

DEEP PLAY AND
SIMULATION IN
URBAN SPACE:
OF ART AND
VIDEO-GAMES



LYNN
FROGETT

Ilfracombe

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.’¹

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.² 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’,³ 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.’⁴

While much of the literature on the public realm focuses on politics and citizenship, class and social identity,⁵ the so-called ‘performative school’ offers a more cultural approach, derived from anthropology, focusing on ‘how people express themselves to strangers’.⁶ 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.⁷

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.⁸ Conventional public art can also be viewed as exclusionary, foregrounding the interests of elites over ordinary urban dwellers and artist-led gentrification.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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'.¹¹ 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',¹² 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

- ¹ Ice T, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 7th May, 1992 at the time of the Los Angeles riots. Cited in Edward W. Soja (2000) *Postmetropolis, Critical studies of cities and regions*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 374
- ² Richard Sennett (2016) 'The Public Realm', *Quant*, www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb
- ³ British Council (1993) *Royal Charter and Bye-laws*, London: British Council
- ⁴ Richard Sennett, 2016
- ⁵ 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; and Richard Sennett, 'Quant: The Public Realm', 2016, www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb
- ⁶ Richard Sennett, 2016
- ⁷ Crossick, Geoffrey and Kasynska, P, (2016) 'Understanding the value of arts and culture', AHRC Cultural Value project
- ⁸ 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
- ⁹ 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
- ¹⁰ 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
- ¹¹ M. Kwon (2004) *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Massachusetts: MIT Press
- ¹² 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.¹

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.²

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;³

- 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.⁴ 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.”⁵

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’⁶ 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

- ¹ 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
- ² Richard Sennett, ‘Quant: The Public Realm’, available to read and download at www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2
- ³ 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
- ⁴ Gulbenkian Foundation, *Rethinking Relationships*, downloadable from civicleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk
- ⁵ Tania Bruguera, ‘Reflexions on Arte Útil (Useful Art)’, available to read or download at www.taniabruquera.com
- ⁶ 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 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

Deep play and simulation in urban space: of art and video-games

Text by Lynn Froggett

It was fun at first. Pokémon Go was the ideal nostalgia vehicle, reminding millions of millennials of the time they spent wandering through Tall Grass on Game Boys in the corner at family parties. It was simultaneously exciting and amusing, having a shared experience with other people hovering near churches clearly looking for Poké Balls rather than Jesus. During this decade of high body count atrocities and dystopian political figures, the game's immersive world was soothing; a happier headspace. (Christopher Hooton, 2016)

New Knowledge-exchange corridors can be produced, between the specialized knowledge of institutions and the 'ethical' knowledge of 'community' and artists can have a role to facilitate this exchange, occupying the gap between the visible and the invisible. (Teddy Cruz, 2012)

Art, play and games

The ways we play increasingly shape our urban experience, whether or not we knowingly engage in games. If there is a distinction between play and games – which both arise from the same basic ludic impulse – it is that games are rule-bound, whereas play has a more flexible, open and emergent structure. The most compelling instance of the rise of the ludic in social interaction is the popularity of video games which are transforming the ways leisure time is spent for vast numbers of people. At the time of writing the augmented reality game

Pokémon Go, measured by the number of its downloads, appears to be the most successful video game of all time. It was initially released in July 2016; a mere eight days later the data analytics firm SimilarWeb estimated 9.5 million daily users in the US. More women were playing the game than men, confounding the stereotype of the gamer as an under-socialised teenage male. The average player was 25, but older age groups were strongly represented. By 26th July, according to Quora, it had been downloaded 75 million times worldwide. However, more striking than the sheer numbers of people involved are the reasons for the game's appeal, which appear to lie in the fact that it transports the fantasy life of games into the real world, so that the Poké hunt¹ enables a 'gamification' of the familiar urban streets and parks that make up public space. The simulations of the game aim to enhance the real world for its players, and the aesthetic of flow and immersion usurps the experience of the real, becoming – as Baudrillard (1983) recognised – more real than reality itself. The Playable Cities movement², claims in its vision statement that “through interaction and creative installations [the playable city] unlocks a social dialogue, bringing the citizens into a city development conversation”. Nijholt (2016) argues that “game environments and digitally enhanced real worlds, such as digital and playable cities will converge” (p. 235) and sees this as building play and humour into the urban experience. There is clearly an appetite for new forms of mass play in urban space, and we might well ask how these align with, and differ from, socially engaged public art in the urban public realm, whether digital or real.

