Animation of Public Space through the Arts

Toward More Sustainable Communities
ANIMATION OF PUBLIC SPACE THROUGH THE ARTS
TOWARD MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION: FROM ‘ART IN THE STREET’ TO BUILDING MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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How can innovative artistic animation of public spaces contribute to building more sustainable cities? This was the question originally posed to participants in the international symposium, “Animation of Public Space through the Arts: Innovation and Sustainability,” organized by the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, in Coimbra, Portugal, September 27-30, 2011. The international symposium was inspired by the growing need of communities to deal with complex issues intertwining multiple dimensions of environmental, cultural, social and economic sustainability and resiliency. In our cities, both large and small, numerous processes of change and adaptation are underway. These processes must be underlined by wide public participation in the development of new alternatives and new social institutions to manage processes of social life. Artistic practices, interventions in shared public space, and public engagement strategies can play significant roles in both illuminating and affecting positive cultural changes and can help to catalyze public participation to the urgent task of transforming our cities and communities into more sustainable places.

The setting of the event in Coimbra was significant. The animation of public space in Coimbra through artistic interventions and activities has a long history, linked both to its lively student body and its vibrant artistic scenes. Of particular note, Coimbra’s ‘Semana da Arte na Rua’ (‘Week of Art in the Street’) held from May 30 to June 10, 1976, in the early post-revolution years, brought a ‘critical mass’ of multiple artistic interventions in the public spaces of the city (Figure 1). The event celebrated freedom and art as a way of assembling people. Praça da República became a big maze where visual artists could hang their paintings, and artisans could hang tapestries and other artefacts, forming a kind of communion between art and popular culture. Organized by artists of the Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, the site’s animation involved the participation of contemporary artists and traditional artisans, amateur theatre-makers and musicians and avant-garde musicians (see Figures 2 and 3). It was
also then that GICAP (Group of Intervention of Círculo de Artes Plásticas) was formed, a performance art group that dealt with the relationships between the collective and the individual. For example, during the ‘Week of Art in the Streets’ the artists of this group made clothes that were ‘wearable paintings’, bringing closer the artist, the body of the artist, and his/her creations (Figure 4). The symposium celebrated these actions, and added a new spin, focusing on contemporary issues of societal change within the context of local sustainability.
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Figure 2. Praça da República, Semana da Arte na Rua, Coimbra, 1976. Photo © CAPC.

Figure 3. Praça da República, Semana da Arte na Rua, Coimbra, 1976. Photo © CAPC.
The symposium promoted interdisciplinary knowledge exchanges and highlighted practice-led research related to sustainable city-building and the animation of public space. It involved architects, theatre-makers, community-engaged artists, urban developers, researchers in many disciplines, and university teachers and students. Geographically, the event brought together presenters from Europe (Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom), North America (Canada and the United States), South America (Brazil), and the Pacific (Australia and New Zealand). Participants shared a common interest: to explore the multifaceted and increasingly vital connections among place, space, community, arts, animation, public engagement, and sustainability.

To further encourage practice-based knowledge exchange and interaction, the symposium was accompanied by two full-day workshops on theatre interventions in public space and cultural mapping, and a five-day student theatre workshop/exchange. In these workshops, artists, architects, teachers,
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Researchers, and students worked together to share expertise and pursue experimental actions in various public spaces around Coimbra.

The overall series of events was organized by the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra and realized through a number of international collaborations and local partnerships. The Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance at Thompson Rivers University, Canada, co-organized the Cultural Mapping Workshop, ‘Exploring Connections among Place, Creativity and Culture’. The Utrecht School for the Arts, The Netherlands, and O Teatrão, Coimbra, co-organized the Theatre Workshop ‘Animation of Public Spaces through Innovative Artistic Practices’. The Students’ Theatre Workshop/Exchange, ‘Animation of Public Space: Artistic Intervention Experiments to Encourage Audiences to Co-Own Public Space in a Sustainable Way’, was co-organized by the Utrecht School for the Arts, O Teatrão, and Stut Theatre (Utrecht). The European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC) thematic area on ‘Urban Management and Cultural Policy of the City’ and the University of Coimbra’s ‘Cities and Urban Cultures’ MA and PhD programs and Department of Architecture also contributed to the development of the event.

We greatly appreciate and acknowledge the financial support received from the Portugal Foundation of Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – FCT) and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Portugal for the event. In addition, venues were generously provided by Mosteiro de Santa-Clara-a-Velha de Coimbra (Direcção Regional de Cultura do Centro), Museu da Água Coimbra (Águas de Coimbra), and Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC). The production of this book was possible through support from the Portugal Foundation of Science and Technology as well as Textual Studies in Canada and the Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance, both based at Thompson Rivers University, Canada.

Following the symposium, papers were reviewed by an editorial review committee consisting of Nelly van der Geest, Utrecht School for the Arts, The Netherlands; and W.F. Garrett-Petts and James Hoffman, Thompson Rivers University, Canada. Selected papers were consequently revised for publication. Thank you to the members of the editorial review committee for your advice and guidance, and to all the authors for the knowledge, insights, and inspiration you contribute to this collection.

In this volume, sustainability is defined holistically, keeping in mind the interconnected dimensions of environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality (Hawkes, 2001), and stressing the necessary
integration of these domains into a holistic approach toward local development. As Choe, Marcotullio, and Piracha (2007) express it, “Culture in sustainable development is ultimately about the need to advance development in ways that allow human groups to live together better, without losing their identity and sense of community, and without betraying their heritage, while improving the quality of life” (p. 202). Also critical is the local capacity for resilience, described by Allegretti, Barca, and Fernandes (this volume) as “a capacity to adapt to transformations of external conditions in the urban panorama.”

Incorporating artistic approaches and cultural considerations into our thinking and planning for greater local sustainability and resiliency is an emerging practice characterized by numerous experiments and the gradual rise of trans-local knowledge-sharing and co-learning networks.

Issues of sustainability and resiliency are at the forefront of public agendas internationally – from cities and communities to global policy fora. Although precise conceptualizations of the ‘sustainable city’ are “rare and contested” (Williams, 2010: 129), it has become the dominant planning and policy paradigm in which the place of culture is being discussed and assessed. The fourth pillar of sustainability – culture – has gradually become more recognized in policy and planning (see, for instance, UCLG, 2010; UNESCO’s Hangzhou Declaration, 2013), but understanding its role in a sustainability context remains challenging both conceptually and in practice (see Duxbury, Cullen, and Pascual, 2012; Duxbury and Jeannotte, 2012). Further evidence is needed on how artistic practices contribute to the societal transitions required to build more holistically sustainable and resilient communities. In this pursuit, the direct experiences and insights from artists and others working with artistic processes in the public realm and with various publics on issues of socio-cultural and community change, (re)attachment to place and environment, and re-envisioning and understanding anew one’s surroundings and circumstances are invaluable. By bringing together a diversity of voices collectively innovating art-based approaches, strategies, and perspectives to addressing these issues, this book aims to contribute to this growing public discourse and its related practices.

Four cross-cutting themes flow through the papers: (1) the use and animation of the public realm for (2) public engagement and participation in (3) encouraging change or transition, with a central focus on (4) the role of artists and art practices in this activity and change. The papers are organized into three sections: Artistic Inquiry: Animating Ecologies, Embodying
Territory; Community Action: Building Spaces to Engage with Nature; and Public Art: Catalyzing Social Connections and Public Action. All papers focus on illuminating interconnections, so organizing them proved to be a challenging task. As readers will notice, there are complementarities and echoes among the papers and across the sections, as is fitting with efforts to link artistic inquiry and action, the use of public spaces, and catalyzing social connections. Each section begins with full essays, followed by a series of shorter profiles of particular projects and approaches, and the insights and reflections resulting from them.

**Artistic inquiry: Animating ecologies, embodying territory**

This section begins with papers on two long-term initiatives from Western Australia and Canada, each examining and engaging with elements of community resiliency, sustainability, and survival. For over 15 years, the Rural Design Studio of Western Australia has explored “the animation of community engagement” through storytelling and performative design in partnership with small agrarian communities. Using “artful processes” to identify and challenge key contemporary issues and valourizing practices of “regenerative chance and indeterminacy,” Ailsa Grieve and Grant Revell explain how the Studio’s activities allow communities to get to know one another, and to develop and seek solutions for social, environmental, and economic survival, sometimes recovered from the past. The Studio works from a perspective of holistic systems and dynamic practices of regenerative thinking to “encourage humans or communities to participate as nature and culture, as opposed to doing things to nature and culture,” through which new aesthetics of cultural sustainability may be developed. The Studio’s work seeks to activate create processes and give life to otherwise culturally suppressed landscapes, rooted in the importance of self-empowerment. In a context of “an unpredictable (slippery) future,” these processes comprise an art at “the edge of a widening consciousness and a deeper understanding of place.”

Within a small city context, artistic inquiry and university-based artists in the Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, have taken lead roles in defining and contributing to community engagement for over 12 years. Reflecting on the evolving roles of artist-researchers in this interdisciplinary research initiative, despite challenges in framing the value of the arts within this context, W.F. Garrett-Petts argues for art as a public sphere in which artist-researchers contribute new critical
perspectives, new forms of inquiry, and new circumstances useful to creatively animate public spaces. For instance, within the context of interdisciplinary research involving visual artists, artistic inquiry helped redefine traditional modes of research, introducing a “creative destabilization of disciplinary assumptions” in the projects, and influenced community and cultural change. Outside of a research context, one might extrapolate that the insights, perspectives, processes, and knowledge that artistic inquiry can bring, and the impacts on challenging and extending ‘ways of thinking and working’, can be valuable in community settings searching for new means to tackle issues and design future trajectories of living together. However, as Garrett-Petts warns, the intervention and involvement of artists may catalyze changes in thinking, but without continuing experimentation and self-reflection, the creative destabilization effect may not result in longer-term changes in behaviour and practice among non-artistic researchers/participants. Garrett-Petts thus argues the need for continued efforts to construct spaces for the emergence of a new type of visual/verbal interface, with the aim of developing these collaborative terrains for inquiry, thinking, and acting.

How can artists encourage users of a public space to ‘co-own’ the space toward greater respect and responsibility for the location and other users, ultimately building greater social integration and sustainability? How can public spaces for interaction and engagement be designed that allow for an optimal balance between the artists’ work and the voice of the users/audience of a public space? The experience of the students’ theatre workshop/exchange held in Coimbra, compared with the work of two artist collectives in the Netherlands, inspired critical reflections on artistic experiments with public engagement, considering different functions of public space, levels of participation, and the balance between the art work and the audience. Nelly van der Geest develops a ‘rolodex’ model that brings these three dimensions together, and maps the experiments in terms of these axes. From a perspective of fostering social sustainability, the article concludes that for interventions in public space where artists and audiences meet to successfully harmonize the voice of the artist with those of the public space users, the project design must include interventions focusing on the level of participation of the audiences: to move from a mode of ‘enjoyment’ to ‘mutual talk and doing’ to ‘co-design’.

Three artistic perspectives on the interconnections among artistic inquiry, place, and public engagement complement these analyses. Through a photo essay of art works created for the exhibition, “Coimbra C,” at Circulo de
Artes Plásticas de Coimbra in 2003, and their original inspirations, António Olaio illustrates how the complex aesthetic experiences of a city like Coimbra can inspire diverse avenues of artistic creation. In turn, artists’ symbolic and abstraction strategies provide new works and images that critique, inform, extend, and potentially transform our ways of understanding the city and its elements.

Donald Lawrence, an artist-researcher within the CURA project in Kamloops, considers the manner in which artistic practice may migrate between the realms of individual and interdisciplinary inquiry. He brings forward the idea of search as a kind of synthesis of research and exploration, a suggestive expansion of the ways in which art expands our awareness of our surroundings. He also highlights the relationship between play and learning; the attribution of a status of ‘play’ to an experience may enable us to bring to the situation our acquired knowledge. For example, in Coimbra a workshop experience using a tent camera obscura to observe one’s surroundings engendered a dimension of play and a fluid manner of learning. The experience provided an opportunity to obtain a fresh look at one’s environment “in an exploratory way that echoes essential aspects of artistic and other creative practices” and, potentially, an expanded understanding of the workings of one’s landscape.

Sara Giddens and Simon Jones reflect on the experiences of performing an ambulant audio performance carried out in the midst of busy public spaces in different cities around the world. Over time, the work increasingly came to focus on how public space articulates local histories with lived memories, and took on the form of a co-design, a dialogue with participants. The paper explores the works’ different manifestations and proposes ways in which the artists’ passing through a city can open potential spaces for reflection on the everyday use of public space. The artists encourage participant ‘auditor-walkers’ to experience both the sensual immediate and the mental reflective, thus embodying the confluence of the practical and the critical in the animation of public space through the arts.

Three brief profiles follow. Charlotte Šunde and Alys Longley discuss an arts-science-education collaboration on water issues in Auckland, New Zealand, in which a series of urban installation/performance works animated elements of the material, technical, social, cultural, spiritual, and economic dimensions of urban waters and waterways. The fluid city project interwove scientific knowledge with artistic methods to evoke, provoke, and prompt new ways of seeing, interpreting, and sensing understandings associated with water. The
project took research out to public spaces, with the aim to allow these public spaces to speak and to create conscious space for thinking and feeling the city differently. Embracing the element of surprise and creating spaces for personal stories to the articulated and shared, animating public spaces through the arts enabled the creation of “new experiences, ideas, and relationships that may potentially evoke emotional responses and recognition” that water is far more than a physical resource or commodity, and lead participants – as ‘water-dependent citizens’ – to engage in a new relationship with their urban waters.

Echoing van der Geest’s points about ‘co-owning’ a public space, Javier Fraga Cadorniga describes how Raons Públiques uses art to catalyze public participation in Barcelona, Spain, “encouraging citizen co-responsibility in the use, management, and design” of the public space in order to contribute to more cohesive and sustainable communities. Intervention strategies focus on collecting residents’ sensitive information about the use and perception of a space and using different tools to “spark debate, encourage dialogue, and start encounters that awaken reflection” (e.g., tea or coffee gatherings for elders to Public Space Trading Cards for children). In such contexts, the arts and art-related processes can play a key role in transforming public space into “an essential element of social cohesion” in society, stimulating chance meetings but also creating new necessary relationships. Further, the processes animated by these various interventions can help communities “to build together their own space and its management, so that they make it theirs and take on both its physical and abstract meanings.” The collective awareness of the public space engenders attitudes to help these environments be sustainable.

Emma Arnold reflects on the internationally proliferating phenomena of textile graffiti as a form of public art from a sustainability perspective, highlighting its ideological and intangible contributions to creating awareness and connection with urban spaces, which is important in fostering environmental awareness and responsibility. Crafted products create a “feminization of space” and may be employed publicly to help create awareness of specific social, environmental, or economic issues. More broadly, the craft and handmade movement counters large-scale industrial modes of production and consumption, reconnecting individuals to more responsible and sustainable forms of consumption, and revolves around ideas of participation, collaboration, connectivity, collectivity, inclusion, and community – a movement that the handmade aesthetic of textile graffiti may publically encourage and popularize.
Community action: Building spaces to engage with nature

Agriculture has been a basic and vital human activity on which much social life has been based. In the light of contemporary society’s largely de-humanized and mechanized process of food production, and a generally weak attachment of urban dwellers to natural processes and food sources, a rapidly growing interest in and engagement with gardens, gardening, and agriculture can be seen proliferating around the world. Giovanni Allegretti, Stefania Barca, and Lúcia Fernandes explore the rise of agricultural gardens in urban areas and the neo-rural transition movement, viewing urban farming as a form of ‘popular art/craft’ through which individuals and collectivities re-connect with nature while also re-inventing social connections at the community level. They point out that while the underlying motivations for these activities vary widely, they are being broadly encouraged by an international urban imaginary involving an array of developments, from ‘urban icons’ of integrated gardens and green walls in new architectural developments, to new parks like New York’s High Line, to farming simulation video games and ‘didactic farms’, to a growing array of mass market products and technological innovations to enable urban inhabitants to “celebrate small rituals of a ‘return to nature’ in their own private or semi-public spaces.” Cultural institutions like museums and information-sharing initiatives strive to expand public knowledge and critical reflection about such practices beyond ‘mere fashion’, while artists, architects, and designers often play catalyzing roles in promoting this recent wave of institutional programs and grassroots practices, reintroducing food production and greenery into urban spaces, and transforming them into community-tended spaces.

Robin Reid, Kendra Besanger, and Bonnie Klohn discuss the creation of a public produce garden in an empty lot in the city centre. Public produce gardens are developed as sites of collaboration and dialogue around local food production and urban spaces, and produce free produce that any member of the public may use. The Kamloops Public Produce Project, as with many urban agricultural projects, draws on members’ knowledge and practices of the past and can be seen as “creative, grassroots responses to less than ideal social, economic, and environmental circumstances.” As a catalyst for change, the project aims to influence local food policy and to widen “acceptable” urban agricultural practices. It incorporates “artistic interjections” to contribute to its allure as an accessible public space and to socially function as a place where communities can tell their stories, build creative capacity, address social agendas, express identity, and participate directly in the development of their own culture(s).
Focusing on individual impact, Annelieke van der Sluijs discusses how, through participative processes, Coimbra residents are empowered to implement sustainable behaviour change in their daily lives, supported by a local “food web and community.” Echoing Lawrence’s emphasis on play as a learning enabler, van der Sluijs notes, “if it is not fun, it is not sustainable.” Solutions need to be practical as well as attractive to be adopted and to touch upon creative impulses in participants, thus enabling personal connection with the aesthetic values of gardens.

Tania Leimbach describes a ‘meanwhile’ project showcasing green walls on the temporary hoardings surrounding a construction site in Sydney, Australia, and promoting the importance of localized food systems, urban agriculture, and systems thinking in the development of sustainable futures. By introducing an unexpected element into the daily routine, the project aimed to contribute to cultural change by stimulating thinking and inspiring action about introducing new ‘green’ possibilities and imaginaries into the urban environment.

Creating spaces for reconnecting with nature, on a local scale and more broadly, is also the imperative behind public art projects such as Walkway in the Loire estuary in France and more large-scale initiatives like the Space for Life complex in Montreal, Canada. Inspired by her experiences assisting in the construction of Walkway, Catalina Trujillo reflects on her connection to the quiet existence and vulnerability of nature surrounded by industrial sites. The construction of an observatory tower and extended walkway was a collective exercise involving local residents and as well as visiting students who were hosted in the village. The tangible process of construction became a collective memory, and the resulting art work enables humans to directly experience the wetlands anew, forming a place to seek harmony and a passage to quiet change.

‘Space for Life’ in Montreal, to be Canada’s largest natural sciences museum complex, aims to bring humankind closer to the natural world. Rooted in the importance of biodiversity to our collective survival and guided by a scientific and artistic approach, Charles Mathieu Brunelle describes how four major science institutions are being brought together to urge visitors to rethink and strengthen their bonds with nature, and to invite them to cultivate a new way of living. Similar to the fluid city project (Šunde and Longley), an array of modes of “informed contact” will teach people through experiences, including immersive, festive, and entertaining ones.
Public art: Catalyzing social connections and public action

Public art initiatives are highly varied – they may encompass visual/sculptural installations, performances and performative actions, or may lie in the design and generation of social exchanges and processes to build capacities and strengthen connections within communities. Art in public space must attract attention and reach an audience within spaces dominated by the “functionalities of everyday life” and the “strict attention economy of the city” (Jespersen). This section examines the impacts of an array of art projects in the public realm from the perspective of artistic strategies of public engagement and assessments of public reception. These explorations and analyses form a valuable critique to the prospective roles of arts activities in encouraging social change toward more sustainable communities.

Line Marie Bruun Jespersen examines the meeting between contemporary art, the public, the urban realm as a context for art experiences, and the viewers. Focusing on the relationship between two art works of Jeppe Hein and their viewers/users, she highlights how elements of playfulness, humour, and direct participation are used to generate social situations where meetings between strangers and cultural exchange can take place. She asks: Can such art contribute to the creation of a diverse, well-functioning public domain? Can art in public space actually connect people? She brings forward key concepts of relational aesthetics and collective reception to investigate this question. In the cases examined, the physical object functions as the mediator for an experience, but different aspects of the same work can relate to different experience types. While not arguing that art should be used to create new public domains, she finds that art can inspire and explore how to create inviting spaces that appeal to a broad variety of audiences. Art works can create meeting places, ‘social interstices’, alternative types of spaces freed from consumer discourse. An unusual experience with a group of strangers can generate communication or at least raised awareness of the other(s) in the city. Art can invite broad audiences to perform socially, together.

Some limitations of invited social performance are explored by James Hoffman, who reflects on the reception of an interventionist artistic performance of community action in a small city. Community groups involved in The REDress Project aimed to ameliorate or eradicate a troubling social situation: 600 missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada over the past decades. While the project as a social endeavour was valuable and necessary, and the goals of effective social change were possible, Hoffman found the project’s
reduced impact was due to the limitations of the artistic genre itself. As an art work intended to foment social change, the development of social exchange was limited, with participants positioned mainly as observers and listeners. Comments during the site tours and panels tended to lean toward feelings of uncertainty and helplessness rather than concrete solutions or plans. Hoffman’s insights comment on the dimensions of staging of public participation and the channelling of public voices into and beyond such works in order to generate ongoing change beyond awareness raising.

With a focus on communities of youth, Claudia Carvalho explores the interconnection of arts and culture, urban public space, and community as a platform to revivify urban space and to re-address citizenship at the community level. Artistic efforts and strategies of civic engagement and leadership in these communities encourage the production of creative citizens. In turn, the appropriation of creative citizenship provides personal and collective avenues for developing and advancing attachments to place, intercultural dialogue, and local development and sustainability. Examining three case studies in Boston, Carvalho identifies three stages in the process of citizenship building at the community level: identifying the main community actors in the local context and the kinds of associations possible; building and reinforcing a community identity in differentiation to others; and creating collective actions involving ethnically and socially diverse communities, which interact to build a shared, place-based community identity. In all phases, artistic activities are tools of outreach to community members, and all community members are understood to be potential agents and active citizens. In these situations, artistic practice was an “indispensable learning tool in promoting self-empowerment” for the development of creative citizens actively engaged in improving their local community and its urban space.

A similar theme resonates within Melinda Spooner’s profile of the Illuminate project in Halifax, Canada, which also aimed to empower youth. It used art programming and mentorship to forge connections among diverse population groups, enhance community vitality, and catalyze ongoing connections and additional projects.

In many places, the development of more socio-culturally sustainable and resilient communities involves addressing and dismantling post-colonial legacies, constructing new stories, and building for the future on renewed foundations. Toward this end, and in the context of artistic objects as transgressive and active dissenters, Paulo Pousada provides an investigation of the contemporary art
works of Ângela Ferreira. Ferreira’s gaze on and critique of built artefacts and public spaces of colonialism have contributed to greater critical awareness and opened up questioning about processes of remembrances, nostalgia, and “given history.” Pousada highlights how the transgressive functions of art to perceive social contradictions and “cultural bashings” (and to expose underlying political and socio-cultural currents that propel these occurrences and trajectories), make it a prime instrument to expose and fight the naturalization of injustice and to disclose and deplore the “unspoken prejudices and fears embodied in everyday protocols of human and community relations” – all essential processes in examining, rethinking, and reimagining our societies.

Alix Pierre and Simone Pierre’s profile paper highlights the importance of community-engaged artistic processes and community celebration in the large-scale public commemoration activities of the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in Guadeloupe. Within this context, the Civic Edupreneurship and the City program centred on creative ways the city could engage its constituents – especially the youth – in “(re)claiming their historical past to better negotiate the present.” In joining the commemorative effort, students left their schools and “laid claim to the city landscape.” More importantly, the project aimed to provide young Guadeloupeans an opportunity “to critically envision themselves in their relation to the world.”

In Stories from HOME, an art-research intervention in a social housing estate near Melbourne, Australia, artist-researchers Marnie Badham and James Oliver developed a situated arts-based and ethnographic methodological approach to participatory and generative research with vulnerable communities. Aiming to challenge representations of place-based stigma through a community-based art practice, the artist-researchers employed a participatory/advocacy approach in which artistic inquiry was intertwined with an agenda to increase the social and political self-empowerment of that community. Focused on “the relational qualities of process-driven practice,” the project generated dialogue through the process of participatory art-making, created a platform for coming together and creating bonds, facilitated dialogue among diverse residents, and reanimated their shared space.

As Francesa Rayner relates, the Maria Matos theatre company in Lisbon promoted two initiatives that transformed public space and created venues for social interaction, anchored around themes of particular social tension – respectively, (non)abundance and the impact of austerity measures in Portugal. In these initiatives, audiences were treated as empowered and active
social agents. Transforming audiences into participants, Rayner contends, is a vital part of “extending cultural citizenship.” Further, she argues that forms of “non-directed social encounter outside conventional theatre routines” based on experiment and informal discussion can promote more socially aware, integrated local sustainability in which artistic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainability are raised simultaneously rather than separately.

Similar non-directed social encounter was a key element of Petra Johnson’s kioskxiaomaibu site-specific art project, which involved setting up kiosks in Cologne, Germany, and Shanghai, China, and linking them via Skype, with kiosk proprietors and customers invited to make use of the platform as they wished. The kiosks were conceived as venues for artistic explorations, and as platforms for unmediated connectivity. Over a six-month period, the practice emerging from the experience was one of setting a stage and then, in a subtle and disciplined manner, retreating, allowing a multitude of people to exchange perspectives, questions, and details of their daily lives.

From the perspective of ‘finding hospitality’ for critical ideas in a relevant part of the public domain, the notions of collaboration and exchange become central. In When Guests Become Host, a public art research project investigating artistic strategies, artist-curator Danielle van Zuijlen invited two artist collectives (from Austria and the United Kingdom) and an architecture collective (from Latin America) to develop new work in the public domain of the city of Porto. The strategies greatly diverged, depending on the aim of the intervention, from a formal and political strategy; to a largely informal strategy to mobilize the memory, imagination, and commitment of local people; to an almost activist approach. Each approach cultivated relevant collaborative arrangements with local residents and organizations, ‘found hospitality’, and produced hospitable gestures in return.

Finally, focusing on the legacies of ephemeral experiences that live on in spectator memories, Jochem Naafs describes how community-based Stut Theatre, based in Utrecht, The Netherlands, aims to (re)create and sustain a ‘community of spectators’. Through creating imaginative, socially engaged experiences rooted in the stories of specific communities, it has developed an ever-growing array of communities with which it has worked, whose members come to subsequent shows in other areas. Through its work, the company aims to foster dialogue that begins in the theatre and continues after the live show, to stimulate an “active remembering” and a sustainable public discourse based on the experience.
Altogether, the collection provides a rich array of practice-based insights and knowledge based on artistic interventions to engage publics as active collaborators; to animate public spaces to foster encounter, dialogue, and social cohesion; and to build individual and collective capacities and renewed foundations from which to build forward. From the perspective of developing more culturally, socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable and resilient communities and cities, arts practices can play key roles in a number of dimensions: arts-based activities and interventions can activate public engagement, catalyze social relations, and evolve new ways of working and living; they can physically and symbolically change the spaces in which we live and relate, and foster greater connections with our natural and built environments; and they can provide new ways of perceiving and inquiring about the world, provoking and fostering changes in thinking, acting, and living together.

Acknowledgements
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References
INTRODUÇÃO: DA “ARTE NA RUA” À CONSTRUÇÃO DE COMUNIDADES MAIS SUSTENTÁVEIS

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Como pode a animação artística inovadora de espaços públicos contribuir para a construção de cidades mais sustentáveis? Esta foi a questão originalmente colocada aos participantes do simpósio internacional “Animação do Espaço Público pelas Artes: Inovação e Sustentabilidade”, organizado pelo Centro de Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra, em Coimbra, Portugal, entre 27 e 30 de Setembro de 2011. O simpósio internacional foi inspirado pela necessidade cada vez maior de as comunidades lidarem com questões complexas ligadas às múltiplas dimensões da sustentabilidade e resiliência ambiental, cultural, social e econômica. Nas nossas cidades, de maior ou menor dimensão, estão a ocorrer numerosos processos de mudança e adaptação. Estes processos devem ser reforçados por uma vasta participação pública no desenvolvimento de novas alternativas e de novas instituições sociais para gerirem os processos da vida social. As práticas artísticas, as intervenções em espaços públicos comuns e as estratégias de envolvimento do público podem desempenhar um papel importante na compreensão e efetivação de mudanças culturais positivas e podem ajudar a estimular a participação pública na tarefa urgente de transformar as nossas cidades e comunidades em lugares mais sustentáveis.

A escolha de Coimbra para palco do simpósio foi significativa. Em Coimbra, a animação do espaço público por meio de intervenções e atividades artísticas tem uma história longa, que está ligada ao seu agitado universo estudantil e aos seus vibrantes eventos artísticos. É de realçar aqui a “Semana da Arte na Rua” de Coimbra, realizada de 30 de maio a 10 de junho de 1976, nos primeiros anos logo após a revolução, que atraiu uma “massa crítica” de múltiplas intervenções artísticas nos espaços públicos da cidade (Figura 1). O evento celebrava a liberdade e a arte como forma de reunião das pessoas. A Praça da República transformou-se num grande labirinto, onde os artistas visuais podiam expor as suas pinturas e os artesãos penduravam tapeçarias e outros artefactos, formando uma espécie de comunhão entre a arte e a cultura popular. Organizada por artistas do Círculo
de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, a animação do local envolveu a participação de artistas contemporâneos e artesãos tradicionais, grupos de teatro e de músicos amadores e músicos vanguardistas (ver Figuras 2 e 3). Foi também nessa altura que se formou o GICAP (Grupo de Intervenção do Círculo de Artes Plásticas), um grupo de arte performativa que abordava as relações entre a coletividade e o indivíduo. Por exemplo, durante a “Semana da Arte na Rua”, os artistas deste grupo criaram roupas que eram “pinturas que se vestiam”, aproximando assim o artista, o seu corpo e as suas criações (Figura 4). O simpósio celebrou estas ações e acrescentou uma nova dimensão, que se concentrava nas questões contemporâneas de mudança social no contexto da sustentabilidade local.

INTRODUÇÃO: DA “ARTE NA RUA” À CONSTRUÇÃO DE COMUNIDADES MAIS SUSTENTÁVEIS


O simpósio promovia a troca de conhecimentos interdisciplinares e realçava a investigação prática relacionada com a construção de cidades sustentáveis e com a animação do espaço público. Envolveu arquitetos, grupos de teatro, artistas interessados na comunidade, planeadores urbanos, investigadores de várias disciplinas, professores universitários e estudantes. Geograficamente, o evento reuniu participantes da Europa (Bulgária, Dinamarca, França, Alemanha, Itália, Holanda, Portugal, Espanha, Suíça e Reino Unido), da América do Norte (Canadá e Estados Unidos), da América do Sul (Brasil) e do Pacífico (Austrália e Nova Zelândia). Todos partilhavam um interesse comum: explorar as relações multifacetadas e cada vez mais vitais entre o lugar, o espaço, a comunidade, as artes, a animação, o envolvimento público e a sustentabilidade.

Para encorajar a troca de conhecimentos práticos e a interação, o simpósio incluiu workshops, com a duração de dois dias, sobre intervenções teatrais em espaços públicos e o levantamento cultural, bem como um workshop de cinco dias de teatro estudantil. Nestes workshops, artistas, arquitetos, investigadores
e estudantes trabalharam juntos na partilha de conhecimentos e na realização de ações experimentais em vários espaços públicos de Coimbra.


Agradecemos o apoio financeiro recebido da Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – FCT, de Portugal, e da Embaixada da Holanda em Portugal para a realização do evento. Os locais dos eventos foram generosamente disponibilizados pelo Mosteiro de Santa-Clara-a-Velha de Coimbra (Direção Regional de Cultura do Centro), Museu da Água em Coimbra (Águas de Coimbra) e Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC). A produção deste livro foi possível graças ao apoio da Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia e também Textual Studies in Canada e a Small Cities Community–University Research Alliance, que estão localizados em Thompson Rivers University, no Canadá.

Após o simpósio, os ensaios foram analisados por uma comissão de revisão editorial formada por Belly van der Geest, da Escola de Artes de Utrecht, Holanda, e por W.F. Garrett-Petts e James Hoffman, da Thompson Rivers University, no Canadá. Os ensaios selecionados foram depois revistos para serem publicados. O nosso agradecimento à comissão editorial pelos conselhos e orientação, e a todos os autores pelos conhecimentos, ideias e inspiração com que contribuíram para esta coleção.

Neste livro, a sustentabilidade é definida de forma holística, tendo em mente as dimensões interligadas da responsabilidade ambiental, saúde econômica, justiça social e vitalidade cultural (Hawkes, 2001), e realçando a integração necessária
destes domínios numa abordagem holística ao desenvolvimento local. Como afirmam Choe, Marcotullio e Piracha (2007), “a cultura no desenvolvimento sustentável tem que ver principalmente com a necessidade de promover o desenvolvimento de maneira a que permita que os grupos humanos vivam melhor juntos, sem perderem a identidade e o sentido de comunidade, e sem traírem as suas heranças, melhorando ao mesmo tempo a qualidade de vida” (p. 202). Igualmente decisiva é capacidade local de resiliência, descrita por Allegretti, Barca e Fernandes (neste livro) como “uma capacidade de adaptação às transformações das condições externas na paisagem urbana”. A incorporação de abordagens artísticas e de considerações culturais no nosso pensamento e planeamento para uma maior sustentabilidade e resiliência locais constitui uma prática emergente, caracterizada por numerosas experiências e pelo aparecimento de cada vez mais redes translocais de partilha de conhecimentos e de coaprendizagem.

As questões da sustentabilidade e da resiliência estão, internacionalmente, no topo das agendas – desde as cidades e das comunidades até aos fóruns de política global. Ainda que as conceptualizações rigorosas da “cidade sustentável” sejam “raras e contestadas” (Williams, 2001: 129), este tema tornou-se o paradigma dominante sobre o planeamento e a política, em que o lugar da cultura é discutido e estudado. O quarto pilar da sustentabilidade – a cultura – é cada vez mais reconhecido na política e no planeamento (ver, por exemplo, UCLG, 2010; Declaração de Hangzhou, da UNESCO, 2013); contudo, a compreensão do seu papel num contexto de sustentabilidade continua a ser difícil tanto em termos teóricos como em termos práticos (ver Duxbury, Cullen e Pascual, 2012; Duxbury e Jeannotte, 2012). São necessárias mais provas de como as práticas artísticas contribuem para as mudanças sociais requeridas para a construção de comunidades mais holisticamente sustentáveis e resilientes. Neste sentido, são extremamente valiosas as experiências e ideias dos artistas e de outras pessoas que trabalham com processos artísticos no espaço público e com vários públicos nas questões ligadas à mudança sociocultural e à comunidade, ao (re)encontro com o espaço e o ambiente, e a uma nova visão e compreensão daquilo que nos rodeia e das nossas circunstâncias. Ao reunir uma diversidade de vozes coletivamente inovadoras, de abordagens baseadas na arte, de estratégias e perspetivas sobre estes assuntos, este livro pretende contribuir para um discurso que se torna cada vez mais público e para as suas práticas relacionadas.

Quatro temas transversais emergem nestes ensaios: (1) a utilização e a animação do espaço público para (2) o envolvimento e a participação do público na (3) promoção da mudança ou da transição, com um foco central no (4) papel
dos artistas e das práticas artísticas nesta atividade e mudança. Os ensaios estão organizados em três secções: Investigação Artística: Animar Ecologias, Incorporar o Território; Ação Comunitária: Construir Espaços de Envolvimento com a Natureza; e Arte Pública: Promover as Ligações Sociais e a Ação Pública. Todos os ensaios concentram-se na elucidação de interligações; por isso, a sua organização revelou-se uma tarefa difícil. Como o leitor deverá reparar, existem complementaridades e ecos entre os ensaios e ao longo das secções, uma vez que apresentam esforços para ligar a investigação e a ação artística, a utilização de espaços públicos e a promoção de ligações sociais. Cada secção começa com os ensaios completos, seguidos de uma série de descrições breves de projetos e abordagens particulares, e das ideias e reflexões que deles resultam.

**Investigação artística: Animar ecologias, incorporar o território**

Esta secção começa com ensaios sobre duas iniciativas de longo prazo da Austrália Ocidental e do Canadá: ambas examinam e tratam de elementos de resiliência, sustentabilidade e sobrevivência comunitária. Durante mais de 15 anos, o Rural Design Studio, da Austrália Ocidental, explorou “a animação do envolvimento comunitário” através da narração de histórias e da criação performativa, em parceria com pequenas comunidades agrárias. Recorrendo a “processos engenhosos” para identificar e desafiar questões contemporâneas fundamentais e valorizar práticas de “possibilidade regenerativa e de indeterminação”, Aisla Grieve e Grant Revell explicam como as atividades do Studio permitem que as comunidades se conheçam umas às outras e desenvolvam e procurem soluções para a sobrevivência social, ambiental e econômica, por vezes recuperadas do passado. O Studio trabalha a partir de uma perspetiva de sistemas holísticos e de práticas dinâmicas de pensamento regenerativo para “encorajar as pessoas ou as comunidades a participarem como natureza e cultura, em oposição a fazerem coisas à natureza e à cultura”, através dos quais se podem desenvolver novas estéticas de sustentabilidade cultural. O trabalho do Studio procura ativar processos de criação e dar vida a paisagens que, de outro modo, estariam culturalmente mortas, tendo por base a importância da autocapacitação. No contexto de um “futuro imprevisível (incerto)”, estes processos incluem uma arte no “limite de uma consciencialização mais lata e de uma compreensão mais profunda do espaço”.

No contexto de uma pequena cidade, a investigação artística e os artistas universitários da Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance, em Kamloops, Colúmbia Britânica, Canadá, desempenharam papéis importantes...
A ANIMATION OF PUBLIC SPACE THROUGH THE ARTS

para definir e contribuir para o envolvimento da comunidade durante 12 anos. Ao refletir nos papéis evolutivos dos investigadores-artistas nesta iniciativa de pesquisa interdisciplinar, apesar das dificuldades de enquadrar o valor das artes neste contexto, W.F. Garrett-Petts fala da arte como uma esfera pública na qual os investigadores-artistas contribuem com novas perspetivas críticas, novas formas de estudo e novas circunstâncias para animarem criativamente os espaços públicos. Por exemplo, no contexto da pesquisa interdisciplinar que envolve artistas visuais, a investigação artística ajudou a redefinir os modos tradicionais de pesquisa, introduzindo uma “destabilização criativa de pressupostos disciplinares” nos projetos, e influenciou a comunidade e a mudança cultural. Fora de um contexto de investigação, podemos extrapolar que as ideias, perspetivas, processos e conhecimentos obtidos pela pesquisa, e os impactos no desafio e na extensão das “maneiras de pensar e trabalhar”, podem ter validade em contextos comunitários que procurem novas formas de abordar os problemas e conceber trajetórias futuras de vida em conjunto. No entanto, como adveste Garrett-Petts, a intervenção e o envolvimento de artistas podem estimular mudanças no pensamento, mas, sem uma experimentação e uma autorreflexão contínuas, o efeito de destabilização criativa pode não resultar em mudanças de longo prazo no comportamento e na prática entre investigadores/participantes não artísticos. Garrett-Petts preconiza assim a necessidade de esforços continuados para construir espaços para a emergência de um novo tipo de interface visual/verbal, com o objetivo de desenvolver esses terrenos colaborativos para investigar, pensar e agir.

Como podem os artistas encorajar os utilizadores de um espaço público a “co-determinar” um espaço no sentido de maior respeito e maior responsabilidade pelo lugar e pelos outros utilizadores, construindo assim uma maior integração e sustentabilidade social? Como podem os espaços públicos destinados à interação e ao envolvimento ser concebidos de maneira a permitirem um equilíbrio ótimo entre a obra dos artistas e a voz dos utilizadores/audiência de um espaço público? A experiência do workshop/troca de teatro estudantil realizada em Coimbra, comparada com o trabalho de dois coletivos artísticos na Holanda, inspirou reflexões críticas sobre as experiências artísticas com o envolvimento do público, levando em conta as diferentes funções do espaço público, os níveis de participação e o equilíbrio entre a obra de arte e a audiência. Nelly van der Geest desenvolve um modelo “rolodex” que reúne estas três dimensões e mapeia as experiências em termos destes eixos. Numa perspetiva de fomento da sustentabilidade social, o artigo conclui que, para que as intervenções no espaço
público, onde artistas e audiências se encontram, harmonizem com sucesso a voz do artista com as dos utilizadores do espaço público, o projeto de conceção tem de incluir intervenções que se concentrem no nível de participação das audiências: passar de um modo de “fruição” para um modo de “diálogo e ação mútuos” e de “cocriação”.

