

Chapter 8

Creativity Beyond the City Centre: Theatre for Young Audiences

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Introduction

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in Singapore is broadly used to refer to professional, family-oriented productions aimed at children 0–12 years old. These performances range from musicals to dramatic plays and usually take place in theatre buildings, have high production values and are closely linked to education. Although dramatic performance for (as well as with and by) children in Singapore has a long and rich history that dates back to the pre-colonial period, it was not until the 1980s that the idea and provision of theatre for children as a form of entertainment started to come to the fore. As standards of living began to improve, and with political stability gaining traction in the late 1980s, policymakers turned their attention to boosting the arts and cultural industries as a way to develop a capital-intensive economy. With the aim of repositioning and transforming Singapore into a “Global City of the Arts” (Kong 2012; Lee & Lim 2004), the blending and merging of educational policies, theatre practices and nation-building strategies led TYA to shift from the margins of society to the economic mainstream, injecting a new dynamic into the cultural landscape and paving the way for what can be described as a TYA sector today.

In an environment where creativity and productivity has flourished, TYA has become an economic entity as much as an artistic practice. In an attempt to fulfil a set of criteria imposed by funding agencies and educational organisations, creative practices are sometimes compromised and moulded to fit the demands of the market. Behind closed doors, interests are pitted against one another, with producers and

directors competing to obtain the rights to a popular title, rushing to secure a theatre venue or outdoing one another by staging a more glitzy and spectacular production. In more commercial settings, imported Broadway and West End-type productions are focused on increasing tourism, exploiting the arts scene for economic gain. These issues signal a cultural climate that is driven by global capitalism, where TYA artists and companies are increasingly pressured to think and act entrepreneurially while maintaining their artistic vision and integrity.

More recently, TYA has flourished largely attributing to the Arts Master Plan – a cultural plan that revealed a vision for the Singapore arts scene to be achieved over a five-year period (2015–2019). This document marked an important milestone because it was the first time in any policy that attention was given to TYA, giving the green light to open up creative possibilities and explore new theatrical territory. The motivation for this arose from concerns of the lack of quality performances in which “young audiences may not be experiencing the best in theatre” (NAC Arts Master Plan, Theatre Sector 2014, 4). Unsurprisingly, this led to an influx of activities for children and families in Singapore such as arts festivals for the young, cultural exchange programmes, creative workshops and international collaborations. One major development that emerged from this is The Artground – an arts centre that hosts music and movement-based interactive sessions, gardening workshops, and multi-disciplinary installations designed for children aged 12 and under.

The research that informed this chapter draws on my ethnographic fieldwork I undertook in 2017. It was designed to reflect open and new discoveries and consider creative practices and forms that might be overlooked when theatre is made to satisfy the market, rather than assessing educational goals or evaluating the Artground’s success. This examination is inevitably connected to my own journey and discovery, but its intention is not personal. Instead, it is to illuminate how TYA beyond the metropolitan and commercial centre can reconfigure creative practices and engage communities in new ways.

The Beginning of the Artground

The Artground has been a long time coming. The idea for a dedicated arts centre for children and young people was first mooted in 2013, following a series of discussions between TYA producers, artists, and companies, in which I was a part of. All parties agreed that there were concerns over the costly commercial theatre productions turning arts in Singapore into an elitist recreation, where only the well-off could

afford a ticket. Grievances were also aired about the lack of rehearsal space, and the tediously safe choice of choosing popular titles over experimental work. These conversations caught the attention of the National Arts Council (NAC), which consequently organised several dialogue sessions between January and March 2014. The aim of the meetings was to identify some of the financial and artistic challenges TYA artists and companies were facing, and to brainstorm possible solutions. The TYA representatives pitched the idea for the children's arts centre, which was later approved by the NAC and incorporated into its Arts Master Plan. Being a part of the TYA community and a participant in the meetings provided me with useful insights, and helped thread together some of the political, social and artistic concerns that arose out of the discussions. The sections that follow focus on two aspects of The Artground. First, it analyses how The Artground has framed and positioned itself as a play space for children as opposed to a typical arts venue. Second, it examines the GroundBreakers – a residency programme that enables artists to take risks, ask questions and work on ideas over a longer period of time.

