Experiencing the Cityscapes and Rural Landscapes as "Citizens" of *The Hunger Games* Storyworld

Natalie Krikowa

Abstract:

In Suzanne Collins' book series, *The Hunger Games*, the dystopian, futuristic country of Panem is all that remains of a post-apocalyptic 'North America'. The twelve poverty-stricken Districts contrast the rich and decadent Capitol, presenting a polarised cityscape for the audience to explore, not only in the books but also across the multiple media platforms that make up this popular transmedia franchise. This chapter investigates how the audiences' experience of the Capitol cityscape and the rural landscapes of the Districts are shaped from one media platform to the next. It proposes that the dystopian themes presented in *The Hunger Games* narrative, and the positioning of the audiences as 'citizens' within the storyworld, further invites audiences to build communities around the franchise, and become activists in real-world civil movements.

Key Terms: Dystopia, storyworld, transmedia, cityscapes, participation.

Introduction

The Hunger Games is a trilogy of young adult novels written by Suzanne Collins and published by Scholastic between 2008 and 2010. The series is set in an unspecified time in a dystopian future, where the country of Panem has, in effect, risen from the ashes of a post-apocalyptic North America. Panem is made up of a luxurious central city called the Capitol where the tyrannical and cruel dictator, President Coriolanus Snow, rules in opulence over the twelve impoverished Districts. In the first novel, *The Hunger Games*, we are introduced to the world of Panem through the eyes (and narrative voice) of the trilogy's protagonist, sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen. When Katniss's

younger sister, Prim, is selected to represent District 12 in the Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers to take her place. She, and her male counterpart, Peeta Mellark are pitted against each other and twenty-two other children in a fight to the death. These Games become a catalyst for the main storyline of the Districts' uprising against the Capitol.

The audience's thematic and cinematic engagement is intrinsically linked to the cityscapes and rural landscapes of Panem. The relationship between the urban Capitol and the rural Districts demonstrates a political and economic polarisation, which is central to the audience's experience of both the storyworld, and the broader social commentary. The main storyline is an allegory of imperial power, and the series explores themes of survival, morality, war, poverty, and sacrifice. Allegory, defined by John Law is "the art of meaning something other and more than what is being said… it is the art of decoding that meaning, reading between the literal lines to understand what is actually being depicted" (2004: 88). The use of allegory in *The Hunger Games* highlights the deeper issues of imperialism, capitalism, classism, and income inequality within contemporary Western society.

The first two novels, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, were adapted into films, which were released in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The final book in the trilogy, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* has been released as two films, with part one released in November 2014 and part two to be released in November 2015 (Lions Gate Entertainment Inc.). Along with the books and their film adaptations, various games, websites and social media networks have been created to further expand the audience's engagement with the fictional storyworld within this transmedia franchise. Within literary theory the experience of fictive worlds is only possible if the reader has a "willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge 1817). The notion of a storyworld is central to transmedia as this is what all the various forms of media share. As Marie-Laure Ryan states: "The ability to create a world, or more precisely, to inspire the mental representation of a world, is the primary condition for a text to be considered a narrative" (2013: 363-364).

This chapter outlines how the urban cityscape of the Capitol and the rural landscapes of its Districts have been created across multiple media platforms and how their juxtaposition is central to the narrative experience of the storyworld. It demonstrates how audiences are encouraged to enter the storyworld and are then enticed to experience it and actively participate within it. It suggests that transmedia storyworlds are particularly suited to the

dystopian genre as they allow audiences to engage with the social, cultural and political parallels between the fictional storyworld, and modern society through an interactive, participatory experience. Lastly it examines how the dystopian themes presented in *The Hunger Games* encourage audiences to construct fan communities around the storyworld, and become activists in real-world civil engagement.

Panem's Urban Capitol Cityscape

Thematic and cinematic engagement with the city is a recurring component in modern storytelling. The urban experience has been the focus of many film movements and genres, from the late nineteenth century Lumière travelogues to the great 'city' films such as *Berlin: Symphony of a City*[1] (Ruttmann 1927), from the film noir metropolises of 1930s gangster films to dystopian science fiction (Arnwine & Lerner 1997). As Julia Hallam notes, media projects about cities offer a particularly rich source of material for investigating civic identity and citizenship (2012: 37). In science fiction, speculation of possible futures is presented through the creation of an imagined storyworld, where the "world created by the [science fiction] author has its own systemic rules insofar as it is a fully working version of an alternative reality" (Moylan 2000: 6).