Três perspetivas artísticas sobre as interligações entre investigação artística, espaço e envolvimento público complementam estas análises. Através de um ensaio fotográfico de obras de arte criadas para a exposição “Coimbra C”, realizada em 2003 no Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, e das suas inspirações originais, António Olaio ilustra como as complexas experiências estéticas de uma cidade como Coimbra podem inspirar diversas vias de criação artística. Por sua vez, as estratégias abstrativas e simbólicas dos artistas providenciam novas obras e imagens que criticam, informam, alargam e transformam potencialmente a nossa forma de compreender a cidade e os seus elementos.

Donald Lawrence, artista e investigador do projeto CURA em Kamloops, considera a forma como a prática artística pode migrar entre os domínios da pesquisa individual e interdisciplinar. Avança a ideia de *procura* como uma espécie de síntese de *investigação* e *exploração*, uma expansão sugestiva dos modos como a arte aumenta a nossa consciência daquilo que nos rodeia. Mostra também a relação entre jogar e aprender: a atribuição de um estatuto de “jogo” a uma experiência pode permitir-nos integrar na situação o nosso conhecimento adquirido. Por exemplo, em Coimbra, uma experiência de workshop que usava uma câmara escura para observar o espaço adjacente engendrou uma dimensão de jogo e uma maneira fluida de aprender. A experiência dava a oportunidade de obter um novo olhar sobre o ambiente “de uma forma exploratória que reflete aspetos essenciais das práticas artísticas e criativas” e, potencialmente, aumentava o conhecimento do funcionamento da paisagem de uma pessoa.

Sara Giddens e Simon Jones refletem sobre as experiências de encenação de uma performance sonora realizada em espaços públicos muito frequentados em diferentes cidades do mundo. Ao longo do tempo, a obra concentrou-se cada vez mais no modo como o espaço público articula histórias com memórias vividas e adquiriu a forma de uma cocriação, um diálogo com os participantes. O ensaio explora as diferentes manifestações das obras e propõe formas como a passagem de artistas por uma cidade podem abrir espaços potenciais para a reflexão sobre a utilização quotidiana do espaço público. Os artistas encorajam os “transeuntes-ouvintes” a experienciarem a reflexão sensorial imediata e
mental, incorporando assim a confluência do prático e do crítico na animação do espaço público pelas artes.

Seguem-se três breves descrições. Charlotte Šunde e Alys Longley falam de uma colaboração entre artes, ciência e educação sobre a água em Auckland, na Nova Zelândia, em que uma série de obras de instalação/performance animavam elementos das dimensões materiais, técnicas, sociais, culturais, espirituais e económicas das águas e cursos de água urbanos. O projeto cidade fluida interliga conhecimento científico com métodos artísticos para evocar, provocar e fomentar novas maneiras de ver, interpretar e sentir ideias associadas à água. O projeto levou a investigação para os espaços públicos, com o objetivo de permitir que esses espaços públicos falassem e criassem um espaço consciente para pensar e sentir a cidade de maneira diferente. Ao utilizar o elemento da surpresa e criando espaços para que histórias pessoais fossem articuladas e partilhadas, a animação de espaços públicos pelas artes permitia a criação de “novas experiências, ideias e relações que, potencialmente, podem evocar reações emocionais e o reconhecimento” de que a água é muito mais que um recurso ou um bem físico, e levar os participantes – como “cidadãos dependentes da água” – a envolverem-se num novo relacionamento com as suas águas urbanas.

Fazendo eco das ideias de Geest sobre a “copropriedade” de um espaço público, Javier Fraga Cadórniga descreve como a associação Raons Públiques utiliza a arte para fomentar a participação pública em Barcelona, Espanha, “encorajando a coresponsabilidade dos cidadãos na utilização, gestão e conceção” do espaço público a fim de contribuírem para a construção de comunidades mais coesas e sustentáveis. As estratégias de intervenção concentram-se na recolha de informação sensorial dos residentes sobre a utilização e percepção de um espaço e no uso de diferentes ferramentas para “provocar o debate, encorajar o diálogo e fomentar encontros que despertem a reflexão” (por exemplo, reuniões de idosos para beber chá ou café e Cartas de Troca de Espaços Públicos para as crianças). Nestes contextos, as artes e os processos com elas relacionados podem desempenhar um papel fundamental na transformação do espaço público num “elemento essencial de coesão social” na sociedade, estimulando os encontros ocasionais, mas criando também novos relacionamentos necessários. Além disso, os processos animados por estas várias intervenções podem ajudar as comunidades “a construírem juntas o seu próprio espaço e a sua gestão, de maneira a que o tornem seu e percebam os seus significados físicos e abstratos”. A consciência coletiva do espaço público engendra atitudes para ajudar esses ambientes a serem sustentáveis.
Emma Arnold reflete sobre o fenômeno internacional dos graffiti têxteis como uma forma de arte pública numa perspetiva de sustentabilidade, realçando os seus contributos ideológicos e intangíveis para a criação de uma consciência e ligação aos espaços urbanos, que é importante para a promoção da consciência e responsabilidade ambiental. Os produtos artesanais criam uma “feminização do espaço” e podem ser publicamente utilizados para ajudarem à consciencialização de questões específicas sociais, ambientais ou económicas. De uma forma mais geral, o movimento de artesanato contraria os modos industriais de produção e consumo em grande escala, voltando a relacionar os indivíduos com formas mais responsáveis e sustentáveis de consumo, e gira em torno das ideias de participação, colaboração, conectividade, coletividade, inclusão e comunidade – um movimento que a estética artesanal dos graffiti têxteis pode publicamente encorajar e popularizar.

Ação da comunidade: Construir espaços de envolvimento com a natureza
A agricultura é uma atividade básica e vital em que se baseou grande parte da vida social. À luz do processo desumanizado e mecanizado da produção alimentar da sociedade contemporânea, e face à ligação geralmente fraca dos cidadãos urbanos com os processos naturais e as fontes de alimentos, vemos proliferarem por todo o mundo um interesse e um envolvimento cada vez maiores com os jardins, a jardinagem e a agricultura. Giovanni Allegretti, Stefania Barca e Lúcia Fernandes exploram o crescimento das hortas em zonas urbanas e o movimento de transição neo-rural, vendo a agricultura urbana como uma forma de “arte popular/artistanato” através da qual os indivíduos e as coletividades se voltam à ligar à natureza, ao mesmo tempo que reinventam as relações sociais ao nível da comunidade. Os autores afirmam que, embora as motivações subjacentes a essas atividades sejam bastante variáveis, estão a ser geralmente encorajadas por um imaginário urbano internacional que envolve uma série de desenvolvimentos, desde os “ícones urbanos” dos jardins integrados e das paredes verdes em novos projetos arquitetónicos, até aos novos parques, como o High Line de Nova Iorque, aos videogogos de simulação de trabalho agrícola, às “quintas didáticas” e a uma série cada vez maior de produtos maciços de mercado e de inovações tecnológicas para permitirem que os cidadãos urbanos “celebrem pequenos rituais de um ‘regresso à natureza’ nos seus próprios espaços privados ou semipúblicos”. Várias instituições culturais, como alguns museus, e iniciativas de partilha de informação esforçam-se por alargar o conhecimento e a reflexão crítica do público sobre essas práticas para além da “mera moda”, enquanto
artistas, arquitetos e designers desempenham geralmente papéis importantes na promoção desta vaga recente de programas institucionais e práticas populares, reintroduzindo a produção alimentar e as estufas em espaços urbanos e transformando-os em espaços orientados para a comunidade.

Robin Reid, Kendra Besanger e Bonnie Klohn falam da criação de uma horta pública num terreno baldio no centro da cidade. As hortas públicas são desenvolvidas como sítios de colaboração e diálogo sobre a produção alimentar local e os espaços urbanos, e produzem produtos gratuitos que qualquer membro do público pode usar. O Kamloops Public Produce Project, tal como muitos projetos agrícolas urbanos, baseia-se nos antigos conhecimentos e práticas dos membros e pode ser visto como uma “reação criativa e popular a circunstâncias sociais, econômicas e ambientais pouco ideais”. Enquanto catalisador de mudança, o projeto tem como fim influenciar a política local de alimentação e alargar as práticas agrícolas urbanas “aceitáveis”. Incorpora “interjeições artísticas” para contribuírem para a sua atracção como espaço público acessível e para funcionarem como local onde as comunidades podem contar as suas histórias, criar capacidade criativa, abordar questões sociais, exprimir a identidade e participar diretamente no desenvolvimento das suas próprias culturas.

Concentrando-se no impacto individual, Annelieke van der Sluijs discute como, através dos processos participativos, os habitantes de Coimbra podem implementar uma mudança de comportamento sustentável nas suas vidas quotidianas, apoiados por uma “rede e comunidade alimentar” local. Fazendo eco à ênfase de Lawrence no jogo como veículo de aprendizagem, van der Sluijs observa que “se isso não for divertido, não é sustentável”. As soluções têm de ser práticas e atrativas para serem adotadas e para despertarem impulsos criativos nos participantes, permitindo assim a ligação pessoal aos valores estéticos dos jardins.

Tania Leimbach descreve um projeto “entretanto” que exibe paredes verdes nos tapumes temporários que cercam um local de construção em Sidney, na Austrália, e que promove a importância dos sistemas alimentares localizados, da agricultura urbana e dos sistemas que pensam no desenvolvimento de futuros sustentáveis. Ao introduzir um elemento inesperado na rotina diária, o projeto pretendia contribuir para mudança cultural, estimulando a reflexão e inspirando a ação relativa à introdução de novas possibilidades e imaginários “verdes” no ambiente urbano.

Criar espaços de religação à natureza, numa escala local ou mais alargada, é também o imperativo subjacente a projetos de arte pública como o *Walkway*...
no estuário do Loire, em França, e a iniciativas de maior escala, como o complexo Space for Life em Montreal, no Canadá. Inspirada nas suas experiências de assistente na construção do Walkway, Catalina Trujilo reflete na sua relação com a existência calma e a vulnerabilidade da natureza cercada por construções industriais. A construção de uma torre de observação e de um longo passadiço foi um exercício coletivo que envolveu residentes locais e estudantes visitantes que estavam alojados na aldeia. O processo físico de construção tornou-se uma memória coletiva, e a obra de arte resultante permite que as pessoas experienciem diretamente os pântanos de outra forma, formando um lugar de busca de harmonia e uma passagem para o sossego.

O “Space for Life”, em Montreal, que será o maior complexo museológico de ciências naturais do Canadá, tem o objetivo de aproximar a humanidade do mundo natural. Baseado na importância da biodiversidade para a nossa sobrevivência coletiva e orientado por uma abordagem científica e artística, Charles Mathieu Brunelle descreve como quatro grandes instituições científicas juntam esforços para convencerem os visitantes a repensar e reforçar as suas ligações com a natureza, e para convidá-los a cultivarem uma nova forma de vida. Semelhante ao projeto cidade fluida (Šunde e Longley), uma série de formas de “contacto informado” ensinará as pessoas por meio de várias experiências, incluindo algumas imersivas, festivas e divertidas.

Arte pública: Fomentar as relações sociais e a ação pública

As iniciativas de arte pública são muito variadas – podem incluir instalações visuais/escultóricas, performances e ações performativas, ou podem traduzir-se na conceção e criação de permutas e processos sociais para construir capacidades e reforçar as ligações no seio das comunidades. A arte no espaço público deve chamar a atenção e alcançar uma audiência dentro de espaços dominados pelas “funcionalidades da vida quotidiana” e a “atenção estrita da economia da cidade” (Jespersen). Esta secção examina os impactos de uma série de projetos de arte no domínio público a partir da perspetiva das estratégias artísticas de envolvimento público e das avaliações da receção pública. Estas explorações e análises formam uma crítica valiosa aos papéis prospetivos das atividades artísticas na promoção da mudança social para comunidades mais sustentáveis.

Line Marie Bruun Jespersen examina o encontro entre a arte contemporânea, o público, o mundo urbano como contexto para experiências artísticas e os espectadores. Concentrando-se na relação entre duas obras de arte de Jeppe Hein e os seus espectadores/utilizadores, Jespersen mostra como alguns
elementos de brincadeira, humor e participação direta são utilizados para gerar situações sociais em que podem ocorrer encontros entre estranhos e diálogos culturais. A autora pergunta: poderá esta arte contribuir para a criação de um domínio público diverso e funcional? Poderá a arte no espaço público ligar realmente as pessoas? Para investigar esta questão, Jespersen avança os conceitos importantes de estética relacional e receção coletiva. Nos casos analisados, o objeto físico funciona como mediador de uma experiência, mas diferentes aspectos da mesma obra podem relacionar-se com diferentes tipos de experiência. Embora não afirme que a arte deve ser usada para criar novos domínios públicos, chega à conclusão de que a arte pode inspirar e explorar modos de criar espaços convidativos que atraiam grande variedade de audiências. As obras de arte podem criar locais de encontro, “interstícios sociais”, tipos alternativos de espaços livres do discurso consumista. Uma experiência invulgar com um grupo de estranhos pode gerar comunicação ou, pelo menos, despertar a consciência do(s) outro(s) na cidade. A arte pode convidar vastas audiências a agirem socialmente em conjunto.

Algumas limitações da ação social convidada são exploradas por James Hoffman, que reflete na receção de uma performance artística intervencionista de ação comunitária numa pequena cidade. Os grupos comunitários envolvidos no The REDress Project tinham o objetivo de melhorar ou erradicar uma situação social preocupante: 600 mulheres indígenas desaparecidas ou assassinadas no Canadá nas últimas décadas. Embora o projeto fosse válido e necessário como empreendimento social, e os objetivos de mudança social efetiva fossem possíveis, Hoffman chegou à conclusão de que o impacto reduzido do projeto se deveu às limitações do próprio género artístico. Enquanto obra de arte com vista a fomentar a mudança social, o desenvolvimento do diálogo social era limitado, com os participantes posicionados essencialmente como observadores e ouvintes. Os comentários durante as visitas ao sítio e aos painéis tendiam mais para sentimentos de incerteza e impotência do que para soluções ou planos concretos. Hoffman fala das dimensões de organização da participação pública e da canalização das vozes públicas para e além dessas obras de maneira a gerar uma verdadeira mudança para lá da consciencialização.

Centrada nas comunidades de jovens, Cláudia Carvalho explora a interligação entre artes e cultura, espaço público urbano e comunidade como plataforma para reanimar o espaço urbano e voltar a abordar a cidadania ao nível da comunidade. Os esforços e as estratégias artísticas do envolvimento cívico e da liderança nessas comunidades encorajam a produção de cidadãos criativos. Por outro
lado, a apropição de cidadania criativa proporciona vias pessoais e coletivas para desenvolver e promover as ligações ao espaço, o diálogo intercultural, o progresso e a sustentabilidade locais. Através da análise de três estudos de caso em Boston, Cláudia Carvalho identifica três fases no processo de construção da cidadania ao nível da comunidade: identificação dos principais agentes comunitários no contexto local e dos tipos possíveis de associações; construção e reforço de uma identidade comunitária, distinta das outras; e criação de ações coletivas que envolvem comunidades étnica e socialmente diversas, que interagem para construir uma identidade comunitária partilhada e baseada num lugar. Em todas as fases, as atividades artísticas são ferramentas de superação para os membros da comunidade, e todos os membros da comunidade são vistos como agentes potenciais e cidadãos ativos. Nestas situações, a prática artística era uma “ferramenta indispensável de aprendizagem na promoção da autocapacitação” para o desenvolvimento de cidadãos criativos ativamente empenhados no melhoramento das suas comunidades locais e dos seus espaços urbanos.

Podemos encontrar um tema similar na descrição que Melinda Spooner faz do projeto Iluminar, em Halifax, no Canadá, que visava igualmente a capacitação dos jovens. O projeto utilizava a programação e a aprendizagem artísticas para criar ligações entre diversos grupos da população, promover a vitalidade comunitária e fomentar as relações existentes e os projetos adicionais.

Em muitos sítios, o desenvolvimento de comunidades socioculturalmente mais sustentáveis e resilientes implica a abordagem e a desmontagem de legados pós-coloniais, a criação de novas histórias e a construção de novas fundações para o futuro. Neste sentido, e no contexto dos objetos artísticos como dissidentes transgressivos e ativos, Paulo Pousada apresenta um estudo das obras de arte contemporânea de Ângela Ferreira. O interesse desta artista pelos artefactos e espaços públicos do colonialismo, bem como a crítica que deles faz, contribuíram para uma maior consciencialização e abriram um questionamento sobre os processos de recordação, nostalgia e “história recebida”. Paulo Pousada mostra como as funções transgressoras da arte para perceber contradições sociais e “ataques culturais” (e para expor as correntes políticas e socioculturais subjacentes que impulsionam essas ocorrências e trajetórias) a tornam num instrumento fundamental para denunciar e combater a naturalização da injustiça e para expor e deplorar os “preconceitos e medos silenciosos incorporados nos protocolos quotidianos das relações humanas e comunitárias” – todos eles processos essenciais para examinar, repensar e reimaginar as nossas sociedades.
O ensaio de Alix Pierre e Simone Pierre sublinha a importância dos processos artísticos que envolvem a comunidade e da celebração comunitária nas atividades públicas de larga escala da comemoração do 150.º aniversário da Proclamação da Emancipação em Guadalupe. Neste contexto, o programa Civic Edupreneurship and the City concentrava-se nas formas criativas como a cidade podia envolver os seus cidadãos – especialmente os jovens – na “(re)afirmação do seu passado histórico para melhor negociar o presente”. Juntando-se ao esforço comemorativo, os estudantes deixaram as suas escolas e “reivindicaram a paisagem da cidade”. De forma mais importante, o projeto pretendia dar aos jovens de Guadalupe uma oportunidade de “se verem criticamente na sua relação com o mundo”.

Em Histórias de CASA, uma intervenção de investigação artística num bairro de habitação social perto de Melbourne, na Austrália, os investigadores-artistas Marnie Badham e James Oliver desenvolveram uma abordagem metodológica baseada na etnografia e na arte para o estudo participativo e generativo de comunidades vulneráveis. Com o objetivo de desafiar as representações dos estigmas baseados no lugar, através de uma prática artística assente na comunidade, os artistas-investigadores utilizaram uma abordagem participativa/ativista, na qual a investigação estava interligada com um programa para fomentar a autocapacitação social e política dessa comunidade. Centrado nas “qualidades relacionais da prática autónoma e orientada”, o projeto gerou diálogo através do processo de criação de arte participativa, criou uma plataforma para a união e produção de laços, facilitou o diálogo entre diversos residentes e reanimou os seus espaços partilhados.

Como relata Francesca Rayner, a companhia de teatro Maria Matos, em Lisboa, promoveu duas iniciativas que transformaram o espaço público e criaram lugares para a interação social, com base em temas de especial tensão social – respetivamente, a (não) abundância e o impacto das medidas de austeridade em Portugal. Nestas iniciativas, as audiências eram tratadas como agentes sociais ativos e capacitados. Transformar audiências em participantes, defende Rayner, é uma parte vital do “desenvolvimento da cidadania cultural”. Além disso, afirma que algumas formas de “encontro social não orientado fora das rotinas teatrais convencionais” baseadas na experimentação e na discussão informal podem promover uma maior consciência social, uma sustentabilidade local integrada, na qual os aspetos artísticos, sociais e ambientais da sustentabilidade são questionados de forma simultânea e não de modo isolado.

Um tipo similar de encontro social não orientado constituiu um elemento essencial do projeto artístico kioskxiaomaibu, de Petra Jonhson, que envolvia a
montagem de quiosques em Colónia, na Alemanha, e em Xangai, na China, ligados via Skype, com os proprietários e os clientes dos quiosques a serem convidados a utilizarem a plataforma como quisessem. Os quiosques foram concebidos como locais para explorações artísticas e como plataformas de conectividade imediata. Durante um período de seis meses, a prática que emergiu da experiência consistia em montar um palco e, de forma subtil e disciplinada, sair do local, deixando que as pessoas trocassem perspetivas, questões e pormenores das suas vidas quotidianas.

Na perspetiva de “encontrar hospitalidade” para ideias críticas numa parte relevante do domínio público, as noções de colaboração e troca tornaram-se centrais. Em Quando os Hóspedes se Tornam Anfitriões, um projeto de estudo de arte pública que investigava estratégias artísticas, a artista-curadora Danielle van Zuijlen convidou dois coletivos artísticos (da Áustria e do Reino Unido) e um coletivo de arquitetura (da América Latina) para desenvolverem um novo trabalho no espaço público da cidade do Porto. As estratégias divergiram fortemente em função do objetivo da intervenção, desde uma estratégia formal e política até a uma estratégia muito informal para mobilizar a memória, a imaginação e o envolvimento do público local, passando por uma abordagem quase ativista. Cada abordagem cultivava acordos colaborativos relevantes com os residentes e as organizações locais, “encontrava hospitalidade” e produzia, em troca, gestos hospitalares.

Por último, centrado nos legados das experiências efêmeras que subsistem nas memórias do espectador, Jochem Naafs descreve como o Stut Theatre, baseado na comunidade, em Utrecht, na Holanda, pretende (re)criar e sustentar uma “comunidade de espectadores”. Criando experiências imaginativas e socialmente envolvidas, baseadas nas histórias de comunidades específicas, tem vindo a desenvolver uma série de comunidades cada vez maiores com que tem trabalhado, cujos membros participam em espetáculos subsequentes noutras zonas. Com este trabalho, a companhia pretende fomentar o diálogo, que começa no teatro e prossegue após o espetáculo, para estimular uma “memória ativa” e um discurso público sustentável baseado na experiência.

No total, a coleção fornece um conjunto rico de ideias e conhecimentos práticos baseados em intervenções artísticas para envolver os públicos como colaboradores ativos; para animar os espaços públicos a fim de fomentar o encontro, o diálogo e a coesão social; e para criar capacidades individuais e coletivas e novas fundações a partir das quais se possa construir algo de novo. Na perspetiva de desenvolver comunidades e cidades cultural, social,
económica e ambientalmente mais sustentáveis e resilientes, as práticas artísticas podem desempenhar papéis importantes em várias dimensões: as atividades e intervenções artísticas podem ativar o envolvimento público, fomentar as relações sociais e desenvolver novas maneiras de trabalhar e viver; podem transformar física e simbolicamente os espaços onde vivemos e onde nos relacionamos e fomentar maiores ligações com os nossos ambientes naturais e construídos; e podem fornecer novas maneiras de compreender e pensar o mundo, provocando e promovendo mudanças no modo como pensamos, agimos e vivemos juntos.

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Referências


Artistic Inquiry:
Animating Ecologies, Embodying Territory
ANIMATED ECOLOGIES: THE SLIPPERY AND THE CURIOUS BY DESIGN

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Abstract: The Rural Design Studio of Western Australia – set within The University of Western Australia’s Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts – has explored the animation of community engagement through storytelling and performative design for over 15 years. The Studio partners with small rural agrarian communities to imagine and experience innovative artful processes that identify and challenge key contemporary issues of regenerative ecologies affecting self, community, identity, and cultural landscape management and design. This article shares recent community design projects developed in the central Wheatbelt towns of York and Pingelly, Western Australia. This work expands on the ancient Kairos theories and practices of regenerative chance and indeterminacy in the playful engagement with marginal communities and their place-worlds. Practices of creative cartography, cultural pattern-making, and experimental magic mapping, for example, collecting and documenting community values, were undertaken. The Studio situates itself in the slippery, eccentric, and unfamiliar edges of culture and nature, at the fringes of the urban and the rural, the real and the imaginary, and most importantly, in the ethical, dynamic, and regenerative in-between of the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous.

Resumo: O Rural Design Studio de Western Australia – estabelecido na Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts da Universidade da Austrália Ocidental – explorou durante 15 anos a animação do envolvimento comunitário através da narração de histórias e da criação performativa. O Studio trabalhou com pequenas comunidades rurais para imaginar e experimentar processos inovadores e engenhosos que identificam e desafiam as questões contemporâneas das ecologias regenerativas que afetam a pessoa, a comunidade, a identidade, a gestão e criação do paisagem cultural. Este artigo descreve projetos recentes de criação comunitária desenvolvidos nas cidades de York e Pingelly, na Austrália Ocidental. Este trabalho baseia-se nas antigas teorias e práticas do Kairos, de oportunidade regenerativa e indeterminação, através do desenvolvimento de atividades lúdicas com comunidades marginais e com os seus mundos-lugares. Realizaram-se práticas de cartografia criativa, criação de padrões culturais e mapeamento mágico experimental, por exemplo, recolha e documentação de valores comunitários. O Studio
situa-se nas margens evasivas, excêntricas e menos familiares da cultura e da natureza, nas franjas do urbano e do rural, do real e do imaginário, e, mais importante, no interstício ético, dinâmico e regenerativo do indígena e do não-indígena.

Location is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations.

James Clifford (1997: 11)

... I like the word [curiosity]. It evokes “care”; it evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilised before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.

Michel Foucault (1988: 325)

Preface
Isolating between itinerant moments of transformative landscapes and curious place-worlds has been the careful charge of Western Australia’s Rural Design Studio. As disciplined educators and practitioners of landscape and architecture, we fixate our energies on the analytical sensing of places and their individual or collective representations and revitalisation through design. It is the intent of this article to explain how and why many Rural Design Studio experiences are found, represented, and transformed in rather magical ways – ways and means that try to develop new aesthetics of cultural sustainability where the meaning of beauty is more race- and place-specific, eidetic, and generative in allowing communities to get to know one another, to develop, and to seek new (sometimes old and forgotten) solutions for social, environmental, and economic survival. The community-based artful work embodies an idea of an unpredictable (slippery) future pre-empting an unpredictable design process. The tipping point is unknown, and the best solution can often not be predicted. Here, we focus on designed art at the edge of widening consciousness and a deeper understanding of place where our community partners get to see and value themselves through ‘other’ eyes. For our community partners, this juxtaposition of studio players is seemingly more important than envisioning themselves with the aid of the ‘other’. These participatory processes reveal the horrors, the champions, and the failures of place itself. In many ways, we also
work to appreciate the idea that Western culture (or, indeed, the discipline of landscape architecture) is ‘lost’ and that creative ‘hybrid’ map-making and revitalized community experiences need to be remade with the actual practice and experience of multiple realms of landscape. Above all, this article helps explain how Western Australia’s Rural Design Studio interrogates the often static or neutral ideologies of cultural and environmental sustainability into more holistic systems and dynamic practices of regenerative thinking where, by design, rural communities and their artful cultures get to know and define themselves by participating as nature rather than simply doing things to nature (Reed, 2007).

Introduction
We would like to begin by paying our respects to the Indigenous peoples of Coimbra, Portugal, and Western Australia, on and to whose land an earlier version of this article was presented and refers. We acknowledge that these First Nation peoples remain the traditional owners, spiritual and cultural custodians of all their rightful lands, and many continue to practice their values, languages, beliefs, and knowledge of those lands and others.¹

On a matter of ethics and racial responsibility, this article only discusses and presents those aspects of the collaborative Rural Studio work that has been approved and allowed to be represented by our Indigenous partners and fellow students in other forums. To avoid this would be unethical. The underlying reason for this is that in Western culture, when the discourse of cultural knowledge or theory often comprehends the ‘other’, then the alterity of the ‘other’ is lost as it becomes part of the same (Pederson and Revell, 1998). As an educational design collaborative, we work to resist the appropriation of Indigenous cultural knowledge by a dominant Western colonial system by not reporting or interpreting the whole cross-cultural ‘story’ of our collective projects. This issue of ethics, or ‘alterity’, is fundamental to both the live studio work we do and the way in which we try to work. As noted by Young (1990: 12), we aim to find positive pedagogical ways in which to allow the “other to remain as other” and to continually question how different cultures are positioned or privileged in this exchange – avoiding where possible the colonizing tendencies of appropriating or placating Aboriginality and marginalizing the other for the benefit of a white Western identity (Young, 1990). For a design discipline or profession like landscape architecture, inter-cultural spaces are so often occupied and controlled by non-Indigenous voices. This dilemma is amplified,
of course, by our discipline’s insatiable hunger for Indigenous landscape knowledge.

In this article, however, we specifically wish to discuss from a community-design point of view that what really matters is how actual sustained design learning and conciliatory practice is undertaken inclusively and on culturally competent, racially informed grounds, for a deeper sense of sustained Aboriginality and its subjective determination should essentially remain with Aboriginal people. These are the foremost qualities of our work.  

A brief snapshot of old Western Australia

The Western Australian landscape is one of the oldest and most continentally stable in the world. Flannery (1994) relays that while the world was undergoing significant cooling and, as a result, loss of species, Australia and New Guinea were, continentally speaking, moving north and warming. This counterbalanced any significant temperature changes, and species adapted over thousands of years to the precise conditions of their immediate landscape (Flannery, 1994). This equates also to millions of years of sun and wind beating down on the same landmass, depleting soils of any ability to store nutrients. Needless to say, we are a nutrient-poor landscape, a credit to the wide and globally significant diversity of flora and fauna that call this place home.

In the early days of colonization, millions of acres of woodlands were replaced with crops to support the growth of the city of Perth and its associated economies. The rural economic landscape has been typically boom and bust for Western Australia, from farmers driving Mercedes one year to selling large portions of their farms to survive the next. And the climate has been largely the same: drought-lands, with sometimes considerable rainfall in untimely sequences. Today, more than ever, Western Australia’s rural communities are facing huge insurmountable problems associated with the deliberate loss of vegetation and large tracts of land turning to ruin with rising levels of soil salinity and acidification. Critical and life-threatening social issues such as depression and isolation arise from the current stress of farming badlands and through unpredictable climatic patterns. Some rural towns are managing to stay afloat through a slow influx of alternative lifestylers or ‘seed-changers’ or to a conversion to tourism-related economies, and there are currently a small number of government arts programs – e.g., Community Arts Network of Western Australia (CANWA) – to support social, environmental, and economic resilience in small rural towns. The Rural Design Studio seeks to complement these hard-fought initiatives.
Recent discussions in landscape architectural design education and research have emphasized the growing need for engaging with real communities in live environments where creative and sustainable partnerships and relationships are made between host communities and their higher educational counterparts (Deming and Swaffield, 2010; Dodd et al., 2012). The Rural Design Studio of Western Australia explores, in particular, a creative ‘non-Eurocentric or anglicized’ collaboration, research, design, and community using the disciplines of Landscape Architecture and the Arts as exemplars of creative problem imagination and solving techniques. In the first instance, we say ‘non-Eurocentric’ here. In the political context, we are genuinely interested in more generative ways of community discoursing and sensing environments into landscapes – eidetic ways that challenge the limitations of, say, the settler-dominated picturesque schools of landscape thought where landscapes are principally made, understood, controlled, and qualified in typically exotic scenic terms. For these foreign landscapes, their deeper (say non-visual or endemic) ecologies and corresponding aesthetics remain hidden or suppressed by these more dominating sensing processes. Australian photographer John Ogden identifies these scenic and cultural limitations of knowing endemic place when he documents a disturbing, relentless condition of a bi-cultural Australia, one that he refers to as Australienation. Ogden writes:
I am an alien, an intruder.... it became clearer to me than ever before that every
day, anywhere in Australia, Aborigines are made to feel outcasts in their own
land. Australia is considered to be a multi-cultural society, but I would argue
that it is better described as bi-cultural because this recognises the vast contrast
between the first inhabitants and any of the many cultures that came later. The
two cultures were and are philosophically opposed. Indigenous Australians
view themselves as custodians of the land, with a responsibility to preserve and
protect it for future generations. In general, we newcomers perceive the land as
a commodity that can be relentlessly exploited for gain.... modern society could
learn much from Aboriginal people about the continuum between the past and
the future. (1999: 8)

In an effort to expand the different ways of knowing Western Australian
landscapes, the Rural Design Studio has become culturally and critically
inclusive over the years. As the program has grown in conciliatory confidence,
it has developed strong partnerships with site-specific Indigenous communities
and their respective advisers both within and outside the design academy. The
program has designed a transparent ‘slippery’ process of genuine community
engagement or, as spatial theorist and artist Paul Carter would suggest, “an art of
the gap” where the rudimentary nature of collaboration is dynamic, open-ended,
and reflective depending on the episodic performance and commitment of the
project groups (in Rutherford, 2010: 6). Designers and their inter-cultural
relationships being ‘slippery’ and at times out-of-control, as opposed to hard-
and-fast or hard-wired in their creative approach, is an intentional generative
mode of cultural design process, ownership, and engagement. Carter would
stress that this is a critical discourse that needs to happen more in Australia
because of our ‘abysmal’ practices of clearing, mapping, and wiping out our
land’s histories. We need to propose new artful practices “by generating new
aesthetic forms that forge encounters with the memories, voices, meanings, and
imaginings occluded by the spatial practices of colonisation” (in Rutherford,
2010: 7). This can be risky business for all partners involved – especially those
working, academically, at the undergraduate level of the creative disciplines.
Nonetheless, it embraces chance and indeterminacy as generative design tools.
From previous studio experiences, being ‘slippery’ overcomes the inevitable
failings of a pre-determined way of getting to know communities and their
poetries of life. All communities and their place-worlds are different and they
behave in strange and wonderful ways. Consequently, interactive community
design methodologies that seek to reveal the deeper personal experiences of place might (or should) explore this fluidity, dynamic, and ephemeral nature of being slippery and exploratory with community. And it is the uncertain aesthetic that accompanies and charges these unusual relational moments of community engagement that tend to be more *regenerative* than sustainable in their nature and culture. Appropriate technologist and architect Bill Reed (2007) suggests, for example, that practices and outcomes of *sustainability* typically work toward manipulating systems to a state of neutrality (zero carbon outlay, self-sufficiency, zero ecological footprint, etc.). *Regenerative* design activities, in contrast, encourage humans or communities to *participate as* nature and culture, as opposed to *doing things to* nature and culture. Reed likes to use the term *holism*. Here whole systems of communities relate, integrate, and co-evolve rather than support an evolution of sub-systems (Reed, 2007).

Julia Levitt (2010) goes further to suggest that this regenerative thinking of an inter-relational culture and nature or ‘way of being’ with communities “requires a reestablishment of relationships, to feel connected and to care; to be personal and close-up rather than academic and arms-length” (no page).

In these Rural Design Studio situations, design students are encouraged to learn from, and typically to hybridize, the more established conventional modes of participatory design operation. Students appreciate that such methods of community engagement have their efficacy in more commercially based projects which are often poorly resourced and typically practiced by regional place-making, community arts, and design consultants like Community Arts Network of Western Australia (CANWA), Co-Design, Merge Landscape Architects, Place Laboratory, and so forth. Alternatively, the important scholarly work of Maureen Rogers from La Trobe University’s Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities is worthy of note here. Although not based specifically within an environmental art and design faculty, the Centre’s ‘Small Towns: Big Picture’ program focused on the more creative social dimensions of community sustainability with the development of a replicable ‘Community Cohesion Indicator’ through an arts-led community engagement process. This indicator prioritizes a community’s basic needs based on the work of Max-Neef et al. (1991) to include nine quantifiable measures: freedom, sustenance, reflection, affection, creativity, understanding, protection, participation, and identity. Rogers (2005) concludes that

Rural communities, faced with the pressures of unprecedented change, have an opportunity to embrace the principles of sustainable development, to create a
new future at the leading edge of global change – but they need help. They need both knowledge and skills to enable them to self-evaluate and strategically plan, and they need a highly motivated, creative, and coherent community to carry it through. (p. 109)

Rural Design Studio participants bring a lot of highly motivated energy to their host-town, and are typically keen to seek and apply heterogeneous behaviours and experiments that are open-ended, uncertain, and provocatively creative – sometimes successfully, sometimes not. It is our collective experience that students like to be more liminal in their discovery of a community’s own basic needs. The Studio considers every community, every environment, and every site different (even within one location), while overarched with affirmative action and recognition for Indigenous rights. Here, the specificities of critical cultural landscapes and their multiple conditions are important to the possibilities of inclusive design sustainability and their study – where the very regenerative nature of Indigeneity really matters. Moreover, the inter-subjectivity of knowing and interpreting some Indigenous worlds and their environments is led by our Indigenous studio partners.

The Rural Design Studio has gained an important and growing extraordinary cultural respect amongst an inclusive Western Australian design community, having now worked with over a dozen urban and rural communities on a variety of collaborative artful projects. These ventures all have their own sets of quirky relationships and project outcomes – from documented community storytelling and oral history sessions to place-based photographic exhibitions, or cultural mapping exercises that culminate in urban design propositions in and around the subject towns or beyond, to the perhaps more important conservation design needs of the broader agrarian landscapes.

**Animated thinkings – indeterminacy, chance, and storytelling**

The taproot is the root of the tree that goes the deepest. In my family taproots are really important because, as my mother always says, ‘We didn’t get here by ourselves. We have others to thank for that and we should acknowledge it’. Those family members that make up the taproots are still very much alive and living with us today, and this reinforces a sense of self, belonging, and place. Never forget your taproots because they’ll never forget you.

* Tjalaminu Mia (2007: 208)
You wouldn’t expect ancestral taproots to arrive by chance, nor perhaps through any sense or act of indeterminacy. As Mia suggests, they choose you wisely. They ‘never forget you’ and remain an essential web of our daily lives. But there is something in the thinking that chance can be welcomed in the design process or in the ways you engage community in artful design-related projects. In our collective experiences, we have entertained genuine and generative chance by allowing the field to take its place within the project and not before as some predetermined game plan or design methodology. Typically, we don’t know the communities or their landscapes until we meet and relate with them. To ‘under-stand’ these cultural landscapes one must ‘stand-under’ them (Dovey, 1999). Some communities are keen to participate, some not. Some reveal their endemic or vernacular ways that allow for worlds of their own to take shape and provide spatial form. As eminent American cultural geographer J.B. Jackson has argued, once you start studying or ‘dissecting’ the vernacular within community landscapes there remains no vernacular (Jackson and Meinig, 1979; Jackson, 1984). It disappears in the ether by the essential focus, the gaze and overt attention of what can be so beautifully precious and distinctive to communities and their landscapes. Consequently, the very natures, cultures, or subtle qualities of the vernacular are dismembered, overly examined, or explained to death, if you will. Investigations of the vernacular have often been transcribed into what artists, designers, planners, and developers refer to as ‘the-sense-of-place’, the genius loci of human environments (Seddon, 1979). But as more contemporary analyses have revealed, knowing the genius loci provides no real generative design currency on its own, as what really matters to many designers and community artists is understanding the experiences of place, the spatial and time-based interactions of humans, their environments, and their perception, attitudes, and values. Whitbread (2011) explains that this more embracing theory of knowing place can be found within the studies of landscape phenomenology or topophilia, which can be attributed to such philosophers as Yi-Fu-Tuan, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and M. Merleau-Ponty. It is these lived experiences, philosophies, and human values within individual and collective landscapes which participating town-folk of the Rural Design Studio seem more eager to share and animate-into-being than any interrogation of their particular vernacular senses.

In the context of the Rural Design Studio, community-based storytelling (like sketching as a way of thinking) offers considerable means of understanding these experiences of place first-hand. Stories tell many things about a culture
and its tellers, but above all they explore the natures of space, time, form, function, efficiency, and sustainability (regeneration) across and within the cultural landscape. Thomas Erickson writes prolifically about the importance of storytelling as a playful and generative mode of community-based design. He explains that storytelling does many things to gather community form and identity from community space, especially where projects can be as much cultural and societal as they are physical. Storytelling supports relationship building, and is a very powerful tool in the interactive community design process. Here Erikson notes, “importantly, that design is not just about making things. Design is a social, collaborative activity; a distributed social process, and as such communication (and the beauty of storytelling) plays a vital role” (1995: 2).

The Rural Design Studio deliberately uses a set of catalytic activities that seek out special and ordinary stories and their tellers. This attitude of design as communication encourages students and their community hosts to co-own the processes and outcomes of design. The politic that results from this communication can have lasting effects for community change and action at the grassroots level. Typically, it is our experience that local rural governments like to meet these creative conditions and support the resulting design partnerships.

Stories and their tellers are typically broad-minded and comfortable in a public setting; they don’t take themselves too seriously and provide a healthy sense of humour and ‘goodness’ to the design matters at hand. Erikson also observes that

stories are equalizers of sorts; they don’t require much expertise or training to listen to or tell them. (For the young undergraduate student, this is not always the case). And they offer ground for collective and individual interpretation and further analysis. They are icebreakers, and make formal processes less threatening. Stories are useful even after the initial fuzzy knowledge has been codified into problem definitions, design principles, lists of user needs, information flow diagrams, prototypes, and other more formal representations. (p. 4)

In good time, at the community design project level, stories and their tellers gather a certain confidence with their fellow design team members, enabling greater possibilities of communicating effectively in more formal conditions with other project decision-makers.
Stories and their tellers can also take generative chances with their subject matter and their audiences. Erikson explains that it is so often the indeterminacy of design situations that overpower the clarity of well-informed problems. And typically community design and its socialized activities of design “can expand the scope of messy, indeterminate situations quite considerably. ... [yet] stories provide one way to deal with this indeterminacy ... a common ground, a body of knowledge which can be added to, and questioned by all participants” (p. 6).

