

13.00: Welcome / Professor **Helle Marie Skovbjerg**,
Design School Kolding

13.05: Lecture / PhD student **Mathias Poulsen**

13.45: Examination / Professor **Stacy Holman Jones**,
Monash University

14.15: Break

14.30: Examination / Associate Professor **Sonia Bussu**,
University of Birmingham

15.00: Examination / Associate Professor **Canan Akoglu**,
Design School Kolding

15.30: Comments from the audience (*please! Also you people on Zoom!*)

16.00: Closing remarks / Professor **Helle Marie Skovbjerg**,
Design School Kolding



'The Junk Playground as Agora: Designing for Playful Democratic Frictions'



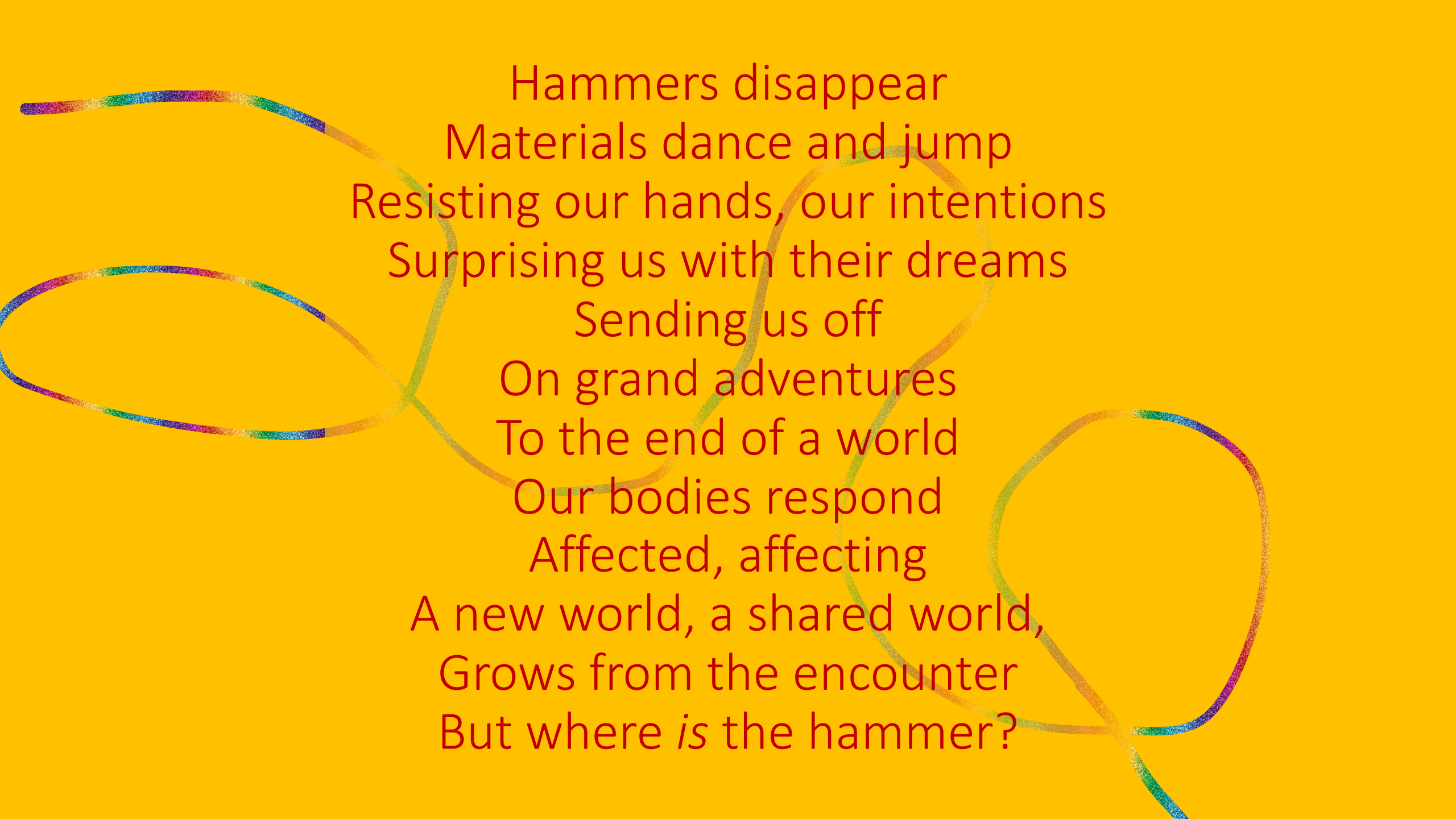
PhD "Defence" by Mathias Poulsen

Design School Kolding, Denmark

April 9th, 2024



Have you seen
the hammer?



