Let me tell you:
We can't individually 'win' in this world
& simultaneously create another
Together.

Wendy Trevino

We become what we practice.

adrienne maree brown

Five people, squeezed into their Zoom boxes, crane into their screens. They are looking at a makeshift board, a spiral of squares travelling inwards to a red circle at the centre. Counters in primary colours are dotted around the board. A player looks at their cards, torn up pieces of paper with scrawled 'build' and 'block' instructions, and says, "Hey, I can move you four squares forward". Another intervenes, "if you do that, you'll end up on a block square! We have too many blocks right now to be able to handle any more". A third, "Why don't you move me to catch up with you! I'm lagging back here". A fourth, "Ah, so speaks the person blocking everyone at the start of the game!". "What if you move yourself forward to a build square? We're running on empty!". As the play unfolds, the counters inch their way towards the centre. There are many false starts, bad strategies, misunderstandings of the aim ("look! I'm beating you all!"). Laughter, disagreement, discussion, frustration, delight.

Introduction:

What does it take to bring into being a world that has not yet arrived? The destructive systems in which we live - the interlocking webs of capitalist white-supremacist hetero-patriarchy, to paraphrase bell hooks[1] – seek to diminish the political imagination. They are deeply invested in defining the terrain of political possibility in order to maintain the status quo. Demands for a radically transformed world - a world without prisons, incarceration, policing, gender binaries; without the exploitation of labour, people, bodies, land, resources; a world organised around care, pleasure, play - are too often dismissed, accused of naivety, romanticism. In such contexts, the imagination itself becomes a site of struggle. This is the starting point for the Worldmaking Game project. We are interested not only in *what* futures are possible but in *how* to arrive at a place from which it is possible to imagine alternative futures. If, as adrienne maree brown suggests, "[w]e are in an imagination battle",[2] what internalised structures have to be shed in order to envision beyond the world as it is? What methods and practices are available for doing so?

We offer play as one such methodology. Play has always been a site of imaginative possibility.[3] As children, we knew how to play. Either together or alone, we allowed our imaginations to lead us into make-believe worlds. In *Fearless Futures: A Feminist Cartographer's Toolkit*, the global feminist movement support organisation, AWID, remind us that when we "imagine as children, there is a moment when one crosses the threshold of reality and enters into a world where anything is possible".[4] Through storytelling, role-play, and structured games, we found ways of conjuring alternative realities and identities, moving our bodies differently, figuring out our relationships to each other and to the world around us. As we embarked on this project, daunted by the task of designing a game that would tap into our capacity to imagine radical futures, it was these early memories we drew on. We remembered spirited card games, summoning ghosts in horror stories, concocting potions from body lotion and mud. We remembered, too, that our imaginations had never existed outside the political. Even then, our play was defined by the systems in which we existed - gendered games of 'playing house', who was and was not allowed to step onto the football pitch at break time. It is also important to note that the capacity to play - the allocation of time, the entitlement to leisure - is deeply shaped by race, class, gender, and disability. As Marxist feminist scholar, Silvia Federici asserts: "I am interested in building a society where *creativity is a mass condition* and not a gift reserved to the happy few".[5] brown, too, asserts that "we all need and deserve pleasure and that our social structures must reflect this. In this moment, we must

[1] hooks, b. (1997). 'Culture, Criticism and Transformation', interview with Media Education Foundation. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQ- XVTzBMvQ&t=283s

[2] brown, a.m. (2017). *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press. p.18.

[3] Mendes, K., Silva, K., Birmingham, E., Fron, J., & Ewald, W. (2011). Introduction: Feminist Games, Play, and Expression. *Feminist Media Studies*, *11*(2), 245-257.

[4] https://www.awid.org/resources/co-creating-fearless-futures-feminist-cartographers-toolkit

[5] Federici, S. 1984. 'Putting Feminism Back on its Feet'. Social Text , No. 9/10, The 60's without Apology (Spring - Summer, 1984), pp. 338-346. Duke University Press. p.343.

prioritize the pleasure of those most impacted by oppression".[6] For those existing in survival mode, play might feel like an unaffordable luxury. This may be true, too, for feminist organisers forced to continually put out fires with little time to rest, let alone play or dream for the future. As Shereen Essof, JASS's executive director, notes, this sense of "just getting by erodes and depletes us";

> We get worn down, we find ourselves running battles with the system, and that makes us forget to imagine and dream. We even forget how to play, how to laugh. So, for me and for JASS, if we leave play out, our work is incomplete because it means that we are compromising not only how we imagine futures but how we understand the co-creation of liberated practices in the everyday.[7]

As we set out to explore play as a tool for movement building, we had this in mind - how could we create an experience of play that felt integral to the work of building and sustaining radical movements? What possibilities might be opened up through play?