There are good reasons to believe that people have played as long as they have made art (Huizinga [1949] 2001), but the popularity of games which can be developed for commercial advantage has increased exponentially in the era of late capitalism. Indeed Giuseppe Ortoleva (2012) suggests that while the 20th century was the century of sex, the 21st could be regarded as the century of the game. He refers to emancipatory movements in relation to gender and sexual orientation, the liberalisation of sexual mores and the reform of sexual conduct within the modernisation process of Western

societies throughout the 20th century. This was increasingly accompanied by a media-driven exposure of sex and its repetitive perversions, which have led to the ‘pornografication’ of much the internet. He argues that representations of endlessly simulated sex, shorn of intimacy and emotional risk, have lost the power they once possessed to unsettle and challenge both selves and moral order – as a result they have become increasingly banalised. Instead of sex it is now the ludic that offers a pervasive form for creative cultural expression within and against the ‘rules of the game’. Ortoleva’s thesis is intentionally provocative, suggesting a progressive displacement of sex by the game as the preeminent cultural preoccupation, and that gamification is entwined with the rise of consumerism and the financialisation of capitalism. Here, I take the idea as a prompt to think psychosocially about art and games as distinct cultural phenomena, aside from the jobs they create, the leisure time they consume and the revenue they generate.

Clearly, it would be a mistake to conflate all digital games, or the motivations and satisfactions of gaming. In this increasingly diversified field there has been an exponential growth of ‘Serious Games’ designed, for example, for educational, organisational or military purposes (Dörner et al 2016). The video game has also become an arena that intersects with art, becomes an art object in itself, or provides a medium for artistic development (Clarke and Mitchell 2007, Sharp 2015). It is also a subject of aesthetic theory (Kirkpatrick 2011) and for the elaboration of play theory (Upton 2015). At issue here, however, is the cultural impact of commercial video games which Wharf and Shaw (2009) argue are simultaneously commodities and sites of meaning that “penetrate into the innermost recesses of consciousness” (p.1). Maybe so, but we should still ask how ‘deep’ these recesses go. What is the impact on the public consciousness of repetitive simulation, widespread engagement in flow states, mimetic action scenarios, calibrated optimal frustration, seriality, digitally mediated affect and the ‘Disneyesque’ aesthetic of much game design? How does it affect human interaction in public space?

Play also diffuses into urban environments through the very different medium of socially engaged art – work that is processual, collaborative, performative, implicitly political, where fantasy is not intended to usurp reality, but to enable us to know it better. Theorists of the genre have been preoccupied in recent years with its critical, political and activist, rather than playful, dimensions (for example Bishop (2012), Thompson (2012), Kester (2004) and Jackson (2011)) and these commitments have informed their attempts to show how art can re-imagine civic space and how we live as citizens within it. Bishop's well known critique of the ameliorative content of the socially engaged arts provokes anxieties about their playful aspect when confronting pressing social and political issues. Play can be intrinsic to the critical and reflective operations of art – but not all play, and not in all circumstances. It can also, of course, be distracting. A consideration of the ludic qualities of art in comparison with those of commercial video games will help to clarify how play can be a vector for art, just as it can for digital entertainment, but we might think about the distinction between the two.

Notwithstanding Nijholt's argument that game environments and real world experience increasingly 'bleed' into one another, play theorists have generally agreed that play and games take place in a space *apart* from real life, and this apartness may either distance us from reality or, paradoxically, bring us into a closer, more curious relation with it (Winnicott 1971). It may allow us to bring the whole range of sensory, emotional and intellectual faculties to bear upon the object of our attention and forestall a *premature* rush to critique. One of the key services that art can perform in urban environments, especially in the face of current political retreats from the porous borders and supra-national solidarities of the open society, is to change the conditions under which 'strangers meet' so that we can know each other better and imagine other ways to live together. With the failure of 'politics as usual' and the manic optimism of populism, art as play holds out the promise of retaining a space of creative illusion that can unsettle the taken-for-granted and ground

hopefulness in a relationship to reality that is both compassionate and critical. But it needs to be ‘deep play’ rather than the mimetic play of simulation.