Hammers disappear
Materials dance and jump
Resisting our hands, our intentions
Surprising us with their dreams
Sending us off
On grand adventures
To the end of a world
Our bodies respond
Affected, affecting
A new world, a shared world,
Grows from the encounter
But where *is* the hammer?



Thank you for
coming today!



‘ This is not a defence’

A photograph of a campsite in a forest. In the foreground, a fire burns brightly in a pile of sticks and branches, surrounded by large grey rocks. To the right, a simple wooden bench is built from logs, with an axe resting on its surface. The background shows a grassy clearing and a dense forest of bare trees under a warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. An orange semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

Maybe this is
what it looks like?

‘The Junk Playground as Agora – Designing for Playful Democratic Frictions’

Welcoming

Becoming – Knowing – Critiquing – Theorising - Doing

Attuning to the Playground

Rhythms and Affective Intensities

Conflicts and Social Friction

Care and Collective Joy

Participation in the Playgrounds

Complementing Participatory Democracy

Drifting by Friction

Playful Democratic Frictions

Co-Labouring Other Worlds

Conclusion

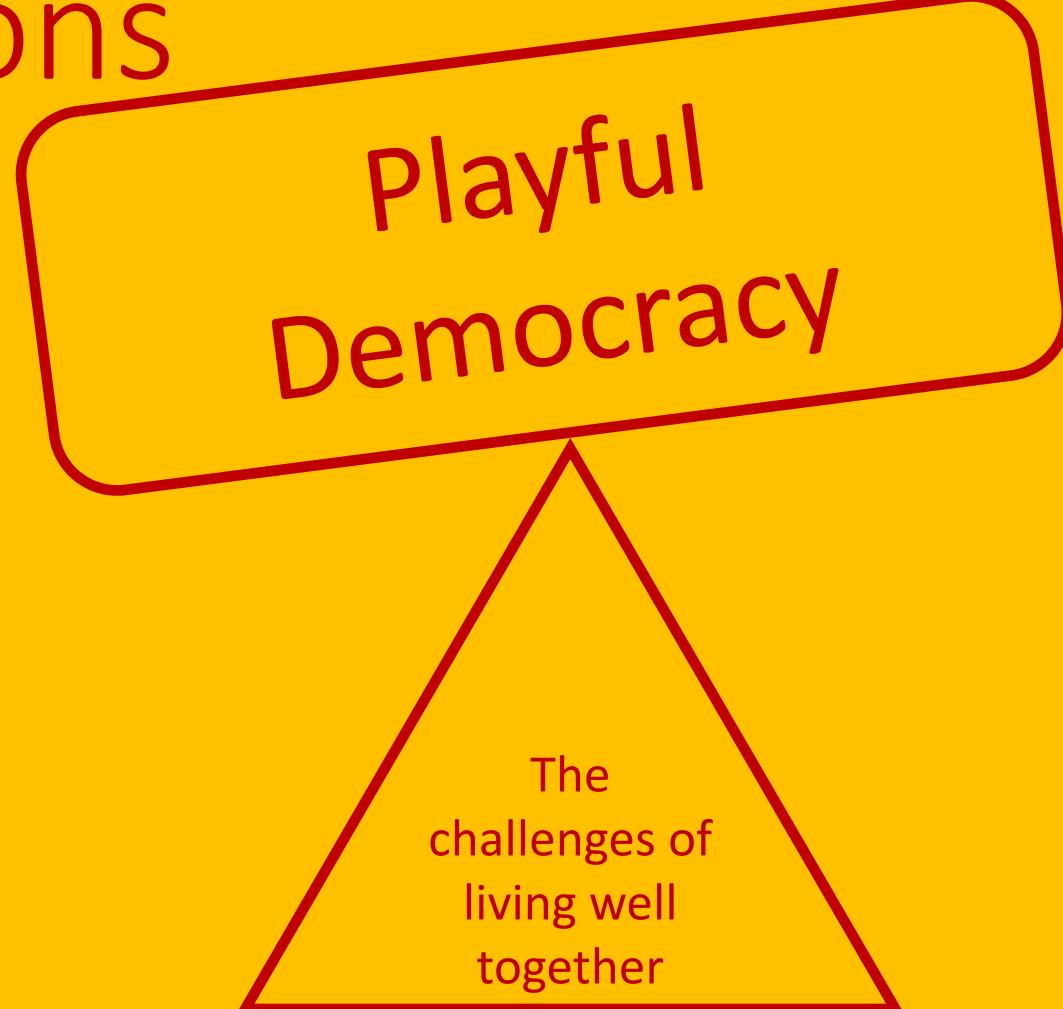


Balancing
hopes and
contributions

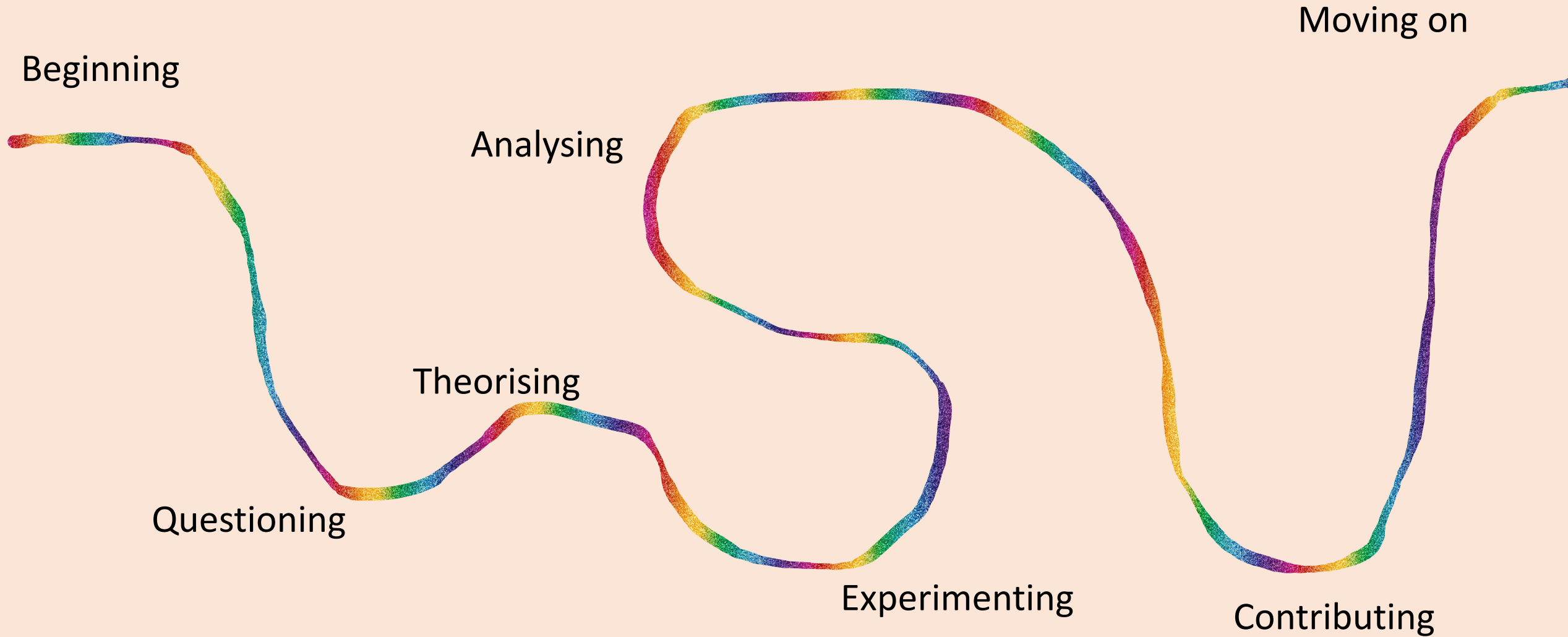
Playful Research

Playful
Democracy

The
challenges of
living well
together



A map of our journey



(almost) EXACTLY 10
years ago today!

THIS IS ONE BIG
EXPERIMENT.
Perpetual beta?