The goal, however, is not to totally resolve the indeterminacy or indeed the greater opportunities for chance thinkings to clarify design matters further through storytelling. Chance, indeterminacy, and storytelling are partners in the informal societal landscapes they create – hybridized landscapes that work best at the unresolved level, the productive ‘slippery’, animated, in-between gaps of challenging community-based design projects and interdisciplinary attention. The Rural Design Studio’s agency of chance and indeterminacy operates in a similar mode to the ancient Greek concept of Kairos, which is beautifully described in the comparative literary works of Australian sociologist Jennifer Rutherford. Rutherford (2010) explores art historian Jean Clair’s definition of Kairos and suggests that “Kairos is both spatial and temporal, defined both as a locus and a defining moment ... mastering the apprehension of both time and place” (p. 9). Yet for the Rural Design Studio, moments of a liminal Kairos are more than often serendipitous, and its participants – locals, students, and staff – often fall upon themselves to creatively read space and landscape as lived place – however awkward, treacherous, shared, and private these decisive and generative moments become.

Despite the possible limitations of storytelling, chance, and indeterminacy as subjective modes of knowing and reimagining aspects of community place, their particular nuances, ambiguities, and non-scientific discoveries remain productive for the operations of the Rural Studio. Above all, these performative moments of relating to landscape, place, or country suggest that a person – or indeed a community – with a ‘good spirit’ shares and possesses the regenerative abilities to find, or be given, the critical uncertain point around which their place-worlds organize and to express themselves creatively.

Animated thinkings – creative cartography and magic mapping

Creative cartography is at the geographic crossover of information analysis, cartography, and art. It intersects disciplines and practices that spatially render social, political, and landscape realities. Like any map-making, it is
the process of making sense of our environment, and particular to the Rural Design Studio, it is the creative collection and representation of stories that are bound in and performed through landscape over time. If traditional map making could be considered two dimensional, then a creative synthesis brings about a third dimension: a cartographical open space that allows for sifting, mixing, re-synthesis, and re-combination. A space likened to Bruce Mau’s ‘the third event’ where meaning is enacted ‘kinetically’ between and beyond the ‘pages’ (Mau, 2006). The ‘third event’ in this case is largely a subjective phenomenological experience, guided by the instrumentality of landscape and the particulars of a rural town.

Students are dropped into a largely new environment where the tangle of social, political, landscape, and ‘other’ cannot be simply navigated, and the collection of town narratives cannot be funnelled toward a predicted outcome. It is anticipated that students begin ‘lost’ and find their way by wandering and interacting, chance and indeterminacy manifesting by default. It is this genuine unfolding of a place, placated by the Situationist dérive, that entices the creative cartography experience.

Central to the Rural Design Studio is an understanding, as posited by Gaston Bachelard (1969), Gilles Deleuze (Boag, 1989), and Pierre-Félix Guattari (Boag, 1989) (among others), that landscape is practiced, opening ground for dialogue, story, and participation. Landscape in this sense is lived, rather than objectified and representative. James Corner (1997) proposes that landscape architecture sits at the interface between ecology and art, speaking “not of fixed and rigid realities but of movement, passage, genesis, and autonomy of propulsive life unfolding in time” (p. 82). Essentially, the Rural Design Studio’s exercise in creative cartography is employed to uphold this idea of landscape in distinct opposition to a more formalized process having the undercurrent potential to be too fixed, fixated, and immediately sourced.

Katherine Harman (2009) points to the professional artistic and cartographic need for “new kinds of cultural maps that acknowledge the impossibility of pinning down what is always shifting” (p. 15). At the positioning of James Corner’s art and ecology interface, the creative cartography device seems well suited to enable this conversation in the Rural Design Studio, at least. Creative cartography acts as artistic agency in exploring un-fixed and subjective worldly inferences such as the political nature of landscape boundaries and the multiplicity of social narratives. Where conventional maps typically maintain
the cultural and social status quo, creative cartography enables questioning the landscape realities and cultural constraints that we live within.

The anthropocentric shadow cast by traditional map-making is the idea that maps know, and certainly, at least, they contain and control, thus igniting Katherine Harman’s question “which comes first, the territory or the map?” While this was never meant to be a chicken/egg scenario, are current landscape architectural practices making it so?

The nemesis question of creation becomes significant in the discussion of Australian landscapes. For the Aboriginal people of Australia, story and landscape are so inexplicably tied that the death of one is perhaps the death of the other. While creative cartographies are not necessarily the mapping answer to a more culturally appropriate expression of landscape, what they can elicit is an experiential and phenomenological questioning of landscape instrumentality. The function of this questioning is, in this case, invaluable to a culture that more often dictates answers than listens.

The bigger picture of Reconciliation calls for an interrogation of all cultural devices, including map-making. The creative cartographer probes patterns of behaviour, systems, links, and relationships, and in this way has the potential to lead to new findings and point in new directions. The creative cartographer acknowledges that s/he does not know the world, but that the conversation is needed. The use of creative cartographies in the Rural Design Studio is designed along these lines to form a space where culturally dominant assumptions can be sensitively upended.

For students working briefly in a rural town, many subjects are implicitly difficult, such as the relationship of the traditional landowners with the colonial others, rural suicide and depression issues, youth issues, and town bureaucracies. In small towns, the unearthing of local idiosyncrasies can have extreme impacts on internal town dynamics. Creative cartography offers, in this case, a soft approach to looking at these issues. The slippery sides of art mean that once something can be seen, it can also disappear. Exhibition audiences take from the students’ work a multitude of meanings, each crafted individually. Even in the outcome, the final piece of the ‘map’, there is no constructed answer, just a reflection, big or small, of what the town was for the students.

Perhaps the best way to discuss how the aforementioned animated thinkings are applied in the Rural Design Studio is through brief explanations of some of the student projects particular to the community-based work in Pingelly and York.
The projects

**Pingelly Prerogatives 2010 – Animation 1**

The quaint, somewhat worn-out agrarian town of Pingelly lies about one-and-a-half hour’s drive east of the city of Perth (see Figure 1). It seems farther. Population is 2,000, consisting of mainly broad acre sheep and wheat farming families with around 100 regional Aboriginal peoples. The Rural Design Studio was invited to design an experimental university research farm not far from the town proper. The brief was somewhat messy and overly indeterminate. It was a university-led project that demanded a sense of community and the unrealistic challenges of participatory design. There was no real animation in it. It was a loaded gun. It was too chancy. Residents were justifiably worried about proposed genetically modified crops and pastures, along with their professorial stewards. We consequently declined an offer to work with the farm, preferring to work with the community first and foremost: a ‘bottom-up’ approach if you will. We wanted to animate a relationship with the town folk and not with the university that we already knew. We sought a generative set of chances to get to know one another in and around the town. Artful design tactics prevailed. After initial ice-breaking meetings with the local government and community representatives, we reassured them that the creativities of 30-odd design students were a wise bet. We prepared for a week-long camp in the town. Bus packed-to-the-gills, students suitably nervous: we hit the road – ‘bitumen all the way’. The serene Western Australian Wheatbelt landscape unfolded itself. It was quite a show. There were gasps from the back of the bus as the rural took over. Almost dream-like, we arrived, lobbing into the barren ‘Rec Centre’ – sacred ground and home to the almighty Pingelly Tigers, the local Aussie Rules football team. Now amalgamated with the bordering district, the Tigers have an identity crisis on their hands. They play elsewhere and this absence could be felt in their home landscape. As a consolation, they get to train on the hallowed turf two nights a week, an area kept green by reclaimed sewage water in the desperate hope of a brighter reclaimed day when the Tigers return for real home games. The distinctive smells of the change rooms – our camp amenities for the week – welcomed us even further, drenched in antiseptic due to the likelihood of inflicted infections from the germy playing field. This smell overtook our collective medicinal memories of sporting products like ‘Dencorub’ or ‘Deep Heat’ as the usual pungent odours associated with aggressive football landscapes. Into the clubrooms and dining hall we all went. Many of us were determined to find Nicky – Nicky Winmar, a local Pingelly lad and one of
Australia’s greatest football legends. The Aboriginal player, eventually running out for the Saint Kilda Football Club (SKFC) in Melbourne, who blew his own whistle at an infamous game with Collingwood on an August Saturday afternoon during the season of 1989. Nicky had been taunted all day by certain (now named) Collingwood players as well as by their Bogan cheer squad. Late into the game, Nicky had more than enough and peeled his jersey back to point at his proud black skin and Aboriginal being. This act alone, probably orchestrated long before on the same hallowed ground at Pingelly, changed the very game of Australian Rules football, and thereafter for every other Australian sporting code overshadowed by racial vilification.

Unsurprisingly, Nicky has been a hero of many and we were all somewhat keen to learn of similar interests amongst our fellow students and staff. Wheatbelt Western Australian football landscapes are unique animated ecologies in themselves – played out on a hopefully level playing field. For many Australian Aboriginal peoples these are the only fields-of-play where they can stand up and be duly recognized and, of course, win. And there he was – etched on the clubrooms’ honour roll many times as ‘Best & Fairest’. More importantly though, his huge portrait hangs over the clubrooms’ Members’ Bar, diminishing the small, awkward image of Queen Elizabeth II. For the republicans amongst us, we had arrived! The week passed quickly and we took turns availing ourselves of many chances to get to know the locals. As we scoured the town, these friendly and inquisitive conversations and ‘get-togethers’ of community engagement grew quickly and became central to listening to various town-folk who would elaborate further on the critical issues relating to local culture-nature sustainability interactions. Whilst we were often guided by the town council representatives and key community leaders, the students were particularly keen to speak to less prominent residents, young and old, who felt their voices and concerns about town landscapes were often ignored, or dislocated from local government decision-making processes.

Design exercises culminating from these formal and informal community ‘get-togethers’ allowed the students to co-develop and facilitate a set of community design strategies focused around issues of public design engagement, regenerative public space, and community and environmental sustainability (see Figure 2). Various creative mapping and landscape analysis tactics were undertaken, including a soil survey of salinity profiles in the town represented as both a performative mapping exercise and installation piece. Community members helped dig and prepare the core samples. The rising
salinity levels of the Pingelly townscape are common to many Western Australian Wheatbelt towns, caused primarily by over-clearing of the surrounding bush and corresponding rises in watertable levels that bring salt to the earth’s surface. Many residents were unaware of the presence and effects salinity could have on their town physically. As an exercise of creative mapping, the societal landscapes of Pingelly were transformed significantly. The final artwork contained the town’s soil samples, mapped and collected in bottles and made into a sculptured hanging mobile. The levels of soil within the mapped bottles indicated the respective positions and heights of the town’s water table. The piece could be played by tinkling the bottles with a steel peg similar to blowing over bottles filled with water. Further afield, a plan for Boodjar (Noongar Aboriginal Country) Park was undertaken on the ghostly remains of the old lawn bowling club. Students explored the local Indigenous connections to land, water, and sky using a variety of participatory research manoeuvres with a small but significant group of Aboriginal residents. The students’ plan sought an extensive use of endemic plant species and their cultural associations, including the strategic placement of Pingelly’s original horse-drawn road grader (considered a key culprit in the tree-clearing activities of the town and wider environs). The grader had been restored by the ‘Pingelly Men’s Shed’, a small group of retired farmers and young folk keen to assist in community design projects. The Men’s Shed program was later researched in detail with a town walk designed to connect all the available working sheds in the township. ‘Men’s Sheds’ are emerging and very successful rural Australian phenomena that seek to develop local technical
workshop-like resources, activities, and associated community projects to enhance the social and mental well-being of retired persons and isolated youth living in rural townships.

Over the week-long camp there was much socialization. Every night, local district guests were invited to the Rec Centre to talk about their special interests. Dinner was prepared by the students and served with a sense of intent and thanks for invaluable community learning experiences. We all learned a lot. The first night of talks included a genuine Noongar Aboriginal Welcome To Country – the very first for Pingelly. The Elders spoke softly of their Indigenous histories and tolerant opportunities for an appropriate inclusive-design sense in the town. Here was Paul Carter’s ‘an art of the gap’ in poetic reverse-motion. These generous ideas materialized later in the week with local Indigenous youth participating in the design of an ‘invisible’ hidden play park just outside the town. The town’s former Aboriginal Reserve became another restorative design project for the same students and community members. Other nights were celebrated with the stories of local historians and politicians and a prolific stonemason from Berlin. One night we all explored the night skies with a couple of local astronomers at their elaborate observatory. One group of students later worked with Dr. Susan Maushart from Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) radio to document the oral histories of six local residents in the local accountant’s office – converted to a makeshift sound studio. It worked well and the stories were made available at the community exhibition in the beautiful old Town Hall (its likely sale now reconsidered!). The stories are now preserved in the State’s Battye Library as well as in the local main street Pingelly Community Resource Centre. Perhaps the highlight of the show was the photographic essay work of the community and students, entitled “A Pause for Pingelly.” This project organized 60 participants to each take a photograph of anything they were doing at 10 am on the Tuesday of that week. The Pingelly community will soon publish a book of the same photographs, along with their explanatory stories. As the community exhibition drew to a close, students projected their weeks’ worth of analytical photographs, mappings, videos and design propositions over the entire facade of the Town Hall entrance. It provided a fitting exclamation point to the community’s power of animated ecologies through storytelling, making maps, taking chances, managing indeterminacy, acting out performative community-design process and attending to Indigenous rights.
York Yarns 2011 – Animation 2

The 2011 Rural studio was titled ‘Who are you Rural’ and was based on understanding past and future rural scenarios involving, rural, urban, and peri-urban spaces. The study unfolded along the Perth-Wheatbelt train line that was originally constructed to bridge the rural/urban schism, and was part and parcel in establishing Western Australia’s rural frontier. Ninety per cent of this rail line has been decommissioned (mainly attributed to the shifting of timber), but it is still the main commuting rail line through the capital city of Perth, and connects many eastern historical towns. So, as part of the journey, the students took the train as far as possible toward the town of York, Western Australia’s first inland European settlement and location of ‘the first farm’, established in 1831.

We arrived at an old stable converted into a Girl Guides Hall aptly fitted with patchwork quilts and bunk beds. While in the city 40 students could remain slightly disguised, there was no hiding them in a small town. Students quickly became a pivot point of town conversation, interest, thrift shop liberties, random gifts, and, in this case, even night raids by thieving locals. And, of course, a week’s worth of odd comments.

An essential facet to this Rural Design Studio program was that it became more or less an exercise in ‘open space’ learning. Students were given the time to make sense or nonsense of the town in their own time and wanderings. The ‘open space’ scenario allowed for a full immersion, and opened up the potential for creating space for chance meetings and interactions. It also allowed the students to create their own agendas and collaborative actions.

One ‘catalytic activity’ was visiting Aboriginal land, currently owned by the Kickett family. The ancestral Dreamings of York were seen from this property, through story, and through the large tracts of bare land and shifted rocks where the creational rainbow serpent made its path.

Another catalytic activity was a trip to a ruined piano sanctuary. Composer and improviser Ross Bolleter started collecting ruined pianos for an exhibition at a Perth art gallery in 1995. At the end of the exhibition, the pianos were put to rest and scattered through the landscape at Wambyn Farm – on top of hilly outcrops and in riverbeds. Some pianos are now so ruined that they lie close to the ground in a pile of strings. Maps to the property were only used loosely and the trip was more an exercise in the situationist dérive. We wandered across the landscape, in groups, and as individuals, moving toward pieces that caught our eye. This meant that findings were by chance and routes could not be recreated.
In retrospect, this insertion had elements of magic realism, the pianos almost signifying fantastical elements decomposing to create the ground on which we all walked.

A visit to some revegetation projects by the Talbot Brook Revegetation Group was another catalytic activity. Here the students experienced a first-hand look at some of the devastating effects that deforestation and clearing can have on the landscape, with large tracts of acid sulphate soils and salinity. After the studio, the students organized to return to York to support the group in an organized tree-planting weekend. This trip also led us to be invited to the local line-dancing class in the town hall where, once again, the locals had a lot to teach us all.

The rest of the time in York was student-directed open space, framed by chance meetings and communal circumstances. Not surprisingly, the students ended up attracting quite a few visitors and it was not unusual for someone to drop by our grounds for a chat and a cuppa. Locals often appreciated the spotlight and attention on stories that they never considered important to an outsider.

Students broke into groups and were asked to navigate their way toward making a community exhibition piece encased in the phenomenological practice of creative cartography. The piece was essentially boundless and could be anything from sculpture to purely visual or audio. There were no limits to the size of exhibition space and most pieces spread, whether ideologically or pragmatically, from the town to the exhibition space. The final exhibition itself was run almost entirely by the student body, right down to the preparation of close to two hundred iced muffins.

Three different exhibition pieces evolved in York – the Forms, the Tumbleweed, and the Rural Bed. The Forms started with a more or less traditional type of survey methodology, but included in the Forms was a mapped solution (as a grid) for York in which you could colour the approximate location in which residents lived. Each survey asked the question “I live in York and I...?,” with answers ranging from the strategic to the quirky. The indeterminacy of this project relied on the open-ended nature of the question and on the unknown outcome choreography between the location square and the nature of the answer. The York grid formatted the exhibition with surveys cartographically placed in relation to the coloured squares. As an extra layer (dimension), the student team then made ties by connecting similar stories across the cartographic layout.

The Tumbleweed project was situationist in its approach, manifesting the theories of drift, terrain vague, and chance. Students pushed a roll of old fencing
wire about 1.5 metres in diameter around the town to see what it would pick up. The objects that the Tumbleweed ‘discovered’ were seen as town artefacts. The piece was largely performance-based, and there were many interactions with community members as it was pushed about the town. The student team derived the path of travel as a wandering from place to place that sparked interest.

At the community exhibition, students played the footage of the Tumbleweed’s procession through town together with the actual Tumbleweed as installation and its collected community artefacts.

The Rural Bed was an interactive exhibition piece. The typology of the project was based around the historical craft practices of making patchwork, an old and now stereotyped regional activity akin to quilt-making. The bedspread cover was made to depict the landscape fabric from the Perth urban regions to its hinter-rural lands, incorporating landscape features particular to this area including the eastern Darling Scarp. Visitors to the community exhibition placed pins with their age groups onto the Rural Bed, mapping where they believed the ‘rural’ started. For some it was at the Darling Scarp; for others it was well past York Township itself. Mental boundaries and sociological extremes of the urban and the rural were contested.

![Figure 3. The Forms (L), the Tumbleweed (C), and the Rural Bed (R). Photographs by authors.](image)

Installations were made almost entirely out of supplies and findings from the town, making the students incredibly knowledgeable as to the resources of the town. It also means that the pieces were created out of the place, which adds an implicit tang of bioregionalism. The limitations in this are also the strengths; it is a small way of enforcing town understanding through immersion. And whether it is from this immersion or the sharing of communal space for an entire week, the Rural Design Studio is known for the student ties that it creates, and ties to the visited community.
Conclusions
This paper has attempted to explain the animated ecologies of Western Australia’s Rural Design Studio. These ‘careful’ community-based activities, events, and programmed performances seek to give life to otherwise culturally suppressed landscapes – ones that are deep and rich with cultural memory beyond the exotic into the traditional and contemporary understandings of Indigeneity and subsequent Australian livelihoods. These live projects are heartfelt realizations of another world where reconciliation and human rights are alive and well. They aim to give Indigenous peoples, and make others aware of the importance of, self-empowerment as a basic right for all humans. Measures of chance, indeterminacy, storytelling, and creative cartographies aim to activate these potential creative processes. As mentioned earlier, many Rural Design Studio experiences are found, represented, and transformed in rather magical ways – ways and means that try to develop new aesthetics of cultural sustainability where the meaning of beauty is more race and place-specific, eidetic, and generative in allowing communities to get to know one another, to develop, and to seek new (sometimes old and forgotten) solutions for social, environmental, and economic survival. The community-based artful work embodies an idea of an unpredictable (slippery) future pre-empting an unpredictable design process. The tipping point is unknown, and the best solution can often not be predicted. Here, we focus on an art at the edge of widening consciousness and a deeper understanding of place where our community partners get to see and value themselves through ‘other’ eyes. For our community partners, this juxtaposition of Studio players is seemingly more important than to envision themselves with the aid of the ‘other’. These participatory processes reveal the horrors, the champions, and the failures of place itself. In many ways, we also work to appreciate the idea that Western culture (or, indeed, the discipline of landscape architecture) is ‘lost’ and that creative ‘hybrid’ map-making needs to be remade with the actual practice and experience of multiple realms of landscape.

The future of Western Australia’s Rural Design Studio has now reached a nexus point where the parties involved are calling for a deeper, sustained commitment to place and its processes. New frameworks, agencies, and collective thoughts will need to be developed to respect these real and imagined artful possibilities.
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Notes
1. For the purposes of this article, the authors use the terms First Nation, traditional landowners, Aboriginal peoples, and Indigenous peoples interchangeably.
2. For a detailed discussion on the racial politics of design education practiced by the authors, see Revell (2012) and Pederson and Revell (1998).
3. Paul Carter proposes the ‘art of the gap’ to counter the decimation of Australian space by obsessive clearing and mapping of the land and a cleared space of inhabitation he named the ‘abysmal discourse’.
4. Such a maxim of thought is inspired by Jean Clair and, in particular, a quote in Rutherford (2010), namely: “A Person with a ‘good eye’ possesses the ability to find the critical point around which the world organizes itself” (p. 1).
5. These Rural Design Studio projects are further described in a short film prepared by the authors, available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aD9Bu0b8cvs

Bibliography


ART IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: WHAT ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS SAY ABOUT ‘ARTISTIC RESEARCH’ AND THE ARTISTIC ANIMATION OF SMALLER COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: For the last dozen years the Small Cities Community–University Research Alliance – a major initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – has been championing a research agenda where university-based artists and artistic inquiry have taken a lead role in defining and contributing to community cultural engagement. The research addresses the proposition that we consider “art as a public sphere,” examining how artist-researchers participating in community–university alliances contribute new critical perspectives, new forms of inquiry, and new circumstances useful for the creative animation of public spaces. The alliance also points to the difficulty in framing and maintaining a shared recognition of how the arts are valued, even among members of the CURA research team.

Introduction
If not by definition, then certainly by default, culture and (increasingly) creativity are associated with big city life: big cities are equated commonly with big culture and heightened creativity; small cities with something less. Yet an overwhelming majority of cities in North America have fewer than 100,000
residents. Of the 346 Canadian municipalities with populations greater than 10,000, only 47 of these are over 100,000 – and only 23 have populations greater than 200,000. In other words, over 90% of Canada’s towns and cities have fewer than 100,000 residents; in the United States, 97% of its cities have fewer than 50,000 residents (Brennan et al., 2005). Remarkably, most of the existing research literature on the impact of artists on the development of creative cities has focused exclusively on large urban centres.

In *Where Good Ideas Come From*, Steven Johnson asks, “What are the spaces that have historically led to unusual rates of creativity and innovation?” Johnson’s wonderfully engaging and important book echoes the prevailing discourse of urban revitalization and associates creativity with urban scale, claiming that “as cities get bigger, they generate ideas at a faster clip” (2010: 10). The indicators of creativity are important here: Johnson – like Richard Florida and others – adds up the number of patents and inventions generated per capita and finds that “despite all the noise and crowding and distraction, the average resident of a metropolis with a population of five million people was almost three times more creative than the average resident of a town of a hundred thousand” (pp. 10-11). Johnson then asks us to ponder: What makes residents of big city environments so much more creative and innovative than residents of smaller places?

The proposition is a partially misleading one, however, for it assumes that a tabulation of patents and inventions is the most significant measure of creativity and innovative potential. It does not account for how a critical mass of art and artists might inform urban animation and creative city planning, and perhaps most surprisingly, virtually no attention has been given to the proposition that, under certain conditions, the impact of art and artists may be amplified in smaller places. John Bratton and I (2005) have discussed elsewhere how smaller cities narrow the divide between creativity and work, the rural and the urban, the individual and the community – how social proximity affects political realities, including access to productive collaborations, media attention, and active participation in decision-making. Still, I remain impressed by the case Johnson and others make for ‘the city’ as a creative space; but after reading Johnson’s book I’ve come away even more convinced than ever that we need to develop scale-specific indicators of success, including those for quality of life, culture, creativity, and the productive interventions and innovations contributed by artists – especially in smaller cities.

Assessments of big city creativity remain tied to certain kinds of outcome measures, in general to traditional notions of productivity and energy
consumption. If, however, we look at a community’s creative capital in terms of cultural capacity building – social networking, levels of engagement and participation, community valuing and appreciation of the arts, and both formal and informal infrastructure development in terms of facilities, organizations, and visible municipal leadership – we get a very different picture. In their literature review of how the arts and culture prosper in smaller communities, Nancy Duxbury and Heather Campbell (2011) identify five reoccurring community factors and critical ingredients:

1. An underlying appreciation and attitude of acceptance toward local culture, history, people and assets, and a community’s “sense of place”;
2. A valuing of the arts in everyday life, and an inclusive encouragement of broad-based participation;
3. Key leadership roles representing the broad community, and a community-based coalition willing to work toward a common goal;
4. Social networks of key volunteers and arts supporters who work on exhibitions, festivals, community cultural development projects; support artists in their community-regeneration efforts; and inclusively encourage vibrancy among all cultural groups in a community; and
5. Cultural infrastructure development – Cultural facilities and centres are important “gathering places,” functioning as a cornerstone of community cohesion and community building. Support for this infrastructure, either as part of new developments or as maintenance of existing facilities, is essential to create a visible focus of efforts and to offer a physical point of contact for diverse community groups. (p. 115; emphasis added)

Note how cultural prosperity is tied to attitudes and values, and to a public recognition of culture’s role in community sustainability. Part of this picture is encouraging, for smaller places, we’ve found, tend to boast a highly committed core of volunteers, with extraordinary opportunities for direct and indirect involvement in the arts (Dubinsky, 2005). In such settings, the presence of, say, artist-run galleries seems a more appropriate indicator of creative and cultural health than the number of patents. However, despite relatively high levels of volunteerism and cultural participation, including participation in artistic activities, most citizens of smaller communities tend to share the bias that creativity and culture are located ‘elsewhere’. Modesty and insecurity and self-deprecation flourish in smaller places. Even more remarkably, most residents of smaller places do not see the arts as having a direct or profound impact on their everyday lives.
A few years ago, a member of our research group, Alex Michalos, surveyed five small Canadian cities, asking residents to assess the impact of the arts on their personal quality of life (Michalos and Kahlke, 2008). This was the first time such a study had been undertaken. Michalos and Kahlke investigated associations between the time invested in and satisfaction obtained from arts activities on the one hand and seven different measures of the overall quality of people’s lives on the other; further, he looked at all associations in the presence of a number of other features of respondents’ lives, such as features concerning demographics, motives, participation in non-arts-related activities and satisfaction obtained from a variety of domains of life, like family relations, friendships, housing, and a sense of meaning in life.

The arts-related activity with the highest percentage of participants was going to films (cinema, movie theatres). Other activities were, in ranked order, going to concerts, attending community events, going to historic and heritage sites, and going to art museums and galleries.

The study found that while people most frequently think of painting and/or drawing when they hear the word arts or the phrase artistic activity, the most frequently mentioned “most important” arts-related activity in the total sample and in each community involved music in some form, particularly listening to music and singing alone. Singing in a group, the researchers discovered, gave participants a relatively low level of satisfaction.

Overall, however, Michalos’s study found a troubling result: when surveyed, residents of small cities reported no significant correlation between their participation in the arts and their quality of life. Given the economic and social impact of the arts documented in creative sector reports on these communities, such results seem all the more remarkable – and point to, I speculate, a social disconnect between the role played by the arts and their perceived impact on daily living. Such a disconnect has serious implications for social and cultural planning.

Indeed, following Pippa Norris’s (2001) observations on the nature of civic engagement generally, we can think of the “culturally prosperous community” as dependent upon a shared public recognition that the arts are valuable: cultural knowledge (what the community knows about the arts), cultural trust (the community’s support for the value of the arts), and cultural participation (the community’s level of arts activity) are key factors in developing the creative small city or small town. Our research program into the cultural futures of small cities has encouraged us to appreciate more fully the importance of art and artists.
in developing this shared recognition – and Michalos’s study only underscores how fragile this shared recognition (in particular, the link between the arts and quality of life) can be.

Part of the problem may be that too often artists are drawn into social and cultural planning discussions after the fact, if at all – that is, once the substantive planning and funding issues have been largely resolved. As a result, the literature on cultural and urban planning has little to say about the planning potential of artistic viewpoints, artistic interventions, and the creative animation of cities and towns; instead, references to artists and their cultural work are more typically included as illustrations and examples – not as arguments. According to Jonathan Metzger (2011), there exists a “nascent interest in planner–artist collaborations,” but virtually no critical consideration of how such collaborations might work (their feasibility and value). Metzger calls the rationale for bringing art and artists into the planning process “generally patchy and ... under-theorized” (p. 213), and he encourages a shift of focus from “‘art in the public sphere’ ... [to] art as a public sphere” (p. 214, italics in original).

Where Metzger focuses on art and artists in general, our work for the last dozen years has taken place in the context of a “community–university research alliance” – a major research initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We’ve thus been practising and reflecting on a research agenda where university-based artists and artistic inquiry have taken a lead role in defining and contributing to the community’s cultural engagement. The following report extends Metzger’s proposition that we consider “art as a public sphere,” examining how our participating artist-researchers contribute new critical perspectives, new forms of inquiry, and new circumstances useful

Figure 1. Figures in this article illustrate some of the interdisciplinary collaborations involving artist-researchers within the CURA projects. Town hall meetings, collaborations between the local government and the university, drew hundreds of local citizens to discuss the cultural, social, economic, and environmental future of small cities. These discussions were often complemented by art exhibitions and panel presentations. Best Foot Forward, an initiative of the walking:lab (November 2009), contributed to the City’s transportation and walking plan.
for the creative animation of public spaces. Our experience also points to the
difficulty in framing and maintaining a shared recognition of how we value the
arts, even among members of our own research team.

The Small Cities CURA
For the last 12 years we have been exploring the notion of artistic research – in
particular, on the community-based knowledge production of artists working
within the academy. This exploration began with the Small Cities Community–
University Research Alliance, or CURA (2001 to 2006), and became a defining
element of our current CURA, “Mapping the Quality of Life and Culture
of Small Cities” (2006 to present). These two interdisciplinary research
programs (the first initiated by the Kamloops Art Gallery in collaboration
with Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia; the second a
follow-up program initiated by the University) are supported by large national
grants and significant community contributions, and are focused on issues of
cultural sustainability and quality of life in small city settings. In particular,
the 26 researchers (drawn primarily from the social sciences and humanities:
English, education, film studies, geography, history, social work, sociology,
philosophy, political science, rhetoric, theatre studies, and the visual arts)
have been exploring notions of social capital and community asset building in
communities of 100,000 population and smaller.

The Mapping Quality of Life and the Culture of Small Cities initiative has
advanced its research program locally, nationally, and internationally over the
past five years through various community-based research projects, city-wide
activities, and a range of publications, presentations, and policy meetings in
order to successfully meet its initial objectives to identify and explore quality
of life and cultural challenges and potential of small urban centres. Indeed, by
exploring cultural realities and mediations that give form and meaning to small
cities, the CURA has begun to contribute significantly to the literature about
quality of life indicators, cultural indicators, community development, modes
of artistic inquiry, and arts and culture pertaining to small cities.

Employing an interdisciplinary approach to develop qualitative indicators
and quality of life measures designed to explore aspects of cultural formation,
the CURA is comprised of seven complementary clusters of one, two, and
three-year research projects, with each cluster collectively addressing ways
to better understand, visualize, and improve the social, organizational, and
narrative networks that define small city cultures. In turn, research results and
applications from all clusters are incorporated into the larger project, and then disseminated and applied in consultation with our community partners and a cross-country network facilitated by our national partners.

This alliance brings together a national ‘community of interest’ and selected ‘communities of place’, and involves key researchers and partners, thus mobilizing resources and expertise for a stable, community-based research program. Our non-academic partners include a local and regional network of community researchers. These include the Kamloops Art Gallery, offering continuity between research programs and an extensive record of community networking; the Kamloops and Skeetchestn Indian Bands, offering an Aboriginal perspective often missing from previous quality of life studies; the Make Children First Initiative, a community network devoted to supporting programs and research for families and children; the AIDS Society of Kamloops and the Rural Women’s Network, with their local, regional, and national reach; the BC Wildlife Park and the Kamloops Museum and Archives – cultural organizations with an established research and publication profile; the Banff Centre, an organization recognized internationally for its contributions to the arts; the Kamloops-South Thompson Sustainable Community Atlas Project and the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, two organizations dedicated to mapping regional indicators and data and providing sustainable local government services.

Figure 2. A key venue for the community–university researchers was the “research cabaret” series, hosted by the university. These informal gatherings provided an opportunity to present issues and share research in progress. Here, tourism professor Robin Reid co-presents her preliminary findings with student research assistant and community activist Bonnie Klohn at Exploring the Role of Community Gardens in the Small City, March 2011. The final research results were shared later that year at the symposium on Animation of Public Space through the Arts: Innovation and Sustainability, September 2011, University of Coimbra, Portugal.
The interest in artistic forms of inquiry and the role of artists in community-based research arose from our work with these community partners – and, as noted, was especially inspired by our work with the Kamloops Art Gallery. In 2005, we hosted an international symposium on ‘artistic inquiry’; and in 2008, in collaboration with the Banff Centre, we ran a 6-week residency devoted to exploring notions of artistic research and community development.

In this context, creative place-making – with a focus on quality of life, mapping, visual and verbal representation, notions of home and community, and the need to define a local sense of place – has emerged as an important theme. Now that the Small Cities research program is entering its final phase, we’ve begun to reflect in greater detail on the roles played by our university-based artist-researchers.

**Involvement of artist-researchers in community-based research**

From the beginning – and with an art gallery as the initial lead partner – the directors of the Small Cities CURA saw the potential for ‘displaying’ research as an important means of public dissemination. Once the research program was underway, at the first major meeting of researchers and community partners, the group reviewed its goals for (1) collaboration and assessment, (2) new partners and alliances, (3) additional funding possibilities, and (4) communications and dissemination strategies. In addition, Lon Dubinsky and I, as co-directors for the initial research program, presented a brief on the potential involvement of artists (Dubinsky and Garrett-Petts, 2002).

The prospect of including the artists was suggested as an example of how new researchers could be drawn into the project, in this case through culminating exhibitions that documented the projects and presented artistic work reflecting major project concerns. The program quickly moved to attach artists, mainly visual arts faculty members, to projects as they arose. In the meeting, we noted that this enhanced use of artist-participants complemented the progress of several current projects, and was generally supported by an increasing interest in interdisciplinarity and community-based public art, especially “new genre public art” as defined by Suzanne Lacy (where the creative focus centres more on the relationship between place and audience than on the object). We envisaged several possibilities, each contingent upon agreement by the researcher(s), community partner, and artist(s) for each project. For example, some artists might participate fully as researchers with their work incorporated into, if not in some cases synonymous with, a
specific project. In other cases, artists, we speculated, might work as more detached observers.

Since the first CURA, the research group has refined the roles of artist-researchers, with the artists now following one of three inquiry models: (1) Affinity – where the artist matches existing work with issues under exploration by a particular research group; (2) Response – where the artist creates new work responding directly to the particular research group’s project; and, most importantly, (3) Integration – where the artist works with a particular research group, becoming in effect a co-researcher by committing skills, insights, vocabulary, qualitative problem-solving methods, and art production to the research process and findings. Integrated research initiatives, we’ve found, put increased demands on artists to explore and create both visually and verbally; we’ve begun to understand better how the university research emphasis (replete with its relatively entrenched expectations for traditional publication and exhibition outcomes) distinguished the work of artist-researchers from those working exclusively in the realm of public art and community advocacy. For the artist-researchers working within the community–university alliance, their practice necessarily involves attention to place, audience, object, interdisciplinarity, multiple literacies, and research.

A key aspect of our first CURA, an aspect continued in the current CURA, thus became the inclusion of artist-researchers, practising university-based artists working alongside academic colleagues and community partners. We have been encouraged by the potential we see for linking creative inquiry to more traditional methods of research; and we’ve found that the presence of working artists as co-researchers (Doug Buis, John Craig Freeman, Laura Hargrave, Ernie Kroeger, Donald Lawrence, Eileen Leier, Ashok Mathur, Adelheid Mers, Melinda Spooner, and Craig Saper) provides enhanced access to, and credibility with, the cultural communities of our participating cities: as one of our partner organizations in Australia found when employing artists in the “Small Towns: Big Picture” project, “While the development of sustainability indicators is of academic interest to those working in the field of ... performance evaluation, the [Small Towns] research would have been an insignificant blip in the community’s experience if it had not been for the involvement of the artists” (M. Rogers, personal communication, June 9, 2005; Rogers and Collins, 2001). Involving participating artists and engaging communities via locally developed cultural projects promotes dialogue and social interaction, and the possibility for contributing new knowledge.
As our interdisciplinary teams learn to accommodate alternative forms of researching, the artist-researchers themselves have prompted further self-reflection and even a rethinking of our three inquiry models. For example, Donald Lawrence (a contributing photographer, installation artist, and university professor) circulated the following email correspondence, an illustrated rough draft of speaking notes for a conference presentation that became the subject of ongoing discussion:

I understand the “artist/researcher” model to be one in which an artist both affects and is affected by academic culture. As a researcher [involved in] the first CURA I worked in a mode that was considered “integrated,” in which one or more artists worked as integral members of a research group .... In this manner of working my own artistic practice did not come into play and, rather, my artist’s “working knowledge” was drawn upon to determine means of working with community participants and research assistants (who might themselves be working as practising artists). In the present [research] group I am collaborating in a similar manner but also with an interest in creating my own artistic work in parallel and in dialogue with many of the group’s other research activities. This realm of artistic inquiry is, in effect, a fourth category, the embracing of an essentially traditional mode of creative “exploration” that complements those previously identified modes of “integration,” “response” and “affinity.”

The interest (among myself and the other artist/researchers of the CURA group) in working in the manner of artistic “exploration” suggests a schism between artistic practice and artists’ involvement in academically-inclined research. However, a further look at “my own” artistic practice during the time period of the [first research] project speaks to something more of a recursive migration of questions and practice across the realms of artistic and academic inquiry, and the opening-up of new modes of artistic exploration. (D. Lawrence, personal communication, October 16, 2007)
I’ve quoted at length here because adding the new category has become important generally for the artist-researchers. While appreciating the advantages of categorizing artistic research into modes, they nonetheless felt (and continue to feel) the modes as somehow limited, as not speaking to the way artists actually think and practice. It is worth noting that the distinction was initially lost on many of the non-artists, who questioned whether so broad a notion as *exploration* could be considered a distinctive mode, arguing that including it would set up a kind of faulty parallelism. However, by claiming *exploration* as a fourth category or mode *complementing* the other three, the artists, we believe now, were indirectly asserting a critique of the disciplinary logic and assumptions informing the creation of such categories: notions of integration, response, and affinity positioned the artists, but these categories did not fully acknowledge the alternative forms of thinking, researching, and making that the artists were bringing to the projects; the categories did not speak to the way artists characteristically moved among such categories, ‘opening up’ rather than closing down new modes of inquiry.

![The Banff Centre](image)

**Figure 4.** The *Making Artistic Inquiry Visible* (MAIV) artist residency at The Banff Centre (May–June 2008) brought together 29 artists, cultural workers, writers, critics, and curators from Europe, Great Britain, and North America. Together the participants practised (and reflected on the nature of) artistic inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration.

**Research update: Toward an alternative academic discourse**

A new research program, “Making Interdisciplinary Inquiry Visible,” has recently emerged from the CURA work and builds on these earlier research experiences, looking to better define and understand the potential contributions of aesthetic knowledge, especially visual ways of thinking and communicating. Specifically, this new research direction extends the critical conversation about new genre public art into the emerging genres of interdisciplinary writing and research dissemination linked to artistic inquiry (see, for example, Bazerman and Paradis, 1991; Becher, 1989; Barton and Hamilton, 1998;
Messer-Davidow et al., 1993). Based on my experience as a participant observer working with the two CURAs, I continue to maintain that the inclusion of visual artists, their practices, and works in interdisciplinary research provides a vital area of investigation. Given the renewed interest in the role of artist-researchers in universities – following the team-based approach employed in the sciences – the prospect of humanities and social science research teams including artists as co-researchers presents us with new, largely unexamined, models of collaborative research and writing (see Blackstone, 2002; Shanken, 2005). Similarly, our community research experience in linking practising artists with community partners from all walks of city life has given us a rich and varied sense of the potential for university-based artist-researchers to help redefine traditional definitions of research and, in the process, influence community and cultural change.