In thinking about ‘deep play’ I am making free with a concept introduced by cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1974) to describe play which in symbolic form enacts unacknowledged aspects of the social order. By doing so it exposes taken-for-granted rituals of everyday lives and social institutions that are not ordinarily subject to reflection or interrogation. Geertz refers, for instance, to manners, status differentials and what passes for an acceptable performance of the self in the public domain. Deep play can expose and reconfigure relations within what we take to be the real and put the ‘what if..’ question to serious use.

Alex Hartley’s *Nowhereisland*, produced by Situations³, offered an example that engaged audiences through several ludic modes and ‘moods’, including deep play that enacted and made available for reflection norms of citizenship. It threw into question the matter of nationhood by creating a space of illusion with which to play with a utopian idea – utopia understood as process and method, rather than outcome (Levitas 2013). It raised the question of how citizenship could be performed and communicated as well as what it might look like.

The centrepiece of the project was the island itself, built from the deposits of a retreating Arctic glacier that was mounted on a raft and towed around the coastal towns of South West England in the summer of 2012, asking citizens to imagine how they would go about building a new nation. It was met by a ‘festival’ of choirs, processions and marching bands, and, in dialogic vein, was also accompanied by a vehicular terrestrial ‘embassy’. The re-imagination of citizenship was fueled by 50 or so resident online thinkers, and a dedicated website that enabled people to register their citizenship and vote on an evolving constitution in real time. A year after the event our research team⁴ ran a group-based process called the Visual Matrix to reflect on the impact that *Nowhereisland* had made on the town



Nowhereisland by Alex Hartley

of Ilfracombe, one of the places it had visited on its journey.⁵ The aim was to understand what traces remained of the visit in the cultural imaginary and memory of the town. We ran the process with adults, recruited by public advertisement, and with young people from the local school. Despite using plenty of photographic reminders of the flamboyant celebrations marking the island's arrival, we discovered that little impression remained of them, or was rekindled. The visually arresting, interactive embassy was remembered better, apparently because of the 'retro' aesthetic that chimed well with the inclination of the adults to look back at the history of the town. However, the thing that continued to do its work in the imaginative life of the population in the months following the island's departure was the creative illusion stimulated by the barren piece of rock, moored fleetingly offshore, its stay truncated by bad weather. A year after its visit the adult group could still project onto the island their dejection over the decline of their town⁶, the empty island symbolising their sense of desolation. The young people, on the other hand, populated it with melting

ice caps, fragile rainforests and vanishing species, and also with their hopes and concerns. They made use of it to consider their responsibilities as global citizens of the future. In either case the island offered an aesthetic object around which ideas and associations gathered, stimulating a collective illusion anchored in real generational experience. Establishing a dynamic between reality and illusion happens in ‘deep play’ – in this case it enacted for the adults what was already there, but had been disavowed, and for the young people what was conceived and in the process of finding form.⁷

In its psychosocial and artistic complexity a project such as *Nowhereisland*, which itself combined a terrestrial and digital presence, far exceeds that of most video games, including those that take place in real and virtual space, and require a community of players. I am not referring to technical complexity here, but to the difference between dancing on the surface of things, surfing the stream, and going with the flow, on the one hand; and on the other encountering something that stops you in your tracks, disorients you, makes you think, frustrates any linear attempts at problem solving, demands creative effort, offers no clearly defined resolution and only comes to fruition with profound emotional and aesthetic engagement. It could of course be argued that it is the dynamic between real places and the illusional Poké hunt that accounts for the success of *Pokémon Go*, creating a gap between imagination and reality that the player has to navigate, and that therein lies its attraction. Maybe so, to date I have not investigated groups of *Pokémon* players using the same depth methodology that we employed with *Nowhereisland*. Nevertheless, I would still make a case that art and video games involve forms of play that arise out of different relations to the world by considering how we interact in digital and real environments.

Affect in Public Space – real and virtual

A research-based vignette (Froggett et al 2014) illustrates a real/digital interaction problem through a project that compared the quality of communication in an online and studio-based civic forum.

We worked with FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) in the city of Liverpool to create an inclusive space in which to address street drinking, a local issue on which stakeholders held widely divergent views. Invited participants included community members, voluntary agencies, businesses, services, street pastors, police, drinkers and other members of the public. We held a live webcast to discuss a way forward, designed so that a studio-based audience could interact with online participants who could join in via a screen feed. This exercise in ‘communicative democracy’ (Young 1996) was intended to include seasoned public speakers, people who wished to remain anonymous, workers, experts, locals and remote callers. The aim was to move away from formulaic consultation dominated by ‘the usual suspects’. Four researchers joined as participant observers, three of them in the studio, and one online.