The Artground as a Situated Practice

The Artground is not a typical theatre building. In fact, it is a repurposed school hall at the Goodman Arts Centre – an arts hive nestled within the Mountbatten neighbourhood. Geographically, this is a location away from the city centre where most commercial art spaces and theatre buildings can be found. Today, the arts centre still maintains the architectural structure of a typical local school; there are three blocks of classrooms, an assembly hall, two cafes, a small black box theatre, two dance studios and a playing field. These spaces are rented out to artists and companies from different disciplines (e.g. dance, theatre, music, visual and literary arts), one of which is, in fact, the National Arts Council. The latter point makes the site an interesting hub of activity, where the creatives and those who dictate the policy for the creatives are housed together.

The exterior of The Artground resembles a typical school hall and blends well with the surrounding school-like environment (e.g. classroom blocks and corridors). This concrete building, which is surrounded by a few trees, appears rather old and unassuming. The inside of the hall evokes recognisable educational undertones for local visitors who have attended public schools in Singapore, perhaps stirring up a sense of nostalgia in some. The absence of a façade might be unnerving for some visitors, who may be more acquainted with the conventional structures and designs of theatre spaces. The space also does not subscribe to expectations when it comes

to theatre bars, lobbies and souvenir shops – as there aren't any. Additionally, since entry into this space is non-ticketed, children and their families are not bound by theatre rules and conventions, and can freely enter and leave as they please.

Making and watching performances in a non-theatrical space opens up new questions about the relationship between creativity and the materiality of place. One way to understand TYA as a social practice is to remove the angle of TYA as a commercial commodity. In *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*, cultural geographer Tim Edensor and his co-authors challenge the prevailing discourses surrounding creative cities. One of their arguments is that the concept of the creative class and creative cities has rebranded artists as entrepreneurs and has privileged “large metropolitan centres as sites of cultural productions” (Edensor et al 2010, 5). In doing so, it has created “a spatial other” (Edensor et al 2010, 1). They argue that when these marginalised spaces (that include homes, sheds, and gardens) are juxtaposed with the dominant narratives surrounding the creative nature of the urban centres, they are often dismissed as “cultural deserts devoid of coolness” (Edensor et al 2010, 1). As a result, these distinctions have led to consumerist patterns being articulated around a series of spatial oppositions such as local/global, suburban/metropolitan, and urban/rural. Here, the metropolitan is also caught up in relation with the non-metropolitan, coolness with the uncool, and so creativity becomes entangled with what is thought to be uncreative (Edensor et al 2010, 13–14). It is in this context, they assert, that creativity has far more complex and nuanced geographies, and argue for a rethinking of marginal and everyday spaces where creative activities also take place.

Harriet Hawkins, in her book *Creativity*, offers an insightful geographical perspective on the production and consumption of art beyond specialised spaces such as theatres, museums, concert halls, and cinemas. Here, she notes that there is a rich repertoire of studies exploring expensive and privileged spaces. As a counter perspective, she examines the “micro geographies” of creative production – a term she uses to describe smaller sites within the wider art worlds – and proposes that these overlooked spaces might be conceptualised as valuable sites for creativity, “encompassing processes of transformation, performance production and transmission” (Hawkins 2017, 72). She distinguishes the studio as a separate space for material-making and experimentation, and suggests that it is “a site for processes such as thinking, reflecting and conceptualising; processes that intersect with material practices of drawing, making or sculpting materials” (Hawkins 2017, 73).

I am not suggesting that The Artground is an everyday space or studio, but these perspectives prompt new ways to consider theatre practices and experiences that are located away from the metropolitan centre. Refocusing on “non-specialised spaces” for the production of creativity enables a theorisation that actively promotes an all-embracing inclusivity. Those who may have been excluded from enjoying theatrical arts – largely because of the expensive tickets sold in the city centre and commercial hubs – would be welcomed into the fold, and there would be a heightened appreciation for all the creative activities produced for children and young people in smaller and informal settings away from the city centre. This way of thinking moves the focus away from market-ready products and services to the affective, emotive and cathartic dimensions of creative pursuits, reasserting the value of creativity that has limited economic currency but boundless value. In a saturated marketplace, this recognises, as Hawkin suggests, the value of the “embodied, affect-rich, place-based experience of performance” (Hawkins 2017, 102).