The Hunger Games explores a future of North America where there is an extreme economic imbalance between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Widespread poverty in the Districts is contrasted with the ridiculous opulence of the Capitol elite; and this is exemplified by the visual descriptions and representation of the Capitol and the outlying Districts. In the first novel, Katniss explains:

> The cameras haven't lied about [the Capitol's] grandeur. If anything, they have not quite captured the magnificence of the glistening buildings in a rainbow of hues that tower into the air, the shiny cars that roll down the wide paved streets, the oddly dressed people with bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal. All the colours seem artificial, the pinks too deep, the greens too bright, the yellows painful to the eyes. (Collins 2011a: 72)

Film director Gary Ross and production designer Phillip Messina were charged with the responsibility of bringing the cityscape of the first book to life on screen. In the behind-the-scenes features on *The Hunger Games* DVD, both Ross and Messina discuss the extensive research and collaboration involved in designing the cityscape of Panem. Designing the Capitol (the technologically-advanced, wealthy city) was apparently the most difficult of locations as it needed to portray a sense of stately majesty, might, and power without looking too futuristic. What emerged was a Computer-Generated (CGI) Capitol that blended scaleless, atonal, concrete structures, reminiscent of communist Russia and the World Fairs of the 1930's with grandiose, classical architecture (Lions Gate Entertainment 2012: Special Features). The filmmakers elected to begin the narrative by constructing the political landscape of Panem. From the outset, viewers are given insights into the relationship of the Capitol over the outlying Districts – of power and dominance over the poor and hungry.

The introduction to the full scope of the Capitol's exterior in the film occurs when Katniss and Peeta look out of the train window in awe as they witness the city for the first time. The CGI shots establish the Capitol as a vast and majestic city occupying the base of a mountain range, surrounded by a huge lake. Once the train pulls into the station, hundreds of Capitol citizens stand on the pristinely clean platform, dressed in bizarre outfits, applauding and waiving excitedly. They appear absurd to Katniss and Peeta and therefore, to the audience as well. This scene is followed by a long, establishing shot of the internal layout of the city, followed by close-ups of its 'strange' citizens in their luxurious environment. In his seminal work, *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) Georg Simmel's details how city life is marked by:

> the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions… With each crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational, and social life, the city sets up a deep contrast with small town and rural life. (Simmel 1950: 410)

This contrast is established in the storyworld of *The Hunger Games* as the readers/viewers are positioned alongside the protagonist, Katniss, as outsiders. We see the socio-cultural effects of Panem's political and economic control through her eyes. She notes:

They do surgery in the Capitol, to make people appear younger and thinner. In District 12, looking old is something of an achievement since so many people die early. You see an elder person, you want to congratulate them on their longevity, ask the secret of survival. A plump person is envied because they aren't scraping by like the majority of us. But here it is different. Wrinkles aren't desirable. A round belly isn't a sign of success. (Collins 2011a: 150-151)

Much research has been conducted on the spatial aspects of the city and its effects on social life, particularly from a sociological perspective. These studies are an attempt to delineate how socio-spatial relationships can illuminate our understanding of social change (Davis 1992; Wright 1997; Davis 1999; Gotham 2003). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels analysed the [then] modern metropolis as a setting for understanding the historical development of capitalism, examining the antithesis between wage labour and capital, and social mobility (1848: 476; 1867: 188-245). In *The Hunger Games* people are born within a District and remain there. They have little or no opportunity for upward social mobility. The Capitol controls every aspect of life within Panem including the distribution of wealth and resources, political positioning and movement between the Districts.

The Capitol's presence is felt throughout the Districts with town squares acting as the epicentre for all Capitol matters, including the 'reapings' – the yearly lottery that selects contestants for the Hunger Games. The town square and hall of justice building mirror the concrete structures seen in the Capitol and are used as visual emblems of power.

