

Dramatising deindustrialisation: **experiential authority, temporality and embodiment in a play about nuclear decommissioning.**

***Aleksandr:** How does one close the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant? Just like any other nuclear power plant. They halt its operation. They plan and stop the reactor, plan and inventory equipment, plan and carry out the characterisation of equipment, plan and dismantle. They also plan and conduct radiological characterisation, plan and sort, plan and pack, plan and characterize radioactive waste. They plan, plan, plan. A part of the waste can be considered non-radioactive and taken out for disposal or reuse. The rest is radioactive waste. This, after radiological characterisation and appropriate processing, will have to be packaged and buried in a repository.*

By the year 2037, the INPP is to be replaced by a green meadow and three repositories of radioactive waste. A green meadow and three repositories of radioactive waste – that's what should be in the place of the INPP by 2038. Three repositories of radioactive waste. Waste containing radionuclides, short-lived and long-lived, highly hazardous and not so much.

Nuclides, the half-decay periods of which are from several years to millions of years. All this will be stacked in packages, surrounded by structures and geological materials and left here forever. Will our city remain here? Forever?

Script excerpt, *Green Meadow*

INTRODUCTION

Green Meadow is a documentary theatre production by the Lithuania National Drama Theatre. It uses participatory theatre techniques to explore the ongoing decommissioning of the Soviet-designed Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant in North-Eastern Lithuania, and the effects of the decommissioning on the residents of Visaginas, a purpose-built satellite town that houses the workers of the plant¹. The play was co-devised and performed by a group of people who live and work in Visaginas. It addresses how the decline of modernity's great projects are experienced by those whose lives were shaped by them: how they make sense of loss and change, and how memory and embodied habit are folded into the everyday uncertainties of the present.

¹ Verbatim theatre is a form of documentary theatre that uses the words of real people, rather than fictional characters. The process usually involves interviewing participants, and then producing a script based on the interview transcripts.

This chapter seeks to make visible the embodied subjectivities that emerge in communities centred on a single industry. It also seeks to explore the role of memory, habit and identity in making sense of shifting lives when these places undergo transition and decline. The theatre production, and my own ethnographic research in the town, challenge dominant ways of knowing and representing postindustrial spaces that are rooted in tropes of melancholic loss and spectacular decay, focusing instead on community transition and endurance, and on how lives are made liveable in the present. By dramatising and personalising the politics of energy transition, the play foregrounds the experiential and community effects of wider economic and political processes. Playing with scale and temporality, it moves between singular events and *longue durée* histories, meshing the affective present with geological time.

The name *Green Meadow* describes the ultimate aim of decommissioning: to erase the huge architectural structure of both reactors as well as all auxiliary facilities, and to replace everything with flora typical to the region. Yet this erasure is more than architectural: the plant, the town and its inhabitants are the materialisation of the Soviet nuclear dream. The process of decommissioning is part of a wider set of global changes: post Chernobyl, post-Soviet, post-Europeanisation, post-progress; a set of changes that have, in bringing about the closure of the plant, the town, and its inhabitants as relics of a past, and - for some - shameful era.

Interspersing excerpts from the script of *Green Meadow* with a discussion of performance, subjectivity and deindustrialisation, I highlight how drama, and documentary theatre in particular, mines the body as historical archive, offering an account of experience and subjectivity that moves beyond social science methods that focus on texts alone. The production process and the performance, foreground embodied practice, movement and affect. Here, the body-as-archive becomes a site of experiential authority, where non-professional actors, the origin of their own experience, interact with audiences. By foregrounding memory, habit, experience and feeling, the play reveals the deep and intimate ways in which town and plant were entwined, and how Visaginas' inhabitants are coming to terms with the slow, ongoing dismantling of the fundamental telos of their town.

The chapter firstly discusses the dramaturgical process and methods used in *Green Meadow* to demonstrate how drama as social science reveals these embodied sensibilities. I then discuss how the ethos of the production generates a form of "experiential authority" that gives weight to

performers' experiences, focusing on how the everyday nuclearity of the town is made visible through these embodied testimonies. The final section of the paper argues that the complex temporalities of the play situate everyday life, memory and habit within broader histories of energy and matter, opening up the event of the plant's closure and folding everyday life and experience into the nuclear Anthropocene.