The forum turned out to be problematic. In the moderated debate of the studio people observed time-honoured rituals of public deliberation, showing courtesy, respect, taking turns and offering structured comments, even when in conflict. Authority was accorded to the chair who held the space providing psychological containment as people became impassioned, controversial, indignant. The online contributions, by contrast, were terse, irreverent, humorous, inventive, but heedless of the affective climate in the room. Our online researcher, normally of sober mind and measured speech, discovered a new persona – or avatar – becoming wittily subversive in the manner of internet chat. The online participants seemed to be performing for their own benefit; the studio audience ignored them. Between real and virtual publics mutual indifference broke out.

We analysed the communication styles, paying careful attention to content, affect and dynamics, and concluded that the critical difference was the presence or absence of containing vertical structure. The implicit rules, and also the authority ceded by common consent to the chair, acted as a form of psychosocial ‘scaffolding’ – a ‘vertical’ support system affording stability to the studio-based audience and containment for conflicts in lateral communication

between peer discussants in the room. Participants were nominally equal, but quickly sorted themselves into a provisional hierarchy based on expertise, experience and role. This seemed to promote good behaviour, but at the price of spontaneity.

The online participants had no such restraints. Our researcher, shielded by anonymity, found himself playing the joker in the liminal space behind the screen. In digital peer to peer, lateral communication there is little to sustain affective self-regulation. Given public anxiety about online malevolence it is important to ask what are the basic conditions for playful communication that is also respectful and thoughtful? Does it depend on the real presence of the 'Other' and the effort and emotional intelligence needed to reach across the gap that separates us, one from another? Or does it depend on an authoritative figure, or an ideal? And is this the essential difference between playing with a utopian idea among fellow citizens of *Nowhereisland*, and playing Pokémon Go in the local park?

Vertical and Lateral relations, social movements and socially engaged art

Digital media have provided the engine and the grounds for new forms of play where peer interactions are relatively unregulated (Facebook has done its level best to avoid a moderating role). They are superficially free of vertical hierarchies and inequalities that constrain 'real' social institutions and communities. The essence of a network is, after all, that it expands laterally providing a (flat) 'platform' for the user rather than (multi-tiered) organisation. Ethical governance is accepted by social media companies only under pressure. In this they are symptomatic of generalised shifts away from vertical institutions. In urban environments we need only think of the contraction of municipal authorities and the diffusion throughout cities of 'flat' organisations created by new business models in the sharing and gig economies. The internet and social media (and of course video games) are affective technologies where communication flows laterally, although this has received little scholarly attention (for an

exception see Karatzogianni (2012)). They make it is easy to be playful, whether advisedly or not. The habits, norms and protocols of conflict moderation that occur in 'real' public space no longer apply on-line. Lateral relations enable spontaneous self-expression, and equally spontaneous innovations in cruelty: trolling, bullying and grooming. The imperatives of respect and recognition that arise in the physical presence and bearing of another are attenuated online and this has implications for 'how strangers meet' in public space.

The laterally impelled and ludic impulse has surfaced episodically in waves of radical politics such as Occupy and a series of allied movements where the aim has been direct, rather than representative democracy, with a mistrust of institutionalised leadership. The cultural politics of protest tends to be playful, inventive and expressive – carnival rather than political party – and also, by their very nature, transitory. They are uplifting to activists, irritating to adversaries, and unable or unwilling to imagine a sustainable organisation of solidarity. The more recent (and successful) populisms have been of the right, with demagogic figures providing the vertical authority that enables the transition from mass movement to power.

A space is left open for artists, producers and local arts organisations working in communities to enable people to look at their everyday lives through play and imagine how things might be different (Froggett et al 2011). This occurs where they embrace a civic mission, embedding themselves in communities degraded by poverty, racism and oppression, where there has been little cultural investment and little opportunity for play of any variety. In *Super Slow Way*,⁸ the East Lancashire Creative People and Places project,⁹ located along a canal with stretches of dereliction and poor monocultural communities, some artists have encountered hostility and abuse, while others have struggled to be taken seriously by local people. Art here is 'for the kids', welcome insofar as it distracts from day-to-day aggravations, possibly better than the bouncy castle or arcade, but essentially a childlike amusement. It takes hard work to generate the trust and latitude to introduce a degree of disruption into the adult order of things.