In essence, we have become even more interested in discovering how this ‘artists-as-researchers’ model extends and complicates the practice of interdisciplinary research and collaborative scholarly communication in the humanities and social sciences. Accordingly, we also need to position university-based artistic research in relation to the public art models of community engagement that gained currency in the 1980s and 1990s. Take, for example, Suzanne Lacy’s statement on public art’s potential emphasis on community engagement and social and political action – communicated with reference to an “aesthetic language” and discourse of advocacy that distinguishes it from the research interests and inflections of the academy:

For the past three or so decades visual artists of varying backgrounds and perspectives have been working in a manner that resembles political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility. Dealing with some of the most profound issues of our time – toxic waste, race relations, homelessness, aging, gang warfare, and cultural identity – a group of visual artists has developed distinct models for an art whose public strategies of engagement are an important part of its aesthetic language. The source of these artworks’ structure is not exclusively visual or political information, but rather an internal necessity perceived by the artist in collaboration with his or her audience.

We might describe this as “new genre public art,” to distinguish it in both form and intention from what has been called “public art” – a term used for the past twenty-five years to describe sculpture and installation sited in public spaces. Unlike much of what has heretofore been called public art, new genre public art –
visual art that uses both traditional and nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives – is based on engagement. (p. 19)

The underlying motivation here is populist, committed to social action and offered in the service of a community that may have little direct interest in either art or research. As Diane Rothenberg (1988) explains,

Lacy’s populism extends to her coworkers; she includes as significant participants people for whom artworks have little interest and makes available a menu of goals and rewards from which they can choose the reason for their ongoing involvement in her project. Her success in attracting and keeping participants over long periods of time testifies to the relevance of her concerns in the social sphere, to her skills at social organization, and to her ability to make pieces which are accessible. She addresses the issue of the alienation of the avant-garde by advocating social change in a form that broadens the audience for art statements. (p. 62)

Similarly, our shared community research experience in linking practising artists with community partners from all walks of city life has given us a rich and varied sense of the potential for university-based artist-researchers to help redefine traditional definitions of research and, in the process, influence community and cultural change (Garrett-Petts and Nash, 2005). Based on our research group’s field observations to date (see Garrett-Petts and Nash, 2005, 2009; Nash and Garrett-Petts, 2007), we argue that the presence of artists as co-researchers (and, hence, co-writers and co-presenters) may introduce a creative destabilization of disciplinary assumptions, prompting the research teams to frame new questions, negotiate and redefine key concepts and a shared conceptual language, give enhanced attention to visual data, and communicate results differently, often offering opportunities for the exhibition or display of both data and findings.

Interdisciplinary research involving visual artists gives contemporary urgency to Marshall McLuhan’s (1994) notion that it is “the artist’s job to try to dislocate older media into postures that permit attention to the new” (p. 254). This dislocation and the resultant alternative academic discourse introduces issues of aesthetic presentation, a rhetoric of visual and verbal display; it also involves issues of knowledge production, the need to accommodate alternative traditions of inquiry, modes of invention that permit increased
attention to personal experience, and a hands-on (‘qualitative’) exploration of material culture (see Dewey, 1934, 1938; Ecker, 1963). While I stop short of McLuhan’s (1960) assertion that “we must all become creative artists in order to cope with even the banalities of daily life” (p. xiv), I argue that a focus on the writing, speaking, and research practices of visual artists should be a prerequisite to understanding the “sensuous geography” (Rodaway, 1994) of this new visual/verbal interface (the emerging alternative discourse of collaborative and interdisciplinary inquiry).

Certainly arts-based research is not new – and social scientists in particular have shown themselves more than ready to theorize a merging of the critical with the creative, as Carol Mullen writes in her introduction to a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry*:

> An explosion in arts-based inquiry has recently occurred in the social sciences, forcing open its tightly stitched seams. This experimentation beyond scientific modes of discourse has created hybrid forms – notably performance art pedagogy ... Creative forms of research representation – narrative, life history, poetry, drama, visual art, and more – have come to the fore, eliciting response, luring participation, and demanding attention. (p. 166)

In an earlier issue of the same journal, in an essay entitled “The Arts and Narrative Research – Art as Inquiry: An Epilogue,” Shelley Day Sclater (2003) asserts: “we are witnessing not only the possibility for recognition of new knowledges that have hitherto been bypassed or excluded, but also the tentative mapping out of a new terrain for research in which the boundaries and possibilities of ‘narrative’ itself are challenged” (p. 622). Sclater writes of artistic inquiry as “an embodied social practice” (p. 622).

These descriptions of artistic inquiries raise the kind of questions that are beginning to give shape to the role and significance of artistic research in the academy – what Piantanida et al. (2003) call “sculpting the contours” (p. 182) of a developing field: If research, traditionally defined, promises the creation of new knowledge, what kind of knowledge does artistic inquiry produce? What effect might an emphasis on artistic inquiry have on the production of art? How does the increasing academic and institutional recognition of artistic research affect the artistic community? How does the practice of artistic research affect academic culture? What is the role of artistic research in animating communities? What can non-artists and communities, including academics and academic communities, learn from artist-researchers – in terms of developing
alternative methodologies, attitudes, and patterns of inquiry? And, a question seldom asked in the social sciences literature: what are the implications of integrating not just creative forms and activities, but more fully the discourse (the disciplinary assumptions, practices, traditions, and values) of artists, art historians, critics, and curators?

I want to linger a moment over this last question, for it has become a commonplace in the literature on ‘arts-based inquiry’ to focus on creativity and artistic ways of knowing in the abstract, as a group of approaches and possibilities that may be unproblematically imported into – usually as supplements to – normal research practices. Helen Simons and Brendan McCormack, for example, write in a recent article on “Integrating Arts-Based Inquiry in Evaluation Methodology”:

Released from the categories, codes, and formal processes of analysis that are common to more traditional forms of evaluation, we can be open to new ways of seeing and understanding. In using the creative arts we are challenged to engage differently with the data and to see differently. (2007: 295)

The authors repeatedly reference the “creative arts,” “artistic knowing,” and “the creative process” as liberating strategies, but little is said about the categories, codes, and formal processes that inform the particular work of the individual practising artists who represent, enact, and embody artistic knowing.

Figure 5. The Produce/Produce project (September-October 2009) combined an art exhibition, conference, and print publication, with the aim of fostering community discussion and action regarding food security, health, Aboriginal perspectives on plant cultivation, and community gardening. Within a year following the project, local citizens developed a community garden in the city’s downtown core. For details of current activities, see http://publicproduceproject.blogspot.ca.
What the CURA’s artists and non-artists say about their collaborations

The research approach
Now that we are nearing the end of our ten-year CURA, and as part of a self-reflective study, we’ve been gathering and studying research narratives from 30 members of our group (university researchers, artist-researchers, community research partners, student research assistants, university administrators, and support staff working on the project). The members were interviewed by student research assistant Bonnie Klohn and asked a series of questions about their experiences as CURA participants, including questions about the nature and value of artistic inquiry.

The understandings and misunderstandings
When asked about feeling part of the research team, the artist-researchers responded positively, situating their activities as part of an engaging and potentially transformative interdisciplinary conversation, a conversation many felt comfortable entering and exiting without compromising individual artistic practice:

Coming to terms with interdisciplinary research:
“It’s momentary. When I’m there [working with the research team] it can immediately be rekindled again. It’s perfect…”
“It’s very interesting for me to be able to interact with a variety of people who weren’t necessarily in the arts.”
“What the CURA has done well is helped develop these interdisciplinary and collaborative research connections. ... I think we have been very open to the idea of working inter-institutionally and inter-collaboratively and inter-disciplinarily, and internationally as well.”
“I haven’t focused my projects as well as I did in the first CURA, and perhaps it’s been trying to understand the framework of the quality of life aspect of it – which has always been a little bit more of a sociological model. As a practising artist, I have to push myself to be interested in that [topic].”

New audiences and insights:
“The small cities exhibition – Urban Insights – in 2005, which was one of the culminating dissemination events for the first CURA, brought numerous researchers, their students, and community partners who were involved in
projects ... into the Kamloops Art Gallery. ... That brought a huge influx of people into the Gallery, people who would not have otherwise gone there. I think it might have been [the Gallery’s] largest attendance for an event.”

“[The CURA] has been a place where you can always expect people not only from a broad range of places, but a broad range of thinking and different academic practices – so that you are always kind of collaborating with people who are completely outside of your own discipline, and that’s pretty rare actually in academe. We tend to silo everything.”

“CURA has changed my artwork. It has made me focus upon the land, on a sense of place.”

When asked to elaborate on the process of artistic collaboration and inquiry, the artist-researchers tended to reference public and institutional spaces, positioning their practice in relation to both the university and the gallery. The potential for surprise, personal change, and the initiation or education of others characterized their responses:

_The sense of surprise and exploration:_

“There is room for surprise.”

“It gives rise to surprise.”

“I think it is wonderful, ... wonderful too that it is an inquiry, not set, not rigid.”

_Bridging and aligning disciplinary practices:_

“The challenge ... is figuring out how people from different disciplines think and work and what the trajectories of their research are.”

“I think that the most positive aspects for me, as an artist, was the fact that there was very little intervention in what I wanted to do artistically. That is, I could get an idea and run with it and develop it right to the end, without anyone micromanaging my project.... Another positive aspect: bringing people together ... from diverse fields to talk about one specific thing. These are people you wouldn’t normally come into contact with.”

“Allows interactions with either government or economic entities... Artists see their practice as broader ...than [something] market-driven or quality-driven – but as exploratory. [This is] a tendency that has existed since the sixties among many artists who have been [working out of] a political interest.”
“As a practising artist my primary mode of dissemination is exhibitions. ... So the co-authoring of books steps outside the usual kind of paradigm of visual arts dissemination.”

“If I step back to ten years ago, to the beginning of the CURA, I would not have thought of myself as an artist ... doing public art or art in public spaces. ... It is an interest for me now.”

“It brings people into galleries, which is a very good thing.”

Several respondents offered comments on the theory and implications of the emerging artist-as-researcher model:

*Toward new models of knowledge production:*

“In every discipline you have some kind of applied area. ... So the artists are very clearly held to the applied area, even though everybody knows by now that they have opinions ... and can write and speak. But the theory is still owned by the theorist or by the art historians. [This] theory is about objects, ... about how to take care of these objects and even how to evaluate them. But I think that artists need a theory about *making*. [The emerging field of] artist research is beginning to talk about that.”

“CURA is out in front in understanding the research value of the creative imagination.”

“It is no longer a matter of the artist locked away in the studio and only having their art seen by curators – but more an opening up of the studio doors to the community. To give to the project and what the artists can give to the community, and it works like a two-way street.”

Perhaps most significantly, when asked about how other members of the research team or how members of the general public tended to see their collaborative contributions, the artist-researchers assumed a ready appreciation of their role as central to the program, focusing on issues of creativity (invoking both the clichés and the capacities) and areas of presumed shared interest:

*Creative practice as central to research:*

“[I think I was a key player in terms of having a strong cultural presence, specifically a visual arts presence, in the CURA. That flowed throughout the first CURA and was important in obtaining the second CURA.”
“I know the rhetoric: the artists have resources of creativity they can share – but it’s not as easy as that. Mainly because creativity is largely mythical and undefined. As artists work alongside others … something self-reflective can be explored. … It’s about a way of serving and interacting with the world.”

“I think it’s really smart and progressive. Creative imagination and that kind of artistic practice is central to [the] transition we are making from literacy to [new forms of literacy]. In other words, this kind of creative act needs to become much more central to education generally.”

“What I have seen develop through the involvement of the faculty and student artist-researchers has been an interest among faculty in other departments, in terms of what visual arts and visual and performing arts practice can bring to research. [For example,] faculty members in geography, who I see as taking a leading role in the CURA recently, have had significant involvement with the visual arts faculty: … they are cognizant of what we do and very interested in what we do – and vice versa. We see a meeting point of our disciplines, and what we both deal with is very physical material, whether it ranges from a small object to a complete landscape. Hence the shared interest in visual imaging through such cross-over forms as maps, diagrams, etc.”

“Artist-researchers are the adhesive between those domains [the university and the community], … [the] spark and catalysts. We are accessible and permeable.”

Early in this chapter I invoked the work of Jonathan Metzger (2011) and Alex Michalos and P. Maurine Kahlke (2008), whose research collectively speaks to both the potential and the limitations of recognizing art’s value in the public sphere. Metzger laments the “generally patchy” critical consideration of how

Figure 6. More traditional conferences (regional, national, and international) were the hallmark of the Community–University Alliance. Map My Culture: Community and Space in Small Cities (Comox Valley, May 2009) was organized by a community partner and featured academic presentations, an art exhibition, field trips, and an online journal publication. For more on these activities, see http://smallcities.tru.ca/index.php/cura/issue/view/3.
collaborations between artists and planners might work; while Michalos and Kahlke find that the public seems reluctant to recognize the arts and artists as central to perceived quality of life. But, as I was recently reminded by one of the social scientists working on our team, such results are only surprising to those already immersed in or committed to the arts and culture scene. In this light, then, perhaps we should not be surprised to find that many of the values and assumptions expressed by the artist-researchers are not fully shared by other members of our research group.

**How non-artists viewed the contributions of artists**

Of those non-artists interviewed, the administrators expressed the most support for the role of artistic inquiry in a community–university research alliance, seeing the artist-researchers as exemplars of interdisciplinarity. One senior administrator commented:

> I think that artist-researchers are an incredibly important contribution to what our divisional research would be because I do remember the times when artists were not considered to be researchers. That’s not too long ago. Over the last twenty years I’ve seen a very positive shift towards a more inclusive definition of research, and I believe artists themselves can contribute immensely to our understanding of the world and community issues.

Calling artistic inquiry “an intriguing type of research,” the administrator noted that “artists ... or artistic research ... can uncover aspects of (in this case) small city or community life and history that you couldn’t really depict in the same form [using] traditional research means.” Speaking of the CURA more generally, the administrator identified the interdisciplinary practices as “a tremendous asset,” arguing that “it’s the way to go. I don’t think there is a way back to the old very disciplined kind of research – very confined and narrow. If you really want to find real answers and really discover what we are really about, we need to do that together in teams.”

A second administrator echoed this sentiment, noting:

> having artist-researchers in residence at TRU has given them a stable situation from which they can do cutting-edge work that they may not have been able to do if they were independent artists in the community. So I think the ability to work from that academic foundation [is important], where they can come back to the academy and reflect on what they’ve learned in the community, but mutually
go back out into the community and share what they are learning through that reflection. ... They are not at the periphery of what’s gone on. I may be overstating the case, but I think the CURA again has enabled people to see the impact of the arts from all different levels.

In contrast, fellow faculty researchers and the community research partners – though sympathetic to and welcoming the collaboration of the artists – expressed only passing interest in artistic inquiry as a potentially transformative mode of research. Although uniformly complimentary, and using adjectives like “fantastic,” “creative,” and “wonderful,” many of the faculty researchers reported only “casual talk” with the artist-researchers and little direct involvement. In general, artistic inquiry was only lightly theorized outside the artist-researcher group itself, although the artists’ work was enthusiastically praised for its public visibility, for making the research more accessible, and for providing what one researcher called a “kind of lubricant for the process.” The informants’ phrasing, too, is instructive: the faculty researchers and their community partners spoke of “bringing in artists” and how artists offer “a really interesting opportunity for bridging or moving what we do here.” These are metaphors of separation and connection that, while ostensibly employed to espouse the virtues of collaboration, nonetheless highlight a continuing disciplinary divide. The following digest of comments is typical of the responses recorded:

*A disciplinary divide:*

“I think that the artist-researchers have played a really instrumental role in this research. I think there is an accessibility of the visual that there isn’t of the written. It’s visible, right?”

“I loved having the artists as part of it. I thought it was incredibly valuable – looking at the artistic representations and the work that they did.”

“Well it’s different, it’s much more qualitative, although I would consider myself a qualitative researcher much of the time. There’s a focus on displaying data, art gallery exhibits, which is not common in the social sciences. So there’s a kind of a ... that is, because the artists tend to outnumber the non-artists [working on the CURA team], there tends to be, or at least this is my perception, ... a lot of exhibits. And I’ve learned a lot from that, although that’s not the way I would exhibit my work.”
"I think it’s been an interesting exercise, but I think in the long term it’s important to go back to one zone area for publishing work. And conversely, invite artists over to publish in a more traditional, social science domain, which involves conferences rather than exhibitions."

"I’m a guy with sort of a science and technical background, so what struck me was the sort of cultural/artistic creative element of the research that sometimes took me out of my comfort level, but I appreciated it very much."

"Well, I think that to me, and to the agency that I represent, I think that whole cultural and artistic area of community research has been given credibility and a sort of standing."

"People don’t often think of art as research, but yet I think there’s so much more awareness created [for our agency’s work] when you can showcase the artistic element ... of any research, right?"

Figure 7. The Tranquille Art Project began as a community exhibition initiative, with contributions from university researchers and artists. Following on the heels of the 2007 project, CURA researchers engaged in a detailed study of Tranquille, an historical site situated at the rural/urban fringe of the city. Researchers continue to develop a public archive, teaching tools, and an audio walking tour to further animate the space with narratives of local history, exploration, and environmental sustainability.

**Conclusion**

The presence of artists working alongside social scientists and humanists invites the engagement of artistic research as a complex of attitudes, motives, and actions. I would want to maintain, based upon over ten years of observations, that the presence of artists affects positively the nature of the research questions posed, the methods employed, the results validated – and the means of disseminating those results. But, even among members of an interdisciplinary research group committed to artistic research as a privileged mode of inquiry, a fulsome and shared recognition and understanding of the roles art and artists play in both academic research and community animation is evidently no easy
goal to achieve. What we can say for now is that any creative destabilization of disciplinary assumptions observed was likely a transient effect and largely project-specific: while we certainly documented research teams framing new questions and negotiating concepts and methodologies as part of their research activities, the lasting impact may reside more with our artist-researchers and administrative support than with the non-artists (that is, than with fellow faculty and the community research partners).

The artistic animation of research spaces, inside and outside of universities, remains a matter of ongoing inquiry. We are in the early stages of understanding the nature of artistic research and what can be gained by integrating artist-researchers in labs, businesses, corporations, factories, not-for-profit organizations, economic incubators, policy institutes, hospitals, community planning councils, and community–university alliances. This understanding begins with intentional recognition – with an informed awareness of artistic practice as a bona fide research approach; with more case studies, especially those where artists are working in collaboration with other artists or with interdisciplinary teams; and with more development and testing of new models for interdisciplinary research collaboration involving artists and their inquiry practices.4

Notes
1. I gratefully acknowledge funding support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also thank the members of the CURA research team for their input, especially those who contributed images and provided feedback on various drafts of this article: James Hoffman, Emily Hope, Donald Lawrence, David MacLennan, Ashok Mathur, Dasha Novak, Michelle Pugle, and Gilles Viaud. Image layout and design is by Emily Hope. The self-study interviews cited were gathered and transcribed by student research assistant Bonnie Klohn, who worked with me on their organization and analysis. In addition, I am indebted to feedback from the participants of the “Animation of Public Space through the Arts” symposium hosted by the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra (September 2011), where an earlier version of this chapter was presented. The present chapter also draws upon and extensively revises some previously published work, presenting here a kind of iterative narrative – presenting, that is, both a comprehensive summary of the Small Cities CURA and new data on the shared understandings and misunderstandings that may inform interdisciplinary collaborations involving artists (Garrett-Petts and Nash, 2011; Garrett-Petts and Nash, 2009; Nash and Garrett-Petts, 2007; Garrett-Petts, 2005). The CURA Website provides an archive of our community-based research activities: www.smallcities.ca. One final acknowledgement: During the last year, my
research partner Rachel Nash passed away from cancer; and although she was unable to contribute directly to this essay, her insights (drawn from years of conversations and collaborative writing) nonetheless inform many aspects of the work presented here.

2. Eight years ago, in a chapter published in *The Small Cities Book* (2005), John Bratton and I considered how smaller communities might become incubators of creativity and innovation. We explored the critical mass of cultural activity necessary to attract and sustain a community of knowledge-based investors and professionals; we wanted to know how the creative capital of small cities measures up against that of their larger neighbours. We concluded that the existence of a critical cluster of artists and cultural activity in a small city not only acts as a magnet for attracting investment in knowledge-based ventures and for recruiting and retaining knowledge workers, but it also increases the capacity for sustained engagement in work-based informal learning and innovation. Smaller places are acknowledged typically for nurturing both community involvement and an enhanced quality of life – qualities we were initially surprised to learn have been negatively associated with creativity. According to the existing literature on large urban centres, the opportunity to establish strong community ties may actually deter some people (read: the creative class) from moving to small communities: deep community involvement is said to be commonly rejected or avoided by itinerant knowledge-sector workers, who characteristically prize personal flexibility and opportunity over community responsibility and commitment.

3. Gilles Viaud’s work on a quality of life ‘tool kit’ for small cities provides an example of the kind of scale-specific measures much needed by smaller communities (see Viaud et al., 2009).

4. Although the literature on the role of artists working in research teams is slim, a number of key studies stand out: Shanken (2005); Scott (2006); Pearce et al. (2003); Wilson (2001); and Thompson (1995).

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**WHOSE VOICE? INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

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**Abstract:** This essay reflects on an experiment to engage audiences in public space aiming at social sustainability. The experiment – conducted by undergraduate art students – took place during the “Animation of Public Space through the Arts” conference, September 2011, in Coimbra, Portugal. In this experiment, debate as function of public space was realized. But in that debate, the voices of daily users were quite silent. To understand what lacked, the author brings in theoretical reflection on the function of public space, the levels of participation, and the balance public artists have to seek between their ties with the art and the users/audiences. She then describes how two art collectives in the Netherlands intervene in public space and manage to let the voices of users be heard. She concludes that staging is a main function of public space, if striving for social sustainability.

**Introduction**  
In autumn 2011, we did an interesting experiment during the conference “Animation of Public Space Through the Arts: Innovation and Sustainability.” We asked students to intervene in public space to find entrances for the audience to start to co-own public space. This search for co-ownership is connected to new
thinking on sustainability. The premise is that if local audiences are connected to their direct environment, the public space will meet their needs and this audience will use the space with respect and may be even take responsibility for the location and the other users. This will contribute to social integration or the ‘People’ aspect of sustainability next to Planet and Profit.

Although the student experiments were very sincere and brought new insights on the artistic approach of public space, the students were unable to prompt interaction with the audiences that were regular users of that specific public space. They remained as artists who created a nice and interesting happening; only the artists’ voice was heard. It puzzled me what was lacking in this experiment.

To get a grip on this shortcoming, I collected some theories on the function of public space, on participation and entrances in community art. I also took a closer look at two artist collectives in the Netherlands that are both quite successful in interaction with users’ audiences. With these ingredients I will conclude what is needed for interventions in public space where artists and audience meet and how artists might find entrances to enable audiences to start to co-own the public space.

**The Coimbra experiment**

In the autumn of 2011, Theatre students from the Utrecht School of the Arts, students from Artistic Studies at the University of Coimbra, and Theatre and Education students from the Escola Superior de Educação de Coimbra (Coimbra College of Education) worked together designing and implementing interventions in the city centre of Coimbra. The workshop was co-designed by the Utrecht School of the Arts, O Teatrão, a theatre company in Coimbra, and the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra. In the workshop, we asked the students to reach out to a general public to encourage the audience to start to co-own public spaces in a sustainable way. The workshop lasted about 15 hours, spread out over a week. Being a workshop for guests, outside of the community, we could not provide the students with contacts for daily users of the location. To prevent the students from imposing ideas on public space and the audience, we offered neutral mask workshops (see Figure 1). This theatrical approach had not previously been applied in public space in cities.

Coimbra is a middle-sized, old Portuguese city and has one of the oldest European universities. The students focused on the heart of the city with its tourist attractions and its student bars and retail outlets. Coimbra gives the impression of a declining city centre: there are vacant houses and shops.
Most of the shop-owners seem over 50 years of age. The experiment was not a commission such as that of a local government or housing company, with applied goals. We used the freedom of a laboratory for interventions in public space. The experiment focussed on getting into contact with audiences and translating observed social needs in aesthetic actions. We were not aiming at a street act or a performance, but at making the audience become involved in their public space.

After a walk through town where the students learned some of the stories of the surroundings, we asked the students to focus on an intuitively chosen place or theme in the city. We asked them to research the area by using observation tactics based in neutral mask. Three mixed subgroups of students were formed, one focussing on the old cathedral (Sé Velha), one focussing on the initiation rites of the university students, and the third on the local public market with sellers from the villages surrounding Coimbra. At the end of the week all groups took the conference public to their spot and showed their work.

The group focussing on the old Cathedral performed for the many types of sightseeing tourists they had noticed during the week. The performance was not very obvious. The students could easily be perceived as young travellers instead of actors. We – the conference audience – were spread out all over the square. The focus on touristic admiring and their poses made passersby aware. I saw people imitating the looks of the students and a mason next to me, who
was loading his car, stopped for a break, watching the lines of the cathedral and making eye contact with me. There was a sense that something was happening, without being obvious what. The students had chosen to perform for a general audience.

The group focussing on the student-initiation rites made a set of rules for crossing Praça de República, the square that is the heart of student bars and facilities. The rules on which the team reacted were given by the way the audience crossed or lingered on the Plaza. They had three forms of presence on the square: accentuation of crossing by following the people; melting down, that is, slowly collapsing in front of a person; and forming a circle around an accidental group on the square. Certain constellations on the square were the key for the performers to go to a new formation. We as an audience were told to be totally invisible. The team wanted to influence the atmosphere on the square subconsciously for any audience. They had done this several times. When the square was busy their influence became clear, but in the case I saw there was little public activity on the Plaza and little happened. Just the melting, which is a strange movement in public space, evoked a rejecting reaction of the involved audience. Their interactions were directed to an audience of the university students as a target group.

The group focussing on the local vegetable market had chosen a storytelling entrance. They noticed that mainly market-sellers used the market. They bought products from each other and were chatting all day. Most of them seemed retired. Although the students did not speak Portuguese they tried to get into contact with the shop-owners. They observed that buying and selling is an exchange and decided to take this rule as a starting point. The intervention became to empower us, the conference audience, to buy a story of the marketers, and then to bring what you bought to share for lunch with our fellow conference audience. To support the exchange the team gave us fifty cents to buy with and little attributes that could help us to make contact. I, for example, got a necklace with a cross, because they observed some of the marketers had little altars in their shops. Half of us came back with stories even without speaking the language. Half did not. I think social skills and age influenced the capacities to collect stories. Here the conference audience was the target group.

What was striking in these three experiments was that all teams focused on mirroring the rules of a location to the audience. Some strived for openly showing them; others preferred a subconscious approach. As well, divisions in three optional audiences for public space were clarified: the ones that use space
on a daily basis, the conference group (an outside group with interconnections), and a general passing-by (visiting) audience. The Old Cathedral group focussed on the general passersby; the initiation students rites group on the daily users; and the local market group intervened as a group audience.

Concerning social sustainability I do not think potential users of the chosen locations got another view of their connection to that location or each other. Co-ownership was not yet touched on. What this small workshop did show was a first step for artistic research on interventions but no approaches for needs of the different users in space or entrances for co-ownership of public space.

To deepen understanding of possible entrances for artists to public space I will add some theoretical reflections on the function of public space, on participation and the balance between artistic and social qualities of an intervention.

Theoretical reflections

Public space

Richard Sennett describes public space as “the place where strangers meet” (Sennett, 2008: no page). In opposition to the private realm, this is the place where “incomplete knowledge joins to anonymity.” The quality of the meeting of strangers changes in time. Sennett points out that there are three schools of understanding the function of public space. Hannah Arendt (1958) emphasizes the debate aspect of public space: “people can discuss freely and equally cut free from the particular, private circumstances” (in Sennett, 2008: no page). Neutrality of public space is fundamental to this concept. Jürgen Habermas (1968) accentuates the encounter in public space. He contends that communication is not possible without confrontation “with class or social differences” (in Sennett, 2008: no page). Neutrality is discussed because class or social differences influence access and encounter. Sennett (with Goffman) articulates the performance element of public space. Public space, in his view, is a stage where individuals and groups express their identity. Here neutrality is turned around and deliberately used to perform an (chosen) identity (Sennett, 2008). I think these three schools function in time, and at the same time exist next to each other. We are now moving to and fro between the public space as encounter and public space as stage.

Artists who work in public space react on these three functions and open up public space for debate, encounter, or stage. The collaboration between artist as professionals and the audience as non-professionals and the level of
participation of non-professionals differs in the three concepts, but the highest level of participation seems to happen during the function of ‘staging’. In that situation, the influence of the audience on the content and the form is strongest.

**Participation**

Due to the development of new media in art, games, and communication, the role of the audience has garnered new attention. Charles Leadbeater (2010) argues that participation has widened from a solo spectator toward a role of collaborative co-designer of the interaction. He delineates three modes of interaction: spectatorship, limited individual participation, and collaborative open-ended participation. Spectatorship focuses on offering the audience enjoyment (sit, watch, and listen). Limited participation adds involvement by making the audience give feedback (talk). Open-ended participation wants the audience – on top of the earlier levels of participation – to do and to determine the story and the product of the interaction. Co-design is an intensive level of doing. ‘Do’ focuses on the story or the content, whereas in co-design the aesthetics of the interaction and product is part and parcel of participation. In that case, the poetic qualities of the audiences have to be taken into account.

With the help of Leadbeater we can alter the level of participation within the three main functions of public space: debate, encounter, and staging. Debate, of course, seeks to enjoy, listen, and talk. Encounter deepens it by adding doing, whereas staging implies the open-ended participation that can lead to co-design. But how do artists balance these levels of participation with their own artistic contribution?

**Mapping community art**

In *Mapping Community Art*, Pascal Gielen (2010) outlines a debate between aesthetics and ethics. He proposes, like Kitty Zijlmans (2008), that art has its own world of codes, rules, institutes, and knowledge. Development of aesthetics, formal language and function of art is an on-going process within this community. This is one of the fundamental relations for any artist. Art has to be acknowledged by the artist’s peers. Gielen calls this tie *auto*-relational. Relational is a concept he borrows from Bourriaud, saying art consciously seeks communication about, to, and in society. Central in this auto-relational kinship are the aesthetic or poetic qualities.

A community artist (like an artist in public space) creates a second tie: to the social context, an ethical demand. In this demand, “the artistic aspect is
subsumed by political or communal goals ... a community art project has only ‘succeeded’ when it realizes an interaction between participants and the artist and wider community at which it is aimed” (Gielen, 2010: 20-21). Gielen observes that success in the community is not a synonym to success in the professional art world. He calls this tie allo relational.

This scale between auto (art) related qualities and the allo (society) related qualities helps us to understand the two ties that bind artists in public space. As in the auto relational world, aesthetics and the poetic or formal language of the art are main forces: I propose to call this side of the scale poetic qualities. For the allo (society) relational forces, I propose to call these critical qualities: here the involvement with society is central. But the participants can be involved on two levels: as people connected to the content and as co-designers, bringing in their own poetic elements: participants’ poetics. Gielen provides us with a balance on which the artist may map himself concerning his affiliations between art and engagement.

The Leadbeater levels of participation can be understood as a continuum of enjoyment – mutual talk – involvement in doing – co-design. This continuum is affiliated with the poetic–critical balance of Gielen. Central in the world of art is to offer spectatorship to a general audience in which the experience of beauty and/or twisting of views play a leading part. Two extremes of audience participation pop up: a general audience that wants to enjoy and an active participatory audience that prefers to do. Essential in the critical aspect of Gielens’ balance is the active involvement of participants who are connected to the content and practice of the artwork: doing and co-designing. Leadbeater helps us map how artists can mix participation of non-professionals with their own need to balance between the poetic and critical qualities of the work: he provides us with a continuum on the level of participation.

If we combine the three scales explained above, we can imagine a rolodex around the function of public space (see Figure 2). This figure combines the art–engagement scale and the level of participation continuum with the three concepts of Sennett on the main functions of public space (debate, encounters and stage). In the areas of enjoyment or talk, debate is the primary function of public space at stake. Often the artist’s voice and poetics shape the debate. In the areas of talk and doing, encounter starts. When the doing of participants is mainly content-based, the critical qualities are the core of the artistic communication. When poetic elements of the audience become included, we move toward co-design and, by this, toward staging
the voices of the participants. Ideally, a test case would not only stage the participants’ voices but harmonize them with the voices of the artists. By combining these scales we have some references to help us understand the complexity of roles played by artists in interacting with audiences in a socially sustainable way.

Figure 2. Visualization of a combination of the three balances.

**Reflections on the experiment**

If we look back to the Coimbra experiment, we can make use of the three above-mentioned scales to understand the extent to which the students were able to encourage the audience to start to co-own public spaces in a sustainable way. Before positioning the experiment in a scheme based on the three continuums, however, I will briefly outline the design and course of the three Coimbra interventions.
The Cathedral group did its intervention by performing enlarged movements (in gesture and in time) that tourists make when they admire a monument. The chosen gestures were observed during the week or came from interaction within the group. They performed for about ten minutes. They did not gather the audience for a start, nor did they finish off with a fixed image at the end. There was a continuous flow of movements with no explicit conflict or turning points in the choreography. Students appeared and vanished as trespassers or passersby. The audience were those individuals who visited or walked through the site and were willing to look at what was happening.

The Praça de República group started off with a dislike of the hazing activities of students that were happening that week. They discussed the (non)sense of this habit and decided that they wanted to mirror implicit rules of inclusion and exclusion to the Portuguese students. After observing the way the Portuguese students met and dispersed on the central square of the area, they developed interaction rules, which they would perform as a group. They would react on any formation that appeared on the square so the choreography became based on accidental happenings on the square. Unlike the Cathedral group, they had no fixed choreography. Like the Cathedral group, they appeared and vanished as a performance team.

The Public Market group noticed that the main interaction in the market was between the sellers themselves: like a group of friends, telling each other stories and sharing food. The students perceived a community that they would like to open up for strangers. They noticed the market-sellers were proud of their products and the students searched for tools to share this pride with outsiders. The students decided to assign a task for the conference audience: to collect a story from one of the sales(wo)men. To make that happen, they provided the conference group with tools (50-cent coins and props that would fit with certain market-sellers, such as a necklace with a cross or a handkerchief). Collecting a story was an individual task. The idea was to make lunch with all the food bought and share the collected stories among the conference audience members. That last part did not work out, as half of the participants did not get a story, or the story was quite small, due to language differences. Spontaneously, the group decided to go buy cheese as a group and ask the seller all sorts of questions using a translator. The local market intervention made use of a dramatic set-up. The start was an introduction to the market and getting the assignment – to try to get a story from a salesman or woman (individually) – and to finish with a collective lunch.
We are now able to position the interventions in the theoretical framework: the level of participation of the audience reached by the students, the way they positioned themselves on the art–engagement balance and, from that, what relation they offered the audience toward the Public Space (i.e., functions of public space). In this analysis, I propose a dynamic view on function, not as a fixed place but as a direction based on the possible reflections of the audience as guided by the experience. Based on my own observations, and in an exploratory manner, I position the three examples on the scales in Table 1; inter-subjectivity of more observers would improve this process of positioning. As part of this positioning process, I define which type of audience the students reached for in each intervention experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of audience</th>
<th>Level of participation</th>
<th>Art–engagement balance</th>
<th>Offered function of public space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sé Velha (Old Cathedral)</td>
<td>General passersby, tourists</td>
<td>Enjoy</td>
<td>Poetic Qualities Toward Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praça de República</td>
<td>Daily users: Portuguese students</td>
<td>Do: by subconscious interaction</td>
<td>Start off from Critical Qualities, moving toward Poetic Qualities Toward Debate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Analysis and positioning of the Coimbra interventions within the dimensions of the theoretical framework

Overall, the students’ experiments were fine pieces of work given time and circumstances, but to reach out toward social sustainability, more qualities of staging or encounter should have been taken into account. To understand what could be the underpinning qualities of staging or encounter, I will describe two examples of socially sustainable art practices in the Netherlands.

Two art practices on social sustainability
In the Dutch art world, we can find examples that have been able to find entrances toward social sustainability while balancing between the poetic and the critical qualities in their work. I will describe two of them to show different
approaches: Cascoland in the Kolenkit neighbourhood of Amsterdam and HIK designers in Utrecht Overvecht. To introduce you to these two cases I will first discuss the context of public art in the Netherlands.

**Context of public art in the Netherlands**
The Netherlands has a long tradition of the use of art in public space. According to the SKOR Foundation for Art and Public Domain, the function of “art projects is to offer a new confronting or enriching perspective on social questions and the physical organisation of public realm. [...] Interaction with the audience is seen as an essential element of art in public space” (SKOR website, 2012: no page). This focus on the audiences of art projects in public space is the subject of a search of how artists could move from user-centred design toward user-driven design (Reiss, 2007). In user-centred design, the user is consulted for his or her needs but in user-driven design, the user becomes part of the design process. Urban areas are the arenas for this search: that’s where The Netherlands communities seemed to erode – newcomers stay unconnected to the neighbourhood and feelings of anonymity and insecurity occur. This opened up Dutch public space for artists with a community art orientation. Besides public artists, whose main focus is on the aesthetics of the design, in the last decade community artists have started to intervene in public space. Community

Figure 3. BBQ spot for the neighbourhood, split into two areas, one for halal use of BBQ and one for non-halal use of BBQ. In the back, a light work of the lighting club, saying Halalluja, a language game between Halleluia and Halal. Photo: www.cascoland.nl.
artists have an equal focus on the aesthetic and the social function of the design and they involve active users (non-professionals) in the design process. The background of community artists is often interdisciplinary. Both Cascoland and HIK designers started their work in the last decade and represent the quest of artists towards social sustainability.

**Cascoland, Kolenkit Neighbourhood, Amsterdam**

Cascoland is an “international network of artists, architects, designers and performers sharing a fascination for interdisciplinary interventions in public space, promoting mobilization, participation and networking through artistic exchange and collaboration” (Cascoland website, 2012: no page). Fiona Bell and Roel Schoemakers form the core of this artist’s network and have done community art over the last eight years. They started with international projects but are now focused on Dutch projects. In 2010, they became involved in the Kolenkit neighbourhood, a redevelopment area of West Amsterdam. Kolenkit’s houses were built in the 1930s, and in the 1950s flats filled in the leftover space. Kotenkit is an immigration quarter; many families of all nationalities live in the district.

In this neighbourhood there were already plenty of social grassroots initiatives but these were mutually isolated and were only available to specific target groups. The urban redevelopment team looked for a neighbourhood-wide approach to civil participation. The assignment Cascoland got was to actively connect the inhabitants to the redevelopment process by artistic interventions, architectonic structures, or objects (Trienekens, 2011: 70). The project ran until May 2013. Up to December 2012, they did 34 interventions, with a variety of approaches from urban gardening to building barbecue places, from a local guesthouse for visitors of the inhabitants, run by the Moroccan women next door, to a lighting club.

Central in Cascolands’ approach is that they asked for two small houses in the neighbourhood as a home for the length of the project. One of them is a studio where they collect suggestions for interventions by offering the audience a service. They started off with a neighbour-restaurant but when they noticed that not all kinds of neighbours came, they opened a temporary snackbar where people could order a snack in exchange for an idea for the hamlet. The other became a guesthouse, as one of the needs was a place to lodge visitors. The houses in the neighbourhood were small, families were often big, and most of the inhabitants had family and friends that would visit from abroad. Whenever
Cascoland noticed a certain need, they developed the solution by offering an artistic happening around that need. Often they invited other art collectives to interact on this need. Or they tried to start a club of neighbours around that topic. The lighting club is an example of a club that was established after noticing that there were many unemployed electricians who kept working with light as a hobby: they started making words with fluorescent tubes as a kind of flash mob during winter. Installing all kinds of clubs is a third characteristic of their way of working.

Concerning social sustainability, the club element in particular builds permanent contact between residents. I would call this permanent community-building approach a form of encounter in public space. It will be interesting to know whether these moments of encounter will survive after Cascoland has left the district.

Cascoland gathers suggestions of the audience often by aesthetic interventions such as ‘a snack for an idea’. In making the needs of the audience visible, Cascoland uses their poetic input and originality. In that starting phase, the aesthetic input of artists is strong. In the product phase, the aesthetic orientation is less dominant. Due to the strong artistic start-ups, Cascoland is followed by the ‘art’ scene as well by socially oriented interventionists.

You could say that Cascoland starts with design, gathers feedback on the design (‘talk’ in terms of Leadbeater), re-designs with input from other artists, and then enters into doing by clubs or by making products.

Figure 4. Facade canvas in Overvecht, showing the district as it was in the 1960s. Community design by HIK designers and the residents of this flat. Photo: N. van der Geest.
HIK designers, Overvecht, Utrecht

HIK designers is a young “design company with a passion for creating site-specific public art installations” (HIK website, 2012: no page). HIK is an abbreviation for clear innovative art. The three young architects – Klaas Schotanus, Henk Verhagen, and Marije van der Bork – are permanently based in Overvecht, Utrecht2, in an old garage which they call the design-garage and that they share with other young creative initiatives. A theme in their urban design is a game with the private–public division. Van der Bork, for example, developed a public kitchen in the park that can be used for community cooking.

