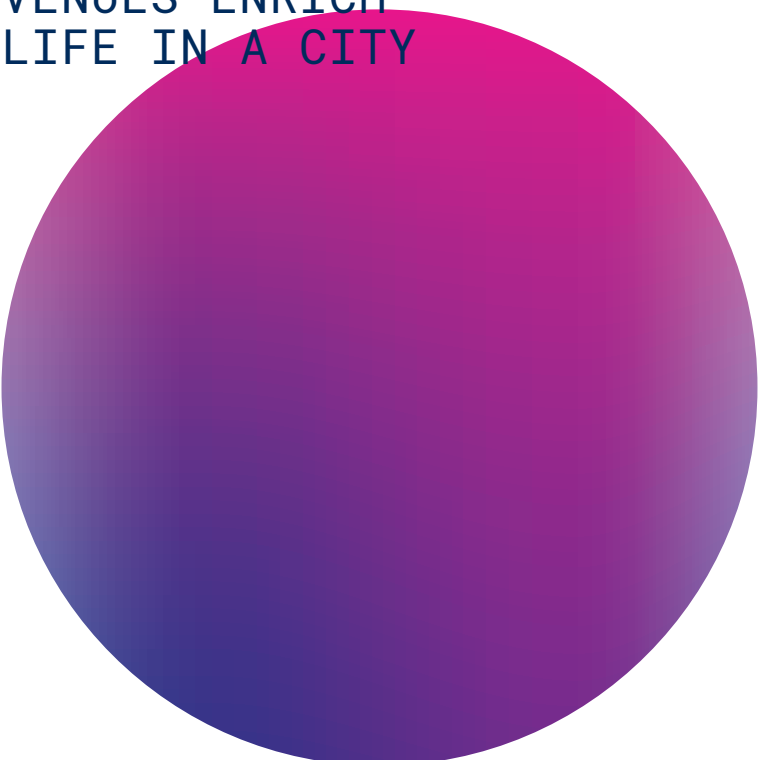


MY HOUSE IS  
YOUR HOUSE...  
HOW MUSIC  
VENUES ENRICH  
LIFE IN A CITY



DAVE  
HASLAM  
Manchester

# Where Strangers Meet: Art and the Public Realm

Foreword/Preface by Jo Beall

‘I’m not saying I told you so but rappers have been reporting from the front for years.’<sup>1</sup>

Why is the British Council interested in the public realm? ‘The public realm can be simply defined as a place where strangers meet’. So says the eminent urbanist, Richard Sennett.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case then the British Council, a cultural relations organisation that brings people together from different cultures, countries and continents, works squarely in the public realm. For around eighty years, through promoting the English language, the Arts and educational links, the Council has fulfilled its Royal Charter mandate to ‘promote cultural relationships and the understanding of different cultures between people and peoples of the United Kingdom and other countries’,<sup>3</sup> bringing strangers together from all corners of the globe to encounter each other. While formal or mainstream diplomacy primarily involves bilateral relations between national governments, the pursuit of cultural relations happens largely among people – in and through educational institutions, cultural organisations, communities and cities.

Unlike the private realm, such as the family where we know each other well and close up, the public realm is characterised by incomplete knowledge and, significantly, by place:

‘Traditionally, this place could be defined in terms of physical ground, which is why discussions of the public realm have been... linked to cities; the public realm could be identified by the squares, major streets, theatres, cafés, lecture halls, government assemblies, or stock exchanges where strangers would be likely to meet. Today, communications technologies have radically altered the sense of place; the public realm can be found in cyberspace as much as physically on the ground.’<sup>4</sup>

While much of the literature on the public realm focuses on politics and citizenship, class and social identity,<sup>5</sup> the so-called ‘performative school’ offers a more cultural approach, derived from anthropology, focusing on ‘how people express themselves to strangers’.<sup>6</sup> Taking this as our starting point our interest was in how arts professionals and performers, policy makers, and citizens, connect through the arts in different public realms.

Cities exhibit a critical mass of social, educational and cultural organisations, concentrations of actual and virtual communities, public spaces, and physical and digital connections. As such, they present a unique opportunity to use the power of arts, culture, education and the creative industries to power city and regional economies, catalyse urban renewal and to promote and share our cultural assets. The British Council has a presence in five cities in the UK and over 180 cities around the world, with its work extending far beyond this to several hundred cities and their rural hinterlands. From this base we are working to support cities in the UK and abroad to be internationally inspired and globally connected.

By using our knowledge, experience and connections we can support cities to achieve their international ambitions, working in partnership to create more livable, inclusive and vibrant urban spaces and places and to improve the quality of life for their citizens through exchange of knowledge, people, ideas, insight, culture and experiences. Our cultural relations approach is built on a spirit of

mutuality and co-creation, which inform this collection and how we engage with art and the public realm.

Most would agree that a good city is one where people's basic needs are met, where public services are delivered affordably and efficiently, where the economy thrives, the environment is protected and where public spaces are not only safe, accessible and affordable but also interesting and inspiring – alive places in which people can engage with each other and where creativity can flourish. Contemporary urban planners adhere to the view that beautiful cities are more liveable cities and culture-led development has become *de rigueur* for urban planners in many places around the world. Within the arts the concepts of public art and public space are intertwined and as Geoffrey Crossick writes in *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, the cultural force of the city and its built environment plays a significant role in this. Yet as Crossick acknowledges, the tangible role that the arts play has been largely untested.<sup>7</sup>

This is a contested area with some seeing the harnessing of the arts to promote creative cities and urban economies as the instrumentalisation of culture.<sup>8</sup> Conventional public art can also be viewed as exclusionary, foregrounding the interests of elites over ordinary urban dwellers and artist-led gentrification.<sup>9</sup> The conversation surrounding cultural value is engaging with such challenges and the need to develop appropriate means of engagement and participation in the arts. Cities, with their vast and growing populations, their density and networks of public services, spaces and institutions are central to this wider discussion.

Underpinning our approach and captured in the spirit of this collection is that cities are about people and the character of a city itself and expressions of its attractiveness and liveability is generated as much by those who live in it as by its built environment and infrastructure, its governing body or political leadership. Cities are the sum expression of all their people, civil societies and the institutions that define the experience of being in the city.

Where there is an inconsistency between political rhetoric and local reality then city diplomacy efforts will likely be undermined. We cannot project an image of a city as the 'greatest place on earth to live' if the reality is only that for some of our citizens.<sup>10</sup>

This collection focuses on what happens to both identity formation and place making when people engage in the public realm through the arts. Its starting point is to recognise artists less as individual producers of *objet d'art* and more as collaborators, participants or producers of situations, shifting the focus from 'production to reception, and emphasises the importance of a direct, apparently unmediated engagement with particular audience groups'.<sup>11</sup> It explores facilitating participation in the arts in everyday and extraordinary spaces and shares ideas and experience of the public realm internationally.