As Michel Foucault discussed in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995: 201), Jeremy Bentham's concept of the 'panopticon', with its central tower, induces:

a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (Foucault 1995: 200)

The idea that the Capitol is always watching and surveying the people is explored throughout the narrative with the citizens being the "object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault 1995: 200). Within the opening chapters of the novel and, in the opening scenes of the film, we are introduced to the Peacekeepers: soldiers sent from the Capitol to enforce the law in the Districts. In the film, towards the end of the scene where Katniss and her hunting companion, Gale, are illegally hunting in the forest, we see a hovercraft fly over them. This is just one example of the constant surveillance of, and reinforcement of the Capitol's power over the citizens in the Districts.

These themes are continually explored across the multiple platforms the franchise employs. As readers/viewers/users interact with the narrative, they become further immersed in the storyworld of *The Hunger Games*, and while exploring the cityscapes, are forced to contemplate their own 'real world', and the potential parallels that are drawn between fiction and reality.

A 'Transmedia' Experience of the Capitol Cityscape and the Rural Landscapes of the Districts

What makes a franchise 'transmedia'? The necessary narrative differential is that transmedia storytelling requires the narrative to exist across multiple media platforms with each platform, adding uniquely to the overall narrative. Ideally "each medium does what it does best – so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption" (Jenkins 2003: 3). According to Ryan, in transmedial storytelling, "the most common relation between the various texts is expansion: for instance, if there is a video game based on a film, the game may invent a new character for the player to control, or it may focus on an aspect of the storyworld that remains undeveloped in earlier version" (2013: 369).

Even as early as 2003, Henry Jenkins understood the potential for audiences' ongoing desire for deeper engagement and participation in the media they consume. In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006), Jenkins conceptualised a new 'participatory culture' to address the full range of experiences audiences were having due to the

inclusion of digital and social media. Additionally, he coined the term 'convergence culture' to address the shifting relationships between media, audiences, producers, and content; defining 'convergence' as: "… the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (Jenkins 2006: 2; Jenkins 2014: 267-268). Most often, these entertainment experiences are pre-conceived and designed with the purpose of building a fan-base around a particular creative work.

The Hunger Games became a transmedia project well before the first film hit the cinemas. Whilst Lions Gate (the production company behind the film series) used the traditional advertising avenues of posters, magazine covers and billboards, they also utilised the book series' extensive fan base to help promote the film on social media. In the lead-up to the release of the highly anticipated film adaptation, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, GooglePlus, Pinterest and Tumblr were used to create a global buzz, generate presales and get the public talking about the film and books. The campaign went beyond a simple Facebook fan page and Twitter account, devising clever ways of encouraging the fans to drive the campaign by positioning them as "citizens" of Panem. Facebook had the official movie page that provided exclusive updates, tour information, and fan of the week. But a Capitol Facebook page, and District pages were also created, allowing fans to become "citizens" of their favourite District. At the time of writing, Katniss' District 12 has 224,000 likes and the Capitol almost 250,000 likes. Whilst the content is primarily promotional material, it is crafted in the image of that District and packaged thematically for the audience. The official YouTube channel branded itself as "Capitol TV Productions" and released "officially-sanctioned" videos for the consumption of the Districts citizens. The channel also included a "District Citizens Reel" that shared fan-created videos (which has since been removed) (McGrath 2012).

The interactive artefacts of the transmedia franchise that further immerse the audience in the storyworld include a series of games for mobile and desktop platforms. The games extend the narrative and experience of *The Hunger Games* storyworld in unique ways. The first game launched in the lead-up to the release of the first film was *The Hunger Games: Girl on Fire*[2]. This official game for iOS devices was a popular download; however, it was not successful in retaining players due to low-quality, pixilated graphics and basic simplistic game-play. The game was designed to be a free teaser to

excite fans, and build an audience-base. The game required the user (playing as Katniss) to run through the forest (from the left of screen to the right) avoiding tracker jackers – genetically engineered wasps created by the Capitol to serve as additional threats in the Games.