Overvecht is one of the biggest neighbourhoods of Utrecht, located just outside the city centre. It is a typical Dutch 1960s district, built with a dream of modern living in flats with lots of public greens for middle-class use. It has a mix of social housing and privately owned houses. In the 1980s, Overvecht became an immigration area (50% newcomers), gaining the image of an anonymous neighbourhood. Now, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, it is being re-designed. The motives are maintenance, making the neighbourhood fit the needs of today’s housing and living, and upgrading the neighbourhood which has several social problems.

One of the main products of HIK designers is a series of photographic murals (façade canvasses) on the blind heads of the high-rise flats in Overvecht. These murals have become landmarks in the area. The process of designing a mural for a flat is divided into four clear steps. In Step 1, a committee of residents starts the process. They discuss theme and practical conditions. In this step, HIK designers use Talk as a dominant form of participation. The collection of optional pictures is Step 2. Residents are informed and invited to propose photographs. Sometimes HIK helps residents to improve their pictures by offering a photo workshop. Here Do is at stake. Step 3: The selection of the mural has two elements: first, the committee and HIK designers do the short-listing and HIK envisions the options. Then, a competition between the pictures is organized. All residents are invited to a selection party down at the entrance of the flat. They vote for the best design. Talk again as entrance for participation. The execution phase, Step 4, is to prepare the chosen picture on a huge screen and attach it to head of the flat. In the opening event, the residents are involved again.

By offering such a clear format, HIK gives “locals a hands-on design experience” (HIK website, 2012). This makes it possible to share design skills
with non-professionals and coach them in different levels of participation, varying from talking to doing and from complete involvement to incidental contribution. The aesthetic aspect and the social aspect are balanced by sharing the designers’ skills. Some critique HIK because they give the audience such a strong say in the aesthetics. Another characteristic of their approach is the permanent basis of HIK designers in the district itself: people can pop in with suggestions for improvement of their environment on an ongoing basis.

Concerning social sustainability, this process offers residents of Overvecht the possibility of getting to know each other and gaining pride in their own flat. It is a rather open form of involvement that gives the possibility of choosing different roles. I would call it a network approach to community building. As far as we know, it does not often create permanent new connections between people in the flat, but it does connect individuals to design and to mediators in the district, such as HIK designers. Some residents keep in contact and walk into the design-garage to suggest new interventions in the neighbourhood.

**Juggling between poetic and critical qualities in public space**

What is striking when comparing these two approaches with the Coimbra experiments is that we find that both start from a base inside the districts in which the artist-designers want to intervene: Cascoland for the time of the project, HIK on a permanent basis. Being on-the-spot, they can become a friend of the residents. From outsiders, they move toward insiders.

HIK designers provides residents with certain types of skills: democratic skills in talk or designing skills in doing (photography and selection). The company’s focus is very much on improving the critical qualities of the involved audience. Co-ownership of the direct environment is understood as improving skills to negotiate with each other and with the commissioners – skills needed for debate and encounter, in the terms of Sennett. HIK designers mediate in this process. They seek forms of doing for the audience as a level of participation. The photographic murals express the aesthetics of the residents, without firm intervention of the poetics by the HIK designers: their focus is on critical qualities, on Gielen’s scale of art and engagement.

Through artistic statements, Cascoland provokes reactions of potential participants. These reactions become the starting point for deeper research by organizing new happenings in which again artists’ poetics are a core element. You could say they open a debate on the neighbourhood by first staging themselves or other artists and from that they move toward encounter (clubs) or
toward offering a stage to the participants in the neighbourhood. Co-ownership is understood as encounter between groups within the community and through expressing the realities of participants to a wider audience. Cascoland is followed by the art community due to their inventive way of evoking reactions on their own poetics at the start of the participatory route.

Comparing Cascoland and HIK designers in their approach at the level of participation, both focus on *doing* and *co-design*, but whereas HIK is rather modest in putting their aesthetics on the design, Cascoland uses this explicitly for the start of participation. HIK designers harmonizes the voice of the residents more toward the critical site of the art–engagement scale, while Cascoland tends to use artists as present backing vocals, more toward the middle of the balance between poetic qualities and critical ones. Where Cascoland’s club approach ‘uncages’ group encounters, HIK provides individual residents with tools to seek encounters with local authorities. In both approaches, staging of local identities is at stake as a tool for encounter. In Figure 5, I propose a position of each of the three examples in the theoretical framework of the three balances.

![Figure 5. Positioning of the Coimbra experiments, Cascoland, and HIK designers in the theoretical framework of the three balances.](image-url)
Conclusion
Whose voices are being heard in art works in public space? We can conclude that there are possibilities for artists to harmonize their own voices together with the voices of the users. HIK designers and Cascoland show us how to do so. Important ingredients for the design of such a project are interventions in the level of participation of audiences: to move from enjoyment via mutual talk and doing into co-design. Next, artists have to position themselves on the scale between the poetic and critical qualities of the work, not neglecting the poetics of the participants. By doing so they provide the audiences with the capacity to cope with one of the three functions of public space: debate, encounter, and staging. Staging the participants in public space and facilitating them to improve their expressions through the artistic input of the professionals seems to be the entrance for co-ownership and social sustainability of public space.

When inviting students to the Coimbra experiment, we failed to introduce them to what is needed to stage audiences. The levels of participation – enjoy, talk, do, and co-design – and the division of audiences in general, active and semi-involved, were blank spots. Also, students were not aware of the different functions of public space and thereby they understandably aggravated their own artistic poetics. This gave an interesting reflection on the chosen places and supported a debate on rules of public space, but did not reach out to co-design or to enhance the social sustainability of the places in Coimbra they enlightened.

Staging the participants in the sense of expressing local identities on their own aesthetic terms (i.e., participants’ poetics) seems to be central in artwork in public space aiming for social sustainability. Those artists, who are able to induce participants toward shifting the boundaries of their own poetics, might conduct a harmonious concert of users’ and artists’ voices.

Notes
1. Neutral mask is a form of mask work initiated by Jacques Lecocq. Central in this approach is non-verbal communication and to let the theatrical work happen organically. It trains collective choir-work, observation with delay of judgement and helps artists to react from being impressed instead of bringing a meaning to a public or site.
2. Utrecht is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands.
References

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COIMBRA AS AN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE:  
THE CITY AS AN ABSTRACTION

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ABSTRACT: The experience of a city can be quite a complex thing, which art can help us to understand. Through the eyes of artists, through relations between the visual and the conceptual, artists can reveal some of the complexities of the aesthetical experience of a city like Coimbra.

RESUMO: A experiência de uma cidade pode ser uma coisa muito complexa, que a arte nos pode ajudar a compreender. Através dos olhos dos artistas, através das relações entre o visual e o conceptual, os artistas podem revelar algumas das complexidades da experiência estética de uma cidade como Coimbra.

Welcome to Coimbra
Here, in these reflections, I am more concerned with the influence of cities in art than with the influence of art in cities. Coimbra is quite a stimulating city for making art – the conceptual density of Coimbra, with its history, places, and characters. With both symbolic and abstraction strategies, an artist can find ways of going from what’s specific to a town to universal concepts.

Welcome to Coimbra could be the title of this essay, as I will start by showing you Coimbra though the eyes and minds of artists, like a kind of alternative tourist guide.

There are at least two Coimbras: The Coimbra we live in and the idea of Coimbra. Actually, we live in both.

In 2003, we gathered a few artists and organized an exhibition at Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC). The name of the exhibition was “Coimbra C.” Inspired by characters, stories, and places of Coimbra, the artists were invited to have a conceptual approach, to create new realities.

Coimbra “C”
Inspired by the ruin of Convent of Santa Clara-a-Velha, António Melo imagined a city where ruin was like a virus that spread everywhere. Not really a bad thing, something that appealed to our romantic, melancholy pleasure (Figure 1).
Figure 1. The ruin of Convent of Santa Clara-a-Velha and António Melo’s artistic work in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.

Figure 2. Mondego River, and Armando Azevedo’s artworks, “mondEGO,” in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.
Inspired by the Mondego River, Armando Azevedo realized that the word Mondego was the contraction between Monde, Le Monde, and Ego. MondEgo (Figure 2).

Figure 3. Choupal National Forest, and Baltazar Torres’ artworks, “Looking for the perfect city” and “Urban trees,” in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.

Inspired by the woods of Choupal, Baltazar Torres made a kind of ecological statement by imaging what would happen if buildings took the place of trees (Figure 3).

Inspired by the Joanine Library at the University of Coimbra, a monument to the idea of a library itself, José Maçãs de Carvalho made a very small film, with a very long list of credits (Figure 4).

Inspired by Quinta das Lágrimas and the story of Pedro and Inês, the most horrendous love story in the world, Paulo Mendes turned it into a kind of carnival attraction (Figure 5).

Inspired by Coimbra’s Holy Queen Isabel and the miracle of roses, Pedro Tudela, instead of turning bread into roses, made a subtle transformation of one of the walls: crumpled white paper with mysterious sounds coming from behind it, like a blank surface waiting to be transformed (Figure 6).
Figure 4. The Joanine Library at the University of Coimbra, and excerpts from José Maçãs de Carvalho’s film, *Aujourd’hui maman est morte*, in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.
Figure 5. Quinta das Lágrimas, and Paulo Mendes’ artwork in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.

Figure 6. Statue of Rainha Santa Isabel (Saint Queen Isabel), and Pedro Tudela’s artwork, "P_APEL_ido_T", in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.
Inspired by Jardim da Sereia and its ‘Mermaid Garden’, in which the fountain is actually a triton, a merman, Sebastião Resende made a sculpture, a hybrid form, something between a fish tail and a table, celebrating the complexity, the dissolution of boundaries in art (Figure 7).

![Figure 7](image_url)

Figure 7. Jardim da Sereia’s ‘Mermaid Garden’ fountain triton, and Sebastião Resende’s “Sereia seria” sculpture (foreground), in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photos by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.

Vasco Araújo was inspired by the idea that Coimbra is the place Portuguese is spoken ‘more correctly’, turning the idea of correct pronunciation into images (Figure 8).

Inspired by the tomb of the first King of Portugal, I made a painting. And there I asked: “When did the founder of Portugal begin to feel Portuguese?” Before Portugal was founded, afterwards, never? (Figure 9).

Inspired by Portugal dos Pequeninos (‘Portugal for the Little Ones’), Pedro Pousada showed us quite a different reality, criticizing or celebrating urban chaos and complexity (Figure 10).
Figure 8. Dictionary entries, and Vasco Araújo’s artworks, “Phonology, according to João de Deus,” in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Circulo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003. Photo by A. Olaio. Artwork reproduced with permission of artist.

Figure 9. Tomb of the first King of Portugal, Alfonso Henriques, and António Olaio’s artwork, “When did the founder of Portugal begin to feel Portuguese?” in “Coimbra C” exhibition, Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra, 2003.
Dancing in the city
We can imagine a city like a musical note we can sustain, eventually forever.
Like the city, the note is always the same but always different. It can’t be the same because everything around it is changing. But it is the same because it is the same note, it is the same city.
A city is always new and old at the same time.
Living in a city is a process of constant discoveries, not only of its changes, but mostly of what a city has that is permanent. The novelty of its oldness.
A permanent discovery of its oldness (Figures 11 and 12).

Today I discovered stereo sound
My girl wouldn’t believe it
but I told her to glue a canary to each shoulder

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhLe2SVud_w

But the liveliness of what’s old in a city resides in its own death. The old buildings, and what remains of them reveal themselves in the mystery of what they have been, a strange way of the past of a city presenting itself as contemporary.
In a delightful, romantic sensation of constant resurrection
the old stones only resurrect to show us how dead they are.
Their heart is made of stone and their stones are made of bone.


Figure 12. *Deadly Resurrection* (video). Music: António Olaio and João Taborda, 2005.
You only resurrected  
to show us how dead you are  
Deadly resurrection

Your heart is made of bone  
Your bones are made of stone

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTkRaNHFdWg

The identity of a city also resides in the awareness that in every city there’s  
the general idea of what a city is, the universal idea of a city. Even an old city  
like Coimbra, whose identity consists mostly in its oldness, being unique, also  
has a lot in common with every city, because it is a city (Figure 13).

Foggy days in old Manhattan,  
for those who seek perfection,  
it’s good for their complexion.

A man is not a bat  
you’d better watch your step  
This weather makes you blind  
your friends you’ll never find

You will never find me  
if not even your body you can see  
And it is very sad  
when you’re left alone with your head

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJj6yL5gpde

To live in a city is to live its public space. The cities are their public space.  
And each home a kind of negative space of a city, as though houses were meant  
mostly to contour streets and squares, helping us draw the public space, the  
real heart of a city.

As citizens it’s the others that make us what we are. I am what my eyes can  
reach. If we really live a city, a strong ethical bind links us to the others. The  
others are what we can see. In my city, for me, I’m invisible but I can see, I can  
see everything but me (Figure 14).
Figure 13. *Foggy Days in Old Manhattan* (vídeo). Music: António Olaio and João Taborda, 1999.

Figure 14. *Invisible* (vídeo). Music: António Olaio and João Taborda, 2005.
I’m invisible but I can see
I can see everything but me

Two girls in a bus,
a guy in a train.
A yellow umbrella
under heavy rain.

A shooting star,
A growing tree.
A wooden guitar.
A fish in the sea.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6laQ1AosQsU
ON THE INTERSECTION OF INDIVIDUAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY INQUIRY

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Abstract: The model of the artist/researcher has a decade-long history at Thompson Rivers University. The Small Cities CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) has seen artists (faculty and students) as key players in interdisciplinary research projects involving such community-engaged and interdisciplinary practices as cultural mapping, community-based storytelling, and educational projects. As both a mode of inquiry and as an object of study itself, the involvement of artists has leaned at times toward aspects of their individual practices and, at times, to calling more generally upon the disciplinary expertise that artists can bring to collaborative and interdisciplinary research. Drawing upon a recent Cultural Mapping Workshop in Coimbra and a project I completed during an artist residency in Tasmania, this paper considers the manner in which artistic practice may migrate across the two realms of individual and interdisciplinary inquiry. Two previous CURA projects provide a context for these undertakings.

Resumo: O modelo do artista/investigador tem uma década de história na Thompson Rivers University. A Small Cities CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) tem visto os artistas (faculdade e estudantes) como agentes importantes em projetos de investigação interdisciplinar sobre práticas de envolvimento da comunidade e práticas interdisciplinares, como o mapeamento cultural, a narração de histórias com base na comunidade e projetos educativos. Enquanto modo de pesquisa e objeto de estudo em si mesmo, o envolvimento dos artistas tendeu por vezes para aspetos das suas práticas individuais e, noutros casos, para o saber disciplinar mais geral que os artistas podem trazer para a investigação colaborativa e interdisciplinar. Baseado num recente Workshop de Mapeamento Cultural em Coimbra e num projeto que realizei durante uma residência artística na Tasmânia, este ensaio trata da maneira como a prática artística pode migrar através dos dois campos da pesquisa individual e interdisciplinar. Dois projetos anteriores da CURA providenciam um contexto para estas investigações.
Introduction: Models of artists’ engagement in research

Kamloops’ decade-long Small Cities CURA has seen artists (faculty and students) as key players in interdisciplinary research projects involving such community-engaged and interdisciplinary practices as cultural mapping, community-based storytelling, and educational projects (see also Garrett-Petts in this volume). It provided a valuable opportunity for visual arts faculty and students to model ideas of research practice and interdisciplinary experimentation.

As both a mode of inquiry and as an object of study itself, the involvement of artists has leaned at times toward aspects of their individual practices and, at times, to calling more generally upon the disciplinary expertise that artists can bring to collaborative and interdisciplinary research. Alongside a testing of the ways in which Kamloops’ various ‘communities’ might be engaged in and by such activity, several models emerged of the manner in which artists might work together with researchers from a range of disciplines, primarily in the humanities and social sciences. Through several publications and exhibitions, and under the co-direction of Drs. Lon Dubinsky and W.F. Garrett-Petts, a three-part model of artist–researcher involvement in interdisciplinary research developed, which guided artists’ involvement in the Small Cities CURA:

1. Integrated: where artists are integrally involved in a broader research project/team
2. Response: where artists create work in response to an existing research question/project
3. Affinity: where artists’ existing/ongoing production parallels some existing research.

From the outset of the Small Cities CURA, my involvement was as an integrated artist/researcher (though that categorization only developed as the research/practice unfolded) working with an interdisciplinary team that included Will Garrett-Petts, with a research profile in English and critical studies, David MacLennan, with a research profile in sociology and education theory, and research assistants coming from each of our respective disciplines. Together with Helen MacDonald-Carlson in the field of early childhood education (whose research became intertwined with our own), we shaped the Mapping Kamloops Project. We engaged numerous neighborhood, school, and other groups in the Kamloops area – asking participants to draw a ‘story map’ representing a personal response to the local landscape and then to ‘walk us through’ their hand-drawn maps in a follow-up discussion. We came to understand the relationships that
existed between individual experience, the collective experiences of particular communities, and more general interests in Kamloops and its environs that were recurrent in many of the maps. While these ‘maps’ assumed many forms with respect to their visual composition, the majority might be characterized as being either map-like in a conventional sense, often with legends, labeling, anecdotal notes, etc., or pictorial, something more akin to generally held ideas of a landscape picture and, at times, with no text (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Participant’s story map, narrating their story of Kamloops.

Figure 2. Participant’s story map of local mountain biking site.
In 2004, much of this material was brought together in *The Homeless Mind*, an exhibition held at Thompson Rivers University. The particular inflection of the Kamloops landscape that emerged through this exhibition was the importance not, as we had assumed, of the urban core of the city but, rather, of the ‘edge places’, locations and ecosystems that speak to the transition between urban development and the surrounding grasslands, river-cut terrain, and other features of the area’s glaciated landscape.

Such an emergent interest in that urban/wilderness interface has a particular resonance in my own artistic practice – a hybrid pulling together of traditional and experimental artistic forms that explores the meeting place of urban and wilderness landscapes and, at times, personal storytelling. The ideas of exploration that come with such interests have a metaphorical connection to the open-ended and experimental activities of artistic production, particularly as such activities might be understood in contrast to the methodologies typical of many academic disciplines and perhaps especially those disciplines that lie outside the humanities. Though very general, this distinction served as a useful critique of the three manners of artistic engagement during the first CURA (2000-2006). As such, and toward the shaping of the second CURA (2006-2012), we conceived of Exploration as a fourth mode of artistic research, one in which the artist/researchers might work in an open-ended manner.

**Artistic exploration**

A quick look at the dictionary (*Concise Oxford*, 1952) confirms that it is in the subtle distinction between *research* and *exploration* that an interesting working space for artist/researchers emerges. Whereas *research* is defined as a “careful,” scientifically inclined mode of searching with an associated “course of critical investigation” (p. 1038), *exploration* offers the opportunity to “examine,” to “(wound) by touch” (p. 419):

In a curious manner this seems akin to Roland Barthes’ distinction in *Camera Lucida* between the orchestrated aspect of a photograph’s “studium” and its more emotive, more elusive “punctum” that Barthes likewise characterized as a “wound.” Perhaps to “search” is a space of common ground for artist/researchers between “exploration” and “research.” (Lawrence, 2009: 28)

A context for rooting learning and research experience in the settings of the urban-fringe or wilderness landscape is well established by TRU faculty and
students. In 2007 and twice since then, I have been involved in a geography field school, teaching workshops on topographical drawing (see Figures 3 and 4). What might be rudimentary knowledge in a visual arts context (a reliable

Figure 3. TRU geography students drawing, Hat Creek Field School, 2007.

Figure 4. TRU visual arts student and CURA research assistant Emily Hope interviewing ecologist and TRU faculty member Dr. Tom Dickinson, Tranquille grasslands, 2009.
method for putting a well-proportioned image of the landscape to paper) was new and enthusiastically embraced knowledge to the geography students. In turn, much of their understanding of the geomorphological structures was new to me – such is the exchange of knowledge that can be gained by interdisciplinary inquiry. A similar set of interests was at play for a group of visual arts students that, in 2010, undertook a road trip of several thousand miles for a field course in and around Dawson City, Yukon – the site of the Klondike Gold Rush of the later 1890s (Figure 5). Under the instruction of Keith Langergraber and in partnership with the Yukon School of Visual Arts, the students journeyed from Kamloops to Dawson City and as far as the Beaufort Sea. In Dawson City, the students engaged with members of that remote northern community through the creation of artworks and performative events around town.

**Story mapping on Sandy Islets**

Considering the manner in which these varied instances of research and learning amongst TRU students, faculty, and other CURA researchers/participants provides a model of artistic-exploration. It is also useful to look to historical understandings of the relationship between learning and play. While it may seem no great leap to consider a connection between play, art-making, and landscape
exploration, it may be more challenging to consider play in relation to the idea of the artist–explorer where that also infers a mode of ‘academic’ and ‘research’ inquiry. In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Johan Huizinga observes that “[t]he contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid” and that “[p]lay turns to seriousness and seriousness to play” (1955: 8).

Such was the case with the Denman Island Story Mapping Workshop, an adjunct activity of the 2009 “Map My Culture” conference in Comox, British Columbia. In this workshop, participants travelled by kayak across Baynes Sound to the Sandy Islets off the north end of nearby Denman Island (Figure 6). On board were Will Garrett-Petts and Emily Hope as my co-organizers of the workshop, two local kayak guides, and an array of academics and other participants – each with their individual interests and expertise in mapping or the local area. As an invited member of the group, historian Richard Mackie provided a lecture afloat and on the shore of Sandy Islets that drew upon his expertise as an historian specializing in settlement patterns on that stretch of B.C.’s coastline (Figure 7). John Belshaw, the conference’s primary organizer, added related information from his perspective as an historian of early coal-mining operations in the region. Complementing such academic expertise was a talk by Mairi Edgar, one of the kayak guides, of the foreshore plant ecology of Sandy Islets (Figure 8). On the island, participants were invited to create hand-drawn maps that called upon their “individual or collective knowledge of the history and ecology of the area” (from the “Map My Culture” conference statement, May 2009).

In a manner similar to the way in which the Kamloops-based CURA mapping projects explored the city’s permeable boundaries, we suggested that “for small cities such as Courtenay/Comox … significant aspects of culture may exist in the space between the city and its surrounding landscape, or between such traditionally defined cultural realms as ‘art’ and ‘recreation’” (conference statement, 2009). Together with a follow-up exhibition of participants’ maps, organized by research assistant Emily Hope for the Comox Valley Art Gallery, this project presents a guiding model for taking interdisciplinary and exploration-based mapping approaches to a community that defines itself broadly in geographical terms.

An understanding of the Denman Island Workshop – or most of these other projects – as the ‘fluid’ movement between seriousness and play of which Huizinga writes is further extended when considered alongside what Sven Dupré relates of seventeenth-century understandings of such relationships in the thinking of the mathematician Johannes Kepler. In his essay, “Playing
with Images in a Dark Room: Kepler’s Ludi Inside the Camera Obscura,” Dupré demonstrates that “it was only the attribution of the status of play to [the experience of image formation inside the camera obscura] which allowed


Figure 7. Historian Richard Mackie lecturing on settlement history of Georgia Strait during the Denman Island Story Mapping Workshop.
Kepler to use his acquired knowledge” (p. 60). Importantly, Dupré considers that Kepler’s “contemporaries did not distinguish between ludus, or social play, and lusus, intellectual play” (p. 62). It is on such a co-dependence of *ludus* and *lusus* that the Denman Island Story Mapping Workshop operated.

**A Camera Obscura on the Tamar**

For an experimental project created during a recent sabbatical, I took a folding Klepper sea kayak (an older wood-framed German design) to Tasmania and created an accessory enclosure to convert the kayak into a floating camera obscura – “Kepler’s Klepper” (see Figure 9). An accompanying video, *A Camera Obscura on the Tamar*, was achieved by towing a video camera behind the floating camera obscura to document its quasi-journey from the head of Tasmania’s Tamar River in Launceston to Port Dalrymple where the Tamar empties into the Bass Strait (see Figures 10 and 11).

A camera obscura is a dark space into which light is admitted through a small aperture with an inverted image cast by the light on a surface opposite the aperture. The closely related ‘pinhole camera’ is a similar apparatus in which photosensitive papers or film are exposed to the light. In part, the kayak-cum-camera-obscura functions as a meditative space – the ephemeral image that
typifies a viewer’s experience of a camera obscura was cast inside the darkened enclosure and drifted across a screen of varnished cloth as the kayak floated down the Tamar. And, in part, with the kayak navigated by that same shifting image, “Kepler’s Klepper” is an example of the sort of “mediating device” that Petran Kockekoren considers in Technology: Art, Fairground and Theatre (2004). Kockekoren sees play as being of essential importance to Victorian society and reminds us that “images, technologies and even scientific theories emerge in a social process” as mediating devices that make one more conscious of the physical presence of their surroundings, and that “there is room to maneuver in [this] for artists” (p. 35).

Figure 9. Donald Lawrence, Kayak Camera Obscura, Tasmania, watercolour and pencil on paper, 2011. Collection of W.F. Garrett-Petts.

Figure 10. “Kepler’s Klepper,” 2011, Tamar River shipyard, video still from A Camera Obscura on the Tamar, 2011.
A camera obscura in Coimbra

I take up the specific interest in the camera obscura here as it is central not only to much of my current artwork (and to some of my early artwork) but also to the Cultural Mapping Workshop in that it was a part of the “Animating Public Space Through the Arts” conference at the University of Coimbra. In this workshop, such experimental pursuits were recast in a more historically grounded apparatus that approximates the portable, tent-form camera obscuras of the 1820s (see Figures 12 and 13). Such instruments would have been used to aid in creating topographical drawings of the landscape and for portraiture, etc. In the 1820s, as during the Coimbra workshop, participants would sit on a stool inside the tent’s small enclosure and trace around an image of the surrounding view that was cast inside by way of a mirror and lens (or a purpose-designed prism that brought those two functions together) (see Figures 14 and 15).

Two locations were used during the Coimbra workshop, the first in close proximity to Mosteiro Santa Clara-a-Velha, the setting of the conference, as a means of introducing participants to the camera obscura, and the second in the Botanical Garden of the University of Coimbra. Although the day’s workshop allowed only a brief opportunity to test such a mediating device in a public setting, it was clear that participants as well as passersby were keen to engage with such an apparatus. The Tent Camera Obscura serves two
functions: First, it encourages participants toward that second of the drawing modes considered in relation to the Kamloops story mapping projects: the representation of a surrounding environment in pictorial form. The optical apparatus of the camera obscura facilitates what we might in simple terms regard as conventional landscape drawing. On one hand, this is a bit at odds with the origins of our interests in story mapping – where we encouraged participants to create maps/drawings from memory. On the other hand, it provides a means by which participants may be quickly surprised by what can be recorded of their immediate surroundings and that in follow-up discussion they have something, a drawing, readily at hand to speak of their immediate surroundings. Even from the brief experiences of those entering into the camera obscura during the workshop, it is evident that there is a clear appeal to such a manner of image-making.

Second, the Tent Camera Obscura also offered something in Coimbra that has not been the case in earlier story mapping workshops (except perhaps the one on Sandy Islets): the participants entered into a space that mediated their experience of their environment – the immediate environment of the landscape that surrounds them as well as the temporal distance between the pre-photographic era of the 1820s and today’s digital technology. To pick up on another thread of Kockelkoren’s discussion, what is essential if technology is to be thoughtfully engaged is a recognition of Heidegger’s distinction between technology which is ‘ready-to-hand’ (zuhanden) and that which is ‘present at hand’ (vorhanden), the latter being a state in which an individual or society is cognizant of the role that technology plays, where “we have to shift our technologically mediated performance of a task to the mediatory equipment itself” (p. 18). Foregrounding such an awareness of technology ‘present at hand’ provides a primary means by which individuals may acquire a heightened awareness of their surroundings.

Concluding thoughts
These experiences and insights are apt for considering the role that artists may have in projects involving community mapping and other public initiatives around planning sustainability. One of the workshop’s participants, Isabel Ferreira, a geographer and urban planner based in northern Portugal with a particular interest in public participation in the governance of small cities, has encouraged further work in Coimbra with the cameras obscura, noting that their use in workshop settings has significant potential for engaging
“citizens directly as a way to discuss publicly the animation of public spaces” (personal correspondence, October 16, 2011). What Ferreira and others attending the Coimbra workshop have been receptive to is the manner in which the Tent Camera Obscura invokes *play* as a fluid manner of learning. Further, in its particular potential to function as a mediating device, the camera obscura can destabilize one’s habituated understanding of one’s day-to-day environment by the experience of being inside its micro-environment. As Petran Kockelkoren (2004) observes, such perceptual destabilization is a key stage in creating a heightened, dramatized awareness of “the physical presence of [one’s] surroundings” (p. 35). The image cast inside the camera obscura will inevitably accentuate details that had previously gone unnoticed. What is afforded by such opportunities – for members of the general public as well as those with specific interests in planning or related research around sustainability – is to obtain a fresh look at environments around them in an exploratory way that echoes essential aspects of artistic and other creative practices. In recognizing the value of interdisciplinary initiatives that explore what can be gained by bringing the practices of artists into play toward expanded understandings of the workings of urban or other landscapes, this experiment in Coimbra very much paralleled the approach taken during Kamloops’ decade-long Small Cities CURA.

Figure 12. Nineteenth-century tent camera obscura.
Figure 13. Workshop participant Isabel Ferreira and the Tent Camera Obscura, Coimbra, 2011.

Figure 14. Passerby with tracing of image cast inside the Tent Camera Obscura, Coimbra, 2011.
Note
1. River Effects: Exploring the Waterways of Tasmania was an exhibition offered as part of Tasmania’s 2011 biennale “Ten Days on the Island” arts and music festival. The exhibition originated at the Academy Gallery of the University of Tasmania (UTAS) in Launceston and travelled to the Plimsol Gallery at UTAS’ Hobart Campus. The artists’ residency was with the Visual and Performing Arts Department at UTAS’ Launceston campus.

References


WORKING THE MIDDLE GROUND: MAKING BODIES IN FLIGHT’S PERFORMANCE WALK, DREAM→WORK

Sara Giddens and Simon Jones
Bodies in Flight, U.K.

Abstract: Dream → Work is an ambulant audio performance project created by Bodies in Flight (2009-12). Originally concerned with how public space is animated by multiple performances that interweave the public and the private, the personal and political, the normative and the imagined, each new manifestation of the work increasingly came to focus on how public space articulates local histories with lived memories. It has been performed in Singapore, Nottingham, Bristol, Wirksworth, and Skegness. As artists, the performers are only ever visitors who walk the middle ground through the city without occupying it, in contrast to the locals who occupy the middle ground as their home, invested in its practical and ideological structures. The artists’ method of manifold re-tracing of inhabitants’ habituated behaviours and routes in rehearsal and performance has forced a disclosing of the relations between corporeality, identity, and the urban environment. This chapter explores, as a dialogue between co-directors Sara Giddens and Simon Jones, the project’s development from stepping over the middle ground of the daily commute to dwelling in the lived histories of place, by charting its different local manifestations and proposing ways in which the artists’ passing through can open out potential spaces for reflection from both within and outside the middle ground of the everyday use of public space.

Resumo: Sonho → Trabalho é um projeto ambulante de performance sonora criado pelo grupo Bodies in Flight (2009-2012). Originalmente concentrado na forma como o espaço público é animado por múltiplas performances que misturam o público e o privado, o pessoal e o político, o normativo e o imaginado, cada nova manifestação da obra centrou-se cada vez mais na forma como o espaço público articula histórias locais e memórias vividas. Foi apresentada em Singapura, Nottingham, Bristol, Wirksworth e Skegness. Enquanto artistas, os performers são apenas visitantes que atravessam o espaço intermédio pela cidade sem o ocuparem, em contraste com os habitantes locais, que ocupam o espaço intermédio como seu lar, investido nas suas estruturas práticas e ideológicas. O método dos artistas de retraçar muitas vezes os comportamentos e rotas dos habitantes em ensaios e espetáculos conduz a uma revelação das relações entre a corporalidade, a identidade e o ambiente urbano. Este capítulo explora, na forma de
um diálogo entre os codiretores Sara Giddens e Simon Jones, o desenvolvimento do projeto desde a passagem pelos espaços intermédios dos itinerários quotidianos até à abordagem das histórias vividas do sítio, mapeando as suas diferentes manifestações locais e propondo formas como a passagem dos artistas pode abrir espaços potenciais para reflexão tanto no interior como no exterior do espaço intermédio da utilização quotidiana do espaço público.

_Dream → Work_, an ambulant audio performance project, was originally concerned with the morning rush hour and the daily ways in which we make and unmake our selves in the journey to work. Created by Bodies in Flight (U.K.), it has been performed in Singapore, Nottingham, Bristol, Wirksworth and Skegness. As visitors, the performers walk the middle ground through the city without occupying it: their responses are at once too big and too small, too general and too specific for the place, in contrast to the locals, who habitually occupy the middle ground as their home, invested in its practical and ideological structures. As artists, the manifold re-tracing of the inhabitants’ habituated behaviours and routes in rehearsal and performance forced a disclosing of the relations between corporeality, identity, and the urban environment, moving from ideas of transnational, transferable labour, to locally embodied memories of place. This in turn led to subsequent manifestations of the project, for instance, at the Wirksworth Festival (2011) and SO Festival (Skegness, 2012), which focused increasingly on a form of dialoguing with inhabitants in order to incorporate their voices into the work. This chapter explores this project’s arc of development from stepping over the middle ground of the daily commute to dwelling in the lived histories of place. We chart the development of the performance-walk through its different local manifestations, proposing ways in which the artists’ _passing through_ can open out potential spaces for reflection from both within and outside the middle ground of the everyday use of public space.

_[Simon Jones]_

Preserving the work means standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work. This ‘standing-within’ of preservation, however, is a knowing... He who truly knows beings knows what he wills to do in the midst of them. ... [T]he essence of _Existenz_ is out-standing standing-within the essential sunderance of the clearing of beings. (Heidegger, 1978: 192)
Dream → work (2009) attempts to echo Martin Heidegger’s definition of the artwork as a preserving outstanding standing within through its use of public space and its desynchronizing of public time. We began with the commute: a group of 12 auditor-walkers followed two performers through the city streets during the morning rush hour, listening through earpieces to the internal monologue of an every-person in the daily process of re-constructing their publicly facing self, moving from dreamtime to realtime. One performer manipulated the sound-score, made up of a live mix of text, song, sound-grabs from the environment, and ambient sounds relayed from microphones worn by the performers. He controlled these sources using a small portable mixer and transmitted the resulting sound-scape to small receivers worn by each auditor-walker. Lasting about 40 minutes, the walks were programmed to start at key intersections in the daily commute during the relevant time of day. In Singapore, for example, Dream → work’s performances began at 7:30, 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. outside the Chinatown MRT (underground) station. By the simple re-mediation of their familiar environment through microphone, mixer, transmitter, receiver, and performer, the auditor-walkers were invited to reflect on their embodied experience of commuting those streets. Dressed as commuters, performers and auditor-walkers alike both disappeared into the crowd at times and then re-emerged by virtue of the attention focused by the group on the performer:
s/he was sometimes seen close-up, sometimes at a distance, the sound-score creating a cinematic soundtrack that turned what was habitual into something strange. Everyday sounds of traffic and overheard snatches of commuters’ conversations were blended with music; performers’ live speech segued into the pre-recorded, giving the impression that one was listening to their thoughts as voice-over commentary on the happenchance events occurring around them. For example, when performer Polly Frame crossed a busy road junction whilst conversing on her mobile phone, the auditor-walkers experienced her live speech dovetailing with a pre-recorded interlocutor discussing social plans for that evening, as they themselves negotiated the potentially dangerous crossing. Here the playful uncertainty of aural sources mixed with the serious, adrenalin-fuelled business of crossing a Singapore street in rush hour.

Behaving most times ‘normally’, the performers moved as if invisibly through the streets, narratizing them as they went, rehearsing a presentation to be made at work that day. Occasionally they discarded these masks by dancing or singing, suddenly making both themselves and the auditor-walkers highly visible to other commuters, reversing the roles of observer and observed. In this way, Dream → work explored the habitual experience of commuting by combining the walkers’ own embodied memories and immediate sensations with the audio technology’s capacity to mix happenchance and prepared sounds, thus opening up an imaginative parallel space-time within which to speculate on that experience from inside the space-time of the commute itself. The walk’s rhythms force them to step aside in two opposing directions simultaneously: toward the immediate, what is passed over and no longer noticed; and toward the profound, what cannot normally be borne in the rush of the everyday and so is passed under, since in that place there is not normally time to disclose it and open it out.

[Sara Giddens]
And now here, recalling that memory, those memories (colluding and colliding) of the experience of the making of the Dream → work walks, alongside but outside of the space-time of the actual experience. (Breathe.) Being here now. Originally conceived to be experienced as part of the commute, the Dream → work walks (five to date) ask the auditor-walkers to share the same time within the sometimes very public space and simultaneously occupy a distinctly different time from those other others who pass us by, each with their own time and tempo, whose purpose in this time is very different.
As makers and auditor-walkers, we are performing the same physical, embodied acts – walking and being still. In that sense, we are actively participating in and as part of the world, occupying the same place. We invite the auditor-walkers to follow in our footsteps, both to move with and against the dominant flow of the commute, to step across, aside, outside from it and to come alongside, to be-come still(−er). Theirs is most likely a singular, one-off experience in amongst a regularly patterned everyday. Seeing for the first time, or as if for the first time, seeing anew their own everydays. To stop. To look, to listen, to smell, to taste, and to take stock. To dwell.

The idea of contact does not represent the primordial mode of the immediate. Contact is already a thematization and a reference to a horizon. The immediate is the face to face. (Levinas, 1969: 52)

For Emmanuel Levinas (1969), the embodied encounter between two persons is actually the unspeakable and indeterminable point when-where we experience both the concreteness and the possibility of our humanity, what he terms its totality (the ideologies and practices within which we conduct our daily lives) and its infinity (the absolute possibilities of the universe which automatically and necessarily challenge us both in fear of death and in hope of justice): “The thou is posited in front of a we” (p. 213).
Dream → work steps over the middle ground where we all necessarily live with our commonsense and ideologies: it jumps over the continuous present of living whilst still remaining in the midst. It oscillates between immediates (that which happens there and then) and profounds (that which is at the deepest reach or furthest throw of the mind and so cannot be there and then). Thus, in Singapore the background synchronization of financing and trading is interpolated by each walkers’ heightened sensory awareness of their own being there and then in the streets of that specific Central Business District. This is provoked by opening up sonically the various gaps in each one’s embodied mode of walking those streets through feeding back live sound-grabs, re-presenting the ‘present’ aural environment. The ‘other’ of time is set forth diachronically through texts that open up possibilities of other times, of children and death, provoking memories and hopes through jointly listening to and having to consider these possibilities while face-to-face with the performer – the other as distinct from everyday capital’s an other, any other, quasi-other.

[SG]

Dwelling is in opposition to how most people move through their city-town space during ‘their commute’. We may wait in order to commute, but waiting is not dwelling. It takes time to be still, not something commuters have to spare. And those participants choosing to see a choreographed performance are expecting movement.

I stop as you move. Less frequently, I move as you stop. Certainly, two directions at the same time. And now we both stop. The one and the other, amongst the other others – still-moving. Your quietening – in relation to my quietening. Face to face in the event-hood of it all: in this fiction, through this moving fourth wall, the one is encountering the other, as if again for the first time. We are held here together, as part of this particular and peculiar etiquette of performance – this consensuality. Standing still alone together. Arriving at this dwelling point, here and now. And in this somehow shared space-time we are asking the auditor-walker to give of and from within themselves, clearing a space so it can be filled again by you and your own theres and thens.

Finding my reflection through your reflection: Is this close to Levinas’ infinity – the reality, “the concreteness” and the “possibilities”? Who am I within this stillness – not my-self, part-other, an un-whole-other, any-other, now gone and back again? I wonder how present I can be alongside this, your apparent presence, appearing in this stillness. Still distracted by the other others who
walk on by, pretending not to notice when we are spilling out so publicly. Can we be still long enough to feel we know in some way this shared still-ing, this still-dance?

It’s such a delicate moment ... [to] think........ Ah, it’s happened. ... In the midst of standing still something else is occurring and the name for that is the small dance. (Paxton, 2004: 9)

Discussing the inadequacies of language to describe states of the body, American choreographer Steve Paxton, in an interview with Peter Hulton, cites standing in an upright position when all the (so-called) “voluntary muscles” have relaxed and one is “standing still” with only the “skeletal muscles” keeping you “upright.” Like Spanish performer La Ribot, we are interested in this still-ing, this “quietness” as an opportunity for spectators to feel a “corporeal presence,” and that through this stillness a space-time is created for (as La Ribot says)

Figure 3. Tom Wainwright, Dream → work, Bristol, 2010. Photo: Tina Remiz.
“contemplating within a non-theatrical time” (La Ribot, 2008: 2). Although we may not choose to describe this as “non-theatrical” time, for the frames and etiquettes of performance and theatre still prevail here, this use of being in stillness does mark a difference. A different kind of space-time, out in public, in the place of the citizen, that is, the place of passing through. Now my body appears to be strangely still and the performer and spectator have time to locate themselves and each other, to move from one place to another, without having to move on to the next presented (or perhaps more accurately – represented) theatrical image. As writer Tim Etchells (2008) reflects, stillness becomes “an imperative beat which nods ... to the philosopher’s pause for reflection” (p. 1).