The collection shows public artists grappling with often complex, social dynamics and relationships as they play themselves out in and through public space. Because art operates beyond the rational and the functional, it often challenges urban planners who by definition are Cartesian in their approach. Yet planners do recognise that cities are social spaces and that social spaces continually change and in the process, that cities are constantly made and remade. Amin and Thrift see the city, 'as everyday process, mobilised by flesh and stone in interaction',<sup>12</sup> growing and morphing around the actions and engagement of ordinary people. This is at the heart of the British Council's cultural relations approach, sharing international experience in the hope of inspiring understanding and opportunity.

### Footnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> British Council (1993) *Royal Charter and Bye-laws*, London: British Council
- <sup>4</sup> Richard Sennett, 2016
- <sup>5</sup> See for example, Arendt, Hannah, 'Public Rights and Private Interests.' In M. Mooney and F. Stuber, eds., *Small Comforts for Hard Times: Humanists on Public Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977; Noel O'Sullivan, 'The Concept of the Public Realm', 2010, Routledge; and Douglas Kelbaugh, 'Three Urbanisms and the Public Realm', *Proceedings. 3rd International Space Syntax Symposium Atlanta 2001*, [www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/3sss/papers\\_pdf/14\\_kelbaugh.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/3sss/papers_pdf/14_kelbaugh.pdf); and Richard Sennett, 'Quant: The Public Realm', 2016, [www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb](http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb)
- <sup>6</sup> Richard Sennett, 2016
- <sup>7</sup> Crossick, Geoffrey and Kasynska, P, (2016) 'Understanding the value of arts and culture', AHRC Cultural Value project
- <sup>8</sup> See for example, R. Florida (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books and C. Landry (2008) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London: Earthscan
- <sup>9</sup> See for example Miles (2005) 'Interruptions: Testing the rhetoric of culturally led urban development' *Urban Studies*, 43(2) pp. 421-440; J. Peck (2005) 'Struggling with the creative class' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), pp. 740-770; and S. Zukin (2010) *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- <sup>10</sup> Jo Beall and David Adam (2017) *Cities, Prosperity and Influence: The role of city diplomacy in shaping soft power in the 21st century*, London: British Council, p. 23  
[www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/g229\\_cities\\_paper.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/g229_cities_paper.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> M. Kwon (2004) *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Massachusetts: MIT Press
- <sup>12</sup> A. Amin and N. Thrift (2002) *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 10

## Where Strangers Meet

Introduction by Claire Doherty

I am making my way along a train station platform in my home town of Bristol in the west of England. It's early summer, a time in which this harbour city reawakens, its public character more extrovert and social for a few short months before hibernating come October. But this morning, most of those around me are moving with the speed of a ritual commute – already mentally occupied with the day. Though physically moving through the concourse of a railway station, these people are already somewhere else – their knees locked under a desk, their faces buried in a screen. There are very few bodies at leisure – unlike the lingering space of the public square, or, for some, the lingering time of the lunch-hour. This is a public space in which bodies are propelled onwards; this is not a place of looking, agitation or agency, nor unexpected encounter. And then something changes...

In amongst the moving crowd are two stationary figures – in worn, khaki soldiers' uniforms. They are standing by the platform edge, waiting, occasionally catching the eye of a stranger. Incongruous due to the anachronistic nature of their historic costumes, they are all the more startling because of their stillness. They're not drawing attention to themselves through any words or movements. They are not exactly theatrical, but they're performing precisely because they should not be here. They are out of time and out of place.

On approaching them, I am handed a card in silence. It bears the name of a Lance Corporal who died on the first day of the Somme in the First World War – 1 July 1916 – and his age, 17. This is a memorial of sorts, but one that understands the public realm not as a stable site, but as a place and a time in a constant state of becoming; a place in which we are all implicated as actors and in which past, present and future are colliding. This is the progressive sense of place that geographer Doreen Massey once evoked as she described ‘place’ as a collision of events and times, memories, fictions, material culture and meeting points.<sup>1</sup>

My encounter that morning in Bristol was later revealed to be one of over two million uncanny encounters of First World War soldiers in public spaces across the UK on 1st July 2016. Though it felt intimate and specific – it was an artwork of immense scale, disbursed through multiples times and places throughout that single day, accumulating online as a mass public encounter and public memorial.

A project by artist Jeremy Deller in collaboration with Rufus Norris, Director of the National Theatre for 14-18NOW, the UK’s arts programme for the First World War centenary, *we’re here because we’re here* became one of the most celebrated public artworks in the UK of recent years (explored in detail by Kate Tyndall in this collection), and it was a catalyst for my interest in working with the British Council on this new collection of essays: *Where Strangers Meet*.

*We’re here because we’re here* is representative of a diverse network of artistic interventions, projects, gatherings and actions globally that are challenging the way in which we think about ourselves, our pasts and our future potential, by changing our experience of the urban public realm. But even within the 12 months since Deller’s performers infiltrated my consciousness and changed my perception of the temporal limits of public space, the title given by the British Council to this collection – ‘Where Strangers Meet’ – seems all the more provocative, all the more politicized than the phrase used by Richard Sennett in 2009 to describe the anthropological character of public space.<sup>2</sup>



Within the past year, as a culture of fear has built around the fault-lines of intolerance, strangers have become the silhouetted figures of potential violence lurking in the shadows of public space. Sennett's promotion of the 'unfinished' city plan, which allows for its inhabitants to adapt and change the public realm, seems all the more fragile.

"In a 'post-truth' world," UCLAN's Professor Lynn Froggett suggests in this collection, "the meeting of strangers in civic space demands ever more effort, reaching across gaps in recognition and understanding, and in urban environments beset by division and discrimination the need arises again and again. It impels the citizen to take a critical and self-reflexive perspective on their relations with civil society and the body politic. One of the key services that art can perform in urban environments is to change the conditions under which 'strangers meet' so that we can know each other better and imagine other ways to live together."

*Where Strangers Meet* considers the recent artistic, technological and political shifts determining emergent new forms of cultural experience in the public realm and in turn, what is at stake in the emergent forms of our cities' cultures. The voices included in this collection speak from disparate locations across the globe, distinguished from one another by their own set of conditions, and in some cases, distinct political positions. There are, however, some significant shared concerns which emerge globally. These include:

- The encroachment of privatisation on public space and the implications for freedom of movement or cultural expression and new cultural forms;
- The risks of 'artwashing' urban development, thereby disguising social implications and speeding the rate of gentrification at the expense of urgent community needs;<sup>3</sup>

- The growth of a culture of fear which threatens to infringe civil liberties, stalling the potential for individuals to freely adapt public spaces for personal or collective cultural activities, whether that be through exclusions due to political or environmental upheaval or the imposition of state forces of control;
- The rapid development of mobile technology and significant changes to the way in which people are authoring, co-creating and participating in culture and the emergence of simulated experiences and their ramifications for our understanding of what 'public' space might be and how it is constructed;
- A tension between self-initiated, self-directed cultural activity and organised programmatic approaches to city-wide cultural programmes for economic growth.