Description of the Game

The game aims to create an embodied and playful experience of different forms of power in movement building. It highlights how power is held within movements as a force for both building towards and blocking radical change. It asks, how does sharing power enable movement growth? How is power used to obstruct and deplete movements? What strategies create impactful and sustainable movements? What forms of power dynamics emerge *within* movements? What forms of power imbalances exist between different actors moving towards a shared goal?

The aim of the game is for all players to reach the end of the board within the same round of turns. Players move along the squares, spiralling inwards towards the centre. The middle of the board comes to represent the collective goal that the players are struggling towards together. The movement of the game is driven by 'build' and 'block' cards. At first, we called them 'power over,' 'drive,' and 'replenish', but these felt too directive. We wanted to enable the affective and political resonances of the cards to emerge organically throughout the game. 'Build' cards enable players to move through the board and swap or share cards. 'Block' cards prevent movement by forcing players to miss turns, lose 'build' cards, and obstruct others. To capture the unequal distribution of power between actors in movement spaces, the cards are unevenly dealt at the start of the game. Crucially, the game forces players to use their 'block' cards. This is essential - it refuses a simple disavowal of our capacity to wield power over others, even when we are well-intentioned. Instead, it encourages players to actively contend with the harmful forms of power they themselves may wield.

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[6] brown, a.m. 2019. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good.* AK Press.
[7] Essof, S. (2022). Interview for Worldmaking Game Project.

Before the game begins, players are asked to set the scene. Ideally drawing on their own experience, players decide on a movement-building context to apply to the game. They are then invited to reflect on the following questions:

- What is the common goal you are working towards? This will be represented by the centre of the board.
- Who are the key actors involved in this process?
- Who is building towards change, and who is blocking it?
- What forms of power does each actor hold?
- What are the possibilities for collaboration and allyship?
- What power dynamics exist between actors?
- What power dynamics are at play *within* movements and organising groups?
- What outcomes are each of the actors invested in, and why?

Once the game is over, players are asked to consider another set of questions:

- How did it feel to play the game?
- What was your role?
- How did the number of 'build' or 'block' cards impact this?
- Which strategies worked and which didn't?
- How did you feel at the start of the game?
- How did you feel at the end?
- How did you feel towards other players?
- Did you feel any moments during the game where the dynamics shifted?
- Did a player who started with majority 'block' cards find themselves with majority 'build' cards or vice versa?
- What kinds of power were at play here?
- Did you make it to the centre of the board? Did you get stuck? How did this feel?
- What parallels can you draw between the game and your experiences of power dynamics in the movements, organisations, institutions, and groups you belong to?

These framing questions are intended to encourage players to notice the power dynamics present during the game. Players are asked to feel the shifting balance of power as it becomes manifest in their bodies, in their interactions with others, in their emotional responses, and in their changing tactics. One player may feel the deep frustration and powerlessness of being continually blocked, of getting stuck. Another may feel the initial thrill of 'winning,' perhaps laced with the guilt of having the power to block and obstruct others. The play may shift from a feeling of depletion to a rush of moving forwards together. The game is designed to bring these complex and contradictory feelings around power, collaboration, and conflict to the surface, in order for them to be named and understood. Through the process of grappling with these dynamics, the game offers a glimpse

of other, more desirable worlds, where our relations are defined by "cooperation, collaboration, communication, and accommodation of each other, inclusion".[8]

The Process

The project was developed through a collective process that involved feminists positioned across the globe. It began with an idea from Just Associates (JASS), a feminist movement support organization dedicated to building the voice, visibility, and collective power of women and those most impacted by systems of oppression for a just, equitable and liberated world for all.[9] The idea was this: to develop a game that would reframe discussions of power, institutional racism, and the role of the imagination in movement building and knowledge production. Conceived as a collaboration between JASS and SOAS, University of London, the project would crucially create a bridge between academics and organisers.