A Constructed Space of Play

The rather cold, austere exterior of The Artground belies the fact that its very existence is motivated by the idea of play. Inside, the design, installations and programmes capture the sense of awe-inspiring discovery and childhood wonder. The space actively encourages children’s natural curiosity about the strange and unknown, and its methodology and ideology reimagine and recreate forms of play that have been lost by rapid urbanisation. For example, there is a miniature garden outside The Artground for children to explore different types of plants and draw creative inspiration from nature. Here, they can participate in a range of programmes such as upcycling projects, worm farming, composting initiatives, and vegetable growing – all of which nurtures a sense of curiosity and a connection with nature. In the hall, the installations are designed in a way that encourages children to climb and crawl through them, similar to climbing a large tree in a park; albeit a sanitized version. This area is also cleared of any barriers so that it enables children to run around and explore all the elements of the various interactive art installations. Since the play space at The Artground is free to the general public, children can freely move between the indoor and outdoor areas at leisure. All these features illustrate a space that is designed to encourage different forms of interaction and embodied experiences that can lead to imaginative discoveries and open-ended play. Executive Director Luanne Poh shares her vision in this way:

I was really looking to create a space that was open-plan. No rules, no 'please stand behind the yellow line' – really a space where children can crawl through, run around and climb over. (Said 2017)



Figure 1. Inside The Artground
Hullabaloo installation by Aida Said

The site of The Artground adds an important dimension to the ideological framing. The unique geographical location, its appearance and surroundings not only challenge the markers of commercial theatres, but also reconfigure the audience experience. More crucially, the emphasis on play makes this participatory experience reliant on children in order for the space to be brought to life. Theatrolgist Marvin Carlson, who offers a semiotic analysis of the performance environment in both traditional theatre and non-theatre spaces, states:

Theatre has traditionally presented itself as a special experience set apart from everyday life, an experience not restricted to the actual performance but extending to the entire event structure of which the performance is a part, and the location of that event structure has often carried forward that image by displaying the symbols of elegance, pleasure and high culture. (Carlson 1989, 164)

Carlson's consideration of the interior decoration in the theatre focuses on theatres designed for adult audiences, and draws attention to features that in the past signalled wealth and class. The Artground continues the tradition of presenting theatre as a "special experience set apart from everyday life", but extends this experience to other forms of creativity and activities in meaningful ways. By focusing on play, imagination and intrigue, The Artground is designed as much for playful interaction as for the visual consumption that Carlson writes about. Since play is active and spontaneous then what is thus "displayed" by this space takes on its own life through children's participation.

Free play is not the only activity at The Artground. There is also a range of activities that take place in the WhiteBox – a dedicated space within its premises that hosts workshops and performances. Unlike a TYA performance that typically lasts between 40 to 50 minutes, the programmes here are curated as a flow of events. The duration of most of the activities are 30 minutes followed by a 30-minute break or change over. During this time when the artists are preparing the White Box for the next activity, the children are invited to play in the main play space or grab a snack at the café just beside The Artground. Additionally, the activities on the same day are not repeated. This not only provides adults and children the freedom of choice, but also extends their time at The Artground. Here, I will use an example to illustrate how curating the programmes in this way can influence children's sense of time and play. On my second visit, I heard parents tell their child it was time to go home as he had already "finished" two programmes and that they had spent close to two hours at The Artground. It was clear that the parents were getting impatient. However, the child replied: "Can we please stay longer? I have not experienced the space and music thing" (referring to two other programmes that were taking place in the WhiteBox). It is interesting to note that the child did not use the words "finished" but instead expressed his participation as an "experience". An argument can be made here about the different ways in which play is perceived by the adult and the child.

In his seminal work *Art as Experience*, John Dewey suggests, while "experience" occurs continuously, "an experience" runs its course to completion. He describes "an experience" in this way:

A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying

on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualising quality and self-sufficiency. It is an experience. (Dewey 1980, 35)



Figure 2. Inside the WhiteBox
Dance Party workshop by RolyPoly Family

The moment that I described can be analysed through Dewey’s differentiation between the two concepts. For the adult, each activity is treated as an isolated event and assumes that a process has concluded. A child’s participation, however, carries a complex emotional resonance which leads to a desire to continue exploring and playing. This illustrates how children’s participation and measurement of time are linked to activity, rather than the clock. As Dewey argues, when we have “an experience” there are no disruptions and breaks because of continuous merging. It is only through “an experience” that it can be integrated “within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences” (Dewey 1980, 35). In her study on children’s experience in the theatre, educationalist Shifra Schonmann builds on the work of Dewey and argues that theatre for children should be treated as “an experience”. She draws on the works of Philip Jackson and contends that, when children are “fully immersed in experience”, they “lose all sense of

separation between self, object and event” (Schonmann 2000, 30). This continuous merging aptly captures the flow of activities at The Artground. The example that I described brings into focus the quality of the experience that creates its unity and illuminates how “an experience” is a whole and carries with it its own self-sufficiency and individualising quality. Although these programmes might not always be theatrical activities, they offer children the time and space to explore new ideas and sensations, allowing them to formulate their own connections and learnings through different experiences.