The collection embraces a broad definition of 'art' in the public realm which encompasses unexpected and unannounced artistic interventions, immersive, dispersed and networked performances and simulated experienced, direct actions and collective, grass-roots resistance through imaginative cultural activities. The collection gives insight into the concerns of architects and planners, but focuses less on form and design, than on the social, political and environmental implications of those creative practices in public spaces. It recognises residents, visitors, commuters and passers-by and new arrivals as active respondents – protagonists in, rather than just witnesses to, the stories unfolding in the public realm.

The meaning of 'public realm' itself is stretched and redefined through these essays by contributors who are concerned less with the theoretical discourse around the terms 'public space' and 'public realm' (see Habermas, Arendt, Mouffe and Sennett) than with the lived experience of publicness. There are clearly defined cultural differences of course in the conditions of public space across these distinct localities: for example, the provisional nature of public realm

from Mexico City to Rio to Cairo and Lagos contrasts starkly from one other, each with its own particular set of political and social conditions, ritualised public practices, architectures and topographies; furthermore the formal character of interior public space evolving through the privatised urban development explored by architect Diba Salam in Dubai contrasts significantly to that described by Karolin Tampere in her consideration of Oslo's harbour area and the work of artist collective Futurefarmers or Dave Haslam's exploration of the club scenes of Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

What does emerge are a common set of tactics that use degrees of subversion and collective action as a means to work as artists and cultural producers in the gaps between planning and lived experience. In his description of two consecutive forms of exclusion which emerged in Cairene public space following the momentous events of the spring of 2011, for example, Omar Nagati describes the revolutionary reclamation of public space by the public which led to exclusion through fragmentation, and the securitisation of public space by state control. "Art intervention in public space", he suggests, "work[s] through the cracks of the system, both geographically and politically, using design as a negotiating tool, and subversive tactics to mediate the different forms of exclusion resultant from the periods of flux and of securitisation." This responsive and agile mode of operating by artists, designers and creative practitioners is a common thread to emerge particularly where a city is in flux.

As this collection unfolded in 2017, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake hit Mexico City, rendering contributor Gabriella Gomez-Mont's words all the more resonant, as she spoke of cities who are in the process of imagining themselves out loud. Yet equally, whilst some are becoming acutely attuned to the need to adapt to environmental shifts and changes, so for others the public realm is increasingly mediated and filtered; this is a disbursed and connected public, largely occupying a virtual public space. Rather than explore specifically the internet as a form of public space, however, three writers have considered the implications of creative technology on our experience of physical spaces.

Professors Lynn Froggett and Jill Stein explore how ‘play’ through digital interaction in this shifting landscape holds out the promise of integration and connection. Stein surveys the digital platforms for collectively authoring spaces, such as location-based and location-specific mobile ambient storytelling; location-based mobile games; augmented reality experiences; and social location tagging/sharing, all of which, she suggests, “blur the lines between the digital and physical public realms by engaging city dwellers with a persistent layer of ambient information.”

Froggett asks: “What is the impact on the public consciousness of this repetitive simulation, widespread engagement in flow states... and the ‘Disneyesque’ aesthetic of much game design? How does it affect human interaction in public space?”

Both authors look at critical, creative practices which are emerging as a form of resistance to a simulated, anodyne public realm to enable what Froggett refers to as a kind of ‘deep play’ whereby critical reflection and individual agency is triggered, rather than repressed. Furthermore, Tony White offers an insight into a live-streamed takeover of libraries by young people in the West Midlands of the UK as a means of considering the library as a public place free from judgement and catalyst for co-created content and unregulated behaviour. This chimes with Dave Haslam’s assertion of the need for self-organised, uncontrolled spaces. “The fact is,” he suggests, “great ideas come from the margins.”

There is no shortage of future forecasting against which to set these reflections on arts and the public realm, but as William Gibson suggested, “the future is here, it’s just not very evenly distributed.”

Froggett suggests, “The capacity to affect and be affected by the needs and claims of others – who are not of one’s friendship group, community or kin – is a neglected aspect of civic life. Affect flows in public space, as it does in private lives, informing how we act into the public realm as embodied and emotional subjects.”

In a recent research inquiry into the civic role of arts organisations, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation identified common characteristics and operating principles shared by arts organisations committed to a strong civic role, namely they are rooted in local needs; develop community agency and build capability and social capital; as well as championing artistic quality and diversity and provide challenge.<sup>4</sup> Such principles are shared by the artistic projects gathered here which work upon the public realm, modelling new civic acts of tolerance, of resolution, resistance and challenge.

This collection tracks starkly different approaches to addressing the inequities of the present – through direct action, through collaborative exchange and by modelling potential new behaviours or processes. In his study of Utopia, Richard Noble suggested that, ‘for artworks to be utopian, they need to offer two things which seem to pull in rather different directions: on one hand a vision or intimation of a better place than the here and now we inhabit; and on the other some insight into what Ernst Bloch terms the “darkness, so near”, the contradictions and limitations that drive our will to escape the here and now in the first place’.

Former Queens Museum Director, Laura Raicovich spoke, when spearheading a new vision for the museum in 2017, of the importance of the civic role cultural institutions play with reference to the museum’s Immigrant Movement International, a community space in Queens that provides free educational, health and legal services. IM is a partnership between the museum and Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, who is interviewed by Gal-dem editor, Liv Little for the collection. Bruguera describes her notion of *arte util* (useful art) as art which is “the elaboration of a proposal that does not yet exist in the real world and because it is made with the hope and belief that something may be done better, even when the conditions for it to happen may not be there yet. Art is the space in which you behave as if conditions existed for making things you want to happen, happen, and as if everyone agreed with what we suggest, although it may not be like that yet:

art is living the future in the present. Art is also making people believe, although we know we may have not much more than the belief itself. Art is to start practicing the future.”<sup>5</sup>

The approaches considered in this collection can be seen to embody this contradictory pull: between the dream of an ideal society and the circumstances of the world in which we live. Some, such as Tania Bruguera’s *Arte Util* and the work of *Futurefarmers* here explored by Karolin Tampere, draw upon the aesthetic strategy of ‘modelling’, as a process through which ideals are tested as types of micro-utopia, whilst others are more assertively direct actions. This difference is often determined by the ways in which the artworks have emerged: some are the result of commissioning processes, outreach programmes or as part of larger-scale urban developments, others are self-initiated and/or the result of collective action.

A consideration of these provisional, unfolding set of works and movements reveals the potential of art in public to expose and respond to the encroachment of corporate interests on public space, to the diminishing opportunities for social cohesion and to the invisibility of the displaced and dispossessed in public life. The significant risk, however, as outlined in the recent discourse on ‘artwashing’ and critiques of the ‘creative city’<sup>6</sup> is “the deliberate use of arts and culture to secure future profitable gain rather than social inclusion or commentary.”