We want to pause here to note the diverse voices and contributions that were integral to the creation of this project. The idea for the umbrella project, 'Worldmaking Beyond SOAS', was instigated by Dr. Awino Okech, the Associate Director of Equity and Accountability at SOAS.[10] Following an invitation to collaborate, JASS proposed a game as a generative way to think about and practice radical 'worldmaking'. The initial core team at JASS comprised Shereen Essof holding the overall direction, Ronald Wesso supporting the game development, Femke Brandt documenting the process, and ourselves, Tasha Pick and Onyeka Nwabunnia carrying out the research and feeding the initial concept design, rooted in JASS's ideas about how change happens.

Once a prototype was created, a broader team from JASS stepped in to further refine the concept and work on the visual design. In this paper, we will focus on the conceptual groundwork from which the game emerged. Wherever possible, we will draw in these other voices and perspectives, particularly Shereen Essof, who was critical to the initial ideation for the worldmaking project, and Ronald Wesso who was central in leading and curating the play sessions where the game was operationalized.

The initial plan was for the JASS team to create the game drawing on prior theoretical work carried out by the SOAS researchers. If the process had continued in this direction, the game development would have reinscribed the very split between academia and organising that we were seeking to disrupt. Shereen Essof underlines the push "for the students to think about turning theory into praxis, and for JASS to think about […] the theoretical underpinning". [11] In order to align theory

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[8] Ibid.
[9] https://justassociates.org/
[10] https://www.worldmakingbeyondsoas.info/
[11] Essof, S. (2022). Interview for Worldmaking Game Project.

with praxis and to bridge this divide, JASS ushered the SOAS team into the development of the theoretical grounding and the game prototype itself - much to our apprehension.

We questioned our ability to design a game that could speak to the urgency of the global political moment from a movement building perspective. We circled around the following questions: What could and should a racial justice game prioritise? How do we create a game that travels across organising groups worldwide and speaks to both local and global experiences? What questions do we want to centre in the game? What new forms of knowledge might emerge through playing?

At a certain point, Shereen Essof noticed a number of interesting parallels between the game itself and the journey we were on as a team. The initial meetings were marked by a certain amount of trepidation. Each of us held doubts, cautiously voiced during the first calls. Who were *we* to design a game about movement building? Did we really have the skills, creativity, knowledge? What would it look like at the end? Would any of it work? Reflecting on the beginning of the project, Shereen remarks, "I knew that it would be a stretch, and we didn't know it was going to work. We asked you to do an almost impossible thing".[12] We were unknown to each other and to the process. This was an experiment of sorts. All we had was a shared "belief in a political vision of something and then trusting that because there is a shared political vision, it would all align in some way".[13] The game itself initiated a kind of worldmaking process that involved play, connection, and community, while raising serious questions of knowledge production, power, race and gender. We were situated across a range of contexts, our work spanning different issues, methods, approaches. We considered the dynamics within our own team, where we were each coming from, what we would bring to the process and what might hinder us - the very conversations at the heart of the game itself. We pooled our knowledge and skills. The whole project was a leap of faith, an exercise in imagining something into being. We didn't banish the doubts, worries, and disagreements, but we weren't led by them either.

Early on, Ronald facilitated a workshop for which he had invented a game riffing off the Monopoly board, focusing on racism in South Africa, where he is based. The game offered a rudimentary view of racial politics - if you landed on a 'white man' square, you sped forward, whereas a 'black woman' square would set you back. Most noticeable to each of us as we played was our embodied experience. The physical feelings of ease, discomfort, frustration, anger, gloating. This focus on *feeling* would become central to our thinking. In this, we were following a long tradition of feminist scholarship and organising which positions *feeling*, and particularly the body, as a site of knowledge, a place from which to speak. As American feminist poet and essayist, Adrienne Rich, urges, "begin with the geography closest in".[14]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Rich, Adrienne. 1986. 'Notes Toward a Politics of Location', in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*. WW. Norton and Co.

We started by exploring existing literature by scholars and organisers whose works offer critical analyses of power, as well as models for mobilising play and the imagination in feminist movement work. Following long discussions, we landed on the key questions that would guide our process:

- How do our experiences of structural and oppressive power inflect our imaginations, interpersonal relationships, and groups?
- How might play be used as a method to engage questions of power? What kinds of knowledge emerge through play?
- How do we craft a game that can travel across contexts?