The second game to be released was *The Hunger Games Adventures*[3] in 2012. It is still a popular Facebook and mobile game available on iOS and Android devices. The game gives players an opportunity to venture into the world of Panem using characters from the films (with an animated likeness) and play out new scenarios within the storyworld. The game narrative is set up in chapters containing mini quests to allow for quick bursts of play. Throughout the various chapters, you learn to hunt, gather and build with Katniss, trade and evade Peacekeepers in the Hob, and venture to the many locations seen in the films and books. Within the initial levels of the game, you are restricted to District 12, where you get to explore the woods, the Seam, the Hob, the bakery where Peeta works, the fence, the coal mines, and the marketplace, to name a few. By exploring the rural District 12, players interact with an environment crucial to the storyworld, and become more sympathetic with Katniss's plight. Upon completion of each chapter, players are granted access to more and more Districts, and more locations within the Capitol, meeting additional characters (existing and new) and exploring locations that were only briefly mentioned in the books and films. The locations and surroundings in the game echo the visual aesthetic of the film cityscapes, but extend the audience's experience of the cityscape by providing new content. The game also features a map of Panem, divided into the 12 Districts and the Capitol. This was the first instance of the Districts being presented in a way that allowed audiences to see where the Districts were situated in relation to one another. With the ability to continually add more levels and content, the game can continue to incorporate narrative elements from upcoming films. It is yet to be seen if the game will go on to explore the rebellion seen in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*, but it offers an opportunity to engage game-players in new environments offered up in the final chapter of the story, particularly that of District 8, where key scenes from *Mockingjay* take place.

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire Panem Run[4] was the third game created in the franchise, and was released in November of 2013. This game requires the player to explore the Districts of Panem and collect items at a preset running pace, whilst avoiding being hit by obstacles. Essentially tracker jackers are chasing you, and the moment you hit an obstacle, they

swarm and kill you; consequently, the run is over and your score is recorded. The objective is to score higher than your friends and move higher up on the leader board. In a press release, Reliance Games CEO Manish Agarwal stated: "We are proud to be able to give fans of *The Hunger Games* films an opportunity to immerse themselves in the game, [and the] social features are a great way for the fans to connect with other fans worldwide" (Reliance Games 2014). Lions Gate Senior Vice President of Digital Marketing, Danielle De Palma also stated: "Being able to play as a citizen of Panem further expands the world-building experience we've created for our fans […] the game provides an exciting new narrative for the core fans while offering a challenge for players of all skill levels" (Reliance Games 2014).

In 2014 *The Hunger Games: Panem Rising*[5] was released to complement the final chapter of the narrative by positioning the player as a member of the rebellion as seen in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*. Players enlist their favourite characters to help lead the rebellion, explore the unique not-yet-seen Districts of Panem, communicate with other players around the world, and battle to take back Panem from President Snow. The player is encouraged to take on the role of the 'hero' and help shape the rebellion. This part of the narrative not only serves to augment the juxtaposition of the Capitol with the various rural Districts (both visually and ethically) but also offers other layers for audiences involved in the rebellion to explore. These new game environments present images of every-day life in, and the unique spatiality of, each District, which were not detailed in the books or films.

With the ability to explore the additional Districts of Panem through interactive game-play, the audience's engagement within the transmedia storyworld becomes one of active participation. The books and films are limited in what activities they offer, whereas a game opens up ongoing opportunities for interaction and participation. With the inclusion of online communities and social networking, the developers behind the franchise have been able to provide additional points of access into the storyworld and more opportunities for active participation. Each of these multiple platforms retain the aesthetic, thematic and canonical consistencies of the Panem cityscape, providing familiarity and consistency at the entry point and the promise of new experiences.

The Hunger Games Explorer[6]*,* the film franchise's official website, was built using the latest web technologies, making it suitable for all media devices and ensuring functionality for mobile touch screens. Donny Makower describes the website as a "real time social aggregation tool that pulls in

content from around the web" (Internet Explorer 2013). Balind Seiber, the Creative Director of Red Interactive, who worked with web developers at Internet Explorer also stated, "We've built this container that allows you to passively observe the conversation but also actively push it out and interact with each other and potentially build relationships around *The Hunger Games*" (Internet Explorer 2013). The site administrators monitor the content that is being aggregated to see what is being shared, re-blogged or liked the most, ensuring that the most relevant, and popular content is given screen priority. The site contains both officially produced content and user-generated content. Users can access this information as a guest or, to gain full features, can login using their District ID (which is applicable for all 'official' sites). The District ID allows users to create an identity, including name and ID number. District ID users can collect 'badges' by linking their social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr etc.) and add 'sparks' to the content they enjoy – fuelling the popularity of 'desired' content.