Exbury Egg by Richard Tymon



Idle Woman

Those who have succeeded, like Stephen Turner with his *Exbury Egg*,¹⁰ have employed deep play to activate curiosity in relation to other people and the environment. Alternatively, Rachel Anderson and Cis O'Boyle's *idle women*¹¹, a floating art project on a narrowboat and butty, has held up to the light obscure relations of misrecognition, shame, social suffering and internalised oppression which were grafted onto the post-industrial and inscribed in women's experience. This kind of work is usually only possible (and possibly only ethical) where the artist 'holds' the art space as a containing space. In other words where the apparent democracy and equality of lateral peer relations between participants is sustained by a structure in which authority is vested in a utopian creative illusion (*Nowhereisland*) and guaranteed by the safety and apartness of the setting. It is also, like it or not, held in the person of the artist and the institutional presence of the programme and its partners.

As publics become increasingly aware of the hit-and-run style of not only artists, but other industries of the spectacle... they develop a deep suspicion of those 'helping' them. As with many long-term efforts, the longer the project, the more the artist or artists must behave like organizational structures in order to operate efficiently and combat fatigue and over-extension. (Nato Thompson, *Living as Form*, p. 32)

Affective play and social relations

The question at hand is whether and how the games that people play and the work that artists do in these environments support civic sensibility, which also implies attention to 'the needs of strangers' (Ignatieff 1994). This is a practical and ethical matter but also an *affective* one. 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. *Nowhereisland* did not impel people to think about citizenship by debating it, teaching it or modelling it.

It created the island nation as an object of imaginative and emotional projection, for its citizens to populate with their dreams and disappointments. In the deep play that exposed how things had been, and what might be, the older population of Ilfracombe discovered within and among themselves not only their disappointment at the decline of their town but a way of sharing it with one another. The young people discovered a sense of attachment to community and a hope that they could do better.

This is a form of exploratory play that Donald Winnicott (1971) regarded as a process of bringing the world alive by discovering for oneself what is there to be found. It differs from the simulations of digital games which depend for their effects on flow state where there is a loss of self-consciousness and a gratifying sense of being at one with the object. In play, as Winnicott conceived it, exploration is stimulated by the non-identity of self and object and therefore the need to reach across a gap to find the other, who is always in some measure elusive. There is a willing disorientation or destabilisation of self in the process. For Winnicott the child may be momentarily lost in play, but most of the time this play is a process of negotiating the strain of reconciling what appear to be inner and outer realities, in order to discover the world anew. It is a process awash with affective cross-currents of love, aggression, creativity, destructiveness and care. Play is getting to know and knowing is emotional work.

Vertigo and Simulation

In *Man, Play and Games* (1958), French sociologist Roger Caillois connected different modes of play with both the psychological needs of individuals and with cultural dispositions. He identified four basic forms of play and games which can occur separately or in combination: competition (*agon*) chance (*alea*), simulation (*mimesis*) and vertigo (*illinx*). Competition and chance are self-explanatory and normally thought of as games that are adapted for adult life. Both forms are now subject to intensive commercialisation, as in the

fabulous sums of money invested in professional sport, and in online gambling. They are both socially and economically significant in contemporary Western societies, but they are not a primary concern here. In thinking about video games and socially engaged art, it is simulation and vertigo that are of interest. These, according to Caillois, are normally the preserve of childhood with marginal significance for adults. However, he was writing in the mid-20th century. With the computer or video game, simulation has become a pervasive form of entertainment. The deep play of art, however, continues to depend on the disruptive power of vertigo to fulfil its critical and utopian promise. I re-read Caillois from a psychosocial perspective, drawing out implications that were never fully developed in the original text.