As the two of us set out, we were aware of the limitations of our global north positionings in the United Kingdom and the United States. We knew that the game would be tested at the Worldmaking Conference at SOAS, and would then upon further development and refinement have the potential to travel through JASS's network of feminist partners and allies located across Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa. In each context, we hoped that the game would challenge players to tap into collective visions for just futures, and to reflect on the methods, practices and discussions needed to get there. We worried about the difficulty of creating a racial justice-focused game that could meaningfully travel between these diverse contexts. Our answer to this was to prioritise *process* - the question of *how* our imaginations, organisations, identities, and relationships are structured by systemic power and *how* we arrive at a place from which we can name, transform and re-imagine these dynamics. In this way, we tried to ensure the game was not tied to a specific location or politic but rather that players could apply their own experiences to the game.

The board's design went through many early iterations. We experimented with a grid, then a snaking path. The linearity of these layouts felt off – as though movement building was a simple process of putting one foot in front of the other towards 'progress'. We understood that movement-building often requires pause, rest, reflection, stopping to share resources with others, and cheering on as they surpass you. Even though they may not feel like 'movement', these moments are vital. We settled on a spiral, in line with the shape that informs the methodological design of JASS's movement building curricula.

After the original game development, we shared the prototype with the JASS team, who then created the visual design for the board and cards and refined the mechanics of the game. Once these elements were finalised, JASS organised two play sessions. These were vital to the process, helping us to get a sense of how it was landing with people outside the project team. A mixture of activists and organisers across global contexts were invited to the play sessions. Some were familiar with the basic premise, while others had not yet engaged with the game at all. The first session was held in Johannesburg, involving members of Safe Space for Women - a group working

on gender based violence.[15] This was their first encounter with the game. They experimented with two approaches, first playing collaboratively as one team, and then splitting into two groups competing against each other in the second round. As they became familiar with the game, they started to have conversations about effective strategies, organising collectively to win together, addressing imbalances of power as they arose, and noticing the feelings that came up during play.

Visuals of the game
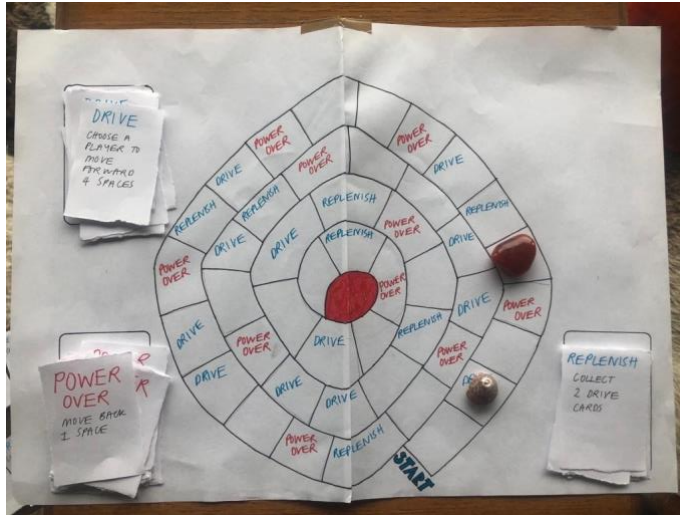
The first iteration of the board, with 'drive', 'replenish' and 'power over' cards.

[15] https://www.safespacersa.com/about-us

The second iteration of the board, with 'build' and 'block' cards.

Theoretical Grounding

Here, we dive deeper into the theoretical frameworks that ground the project. We interweave our own reflections on the game, hoping to highlight the generative convergences and tensions between theory and praxis.

Power:

In designing the game, we sought to engage with the complexities of power at multiple levels - between stakeholders, within organising groups and in interpersonal relationships. We wanted to tease out the internalised power structures that often direct our strategies, practices and imaginations.