But what emerges from this collection is a more subtle set of arguments for the involvement of artists and artistic practices in the development of our cities through collaborative action, resistance, creative invention and by offering productive alternatives through the occupation of the centre to reassert the periphery. *Futurefarmers*’ proposition for a public bakehouse in Oslo for example operates as the means by which radical approaches in food production enter the space of corporate urban redevelopment.





*Rhodes must fall* © Schalk van Zuydam

Alongside this utopic modelling of potential futures are the equally resonant issues of grappling with a city's contested past. It is worth remembering that Jeremy Deller's soldier performers disruption of the temporal limits of public space in Bristol last year also occurred in a centre promenade in Bristol overlooked by a statue of slave-owner Edward Colston – a site of consistent and increasingly urgent debate in a city built on the slave trade. Historian David Olusoga explores the implications of public monuments as sites of contested histories through the protest movement for the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town and the subsequent violent rallies which erupted around the confederate statue in Charlottesville this August.

The act of commemoration has always been closely aligned to strategies of storytelling, by which a particular history of the past is sanctioned by those in the present to bring about a particular future. As Boris Groys suggests, 'The future is ever newly planned – the permanent change of cultural trends and fashions makes any promise of a stable future for an artwork or a political project improbable. And the past is also permanently rewritten – names and

events appear, disappear, reappear, and disappear again. The present has ceased to be a point of transition from the past to the future, becoming instead a site of the permanent rewriting of both past and future – of constant proliferations of historical narratives beyond any individual grasp or control.”

As Deller’s significant work of art in the public realm indicated on 1 July 2016, the potential of art in the public realm is to assist us with rewriting and reimagining how we live together in the future, but essentially by revisiting the past with new eyes, lifted from our screens, to feel the materiality of being in the physical environment and to look the stranger in the eye.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘Landscape as Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains’, 2006 republished and downloadable at [oro.open.ac.uk/7227/1/Journal\\_of\\_material\\_culture\\_pdf\\_version.pdf](http://oro.open.ac.uk/7227/1/Journal_of_material_culture_pdf_version.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Richard Sennett, ‘Quant: The Public Realm’, available to read and download at [www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2](http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2)

<sup>3</sup> See journalist Jack Shenker’s recent article in *The Guardian* who characterised the threat of privatisation as the “insidious creep of pseudo-public space” where the control of ‘acceptable behaviour’ ranges from covert policing and surveillance to the less obvious ‘planning-out’ of free movement

<sup>4</sup> Gulbenkian Foundation, *Rethinking Relationships*, downloadable from [civicleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk](http://civicleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk)

<sup>5</sup> Tania Bruguera, ‘Reflexions on Arte Útil (Useful Art)’, available to read or download at [www.taniabruquera.com](http://www.taniabruquera.com)

<sup>6</sup> See Oli Mould, ‘Why culture competitions and ‘artwashing’ drive urban inequality’, *Open Democracy*, Sept 2017. Download at [www.opendemocracy.net/uk/oli-mould/why-culture-competitions-and-artwashing-drive-urban-inequality](http://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/oli-mould/why-culture-competitions-and-artwashing-drive-urban-inequality) and Alexander Nazaryan, ‘The ‘Artwashing’ Of America: The Battle For The Soul Of Los Angeles Against Gentrification’, read at [www.newsweek.com/2017/06/02/los-angeles-gentrification-california-developers-art-galleries-la-art-scene-608558.html](http://www.newsweek.com/2017/06/02/los-angeles-gentrification-california-developers-art-galleries-la-art-scene-608558.html)



## My House Is Your House...

### How music venues enrich life in a city

Text by Dave Haslam

I have an older sister and a younger brother, but for some of my childhood my parents fostered too. This was mostly when I was between about seven and twelve years-old. Social services would phone and a child (or two siblings) would arrive at our door a few hours, or a day, later.

In the space of five or six years, around thirty-five foster kids came into our home, and our lives, for anything between a few days and several months. The kids were from a number of different religions and races, although not quite all ages. My parents had a policy of only accepting kids younger than my younger brother. This was so we didn't feel displaced by the foster children, but it also had the effect of casting us all in caring roles.

The kids would be temporarily fostered with us for a variety of reasons; sometimes the mother was trying to escape domestic abuse, or the mother was in hospital or in jail. Often we'd host a pair of siblings –usually an older sister with a younger brother– and they'd be glued together from the moment they came through the front door. We'd treat them just like younger brothers and sisters. We would care for and look out for them, but we'd also bicker sometimes. They'd play football or hide-and-seek with us, watch *Wacky Races* on TV after school, and they'd come on family holidays.

This was the late 1970s, in Birmingham. In 1980, I moved to Manchester and since then I've made a career as a DJ and journalist. The latest of my five books is my memoir, *Sonic Youth Slept On My Floor*. In the book, I documented meeting people who made an impression on me, and inspired me; like John Peel, Nile Rodgers, Tony Wilson, and Tracey Thorn.

I also considered those years fostering, and realise now that I have drawn many lessons from the experience of knowing those kids, not least to value my stable family life, but also to appreciate the heavy loads some people have to carry. I reckon those encounters were among the most significant in my life. Not that I understood that at the time: I was young, at an age when you experience life at face value.

Fostering gave me an insight into the lives of other children; their precarious home life; their distressing stories. Once or twice a parent visited. I remember a father arriving on a Sunday afternoon, and I could tell it was killing him that whatever nightmare the family was going through, he was unable to care for his child. Seeing a grown-up sobbing outside your family home is something a nine-year-old never forgets.

I doubt many of my foster brothers and sisters recall their short times with us, although two of them have subsequently taken jobs that have given them access to their Social Services file and made contact. One of the two recalled just a fleeting image; a memory of a day in the countryside, when cows ran across a field to watch us eat a picnic.

The experience of fostering exposed me to the struggles of some families but also helped give birth to a sense of idealism. We'd arrive home from school, a newly-arrived youngster would be introduced to us and we'd grab them by the hand, show them their room, go find the dressing-up box, or run into the garden. It was that quick, that simple, that amazing. In thirty seconds the person standing in front of us transformed from a stranger to a sister or a brother.

Writing my book, especially the chapters about DJing in clubs like the Haçienda in the 1980s and 1990s, I became aware how utopian my attitudes to discotheques and dancefloors are. I realised that the encounters with my newly-arrived foster brothers and sisters acted like a precedent, a model for the best kind of interaction with a stranger; immediate acceptance and connection. Granted, it was a temporary attachment, but lots of important things in our lives are temporary; love, anger, heartache, a day trip to the countryside. It doesn't mean they're not real.

I remember in packed clubs playing a record in 1990 by the Break Boys called 'My House Is Your House (And Your House Is Mine)'. I was in the midst of a music scene that was communal and accepting, where people from various neighbourhoods and backgrounds had come together to party.