Deindustrialisation, affect and subjectivity

Visaginas, formerly known as Sniečkus, was an *atomgrad*, one of a series of purpose-built towns constructed during the 1970s and 1980s to house the workers of nuclear facilities². These towns both showcased the success of the Soviet planned economy and provided pleasant, egalitarian living spaces for the workers of the plant. Workers were posted to the Sniečkus from other, often closed, nuclear sites elsewhere in the Soviet Union, and helped to build the town and the plant. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the decision to close the plant was announced, a trade-off condition of Lithuania's accession to the European Union. At the time, no alternative economic plan was put in place outside of the long and painstaking work of dismantling the plant. While a large number of the town's residents left Visaginas to explore the opportunities offered by the free movement of labour with the EU, many remained to work on the decommissioning, or lived off redundancy money, pensions and the piecemeal alternative work available (Šliavaitė 2015, Dawney forthcoming).

Divorced from the Soviet planned economy, monoindustrial places like Visaginas are fragile. The first nuclear age promised near limitless power; now, what seemed like the future of fuel generation is increasingly uncertain. Indeed, in Visaginas, the closure of the plant is an indirect consequence of the breaking up of the Soviet Union and subsequent independence of Lithuania, the accession of Lithuania into the European Union, the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster (Ignalina II used the same RBMK-500 reactors, and indeed much of the recent HBO TV series was filmed at the plant) and ongoing uncertainty regarding nuclear power. A focus on deindustrialising communities reveals the lived experience of structural change – the affective, emotional and sensorial shifts that take place as the tectonics of livelihood, dwelling and belonging pull apart. It enables us to pay attention to the way that these connections are sedimented in memories, affects, bodily habits, expertise, and subjectivities, and to the processes of adapting to change.

² Other *Atomgrads* include Sosnovyi Bor, Kurchatov, Desnogors in Russia, and Energodar and Prypiat/Slavutych in Ukraine Wendland, A. V. 2015. Inventing the Atomograd. Nuclear Urbanism as a Way of Life in Eastern Europe, 1970-2011. In *The Impact of Disaster: Social and Cultural Approaches to Fukushima and Chernobyl*, ed. T. F. L. G. Thomas Bohn, Arndt Graf, 261-287. Berlin: EB Publishers.

There is a small but significant literature in the social sciences on the relationship between affect, community and deindustrialisation. Walkerdine and Jimenez' (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012:72) sensitive discussion of affect and community after the closing of a steelworks in South Wales describes the closure as an existential threat, seen to rupture a community's "sense of continuity of being". They relate how the residents experienced collective trauma, using the metaphor of "skin" to describe the holding power of the steelworks, and the "overwhelming anxiety and threat of annihilation" that were the effects of its removal (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012:56). Concern with the affective fallout of deindustrialisation is echoed by Stewart, discussing the embodied and traumatic effects of the closure of coal mines in West Virginia:

The bodies wheezed. They reeled. They were hit by contagious outbreaks of "the nerves." People "fell out." They said it was like they were being pulled down by a hand that grabbed them in the middle of their back. The force of things amassed in floods of stories and in ruined objects that piled up on the landscape like an accrual of phantom limbs. (Stewart 2011:447).

In these studies, a focus on affect and community brings to the fore the intensified connections between place, labour and community in deindustrialising places, and the trauma that processes of economic, political and technological change can bring about.

Other scholars of deindustrialised places have attended to the relationship between landscape and affect, and the visible traces of former industrial processes on the landscape. Storm (2014:1) develops the concept of the landscape scar as "a reminder, the trace of a wound... marks of sorrow and betrayal, of the abuse of power and latent hazards... they bear tales of communities and dreams, of achievements and resistance" (Storm 2014:1)". This attention to place and subjectivity is also stressed by Alice Mah (2012), whose concept of "industrial ruination" reveals landscapes of uncertainty, disruption and traumatic collective memory (Mah 2012). In cultural geography, material traces of former industrial glory have been ripe grounds for melancholic ruminations on memory, loss and ruination that both highlight the significance of material remains and at the same time feed into "ruin-gazing" tropes (Edensor 2005, Strangleman 2013, Dawney 2020, DeSilvey and Edensor 2013, Millington 2013, Fraser 2018).