Power does not exist as a monolith; it has the potential to be changed and shifted. Our starting point for thinking about power was JASS's power framework, outlined in *Making Change Happen: Power* (2006). Here, they state:

> In reality, power is dynamic, relational and multidimensional, changing according to context, circumstance and interest. Its expressions and forms can range from domination and resistance to collaboration and transformation. This

is good news for social justice promoters whose strategies depend upon new opportunities and openings in the practice and structures of power.[16]

In JASS's framework, oppressive power, what they term 'power over', is made manifest through "repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse".[17] It can be hidden, visible or invisible. They argue:

> At its most basic, it operates to privilege certain people while marginalizing others. In politics, those who control resources and decision-making have power over those without and exclude others from access and participation.[18]

The authors highlight the fact that, "in the absence of alternative models and relationships, people repeat the *power over* pattern in their personal interactions, values, communities, and institutions".[19] The game might be viewed as one method for exploring such alternative models. Crucially, JASS's framework does not only emphasise 'power over', but 'power within', 'power with', 'power to' and 'power for'. These point to the ways in which 'power over' can be creatively transformed towards other possibilities. 'Power within' refers to a person's self-worth and self-knowledge.[20] 'Power with' reflects the process of "finding common ground among different interests in order to build collective strength".[21] 'Power to' is the potential we all have to shape our lives and the world.[22] 'Power for' represents the political visions we are working towards. JASS states:

> These alternatives offer positive ways of expressing power that create the possibility of forming more equitable relationships and structures and transforming power over. By affirming people's capacity to act creatively and collectively, they provide some basic principles for constructing empowering strategies.[23]

We sought to embed this framework within the game, creating an embodied experience of shifting power dynamics towards a more equitable distribution. The only way to 'win' the game is for players to move away from 'dog eat dog' towards collective strategising. Throughout the workshopping process, it was clear that this required constant dialogue. Depending on a player's distribution of cards, they might need to de-prioritise themselves, to share cards, and to define a

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[16] JASS. 2006. *Making Change Happen: Power: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace.*
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

strategy with others. Without these elements, reaching the centre of the board as a team is all but impossible. Shereen Essof notes that "to win means to collaborate".[24]

The game seeks to highlight the strategic possibilities, as well as the tools, practices and conversations that are critical to effectively tackling oppressive 'power over' systems. It points players away from 'quick fix' solutions, towards a deeper process of transformation, orienting towards 'power for'. As JASS notes, overreliance on "superficial approaches" to 'power over' such as policy and technical solutions fail to address power's complexities, resulting in "missed opportunities and poor strategic choices".[25] For Ronald Wesso, "the interesting thing is that in order to fully mobilise our collective liberatory and transformative power, the imagination is critical because we have to be able to imagine different selves".[26] The game aims to tap into the possibilities for other selves by observing how it *feels* to hold different forms of power, and for these power relations to shift.

Knowledge Production and Feminist Popular Education:

The game is designed as a pedagogical tool rooted in a tradition of Feminist Popular Education (FPE). Paulo Freire's seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) puts forward popular education as "a strategy for building people's movements and catalysing revolutionary change".[27] Freire emphasises the potential for popular education to help people overcome feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, and conformity to the status quo.[28] The cultivation of critical thinking as a revolutionary tool was central, too, to the feminist 'consciousness raising' groups of the 1960s onwards. Declaring that the 'personal is political', feminists positioned their own lives as a legitimate starting point for serious political and intellectual engagement. In this lineage, FPE affirms the dignity of all those participating and recognises that everyone in the room is simultaneously teacher and student.[29] For Shereen Essof, FPE is "about starting where people are at and together learning and unlearning and relearning what it means to be in the world".[30]

Feminists have long sought to problematise the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice', the sense that knowledge is something that happens 'over there', away from life. In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed states: "To live a feminist life is to make everything into something that is questionable".[31] hooks famously argues that the "most meaningful" theory invites readers to

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[24] Essof, S. 2022.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Wesso, R. 2022. Interview for Worldmaking Game.
[27] Miller, V. & and L. VeneKlasen. 2012. 'Feminist Popular Education & Movement-building, JASS Associates.,pp.1-6. p.1.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Essof, S. 2022.
[30]Ibid..
[31] Ahmed, Sara, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). P.2

engage in "critical reflection" and crucially *action*, the "practice of feminism"; such theory necessarily "emerges from the concrete".[32] Both Ahmed and hooks mobilise the 'concrete' to form a practice of counter-hegemonic knowledge production. hooks, in particular, situates this practice as resistance to elitist academic gatekeeping. Throughout the game project, we were led by this idea that the practice of theorising does not belong to the academy but rather can be found in the spaces we inhabit daily.

