. The *improvisateur* continually scans what the moment provides, noticing what is being made available, and selecting and engaging with what is being offered.

**SR>>>**Throughout this session we are working on the basis that the individual and environment are co-extensive ... you do not move *IN* an environment you are *part* of that environment. Not only does it affect you in subtle, affective ways you also affect that environment through your very presence, and through your movement activity – shaping it through ever shifting spatial forms and imbuing it with qualitative intensities. Thus, whether experientially engaged, or observing what is going on you are an integral element of the milieu in which you find yourself, and party to its transformation.

It is through this prism that we will be approaching this investigation of in/extensive topologies. Whilst the session might seem to be taking the form of a movement workshop, the intent is to highlight the theoretical implications that seem to be embedded in some of our choreographic activities. For this reason you will be asked to shift back and forth between full experiential engagement in the activities and moments of stillness that allow you to observe the shifting patterns that emerge in the collective movement behaviour as the activity goes on.

**SR>>>>***Without any more ado let us commence the session.*

**First re-evaluate what the space feels like to you now.**

## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 1:

### *[Intensive space]*

**SR>>** Stand still: feel the weight of your feet on the ground:

Take your attention to the space above your head:

Feel the distance between you and the person next to you

*Listen to the sounds in the room ..... nearest to you – furthest away – outside of the room even.*

Now take your attention to your skin, the permeable boundary between you and the environment, move slightly to your left or right – one step.

*Does the sense of the immediate space around you change in any way?  
Or of the space between you and the nearest solid object in the environment?*

Feel the temperature in the room.

**SR>>>** The *first movement activity* was intended draw your attention to the in/extensive, by directing it to the qualitative sense of the space you are currently occupying. Experientially, in Brian Massumi's terms,

...[t]he slightest most literal displacement convokes a qualitative difference, because as directly as it conducts itself it beckons a feeling, and feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to fold again in action. (Massumi, 2002, p.1)

**CJ>>>** In Arakawa & Gins' terms

Body movement that takes place within and happens in relation to works of architecture are to some extent formative of them - the body in action and the architectural surround should not be defined apart from each other. (Gins & Arakawa, 2002, p.50)

## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 2:

### *[extending affective/intensive space]*

**SR>>** Start to walk ..... then gradually settle in a space in the room that feels comfortable to you.

Take your time.

*Try to understand why this place 'feels good' and this doesn't.*

*Note the **sensations** in the different places which feel uncomfortable to you.*

*When you pause to feel the space ... from time to time also take a moment to observe what is going on around you, taking a more distant view on the event.*

**Retain your observations in your minds....**

**SR>>** The notion of the in/extensive was also explored in the *second movement activity*: the simple goal of finding a place that felt comfortable created an intensive group system that generated not only a **relational/differential** space, a **topological** space, a space of flux ... but also a space replete

with multiple **interweaving ebbs and flows of sensation**. You were territorialising, deterritorialising, and reterritorialising the space and your bodies as you tried to find that moment of comfort, a moment that was constantly disrupted by the reconfiguration of the quality of the space by the movement of others engaged in the same activity. These created dynamic system[s]

... that are constantly traversed by a ... flow of energy or matter, a flow that does not allow the differences in intensity to be cancelled – therefore maintains the difference. (DeLanda, 2005, p.82)

To my choreographic (outside) eye you generated a nomadic space inflected by shifting desires, because what felt comfortable only a moment ago no longer felt comfortable when someone else changed their position. From my position as witness I was seeing an intensive dynamic choreographic system in operation. In this simple exercise Deleuzian notions of relational space emerge, as do resonances with Lefebvre's rhythm analysis, for

Rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another. In the body and around it. Rhythms are forever crossing and recrossing, superimposing themselves on each other, always bound to space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.205)

**MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 3:**  
***[relational and differential space]***

**CJ>> Part 1** Using circular and curved pathways let's now walk around the room weaving between people, head into open spaces wherever possible. Now change the pathways and make them angular and erratic. Alternate between circular and erratic pathways through space.