The Haçienda had a key role in shaping music history; it was a blueprint for rave culture and the spiritual home of the Madchester bands like the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays. Over the next pages, I'm going to describe and explain the personal, communal, cultural value of the Haçienda but other nightclubs and music venues too. How they have the potential to transform culture, lives, communities, and cities.

My interest in music venues and other sites of cultural activity started in my early teenage years when I became fascinated by the idea of what was off the radar. I'd be sitting watching TV shows *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*, thinking there must be more to life than this. Thanks to my big sister and her friends, I had heard enough music to understand *Top of the Pops* wasn't the whole story and the world wasn't all Showaddywaddy. By extension, I decided that not all the realities and ideas out there were reflected on news programmes like *News at Ten* or *Nationwide*.

I guess I was beginning to covet the notion of a counter culture, and I began to look for clues, and follow rumours of where and what the counter culture might be. It wasn't on TV or in the daily newspapers. I found it at venues. Venues of all kinds.

When you grow up in a city, or move to a city, the biggest adventure and the most valuable reward is to find your tribe. We search for a place where we find people we share interests with, or feel comfortable with, or attracted to, or inspired by; for example, Tim Burgess of the Charlatans in his book about hunting for vinyl in record shops, says a great record shop is like “a refuge”. The same can be true of a club, an arthouse cinema, a particular pub, a café bar, a boutique, a bookshop, a hairdressing salon, a nightclub. Music venues are not buildings or sites of activity or cultural catalysts that exist in isolation. They’re part of a network of sites that serve various scenes and tribes.

I didn’t see myself as a creative person, but I was a little unsettled, a little adventurous, not very engaged with the mainstream, and very curious. I was curious about everything; from understanding social inequality, to finding music that thrilled me more than Showaddywaddy did. In Birmingham in my teen years, I discovered an arthouse cinema in Aston called the Arts Lab, which gave me a chance to see films the mainstream cinemas and TV channels weren’t showing; the likes of *Lenny*, *Ashes & Diamonds*, and *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. I discovered an alternative bookshop, Prometheus, and a couple of record shops where music away from the charts was available; the Diskery, Reddington’s Rare Records, and Inferno.

There were a couple of what were called “greasy spoon cafes”, including one at the back of New Street Station, and another on Broad Street. Daytime, I’d meet friends in those sorts of places, to compare our vinyl record purchases and eat cheese on toast. Then, when I was old enough to venture out after dark, I started frequenting venues like Barbarella’s and the Fighting Cocks, seeing live acts like Iggy Pop, the Au Pairs, and Magazine.

After I’d arrived in Manchester, it was almost as if I replicated the network I’d enjoyed in my mid-teens in Birmingham. The pull of the local alternative bookshop was still strong; Grass Roots on Newton Street replaced Prometheus in my affections. My teenage passion for art house films stimulated by visits to the Arts Lab found an outlet at

the Aaben in Hulme where I saw Stalker, and Repo Man. In addition, my friends and I took to frequenting a handful of city centre greasy spoon cafes, including one on John Dalton Street, and the Alesia on Newton Street. I also found night time music venues featuring great new bands, like the Beach Club, and the Cyprus Tavern, and then, from 1982, the Haçienda.

Music venues and other places of night-time entertainment have played a central place in their cities for centuries. In the early 1840s, the demand for music venues was so great that new legislation was passed; the Theatres Act of 1843 relaxed the rules governing places of entertainment, especially entertainment on licensed premises. Some informal campaigning for more music venues had taken place, including, in 1840, a march through Shoreditch, East London, which had rallied around the slogan ‘Freedom for the people’s amusements’.

Among clubs and venues with a central role in their cities, Nottingham’s Rock City and the Barrowland ballroom in Glasgow are two examples. They have become embedded in the cultural and social life of the community in the same way that, traditionally, a university, cathedral or a factory might have done. Liam Gallagher recently explained the attraction of the Haçienda: “For people who went there it was their church”.

As well as being sites of personal and communal importance, clubs and venues have had a significant role to play in shaping music history. Two rarely mentioned (but certainly worth celebrating) are the Scene, a pioneering, amphetamine-filled, mod hangout in Ham Yard, Soho in the first years of the 1960s (Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton were among the regulars) and the Dug Out in Bristol in the mid-1980s (integral to the roots of Massive Attack, Portishead and others through the 1990s).

Britain's standing in the world has taken a few knocks over the last years, but its ability to produce an exciting, creative, and influential youth culture is as big as ever. The country's small venues are central to this; they have always been crucial in the development of the country's international reputation for innovative music and fashions. Almost all major acts and DJs fashioned the foundations for their careers performing at grassroots venues.

But the country's venues and clubs not only give Britain soft power, but contribute hugely to the economy too. The night-time economy is the UK's fifth biggest industry, annually generating £70bn (6% of the nation's gross domestic product). One of the virtues is the ease of entry. Customers become musicians. Barstaff become DJs become club promoters become venue owners.

Music venues and nightclubs invariably have close connections with record shops (for the music), boutiques (for the outfits), and neighbouring bars (for the pre-show meet-up). Music scenes also motivate, employ, and inspire work of musicians and designers; both graphic designers like Peter Saville, and clothes designers like the late Alexander McQueen.

Music venues help shape a city, the best, most significant and influential of them nurture and showcase radical, alternative music and ideas and appeal to those seeking maverick lifestyles, the weirdos with the network of alternative hangouts, the young people disenfranchised from the prevailing culture of the city. It's a role that benefits the psychological health of a city, its sense of diversity, and its creative strength.

In recent decades, as cities have been moving towards homogeneity – becoming dominated by chain hotels, retail malls filled by the big commercial names, and coffee shops run by the major brands – the founding and survival of alternative and independent activity has never been more important.

Arguably the most significant Newport venue of recent decades was TJ's, a live music venue run by the late John Sicolo, which created and nurtured an alternative scene in the 1980s, a compelling example of the value of venues that kick against musical and cultural homogeneity. When John Sicolo died in 2010, one contributor to a BBC radio show in his honour said TJ's was invaluable to teenagers in the Welsh valleys who weren't at home in either the 'strait-jacket masculinity' of rugby clubs or the high street discotheques.

The Haçienda played a particularly valuable role by providing a sense of an alternative. The club is now celebrated by Manchester City Council, a tool in various tourist campaigns, and has become an obsession in the local media, but in the first few years it was open, it was barely written about in the evening newspaper, the *Manchester Evening News*.

Founded by Factory Records and New Order, the Haçienda was radical and underground, on the edge of town, often featuring music you couldn't hear on the radio. In the early 1980s, it was the biggest by far of several venues in the city that nurtured ad hoc communities away from the commercial mainstream. People in Manchester at the time discovered other half-hidden spaces, dancing to hi-energy in close-knit, hardcore gay clubs like the Archway, perhaps, or being immersed in the intensity and solidarity of soul nights at the Reno in Moss Side.