In '*Under Western Eyes' Revisited* (2003), Chandra Mohanty grapples with her own contested relationship to the academy, using this as a starting point from which to investigate the connections between Western epistemologies and the appropriation of knowledge derived from indigenous and of colour communities. She states, "'I think feminist pedagogy should not simply expose students to a particularized academic scholarship but that it should also envision the possibility of activism and struggle outside the academy".[33] What does it mean for pedagogy to envision the possibility for struggle? For Leela Fernandes, knowledge does not simply *represent* but *makes* worlds.[34] Fernandes invites us not only to take responsibility for the forms of knowledge we produce, but to view knowledge production itself as a practice of worldmaking.

In essence, FPE works towards transforming the harmful norms and beliefs built into violent hetero-patrarichal systems. It is a decolonial practice whose point of departure is the lived experience of oppression as it cuts across the intersections of race, disability, class, gender, sexuality, nationality and so on. Crucially, the game is not directive. There are no specific outcomes set out at the beginning of play. Instead, the players are the agents of their own learning. Lessons surface through play and conversation, and may be different with each new round or group. As JASS notes, FPE is an "iterative, structured process" in which there are "no predictable steps or outcomes".[35]

JASS highlights four central principles of FPE: knowledge and critical consciousness; validating and building women's knowledge and spirit; understanding and navigating power; self-care (heart-mind-body).[36] In the design process, we were especially led by these first three tenets of FPE,

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[32] hooks, bell, 'Theory as Liberatory Practice', in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routlege,1994) pp. 59-75. P.8

[33] Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles', in *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter 2003), pp. 499-535. P.523

[34] Fernandes, L. 2013. *Transnational Feminism in the United States: Knowledge, Ethics, Power*. New York: New York University Press. p.122.

[35] Miller, V. & and L. VeneKlasen. 2012. 'Feminist Popular Education & Movement-building, JASS Associates.,pp.1-6. p.1.

[36] Miller, Valarie and Lisa VeneKlasen, Feminist Popular Education & Movement-building,JASS Associates, (2012),pp.1-6

setting out to build critical consciousness through players' feelings and experiences, making sense of the forms of power that mediate their lives.

For Shereen Essof, 'heart-mind-body' speaks to "the need to defend women's bodies", to "reflect and channel women's passions, their values and anger (the heart)" and to "tap into their minds".[37] In the game, this is reflected in the creation of a safe space that facilitates play, surfaces what it means to work with or against each other, and requires strategic thinking.[38] This approach asks, what does it mean to think about ourselves holistically? How would this change our organising? Centrally, "embodiment is about presence. Being fully present and feeling safe to be fully present. And it's also about a sense of freedom. To laugh, to engage, to play".[39] This alignment of heart-mind-body is perhaps best reflected in the practice of playing itself.

Play and the Radical Imagination

Our understanding of the radical imagination is deeply rooted in a legacy of organising work and scholarship by queer, Black, decolonial, and abolitionist feminists who sound an expansive call "toward the total transformation of all social relations".[40] For brown, "Abolitionists know that the implications of our visions touch everything - everything must change, including us".[41] Changing everything requires reflecting on the ways in which we hold oppressive power structures in our own bodies, relationships, movements. ASTREA, the Lesbian Foundation for Justice, echo this in their report, *Healing Justice: Building Power, Transforming Movements* (2019): "Everything we want to change in the world around us also exists right here in our bodies. [...] oppression, colonization and white supremacy" is "held on a cellular level".[42]

In the game creation process, we sought to create an experience that draws attention to how the macro-political dynamics of structural power play out in the quotidian – the lives, bodies, and spaces inhabited daily. M. Jacqui Alexander names this "body praxis"; she points to how hegemonic power is made manifest through habituated practices, "the ways in which ordinary people do the work of the state and the work of war".[43] She concludes, "all spaces carry the potential for corruptibility".[44] This observation is critical to untangling the ways in which feminist movements themselves inadvertently reflect, absorb, and reproduce the overarching conditions of the societies in which they exist. Yet if the work of oppression is carried out through the mundane

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[37] Essof, S. 2022.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] brown, a.m. 2021. *We Will Not Cancel Us*. AK Press.
[42] ASTREA: Lesbian Foundation for Justice. 2019. Healing Justice: Building Power, Transforming Movements. p.12.
[43] Alexander, M. Jacqui. 2005. Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred. Duke University Press. p.325.
[44] Ibid.

and minute actions of daily life, then these sites, too, carry a radical potential. In designing the game, we sought to observe how our daily experiences are inextricably, but not irredeemably, produced within the political.