Adjust your speed to medium/fast/slow ... try speeding up as you enter open space, and then slowing down when you are near others or when you enter narrow or congested spaces.

Gradually adjust your speed to someone else, or in response to the changing dynamics around you.

Occasionally change that speed radically, and then return to the last speed.

Here we activate a Deleuzian event, which is

... laid out on a prehistorical plane, on duration, where duration is understood as a plane of immanence that has the power to separate itself into different fluxes and/or into single currents, according to the nature of attention occurring. (Deleuze, quoted in Dewsbury and Thrift, 2005, p.92)

**CJ>> Part 2** This time, as you move, I would like you to emphasise inclusive (or warm) and exclusive (or cold) zones by creating extended barriers and gestures with your arms, shoulders, body facing, and pathways that either include/embrace or exclude/ignore people around you.

This is a process of

Remaking the body, intensifying its forces. investing its milieu in a new configuration of closures and openings. (Grosz, 2008, p.21)

**CJ >> Part 3** Now, I would like you to move around each other as close together as possible without touching anyone. How close can you get without brushing against another person. This involves a great deal of care and attention ... Now open the distance out a little bit ... now open it a bit more, expand the space ... now open it even further so there is greater freedom and breathing space...

[Art is about] transforming the lived body into ... a force that transforms the body along with the world. (Grosz, 2008, p.22)

**CJ>>** A&G use the notion of 'tentativeness' to discuss the way we negotiate our architectural surrounds, this is a blend, underpinning *social and environmental interaction*, that mixes discovery and care.

Social space [is] an intermediary, mediating bodies, objects, centres of efferent actions, energies, areas of viscosity. (Lefebvre, 1991, pp.182/3)

**CJ>>** de Certeau (1984, p.117) cites Merleau-Ponty as distinguishing an 'anthropological space' from 'geometric or isotropic' spatiality, or place, and that desire provides a person with a sense of direction that is 'implanted in the space of a landscape'.

Let us pause ... reflect for a moment on the negotiations and interactions that these simple spatial mobilities produce, and on their space altering nature.

### **MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 3**

***[relational and differential space]***

**(Cont'd):**

**SR>> Part 4** Continue to walk around the room. Be aware of the space above your head and ground on which you walk, as well as the space around.

Pause from time to time so that you become aware of the ebbs and flows of the motion of the people in the space.

Select a person in the room, keep the distance between yourselves and your chosen person constant.

*Pay attention to the quality of the intensities between you.*

Select another person. **Repeat the activity.**

This is resonant of the Deleuze/Guattarian notion of smooth space - a space constructed by local operations involving changes in direction. Smooth space is intensive, filled by events, not formed or perceived things. Whereas in striated (extensive) space, forms organize matter, in smooth (intensive) space, materials signal forces. It is an intensive rather than an extensive space, where the

line is a vector, one of distances and direction, not of measures and dimensions or metric determination.

Such movement not only 'conditions the production of space' but 'associates it with a history' (de Certeau, 1984, p.118) – it is an animating principle that invigorates the inanimate 'deadness' of place by investing, enlivening, graffiti-ing, and saturating it with the transient interventions of moving bodies. Further,

In co-operation with other organisms, the architectural body (sited awareness) mediates the body proper and the architectural surround, and therefore should be viewed as communal. (Gins & Arakawa, 2002, pp.70/71)

#### **MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 4:**

##### **CJ>> Part 1 *Tableau Vivant***

This is a very simple exercise that plays with the architecturalism of bodies (an architecturalism in dance that weaves between anthropomorphic/dramatic and geometric/abstract).

In pairs, one person adopt a still position, the second person then attach yourself to this shape by connecting 3 body parts – the 1st person then carefully move away, examine the 2nd person's shape, and then re-attach with 3 new connecting points – and so it goes on, each person alternately disconnecting and then re-connecting to the other's sculptural position.

*A variation* – vacate the static shape just after you have made it, leaving your partner to connect to the virtual shape left in the space as they remember it – the focus here is on sensing or attuning to the residual presence of movement and form ... on what it leaves behind as a memory trace.