While this literature indeed offers sensitive and nuanced accounts of the capillary endings of deindustrialisation, foregrounding how macroeconomic and political changes play out at the community level, they rely largely on conventional social science methods, such as interviews, or on the researcher's own interactions with postindustrial landscapes. Using drama as social science

method can offer an increased focus on embodiment, movement and experience. This embodied, approach reveals how day-to-day habits, cultures and ways of life are inscribed on and through bodies, foregrounding these bodies as spaces through which material, economic and affective transitions take place. Here, it is the bodies themselves, and not only their recorded testimonies, that act as archives of the event.

Drama, experiential authority and the body as archive

While investigating these relationships between affect, deindustrialisation and community in Visaginas in 2016 with two photographers, I stayed by coincidence in the same guest house as the team from the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, who were in the early stages of developing *Green Meadow*. This serendipitous meeting led to our collaboration. I subsequently conducted a workshop with the creative team to explore the conceptual themes of the play. These discussions drew together observations from my fieldwork during 2016 and 2017 and from the LDNT's early work with theatre participants, as well as discussions of academic texts including *Problems of Hope* (Dawney, Blencowe and Bresnihan 2017), and Nixon's *Slow Violence* (Nixon 2011). On future visits, I attended a theatre workshop in Visaginas, watched three performances of *Green Meadow*, and conducted interviews with the creative team and some of the performers.

Green Meadow's actors were recruited by setting up a stall in the middle of town, near to the (now removed) radiation monitor. Those who were interested took part in a series of weekly workshops to develop the play. The script was based on interview transcripts and drama workshops. Early versions of the production were staged within the town in 2017, offering opportunities for audiences to contribute to the production process. The play was then staged the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre in Vilnius, then toured regional towns in Lithuania including Visaginas.

Drama can make embodied histories visible, expanding the forms of data available to researchers to include habit, movement, gesture and affect: registers that are less available in more traditional social science methods such as the interview. Recent geographical research has highlighted the use of drama as social science method, both to communicate and disseminate of research and to allow marginalised voices to be heard, for example in Pratt and Johnston's important work with Filipina domestic labourers in Canada, Mike Richardson's exploration of Irishness and masculinity through theatre, and Ruth Raynor's collaborative theatre production with a women's group in Gateshead exploring everyday understandings of austerity (Pratt and Johnston 2013, Richardson 2015, Raynor 2017b, Raynor 2017a, see also Rogers 2018). In each of these examples, drama is used as a powerful

tool for understanding complex economic, social and psychosocial phenomena, both giving a voice to the powerless and facilitating participants in making sense of their own experiences. In addition, drama can also facilitate collective-sense making through the construction of stories (Raynor 2017b). In this way, these practices follow a long tradition in Boalian theatre of the oppressed (Boal 2006), and the work of early feminist consciousness-raising practices that seek to externalise and make public – and therefore political - privately felt and unacknowledged experiences (Sarachild 1978). In the context of Visaginas, a town where people feel forgotten and abandoned by the institutions that inflicted change upon them, the collective production of a play about these changes helped to build community narratives, and to communicate their stories to those from outside the town. My own interviewees had discussed with me the way they felt shame when discussing where they are from, and how the town is treated as an object of ridicule, or derision, by those from other parts of Lithuania. The play enabled the performers to generate and tell their stories to a broader public, to speak about their hometown with pride and authority, offering a medium for exploring lived politics, and the “voice of the street” (Stephens 2019).

There are parallels between *Green Meadow* and the work of the Berlin-based company Rimini Protokoll, whose theatricalisations of the everyday involve performers as “experts who play themselves” (McKechnie 2010:76). Rimini Protokoll aims to construct everyday utopias, where the authority of these “experts of the everyday” is augmented to give equal voice to those who may not otherwise be heard (Dreyse 2008). Kristina Werner, one of the directors of the play, aims to create a space where individuals are being witnessed and “seen in totality rather than as a limited extract of whom they represent or how others imagine them to be” (Balevičiūtė 2019).