The Capitol of Panem has an official (fictional) website[7] that allows fans to explore the social, cultural, and political landscape of the Capitol, and its citizens. The landing page for the website features a portrait photograph of President Snow, which has been updated throughout the course of the film releases to present new relevant images. In the first incarnation of the website, users were welcomed to the 'Citizen Control Centre' where they could log in with their District ID. Reminders from the Capitol appear across the site, reinforcing citizen protocols with messages like: "Respect your Peacekeepers and serve your district with vigilance"; "The Capitol is a beacon of perfection"; "It is the crowned jewel of Panem. How have you helped polish it?" and "Panem: a nation united under one people and one President". This feature has since been replaced, but all information on the website continues to be presented as 'officially-sanctioned' content – direct from the Capitol to its citizens – with the Capitol seal prominently displayed across all 'official' websites.

Another official website that offers further engagement with the cityscape of *The Hunger Games* is *Capitol Couture*[8]. This is a website dedicated to the fashions and culture of Panem's Capitol. The site contains editorial content from cover stories featuring Katniss Everdeen, to articles on fashion, beauty, design and culture. You can find this season's Capitol 'looks', 'marvel' at this month's interior designs, or get the latest opinions on beauty and even body modification using 3D printing technology. Multi award-winning costumer designer Trish Summerville is in the process of recreating some of

the film's fashions, for public consumption, via Net-a-Porter. Fans will soon be able to buy exclusive 'Capitol Couture' pieces via this online fashion house – inspired by costumes such as Katniss' chariot dress, and a bow and arrow bracelet (Net-A-Porter 2014).

This market-led positioning of the audience as "citizens" of Panem fits neatly into the participatory experience offered by *The Hunger Games* transmedia franchise. Just as the visual representations of both the cityscapes and the rural landscapes in the films add additional layers to the reader's already imagined visual constructions, so too do the games, websites, and social media. These more interactive mediums that extend the transmedia experience provide opportunities for the audience to engage in the storyworld and with each other.

Dystopian Panem as Social Commentary

Transmedia storyworlds are particularly suited to the dystopian genre as they encourage audiences to engage with social, cultural and political parallels between a fictional storyworld, and modern society. The interactive participatory experiences provided by transmedia engage audiences deeply in thematic content. Interactivity can be understood as "the collaboration between the reader and the text in the production of meaning" (Ryan 1999: 125), and as "the power of the user to modify [the] environment" (Ryan 1999: 121), suggesting that interactivity requires a compromise between discovery and predictability (Ryan 1999: 124). With the advent of interactive digital games, this suspension of disbelief is furthered with players projecting themselves as members of the imagined world. Ryan explains how the "emotions experienced in make-believe in the fictional world may carry over to the real world" (1999: 116), and highlights Jay Bolter's assumption that "losing oneself in a fictional world is the goal of the naïve reader or one who reads as entertainment" (1999: 120) – a feature of genre fiction such as science fiction.

Keith M. Booker, who considers the principal literary strategy of dystopian literature to be "defamiliarization", suggested that by "focusing their critiques of society on imaginatively distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable" (1994: 3-4). Dystopian literature focuses on society's negative characteristics

such as poverty, oppression, political and military mistrust; and often extrapolates aspects of contemporary society. Tom Moylan sees dystopian narratives as: "largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century. A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life…" (2000: xi). Moylan suggests that science fiction encourages readers to attach themselves to the protagonist" (2000: 4). In *The Hunger Games*, audiences attach themselves to the protagonist Katniss Everdeen, and immediately sympathise with her situation. From the opening pages of the first book, Katniss tells the reader of her struggles and the repressive surroundings in District 12.