CounterPlay – an origin story



(Henricks, 2015)

Research Questions

How might we design for playful democratic participation?

How can we study playful democratic participation?

What happens when we understand play as a mode of democratic participation?



Methodology

What do you bring with you on your adventures when all you know is that you want to know something you don't know yet, can't know yet?

A person wearing green overalls and blue gloves is holding a wooden mallet. The mallet is positioned vertically, with its head pointing downwards towards a wooden structure. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with gravel and some debris. The text "Constructive design research" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Constructive design research

E.g. (Koskinen, 2011)

A photograph of a desk with various objects. In the foreground, a book with many yellowed, torn pages is standing upright. To its left, a smartphone is partially visible. Behind the book, a calculator and some papers are scattered. To the right, a cardboard egg carton is visible. The background is blurred, showing more desk items.

Artistic & performative research

E.g. (Østern et al, 2021)



Autoethnography

“Autoethnography does not speak through an individual or isolated voice, saying ‘My story, my experience, my self, the end.’ Rather, autoethnography is interested and invested in assembling a we’

(Holman Jones, 2017)



Experiments



‘The Junk Playground as Agora’

(Koskinen et al, 2011; Redström,
2017; Brandt et al, 2015)

Experiments

EX	Partner	Participants	Date(s)	No participants	Duration
1	Design School Kolding	Adults	10 September 2021	20	5 hours
2	Mølleskolen	Adults	7 September 2021	90	4 hours
3	Local community group in Hjortshøj	Children and adults	18 September 2021	50+	7 hours
4	UCSYD	Adults	13 October 2021	7	4 hours
5	Redux	Adults	25 November 2021	20	2 hours
6	Local community group in Egebjerg	Children and adults	5 March 2022, 3 & 10 April 2022	20-50	3 days, 4-6 hours each
7	Nicolai for Children	Children	3, 4, 5 May 2022	5 workshops, 25-50 each	90 minutes each
8	Monash - Emerging Technologies Research Lab	Adults	7 September 2022	8	2 hours
9	University of Canberra - Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance	Adults	21 October 2022	8	2 hours

‘We have landed far
into the future...’





‘today you have been closer to creating something with your fellow students than ever before. It felt good to take a step back, let go of control and surrender to the process. Important development towards who you want to be and what you want to be a part of’





Representational issues



A sculpture made of metal rods, wood, and tin can lids stands in a field of tall grass at sunset. The sculpture has two main vertical poles. The left pole has two small circular metal lids at the top, a small wooden block with two circular holes in the middle, and two blue-rimmed metal lids at the bottom. The right pole has two larger circular metal lids at the top and a small wooden block with two circular holes in the middle. The background is a field of tall grass with a body of water in the distance under a warm, orange sky.

Theory development

(Redström, 2017)



Democracy as movement

E.g. (Rosanvallon, 2018;
Schlosser et al., 2019)