These small venues were something of a second home to the people who found them and frequented them. They were places of acceptance and connection. Gay clubs were a haven for a community that would often face hostility elsewhere, as well as sites for positive self-expression, and adventure. Members of the black community were also unwelcome in high street discotheques. Many clubs had a 'colour bar' (a polite phrase for "racist door policy"), even after racial discrimination legislation outlawed such practices.



In 1978, the Commission for Racial Equality took Polyanna's in Birmingham to court after collecting evidence that the club was routinely turning away black customers.

Mainstream nightclubs in that era were frequented by pissed-up guys desperate to fight weirdos like me. Plenty of cities were –and still are– like this. I remember talking to James Barton, who went on to be a co-founder of Cream: he said his earliest memory of nightclubbing in Liverpool was the desperate search for places where the night didn't end with a fight and someone having a pint glass pushed in their face.

I was already aware that the off-the-radar venues had the potential to be more interesting than those that were more conspicuous, and that they could be places I'd meet like-minded folk and fall in love with the music. That's how I found myself at a club called the Man Alive, on a midweek night, among twenty-five people dancing to the outrageously uncommercial sound of 23 Skidoo. It was here that I began my DJing career, a year before I got a job at the Hacienda.

Fifteen years or so after his attempts to avoid random violence in the clubs of Liverpool, James Barton established Cream as the era-defining superclub of the 1990s. Alongside the Cavern and Eric's, Cream is one of a trio of Liverpool clubs that have made music history in the city over the last sixty years. The Cavern played host to two hundred and ninety-two shows by the Beatles; there's no bigger or more influential band in music history. Eric's was opened by Roger Eagle in the post-punk period, during a boom in bands forming, gig-going, and small venues around the country inspiring and nurturing emerging talent. Eric's was somewhere the Clash, the Cure, and Joy Division would play, and tickets for the show would be £1.10.

The Cavern, Eric's and Cream were all part of a world of dozens of unheralded venues and a host of related activity, but without these three venues in particular, modern Liverpool would be unimaginable.



From the enduring story of the Beatles and the Cavern, through the inspiration to the regulars generated by Eric's, to the energising influence of Cream, they have given the city its status as a music capital.

Manchester has a similar status, mostly garnered from, and through in the 1980s, although the roots were laid in the late 1970s, especially thanks to bands including Ludus, Buzzcocks, and the Fall. Factory Records are key to the Manchester story, though, having grown from an organisation set up to host live music, to becoming a record label, releasing music by Joy Division, A Certain Ratio, and then New Order.

As the label became more successful, New Order and the Factory clan, made visits to New York venues like Hurrah and the Danceteria. In that era, New York was falling apart and financially bankrupt, but creatively so strong. The Danceteria wasn't just a venue sparking and surfing the era's musical zeitgeist, but was also a place where culture, art, and music collided. One night the punk pioneer Richard Hell, might perform his tough, angular guitar music. Another night, the club might feature electro break-dancing, and street art. The Beastie Boys would hang out there (before they were the Beastie Boys). Artists, including Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat were part of the Danceteria scene, and Madonna was a constant presence on the dancefloor. She bugged the talent booker at Danceteria, Ruth Polsky for a chance to perform on the Danceteria stage. Eventually, she got to make her live debut there, warming-up for A Certain Ratio.

Taking Danceteria as a role model in 1982 was part of the phenomenal ambition of the Hacienda's founders, demonstrated also by the intention laid out in the first flyer the Hacienda issued: the flyer declared the aim of the club, "To restore a sense of place". Imagine opening a club with that headlining your manifesto? That was where they were coming from. They believed in all this, and neglected to look after some of the more mundane things they could have been doing; like formulating a water-tight business plan.

In the early years, the club was under-populated; but an inclusive door policy and a mix of live music, DJs, and cut-up videos on the big screens drew all manner of creative people to the space. Fashion shows were another feature of what went on at the Haçienda. I remember working on the music for one in 1986, alongside Jeff Noon who later went on to write some powerful and successful novels (including *Vurt*). Of all the achievements of the Haçienda, there is none more valuable than the way the club provided a space that creative types from all backgrounds gravitated towards.

In addition, people who gravitated towards the Haçienda, graduated from there inspired. A number of big names were motivated to take up a career in music by what they experienced at the Haçienda in the late 1980s; they went from being consumers of music, to becoming a producer, to participate in the culture. I'm thinking particularly of the French DJ Laurent Garnier, and Ed Simons and Tom Rowlands from the Chemical Brothers. Those names exemplify how important clubs and venues are as catalysts for activity outside of their wonderwalls: bands, DJs, a legacy, a mythology.

It was the same ten years earlier, at the end of the 1970s, when Eric's in Liverpool was central to the beginnings of so many careers, including those of the bands Echo & the Bunnymen, and Teardrop Explodes. For Pete Dinklage, seeing the Clash play at Eric's galvanised him into becoming a singer and musician (his band, Wah Heat, went on to feature on several music press front covers and in a handful of episodes of *Top of the Pops*). Bill Drummond – later of the KLF – was another person whose career was kickstarted at Eric's; he was in a band with one of the ace faces at the venue, Jayne Casey, who, as well as being a musician, later took up a key role at Cream and then piloted Liverpool's year as Capital of Culture.

Ideas that challenge the prevailing culture can one day change it, or, at least, enrich it. Most of the venues I've mentioned began, and sometimes remained, unheralded, but ideas and inspiration they gave

birth to nevertheless percolated through the world of ideas, via their graduates, most often. The story of a great venue doesn't end when the last customer leaves.

Billy's is another example. Billy's was the name given to weekly club night opened in Soho, London in the autumn of 1978 at a venue then called Gossips in the basement of 69 Dean Street. Billy's was hosted and promoted by Steve Strange, alongside his flatmate Rusty Egan who became the club's DJ. The people who organised and frequented Billy's (along with graduates of similar clubs of the era – including the Rum Runner in Birmingham, and Blitz, Strange and Egan's next venture) went on to define and disseminate a sound and a flamboyant look that became known as 'New Romantic'. The scene, which had worldwide influence had its genesis in two or three small, left-field clubs.

Perhaps it's worth pausing here, in order to underline that the significance of venues is usually only measurable in retrospect, when the seeds sown have bloomed. Many music venues and nightclubs that could lay claim to most importance in the life of cities or in the world of ideas don't look like very much.

In a dilapidated area threatened with demolition or the construction of apartments or retail developments, there could well be, down some deserted street a pub function room or a cheaply-converted warehouse basement that, to a small cell of music lovers, is their idea of the perfect venue. Maybe there, something amazing is happening, that in retrospect will be historic.

In recent years I've become intrigued by the history of nightlife in the areas around Pigalle and Montmartre in Paris, especially two tiny cabaret clubs in operation over a hundred years ago; the Chat Noir, in Pigalle – frequented by painter Toulouse Lautrec, musicians Claude Debussy and Erik Satie, and poets Paul Verlaine and Jules Laforgue – and the Lapin Agile. The Lapin Agile on the north side of Montmartre, was owned by the singer and comedian Aristide Bruant.