Documentary theatre, as a realist form, promises to offer a more “true” account of events through its reliance on documentary evidence. This usually relies on the written archive - the performing of a script based on documentary records (of interviews and archival documents). Here, it is the actors’ bodies themselves that are the living archives from which the performance is devised. Unlike other forms of documentary theatre, such as verbatim theatre, where professional actors adapt and perform the experience of others, in *Green Meadow*, the audience directly encounters those whose stories are being told. Using the same body as both archive and performer foregrounds the play’s liveness, promising a direct engagement with experience. In *Green Meadow*, performers who had worked in the nuclear plant were asked to develop a repetitive movement that related to their work. In this “dance”, the choreography of movement and gesture gives thickness to the representation of experience, and to the testimonies of the performers. INSERT FIG 1.

Using living bodies as archives, rather than the static representation of an oral history interview, allows the scripting to become more fluid and responsive. Director Kristina Werner encouraged performers to actively engage with the script throughout the play's lifespan: for each iteration of the performance, the performers amend the script, asking whether this holds as truth in the present. As the actors' lives develop and change, and as they view their pasts in different ways in relation to their present, so the performance adapts. As a result, the instability of memory and the changes to people's lives in the present are incorporated in the script at every new performance, meaning that the archive is in a constant process of remaking.

Previously, I have discussed the concept of "experiential authority", drawing on the testimonies of those who have undergone major and often traumatic life experiences (bereavement, war) to show how the affective power of their own embodied experience generates relations of authority in the public sphere (Dawney 2013, Dawney 2019). Here, the audience encounters this authority through direct engagement with these "experts of the everyday". The abstractions of energy politics become personalised, amplifying voices that may otherwise not be heard and bringing authenticity and voice to their complex dynamics. The production plays with realism and fiction, truth and authenticity, involving genuine but staged testimonies of "experts by experience", blurring together dreams, memories, imagined realities and future. From the audience's perspective, the performance of the play by those who live in the town augments the sense of truth, authenticity and authority of experience, producing alternative, vernacular histories that undercut and slice through narratives from above.

Memory and nuclearity

While there are similarities between experiences of deindustrialisation, nuclear energy production is notably different from common case studies, such as the extractive or metals industries. It involves different expertise, skills and safety-focused modes of attention, meaning that nuclear communities operate in a world of "everyday nuclearity" (Hecht 2012, Dawney forthcoming). This everyday nuclearity is visible throughout the town, in the form of sirens on the sides of buildings, play structures shaped like subatomic particles, a radiation indicator (now removed) in the middle of town and street names like Energetiku³. Nuclear workers do not garner the same sympathetic and

³ Elsewhere, I highlight the spatial articulations of this everyday nuclearity in Visaginas, drawing attention to its role in providing community identity Dawney, L. (forthcoming) Atomic cities, analogue dreams: infrastructural ontologies and the memories of lost futures. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*.

sentimental response as other workers affected by deindustrialisation – the heroic figure of the miner or steelworker that mobilises left-wing nostalgia does not hold in the context of nuclear work, which is, as many of the participants in my ethnographic research revealed, associated with contamination and fear. For these reasons, among others, the specific histories of nuclear decommissioning are rarely discussed in academic work on deindustrialisation. This project provides a welcome discussion of these histories, demonstrating how nuclearity, and its position within 20th century imaginaries, shapes the lives of those who work in the nuclear industry, and the way in which they experience its decline.

Green Meadow testifies to the deeply entwined worlds of nuclear sociotechnical assemblages in the lives of Visaginas' inhabitants through recalling memories, firstly of growing up near the plant, secondly of the Chernobyl disaster, and thirdly of the night of the shutdown of the last reactor. The theatre process brings to the fore personal memories and embodied habits that constitute everyday life in the *Atomgrad*. INSERT FIG. 2 In the following extract, the playful, collective recitation of safety procedures taught in school reveals the shared histories of nuclearity held by the residents of the town, while at the same time drawing attention to the everyday affective modalities (fear, complacency) informed by the possibility of an accident⁴.