For Caillois games of vertigo involve testing one's balance and bearing, by wilfully pursuing a sudden disorientation in temporarily controlled circumstances, out of which one re-emerges transformed:

Essential is the pursuit of this special disorder or sudden panic... The freedom to accept or refuse the experience, strict or fixed limits and separation from the rest of reality (Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, p.26)

He had in mind not only sports, such as skiing and horse riding, but the ecstatic loss of consciousness in trance states induced by shamanic practices. However, he never fully explored the psychological drivers of this intentional loss of equilibrium, and what it might signify in terms of human consciousness. Contemporary writers on games seem not to know what to make of *illinx*. Upton (2015) takes it literally as pure physical sensation (the roller coaster, the bungee jump). However, games of vertigo surely start with the small child's attempts to stand and remain upright, letting go of the parental hand. Psychically speaking the release of the hand creates a gap and a moment of individuation, a loosening of the symbolic verticality of parental power at the risk of falling, impelling a search for a new self-sustaining equilibrium. This is a form of play psychologically

re-enacted throughout life, in which one loses and finds oneself, immerses and separates. Other sporting forms are climbing, diving and kayaking.

If we extend Caillois' ideas to modes of creative thinking we could say that vertiginous play is a precursor to those forms of intellectual activity that demand depth, where we dig beneath the surface, render visible the unseen and unearth the obscure. Vertiginous play demands not only a tolerance of uncertainty, but an active embracing of it, as we travel imaginatively into unknown territories. Games of vertigo explore the possibilities and limits of verticality in order to measure oneself against a more powerful authority and value: parent; sea, sky or mountain; truth, justice and morality; or an ideal of citizenship. The vertiginous game, psychosocially speaking, involves an abandoning of a previously taken-for-granted order in favour of exploration and discovery, a wilful de-centering of the self that dents one's narcissism. Much socially engaged art invites a letting go of the familiar, reaching across gaps in perception or understanding. It momentarily suspends the order of things and creates the conditions for a disorientating lurch into the unknown. Nowhereisland invited just such an imaginative leap in reinventing an idea of citizenship and the concept of nationhood.

In the studio at the FACT webcast, a vertiginous disorientation arose when the incipient moralism of teetotallers, street pastors, bureaucrats and businessmen confronted 'real' drinkers. The debating game dissipated as participants were obliged to reach across a gap in understanding. The containment that made this discomfort tolerable came in the person of the moderator who supported the effort required of participants to relinquish their own certainties and see things from the position of the other; communication was thoughtful, impassioned and sometimes halting. Meanwhile online, it was detached, ironic, stylised and self-referential, addressed to no-one in particular. Our online researcher, seduced by the disembodied lateral connectivity of the web was surfing, free of anchors the real, in a stream of unpunctuated consciousness.

Games of simulation are quintessentially mimetic and performative. Rather than the disorienting exploration of deep play they involve a fascination with surfaces, seriality, repetition, testing oneself against the lateral rather than the vertical relation. They are about imaginary scenarios – the dressing-up games of children, which find expression in adult life in the fairground and the carnival. The latter is increasingly prominent in urban re-appropriations of Mardi Gras that involve a cultural queering of distinctions and a celebration of alternative sexualities. In the pure simulation we are all as one, dancing on the same street, or on the same float, even as we seek singularity. Distinction is dependent on self-expression, and the aim is to stand out among the many with style and flourish. In the carnival there is no purpose, subjectivity, narrative or history – we are swept along in the joyous seriality of moment-by-moment existence – and the art is in the creation of a liminal space for controlled and culturally sanctioned irresponsibility.

Mimicry is incessant invention – the rule of the game is unique. It consists in the Actor fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell. The spectator must lend himself to an illusion without first challenging the décor, mask or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself. (Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, p.23)

Here then is the ‘real’ analogue to the coveted flow state of the video game with its repetitions, calibrated challenges, gratifications and necessary pointlessness. Just as with porn (sex minus the risk of getting out of one’s depth) its hyper-excitement is soon banalised. Simulation games have a time-limited allure – carnivals are fabulous and fantastical but if they last too long they become tawdry and repetitive.

For me, the addict, it feels like the crystallisation of a hollowness that’s only becoming more prevalent in all forms of gaming, be it leaderboards yo-yoing to infinity on online racing games or multiplayer shoot-em-ups’ ‘I die, then you die, then I die, then you die’ ad infinitum premise. (Christopher Hooton 2016)¹²

This distinction between the play forms in art and video games is not intended to be normative, though it may seem that I have argued myself into this corner. After all, the idea of depth is incoherent without surface. It would be an over-simplification to suggest that complex works like *Nowhereisland* are simply one or the other. The deep engagements that were revealed in the visual matrices would never have occurred if the island had not first brought people together in a carnival of collective celebration. The levelling and bonding effect of pure enjoyment established the ambiguous island as an evocative object (Bollas 2009). Celebrating its arrival was the emotional ground of the expressed desire for sustainable community, often associated with older people, but here embraced by the young.