> Our part of District 12, nicknamed the Seam, is usually crawling with coal miners heading out to the morning shift at this hour. Men and women with hunched shoulders, swollen knuckles, many of whom have long since stopped trying to scrub the coal dust out of their broken nails and the lines of their sunken faces. (Collins 2011a: 4-5)

This description of the inhabitants of District 12 is our first glimpse into the dystopian world of Panem. In District 12, like many of the other outlying Districts, poverty and hunger are rampant. The Government hands out rations called tesserae (basic grain and oil) to those eligible to participate in the Hunger Games, in return for adding their name additional times into the Reaping lottery. These rations are not enough to ensure survival, and many turn to illegal trading in order to gain food and other basic living essentials. Katniss, however, was taught to hunt and gather by her father before he died in a tragic mining accident years before the story begins. Since her father's death, Katniss unlawfully crosses the electrified fence separating District 12 from the forest, to hunt and to forage for nuts and berries. She then uses the food to trade in the Hob – the black market in District 12. It is in the Hob where readers witness the true destitution and pitiable state of living, but also the contentment and kindness of these people.

The Hunger Games act as a form of entertainment for those in the Capitol and a yearly demonstration of the Capitol's dominance over the inhabitants of the outlying Districts. The Capitol's use of the Games as a way of instilling fear, establishing control, and constructing a rigid class structure, also maintains a way of life for Panem's citizens. By pitting the Districts against each other in these deadly Games, the Capitol not only reinforces its

separation from the Districts, but also the Districts from one another. The Games emerged as payment and restitution for the "Dark Days" – when the Districts rebelled against the Capitol, eventuating in the almost-collapse of the entire nation. The Capitol cannot survive without the Districts as they provide the much-needed resources and a labour force. This reliance on the Districts causes concern among the ruling elite that the Districts could once again rebel against the Capitol, and for President Snow, this fear is ever-present. It is the unspoken, ever-present threat of rebellion that fuels their fear tactics. The Games are therefore not merely a barbaric form of entertainment for the Capitol's citizens; they serve as a way of dividing the districts and maintaining the Capitol's absolute power.

As the second film instalment of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* moves us further into the political and social constructs of Panem, we begin to see shifts in power, and extreme measures taken to retain the Capitol's power and control over its citizens. Katniss Everdeen, after winning the first Hunger Games, has become a 'beacon of hope', which President Snow fears 'must be contained', because hope could inspire a rebellion. Book and film fans alike rallied behind Katniss and the ideal of the 'Mockingjay'. By becoming active participants in the storyworld and positioned as 'citizens' in the various games and websites, fans mobilised online to bring the ideals of the 'Mockingjay' over into the real world.

The Audience as 'Citizens' of Panem

The transmedia franchise of *The Hunger Games* has continually positioned its audience as 'citizens' across the various media platforms, to the point where audiences are becoming their own real-life 'Mockingjays'. Fans are speaking out on contemporary real-world injustice, just as the District citizens do in the fictional storyworld. As Jenkins argues, for people who are culturally active (consuming films, television, and games), these media platforms act as a bridge and support system for them to become more politically active. What we are seeing as a result is that participatory culture is leading to participatory politics, with outcomes of political mobilisation, discussion, and expression, and the development of civic identities (Jenkins 2014). We are seeing the civil uprising witnessed in fictional Panem, cascade into the 'real world', with many websites and social media-based

communities and organisations created in response to the franchise, but which exist separately from the franchise owners and producers.

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire – Ignite the Fight Against Hunger[9] was one of the first fan-created communities formed around the franchise. It is a sanctioned charity/food drive supporting *Feeding America* and the *World Food Program*, aimed at raising awareness about world poverty and hunger. It gives fans an opportunity to contribute to programs designed to help others in need. Fans can learn and share facts on national (USA) and global hunger through their social networks using the hashtag #ignitethefight.

Odds in Our Favor[10] is an online community of 'citizens' concerned with the growing economic disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Their campaign to 'Join the Resistance' focused on organising like-minded citizens to rally at cinema screenings of *Catching Fire*, handing out stickers (of the three-fingered salute featured in *The Hunger Games*) and information about economic inequality. Their project, 'We Are the Districts'[11] is dedicated to sharing local economic information to a global audience – from unemployment rates, to food stamp cuts, and information on gentrification and the gender pay gap.