[SJ]

[I]n vulnerability lies a relation to the other that is not exhausted by causality, a relation prior to all affection by the stimulus. The identity of the self does not set limits to submission, not even the last resistance that matter ‘in potential’ opposes to the form that invests it. Vulnerability is obsession by others or approach to others. ... An approach reduced neither to representation of others nor to consciousness of proximity. (Levinas, 2006: 64)

Levinas’ insistence on the inexhaustible responsibility we all bear to the other, as the essence of our humanity, this vulnerability to the other’s approach, became a critical aspect or, more properly, a critical relation in the daily making of the work, precisely because the work is made amongst, and many of its sources are drawn directly from, the host of the everyday – their daily living in, their investing in the making of that place, their daily performing of it. This relation is not an inter-acting in Bourriaud’s sense, nor a spect-acting in Boal’s sense, but a dialoguing as described by physicist David Bohm (1998): an opening up of a space to listen to the other through sustaining an absolute and radical suspension of judgement.

The artist’s will to make, to set forth, to put in the place of something else, in essence to re-place someone else’s will, is profoundly challenged by these others who literally stop us in our tracks. To resist these approaches would occasion strife, specifically because it is the others’ place that we appear to be re-placing. And to convert the others’ stories into material would be to reduce them to an expression of our own will. So the only way not to do violence, to begin properly to answer the call of these others (in Levinas’ sense) and yet still make the work an exercise of our own, is to open a space within the making, within the process, to dialogue.
In the Wirksworth version (2011), our commissioners asked us to make a walk that drew attention to the architectural industrial heritage of this Derbyshire town. We decided not to replicate the local tourist industry's commercialization of the Industrial Revolution but to focus on 1973 – the year that saw the opening of the High Peaks Trail, a key event in the development of that post-industrial heritage industry, and also both industrial strike-action and accidents in the then still-active local coal-mining industry. We asked locals who lived through that period to read newspaper articles from 1973, ranging from reports on the Markham Colliery Disaster to advertisements for ‘warehouse boys’ and housekeepers. Around these readings, the inhabitants casually added their own commentaries and observations. In the churchyard at the centre of the town, the performer stopped outside each house and a reading or comment was played. Thus a space was created within the heritage site that evoked a still-living historical period, recognizable as both near to us now and yet very different in its industrial relations, gender politics, and the like. The various visually evident layers of architectural history were placed in a relationship with an ‘official’ newspaper history read aloud by the voices of those who had lived through it. This diachronic layering was further developed as the version wound back time to reference the Romans, then first settlers, then the geological pre-history of the surrounding landscape which produced the coal and stone which later formed the natural resources upon which the Industrial Revolution was founded.

This dialoguing inflects indirectly the mood of making, rather than directly informing a fall to judgement, or into will as decisive actions in making the work – what we might think of as the artist’s signature. To be clear, this suspension produces a relationship between our own will to make and the others’ wills to tell something of their own place from their own points of view, from the inside. It resolves a problem, fundamental to participatory art-practices, posed by Heidegger’s essential difference between art and life: the artist’s will to stand outside the everyday, not to disappear into reality. Namely, as we come from the outside, in our willing, our artistic act of re-placing, we wilfully refuse to know our host’s place from the inside. However, to allow their wills to prevail, or even to occupy a space within the work, would render the art as life, would dilute its own-ness, bleach out its insight with the everyday. Hence the significance to our making of Levinas’ welcoming the other, by way of Bohm’s suspending judgement – between strife and translation. In this way, our will is both humbled in listening and preserved in not having to submit directly to the others. The indirectness of dialoguing without judgement or purpose, without
taking a stance on the matter, as part of the process of siting the work, opens up a space for both artist and local in the performance, actually affecting the mood of working. As such, it enriches the work in ways we cannot feel and the others cannot tell.

[SG]

Stillness is the moment when the buried, the discarded and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness like life-supporting oxygen. (Seremetakis, 1996: 12)

Seremetakis suggests in this dwelling place – a stillness, a contemplative space-place. How much effort – to create a space-time for dwelling! Much more difficult to organise this space-time than the walking: keep moving and you

Figure 4. Graeme Rose, *Dream-walk*, Wirksworth, 2011. Photo: Tony Judge.
will not be noticed as much, will not be questioned, you don’t stay still enough in one place for it to be an issue. “Loiter with intent.” No, you cannot dwell in it, only move through it – with purpose. All that time spent dashing around, making new acquaintances, taking care of the potential.

Not yet a quietening of the mind – but perhaps a focusing – a foregrounding. My mind can’t yet be still – sorry – always moving from one thought or sensation to the next – I can sense more now! How have we arrived at these moments? Through movement? Through walking, making the stopping and stilling more profound in its difference from that repetitive walking, doing stillness by way of movement, but just as readily finding movement through stillness. I sense a stilling. I sense your stillness. How do the senses still? Those senses that ordinarily themselves can never be still as they actively project into the world around them and the mind follows.

[SJ]
In stepping over the middle ground, we still leave the auditor-walkers as carriers of that middle, in fact the actual possibilities of that middle. They work the middle that we step over; they respond from that middle to our producing of the immediates and profounds. And this answering the call of what is there and could be there, from within the there, places them both within the middle of things and outside of them. They become aware of their together aloneness: they are the necessary middle; or rather, the necessary being in the middle of things, amongst the host amidst things. So, as the work is peopled by a host of such ideological enactments, it is relieved of doing that work itself. Furthermore, Dream → work’s refusal to dwell in that middle, the absence of specifics from that cultural, ideological matrix calls forth the auditor-walkers’ own ideologies: space without ideology admits the possibilities not of a ‘non-ideological’ place but of a reconfiguring of space-time with the ideological. And that reconstituting is properly the future work of the auditor-walkers themselves after our work in the work is done, since they must live in that space once we are gone.

[SG]
[T]he deployment of different ways of slowing down movement and time ... [are] powerful propositions for other modes of rethinking action and mobility through the performance of still-acts rather than continuous movement. (Lepecki, 2006: 5)
As Lepecki (2006) writes, to offer quietness in the noise, to offer stillness in dance, to be quiet and to be still, interrupts (or is it punctuates?) the flow. We are drawn to this quietness and this stillness. When I am deliberately not doing in this place and time of passing through, I can recall my own sense of stillness. I see your body stilling and I reference my own body in its manifold stillness; and through this presencing I recall, I remember. I may or may not be able to dance those steps you have just danced, but I can be still, still alongside. As Lepecki (2001) writes, “to engage in stillness is to engage in different experiences of perceiving one’s own presence” (p. 2). This is as bespoke as the work is to each time-space. Even this stillness, this quiet is never the same. Just like the walk itself, filled with the same overflowing of difference in every part, in every place, person, day, and countless extraordinaries within the everyday. The work is essentially about ex-posing these profound.

When can I experience this stillness for myself without being concerned for the experience of others? I’m always more careful within these circumstances, always already watching out for the walkers’ welfare. How fast, slow, far, steep? Taking care, looking after, respecting. In the meantime, this time, I will take care of you as best I can.

Once again back to this present, being alone alongside, reading these words, re-presented. Only when I sit can I write. I cannot write unless I am still and my mind is focused, cleared of the everyday as much as possible. Making a clearing in which to dwell.

[SJ]

The act of consciousness is motivated by the presence of a third party alongside of the neighbour approached. A third party is also approached; and the relationship between the neighbour and the third party cannot be indifferent to me when I approach. There must be a justice among incomparable ones. There must be a comparison amongst incomparables and a synopsis, a togetherness and contemporaneousness; there must be thematization, thought, history and inscription. (Levinas, 1998: 16)

Thus, the clearing of Dream → work must be predicated or, in our case, literally grounded on its relation to the everyday, whence it emerges and through which every participant must have passed in order to reach this clearing and be involved in the work. For the work to be first recognized as a work, in order for its preserving to become possible, it must produce its very relation to the
everyday as its incomparable work. This echoes what for Heidegger is the very
definition of Being – that its own being is an issue for it: art’s relation with the
everyday is hence posed as a problem for the work and its participants and their
own relatings to the world whence they have jointly emerged in the preserving
of the work. To see the world thence askance is to see it as if for the first time
and so to see what it is possible to do with that world. In this way, even those
very lived technologies, ideologies, and corporeal habits of movement and
thought are turned against themselves to ex-pose what they normally en-close.
Thence, Dream → work’s participatory aesthetics must be by way of and about
presence: to be in the co-presence of is to appear before the other, performer,
auditor-walker, a face-to-face, as Levinas described it, of absolute alterity in
the midst of the everyday.

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PROFILE

FLUID CITY/WATER IN THE SUSTAINABLE CITY:
AN ARTS-SCIENCE-EDUCATION COLLABORATION
FOR TĀMAKI MAKaurAU AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

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Abstract: This profile documents the fluid city project: an arts-science-education collaboration that aimed to foster awareness and understanding of water issues in Auckland City, New Zealand. The series of urban installation/performance works animated elements of the material, technical, social, cultural, spiritual, and economic dimensions of urban waters and waterways.

Resumo: Esta descrição documenta o projeto cidade fluída: uma colaboração entre artes, ciência e educação que visava fomentar a consciencialização e a compreensão das questões ligadas à água em Auckland, na Nova Zelândia. A série de obras urbanas de instalação/performance animavam elementos das dimensões materiais, técnicas, sociais, culturais, espirituais e económicas das águas e cursos de água urbanos.

The fluid city project is an arts-science-education collaboration that aimed to foster awareness and understanding of water issues in Tāmaki Makaurau, the indigenous Māori name for Auckland City, New Zealand. The one-year project brought together choreographers, dance practitioners, and designers with scientists working across different spatial scales in the urban ecosystem, from microbiology to river geomorphology. It also involved an architect, urban planner, and educationist with links to each of these practices. The fluid city project members were: Charlotte Šunde, Alys Longley, Carol Brown, Kathy Waghorn, Clark Ehlers, Katie Fitzpatrick, Gary Brierley, and Rose Martin, all from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The intention of fluid city was to devise a series of urban installation/performance works in the city of Auckland that animated elements of the material, technical, social, cultural, spiritual, and economic dimensions of urban waters and waterways in the Auckland region. It was launched on the official United Nations World Water Day, 22 March 2012, thereby linking our city to a worldwide
network of people and projects concerned about the sustainability of water and communities.

Critical to the sustainable development of cities is the need for widespread public education and social awareness of the current and potential resources within the local metropolitan area. Similar consideration needs to be given to global resource use impacts, underlying socio-cultural and political-economic forces, and the complex ecological interrelationships that extend far beyond the city’s periphery. The fluid city project formed part of a major cross-disciplinary research initiative at the University of Auckland, Transforming Cities: Innovations for Sustainable Futures (www.transformingcities.auckland.ac.nz), which supported novel interdisciplinary research related to broad themes, including imagining and developing mechanisms/interventions for sustainability. This has provided an opportunity within academia for creative practitioners to collaborate in new ways through research that envisages urban futures as environmentally sustainable, culturally innovative, and economically viable. Creative cities attract, nurture, and sustain talent (the so-called ‘creative class’) that, in turn, provides opportunities for mobilizing citizens to re-imagine urban spaces and re-think solutions to urban problems (Florida, 2002). This direction aligns well with the bold vision promoted by the Mayor of Auckland: that of transforming Auckland into the world’s most liveable city.

As a collective, the fluid city research project team was guided in its methodology and performance outcomes by the key research question: How might an arts-science-education performance collaboration play a role in fostering awareness and understanding of water issues in the city of Auckland, thus motivating ecological stewardship and creating experiences that enhance the quality of life in our urban landscapes? While the primary goal of the fluid city project was to explore and produce new ways of disseminating knowledge about water with the diverse public of Auckland, we also sought to bring people’s attention to the diverse meanings, values and issues associated with water. The interweaving of scientific knowledge with artistic methods of evoking, provoking, and prompting new ways of seeing, interpreting, and sensing understandings associated with water was a unique feature of this project.

Water is a physical necessity for all life forms and while seemingly abundant in Auckland (with a high natural rainfall), its misuse, appropriation, and pollution make it a contestable and increasingly precious resource. Furthermore, water carries great cultural significance in our historical settlements, in both Māori and European traditions, and continues to embody deep spiritual significance
(Douglas, 1984). The need for high quality water to sustain human life from the cellular to ecosystem-wide level is obvious to water scientists, medical practitioners, and many informed citizens. But the question of how to connect all Aucklanders with the far-reaching issues facing the waters of their city (both now and in the foreseeable future) is less straightforward. Quite simply, how do we go about animating the numerous critical issues and diverse meanings around water in the city of Auckland?

The fluid city project was committed to the proposition that interactive, playful, evocative, experimental, aesthetic, and creative forms can bring to life, in very powerful ways, the multiple meanings of water. The knowledge contained in scientific reports and academic articles needs to be communicated to the community, but tools with a far greater outreach are required. We share a conviction that interactive events in the public realm, based on sound scientific research and incorporating other bodies of knowledge, are more likely to facilitate willingness and provoke curiosity among members of the public to engage in a relationship with their urban waters. We sincerely hope that in facilitating new experiences, fluid city provided opportunities for Auckland citizens to accept a sense of responsibility in guarding and protecting the water bodies in the city. Tangata whenua (local Māori tribal groupings) continue to uphold intergenerational, inalienable obligations as kaitiaki (guardians) of natural resources, which they consider as taonga (treasure). That sort of reverence for water is a response we endorsed.

The project involved the creation of a public performance event as well as the design of mobile ‘wandering reservoirs’ (see Figure 1). Each of the three reservoirs was uniquely designed to convey different sensorial ways of knowing (visual, audial, and kinesthetic) with hands-on experimentation to connect visitors with dimensions of urban waters that form our fluid city (as outlined in more detail below). The different components of the project that were envisaged included: 1) an interactive scientific laboratory; 2) a video animation; 3) an installation for listening to and contributing water stories; 4) a site-specific choreography and accompanying sound-work; 5) a series of school projects; and 6) various community outreach programs. A two-day event on Auckland’s downtown waterfront was realized in March 2012, and we are currently working on a schools outreach programme and a community art installation as part of the Auckland Arts Festival in March 2013.

Animating public spaces through the arts enables the creation of new experiences, ideas, and relationships that may potentially evoke emotional
responses and recognition that water is far more than a physical resource, commodity, or even its chemical composition, H2O (Illich, 1986). The fluid city group intended for the performance experience to take the recipients on a journey of rediscovery and reconnection with ‘watery places’ that may otherwise be overlooked by busy commuters or café consumers. We staged the event at Wynyard Quarter: the recently reclaimed urban public space on Auckland’s commercial waterfront. The performance event drew people’s attention to the hidden, neglected, and subterranean fluids that flow through and beneath the hard surfaces in the built environment. We deliberately embraced the element of surprise – creating space for personal stories associated with water to be articulated and shared. We did this through encouraging participants to reflect on the multiple roles that water has in the functioning and prosperity of the city as well as the benefits directly to them as ‘water-dependent citizens’ (e.g., physical, experiential, in relationship with landscape, in the shape of the city, as part of their ecosystem).

The design outcome of the fluid city collaboration was three ‘wandering reservoirs’ – unfolding vessels or contained rooms, towed by bicycles (see Figure 1). The reservoirs/vessels looked partly like a water tank and partly like a cabinet of curiosities. Each was designed to engage with water in a different way: opening up, drawing in, and sharing seated space with members of the public. The ‘Wandering Laboratory’ (see Figure 2) housed two powerful microscopes,
a collection of water samples, and a map so that participants could choose the test-tube sample closest to where they live or from a place meaningful to them. After examining the microscopic life contained within the water sample, microbiologist Clark Ehlers was onsite to explain the implications of different microbes as an indication of the water’s biological health or lack thereof. The map, co-designed by Clark and architectural curator Kathy Waghorn, illustrated the geographical context of each water sample and provided text on the major land use impacts affecting each site of collection.

The ‘Roaming Cinema’ features animation displaying the myriad ways that water features in our everyday lives and in the context of Auckland’s urban catchment. Members of the public were invited to peer into the closed vessel, which was based on the design of the Mondo Nuovo, to watch an animation on iPad tablets fixed to the inner wall. A short film, constructed from live footage and fictional animation, was played on a continuous loop without obvious beginning or end. The film emphasized the phases of the hydrological cycle: the formation of clouds, rain, springs and forested streams, to the ponding and overflow of stormwater from roads into drains and culverts that spill into the estuaries and harbours. Through an interposed circular/cyclical symbolic motif throughout the animation, viewers were reminded of the numerous ways we depend on water in our daily routines: the bath/shower, watering the garden, boiling peas, drinking a glass of water, a cup of coffee (each drop of
coffee requires 1,100 drops of water\(^1\), and so on. Deliberately avoiding linear narrative threads and minimizing text, we instead presented a fast-flowing visual encounter with Auckland’s watery world, acknowledging in particular the rare and precious native fish and invertebrates that indicate the state of aquatic health.

The third reservoir was the ‘Roaming Vessel of Stories’. It enabled the public to listen to stories about water and to contribute their own, either through an audio recording or by volunteering a piece of writing on-site. We estimated that around 30 per cent of participants at the fluid city project took up the offer to share their own water stories and concerns through pegging their postcard to a washing line of stories (see Figure 2). Over 80 postcards were collected over the two days of the event. The washing line was created out of the postcards inviting fluid city visitors to “Share a water story (or poem, or drawing...)” or to voice their opinions on “What do you think are important water issues for Auckland City?” (see Figure 3). A number of postcard responses commended the novel, informative, and inspirational appeal of the fluid city project, which attracted well-travelled international visitors and five-year old boys alike. Others wrote passionately of water as the source of life and the source of our being, and of the cleansing, comforting, and embracing nature of water as if someone is giving you a hug. One respondent recollected a childhood memory of her

Figure 3. Postcards provided to the public for sharing water stories and their views on important water issues for Auckland. Photography by James Hutchinson.
father building a boat in their backyard while she leaned over the edge and sang songs into the water.

The Vessel of Stories was the only reservoir to literally tell stories, with an opportunity to sit down on upturned bucket chairs with accompanying bucket tables and listen on headphones to a continuous stream of stories and songs. The audio recording brought together a body of interviews, stories, poems, and songs that evoked some of the diverse roles water plays in the lives of Aucklanders. Scientists discussed the unique geomorphology of Auckland’s rivers and their concerns with sediments and pollutants entering waterways; a Māori opera singer offered an interpretation of why, in Māori culture and language, the word for ‘song’ and the word for ‘water’ are tightly woven together; children sang the song of the kina (sea egg) and the tuna (eel).

At particular times throughout the two days, the Vessel of Stories became the starting point for a site-specific choreographed dance performance, Blood of Trees, which featured a ‘walkscape’ where viewers connected to the history, ecology, and mauri (life force) of the environment, listening to a sound work alongside the live choreography (see Figure 4). Choreographer Carol Brown and sound artist Russell Scoones developed Blood of Trees as a redevelopment of their earlier work (created with architect Dorita Hannah) entitled Tongues of Stone, Auckland, an iteration of a large scale site-specific work performed in

![Figure 4. Blood of Trees water carriers perform as part of the fluid city project.](image)
Photography by James Hutchinson.
Perth, Australia, by Strut dance collective in 2010. The walkscape creates an intimate sound world that references multiple effects, histories, stories, and textures of particular Auckland sites. One hundred members of the public donned the headphones and many more joined a throng of curious bystanders. The performance walk and its walkscape highlighted the fluidity of space as dancers articulated rich and dynamic movement, evoking a felt world of furious, lost, guiding, hungry, and historical characters.

Water issues are complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Entire branches of science are dedicated to the study of water. An arts-science-education public performance work such as *fluid city* can only ever attempt to present a partial understanding – essentially a drop in the ocean of discovery. And yet our brief was not restricted to an outcome directed to knowledge exchange per se: *fluid city* is not a one-way flow of information. Rather, going beyond our primary roles as university-based educators, through the *fluid city* collaboration we took our combined research knowledge out of the classroom and laboratory and into public spaces. Our measure of success was how effective we were in allowing those physical spaces to speak and in creating conscious space for thinking and feeling the city differently. A further motivation was responding to the challenge that university research (i.e., academic papers, books, reports) doesn’t sufficiently engage people of the city and that, as a consequence, research is perceived as inaccessible and thereby ineffective. This is a challenge in particular for science. The artists on the team, however, brought diverse experience in creating public art and the collaboration between disciplines began in this meeting of paradigms.

It has been our experience and observation that methods of creative animation go beyond the rational, cognitive understandings about water to embrace other ways of approaching water, potentially ontologically. Hence, we were able to attract a wider pool of the public through interventions that were tactile and immediately tangible, stimulating to the senses and that were intended to engender emotional connection. We estimate that between 300 and 500 people came across the project: some pre-booked headphones for the ‘walkscape’ that accompanied the performance and others chanced upon the project, often drawn in by their curious children who were playing at the nearby park. We also utilized media opportunities to promote urban water research issues and the *fluid city* objectives, broadcasting on Radio New Zealand and local radio interviews, and were represented on a panel of experts at the Auckland...
Museum’s LATE night public event focused on ‘Aqua: From a Ripple to a Swell’. In addition, the fluid city project directly supported a master’s thesis in Dance Studies, contributed to the PhD dissertation of one of the team members, and was presented at national symposia and international conferences in our various disciplines.

Plans are underway to take the fluid city project into schools in the wider Auckland region. A further iteration of fluid city will take place in March 2013 during the Auckland Arts Festival as part of a wider Rosebank project under the premise that through a better knowledge of place, communities grow, and that culture is the mechanism by which this occurs. In each future redevelopment of the project, fluid city researchers continue to strive for more effective communication of critical urban water research issues to the public in ways that are innovative and that prompt conversations and deeper reflection about water resources and values within the city. We seek to genuinely connect members of the public to water issues that affect them as citizens not only in Auckland City, but also as global citizens in a world increasingly facing water resource constraints. If fluid city inspired, provoked, and refreshed members of the Auckland public to value water beyond its mere functional uses, we take heart that we contributed to creating a city wherein the urban waters of our futures may quench both our thirst and our spirit.

For more information: www.fluidcity.auckland.ac.nz

**Note**
1. www.waterfootprint.org

**References**
THE COMPLEX CITY, PARTICIPATION AND ART: TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: The communication possibilities of the arts can be used to transform public space into a place that creates new relationships between residents and technicians, encouraging citizen co-responsibility in the use, management, and design of public space. This meaningful approach to participation is the best way of contributing to more cohesive and sustainable communities.

Resumo: As possibilidades de comunicação das artes podem ser utilizadas para transformar o espaço público num lugar que cria novas relações entre residentes e técnicos, encorajando a corresponsabilidade dos cidadãos na utilização, gestão e conceção do espaço público. Esta abordagem significativa à participação é a melhor forma de contribuir para a existência de comunidades mais coesas e sustentáveis.

Context: The complex city
We have reached the twenty-first century in cities with a complexity that our grandparents would not have been able to imagine. Traditional relationships among citizens in public spaces have transformed, no longer happening only in physical spaces, but also expanding into virtual worlds. Physical public space itself gathers new relationships in a society that is increasingly more interconnected, more informed, more multifaceted, and less cohesive.

A key feature of this current complex city is its unpredictability, the highly random nature of the events that occur in it. We believe the greater the number of contradictory or unrelated events a public space allows, the greater its permeability and ability to be appropriated by its users. The more that debate and conflict flourish in a particular space, the more important, useful, and meaningful that space will be for the community. However, the rampant spread of private and speculative interests in our cities tends to turn citizens into mere consumers. Therefore the spaces that host various types of open community
activity contribute to the creation of free and critical beings, committed to building a true citizenship.

Understanding those relationships requires something complex as well, a redoubled effort from those actors who work on the construction of the city. The figure of the architect, who alone draws on his table the future of the city, is now superseded by countless variables out of reach of his technical knowledge, making the joint work of experts in a numerous variety of fields critical to analyze, comprehend, and design the spaces we inhabit.

The complexity of our cities has to be transferred then to those technicians who reflect on urban issues, demanding a multidisciplinary approach that will allow us, when looking at the city, to see everything from the way its physical infrastructures are arranged to the relationships between its inhabitants, looking for tips to progress on a wide range of subjects, such as social equality, energy efficiency, equal opportunities, or mobility improvement. This way of dealing with urban reality requires more than an in-depth and thorough knowledge of each of the disciplines, since it is from the relationships woven among them where we will obtain the most interesting conclusions.

A further challenge is to understand the uncertainties and unforeseeable events we find every day in our urban spaces, and to use them to our advantage. On one hand, we can try to decipher whether these apparently chaotic and disorganized performances hide an underlying order that would allow us to better comprehend the complex city. On the other hand, we can simply use the unexpected encounters in public space where ‘everything’ happens (coincidences, conflicts, etc.) to gain access to this precious unfiltered information, to get in touch with the city, with the urban phenomenon, with its simple and complex meanings.

Often attributed to urbanization is a noticeable separation between planning decisions made by technicians and the experiences of everyday reality in which political and economic interests prevail over those of the city's inhabitants. The large number of actors and interests that converge in this discipline (urban planning) unfortunately tends to allow this perception to be justified. To address this issue, in recent times what is often found in public administration is a growing trend to introduce ‘participatory processes’. Urban planning is included in this ‘participatory’ trend, leading to numerous studies, manuals, and courses, and even some legislative amendments and the creation of new instruments of urban intervention. However, even though the need to bring governance to the citizen is correctly identified, this does not always guarantee
an improved relationship between the technicians and residents leading to a more democratic construction of public space. Certainly, some institutionalized participatory processes may be used as a way to manage, compartmentalize, and thereby diffuse many of the valid antagonisms that citizens might voice against a governing body.

Figure 1. Only egalitarian and sincere dialogue between inhabitants and technicians can guarantee adequate urban planning.

Raons Públiques’ work in public space
From this basis, the collective Raons Públiques (‘public reasons’ in Catalan) was created in Barcelona in 2009. Conceived within the NGO Architects Without Borders and then established as an independent association in 2012, Raons Públiques is currently a group of 11 members with different professional backgrounds (sociology, urban planning, architecture, interior design, graphic design, anthropology, and social work). Our aim is to contribute to the debate about urban transformation and management, researching new intervention methodologies to encourage citizen co-responsibility in the use, management, and design of public space. We do not limit ourselves geographically, and have participated in workshops and seminars in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, and Switzerland.

We cannot conceive of any other way of working on the city than to try to understand it from within, unraveling the complex web of relationships that develop in its everyday life. Knowing the actual everyday uses of the city requires
technicians prepared to build new relationships with communities, relationships in which hierarchies are questioned and roles are reversed and intermingled. The old structures of vertical relationships are put aside in order to obtain a richer and more complex dialogue, with a multitude of shades, which provides knowledge in both directions in a process of mutual learning. This process helps generate greater awareness and responsibility in citizens about their role in the management of the city, and allows technicians to acquire a thorough knowledge of this reality so it can be transformed.

Up to now, we have been working with different organizations (neighbourhood associations, social NGOs, local and regional governments, etc.) as part of our volunteer work. Some specific interventions have taken us abroad (Portugal, Italy, France), but our strong commitment to the communities we work with and the necessary long-term processes we develop tend to anchor us to our immediate environment, the city of Barcelona. In our interventions, we use different tools to spark debate, encourage dialogue, and start encounters that awaken reflection. Adapted to the context of each activity, we apply a set of resources that allow us to work in the most appropriate way in each situation, depending on the nature of the project (e.g., urban diagnosis, public space design, collaboration with other associations, awareness-raising activities, etc.) and the group with which we work (e.g., public authorities, specific population neighbourhood groups, etc.).

When analyzing public space, we are strongly concerned with collecting all the sensitive information about use and perception of the space, which is not usually registered. To undertake an urban diagnosis in which every user is represented, we have developed several tools to interact with the community so that we can have a holistic overview of it. For example, by placing a table in a square and inviting people passing by to have tea generates a comfortable space where discussion (conversation) arises spontaneously. Sometimes it is more appropriate to go find people, for which we have designed several models of an unusual cart (called El Carrito, see Figure 2) that collects and distributes information among passersby. The insertion of a new mobile and ephemeral urban element generates a temporal transformation of the space, and builds bridges among inhabitants and technicians.

With older people, having a quiet coffee gathering in their usual meeting place (e.g., the social centre, a park, some benches) has brought to light the way they understand public space. Working with children, we have created ‘gymkhanas’ or obstacle courses with public space recognition tests, or games
such as Neighbourhood Detective or Public Space Trading Cards, a collection of trading cards that compile all the public spaces in a neighbourhood. We have found it is also important to actively participate in community activities such as neighbourhood festivals, recording an outdoor radio program for a youth association (Figure 3), or organizing outdoor film screenings (called ‘fresh cinema’) to create trust bonds and share issues on identity.

We also study the way traditional instruments of expression, such as models or maps, can be transformed into interactive elements for dialogue between technicians and citizens. In this regard, performing collective mapping (Figure 4) is particularly revealing since it can reflect the perceptions and everyday uses of public space.

This way of undertaking urban analysis has allowed us, and those working with us, to have a better comprehension of urban reality. In some cases it is the first step of an urban proposal for a determined area (such as the prized project elaborated together with LaCol in Collserola), and in some others, as in our work in the neighbourhood of Fort Pienc, this knowledge will give birth to an exhaustive document outlining possible subsequent interventions.
Towards more sustainable communities
Over the last two years, we have developed various strategies on urban action that allow us to progress in our research and projects. These are part of our attempt at ‘artistic interventions aimed at the animation of public space’, taking into account the countless and slippery definitions given to the arts. What we are positively convinced of is the modest, but unquestionable, contribution of these
interventions to improving the quality of our cities, and thus of our societies, moving toward the creation of more sustainable communities.

Here is where concepts such as *collective construction, space appropriation,* and *empowerment* play a role. Raons Públiques tries to act as an animator that generates appropriate tools to allow communities to build together their own space and its management, so that they make it theirs and take on both its physical and abstract meanings. We strongly believe that this kind of collective awareness of public space creates attitudes that help these environments be sustainable, from both social and economic points of view. There is no one better than the one who uses a space daily to take care of its management and maintenance.

It is here, in the transformation of public space into an essential element of social cohesion in our societies, where the arts can play a key role. Using the arts’ communication possibilities, public space can become not only a place to stimulate chance meetings among inhabitants (residents), but also to create new, necessary relationships between them and technicians (or so-called participation), which will contribute to the creation of more cohesive and, therefore, more sustainable communities.

For more information:
Web: raonspubliques.org
Twitter: @RaonsPubliques
Facebook: www.facebook.com/raons.publiques

Notes
1. English translation by Amalia Speratti; edits to English by David de la Peña.
2. The possibilities for public space within this new paradigm have been explored by theorists like Ash Amin and Karen Franck (e.g. Amin, 2008; Franck, 2006).
3. More information about this project: www.portescollserola.org
4. A brief summary of this work: www.raonspubliques.org/portfolio/fort-pien/ing

References
PROFILE

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS OF TEXTILE GRAFFITI IN PUBLIC SPACES

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ABSTRACT: Textile graffiti is a form of public art linked to the recent resurgence in textile crafts. Textile graffiti includes interventions such as yarn bombing in which artists install knit or crochet works into the urban landscape. Such installations may have a variety of implications from highlighting urban blight to providing insight on the historically masculine nature of urban planning.

RESUMO: Os graffiti têxteis são uma forma de arte pública ligada ao ressurgimento recente do artesanato têxtil. Entre estas obras, incluem-se intervenções como o bombardeamento de fios (yarn bombing), em que os artistas instalam obras tricotadas ou de crochê na paisagem urbana. Estas instalações podem ter várias implicações, desde a crítica da decadência urbana até à denúncia da natureza historicamente masculina do planeamento urbano.

INTRODUCTION
Textile graffiti is a form of public art emerging from the recent resurgence in textile crafts and having evolved from the graffiti subculture of the 1970s and 1980s in New York City. Textile graffiti comprises a wide range of artistic interventions in public spaces. Using materials such as yarn, artists pair practices of graffiti and street art with handcraft techniques of crochet, knitting, and lacemaking. Artists work in a variety of ways, including the installation of knitted pieces around trees and elements of urban infrastructure, implanting thread into the cracks of sidewalks, and using fences as a substrate for needlework. These creative intrusions provide a colourful interplay between textiles and elements of the urban landscape.

This paper explores the proliferation of textile graffiti and discusses the practice in the context of sustainability, taking a broad view of the art form rather than a curatorial approach to the work of individual artists. As elements
and symbols of domesticity wage a playful war on urban spaces, textile graffiti may do more than animate public space and act as a means of creative expression. These intrusions may unwittingly make comments on the historically masculine and patriarchal nature of urban planning, highlight issues of urban blight and gentrification, and provide insight into how cities are organized to allow for creative expression. Textile graffiti may also reveal spaces of community importance and emerging culturally and artistically productive areas of cities.

**Resurgence of craft and the handmade**

There has been a recent resurgence in the craft and the handmade movements, a phenomenon which has economic and environmental roots and repercussions. Some call this trend a resurgence and powerful re-emergence (von Busch, 2010) while others refer to new trends in knitting as a renaissance (Sloane, 2009) and explosion (Springgay, 2010). This resurgence in craft is tied closely with third-wave feminism, particularly in the ways in which women artists are re appropriating and reconnecting with traditionally feminine handiwork of the past.

The Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century emerged in part as a response to the increased industrial production and proliferation of technology associated with the Industrial Revolution. The recent handmade movement may indeed have some similar philosophical allegiances. Recent trends do not reject technology outright in the same fashion but, in fact, embrace technological progress (von Busch, 2010). The recent movement comes more as a response to and critique of modern modes of production, consumption, and consumerism. The movement is spearheaded by a philosophy that strives to put consumers directly in contact with producers (Etsy, 2012), aiming to create alternative and arguably more sustainable economies. With the proliferation
of this movement has come a renewed reverence for the aesthetic of the handmade, resulting in an associated street art movement broadly referred to here as *textile graffiti*.

**Characteristics of textile graffiti**

Textile graffiti artists bring traditionally feminine and domestic skills of crochet, knitting, needlework, and sewing into the public domain. It is a form of creative expression – and at times dissent – which has emerged within the last decade. On a purely semantic level, the semiotics surrounding the art form is curious. Textile graffiti takes domestic and historically feminine activities and pairs them symbolically with masculine activities of war, giving rise to this new wave of street art being referred to as ‘guerrilla lace’, ‘invasive crochet’, and ‘yarn bombing’. This nomenclature likely results from the fact that the practice of graffiti style writing is often referred to as ‘bombing’ because works are implanted covertly and illegally in public spaces. Some examples of these installations can be seen in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

Figure 2. Crochet installation at Carré Saint-Louis in Montréal, Canada (2011). Photo. E. Arnold.

Textile graffiti merges “the disciplines of installation art, needlework, and street art” (Moore and Prain, 2009: 17), often involving the installation of knitted pieces in the urban landscape. As with any art, the motivations behind textile graffiti are as varied as the pieces themselves: from injecting humour
into the urban landscape to liberating craft from its utilitarian past (Moore and Prain, 2009). This novel use of textiles symbolises an important departure in terms of function from the utilitarian past of craft and the handmade. An important distinction of *knitivism* – a neologism that pairs knitting with

Figure 3. Yarn-bomb on a signpost in the Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood in Montréal, Canada (2012). Photo. E. Arnold.

Figure 4. Crochet installation with googly-eye in the Mile End neighbourhood in Montréal, Canada (2012). Photo. E. Arnold.
activism – is that the created art object is devoid of function (Springgay, 2010). Knitivism, and its broader counterpart craftivism, are playfully rebellious forms of activism, which are associated loosely with textile graffiti.

In some respects, textile graffiti is rather innocuous. Unlike other forms of street art, it is not generally damaging to architecture or urban infrastructure giving artists more freedom to attach pieces during the day in public view. Even for an ephemeral art form, there is an added temporariness as works can easily be removed with a pair of scissors. Installations may not necessarily be perceived as acts of vandalism in the same way as other street art. These artists interact with the urban space differently from other graffiti artists, perhaps as a result of the novelty, impermanence, and non-invasiveness of their work. There is consequently a certain performative aspect to this work that is not commonly witnessed with other forms of street art. While much street art tends to be undertaken surreptitiously under the cover of night, away from the public eye, textile graffiti artists seem to benefit from the ability to openly install their works in plain public view.

Space, place, and gender

Though textile graffiti is not exclusively a feminine pursuit, it easily hints at numerous and multifaceted gender issues which relate not just to the art itself but also to the spaces and places in which it is found. Installations juxtapose a typically masculine form of creative expression with the feminine pursuits of knitting, crochet, and lace-making. The activity of knitting alone is considered a “gendered act” (Springgay, 2010: 116) while graffiti is considered “a racialized, hyper-masculine project in the public imagination” (Dickinson, 2008: 27).

As a practice, textile graffiti hints at gender inequalities that continue to pervade many public urban spaces as a result of historically male-oriented and -generated urban planning and policy. Such spaces have been characterized by a “patriarchy of urban structures” (Zebracki, 2012: 1) and “patriarchal power relations” (Fenster, 2005: 217). Much writing on gender and urban planning explores ideas of the exclusion of women in public spaces, paying particular attention to issues of fear and safety (e.g., Fenster, 2005). Such power relations may not just impact planning that then affects security and well-being, but may also influence public art in the city. After all, “it is men in the male-dominated professions of architect, planner, designer and developer who develop the conceptual map of the city to which public art is co-opted and who interpret the map for people like themselves” (Miles, 1997: 127).
Textile graffiti plays on issues of public and private, spaces that are also considered highly gendered: the “masculine public realm” and “feminine realm of the household” (Miles, 1997: 128). This division is perpetuated in the art world as domestic crafts are not typically held in the same regard as fine art (Miles, 1997) and there has been an historical “downgrading of art forms associated with women” (Parker, 2010: xi). Activities like yarn bombing bring women’s art, typically associated with private life, openly into public view, dissociating art objects from the functions they would otherwise have in the home. These works interface in urban landscapes that may also be considered aesthetically masculine creating an interesting contrast between soft and delicate textiles and the rough and harsh nature of a typical cityscape.

**Sustainability implications**

To take a strict environmental management approach to the environmental and sustainability impacts of textile graffiti is unrealistic. How materials are being used could be considered sustainable if artists utilize scraps and materials that would otherwise be discarded into municipal waste systems. On the other hand, textile graffiti does create waste and might be perceived as frivolous, although it may temporarily extend the lifecycle of materials. What is likely more important in the context of sustainability are the more ideological and intangible aspects associated with many forms of public art, aspects that are at times difficult to quantify and qualify. Textile graffiti may create an awareness and connection with urban spaces, a connection important in fostering environmental consciousness and responsibility. In the case of craftivism and knitivism, crafts may be employed publicly to help create awareness of another kind, on specific social, environmental, and economic issues. Textile graffiti, for example, was used extensively during the 2012 student movement in Québec. During the *Printemps érable* or *Maple Spring*, students installed red yarn-bombs throughout the city of Montréal as a way to protest proposed tuition hikes. An example can be seen in Figure 5.

Current modes of consumption tend to be tied to large-scale, industrial modes of production. The implication is that consumers are often disconnected from where products come from and how they are made, resulting in patterns of consumption that may easily be considered unsustainable. The craft and handmade movement, which has links to third-wave feminism (Springgay, 2010) and with explicit economic and environmental underpinnings, is a recent trend running counter-current to these patterns. The act of “making and mending by both men and women is an expression of material and environmental care”
The handmade movement may have a range of potential sustainability implications and textile artists may unwittingly be encouraging more responsible and sustainable forms of consumption. As an extension of this movement, textile graffiti may contribute to publicly encouraging and popularizing a handmade aesthetic.

Yarn bombing is seen by some as “an act of asserting the need for comfortable human spaces in our increasingly industrial, urban surroundings” (Buszek and Robertson, 2011: 198). On an aesthetic level, such works may impact the way public spaces are perceived and experienced. Textile graffiti may serve to beautify urban spaces, particularly in the case of younger, more planned cities or in blighted or depressed neighbourhoods. Beyond aesthetic appeal, such street art may make political statements by subtly highlighting issues relating to how cities are planned and governed and how spaces allow for the inclusion of women, public art, and creative expression.