Embrace and cradle the tentativeness that precedes and accompanies action and sympathizes with and emulating the mutability inherent to a moving body. Your tactically posed surround, set up to be reaching out to you seconds before you find yourself reaching out to it, invites you to be, in advance of any overture from you, ever and again part of it. (Arakawa & Gins, 2002, p.98 *paraphrase*)

*This next exercise has been adapted from the improvisational technologies of the innovative choreographer William Forsyth. It serves as a taster of his more complex movement explorations, which are to do with memory traces and movement inscriptions/residues in space.*



## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 4:

### **CJ>> Part 2 Architectural Bodies**

Create a simple movement.

The memory and visualisation of that movement and its sculptural positioning and coordinates in space are now available to be revisited, manipulated, and altered.

For instance, place your arm out to the side at shoulder height parallel to the ground. Now lower your arm and step aside. See the 'virtual' arm still in space. Take the virtual arm by its extremities and bend it at the elbow so that it is shaped like a boomerang, then throw it. Follow its trajectory through the air and catch it when it returns. Now stretch it out and join its ends so that it makes a large circle like a hoola hoop. Put it round your waist and spin it with your hips. Let it drop to the ground, step over its rim and then run around its circumference, etc.

Continue this improvisational game with other virtual body parts and movements. As the imaginary environment around you gets cluttered with residual movement objects, feel free to randomly revisit and re-manipulate any of them.

Pause occasionally and watch what others are doing with their imaginary movement manipulations and spatial inscriptions, interweaving the actual and the virtual. See them dancing and reconfiguring their immediate movement histories, keeping them available and suggestive.

***Take note of how the space feels to you now.***

Ally yourself that closely with your tactically posed surround that it reads as the perimeter of your extended body. ...Your body complies with presented structures through landing-site dispersals that are determinative of its [architectural body's] holding patterns. (Gins & Arakawa, 2002, p.98)

The preceding movement activities echo Gins and Arakawa's notion of the architectural surround, where

an architectural procedure is a spatio-temporal collaboration between a moving body and a tactically posed surround. (Arakawa and Gins, 2002, p.73)

**CJ>>** In terms of *environments*, de Certeau (1984, p.117) utilises the concept of dynamic reciprocity to discuss the distinction and relationship between *place* and *space* – firstly he defines the two terms:

- *place* 'delimits a field' – where 'elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence' alongside each other – it is 'an instantaneous configuration of positions' – 'it implies an indication of stability'
- *space* is 'actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed in it' – it is composed of 'intersections of mobile elements' involving 'direction, velocities, and time variables' – it exists 'as the act of the present' and is 'modified by the transformation caused by successive contexts' – as such it is temporal and unstable – *hence space is the place of movement*

## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY 5:

**CJ>>** Mass improvisation, each participant using any of the ideas introduced during the workshop at will. Revisit previous movement tasks that you would like to re-experience and explore. Allow yourself to intuitively respond and interact with architectural bodies around you. Attune yourself to your own rhythms and desires, and to the shifting movement intensities in the space. Play.

Following Gins and Arakawa's recommendation that we

Dip at will into, so as to further reflect on, the free-ranging would-be connectivity out of which cohesiveness for architectural bodies is fashioned; sporadically play a cleaving (cutting apart from while adhering to) hesitation waltz with tendencies, inclined breezes and pursuits, and rivulets of complexly varied sited awareness. Will some joining-in or joining-together areas blast back to you the schematics of their conjugated articulating snap-tos? (Gins & Arakawa, 2002, pp.99-100)

The session ended with this improvisation.

In the final moments of the Performative Paper delegates were reminded that, through the choreographic concepts that they explored performatively in the session, the movement activities articulated through practice some of the more complex concepts concerning space that have been introduced by contemporary philosophers and theorists.

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Bibliographies, a list of quotations and descriptions of the movement activities were distributed to delegates after the session. Descriptions of the movement activities and associated quotations are merged in the above text.

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*Sarah Rubidge and Chris Jannides: December 2009*