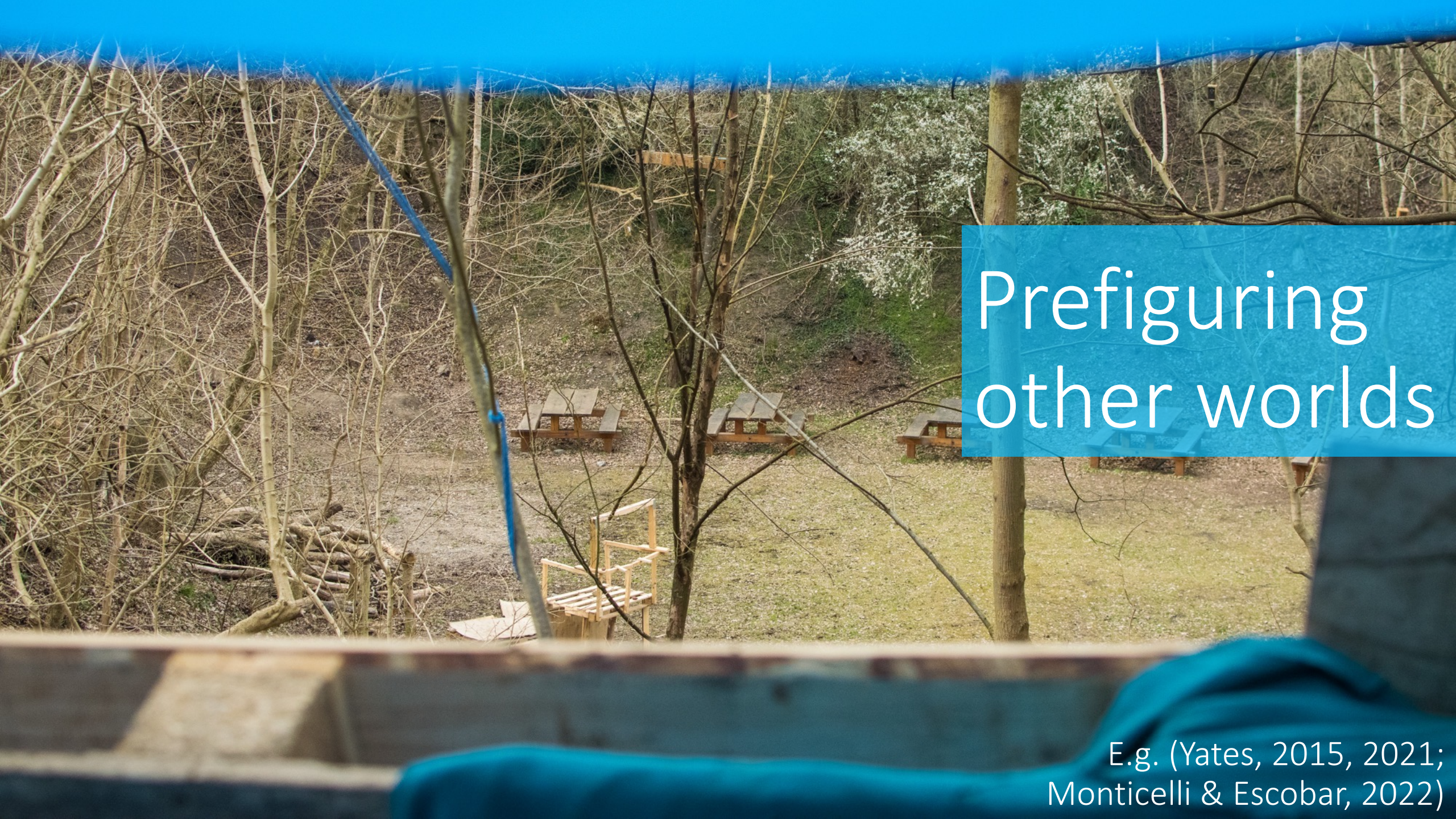


Participation as
assemblage



Friction

E.g. (Stewart, 2007;
Berlant, 2022; Tsing, 2005)

A photograph of a wooded area with several wooden picnic tables and a wooden chair, viewed through a blue translucent overlay. The scene is a clearing in a forest with many bare trees and some green foliage in the background. The text "Prefiguring other worlds" is overlaid on the right side of the image in white font.

Prefiguring other worlds

E.g. (Yates, 2015, 2021;
Monticelli & Escobar, 2022)

A complex network diagram is set up on a wooden table. It features a central circular area with a black base and an orange center, containing several small, colorful human-like figures. This central area is surrounded by a large, irregular network of thin, light-colored sticks or wires. These sticks are connected to various points on the table, including several green and yellow plastic caps on the left, and a purple feather on the right. The entire setup is on a wooden table, with a water bottle and other items visible in the background. The text "The mystery of analysis" is overlaid on a purple banner at the bottom left.

The mystery of analysis

E.g. (Balletero & Winthereik, 2021)

Gathering my research materials

Video (phones & GoPro)