The Harry Potter Alliance[12] (HPA) is an organisation that was born out of the Harry Potter fandom, but has progressively incorporated more fandoms to create a larger member-base. HPA identifies as a non-profit organisation that "turns fans into heroes", stating that: "We're changing the world by making activism accessible through the power of story" (2015). HPA has since expanded its model of civic engagement through a new organisation called *Imagine Better*. This project takes a "grassroots, 'out-of-the-box' approach to harnessing the energy of social media, popular culture, and modern mythology for social change" (2015). In a recent press release, the HPA outlined their upcoming campaign to coincide with the release of *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1*. The hashtag #MyHungerGames encouraged the public to fill the gap between *The Hunger Games* marketing and the series' political message with their own stories of the daily realities of income inequality.

Moylan states that readers strive to be actively part of a found community of people who are also dislocated, and no doubt dispossessed and disempowered, and who are posing similar questions to the entire social reality: asking historically as well as individually where in the world they are,

what in the world is going on, and what in the world they can do about it (2000: 4). Moreover, he posits:

> Much of science fiction works by way of a readerly delight in the thoughtful and thought-provoking activity of imagining the elsewhere of a given text, of filling-in, co-creating, the imagined paradigm of a society that does not exist but that nevertheless supplies a cognitive map of what does exist… if a reader can manage to see the world differently (in that Brechtian sense of overcoming alienation by becoming critically estranged and engaged), she or he might just, especially in concert with friends or comrades and allies, do something to alter it – perhaps on a large scale or ever so slightly, perhaps in a singular deluge or maybe through steady drops of water on apparently stable and solid rock – so as to make that world a more just and congenial place for all who live in it. (Moylan 2000: 5)

Mark Fisher points out that young adult dystopian literature tells us much more than just which demographic *The Hunger Games* is aimed at, suggesting that the franchise resonates so powerfully with its young audiences because it evokes feelings of betrayal, and resentment within a generation (2012: 27). Patrick Smith further speculates that the current resurgence of young adult dystopian literature may well be due to their inherent adaptability to the big screen (2012: 23). He also adds that:

> Much of the young adult dystopian literature today draws thematically from classics… typically [featuring] totalitarian governments, war, broken economies, and includes themes of power, control, underdogs fighting against an oppressor. These themes often mirror the political and economical climate of the time it was written, often reflecting on (or projecting) a society's views on current world events. Within these dystopian texts lie a common thread, that suggests the world lies on the precipice of destruction. (Smith 2012: 23)

In the third and final film instalment, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*, Panem is on the precipice of a revolution. Katniss is on the final leg of her journey as she reluctantly takes on the mantle of the 'Mockingjay' – the symbol of the revolution. The themes of war, democracy, power of the media, manipulation, and sacrifice, take center stage as audiences follow Katniss on her final journey. Much of the action in the storyline's finale takes

place in the Capitol – the symbolic 'evil' she has battled since the first book. With many scenes occurring in the streets and dwellings of the city, her fight with the Capitol becomes literal. She faces perilous conditions, hazardous environments and man-made horrors as she and her rag-tag team make one final stand against President Snow and the Capitol forces. Whilst she is initially made to be a pawn in another political game, Katniss eventually awakens to the competing agendas and chooses to follow her own path. In the end, she reflects on the past, contemplates the future and struggles to reconcile her own morality with the consequences of her actions.

Conclusions

Transmedia storyworlds are particularly suited to this emerging dystopian young adult genre, as it allows youth audiences to engage with parallels between a 'fictional storyworld' and their own 'real-world' circumstances. As Ryan states: "Once we have invested sufficient mental energy to construct a storyworld, we want to collect the dividends of our efforts by being able to return to this world as often as we want" (2013: 385). By actively participating in, and interacting with the fictional storyworld of *The Hunger Games*, young audiences are engaging with the themes and issues facing them in contemporary society. At the core of *The Hunger Games* is an exploration of issues set within a familiar cityscape – that of economic inequality, poverty, the abuse of power, and exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. Fans of franchises like *The Hunger Games* are claiming an affiliation with these kinds of stories. By transitioning from participatory culture to participatory politics, audiences can not only reflect on these issues, but also become a force for change. Katniss Everdeen, as the 'Mockingjay' is a symbol of hope for the citizens of Panem, but also for citizens of Earth.