Gerdas: *We had a class called Civil Safety. During that class we would play cards or eat sunflower seeds. Or skip it altogether.*

Edita: *One time, I remember we were in a forest, picking mushrooms or berries. And the sirens started howling.*

Dima: *Sirens were cool. Every time I heard them, I thought, maybe something finally happened? Nope, just a routine check.*

Edita: *I got so scared because it sounded like a giant vacuum cleaner.*

Gerdas: *I had a plan as a boy that if something happened to the plant, I'd hide underground until the wave passed.*

Edita: *As a child, I already knew about Chernobyl and that vacuum cleaner sound was a sign of disaster to me.*

⁴ Visaginas is primarily Russian speaking, while the play was performed in Lithuanian venues such as the National Drama Theatre. Its performers' first languages were Russian, Lithuanian and English. All performers spoke in their mother tongue, while surtitles in each of the other two languages were displayed during the performance. The extracts from the script here are taken from the English surtitle translations, where necessary.

Maša: We were shown films about Chernobyl. I didn't really care about it. It seemed so long ago and far away, like on another planet.

Edita: And I imagined a nuclear disaster being like a gas stove explosion.

Aleksandr: I was six when Chernobyl happened.

Maša: I was sitting at my school desk, looking at the teacher writing something on the blackboard.

Aleksandr: I don't remember any news related to the tragedy.

Maša: Suddenly a siren blasted. "What if the plant exploded and my parents are there? What am I gonna do?"

Aleksandr: We were visiting friends, and Dad and his colleague read about it in a newspaper...

Maša: I thought, if there's evacuation and I'm allowed to take only three things, what would they be?

Aleksandr: Certain mushrooms couldn't be eaten from then on because they accumulate heavy metals and radionuclides.

Maša: I decided to take my beloved doll, my chinchilla, and some chinchilla food.

Gerdas: One night there was a big blast outside my window.

Dima: They taught us at school what to do in case of a nuclear disaster.

Gerdas: I jumped into my bed: what happened? Did the plant explode?

Dima: They gave us a ton of instructions.

Gerdas: But it was just thunder.

Edita: If you're driving, pull over, turn the ventilation off and roll up the windows.

Dima: Turn on the radio or TV.

Maša: Don't drive any further and don't get out.

Olia: If you're outside, get in.

Aleksandr: Look for an evacuation plan – it shows where the buses will come.

Gerdas: Don't touch any injured people – they may be radioactive.

Edita: Cover your mouth with a wet cheesecloth.

Maša: Having returned from the outside, put your clothes and shoes into a plastic bag and remove it from the premises.

Dima: Don't drink, eat, or smoke in a contaminated area.

Gerdas: Seal all air vents.

Maša: Wash yourself thoroughly with soap.

Edita: Wash your dog or cat if they've been outside.

Aleksandr: Shut the windows.

Olia: Wash your hair.

Maša: Take a few iodine pills.

Gerdas: Cover any water wells.

Edita: Warn your neighbours.

Maša: Do not panic.

Here, the experiences of growing up in a space of everyday nuclearity, and the intertwining of bodies and plant is made visible through childhood memory. Safety procedures are reeled off like mantras, as the shared histories of risk mitigation are related with humour and levity. Earlier in the play, the ritualised and habitual practices of daily work in a nuclear plant offer a repetitive, cyclical temporality that Lisa Baraitser describes as the “time of maintenance” (Baraitser 2017): ongoing, banal work of keeping things going, performing safety checks in the context of foreclosed futures. The performance rests on both the instability of memory and the complex and unstable relation between past and present. Two events, in particular, feature prominently: the night when the final reactor stopped and the Chernobyl disaster.

Maša: December 31, 2009. The power plant's last day of operations. I offered to my friends to go there, listen to its sounds one last time, and say goodbye to it. We bought tickets for the bus that used to bring the employers in and out of the plant every day.

On the way there, I tried to imagine what I was going to see. I expected to hear all kinds of noises, like in factories. Smoking chimneys, people shouting "Bring in the uranium!" or something along those lines. And so we arrived at the plant. The bus door opened and... nothing. Silence. There was nobody outside.

You could almost see the tumbleweed rolling around. We decided to walk around the territory.

We reached a printing house. It's in a separate building, where my mother once worked. I recalled one New Year's Eve when Santa brought me a doll. I took it to mother's work, where I fed it, gave it a drink, and put it to sleep. Mother's colleagues would say, "Oh, what a cute girl. Here's a candy for you." It would make me so happy. We walked around a little longer, then we left.