Creating such an environment recognises that the adults – whether they are theatre-makers, producers or play providers – have a role in ensuring that children’s artistic and aesthetic experiences are of equal or higher quality to any form of entertainment for adults. Geographer Owain Jones has conducted research into children’s use of adult-constructed space. He argues:

Children mostly live their lives within the warp and weft of the striations of adult space. These material, symbolic and disciplinary structures are both incidental and deliberate in their relation to children. Children’s geographies operate within these patterns. The question is the nature of the interaction between the two. If adults’ geographies are intensive, rigid and powerfully embedded, there may be little chance for children to build their own geographies, but if adults’ geographies can be more permeable, heterogeneous and tolerant of otherness, then those in society most celebrated for their bodily and mental spontaneity, creativity, exuberance and mobility, may have the ability to express this in the creation of their own geographies within the adult world which, it seems, is bound to continue to be the dominant ordering of space. (Jones 2000, 43)

The fact that The Artground – culturally and architecturally – is a building designed to encourage curiosity and playful discoveries suggests its ability to act as a bridge between childhood and adulthood space. This is, perhaps, what Jones calls “polymorphic space” (Jones 2000, 38), which can respond to the “warp and weft” of adults’ and children’s interpretations and desires. What is interesting and particular about The Artground is the liminality between these positions described by Jones. The building is managed and controlled by adults, but specifically designed to allow children to play creatively and imaginatively within it. Designing and positioning

it as a “play space” challenges the idea of control and policing, and shifts the power from the adults to children. Additionally, since the installations are changed every few months, it encourages continuous encounters and exchanges between artists and children, enabling the reciprocity of creative input to shape its design and ethos. By providing the tools and equipment of play, The Artground brings to fore the children’s “imaginative involvement” and allows them to be creators of their own geographies (Jones 2000, 67).

Empowering children and recognising that they are able to think and feel for themselves at The Artground reflects the heartbeat of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ). The organisation’s belief is written as a vision statement:

ASSITEJ commits in principle and in practice to collaboration and cooperation between other international artistic associations on matters of mutual interest, where appropriate. We do this in order to advocate the theatre and the arts as a universal expression of humankind, as fundamental to human, social and cultural development and as a bridge-builder for mutual understanding and tolerance as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Assitej-international, n.d.)

This view insists that children are active beings whose agency is important in the creation of their own worlds. It signifies a shift in power relations where the adult no longer automatically assumes hierarchical privilege, although it must be recognised that they are still the purchasers of tickets and the chaperones. Above all, it treats children as competent social beings and advocates for both their rights to participate in the arts and capacities for engaging with/ in performance. It is clear that The Artground shares the social commitment of the global TYA community and recognises that the arts should be a vital part of children’s cultural lives.

The Groundbreakers - A Slower Way of Working

Playful and curious encounters at The Artground are not just for the children, but also extend to the artists who create these experiences for them. In October 2017, three months after its opening, The Artground launched the GroundBreakers, a residency programme that offered artists the opportunity to discover different ways of art-making and a space to create new work for children and young people. The

aim of the programme was for practitioners to conceptualise and test different ideas that could “break new ground”, and provide children “aesthetic experiences that are thoughtfully designed and considered” (The Artground, n.d.). The programme does not demand the artist produce a final product, but places an emphasis on the creative development. It adopts a flexible and open method that allows them to improvise, experiment and engage with ideas and practices that might not necessarily lead to any outcome; prioritising the *doing*, rather than the *done*.

In many ways, the GroundBreakers, as a process of making and discovering, resonates with the idea of the studio that Hawkins discusses. The studio, she argues, allows artists, musicians, and craft practitioners to engage with creative practices that are not necessarily linked to the “traditional structures of the creative industries”, reflecting more overlooked stories of production and consumption (Hawkins 2017, 101). She goes on to suggest that the studio is a space of practice that involves a whole series of “collection, documentation, rumination, development and information” (Hawkins 2017, 79) and is “a complex and ever-changing terrain of creative production” (Hawkins 2017, 101). Thinking about the GroundBreakers from this perspective thus shifts TYA from market-ready products to embracing practices that are never complete or closed; wherein the work is entwined with the situated nature and social and material conditions of its making. It recognises that creativity is always evolving, that it emerges from the culmination of multiple processes, and takes into account its improvisational qualities that shuttle between inspirations, ideas, reflections, and knowledge. There are three ways in which the incubation programme can encourage new ways of working and engagement.