The links between gender and sustainability should also not be ignored. Street art may be empowering, permitting creative outlets for diverse artists without the need to be associated with exclusive and commercially motivated art communities. In the case of textile graffiti, it is women and women's work that is also empowered. Though generally discussed within the context of developing countries, greater equality for women is often referenced as an important prerequisite for sustainability.
Conclusions

Textile graffiti is not necessarily a sustainable practice nor does it purport to be one. The intents, motivations, and messages of these artists are not explicitly environmental or sustainable. Rather, the sustainability implications of textile graffiti are likely more nuanced than other forms of environmentally and sustainably engaged art. Textile graffiti may create an awareness of space, a feminization of space; it may be used to create awareness of social and environmental issues as a creatively engaged form of activism; and it may bring to mind issues of consumption and consumerism. It may provide information on public spaces, alluding to parts of cities that are more creatively active or which are simply gentrifying. The handmade movement and the textile graffiti movement revolve around ideas of participation, collaboration, connectivity (von Busch, 2010), collectivity (Springgay, 2010), inclusion, and community (Greer, 2008) – all of which may be considered tenets of a sustainable society.

Textile graffiti may be a passing trend, a movement as ephemeral as its oeuvres. These actions might not save the world nor may they have the most far-reaching implications for sustainability. For many, the idea of a sustainable city is one that is aesthetically pleasing, welcoming, and inclusive. Textile graffiti juxtaposes brightly coloured wool with concrete, thread with steel, lace with barbed wire, imbuing mundane elements of the urban landscape with vitality and domesticity. Fences, poles, brick walls, sidewalks, and even trees have found themselves targets of this recent trend in street art in cities around the world. Textile graffiti is rife with contrasting concepts and imagery. Ideas of public versus private, feminine versus masculine, and domestic versus urban permeate these playful and colourful interjections. Perhaps what makes textile graffiti so interesting is the fact that it is so rife with contradictions, juxtapositions, and dualities.

References


Community Action:
Building Spaces to Engage with Nature
RE-SEMANTIZING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CREATIVE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE URBAN MILIEU

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ABSTRACT: In the course of the last half century, the most vital of all human activities, food production, has become a highly de-humanized and mechanized process, carried on away from the everyday experience of most people, in degraded natural environments and often-unhealthy work conditions. This major transformation, which has been termed ‘the modern agricultural dilemma’ (Wright, 2005), has produced a profound alienation of the majority of the world’s population, especially in urban areas, from the natural world as a place where to search for both material and spiritual nourishment. At the same time, however, many people around the world, in the most diverse contexts, have started to challenge this alienation by engaging in the highly creative and socially innovative activity of urban (and periurban) farming. After briefly delineating key aspects of the current agricultural crisis, the article offers an overview of contemporary experiences in small-scale sustainable agriculture and a tentative picture of the variety of forms, spaces, and social actors involved. Viewing urban farming as a form of ‘popular art/craft’, two main avenues are explored – the rise of agricultural gardens in urban areas and the neo-rural transition movement – with some reflections on the rise of urban farming in the urban imaginary and the frequent involvement of artists and designers in urban gardening initiatives. The article closes with critical observations on the state of research on urban agricultural practices.

RESUMO: Durante o último meio século, a mais vital de todas as atividades humanas, a produção alimentar, tornou-se um processo altamente desumanizado e mecanizado, afastado da experiência quotidiana da maioria das pessoas, em ambientes naturais degradados e, em muitos casos, em condições de trabalho pouco saudáveis. Esta grande transformação, que foi chamada “o moderno dilema agrícola” (Wright, 2005), produziu uma alienação profunda da maioria da população mundial, especialmente nas zonas urbanas, em relação ao mundo natural como lugar onde se procura alimento material e espiritual. Ao mesmo tempo, porém, muitas pessoas de vários países do mundo, nos contextos mais diversos, começaram a desafiar esta alienação ao envolver-se na atividade fortemente criativa e socialmente inovadora da agricultura urbana (e periurbana). Depois de delinear brevemente alguns aspectos essenciais da atual crise agrícola, o artigo oferece
Introduction: The macro-context
Since its early inception in human history, agriculture has been the most basic and vital human activity, on which much of social life has been based. For millennia, food production through domestication of plants and animals has been an everyday affair for the majority of the world’s population, who lived in rural areas, either on farms or in small villages tightly connected to the land. In the course of the last few decades, however, agriculture has been profoundly transformed, becoming a highly industrialized process of crop production through a generalized use of chemical inputs and petroleum, and conducted in large-scale monocultures that have replaced pre-existing diversified agro-ecosystems (Ponting, 1991; McNeill, 2001; Wright, 2005). In the first decade of the new millennium, the crisis of agriculture manifested itself as probably the most serious consequence of economic globalization: the two massive food crises which struck many poor countries in 2008 and 2011 were only the epitome of a general degeneration of food production and distribution systems worldwide, testified by alarming data about the steady increase in consumer prices, hunger, malnutrition, and chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes – which, in turn, reflect the profound inequalities afflicting people’s access to food on the global scale (Dapice, 2011). Most of the above problems originated during the twentieth century with the industrialization of agriculture and especially with the so-called ‘green revolution’ of the 1960s, by which monocultures with high levels of chemical and water inputs came to be considered (paradoxically) the most efficient and economically sound form of food production. On the contrary, industrialized agriculture caused a number of ecological shortfalls, such as a huge increase in soil erosion, an unprecedented reduction of biodiversity, and simplification of ecosystems, with a consequent reduction of their resilience to natural disasters. Industrial agriculture also brought about new risks for human health and
loss of autonomy on the part of farmers, while exacerbating the problem of decreasing yields (McNeill, 2001; Altieri, Ponti, and Nicholls, 2005).

Industrial agriculture came to be superimposed over pre-existing forms of food production through a series of international trade agreements that took place after World War II, and especially in the last two decades. These agreements had the effect of imposing foodstuff of the global North on the internal markets of poor countries, while annihilating their food reserves and food sovereignty, and causing the impoverishment of local farmers with consequent land abandonment (Stiglitz, 2007). This process ended up with the contemporary emergence of ‘land grabbing’, that is, the appropriation of huge tracts of land on the part of corporations and states – with the support of the World Bank – as a form of speculation on future market values or to create monocultures of bio-fuels, soy and other cash crops (Food First, 2011; Liberti, 2011). Finally, climate changes of the last decade have also aggravated the contemporary agricultural crises, causing the continuous rise of food prices due to loss of yields resulting from natural disasters (IFPRI, 2013).

Since the end of the twentieth century, a number of NGOs and local social movements worldwide have started to speak up in the defense of traditional agriculture, advocating for food security, food safety, and food sovereignty for poor countries and rural, as well as urban, low income populations. Taken together, their policy recommendations can be summarized in three fundamental measures: (1) keep land in the hands of local farmers’ communities; (2) support agro-ecological farming methods based on participatory research programs; and (3) shift market policies towards the goal of local food autonomy and self-sufficiency (La Via Campesina, 2010; Food First, 2011; Grain, 2011).

While these three strategies might require long-term and large-scale transformations in the political-economy scenario, they need to be supported by new cultural visions that can re-semantize and enrich thinking about and enacting agricultural practices. A number of minor transformations are already taking place in the way people relate to agriculture in different places and contexts around the world. Can these small practices taking place at the local level – at the same time in many different contexts around the planet – contribute to constructing new meanings and visions of agriculture as a central cultural component of human activities?
Uncovering the historical roots of urban gardening

Many words are used to refer to practices that aim to reintroduce agriculture in city spaces. While terms such as allotment gardens, community gardens, or pedagogic gardens refer to specific forms of reintroducing cultivation in urban space (in close relation with those who run them or their specific goals), more general terms as urban or periurban agriculture try to depict a larger series of phenomena which dialogue with cultivation/farming activities in both central and more peripheral urban spaces.

Such phenomena have a very long history – growing food in or around the city has been a common practice prior to industrialization and during the urban growth of the last two centuries. The story of urban or periurban agriculture is tightly linked to nineteenth-century urban development, which, on one hand, incorporated some agricultural land into the cities’ landscapes and, on the other hand, often featured some empty plots devoted to agricultural activities to allow recently urbanized workers to maintain a relation with family-scale production of fruit and vegetables for self-consumption and some income. The important (but still not vast) literature on the history of gardening in urban and periurban spaces usually focuses on the different degrees of need (and socio-political strategies) that motivated such practices in some important specific world conjunctures (Lawson, 2004). Attention has also been given to the role of actors such as unions or Christian churches in promoting – or strongly criticizing – projects of allotment gardens in relation to struggles for workers’ rights (especially in the framework of the second industrial revolution, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century). Other studies address issues related to food sovereignty and self-sufficiency during, and in the aftermaths of, World War II, or – more recently – the role of urban agriculture in countries affected by international trade embargos, such as the interesting case of Cuba after the crash of the Soviet Bloc in 1989.

Urban struggles in favour of an increase of urban gardening spaces – such as those conducted in several countries by the so-called Green Guerrillas, a movement that originated in the early 1970s in New York City1 but today is also active in other countries – have recently popped up and expanded in many different contexts. Such organized phenomena, whose aim is enrooting in solid community networks – seem to have been able to enter in dialogue with individual-based informal practices which have proliferated in the latest three decades (especially in many peripheral or semi-peripheral countries), conquering empty urban plots, edges of street or railway lines, and other
marginal *terrain vagues* to establish precarious agricultural activities which have proven useful not only to add income or to reduce family expenditures for food, but also to strengthen feelings of ownership and belonging to the city on the part of marginalized urban inhabitants.

An interesting aspect of such practices is that despite their informal nature, often violating rules contained in the respective national legal frameworks or local bylaws, they were able to attract the attention of local institutions thanks to their capacity of ‘problem-solving’ – especially important in a moment of growing cuts to public welfare, which require creative solutions to citizens’ problems. As it become clear in some cases, such as in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Martins, 2012), the capacity of local decision-makers to observe and valorize self-help practices experimented by citizens can contribute to renewed public policies and open a ‘virtuous circle’ whose goal is to learn from grassroots practices while also contributing to gradually regularize them. Such progressive regularization aims to reduce the precariousness of such practices and their difficulties in attracting investments due to their informality.

The last three decades of the twentieth century also featured important but controversial public policies to promote urban gardening in large cities, exemplified by the experiences of special agencies created in Los Angeles and New York (where the famous Green Thumb project was established in 1978). These agencies provided strong support to urban agriculture projects until the end of the 1980s, when they were confronted with the pressure of land speculation and the dynamics of city growth and metropolitan sprawl, which forced them to partially abandon their original tasks (Lawson, 2005).

In the last decade, we can observe the remarkable experiences of nations such as Brazil, Colombia, or Bolivia where urban agriculture has come to be recognized as a valuable contribution to several areas of public intervention (from social inclusion to food sovereignty to the fight against poverty) and has been linked to reshaping urban contexts and changing welfare patterns and development policies. These achievements are complemented by a vast and growing production of handbooks and toolkits published in recent years – often on the basis of extensive case study analysis (e.g., experiences in Lima, Peru; Seville, Spain; Rosario, Argentina; or Belo Horizonte, Brazil) – by a large series of international institutions which work in the domain of development and pro-poor strategies (i.e., the World Bank, FAO, UNICEF, or UNDP) and their social partners (such as the RUAF Foundation, based in Holland).
These latter efforts seem to be fuelled mainly by the pressure of global economic-financial crises, which urge new solutions to the negative effects taking place in the face of shrinking household incomes, reductions in food quality, and the social exclusion of vulnerable groups such as immigrants, precarious workers, and the elderly. Holistic approaches addressing these issues (with special attention to urbanization processes in the countries of the Global South) have been able to highlight a wide range of positive contributions and ‘collateral effects’ that the promotion of urban and periurban agricultural practices can address in the domains of social inclusion, community-building, and the creation of sustainable visions for urban space transformation. In part, this explains the recent growth of investments in promoting (peri)urban agriculture practices, not only on the part of public decision-makers (e.g., local authorities or administrations of museums, schools, or prisons) but also by grassroots organizations, social movements, and even non-organized urban dwellers and families.

Within this panorama, it is worth underlining that practices that in the past appeared to be merely conservative (e.g., individually-managed allotment gardens) can evolve and acquire a capacity to address progressive goals through interaction with public policies based on dialogue with networks of actors interested in valuing community links and discussing common goods and sustainability goals. These discussions and resulting (peri)urban agriculture policies and programs give importance to the social, cultural and economic dimensions of inclusion, and not merely to environmental implications.

**Urban gardening as a popular art/craft?**

Beyond its social and political relevance and a growing scientific literature on its nutritional and ecological benefits (Hodgson, Campbell, and Bailkey, 2011), some of the more impressive aspects of urban agriculture have not been sufficiently well documented and analyzed. This is particularly true when it relates to practices that are not primarily productive, such as those involving recreational, pedagogical, and therapeutic motivations and strategies (e.g., ‘school farms’ or therapeutic gardens such as in the Portuguese rehabilitation unit Comunidade Terapêutica do Meilão).

Today, urban gardening can be seen as a growing mode of social engagement into creative and productive use of public space worldwide. As noted, people continue to practice urban farming in a variety of forms, as a means of subsistence, social and generational cohesion, and local/sustainable food
production. But urban farming can also be viewed, more generally, as a form of ‘popular art/craft’, that is, a non-industrial activity based on personal, often vernacular, crafting skills. In this respect, it is a creative way of using nature as raw material and as a source of inspiration. Designing horticulture, beehives, and small-scale irrigation systems; remodelling abandoned urban plots; turning waste into cultivated green areas – all are forms of creative engagement with and/or reinvention of public space. Moreover, people often engage with these activities in ‘bottom-up’ ways, as forms of individual and collective re-connection with nature, while also re-inventing social connection at the community level.

A wide family of practices aims to reinterpret the role of small-scale agriculture in tight relation with an anthropocentric vision of human economic activities, and to promote the rediscovery of non-profit-based exchange relations that can contribute to creating new social bonds and re-signify the concept of everyday-life quality. This large family of practices includes two movements that (from different starting points) converge into a common goal: to demystify and dematerialize the borders of traditional dichotomies such as urban-versus-rural. This challenge is confronted through practices that work to reintroduce a daily dialogue with nature and agricultural production within the urban milieu as well as practices that engage with the idea of farming as a social movement, aiming at building holistic visions and wider political awareness of the interdependence of urban–rural linkages in communities located in extra-urban space.

A changing public urban imaginary

As research on the ‘shift’ in political culture in regard to urban and periurban agriculture seems to increase, a dark corner remains underexplored: the changes in the public urban imaginary which may have been facilitating the emergence of a central role for urban agriculture in the discourse on urban transformations. Undoubtedly, in recent years, a series of alarm bells have underlined the risks of a growing detachment of young urban inhabitants from an understanding of agriculture and its interdependent relation with daily-life commodities and urban quality. For example, research conducted by the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) in 2009 in the basic schools of several EU countries, within the project Tellus Mission², demonstrated a high incapacity of young Europeans to relate farming products to the form they assume when sold in the markets, illuminating a frightening average ignorance about agriculture and farming life as well as an impoverished imaginary on nature.³
In light of this situation, several concurrent elements have converged in raising awareness on the importance of agricultural practices in the quality of life of the urban environment, especially among younger generations. For example, soon after the CEJA survey, a massive diffusion of real-time farming simulation videogames appeared, including the Harvest Moon series developed by Marvelous Interactive Inc., the social network game FarmVille developed by Zynga in 2009, and also Happy Farm, Green Farm, Farm Town, SimFarm, and the Brazilian ‘Turma do Chico Bento’.

Could these games partially contribute, somehow, to raising the interest (and knowledge) of young urban dwellers in real agriculture practices?

This explosion of game releases coincided with a wave of creation of “didactic farms” (Allegretti and Frascaroli, 2006), which began to be important reference points in pedagogic experiences about natural resources in the urban milieu, especially for schools and families with young children. This movement occurred in a moment in which the international imaginary of the relation between food production and city spaces has also been stimulated by important voices advocating for investing in practices of family-level urban agriculture, such as that of U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama, who established a family garden at the White House and attracted much media attention to this issue.

Other ‘convergent elements’ of the urban imaginary have also been changing in recent years in the direction of more sustainable uses of public space and a greener aesthetics for the built environment. This includes the creation and international circulation of images of a series of global ‘urban icons’ such as the revival of the Naerum Allotment Gardens by Carl Theodor Sorensen, built in Denmark in 1948-52, with oval plots fenced by evergreen bushes laid out on a rolling lawn, in a fluid progression (Barbey, 1952; Andersson and Høyer, 1993); and new green vertical gardens created by biologist Patrick Blanc in famous buildings like the Quai Branly Museum in Paris (by architect Jean Nouvel), the Caixa Forum in Madrid (by Herzog and de Meuron starchitects), and the “Rainforest Rhapsody” in Capiteland, Singapore. Such examples, shortly after their construction, were emulated by less renowned planners, soon becoming a common feature in the new urban landscape, as occurred in Florence, Italy, with the development of a vertical garden of Mediterranean spices that renewed one of the walls of the Le Murate ex-prison. Other prominent architecture examples that used green (and often edible plants and fruit trees) as an important component also contributed to increasing attention to a different
way of interrelating the green and the built environment, and adding weight and sensitivity to the major issue of revitalizing urban spaces through practices of green-care.

Of special note is the High Line public park in New York City, built on a 1.45-mile-long elevated rail structure. In 1999, the non-profit organization Friends of the High Line saved this industrial icon from clearance and transformed it into one of the most successful tourist spots of the city, consequently emulated in several other places. The High Line, forged around a self-seeded landscape rich with wild plantings that grew on the unused High Line (161 out of the 210 plant species are native to the area), has been an important worldwide example to reflect on cost reduction in garden management and on locally based sustainability practices.

Such award-winning experiments have been accompanied by a growing number of mass-market products and innovative technological solutions designed in order to allow different target groups of urban inhabitants to celebrate small rituals of a ‘return to nature’ in their own private or semi-public spaces, often linking green design with small food-production facilities. For example, items such as rigid and soft planters (such as removable bags made of recycled polypropylene), amphorae, movable beehives, chicken coops and other livestock facilities, bio-top rooftop containers, solar bubble and vertically integrated greenhouses, living walls, permeable paving, and tomato plant stands have been put on the market to facilitate micro-hydroponic private experiments at the individual dwelling level and to construct roof-gardens or small ‘temporary gardens’ for food production – encouraging and enabling individuals to shape ‘edible landscapes’ in the built environment.

**Art and agricultural practices in the urban milieu: A natural convergence?**

Parallel to the expansion of market solutions, which undoubtedly has fuelled the enrooting of urban and peri-urban agriculture practices in the collective imaginary of urban inhabitants, many public institutions have also devoted energy, time, and space to expand public knowledge and critical reflection about such practices beyond ‘mere fashion’. Organizations such as the Garden Museum in London, the Deutsches Kleingärtnermuseum in Leipzig, and the Museu do Traje in Lisbon have been important in shaping (peri)urban agriculture experiments and leaving visible traces and memories of them.

One of the most important directories to compile and spread successful examples of experiments which try to match architectural renovation and
design techniques, on one side, with food production in high-density urban environments on the other, is Carrot City, a research initiative that originated from a 2008 symposium, conceived by students and faculty members at the Department of Architectural Science of Ryerson University in Canada. Following an exhibit held in early 2009 at the Design Exchange in Toronto and a book written by Mark Gorgolewski, June Komisar, and Joe Nasr in September of 2011, the initiative has expanded into a traveling exhibit that has been shown at a number of venues around North America, Europe, and Africa. Carrot City’s main aim is to spread around experiments and solutions that can “empower designers to develop exciting and imaginative new proposals” to contribute to shaping the horizons of a future ‘Productive City’ (Carrot City website).

Through this initiative, many interesting examples of food production in the urban landscape have been made known and emulated. Notable among them are: the Rooftop Gardens of the Fairmont Hotel chain in Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Bermuda, and Washington – an experience started in 1998 with the active partnership of the hotels’ kitchen chefs and staff – and the Roofgarden of the Congress Palace of Montréal. The latter is an energy-efficient certified structure that in 2010 embarked on a pilot project, soon transformed into the Culti-Vert permanent habitat with the help of the caterer Capital Traiteur and the collaboration of the Montréal Urban Ecology Centre.10 In both the experiences, while the initial motivating reason for the initiative was to render the rooftops aesthetically more attractive through planting permanent vegetation, including climbing plants, and to respond to criticisms from customers and managers of surrounding taller buildings, this goal was soon transformed into the creation of showcase vegetable gardens that grow quality vegetables, fruit, and fine herbs (and sometimes include beehives, composting, and other features) for the restaurants in the area, also contributing to the well-being of the local community and the idea of a ‘0 kilometre’ food provision chain.

Notably, in several of these examples, which “demonstrate how the production of food can lead to visually striking and artistically interesting solutions that create community and provide residents with immediate access to fresh, healthful ingredients” (Carrot City website), we find the central role often played by visual artists, architects, and designers in the development of showcase experiences which aim to consolidate strategies for reintroducing urban agriculture to cities.

We think the explanation for this cannot be reduced to merely recognizing that these socio-cultural categories have a major ‘sensitivity’ for aesthetics
or for problems related to sustainability and creative approaches to the transformation of urban space. We propose an added explanation to help explain this ‘convergence’ between the artists’ role in promoting urban innovation and diversified (peri)urban agriculture activities that aim to make space for food production in the urban milieu, ranging from ambitious urban plans to simple measures for growing food at home, and even in cemeteries, which is linked to the ‘temporary status’ of urban agriculture. In fact, it seems that urban agriculture largely consists of rediscovering practices that challenge the borders between monadic activities and between formal and informal uses of the territory, proposing new readings of the sustainability concept. From this perspective, sustainability is reinterpreted not as a permanent sequence of activities located in the same place but as centred in the idea of resilience, that is, a capacity to adapt to transformations of external conditions in the urban panorama, which can be fast-moving and are often shaped by strong actors whose goals are pursued despite circumstances and external implications. Somehow, the state of ‘precariousness’ that marks (peri)urban agriculture activities and submits them to the approval and constant verification of other, more lucrative activities to be conducted in the same area (such as the real estate market for new tertiary or residential buildings) is perfectly in line with the precariousness and intermittence that generally characterizes the work of urban art.

A second possible convergence between urban agricultural activities and artists’ ambition to contribute to new territorial aesthetics in the development of (peri)urban agriculture projects could be related to an idea of landscape similar to that contained in the European Landscape Convention (approved in Florence in 2000), wherein aesthetic values can be interpreted as the ordered fruit of productive and organized work on spaces – primarily aimed at food production – rather than as the result of merely the aesthetic will of an author. From this perspective, a clear affinity can be traced between urban agricultural activities and the field of land art, where the pivotal role of the ‘context’ in the signification of the main artistic artefacts seems more visible than in other forms of art, where the presence of the author’s touch seems to have a more visible preeminence.

Given these perspectives, it is not difficult to understand why urban artists and art projects often play a catalyzing role in promoting or accompanying the recent and impetuous wave of institutional programs and grassroots practices interested in reintroducing food production and greenery into dense
city blocks, and shaping community spaces and productive green surfaces that can be tended and harvested by residents and school students alike. This ‘convergence’ explains why experiments in the construction of edible urban landscapes go together with the production of new urban narratives which seem to contribute to the creation of a ‘virtuous circle’ which – through discourse and the circulation of images and artistic projects – undoubtedly enriches the possibilities of such practices to be supported by public investments, to influence other contexts, and to contribute to gradually modifying the urban landscaping culture.

**Farming as a social movement: Transition as an example**

In addition to urban (and peri-urban) farming, other actions also represent the urban ecological transition at the present time: sustainable agriculture, personal behaviour changes in relation to nature, and community engagement in a common project to lessen petroleum expenses and influence in climate change. Planetary turmoil, uncertainty about future life quality, distrust in authorities and government policies, and the economic crisis collectively confront people with a feeling of despair, fear, and disbelief. Our rational minds and technological skills aren’t solving the problems as quickly as is desirable. People are beginning to think about how they can, individually or in small groups, contribute to a new scenario in their place of living or where they could move to develop a new life project to change the situation. Thus, a new paradigm emerges where citizens are the promoters of diverse initiatives to promote a more sustainable way of living on the earth. Ecovillages, sustainable communities, transition initiatives, gardens, farms, orchards, and woodlots are different expressions of this kind of initiative.

The foundation of ecovillages began in 1987 with the formalization of the Gaia Trust organization and the dynamization of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). In the GEN website, there are more than 1,500 ecovillages registered (GEN, 2012). GEN promotes information, support, tools, and leadership to the development of sustainable projects. Ecovillages are defined as ways of value transformation, supported by four pillars:

- Distinguishing life quality and happiness from growth;
- Reconnecting people to their local place of living;
- Recovering ancestral values and practices; and
- Working and experimenting an ethics of holistic education (Dawson, 2010).
The transition movement emerged in mid-2000 with the aim to build a new post-carbon society (Holmgren, 2002) by reducing oil dependence and reducing the ecological impact of local and regional economies and people’s needs for food, energy, and other goods and services, and providing these goods locally and regionally. The first transition town initiative was set up in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland (Ryan-Collins et al., 2010). Totnes was the England’s first transition town, which has a long history of green activism (Hopkins, 2010). In 2006, the Transition Network was founded with the goal to inspire, connect and support the different community initiatives following the transition initiatives model. Hopkins (2008, 2010) provides data about the expansion of the transition initiatives: in September 2011, there were 382 registered and 482 new ones beginning, in 24 countries. In August 2013, there were 471 initiatives registered (TN, 2013).

Through the transition town initiatives, a new paradigm emerges with the aim of changing today’s focus on wealth-related values, economic capital, and domination of nature, to a focus on increasing the relevance of health, environment, biodiversity conservation, and communities’ and people’s happiness (Yunus, 2010). The main contribution of these initiatives to a paradigm change is the transformation of people’s role as consumers into a role as artists, seeking life quality instead of goods quantity (Kumar, 2010).

Different from environmental activism that mainly intends to change the economic and political paradigm, these initiatives link people, institutions, time, values, and ideas to find a better way of living (Algarvio, 2010). The means used also differ. Taking the transition movement as an example, we can say they use the arts and local actions based in a holistic practice, permaculture, to feed their hope in a better future. The environmental movement tends to have a sectoral approach to forests, soil, and so forth and acts mainly through protests, campaigns, and lobbying to reach and influence public opinion. Fear and blame are the main discourses used to change the system. The green economy is a means acceptable for most environmentalists. For the transition movement, the reinforcement of local economy, not economic growth, is the most relevant dimension for prosperity to take place (Hopkins, 2008).

Some of the projects are situated in rural areas where unused and less expensive land exists. Agriculture and energy are the central elements of these projects, with an emphasis on sustainable agriculture (i.e., organic, biodynamic, permaculture, and agroforestry) and renewable energies (see Figures 1 and 2). Urban citizens can be project promoters, moving to rural areas or spending
Figure 1. Permaculture garden in Tamera ecovillage, Alentejo, Portugal, September 2011. Photo: L. Fernandes.

Figure 2. Solar energy in in Tamera ecovillage, Alentejo, Portugal, September 2011. Photo: L. Fernandes.
their weekends there. The projects’ development can be a way of employment and earning money or only a leisure time activity. They can be communitarian initiatives or individual/family activities. They can promote community ideals by providing people with opportunities to build connections and friendships with others. There is a relevance of the local, with a belonging and an ingrained meaning in symbolic, historic, and cultural terms (Escobar, 1993).

The rural space is, in this way, transformed by the urbans, with the original rural inhabitants’ participation or not. Urban inhabitants who have moved to rural areas are commonly called neo-rurals: “a widespread assumption, namely that all of them share some characteristics that make a clear opposition to those of local population.... differences they have when compared to local population: higher level of education, lower involvement in agricultural activity, higher rates of women in paid work, etc.” (Escribano and Mormont, 2006: 35). In the North American context, they are called “back to the landers” or “the new returnees to rural,” defined as: “people who have given up mainstream contemporary American culture for a return to a way of life variously imagined as simpler, more natural, more rooted in community” (Ivanko and Kivirist, 2004: xv).

**A glance to research trajectories**

Undoubtedly, the richness of perspectives on these new activities and interpretations related to the cultural transformations of the urban agricultural imaginary are only asymmetrically reflected in the present state of research on the array of grassroots gardening/agricultural projects, especially if we take into account the context of macro-issues outlined in the introduction of this paper. The international literature in this field to date has highlighted a number of issues, relevant from a socio-environmental perspective. They can be summarized into three macro-groups, with three distinct views of (peri)urban agriculture as a macro-area of interest:

1. **(Peri)urban agriculture imagined as a strategy for community food security and food safety.** Relevant topics from this perspective are: the aim to community self-reliance and autonomy from the global food market, especially in contexts of economic crisis or chronic poverty; access to nutritious and healthy food; the preservation of cultural and biological diversity (e.g., vernacular agricultural knowledge and seeds); and the capacity of urban agriculture to provide reliable and sufficient quantities of food (i.e., productivity) (van Veenhuizen, 2006; Mougeot, 2006; Bakker et al., 2000).
2. (Peri)urban agriculture imagined as a form of social inclusion/social cohesion, challenging land-use and urban-planning practices. Relevant topics from this perspective are: the social function of property (e.g., regeneration of abandoned or waste land parcels, common property institutions); forms and opportunities of access to resources (e.g., water, seeds, knowledge, infrastructures); and informal economies (Biel and Cabannes, 2009; Woelfle-Erskine et al., 2003).

3. (Peri)urban agriculture imagined as a social movement aiming at building sustainable agricultural practices through social networking and other forms of agri/cultural action (e.g., permaculture and transition networks, land squatting, ecovillages, and voluntary farmwork and international exchanges). Relevant topics from this perspective are: opportunities for reconnection with nature (i.e., anti-alienation), social identity, and community building; creative entrepreneurship and solidarity forms of economy (Truninger, 2010); and the dialectic between activism and individual escape (Dawson, 2010; Biel and Cabannes, 2009).

Considering the state of research investigating these practices and avenues, we acknowledge the growing multidisciplinary field that is emerging but also observe important limitations. The first relates to the still underdeveloped area of research on the evolution of the green/edible urban imaginaries and their interrelation with urban-art actions. The second seems more related to a limitation of vision: literature on urban and periurban agriculture is rarely comparative, and is still usually limited to case studies and mono-issue investigations. In fact, research on recent experiences of cities and/or countries that have engaged in innovative public policies on (peri)urban agriculture has rarely gone beyond a storiographic perspective, barely approaching the topic within the larger framework of public policies and urban governance.

In addition, new interpretive and methodological instruments are needed in order to further investigate various aspects of the (peri)urban agriculture phenomenon in a sustainability perspective. From this perspective, a visible shortfall of existing research literature has to do with its disciplinary confinement – pre-eminently within sociology, landscape architecture, or agrarian sciences – without extended attempts at better integrating the various perspectives. Such an approach is not grounded enough – literally speaking – to be able to fully grasp the complexity of the social and ecological dynamics which take place in (peri)urban agriculture practices. Another blind-spot of
the current research literature in (peri)urban agriculture concerns the internal dynamics between different strands of the urban farming reality. While most of the studies so far have analyzed (peri)urban agriculture communities in their dynamic interrelation with the external context (local governments, national agricultural policies, the global food crisis, etc.), the community dimension has tended to be uncritically assumed as a homogeneous social reality, a positive and undisputed term of reference in the processes at play. However, social differentiations related to class, gender, age, ethnicity, and territory (just to name the most relevant) can have important repercussions on the how and the why of urban farming practices, and influence in critical ways its outcomes from a sustainability perspective. A critical analysis of such differentiations of the socio-spatial scale is needed in order to better understand how sustainable urban agriculture is as a social practice and how it can contribute to socio-spatial justice from the perspective of ‘the right to the city’ (Soja, 2010; Lefebvre, 1981). Another issue in need of further understanding is the dynamic between individual/family strategies and collective action/networking strategies (Cattani et al., 2009), which could cast a new light on experiences that are able to go beyond merely individual-based productive activities, and re-imagine part of the productive market system through networking initiatives inspired by a different horizon of exchanges. A very delicate and crucial point here is to understand how far and with what limitations (peri)urban farming is part of a collective project toward building more sustainable social and ecological practices; and whether such a common good perspective can be successfully added to existing practices in a consensual and bottom-up way, without becoming a techno/bureaucratic imposition.

An open conclusion
In this small reflective essay, we have tried to point out how – in the last half century – food production has been subjected to a deep process of de-humanization, which has produced a profound alienation of the majority of the world’s population, especially in urban areas, from the natural world as a place to search for both material and spiritual nourishment. However, at the same time and in the most diverse contexts, bottom-up practices capable of challenging this alienation have popped up, engaging people in highly creative and socially innovative activities related to urban (and peri-urban) farming and the progressive creation of edible city landscapes. We have painted a brief overview of some contemporary experiences in small-scale agriculture in order to suggest possible
contributions they can offer to a more holistic reading of an ongoing transformation of our cultural imaginary. From this perspective, we offered a tentative picture of the variety of forms, spaces, aims, and social actors involved in activities of (peri)urban farming, without forgetting that it can be read not only as a series of activities that transform the way of producing and consuming in a fast-transforming urban landscape, but also as a space of networking between social and institutional actors, and as a form of ‘popular art/craft’ – a non-industrial activity based on personal crafting skills and a creative way of using nature as raw material and as a source of inspiration. Through several examples, we have tried to suggest how ‘convergent trends’ in modern society seem to have contributed to a gradual reframing of our urban imaginary toward a capacity to better value the interrelation between the intertwined social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

Our reflection closed with critical observations on the asymmetric state of research on urban agricultural practices, pointing out some research voids to be addressed as well as the lack of a comparative analysis of urban agriculture initiatives. Such limitations need to be counterbalanced if we want to better understand how long-term and large-scale political-economic transformations can be challenged, completed, and even reversed by new cultural visions brought about by small but wide-spread initiatives that seem to have a potential – although there is still not enough strength and awareness behind them – to help re-semantize and enrich thinking about and enacting agricultural practices.

Notes
1. In the early 1970s, under the leadership of Liz Christy, Green Guerillas threw “seed green-aids” over the fences of vacant lots, planted sunflower seeds in the meridians of busy New York City streets and put flowerboxes on the window ledges of abandoned buildings. In a few years’ time, dozens of community gardens (more than 600 are still alive) bloomed throughout New York City, and neighbours formed vital grassroots groups. Their configuration changed along time, and today these groups are organized into a non-profit resource center, helping community gardeners cultivate. See Brooks and Marten (2005) and www.greenguerillas.org.
2. For information about the Tellus Mission project, see: www.comminit.com/polio/node/121075.
3. Some examples of the inquiry’s results: for 40% of the responders, a chicken has 4 legs; 80% ignore where cotton comes from, with 20% saying it’s produced by sheep’s skin; 90% enter in contact with agriculture production only on the markets’ tables; and for 20% of respondents, oranges, olives, and bananas grow in the U.K.
5. See Kohler (2009).
7. For example, the Agro-Housing, a multi-storey apartment block planned for the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2007 by the Israeli architect Knafo Klimor for the Living Steel International Design Competition, with the goal to integrate food production as a means to increase urban resilience; the Harmonia 57 building by French-Brazilian architects Triptyque and Peter Webb in São Paulo, Brazil (2008); and Stefano Boeri’s ‘Vertical Wood’, a project of urban reforestation corresponding to 10,000 m² of trees in a two-tower unique residential complex in Milan’s Expo area.
8. The High Line gardens, designed between 2004 and 2006 by a team composed of the landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations, the architecture firm Diller Scöfidio + Renfro, and planting designer Piet Oudolf, opened in June 2009 (section 1) and June 2011 (section 2). The city of Paris converted a similar rail viaduct into an elevated park called the Promenade Plantée, and similar projects have started in St. Louis, Philadelphia, Jersey City, Chicago, and Rotterdam. For more information, see: www.thehighline.org.
9. Green technologies such as ‘HOH! Hang Oasi Home’ (by Ortisgreen), the hydroponic solution Greendea, and ‘Floating Gardens’ (created by the architects Marta Carraro, Laura Grillo, and Francesca Crovetto) have even been applied to the creation of aromatic micro-gardens for yachts and sporting boats, as exposed in a recent edition of the Yacht and Garden exhibition in Genoa, Italy, thus trying to expand urban agriculture practices to another environment.
10. See http://rooftopgardens.ca.
11. See the film documentary, Inside the City of the Dead, by Barbara Urbano.
12. In some rare cases, this ‘minority status’ of urban agriculture – always subjected to the primacy of other urban land uses – is even made explicit in some of the projects and policies aimed to stimulate (peri)urban agriculture practices. For example, the Banco de Tierras (Land Bank) created by the Galician Regional Government in Spain aims to provide spaces for cultivation in urban and periurban areas, and through the agency spaces can be exchanged and rotate according to other developments and uses of urban land.
13. For example, imagining ‘temporary previews’ of how a space could look if it was devoted to urban gardening activities.

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THE KAMLOOPS PUBLIC PRODUCE PROJECT:
AN EDIBLE, ARTISTIC SITE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract: Public produce gardens in urban centers have the ability to engage a wide range of community members by creating spaces of interaction, learning, and collaboration. These sites also provide the community with increased knowledge of the environmental, social, health, and financial benefits of locally grown food in an urban setting. A case study of the Kamloops Public Produce Project in British Columbia, Canada, provides the opportunity to ask how public produce gardens, as unique sites of collaboration, can provide multidisciplinary spaces for artists, landscape designers, gardeners, city planners, and the general public to engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue centred on local food production and urban spaces.

Resumo: As hortas públicas em centros urbanos têm a capacidade de envolver um vasto conjunto de membros da comunidade, criando espaços de interação, aprendizagem e colaboração. Estes sítios providenciam à comunidade um conhecimento mais profundo dos benefícios ambientais, sociais, físicos e financeiros dos alimentos produzidos localmente em zonas urbanas. Um estudo de caso do Projeto de Hortas Públicas Kamloops, na Colúmbia Britânica, no Canadá, fornece a oportunidade de perguntar como as hortas públicas, como sítios singulares de colaboração, podem providenciar espaços multidisciplinares para os artistas, designers paisagistas, planeadores urbanos e o público se envolverem num diálogo multidisciplinar centrado na produção local de alimentos e nos espaços urbanos.

The garden is the perfect example of how we as humans can learn to occupy the planet in a more thoughtful way. The garden is what humans make to feed ourselves; it’s like some reconciliation between what humans need to survive and what the planet needs to sustain that...

Fritz Haeg (2007)
Introduction
Public produce gardens are sites of collaboration that have the ability to encourage community engagement and public dialogue about the relationship between food and urban spaces. The Kamloops Public Produce Project, a grassroots-initiated urban agriculture project that began in March 2011 in Kamloops, British Columbia, became the first public produce garden in the community and one of the first projects like this in Canada. The project has successfully demonstrated the community’s capacity to produce free, organic produce; raise public awareness about growing food locally; and transform a derelict urban lot into a healthy, accessible, and productive space.

While we acknowledge that one garden in a small urban centre is not going to change food production at the global level, we have discovered that projects like this have the capacity to raise public awareness about growing food locally and that they encourage a civic response to the current global food system. Within the context of this garden, landscape designers, gardeners, artists, and the general public were able to work together in one space to create an aesthetic, artistic, and participatory community space. Because urban agriculture projects contribute to livability and sustainability in cities, it is important to analyze their capacities and outcomes through a multidisciplinary lens.

We use the first section of this paper to articulate some of the detrimental effects that urbanization and the industrial food system have had on our relationship with food. We then discuss the cultural responses that have emerged from this crisis, acknowledging that there is an obvious cultural trend toward going local and being organic and that private enterprise has undeniably profited from this trend. We suggest that this trend is coinciding with a global movement and is, in fact, a very loud and active response to a dangerous and rapidly deteriorating global food system. We aim to situate the Kamloops Public Produce Project in this current cultural moment and in a history of community-based projects that have evolved in response to challenging social and economic circumstances. Our case study of the Kamloops Public Produce Project can thus be seen as belonging to a wider social movement that is coinciding with creative and innovative urban food initiatives.

Urbanization and food
Today, half the world’s population lives in urban centres and there is little connection to the rural landscapes that provides its sustenance. By 2050, there will be twice as many people living in cities (Steel, 2009). The rapid expansion of
cities requires many resources for support. Dense urban population growth has changed our relationship to our natural ecosystem and brought into question the capacity of the biosphere, the ocean, and the atmosphere to continue sustaining an increasingly urbanized population of people. As Tjeerd and Girardet (1999) point out, there “can be no sustainable world without sustainable cities” (p. 43). All cities have complex issues dealing with population growth, economic development, resource use, and urban sprawl (Daniels, 2009; Antrop, 2003; Benton-Short and Rennie-Short, 2008; Eaton et al., 2007). The disconnect that exists between our food sources and our kitchens is an outcome of the enormous divide between urban and rural landscapes.

On average, food travels 5,600 km to get to its consumption destination (Bentley and Barker, 2005: 8). Urban settlement patterns are supported by a network of roads that promotes car travel to major food stores and the transportation of massive quantities of food into our cities. The influence of city design in combination with a globalized economy often make it easier, cheaper, and more efficient for the average North American consumer to rely on products that have come from across the planet than to exchange fruits and vegetables with a neighbour or purchase from a local farmers’ market (de la Salle and Holland, 2010).