However we still need to consider the implications of these contrasting aesthetics of interaction in civic space: on the one hand the laterality, simulation, flow, seamless surfaces, hyper-excitement, peer-to-peer display, competitiveness and performativity of the video game; on the other, the verticality of seeking beneath the surface, or reaching across a gap, that is demanded in deep play and expressed in forms of socially engaged arts practice where an encounter with otherness destabilises the self, and because it is understood to be play of a sort, the disorientation is willingly embraced. *Mimesis* and *illinx* can and do coexist and enrich one another – both are indispensable to the development of full human capacity and a rich civic culture – if there is a problem it is when the mass diffusion of simulation (and dissimulation) displaces deep play which, in its surrender of narcissism, seeks out the truth of the Other.

In a ‘post-truth’ world 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. This implies an ability to question the appearances of things, especially the taken-for-granted and settled forms of life that pass for everyday experience and common sense.

It involves a positioning of oneself in relation to others, who are neither intimates nor acquaintances, in such a way that one accepts a degree of responsibility for their welfare. The idea of ‘cultural citizenship’ invokes the role of the arts and media in helping us to collectively imagine how the world can be differently interconnected, interpreted, communicated and represented – in perilous times it is about the basis for hope. Socially engaged art offers an exploratory route to this end when it is characterised by deep play, which in the fullness of its illusions brings us to a closer and more generative grasp of reality.

Footnotes

- ¹ *The game is downloaded onto mobile phones to provide a map of the player’s movements in the real world. The object is to find and catch fictional creatures – Pokémon – as they appear on the screen by slinging Poké balls at them (also found on screen).*
- ² www.playablecity.com/vision/
- ³ www.situations.org.uk/
- ⁴ *The Psychosocial Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire, including Lynn Froggett, Julian Manley and Alastair Roy*
- ⁵ *The Visual Matrix was developed together with Michael Prior and Clare Doherty from Situations specifically to fill a gap in the repertoire of methods available to research the affective and aesthetic, as well as the cognitive impact of public art. It is led by imagery and association and enables people without access to expert art critical discourse to express their affective and imaginative responses to a work in a group setting, see Froggett et al 2014, Froggett et al 2015 for detailed methodological account, related to Nowhereisland.*
- ⁶ *Ilfracombe has shared the fate of many English seaside towns that experienced precipitous decline in tourism since the introduction of cheap package holidays abroad from the 1960’s onwards. It was cut off from the national rail network by ‘the Beeching Axe’ in 1963.*
- ⁷ *Philosopher of art and music Suzanne Langer, describes the process of artistic symbolization as finding form for feeling (Langer 1948)*
- ⁸ superslowway.org.uk/
- ⁹ *Creative People and Places is a programme in which 21 area-based projects have been funded by Arts Council England to deliver art in areas of low cultural engagement. Super Slow Way is one such project, located in Pennine Lancashire along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.*
- ¹⁰ *Stephen Turner’s Exbury Egg is a temporary, energy efficient, self-sustaining work space that arrived on the canal bank at Finsley Gate Wharf, Burnley, Lancashire in 2016 and stayed for six months, opening up the wharf as a site of environmental and social exploration for the neighbourhood superslowway.org.uk/projects/the-egg/*
- ¹¹ superslowway.org.uk/projects/idle-women/
- ¹² *Rebecca Cannon (2007 p.38) asks “can one ever tire of killing and dying” and hence “the addictive fervour of gameplay”.*

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Lynn Froggett

Lynn is Professor of Psychosocial Research UCLAN, and Co-Director of the newly established transdisciplinary Lancashire Research Institute for Citizenship, Society and Change. She has a with cross-disciplinary background in Social Sciences and Humanities and a professional background in social work.

Lynn is a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Stavanger and Roskilde and Executive Chair of the Association for Psychosocial Studies. Her work has developed through ethnographic, biographical narrative, hermeneutic and visual methodologies in settings as diverse as, mental health, hospitals, primary care, education, welfare, urban regeneration.

Currently much of her research focusses on the socially engaged arts, mental health and well-being, citizenship and civil society.



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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