First, as I have explained earlier in this chapter, the idea of a TYA/ arts centre for children emerged from conversations amongst theatre practitioners who were driven by creative ambitions rather than economic gains. One of the concerns is that, in a competitive climate, artists and companies are pressured to create work that can meet the demands of the market in order to survive. Additionally, since most of the TYA activities take place within the urban centre, producing a work requires high financial costs (e.g. rental of rehearsal space, promotion, paying a production team, and hiring a venue). To combat this, artists sought a space where they could take risks and create works that were not tied to educational outcomes or economic pressure. In some ways, the GroundBreakers responds to these concerns. Since the programmes are heavily subsidised by the NAC, it removes the financial obligations and risks from the artists. By moving the making away from the frenzied space of productivity, this environment invites them to slow down and become

fully immersed in the creation process. It offers them the time and space to explore, reflect and research, rather than fall back onto formulaic and stale approaches of art-making. In his book, *Originals*, psychologist Adam Grant advocates a slower process of working and thinking – what he calls “procrastination” – and discusses how such an approach can boost creativity. He refers to prominent figures such as Leonardo Da Vinci and argues that procrastination is a common habit of creative thinkers and great problem solvers. He states:

Along with providing time to generate novel ideas, procrastination has another benefit: it keeps us open to improvisation. When we plan well in advance, we often stick to the structure we’ve created, closing the door to creative possibilities that might spring into our fields of vision. (Grant 2016, 104)

This suggests how a slower process of working can give time for ideas to mature and enable artists to imagine, dream, learn and evolve as they go long; although it must be recognised that such an approach requires a level of discipline as well. By embracing improvisation as a way of doing, designing and making things, artists are able to focus on doing things well rather than doing more things; paying attention to quality rather than quantity.

Second, one advantage of the programme is that artists are given the opportunity to present their ideas/ work-in-progress to parents, children and other artists as a way to gather feedback. This is not commonly practised in commercial theatres in Singapore since it requires additional resources and time on the part of the artist or company. Nick Wilson who examines the relationship between creativity and the cultural and creative industries provides a useful perspective to reflect on these interactions. In *Social Creativity: Requalifying the Creative Economy*, he moves the emphasis away from the economic imperatives of the creative economy and individualistic notions of creativity, and calls for a consideration of “social creativity” that focuses on the “collective and relational nature or creative practice” (Wilson 2010, 373). Attending to social creativity, he suggests, invites “interaction across boundaries” that can enable “the reproduction and/ or transformation of social values, and the realisation of human beings’ creative potential” (Wilson 2010, 373). The feedback sessions chime well with Wilson’s idea of “social creativity”. It challenges the top-down approach of making TYA by creating a feedback loop between the artist and audience, and, in doing so, enables new ideas and forms of knowledge to be socially produced.

These dialogical encounters not only inform about the creative process, but shift the audience from passive consumers to active producers and co-creators, encouraging a constant re-evaluation and rebalancing of the status quo between adult and child.

Third, the GroundBreakers is not an isolated place of production but operates as part of an artistic cluster, giving artists the opportunity to connect with local and/ or international artists during their residency. Instead of working alone, the artists can tap onto a wider creative network including other artists who reside in the Goodman Arts Centre, teachers, social and cultural workers working in the vicinity or visiting practitioners. This moves the creation process from the impulse of individuals to a more distributed social phenomenon, facilitating an active and supportive relational community. Such a way of working, as Wilson suggests, allows:

...more choice about potential practices and therefore better decision-making and more creative practice; being better able to work with uncertainty and multiple perspectives (allowing better dialogue, collegiality and teamwork); and resolving personal/ professional dilemmas, and recognising and using the power of emotion. (Wilson 2010, 376)

Edensor and his co-authors also point out that working between groups in close proximity can generate benefits. These “networks of creativity”, they suggest, resist concepts of creativity that are limited by spatial enclosures to develop a more open understanding of the transitory and fluid nature of creative practices (Edensor et al 2007, 16). They assert that creative currents can flow through networks and increase the potential for “new and emergent forms of activity across a range of sites and locales” (Edensor et al 2007, 15). This theoretical understanding underpins the intention and practices of the GroundBreakers. It brings together multiple artistic forms and perspectives that can deepen the quality of the artistic work. As a network, this way of working resists hierarchical structures and bounded places, encouraging social and creative relationships that are built on reciprocity. By engaging with others and experimenting with different artistic and dramatic forms, it can ultimately contribute to collaborations and practices that are rhizomatic and dynamic, recognising that creativity is an ongoing cultural and social process.