To refuse to orient our bodies towards "fearful imaginations," as brown suggests, requires an active liberatory praxis of "embodied transformation".[45] As Jessica Horn importantly notes, the body retains and reflects *not only* vicarious trauma but "vicarious resilience": "activist praxis" holds the potential to unlock "agency," "joy," and transformational knowledge.[46] Shereen Essof notes that for JASS, the work of the imagination is "the courage" to "recognise that the world can and should be changed. It's not just about dreaming of different futures, it's also about bringing those possibilities *back from the future* to work in the present. For us, play is central to that.".[47] Play is a practice that offers to reach out and touch every aspect of our lives, from our political goals and the way we organise our movement spaces to our everyday activities, interpersonal relationships, and networks of care. We might hold the futures we desire in our bodies, feelings, and dreams. Movement building, in this sense, is an act of profound creativity. As Federici argues,

> We must also broaden our conception of what it means to be creative. At best, one of the most creative activities is being involved in a struggle with other people, breaking out of our isolation, seeing our relations with others change, discovering new dimensions in our lives.[48]

This idea was at the forefront of our minds as we imagined the game into being.

So, why a game? Wouldn't it have been enough to name and discuss these dynamics? From its inception, this project was committed to an alignment of theory and practice. If we're talking about 'body praxis', we needed to create a theoretical engagement that could also be registered at the level of individual and collective bodies. Following hooks, the "possession of a term" does not bring "practice into being"; concurrently, "one may practice theorizing without ever knowing/possessing the term".[49] By centering *practice* as a site of meaningful theorising, we were invested in challenging the hierarchies of knowledge production present in academia. hooks notes that by deeming some work "not really theory," scholars with institutional power (predominantly white, middle class) are enabled to appropriate the work of less visible theorists.[50] Crucially, this process is facilitated by the supremacy of a particular understanding of knowledge that has "defined the

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[45] brown, a.m. 2019.
[46] Horn, Jessica. 2020. 'Decolonising emotional well-being and mental health in development: African feminist innovations'. In Gender & Development, 28:1, 85-98, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2020.1717177. p.96.
[47] Essof, S. 2022.
[48] Federici, S. 1984. p.343.
[49] hooks, b. 1994. 'Theory as Liberatory Practice', in Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Routlege,1994) pp. 59-75. p.3.

[50] Ibid.

terrain" of what is intelligible as theory.[51] (Ahmed 1996:73). As Lola Olufemi states, "feeling is a way of knowing and a powerful starting point for building a political framework".[52]

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), hooks argues for a pedagogy driven by "excitement". She asks how the classroom can become "the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts", "a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active partici-pants in learning".[53] It was this sense of learning through excitement, play, spontaneity, reflection, and active participation that we sought to create in the game. Crucially, we were interested in the radical potential of imaginative play, not only as a way to flex the muscles of our imagination but to centre delight, joy, and pleasure as politically generative acts of resistance to violent systems.

Our understanding of play resonates with the power of the erotic, seminally theorised by Audre Lorde. For Lorde, the erotic is a "lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence"; it carries with it a "grave responsibility [...] not to settlefor the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe".[54] Patricia McFadden in her influential essay, 'Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice corroborates this view, arguing that the reclamation of erotic energy becomes a "reservoir of personal and political courage".[55] Without this, "we cannot begin to imagine ourselves in new and profoundly life-transforming ways".[56] Undoubtedly, then, play holds the promise not only of bolstering movements but of offering, too, glimpses of barely-imaginable feminist futures.

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[51] Ahmed, S, 1996. "Beyond Humanism and Postmodernism: Theorizing a Feminist Practice", in Hypatia, 11 (2), pp. 71–93. P.73.
[52] Olufemi, L. 2020. Feminism Interrupted: Disrupting Power. London: Pluto Press.
[53] hooks, b. 1994. Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Routlege) p.11.
[54] Lorde, A. 1984. 'Uses of the Ertoic: The Erotic as Power'. In Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. 2007. Berkley: The Crossing Press.
[55] McFadden, Patricia. 2003. 'Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice'. In Feminist Africa, 2: 50-60.
[56] Ibid.