When Picasso arrived in Paris, at the very beginning of the twentieth century he went in search of thrills and comrades, and found both at the Lapin Agile. The venue had existed for a number of decades; the haunt of artists, poets, and ne'er do wells of various sorts. For a while, also, it had been nicknamed the "Cabaret des Assassins" after a crew of gangsters had killed the owner's son during an attempted robbery.

One of Picasso's most glorious works 'Au Lapin Agile' (1905) which features the artist himself in the venue, together with a representation of his lover Germaine Pichot, a young woman who had broken the hearts of a number of men who hung out in the bohemian cabaret clubs of Montmartre and Pigalle.

From the Chat Noir and the Lapin Agile, to Billy's and the Haçienda, many of the night-time venues which have turned out to have the most significance are what might be called "dives", although few have ever been as grotty as the Cavern in Liverpool, which stank of sweat, mould, disinfectant, and stale onions. Paul McCartney's father offered a ton of encouragement to his son, but he was never fan of the Cavern. "You should be paid danger money to go down there," he told Paul.

The cheap, out-of-the-way, undercapitalised venues are the ones that attract risk-takers and pioneers, the ones with the mad ideas and ludicrous ambitions who have nothing to lose. That's when cultural activity is at its most exciting and effervescent, creating new scenes and future possibilities, with inspired and maverick pioneers ignoring or pushing against the mainstream –even if, as with the New Romantics, for example, they become the new mainstream. But that's fascinating, too; how misfit kids and talented rebels gathered under a mirror-ball between four walls of a venue can knock culture into a new phase.

I wouldn't denigrate or wish away any art galleries, or other major cultural institutions, in any cities around the world; indeed, the positive impact of places like the Guggenheim in Bilbao and the Sage in Gateshead are undeniable. But a healthy, participatory,

culture needs more than the kind of high profile cultural emporia that public policy and City Council initiatives have fixated on in the past.

In 2015. Manchester's Council Leader Sir Richard Leese listed the good news about various major cultural institutions in the city, describing all these sparkly buildings as the city's "cultural provision" which, he said, "draws in tourism and attracts wider inward investment by positioning the city as an international centre for culture and the arts". The assumption is that culture in the city is whatever is contained in these buildings. And the language is instructive; "cultural provision". Something provided for us? Something we have an entirely passive relationship to? That art and culture is solely something we can consume? That culture in the city is just a pawn in a city's relentless civic boosterism.

But so much that's great about culture in Manchester exists outside the cultural institutions; in the dodgy venues, the rehearsal rooms, the uncontrolled spaces, artists' studios, the basements and the streets. The fact is, great ideas come from the margins. The Hacienda was as glitzy as you would expect an old warehouse opposite huge rusting gas holders on Whitworth St West to be. Hip hop was born in the Bronx. Picasso spent more time in cabaret clubs like the Lapin Agile than he did in the Louvre.

It intrigues me about how we find our tribe, our places to hang out in cities, as I did when I was a Birmingham teen, as Wylie did in Liverpool, as Picasso did in Paris, and we all do, consciously or not; I curated my own urban networks.

Furthermore, and, in many cases, if we don't find somewhere, we make our own space, maybe collaborate, maybe create a little cell of like-minds. As Roger Eagle did at Eric's, and Steve Strange and Rusty Egan did at Billy's; they were resourceful and passionate enough to begin their own projects, animate a space their way, and make their own culture. This for-love-not-money and do-it-yourself process has underpinned so much activity after dark.

At night, there's a transformation on the streets, encounters and interactions have a different quality to those in the daytime. Many in the LGBT+ community will know this; how day-times closeted at work, and night-times out and empowered, are very different.

Life after dark in music venues and nightclubs in towns and cities can be chaotic and perilous, something of a secret time, a lost time, when in our actions what's normal doesn't apply, a chance for some casual flirting or sexual encounter, to seek pleasures, to look different, to be different, to be lost in music, to indulge in some daft craziness.

Life after dark is often hidden, and more than occasionally, it's on the edge of the law or in defiance of it: it has a history of dark corners, gangland protection rackets, errant doormen, moral panics, ecstasy deaths. But it also has so much potential, to be exciting, creative, an adventure, and an escape.

Night-time venues have the potential to be sacred spaces in cities, which is why so often news of the closure of venues by inept council planners, or rapacious property developers is often greeted like a dagger in the heart of the city, with shock and mourning.

In London, an unholy alliance of property developers, planners and councils have attempted to monetise every acre of the city; prioritising retail and apartments and bulldozing music venues. New protests at this cultural vandalism have been triggered, people back on the streets once again demanding freedom for the people's amusements.

If councils and planners had the imagination to turn away from the cavalier approach to clubs and venues, there are a number of things that I could suggest they do in order to nurture and defend nightlife.

First, to understand the value of clubs and venues, and their key role in creating an attractive, healthy, town or city; after all, no-one

has ever moved away from somewhere because there are too many exciting things to do: they'll need to appreciate how music venues and other underground off-the-radar cultural spaces can be precious communities, offering escape and alternatives. That the risk-takers, and pioneers setting up in insalubrious surroundings are giving life to a city.

Picasso falling out of a cabaret bar, half mad with absinthe, and with the wrong girl on his arm. In all things –art, music, retail, architecture– the margins, not the mainstream, give a city its authenticity, its quirks and its soul.

Second, if there's a consideration of what kind of conditions need to be in place to nurture a thriving local art and music scene, then my advice is; don't get obsessed with funded, sponsored, box-ticking activity; and don't measure cultural success by footfall, or BBC Radio Four coverage.

Cultural activity can be underground, challenging, oppositional, and uncomfortable, and not always PR-friendly. Art isn't obliged to make us feel comfortable. Life is untidy, and art can be too. Stephen Sondheim says, "Art, in itself, is an attempt to bring order out of chaos." I respectfully but totally disagree. That's not art that's cutting a hedge. Art reflects what it's like to be human; flawed, on the cusp of falling apart.

In short; resist the spread of corporatised, commercialised and controlled spaces. Try to control things too much. Don't kill all the chaos.

Third, we should address an issue that could justify active intervention; the provision of cheap space. Thirty and forty years ago, in the post-industrial era, businesses and people were deserting city centres, which provided cheap *ad hoc* space galore for music venues and clubs in or among the semi-derelict warehouses, factories, basements, office buildings, and old cinemas in New York, London, Manchester, Liverpool and other cities.



Perhaps it's time for the authorities to take on more of an enabling role. Now, post-gentrification, it's far harder by far to access those cheap, informal spaces that the marginal creative world needs in order to exist.

The availability of cheap space is vital. Perhaps ways can be found to help creative businesses run by individuals or co-ops to own the land, the footprint of their businesses, as a defence against the whims or plans of a big business developer; property ownership by the sector, for the sector. There are other, related actions; including demarcating areas as cultural quarters, offering rent and rates discounts, and, of course, pursuing a considerate planning policy.