These three approaches illustrate how the GroundBreakers programme can generate an environment that is conducive for future works. It operates as an interdependent system of activities and highlights the “making of” TYA as a social and relational

practice reliant on cooperation, collaboration and participation in a shared space. It is not a rehearsal for productions, nor a training ground for practitioners to pass time while waiting for work in what they perceive to be serious theatre. Rather, it is a space that allows artistic freedom and insists on collective creation in which different groups of people come together to exchange and share ideas, skills and knowledge; although it must be recognised that the artists of the GroundBreakers ultimately select and put the materials together. Importantly, this programme emphasises the slow-brewing of ideas and working out through trial and error, illustrating creativity as knowledge-building and as a form of improvisation. In this context, making space for creativity does not lie in fixed forms or a particular individual, but on cross-fertilisation between people, place and ideas. This open and creative platform thus challenges producing commodities for the art market and expands the possibilities of TYA, prompting questions of what it can become.



Figure 3. GroundBreakers “testbedding” session
OddSocks by Five Stones Theatre

Creative Limitation and the Future of the Artground

These innovative ways of working illuminate how The Artground has offered artists and children an alternative space to play, create and discover. Commercial forms of entertainment might receive more attention because they get bigger budgets or greater visibility in the press, but a smaller organisation like The Artground is equally an important cultural engine that can develop new forms of theatre and cultivate imaginative experiences. This is something ongoing and cannot be measured or equated simply in economic terms.

It would be misleading, however, to imply that The Artground is a solution to all the challenges of TYA or a model that is thriving. There are, inevitably, political challenges and implications as there are creative opportunities. At the time of writing, I was told that the NAC has reduced its funding for The Artground, leading the team to rent out the WhiteBox for birthday parties and children's events on some of the weekends as a way to sustain itself. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also placed additional pressures on the centre. This illustrates how The Artground operates as part of the wider economy and is vulnerable to variation and change. As much as it is a site that can challenge the commodification of creativity, its activities are also tied to material, environmental and political conditions. Hawkins, who examines creativity at the margins, suggests that it is often the very "edginess" or otherness of these spaces to wider narratives of the creative city that constitutes their very attraction for the creative sector (Hawkins 2017, 241). Ironically, she states, it is also what eventually undermines the same marginality (Hawkins 2017, 242).

This perspective illustrates The Artground's precarious situation in which the relationship between creativity and its practices is volatile and must be carefully negotiated. It must also be recognised that The Artground is a site that was built and sought out as a requirement rather than a choice, an essential way to advance artistic practices rather than generate profits. These alternative and innovative ways of working, if taken for granted, can face the dangers of being subsumed by dominant capitalist trends and forces, requiring TYA practitioners to once again renegotiate their place and artistic identities. Perhaps, TYA's ability to genuinely reimagine and reinvent itself depends on maintaining an even balance of power between capitalism and TYA's capacity to move, excite and provide an imaginative future. Geographer Oli Mould, who offers a radical perspective of creativity in his book, *Against Creativity*, argues:

Capitalism's greatest lie is getting us to believe that the ground that it seeks to stabilise and profit from is barren and devoid of life.... Don't believe this lie. Believe that creativity is about searching for, giving space to, and trying to realise the impossible. (Mould 2018, 202)

This hopeful view revitalises the fact that The Artground still plays an important role in sending a message to the state, industry, and general public that arts for children and young people hold a valuable cultural position in society. In an environment dominated by global capitalism, it can offer an equitable space to develop artists who understand that the future of TYA and the arts for children is dependent on their social role as art/ theatre-makers. This space that brings together a range of people, knowledge, ideas and practices is a catalyst for igniting new ways of working, and can continue to provide an alternative and valuable ground for TYA. Above all, decentralising creative activities from the urban centre has enabled children living in the neighbourhood direct and equal access to the arts, and, in doing so, has enlivened the local community. It is by rethinking and redrawing the boundaries of creativity that has the potential to move the sector forward.

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