Verbal & written reflections from participants

Photos

My own observations, sensations & reflections

Media

Users: 10

Media: 17

Descriptors: 13

Excerpts: 494

Codes: 214

Code Application: 607

Import Data

Export Data

Codes

Abstract / Concrete

Adult assessments

Adult play

Aesthetics

Against narrow structures

Agreeing without words

Arguing for freeing students

Autoethnography

Banter

Becoming immersed

Being active

Being proud

Being surprised

Bodily movement

Building things

Building trust

Camera awareness

Carnavalesque

Challenging hierarchies

Climbing the slope

Collaboration start

Type

Title

Added

User

Ex

Length

Reflections_Experiment_2.docx

12/08/202

mathiaspoulsen

4

16919

2: School Experiment - Reflections.docx

12/09/202

mathiaspoulsen

0

23651

8: Gravel Pit Experiment - Interviews.docx

01/23/202

mathiaspoulsen

0

12903

1: DSKD Experiment Reflections

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

90

33594

2: School Experiment - Reflections

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

76

15977

2: School Experiment - Stories

12/08/202

mathiaspoulsen

60

23651

3: Community Party Experiment - Reflections

12/08/202

mathiaspoulsen

35

14024

8: Gravel Pit Experiment Day 2

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

30

10381

8: Gravel Pit Experiment Day 3

01/23/202

mathiaspoulsen

0

40774

2: School Experiments - Postcards

12/09/202

mathiaspoulsen

51

58246

5: UCSYD - Shared reflections

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

98

13033

5: UCSYD Experiment - postcards

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

14

3485

5: UCSYD Experiment - My Reflections

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

7

2758

5: UCSYD Experiment - My Reflections

12/07/202

mathiaspoulsen

24

12538

Excerpts: 494

Resource: 9: Nicolai Experiment

Added: 01/27/2023

Username: mathiaspoulsen

Codes: 1

Hun begynder at tegne en bil og sætter sig ned. Hun har tegnet en bil og viser den til mig.

Resource: 9: Nicolai Experiment

Added: 01/27/2023

Username: mathiaspoulsen

Codes: 1

Hun begynder at save i en plade.

Resource: 9: Nicolai Experiment

Added: 01/27/2023

Username: mathiaspoulsen

Codes: 1

"jeg skal være testprøven, jeg skal være testprøven" - hun har nævnt nogle gange, at det er hende, der skal teste deres bil når den er færdig.

Resource: 9: Nicolai Experiment

Added: 01/27/2023

Username: mathiaspoulsen

Codes: 2

"er det ikke vi laver noget for os selv og så til sidst viser vi det, for det vil jeg gerne"

"men det vil jeg ikke..."