Back home, sitting at the festive table on New Year's Day, I imagined that as I was eating Russian salad, out there in the plant, a man in a white uniform was sitting and waiting for midnight to arrive so he could shut the plant down. There he goes to an "ON/OFF" switch,

pulls it, and shuts the power plant down. And then the lights go out, the city is dark, and lightbulbs explode in every home. There I was, a few minutes past midnight, waiting for this to happen. And nothing. Just silence. Not even a spark in a socket or a flicker in a lightbulb. Nothing.

If it had been a movie, after shutting down the plant, the man would leave the plant, put a huge lock on its door and go home. He would be sad as he walked the streets and everybody would yell at him, "What have you done? Why did you turn the plant off? What were you thinking?" And they'd throw tomatoes at him. Then he would go home and tell his wife, "That's it. Turned it off." "God, you're an idiot." She'd collect her stuff and leave him. Then he'd pick up a gun and shoot himself.

But that would be like in the movies.

In reality, my mom and I sat at the table and ate salad.

Aleksandr: 2010.

It was only five days that later I realized that something had changed. It took me while to understand what it was.

I went to the turbine room and listened. The silence...

Not as quiet as it is nowadays, before or after the work day, when no workers are dismantling things. But way quieter than it used to be when the turbines were running. Like standing next to an ascending airplane. Plus the turbine room got colder. The working machines used to generate a lot of heat. There was no point in heating a huge hall, especially when they started cutting heating costs.

All of that is memory games. It comes and goes. Images emerge and dissolve in the air. A kaleidoscope.

As usual, the monitoring schedule was set one year in advance. A few weeks later, we realized we could do away with some of the measurements the following year. We were given new tasks and new duties. Together with the new Head of Division we started working on a bulky waste characterisation methodology.

It was a very intense time. Everyone needed the methodology to be able to begin the dismantling works. The work began. Running around the controlled zone with a huge gamma-ray spectrometer. The management was anxious to receive the methodology and begin the dismantling. The workers avoided it like the plague.

I guess they couldn't understand that it was all over. They were hoping for a re-launch of the plant. I couldn't understand it myself, despite being part of the impulse that started the dismantling.

That winter and spring in Europe were very cold. Plus, natural gas prices skyrocketed. In Slovakia, for example, their plant was shut down and then restarted for six months, in order to bring the country's power production costs down.

Here people hoped for the same. It's a psychological thing. If you don't want something to happen, you keep pushing it away as much as you can. Serious changes take time.

With time, the staff learned the instructions better than I did. They can even correct me now if I misquote something. Everybody got used to the new order. Things settled down.

Yet knowing that everything changed forever is very sad.

Vova: *On the night of the shutdown, my parents and I were looking at a website that showed the levels of energy produced by the plant. We saw the indicators gradually descending. In the morning, they were down to zero.*

Aukse: *I don't remember what I did on that night. I just noticed that lightbulbs got dimmer after the shutdown. They really used to be brighter.*

The closing of something is unspectacular. There is no ceremony, no rite of passage, just the slight dimming of lightbulbs as the town's electricity supply gets switched to the main grid. The production draws attention to the difficulty of dramatising these slow processes of change – in attempting to focus on the event, it is revealed as a let-down. Maša's memories of granting significance to the event by imagining the closure cinematically are juxtaposed with (safety worker) Alexandr's practical account of the changes in the working day at the plant. During the dramaturgical process, fragments of memory rise to the surface: of a childhood inflected by nuclearity, of eating salad as the lights dim during the closing of the plant, of building a town now left to fend for itself. These fragments show how the plant is inscribed onto bodies – through the repetitive processes of the working day, for example - or through memories of the chocolate eclairs from the plant bakery, of the plentiful heat and hot water that maintained bodily comfort in sub-zero temperatures.

