

WORLD FACTORY WORKSHOP



The *World Factory* workshop comprises a scenario-based game about the relationship between business and ethics at the sharp end of mass production. In a technologically sophisticated theatrical environment, the event explores the geography, labour, ethics, politics, aesthetics and economics of globalization and the world of mass production. Resource management and the relationship between mass production and environmental impacts are also brought into the frame.

The workshop is for a maximum of 24 participants (minimum: 12 participants).

PREPARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS:

A week in advance, a paper introduction to the event is sent out, with documentary stories from interviewees and others in the midst of the world of mass production. The PDF will have links to our 'digital quilt' and other resources for research.

People: Workshop leader; Performer (dealer); Technician

Set-up time required: 2 hours

Workshop duration: 2.5 hours

Equipment to be supplied by host: 4 tables c2mx1m (to seat 6 people each); 2 tables c 1mx1m to support World Factory workshop equipment; 26 chairs; flipchart with paper; a screen or wall for video projection. All other technical and AV equipment provided by METIS.

WORKSHOP:

On arrival, the 24 participants are split into four groups of 6; each group will play a 'factory' in the game.

The workshop will start with a brief (10 minute) introduction from the workshop leader explaining the background to *World Factory*, and exploring the relationship between the research and the practice of the full theatre show. At this point, participants will also be encouraged to 'play', to release their imaginations, rather than approach the game within the parameters of success/failure that is often applied to gaming within a learning context. It will be made clear that playing is about experiencing the world of the Chinese factory; it isn't about getting it 'right' – and that it is up to participants to decide what it means to 'win'. This context is a key part of the 'theatrical' model of creating an alternative imaginative space for the consideration of the relationship between ethical practice and capitalism – and for exploring their relation to business.

PART I: THE GAME (c. 1 hour)

The main focus of the workshop is the World Factory game. It lasts approximately one hour and models 'a year in the life of a Chinese clothing factory'. The participants must select one of two options on a card, and scan the barcode corresponding to the option they wish to select,

in order to be dealt a new card. In a manner that will become par for the course as the game weaves through the multiplicity of issues at stake, the first card poses a conundrum, 'You have taken over a clothing factory; you have to cut the wage bill.' On the back there are two options, each with a barcode underneath it: 'Keep the workers' wages at their current level, but sack half your workers' or 'keep all your workers and lower their wages by a third'. The 'participatory' task of the performance is simply for the group to decide together which option to take. How they decide this, and 'who' they decide to be when making the decision, is up to them. Each table has a scanner familiar from those used in clothes shops to scan items being purchased. When an audience member scans a barcode on the card, the decision is logged, which then tells the dealer which card to deal next, and whether any money or workers are owed to the factory. Throughout the game, footage of factories is projected – with regular updates on how the months are passing, in the game.

Depending on what options they choose, each 'factory' will experience a storyline tailored to their decisions – a different journey through the multiple pathways of World Factory. The game has multiple routes and outcomes, interlinking questions of ethics, fashion, environmental impacts, working conditions, migration and globalization. Behind the scenes of the card game, a technologically complex digital system connects decision to action, by means of a custom-created processing patch, which matches barcodes to specific cells of information from an excel database of 420 cards with 36 columns of data relating to each card (ie 15,120 separate, but interconnected, pieces of information). The system also produces a sonic accompaniment to the experience for each factory that is tailored bespoke to the route taken by each team. For example, when a factory has 'completed' an item of clothing, they receive an actual example of it from the dealer, to the accompaniment of an audio advertising 'jingle' from the garment's (fictionalized) 'brand'. This game of multiple branching choices thus creates divergence and convergences through more than 100 million mathematically distinct routes through the game.

At the end of the game, receipts (like till receipts) are automatically printed and provided to each team member of each 'factory'. These receipts show the detail of the options selected by each factory throughout the game – with links to the World Factory online 'digital quilt' so that afterwards students can look up the real-life stories behind the stories in the game.

Short break (10 minutes)

PART II: THE RECKONING (c. 1 hour)

The computer system pulls the data from the actual card routes taken in the workshop, and a series of data realizations reflect back to the participants the consequences of the decisions they made – how many garments produced (with how much cotton used and therefore how much water to produce the cotton), numbers of workers employed, how much money made, what kinds of improvements to workers' conditions occurred, and so on. This data brings together a comparison of the different choices made by the groups, and provides a catalyst for a wider conversation. The workshop leader and performer-dealer use the data to facilitate a discussion/debrief about the decisions made and the wider implications for the politics of production, consumption, resource-management and capitalism.

WORLD FACTORY background:

The performances of *World Factory* April-June 2015 were created by METIS in co-production with the Young Vic, New Wolsey Theatre and Company of Angels. The workshop has been developed with the support of the Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Programme.

Guardian article by Paul Mason (250,000+ hits)

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/24/turn-a-liberal-hipster-into-global-capitalist-world-factory>

BBC World Service news hour interview: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02s9dck>

Exeunt article on the politics of participation:

<http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/world-factory-the-politics-of-participation/>

For images of the show and audience feedback from twitter:

<https://www.facebook.com/WorldFactoryShirt>

Press commentary:

'One thing we might learn from *World Factory* is that if there is such a thing as responsible capitalism then it is in its death throes or was faking it all along.'

Exeunt Magazine <http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/world-factory/>

'One of the guiltiest pleasures going'

What's On Stage http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/reviews/world-factory-the-young-vic_37849.html?utm_source

'a ground-breaking theatre/game. Deep, research-based. & Done with commitment.'

Paul Mason via Twitter

'lively and ambitious ... *World Factory* makes us complicit in the process of exploitation before pulling us back to see a bigger picture that ain't so pretty.'

The Times <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/stage/theatre/article4446005.ece> (behind paywall)

'smart, mischievous and genuinely thought-provoking.'

Financial Times <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c40168ae-fee3-11e4-94c8-00144feabdc0.html>

(behind paywall)

'an ambitious, provocative and intricate piece of game-making, evading easy answers and polemic while succeeding in making us think'

The Stage https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2015/world-factory/?utm_content=buffer

'a stunningly presented experience. [...] the attention to detail is superb.'

Time Out <http://www.timeout.com/lon> <http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/world-factory>

'a richly absorbing experience'

Evening Standard <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/world-factory-review-richly-absorbing-and-thought-provoking-10262870.html>

'The sophistication of the experience and the dynamics of the game make the production much more than a piece of interactive participatory theatre.'

The British Theatre Guide <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/world-factory-young-vic-11546>

'this is where *World Factory* shines as a piece of theatre. The traditional boundaries between audience and subject matter are smashed: we are implicated in the web of the show.'

Culture Whisper <http://www.culturewhisper.com>

WORLD FACTORY PARTNERS:

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World Factory was originally conceived and developed in collaboration with Chinese theatre company, Grass Stage, Shanghai.

METIS <http://metisarts.co.uk/> is a Cambridge-based performing arts company/network creating interdisciplinary performance projects through rigorous research. A fascination with maps, space, technology, travel and history drives our work in a range of media. Our work is characterised by its pursuit of expressive forms that connect with the contemporary world.