Codes x Descriptor

Field: Set: Experiments

Field: Location

His/Miss: Sub-code Count: Normalize: %

Abstract / Concrete

Grenå: 0.0%

Hjortshøj: 0.0%

Horsens: 0.0%

Kolding: 42.9%

Adult assessments

Grenå: 0.0%

Hjortshøj: 0.0%

Horsens: 0.0%

Kolding: 100.0%

Adult play

Grenå: 0.0%

Hjortshøj: 42.9%

Descriptor Ratios Multi Chart

Set: Experiments, Field: Location

Set: Experiments, Field: No of Participants

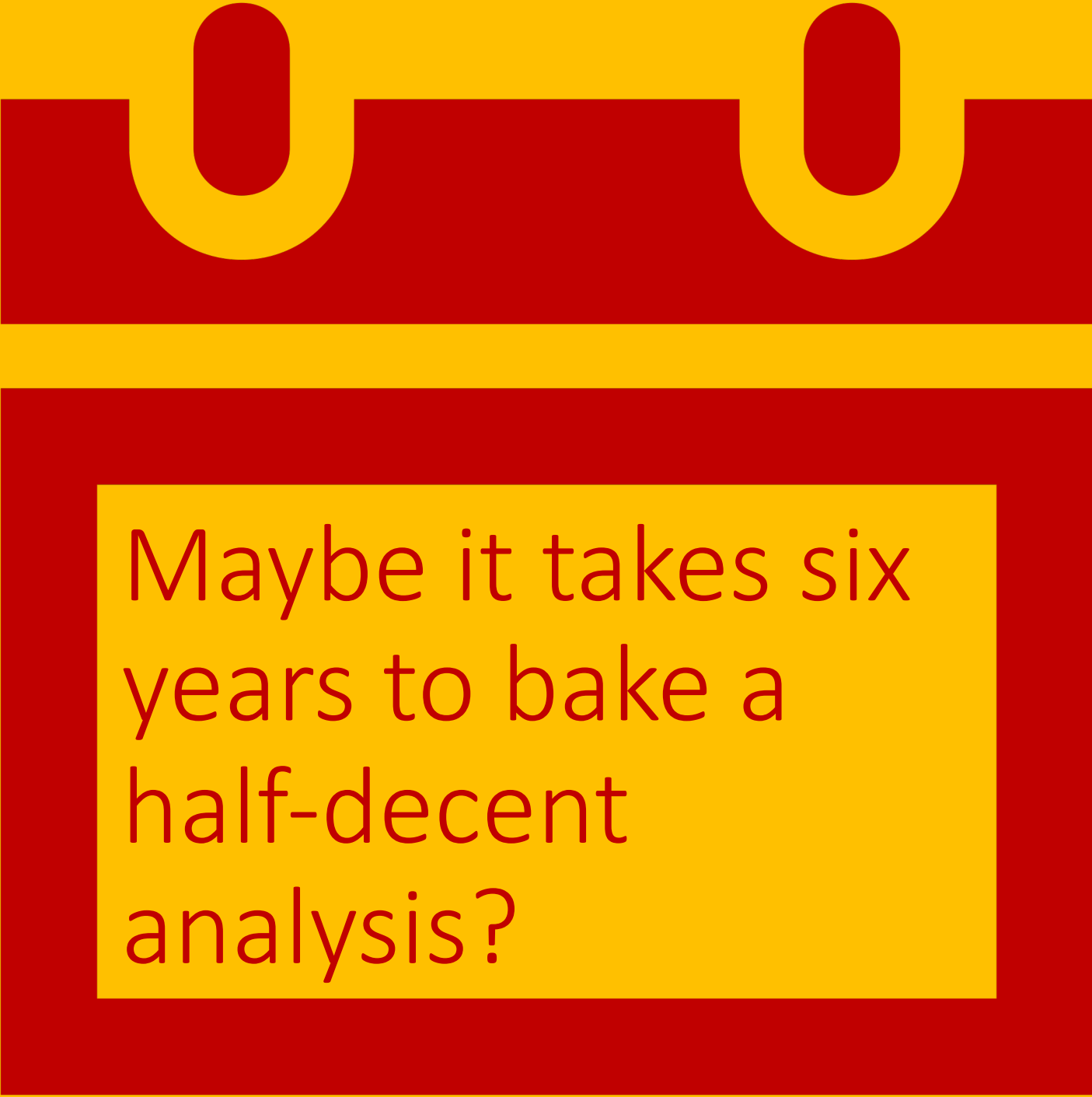
Set: Experiments, Field: Date

Set: Experiments, Field: Experiment name

Set: Experiments, Field: Time span

Set: Experiments, Field: Data type

(Charmaz, 2014)



Maybe it takes six
years to bake a
half-decent
analysis?

Case in point:
Collective Joy

'I'm not talking
about Hollywood
romantic
relationships, I'm
talking about a
sense of care,
connection,
generosity,
appreciation, that
kind of love'





RADICAL HAPPINESS

MOMENTS OF
COLLECTIVE JOY

LYNNE
SEGAL

‘As the world becomes an ever lonelier place, it is sustaining relationships, in whatever form they take, which must become ever more important. An act of defiance, even’

(Segal, 2018)

**AFTER
DEMOCRACY
IMAGINING
OUR POLITICAL
FUTURE**
ZIZI PAPACHARISSI

‘but is it a joyful
mode of
engagement?’

(Papacharissi, 2021)

The junk playground as agora: designing spaces to reinvigorate democratic participation

Mathias Poulsen

Design School Kolding, Denmark


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<https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2022.679>

Abstract: In this paper, I suggest that there is an urgent need to design new spaces and possibilities for democratic participation. With inspiration from the tradition of “junk” and “adventure playgrounds”, I argue that play design can contribute to expanding the participatory repertoire within deliberative democracy. Two design experiments are

‘I have been on a journey this afternoon, where there was much joy [...] together with colleagues I don’t normally talk to. (...) it was so much fun and there was a delightful feeling of community’.





‘The researcher is also in the hands of the research material’



A junk playground
approach to analysis?

Unpacking Contributions

‘Playful Democratic Frictions’





'Drifting by Friction'

E.g. (Krogh & Koskinen, 2020, 2022)
(Tsing, 2015)

Becoming
otherwise



If this is my PhD,
what should I
add next?



With Love

‘Let us draw upon that love to heighten our awareness, deepen our compassion, intensify our courage, and strengthen our commitment.’ (Hooks, 2015)





Thank you again
for coming today!