Fourth, anyone with a hand on levers of power or influence –including educators– should do whatever is necessary to encourage participation in culture; it's the only way to keep ideas alive. Music is such a great vehicle for this, with so many roles to play, and so few barriers; a career playing maracas, carrying sound equipment, making Facebook videos, designing the sleeves for limited edition vinyl releases. The healthiest towns and cities aren't built only on consumption but creative invention too.

A local music scene has personal, cultural and economic impacts but giving people a stake in local culture also intensifies the collective experience. We witnessed this in the aftermath of the terror attack at the Manchester Arena in May 2017; music and the local music scene played such an important role in articulating the city's pride and togetherness. A block of apartments could never have the positive impact on a city a music venue can.

Unfortunately, without a shift in thinking, gentrification will continue, and the narrative familiar in many cities around the world will continue to be repeated; in a forgotten part of town, a bright spark finds cheap space, their activity repopulates it, brings some buildings back into use, and creates activity which transforms the area,



but then, making the area attractive draws the attention of planners and developers who sweep away the venues to replace them with buildings considered more lucrative.

It's key that such cultural spaces shouldn't be considered to be servants of some bigger plan, but a positive result in their own right. They're not tilling the soil until big business can come along and cash-in.

An example of this is the story of an area in Liverpool that has become known as the Baltic Triangle. The Baltic is now a Northern hotspot of culture, creativity and night-time excitement, but it wasn't like this twenty years ago. It was a rundown, deserted part of Liverpool.

In the first decades of the 20th century, the area was once packed with warehouses and terraced housing. 1970s' recessions finished the process that wartime bombing and post-war clearances had begun; businesses and people were replaced by derelict warehouses and just a few small industries, like MOT garages set up in tin sheds and makeshift workshops.

The Baltic has move into a new era in the last 20 years thanks to the creatives who took advantage of the cheap space and saw the potential, and the venues that followed. Now, though, all this activity has attracted developers wishing to build residential apartments for those attracted to the nightlife and culture. Some of the pioneers are already being pushed out, and one landmark venue –Constellations– has recently announced its lease is up and the venue isn't part of the developer's plan after 2019.

In those grim days, at the very beginning of the new millennium, the Council decided to intervene; their idea was to create two "managed prostitution zones" in the Baltic Triangle around Newhall Street and Crump Street, near what's now Constellations. The plan was never delivered after the Home Office ruled out the use of such zones in 2005.

By this time, though, if you knew where to look, things were happening; including regular gigs at the New Picket music venue in New Bird Street. And Jayne Casey –graduate of Eric’s, and ex-member of the Cream team– had co-created an arts venue, the A Foundation, in the area, attracting artists and creatives to the derelict streets and beginning the revival of the area in earnest.

A not-for-profit company, Baltic Creative, began to refurbish the warehouses and sheds. A large red-brick warehouse in Parliament Street was occupied by Elevator Studios (it now hosts dozens of digital and creative businesses). Music venues like Camp & Furnace and Constellations are part of what makes Liverpool an attractive place to live, or come to study in. According to Baltic Triangle Area CIC figures, more than three million visits were made to the area over the course of just one year. Baltic Triangle Area CIC board member Liam Kelly has rightly described the area as, “a clear example of what culture and creativity can do to change the face and spirit of a place”.

Liverpool has had more than its fair share of venue closures; Eric’s has long gone, and in 2015, Nation (the home of Cream) and The Kazimier which had brought life to Wolstenholme Square, became victims of the success they’d made re-energising the area and were closed in order to make room for new city centre developments.

Constellations, and venues like the Duovision art gallery on Stanhope Street face an uncertain future. In interviews, Liam Kelly is adamant the narrative needs to be changed: “It should shift the conversation not to ‘how do we build over this?’ but to ‘how do we build on this?’”

The search among unsettled types for alternatives to a world suffocated by homogeneity and a predictable mainstream, and the hunger for excitement and the appeal of life after dark are undimmed. However unconvinced we could be that councils and big business will ever change the narrative, on the other hand, we can always be

assured that there will be passionate malcontents, artists, and music lovers who are going to be resourceful enough to find new spaces for like-minded people to gather, find self-expression and an identity.

DJing, I still occasionally play ‘My House Is Your House (And Your House Is Mine)’ nearly thirty years after it was released. And why not? The music still resonates, and the spirit of life after dark is as strong as ever. It’s still a joy for me, witnessing it happen; people gather, the music plays, and thirty seconds later strangers are brothers and sisters.



## Dave Haslam

In the 1980s Dave Haslam booked bands into small venues throughout Manchester; hosting shows early in the careers of bands including Primal Scream, and Sonic Youth. He then DJ'd over 450 times at the legendary Hacienda club in Manchester, mostly in the late 1980s. He has DJ'd worldwide, including Paris, Detroit, Berlin, Ibiza, New York, Lima, and Geneva, and at afterparties for New Order, Gorillaz, and Depeche Mode.

He has written for 'NME', 'The Face', 'The Guardian', and elsewhere; and written five books, including 'Life After Dark', the definitive history of British nightclubs and music venues.

In his latest book, 'Sonic Youth Slept on My Floor' - his memoirs published in May 2018 - he documents encounters with inspiring characters including David Byrne, Nile Rodgers, Tracey Thorn, John Peel, Mark E Smith, and John Lydon. Gilles Peterson of BBC 6 Music has declared 'Sonic Youth Slept on My Floor' the "Book of the Year".



## Claire Doherty (Editor)

Claire Doherty is the Director of Arnolfini, Bristol.

Previously, Claire Doherty was the founding Director of Situations. Over the past decade, Situations emerged as one of the UK's most innovative and pioneering public art producers, commissioning and producing temporary and long-term public arts projects, creating public art strategies and visions for city-wide initiatives and leading publishing and research initiatives to improve the conditions for, and skills to produce, new forms of public art worldwide. Claire has developed an international reputation as a leading thinker in new approaches to public art policy and planning, and is dedicated to engaging those for whom the arts might have seemed irrelevant or inaccessible through transformative art and cultural experiences; advocating for the social value of the arts, and finding ways to catalyse positive change in specific places.

Claire was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Award for outstanding cultural entrepreneurs, 2009, and appointed MBE for Services to the Arts in New Years Honours List 2016.

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## ***Where Strangers Meet***

An international collection of essays on arts in the public realm.

The urbanist Richard Sennett has written that ‘the public realm can simply be defined as a place where strangers meet’. As the number of us living in cities rises, the pressures on the shared spaces of a city will increase; the places in which our future relationships to one another are negotiated. This is particularly resonant for the British Council, an international organisation that brings people together from different cultures, countries and continents through arts, education, science and the English language. Building on its multifocal work in cities, the British Council commissioned a collection of essays to explore different perspectives on how artistic and cultural experiences affect individual and collective participation and action in the public realm.

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