Complex temporalities

Deindustrialisation is a long, slow process. The decommissioning of the plant itself will take 30 years. At the community level, coming to terms with change is slow and incremental. As Sherry Linkon points out, using an apposite metaphor for this case, deindustrialisation has a "half-life", and spectacular events such as the closure of a factory or plant have extended, ongoing reverberations through communities (Linkon 2018). In our conceptual workshop, we drew on recent discussions of "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) to situate the event in the context of memories of quotidian life, ongoing sense-making in the present, histories of industrialisation and the afterlives of nuclear

matter to reveal the longer, more complex temporalities of industrial processes. The play deals with the difficulty of making sense of these overlapping temporalities by juxtaposing specific events with the ongoing, mundane everydayness of life in the plant, and *longue durée* histories of radioactive matter. The lived and felt events of the closure of the plant and the learning about the Chernobyl disaster are woven into speculative histories and futures that span hundreds of thousands of years. The experiences of the performers of *Green Meadow*, as first-hand witnesses to the building and closure of the Ignalina power plant, personalise and dramatise these broader temporalities of industrialisation, deindustrialisation and the Anthropocene. Their bodies are thus positioned as shifting, material repositories for histories of energy, hubris, progress, power and endurance.

Avoiding the for and against arguments so beloved of those discussing nuclear power, or inviting the audience to engage with “issues”, *Green Meadow* dramatises a site of the nuclear Anthropocene as it plays out through bodies haunted by memories, histories and lost futures (Carpenter 2016). The play opens with a timeline: a collective narration of the personal, the political and the planetary.

INSERT FIG. 3.

Beginning with the first appearance of *homo sapiens*, via the discovery of uranium, the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, the personal histories of the actors’ relatives who built the town, the Chernobyl disaster, individual achievements and memorable events of the cast, and ending in the year 800362, the timeline accelerates towards its speculative conclusion:

Olia: 2012. Working and living in London, I learn that I’m pregnant and decide to go back to Visaginas. Here, on May 14, my son Robert is born.

Gerdas: 2013. My dog Harley wins the explosive detection championship.

Dima: September 2015. I return from my travels to Visaginas and decide to put down roots here.

Vova: October 2016. I join the Green Meadow project.

Violeta: 2038. The power plant is closed. In its place there is now a brown field instead of a green meadow.

Edita: 2068. A long-term waste storage facility 750 metres under ground starts operating

Gerdas: Year 200030. A 60-tonne chondrite meteorite falls on Kalviškiai village, 5 kilometres from the deep storage facility.

Auksė: Year 300101. The threat arises that aliens might land on Earth and use the nuclear fuel for military purposes.

Aleksandr: Approximately 500014. The nuclear fuel now used is comparable to natural uranium in terms of its radiotoxicity.

CONCLUSION

Drama can reveal the affective and embodied effects of postindustrial change. Weaving together memory, habit, movement and experience, theatre offers a method for teasing out the intimacies of nuclearity, and the effects that the closure of the plant has on the symbolic and affective life of the community living alongside it. By using theatre methods such as movement, to activate memory and reflection, *Green Meadow* generates creative ways of representing lived experience, drawing out performers' affective relations to historical events. Drama as social science method is a powerful form of collective theorising, bringing together embodied experience, memory, philosophy, affective attachments and material engagements to produce multiple, entangled and differently scaled stories, and provide counter narratives to official histories.

In this chapter, I have discussed how *Green Meadow* generates a form of experiential authority, augmenting vernacular experiences and bringing new voices into public discussions around deindustrialisation and energy politics. The production offers powerful alternative narratives that contest dominant deindustrialisation stories of loss and decline. While memory is central to the stories told, the ongoingness of *Green Meadow* refuses closure, inviting audiences to consider the ways that performers move on, make new paths and get by. It thus avoids stock characterisations and formulaic modes of storytelling mired in melancholy and loss, instead drawing out moments of humour and levity. It pays attention to the cultures that persist in deindustrialising places, and the social glue that these cultures offer as a means to endure the present. Performers are seen in all their complexity, rather than figures that stand for a moment in history, or as archetypal victims of processes beyond their control.

Participatory theatre can elicit these stories and experiences, revealing personal and collective memories and communicating them to wider audiences. *Green Meadow* creates a platform and means for the experiential authority of those directly involved in the closure of the Ignalina II plant to enter broader issues of energy politics, deindustrialisation and radioactive waste management. In giving voice to those who live in Visaginas, it makes visible the cultural and community aspects of everyday nuclearity, showing how peoples' lives are shaped by the nuclear promise of the 20th century, and perhaps allowing more informed discussions of the community implications of nuclear decommissioning. In this way, the work of the LDNT augments the authority of these "everyday

experts". As art, research method and public engagement, the play offers multiple, complex and fragmented histories, presents and futures, making explicit the participation of quotidian practices in planetary histories and processes.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to the creative team of *Green Meadow*: Rimantas Ribačiauskas, Kristina Savickienė, Jonas Tertelis, Kristina Werner, all the performers, Jonty Tacon, Laurie Griffiths and the many others I met during fieldwork in Visaginas.