Notes

[1]German title: *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*
[2]*The Hunger Games: Girl on Fire* was created by Lions Gate Entertainment Inc.
[3]*The Hunger Games Adventures* was created by Functactix and Lions Gate Entertainment Inc.

[4]*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire Panem Run* was created by Reliance Games and Lions Gate Entertainment Inc.

[5]*The Hunger Games: Panem Rising* was created by Kabam and Lions Gate Entertainment Inc.

[6]'The Hunger Games Explorer' was built in partnership with RED Interactive Agency and Internet Explorer and can be found online at: http://www.thehungergamesexplorer.com

[7]The 'Capitol of Panem' official website can be found online at: http://thecapitol.pn/

[8]'Capitol Couture' can be found online at: http://capitolcouture.pn/

[9]'Ignite the Fight Against Hunger' can be found on line at: http://www.hungergames.com/

[10]'Odds In Our Favour' can be found online at: http://oddsinourfavor.org/

[11]'We Are The Districts' can be found online at: http://wearethedistricts.tumblr.com/

[12]'The Harry Potter Alliance' can be found online at: http://thehpalliance.org/

Bibliography

Primary References

Berlin Symphony of a Great City. Dir. Walter Ruttmann. Deutsche Vereins-Film, Les Productions Fox Europa, 1927.

Collins, Suzanne. 2011a. *The Hunger Games*. London, United Kingdom: Scholastic.
— 2011b. *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. London, United Kingdom: Scholastic.
— 2011c. *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*. London, United Kingdom: Scholastic.

The Hunger Games. Dir. Gary Ross. Lions Gate Entertainment. Lions Gate. Roadshow Entertainment, 2012.

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire. Dir. Francis Lawrence. Lions Gate Entertainment. Lions Gate Entertainment, 2013.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1. Dir. Francis Lawrence. Lions Gate Entertainment. Lions Gate Entertainment, 2014.

Secondary References

Arnwine, C. & Lerner, J. 1997. 'Cityscapes: Introduction', in *Wide Angle*, 19(4): 1-7.

Booker, M. K. 1994. *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Coleridge, S. T. 1817. 'Biographia Literaria', Chapter XIV. On line at: http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/biographia.html (consulted 15.01.2015).

Davis, D. E. 1999. 'The power of distance:re-theorizing social movements in Latin America' in *Theory and Society*, 28: 585-638.

Davis, M. 1992. 'Fortress Los Angeles: the militarization of public space' in M. Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a theme park: the new American city and the end of public space*, New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

Fisher, M. 2012. 'Precarious Dystopias: The Hunger Games, In Time, and Never Let Me Go' in *Film Quarterly* 65(4): 27-33.

Foucault, M. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books.

Gotham, K. F. 2003. 'Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban Poverty: The Urban Poor as Spatial Actors' in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(3): 723-37.

Hallam, J. 2012. 'Civic Visions: Mapping the 'City' Film 1900-1960' in *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 53(1): 37-58.

Harry Potter Alliance. 2014. 'Donald Sutherland wants the Hunger Games to start a revolution: Here it is' On line at http://thehpalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/hpa-pr-11-17-14.pdf (consulted 25.01.2015).
— 2015. 'What is the Harry Potter Alliance?' On line at: http://thehpalliance.org/downloads/press/about-the-hpa.pdf (consulted 25.01.2015).

Internet Explorer. 2013. 'The Hunger Games Explorer - Behind the Scenes' On line at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ0CqCWnQ6I (consulted 04.09.2013).

Jenkins, H. 2003 'Transmedia Storytelling' On line at: http://www.technologyreview.com/news/401760/transmedia-storytelling/page/3/ (consulted 28.11.2013).
— 2013. 'Rethinking "Rethinking Convergence/Culture"' in *Cultural Studies* 28(2): 267-297.