References

- Balevičiūtė, R. 2019. Interview with Kristina Werner. In *Teatro žurnalas*.
- Baraitser, L. 2017. *Enduring time*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Boal, A. 2006. *The aesthetics of the oppressed*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Carpenter, E. 2016. *The nuclear culture source book*. London: Black Dog Publishing
- Dawney, L. (2013) The figure of authority: the affective biopolitics of the mother and the dying man. *Journal of Political Power*, 6, 29-47.
- (2019) Affective War: Wounded Bodies as Political Technologies. *Body & Society*, 25, 49-72.
- Dawney, L. (2020) Decommissioned places: Ruins, endurance and care at the end of the first nuclear age. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 45, 33-49.
- (forthcoming) Atomic cities, analogue dreams: infrastructural ontologies and the memories of lost futures. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*.
- Dawney, L., C. Blencowe & P. Bresnihan. 2017. *Problems of Hope*. Lewes: ARN Press.
- DeSilvey, C. & T. Edensor (2013) Reckoning with ruins. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37, 465-485.
- Dreyse, M. 2008. *Experts of the everyday: the theatre of Rimini protokoll*. Alexander-Verlag.
- Edensor, T. 2005. *Industrial Ruins: spaces, aesthetics and materiality*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Fraser, E. (2018) Unbecoming place: urban imaginaries in transition in Detroit. *cultural geographies*, 25, 441-458.
- Hecht, G. 2012. *Being nuclear: Africans and the global uranium trade*. Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.
- Linkon, S. L. 2018. *The half-life of deindustrialization: Working-class writing about economic restructuring*. University of Michigan Press.
- Mah, A. 2012. *Industrial ruination, community, and place: landscapes and legacies of urban decline*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- McKechnie, K. 2010. Instance: Rimini Protokoll, Mnemopark (2005). In *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, ed. C. K. Sarah Bay-Cheng, Andy Lavender, Robin Nelson, 75-81. Amsterdam: Amsterdam university press.
- Millington, N. (2013) Post-industrial imaginaries: Nature, representation and ruin in Detroit, Michigan. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 279-296.
- Nixon, R. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.
- Pratt, G. & C. Johnston (2013) Staging testimony in Nanay. *Geographical Review*, 103, 288-303.
- Raynor, R. (2017a) (De) composing habit in theatre-as-method. *GeoHumanities*, 3, 108-121.
- (2017b) Dramatising austerity: holding a story together (and why it falls apart...). *cultural geographies*, 24, 193-212.
- Richardson, M. J. (2015) Theatre as safe space? Performing intergenerational narratives with men of Irish descent. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 16, 615-633.
- Rogers, A. (2018) Advancing the geographies of the performing arts: Intercultural aesthetics, migratory mobility and geopolitics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 42, 549-568.

- Sarachild, K. 1978. Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon. In *Feminist Revolution*, ed. K. Sarachild, 144-50. New York: Random House.
- Šliavaitė, K. 2015. 'Homeland is where everything is for the people': the rationale of belonging and citizenship in the context of social uncertainty. In *Ethnographies of grey zones in Eastern Europe: Relations, borders and invisibilities*, eds. I. H. Knudsen & M. D. Frederiksen, 107-122. New York: Anthem Press.
- Stewart, K. (2011) Atmospheric attunements. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, 445-453.
- Storm, A. 2014. *Post-industrial landscape scars*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Strangleman, T. (2013) "Smokestack Nostalgia," "Ruin Porn" or Working-Class Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation 1. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84, 23-37.
- Walkerdine, V. & L. Jimenez. 2012. *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation: a psychosocial approach to affect*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wendland, A. V. 2015. Inventing the Atomograd. Nuclear Urbanism as a Way of Life in Eastern Europe, 1970-2011. In *The Impact of Disaster: Social and Cultural Approaches to Fukushima and Chernobyl*, ed. T. F. L. G. Thomas Bohn, Arndt Graf, 261-287. Berlin: EB Publishers.