The industrial food system has placed our relationships and interactions with food on a global level and, for the most part, the forces that determine what we eat and how much we pay are external to the local communities within which we reside. Many of us rely heavily on a food system that is supported by high chemical inputs, monoculture crops, long-distance transportation, and multinational corporations: “Most of our food now comes from places we don’t know through a system run by corporations we don’t recognize. We eat from a vast network run by Big Food – agribusinesses and chemical companies...” (Tracey, 2011: 10). As Carolyn Steel (2009) explains, “80% of global trade in food is controlled by just five multinational corporations” (no page). This food system is characteristic of our current neoliberal paradigm in which ideals defined by efficiency and accessible, open markets tend to dominate. Furthermore, it is very much a product of an economy that is almost inextricably connected to fossil fuels.

There are many problematic characteristics inherent to industrial food production but the system’s heavy reliance on fossil fuels “for almost every phase of food production” (Nordahl, 2011: 18) is one of the most contentious. As the supply of fossil fuels diminishes, the price of fossil fuels jumps, and,
consequently, so does the price of food. In 2011 and 2012, newspaper headlines warned us about jumps in food prices that were a direct result of increasing fuel costs. It was predicted that Canadians would pay 5-7\% more for their food by the end of 2011:

Food companies are raising prices due to the soaring costs of key commodity ingredients like wheat, corn, sugar and vegetable oil, which have gone up as much as 50 to 100 per cent over the last year at a near-record rate. With the United Nations blaming higher crude oil prices for pushing global food prices to an all time high... (Gazze, 2011: no page)

The globalized agriculture system is, however, not entirely deterministic. In order for our cities to undergo internal transformation and adjust to the pressures of the outside world, there must be a change in attitudes toward how urban spaces are viewed and how alternative landscapes can exist within these spaces: “The city of the future will be a living, dynamic, holistic and edible place. The sooner we start growing it, together, from the ground up, the better it will be for all” (Tracey, 2011: 7). We must begin to imagine how to engage community in creating healthy urban landscapes that incorporate local food production.

Growing locally: A trend or a social movement?
Notions of ‘being green’, ‘going local’, ‘acting sustainably’, and ‘being eco-friendly’ have come to pervade our common vernacular. Private companies, governments, and local organizations have embraced these ideas, leading to both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, companies are realizing that it is in their vested interest to change their behaviour and respond to consumer consciousness about environmental degradation and unsustainable levels of consumption. On the other hand, it often seems as if environmental consciousness has been translated into an influx of consumable objects and that ‘being green’ is a consumable trend rather than a politically and socially motivated way of acting. Like any trend, consumer goods are produced and sold and new market niches are exploited. Many products serve as examples: extraordinarily expensive gumboots that have become ubiquitously fashionable; expensive organic products that often function as status symbols rather than mindful, politically aware purchases; and the ‘green’ grocery bags that we have been compelled to purchase in mass quantities, without questioning the source or the ecological impact of the material with which they are made. While the decision
to embrace a ‘green lifestyle’ through the purchase of certain foods or products may currently be in vogue, we argue that this trend is coinciding with a social movement that is corresponding with events and conditions that are imploring society to question values, behaviours, and actions toward current global food production and consumption. Within this broader social movement, factors such as increasingly urbanized landscapes, disconnectedness from our source of food, and soaring food prices have given momentum to grassroots-initiated local action.

A common theme that emerged from interviews with those who visited the public produce garden was an increasing concern for how their food is produced, the chemicals used in the process, and the taste of commercially grown food. Many commented on how the taste of a tomato from the grocery store compares to the taste of a “fresh tomato picked straight from the vine.” Results also showed overwhelming support for the transformation of urban spaces into garden spaces that can be used to grow produce. We see this social movement as belonging to a history of movements where people come together through food production and sustenance to improve challenging social and economic circumstances. Other urban agriculture initiatives in cities throughout Canada, such as farmers’ markets, U-pick farms, and farm fresh deliveries, also offer access to local food and the people involved in its production.

Knowledge that is connected to production, harvesting, and preservation can be understood as belonging to a history of people who have responded to economic and social hardship by working together. During World War II, the Victory Gardens in the United States “supplied 40 percent of the fresh vegetables consumed in America” (Lawson, 2005: 171). These gardens were also instrumental in creating a sense of pride and building community participation in the production of local food. Darrin Nordahl, author of *Public Produce* (2009), explains that times of distress encourage people to get involved with food production. Throughout various decades of economic and social struggle, educational and practice-based programs were created and citizens worked together to make food production accessible by growing food in their local neighbourhood (p. 17). He also notes that the effects of community-initiated food production projects expand beyond food security because they positively affect social, psychological, and personal factors that impact both the individual and the community (p. 18).

We situate the Kamloops Public Produce Project in a complex cultural moment where, yes, it is undeniably trendy to ‘grow local’ and ‘know your farmer’ and where the organic products that are available for purchase are often available
only to a narrow socio-economic group of people. The Public Produce Project and many other urban agriculture projects may indeed be receiving praise and achieving momentum in part because they are situated in a cultural milieu that is open to their objectives. However, we aim to situate the Public Produce Project in a broader context, one that acknowledges that its group members and the community members it engages with are drawing from knowledges and practices of the past. They can be understood as creative, grassroots responses to less than ideal social, economic, and environmental circumstances. Furthermore, these projects include a sense of community, and incorporate creativity and forms of knowledge exchange that go much deeper than cultural trends or marketable consumer objects.

We have come to understand the Kamloops Public Produce Project as a pragmatic response to our society’s unhealthy reliance on transportation, urbanization, pollution, and waste but also as belonging to a long history of praxis-based initiatives, such as victory gardens, that have brought community members together. Furthermore, the Kamloops Public Produce Project is a creative and community-engaging space meant to interrupt the prescribed logic of urban space. It is an edible, designed space that livens up an urban centre and invites people to interact in different ways than they might with other spaces (private consumer spaces, roads, parks, etc.). The project’s longevity and capacity to engage a range of community members rely on multiple factors, including engagement with the arts, intergenerational and cross-community knowledge exchange, and active participation from the public. As Badham (2010) points out, the “accumulated repertoire of knowledge, assumptions and beliefs is comprised of both history and heritage – documented traditions and achievements – and new and changing ways to interpret the world through experience, learning and socialization” (p. 88). Furthermore, Badham maintains that community-engaged art plays an important role in “providing communities with opportunities to tell their stories, build creative capacity, address social agendas, express identity, and participate directly in the development of their own culture(s)” (p. 89). The Kamloops Public Produce Project is a multidimensional space that relies on artistic interjections to contribute to its allure as a healthy and accessible public space and it functions in the context presented by Badham.

Socially engaged art, such as the Kamloops Public Produce Project’s garden space, can be thought of as a ‘tool for change’ or, in this case, a catalyst for change and the fruition of an existing cultural trend toward an authentic concern for notions of sustainability and the local. In a cultural moment where systemic
global issues complicate our individual agency and contribute to the death of environmental and cultural prosperity, the inception of the garden as a socially engaged expression of artistic and cultural self-determination is timely. The Public Produce Project is one of the many projects that we need to consider among indicators of participatory-based change that drive the success of food-based movements throughout the world.

Our local context: Kamloops
The name Kamloops comes from the Secwepemc First Nations word meaning “meeting of the two rivers,” today named the North and South Thompson Rivers. These rivers provided an ideal location for hunting and gathering and supplied the most important part of the Secwepemc diet: salmon (Balf, 1981: 1). Food production and agriculture plays an important role in the history and landscape of Kamloops. While salmon was a local staple, Europeans introduced new vegetables, which were farmed in the area. Sheep and cattle ranching have also come to dominate the rolling hills and grasslands in the Kamloops area. Livestock was particularly important in Kamloops during the war years and remains an important part of the agricultural landscape today (Balf, 1981). As with many urban centres in North America, the physical landscape of the area once had the capacity to support its population with food that was grown and processed in the local region. During interviews conducted in 2010 and 2011, community gardeners in the Kamloops area reminisced about the large gardens, orchards, and farms in the region. For a vast number of seniors local to Kamloops, growing food has always been a part of their family traditions and lifestyle. Today, many of these folks have moved into apartments or condominium complexes and do not have the space to grow food. As such, seniors’ participation in community gardens and support for public produce initiatives is notable.

In Kamloops, there are approximately 227 community garden plots operated by Interior Community Services (ICS). ICS is a non-profit community group that holds various contracts with the City of Kamloops; for example, ICS oversees the community gardens and community kitchens programs with budgets coming directly from the City of Kamloops. With a population of 85,000, there is growing demand for access to garden plots in the community gardens that exist in high-density areas. This demand appears to coincide with an increasing public interest and momentum toward growing healthy, affordable food on public, semi-public, and private land. Backyard sharing, spin farming¹ and
foodshare opportunities are also bundled into this momentum. In a presentation and workshop in Kamloops on public produce, May 4-5, 2011, Darrin Nordahl, a landscape architect and community planner in Davenport, Iowa, shared examples of municipal food-growing initiatives in public spaces in the United States. Although some progressive municipalities are taking a leading role in developing policies, programs, funding, and maintenance strategies to support and encourage small-scale urban agriculture, it is not the norm yet. In Kamloops, small-scale urban agriculture initiatives are often grassroots-led, allowing the municipality time to see if they are successful before committing resources and funding to similar projects.

The Kamloops Public Produce Project: A case study
At the beginning of March 2011, the Kamloops Food Policy Council in partnership with the Thompson Shuswap Master Gardeners Association received a Community Food Action Initiative start-up grant from the Interior Health Authority to create the first edible and fully public garden in Kamloops. The project came to be known as the Kamloops Public Produce Project. The project’s objectives were: (a) to act as a demonstration project for public produce; (b) to increase awareness of food security; (c) to increase access to healthy food; (d) to act as a tool to educate residents about growing their own food; and (e) to encourage change in policy that supports community food security.

It is important to note the difference between community gardens and the public produce garden in this case study. Community gardens are plots leased by individuals or groups from the city and are part of a larger garden site. They are semi-private and usually gated, giving access only to those who have leased a plot. The Kamloops Public Produce Project is run by volunteers, located on private land, not gated, and open to the public to harvest the produce and enjoy the space 24 hours a day. Both community gardens and public produce gardens help to strengthen the local food web and to build a sense of pride for those who contribute time and effort. As noted in the Public Produce Strategic Plan (2011), public produce gardens are not supposed to replace community gardens; instead, they contribute to a stronger web of food security-related initiatives in a community.

The pilot project was intended to build partnerships and raise public and political awareness about making food production a central component of city planning. It also set out to initiate conversations about food production, healthy landscapes, and thriving community spaces.
Structure and location of the garden
The shape, size, and physical location of the garden must be considered when thinking about the ways people interact with the space. The garden is a long and narrow corridor – 15 feet wide and approximately 120 feet long – not an enclosed area. Raised beds consume 8 feet of this width, leaving a walking corridor through the middle of the garden. The path is wide enough for bikes, strollers, and wheelchairs; the garden was designed so that people at all levels of mobility can move freely through the space.

The project is located at 1st Avenue and Victoria Street, on the main street that runs through downtown Kamloops. It is located in proximity to an intersection that sees more vehicle traffic than foot traffic. Many community members commented that they have never been to the garden because they never walk down to that area. Others have explained to us that they now travel to that end of Victoria Street specifically to enter the garden. This pertains both to locals and to the many tourists who visit Kamloops. Advantageously, the garden is situated in close proximity to City Hall and municipal staff have witnessed every stage of the garden’s progress. Because one of the primary goals of the garden project was to affect municipal policy, the location was ideal. The project demonstrated to the municipality how effective small, hands-on projects can be in bringing the community together.

Figure 1. Kamloops Public Produce Project. Artistic rendition of the Public Produce Project by S. Garson, 2013.
Although the garden is an open-access public space, it is located on a small slice of private land. The owner of the land is a well-known developer in Kamloops. To the west of the garden, there is a tall building that provided a support for handmade trellises, on which plants could grow vertically. To the east of the garden is a second private lot; the site of a different owner’s demolished building. The land next to the garden space is much larger and has been neglected for two years. The garden project organizers were not given permission to use this piece of the empty lot and it remains a barren landscape, home to weeds and urban debris.

**Project organization**

The success and continuation of the garden can be attributed to the diverse and dedicated team of people that became involved in this project. The members of this team highlighted the diversity of people who hold an interest in urban agriculture and public produce. The core group initially consisted of the president of the Master Gardeners Association, a landscape designer, a carpenter, the co-chair of the Kamloops Food Policy Council, and a communications and volunteer coordinator. Together, the team formed a dedicated group of highly skilled people that were able to design and build the garden cost-effectively and quickly, work cooperatively, and communicate well. As the project grew in breadth, the core group became even more dynamic, adding a community volunteer who works at the local newspaper, another carpenter, a dietetics intern, fine art students from Thompson Rivers University, and a few other committed community members.

**Connection to place through collaborative arts**

Literature around edible landscaping emphasizes the possibilities of creating an edible garden that is just as aesthetically pleasing as any garden that has been constructed with ornamentals (Creasy, 2010; Haeg, 2007). Public Produce Project group members Elaine Sedgman and Shelaigh Garson (a master gardener and a landscape artist, respectively) were responsible for the physical design of the garden and the selection of plants that would be most suitable for the site. Their combined creative powers and practical know-how created a garden that was both productive and aesthetically pleasing.

A *signature image* was designed for the garden project so that it would be recognized throughout the community. Starting with a photograph of ‘squash growing on pavement’, an artist was hired to create a rendition of that image.
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(see Figure 1). The image has been used consistently across various forms of media, creating a ‘brand’ or ‘logo’ for the garden. The Public Produce Project coordinator also set up an e-mail address, a blog page, and a Facebook page from the outset to ensure that the project would have the capacity to communicate through a variety of forms of social media. Not only did this help build recognition of the project throughout the community, it allowed the project to communicate with volunteers and community members in a professional and consistent manner.

The concept of public produce is new to most people, the concept of free is foreign to many, and the concept of communal is not something that our society practices very often. Thus, a public garden that is communally set up and offers free food is a peculiar type of public space. It was recognized early on that if this site was to succeed as a demonstration garden, clear and simple signage in the garden would play an important role in educating and encouraging the public to pick the produce grown on the site.

A welcome sign with an explanation of the nature of the garden was a necessary component to engage the public with the space. Unfortunately, the sign for this project went up later than would have been ideal and various comments confirmed the ambiguity of the garden. People did not know that ‘public produce’ meant ‘free to the public’. A public garden, however welcoming it is aesthetically, must clearly spell out that anyone can harvest from it, that anyone is welcome to spend time in it, and that everyone is welcome to become involved with the project as a whole. Even with visible signage, it can be difficult to convince people that taking something ‘that is not theirs’ is okay and that it is encouraged.

Garden designers Garson and Sedgman created handcrafted educational labels in the garden that identified the vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers and made suggestions as to how these produce items can be used. This type of labeling is an essential element of a public garden.
Labels act as an interface between the garden and the public, inviting people to learn about the plants and harvest the vegetables. Many people have never encountered vegetables ‘in the ground’. Instead, their interactions with some of the more common plants take place in the space of a supermarket, where things are packaged, labeled, and priced. Translating the language of the garden – which can be wild and foreign – into something that the public can read is an essential component of a successful public produce garden. Despite these signs, some vegetables were harvested prematurely (the leeks) or incorrectly (the potatoes). We found that adequate and descriptive signage is one of the most important elements of a successful public garden.

Art students from Thompson Rivers University (TRU) also contributed, provided ideas for a mural on the garden wall. Unfortunately, the mural was never realized; however, a Fine Arts student, who was putting together an installation at TRU documenting the legend of ‘wildmen’ such as sasquatches and yetis, created a large blue image of a sasquatch that was pasted onto the back wall of the garden. This installation became an object of public curiosity in the garden space, which contributed to the larger context of the garden as a space of ongoing social engagement with its audience. Another Fine Arts student was actively engaged in photographing the progress of the garden from different perspectives. These photographs were used in presentations of
the Public Produce Project at various conferences and at information sessions given by the group at City Council meetings.

In an effort to make the garden meaningful beyond its physical location a mobile studio was set up at the farmers market with a variety of paints, brushes, colored pens, and wooden shapes. The purpose of this mobile studio was to encourage the general public to create signage that would later be placed in the garden. Young children with their parents, youth, and middle-aged adults all participated in creating colourful, vibrant signs to be placed in the garden. Messages such as “Let it rain,” “Tiptoe through the Turnips,” “This is Your Garden,” “I Dig Gardening,” and “Talk to Strangers” were painted on signs by the general public. While some may refer to this artistic form as folk art, it is a form of collaborative art in that members of the public were able to contribute to the garden even if they had not previously heard of it or visited the site. Perhaps one of the most rewarding outcomes of this mobile studio was that some of the people who participated in sign painting at the farmers’ market also signed up as volunteers for the garden.

Fritz Haeg, an artist who has become well-known for his use of edible plants as an artistic medium and for his transformations of American front lawns into edible gardens, speaks of the capacity of public garden spaces to create critical discourse and connect people to place (Haeg, 2007). Drawing from Marnie
Badham’s (2010) insights into the relationship between artists and communities in building social creative capacity, the notion of a ‘mobile studio’ gives meaning to the garden space through socially engaged art practice that extends beyond the physical perimeter of the garden. When artists and communities work collaboratively, the general public is able to connect with “global issues at a local level through practice known as community cultural development, community arts, or socially engaged arts practice” (Badham, 2010: 84).

The project has aimed to provide an array of opportunities to connect with the garden directly and indirectly, and to reflect on the capacity for local community action in the context of industrial food systems and in other areas. For example, in May 2011 Darrin Nordahl, author of *Public Produce* (2009), was invited to Kamloops by the Kamloops Food Policy Council, which was supported through funding from the City of Kamloops. Nordahl gave a presentation about public produce at the university and all members of the broader community were invited to attend. The following day, a Stakeholders Workshop was held. Community groups, private business owners, non-profit organizations, municipal staff, and interested community members gathered to discuss the potential that public produce initiatives could have in Kamloops. The goals of the workshop were:

1. To inform key stakeholders of progressive, community-minded initiatives taking place in urban settings – through development, design, and policy as they relate to the production of local food.
2. To begin creating a strategy that will move Kamloops forward in both policy and practice. (Kamloops Food Policy Council, 2012: no page)

There was a large and diverse turnout at the workshop and it successfully created a space in which a range of community members could discuss the pragmatic potential of public produce in Kamloops. Small working groups discussed what Kamloops might look like in 2020 if public produce becomes a community priority, exploring benefits, barriers, challenges, and “easy wins.” Two important outcomes from this workshop were the publication of the Kamloops Food Policy’s “Public Produce Strategic Plan” (May 2012) and the creation of a critical and pragmatic dialogue that imagined alternative, healthier landscapes in the Kamloops region. This workshop, in direct connection with the garden at 121 Victoria Street, enabled people to imagine a local landscape that would produce more food than ornament.
Public feedback
The feedback from the community has been very positive. Comments were gathered from informal interviews with members of the general public attending community fairs and the Saturday farmers’ markets. Comments were also collected from people in the garden and through a comment/suggestion box that was placed at the entrance of the garden. Generally, comments were oriented around hope and gratitude for the garden, its organizers, and the aesthetic value it brought to the area. Written comments branded the public produce garden as a “vital political antithesis to the corporatization of civilization”; described the space as something that “builds awareness and shows giving in the community”; and suggested that “there should be more projects like this.” Additionally, many comments left in the garden comment box reflected an appreciation for the beauty of the garden and for the fresh produce and the contribution it made to their meals. One member of the public loved to cook and visited the garden daily to collect herbs for that purpose. In addition to those who harvested the produce, other visitors described how they simply enjoyed the aesthetics of the garden on their lunch breaks or during their commute to and from work. The Kamloops Immigrant Service Centre is situated to the west of the garden and several employees visited the garden during their lunch break. A few women, originally from Thailand, were thrilled to see Asian greens growing in the garden. They mentioned feeling a “connection to home through the plants” (personal conversation, K. Besanger, August 2011).

Surprisingly, many of the people who provided comments about the Public Produce Project reported that they had not taken any food from the garden. The most common sentiment was that it was better to leave the food for those in need. This assumption that public produce gardens are associated with those in need is also mentioned in the literature. As Johnson (2011) points out in her book *City Farmer*, food gardens have and still are to some extent associated with class elements. The need to grow food can be a perceived as a public statement of an individual’s circumstances and reduced status (p. 42). It is possible that the location of the public produce garden in the downtown area and the proximity of social housing and immigrant services may have contributed to a similar response to the garden in Kamloops.

In addition to the suggestion that the produce from gardens like this should primarily benefit ‘those in need’, there were numerous comments from the public that expressed surprise that the garden had not been vandalized. This response is particularly noteworthy in that there appears to be a social expectation that
food gardens open to the public, without fencing or supervision, will fall victim to some form of destruction.

There were also comments from members of the public who did not feel comfortable eating the food out of the garden because they weren’t sure what might have “happened to it” prior to the harvest. This commentary, in conjunction with the general feeling that the food should be left for people in need, speaks to a larger meta-narrative that associates growing food for one’s family or community with neediness. Furthermore, it points to an inherent social trust in the industrial food system and distrust in local food systems.

Even if people did not feel comfortable taking produce from the garden, it was designed to encourage people to spend time in the space. Two brightly painted wood benches and a harvest table were used on a regular basis for different purposes. For example, a young girl from one of the local businesses told us she used to sit on the bench in the garden as it was a peaceful place to think about her grandmother who had recently passed away. Around the same bench, empty liquor bottles and cigarette butts were also found, suggesting that the space appealed to a variety of people for different reasons. What is worth noting is the cigarette butts were not found in the actual planters, indicating a level of respect for the growing spaces. Although the project faced challenges and barriers related to funding, municipal support, and possible vandalism, the tangible and intangible benefits are worth mentioning. The public expectation that the garden would be vandalized was thwarted by the care and attention the garden received by its users. Interview results with the general public in the garden gave some indication of how the garden was used on a daily basis. One volunteer described her experience as follows:

I so looked forward to my weekly morning waterings. It was a great way to start the day. When I was in the garden space it was truly magical, full of buzzing life, butterflies and hope-fullness. Most everyone who walked through while I was there were smiling and happy and curious. They often commented and wanted to discuss aspects of the garden. Even with the empty lot next to it the space was transformed into a place of beauty and people respected that. As an inspired gardener I learned lots of tidbits of useful information, not only from the master gardeners and information I found on the public produce website but purely from observation. I wish I spent more time with my camera in this space as I found it truly inspiring. (anonymous volunteer, “Kamloops Public Produce Project Call for Feedback” email correspondence, January 3, 2012)
The notion of enticing people to spend time in the garden contributes to the overall sense of place in the downtown core. As Robertson (2000) discusses, green spaces and resting places play a vital role in helping to keep a downtown centre vibrant and healthy in a small city.

**Food policy and the municipality**
For many city officials, acceptable urban agriculture practices are still quite limited in scope. When the public produce initiative was first introduced, group members were unsure of how this new idea might be received by municipal officials. For example, in Kamloops, the community gardens program is embraced openly and has contributed to the City of Kamloops’ reputation as a leader in food security. However, Kamloops citizens’ attempts to change municipal bylaws to allow individuals to keep hens within city limits were shut down in the early stages. Speaking to this issue, Nordahl (2009) writes: “what often comes to the minds of many when they hear ‘urban agriculture’ is a community garden on a vacant parcel in a distressed neighborhood” (p. 51). Urban spaces also tend to be aestheticized in a fairly uniform way and ornamental plants dominate city landscaping, while edibles have not yet become commonly accepted. The idea of public produce in Kamloops met with some initial skepticism from individuals and city staff who thought the garden would be subject to vandalism. Furthermore, the idea of planting edibles in replace of ornamentals can translate for some into visions of mangy-looking plants, increased maintenance costs, and liability concerns. In spite of this skepticism, the project’s first season was a remarkable success and did not experience one act of vandalism. Every sign was left in place and every plant was treated with respect.

While the Kamloops Public Produce Project was in its early months, a group of anonymous food activists planted ‘guerilla’ public produce in a set of planter boxes that frame the public square of the library and Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) administration building. This building sits five blocks east from the Kamloops Public Produce Project, at the opposite end of Victoria Street. The resistance and eventual uprooting of the produce exemplified the kind of resistance that Nordahl warns about. In light of the public support that had been gained for the Kamloops Public Produce Project just a few blocks away, many community members were expecting that the ‘guerilla produce’ would be permitted to stay. Members of the community showed their support for the ‘guerilla edibles’ in the library square by writing letters to the editors
of the local newspapers. However, the TNRD administrators decided that the liability of having edible landscaping was too great and the vegetable plants were moved from their location. The Kamloops Public Produce group offered to adopt the uprooted plants and they were moved and replanted in the Public Produce Project’s garden beds. The vegetables outside the TNRD building were replaced with ornamental flowers that were deemed aesthetically pleasing and consistent with traditional decorative landscaping.

Interestingly, it was exactly these types of public spaces that were used to support Victory Gardens and build a sense of community during the war years. Although the library square is very clearly a public space, the TNRD responded in a way that was reflective of the fact that our contemporary public spaces are complicated places and perhaps not as public as we understand them to be. A newspaper article reporting on the uprooting of the “guerilla garden” reported Greg Toma, Chief Administrative Officer of the TNRD, saying: “I think the first thing they should do is check with the property owner. That’s step one... They have to find out if there are any issues on the part of the landowner” (Youds, 2011, no page). Nordahl writes that “true public spaces include those properties owned and maintained by the municipality, such as streets and sidewalks, parks, squares and plazas, parking lots, and municipal buildings (libraries, city halls, and police and fire stations, for example, and the landscaped grounds that surround them)” (p. 52). However, the type of dialogue that the TNRD engaged in following the guerilla plant-ins reveals that this definition is not always straightforward. Although the planters are situated in what is, by definition, a completely public space, issues of public liability played a leading role in this case.

On a more positive note, in 2012, just one year after the demonstration garden was planted, the City of Kamloops has built a fully public, edible garden that borders a newly installed community garden. This is the first municipally funded and operated public produce garden in Kamloops’ history. They also planted edibles in the planter beds at city hall, which were harvested for the food bank this past autumn.

Although the importance of food production is quickly becoming more common in the public lexicon, it takes longer to become part of the ideology of city administrators, elected officials, and urban planning departments in small cities. We suggest that urban agriculture projects will benefit from the construction of spaces that invite a range of interpretations between food production, city space, and community engagement. In many ways, the Public
Produce Project was successful because of its capacity to operate as more than just a food production space. It became a space of creativity, civic dialogue, a walking path, a place of rest and work, and a site of community-engaged artwork.

**Conclusion**

While grassroots-led urban agriculture initiatives like the Public Produce Project are not sufficient on their own in solving the many problems connected to the industrial food system, they are instrumental in raising public awareness of the feasibility of growing local food in urban settings and bringing citizens into a discussion that considers local food production as a catalyst for multi-faceted community engagement. Overall, the Kamloops Public Produce Project was successful in achieving the goals that it set out to accomplish. The project secured land, funding, and in-kind donations to support the volunteers in building and maintaining a demonstration garden on a neglected site in the middle of a downtown urban area. It increased access to healthy food by providing an opportunity for the general public to pick fresh produce that was completely free of charge. Group members successfully networked with the community at large by engaging with the public in spaces other than the garden itself. For example, the sign painting day at the farmers’ market engaged people with the garden, even if they had never stepped foot in the space. The signs also increased the opportunity for people to learn about food production in the garden space and, overall, encouraged social engagement with the garden through the arts.

By autumn of 2012, the Public Produce Project already experienced a second successful season through a grant from the City of Kamloops and is in the process of applying for a third round of funding from the City. If this money is granted in 2013, it will mean a third operational year for a project that had only ever intended on being a temporary demonstration project.

Group members from the Kamloops Public Produce Project have published a Strategic Plan and are in the process of creating a ‘how-to guide’ that will be made available to other communities interested in initiating public produce. The Kamloops Public Produce Project created a space in which grassroots-driven food production sparked community interest, engagement, and created a site for civic dialogue. It encouraged a community-based, multi-faceted response to the global food system, communicated through various means including local food security, artistic engagement, community capacity building, and political engagement at the municipal level.
Note

1. Spin farming utilizes undeveloped urban land, usually under one acre in size, to produce food for profit (De la Salle and Holland, 2010: 244).

References


PROFILE

FOOD PRODUCTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR REDESIGNING URBAN LIFESTYLES: DO-IT-TOGETHER EXPERIMENTS WITH BEAUTIFUL AND INVITING FOODSCAPES IN COIMBRA’S BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Abstract: Through a participative process, course participants in food chain-related courses get empowered to implement sustainable behavioural changes in their daily lives. Ongoing interaction and mutual support have resulted in a web of persons, projects, and places that multiplies opportunities for strengthening the local food web and community, broadening the project’s impact from the personal to the institutional and political levels.

It is clear by now that sustainability has become an important issue on the international agenda. But where do we actually make the personal choices that make a difference? What does it take to get motivated and empowered enough to substitute habitual patterns? In Coimbra’s Botanical Garden, we try to combine various elements we think are of major importance to close the gap between wishful thinking and positive changes of behaviour. This article outlines some of the key lessons learned in our work to catalyze and facilitate these new projects and behaviours.

Food production as a starting point
Food touches on every aspect where we as individuals can make a difference. Our personal choices have an impact on the natural, economic, and political landscape we live in. Its social and cultural functions provide excellent
opportunities for sharing, celebration, and feeling a sense of community. Thus, we have focused on creating several food-related participatory projects.

In 2011, we developed a beekeeping course that included the construction of beehives and a garden with plants that combine importance for insects and edibility. We also started a vertical garden in which we ran a course where participants could learn how to create a beautiful container garden to grow their own vegetables, small fruits, herbs, and flowers, maximizing their harvest and the use of space and minimizing work and the use of water.

**Learning practical skills and supporting transfer to personal context**

Participants in previous courses reported that the main barrier to applying what they learned was getting started. Consequently, we included all the steps necessary to get started at home with the aim to give participants confidence in their capability to do it on their own. Experience proved that demonstrating is not enough. Ideally, each participant gets the opportunity to practice in every step of the process. It is also important to repeat steps.

Special attention has been given to the preparation stage. Our vertical gardening course includes practice on how to analyze a given space and prepare soil for cultivation, including container construction. We included a possibility for participants to get help with their design for a home garden and provided support-on-demand after the practical and theoretical part of the course, during the growth and maintenance of the harvest. It was also possible for participants to use a square metre within the Botanical Garden to cultivate their garden.

In the future, we want to offer the possibility to help participants realize their home gardens with the group to make it easier and more fun to get started. We also concluded we need to plan more fixed, scheduled moments of our availability during the growth season. Participants had difficulties expressing their need for help and asking for our time. With fixed moments, participants are more likely to meet as a group. That way, we improve possibilities for group learning and the formation of a peer-to-peer network.

**Providing the broader context and consequences of personal choices**

If there is no sense of the broader picture, including ecological principles, social, and economical impacts, we run the risk of creating new problems in our attempt to solve a local problem. We base our course contents on permaculture philosophy (Holmgren, 2006; Molisson, 2009) and integral theory (Wilber, 2001).
The beekeeping course was developed because we wanted to transmit the importance of bees in particular and insects in general for our food supply. By integrating the construction of the bee garden, we provided participants with possibilities to actively support insects in their survival. In our vertical gardening course, we included modules on ecological principles and energy flows and the impact of our choices on the food chain.

**Inviting, beautiful examples**

If it is not fun, it is not sustainable. Solutions need to be practical and attractive to have a chance of being adopted. In our vertical gardening course, we try to accomplish this by showing how participants can integrate species with ornamental value and attractive odours. They also learn to integrate as many functions as possible to make the garden an attractive place to be, like shady meeting places, room for play, and areas for contemplation (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. First year vertical garden: inviting, beautiful examples.](image)

**Creating laces**

A course is the beginning of a learning process. We want to show how learning together in action accelerates speed and depth of learning and how it makes changing easier and more fun. We encourage our participants to keep on learning together after the course.
In the vertical gardening course we have also learned that we have to be very careful not to overload participants. As most of them have limited time, too many practical tasks keep them from enjoying the garden and being together.

The aesthetic value of the garden and the various opportunities we embrace to share the beauty and wonders of nature are more than just an added pleasure. They touch upon creative impulses in participants, and possibilities to relate in a more authentic way to oneself, each other, and the environment. Although all the practicalities around gardening and beekeeping obviously need to be in place, it is the intimate relation between this element and methods for collective learning and community building that in our view make the difference between changing behaviour and changing attitude.

Recent developments
In 2012, the surface of the garden and the number of beehives were doubled to meet the growing interest (both courses went from 10-12 to 40-45 full course participants) (see Figure 2). With the infrastructure in place, we are available to increase the number and diversity of educational activities and receiving visitors. With these activities, we raise the financial means to offer free learning opportunities and to invest in new projects.

![Figure 2. Second year vertical garden: doubling growing surface.](image)

Gradually, our field of action is broadening beyond the limits of the Botanical Garden. As approximately two-thirds of our participants continue practicing after the course, a new task has emerged: supporting initiatives that grow from the courses. We have supported a school teacher who developed and
implemented an idea to start gardening and composting in the school yards of schools in her district with technical support and workshops for other teachers involved. Our beekeeper is a true pollinator himself: we organize events to continue shared development, like improving alternative beehive types, and he is working on a train-the-trainers course so ex-students can start teaching, supported by some visits by him, to diminish travel distance and stimulate local networks. Another spin-off is a small beehive construction company.

Through shared lunches in the garden, we have established relationships with the academic community, resulting in cooperation in an action research project exploring the impact of policies stimulating grassroots initiatives aimed at creating jobs in the local foodweb, on social integration, and on the strengthening of local community and economy, among others. With projects like this, the significance of our initiative for the local community is growing.

For more information: http://transicaocoimbra.wordpress.com/espaco-no-botanico/

References
PROFILE

MAKING IT VISUAL: GROWING IDEAS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT: Concrete Jungle: A Green Wall for Growing Ideas consisted of a graphic treatment combined with a growing landscape installed on a large temporary construction hoarding, a ‘meanwhile’ project in a busy urban centre in Ultimo, Sydney. The installation showcased the potential of green walls as part of urban solutions for sustainability with a graphic promoting the importance of localized food systems, urban agriculture, and systems thinking in the development of sustainable futures.

RESUMO: Selva de Cimento: Uma Parede Verde para Plantar Ideias consistia num tratamento gráfico combinado com um panorama de plantação instalado num grande tapume temporário de construção, um projeto “entretanto” num centro urbano agitado em Ultimo, Sydney. A instalação exibia o potencial das paredes verdes como parte das soluções urbanas para a sustentabilidade, com um gráfico a promover a importância dos sistemas alimentares locais, da agricultura urbana e dos sistemas de pensamento no desenvolvimento de futuros sustentáveis.

Overview
Concrete Jungle: A Green Wall for Growing Ideas brought together artists and designers with landscape architects and sustainability professionals. The installation was one of five commissions for the University of Technology (UTS) city campus ‘master plan’, over the period of 2010-2013. The university’s intention was to deal creatively with the uncomfortable transitional spaces that were the result of large-scale structural changes across the entire campus. The university sought ways to ameliorate some of the negative impacts during the construction period: the noisy, chaotic, and dislocating effects to life on the street. The project brief was to alter a large-scale construction hoarding and its surroundings from bland and featureless into an engaging and interesting temporary space.

The installation incorporated 110 m canvas graphic and green wall sections, which became a growing landscape on the temporary construction hoarding
(see Figure 3). The aim of the design was to showcase the potential of green walls as a part of urban solutions for sustainability. In addition, it sought to communicate the importance of urban agriculture and local food systems in the development of sustainable futures. Over the nine months of the project, the plants matured, flowered, and thrived. They gave the otherwise static façade a living, active, and time-based dimension. The work required maintenance and care in an environment that was otherwise focused on development priorities. The graphic was experienced through the physical act of walking the 110 m, designed as a rhythmic visual of life in Sydney intercut with short statements that reflected actions, behaviours, and values relating to sustainability.

Project collaborators were: Tania Leimbach, Rully Zakaria, Nick Sargent, Carli Leimbach, and Mark Gerada. Partnering organizations were: DRAW – De Manincor Russell Architecture Workshop; Junglefy – Green Wall and Green Roof Solutions; Urban Aid – University of Technology, Sydney.

This is a brief reflective account of the design process. It includes aspects of the conceptual and communicative thinking, pragmatic planning, and a description of the collaborative design process as it evolved. It also discusses influences, opportunities, and constraints, with a brief account of the legacy and outcomes of the project.

Figure 1. Large-scale figures move across the urban montage. Photo: W. McDougall.
Planning: Context and the conceptual process
With a beautiful harbour, beaches, and a sub-tropical climate, Sydney is famous for its natural beauty. But the city is also a sprawling, messy pull of contradictions. There are many neglected areas in the inner city and across the expanse of outer suburbs. The ‘anti-postcard’ places have often been poorly developed, over-run by cars, and are lacking public transport, viable infrastructure, and vibrant public space. The city has a major challenge to deliver on the commitments made for the 2030 ‘Vision for a Sustainable Sydney’ (City of Sydney, 2011), which envisages a low-carbon city with abundant green spaces, characterized by active ‘villages’ and community hubs. This project combined a reflection of the city’s current reality, the urban experience of ‘life between buildings’ (Gehl, 1987) in Sydney, with an aspirational dimension in line with the future vision of Sydney in 2030. It began as a broad exploration of cities, urbanism, and urban food systems, turning to look specifically at Sydney’s urban condition and possible future trajectories for development.

The University of Technology is located in a busy, inner city area, Ultimo, which is a fairly barren and under-loved precinct of Sydney. Working in the Ultimo precinct, we could not rely on the easy beauty of the coast, or the iconic and pristine views of Sydney Harbour. The nominated site is known as the Ultimo Pedestrian Network. Throughout the day, it is full of people, moving between the Central train station, Chinatown, the university, a large museum, and the Australian national broadcaster (ABC). At night, it is mostly vacant and lifeless. The long-term ‘Masterplan’ project (University of Technology, 2008) involves five major building schemes, including a new business faculty designed by Frank Gehry, the Dr. Chau Chak Wing Building. The design commission was set up through Urban Aid, a design research group at the University of Technology, supported by architecture workshop DRAW in a consultancy role, and carried out by a team of four designers, Concrete Jungle.

For the design collaborators, Concrete Jungle, it was a rare thing to be offered a project like this: a big, blank, public canvas in the middle of an urban centre; a solicited invitation with no commercial pressure or agenda. We approached it with an inquisitive, open-ended attitude. Working in the public realm, with a spectrum of values and expectations to consider, we wanted the project to be accessible and appealing while also provoking response and attention. The project was generated out of an interest in the potential of temporary public art projects to enhance transitional urban spaces. The work needed to make ‘something’ happen, to generate some kind of energy and
affect during this ‘in-between’ phase, in this dull ‘no-place’ zone of the city. We acknowledged the inherent limitations of designing for a façade, knowing the work was not going to make a radical long-term incursion into the urban realm, but we felt the project gave us permission to present transformational and radical ideas, to create a talking piece for the massive numbers of foot traffic passing across that site daily, and to contribute indirectly to the ongoing planning debates in the Ultimo area as well as to broader concerns of sustainability in the city.

Developing a communicative framework for sustainability within the project was ongoing. Sustainability is still something of a promise, an ambitious future counterpoint to a world dealing with a swathe of current environmental, social, cultural, and economic pressures. Exploring how ‘we’ collectively and individually learn sustainability and the question of what we need to un-learn in order to generate change was a central question during the design process. An emerging concept out of the U.K. presents sustainability as a new form of literacy. It argues that we collectively must acquire new knowledge, particular skills, capacities, and alternative ways of thinking. Sustainability, they argue, will be an ongoing, time-based learning and change process. It must be holistic, critical, and future-oriented (Stibbe, 2009), and will be context dependent. Theories of change incorporate ideas of individual transformation and of making room for new ways of being in the world through “an emptying of the old so that the new may enter” (Peck, 1987: 182). The notion that transformational experiences lead to behavioural change and cultural shifts is an argument emerging out of social research for sustainability. Although artists in general are not technically or scientifically capable of transforming systems, they are in a position to utilize their powers of discursive engagement and subtle provocation in innovative ways.

**Designing: Communicating ideas through collage, vertical gardens, and text**

During the early phase of design, late nights were spent exploring ideas and sharing conversation, wine, and food, and creating collage. Collage is a low-tech, humble process, but famous through the twentieth century for re-presenting media culture. It has been used to provocatively collapse histories and re-create narratives through re-combining image and text. We were inspired by the anti-fascist Dada collages of Hoch and Heartfield and the British pop sensibility of Hamilton. Collage can be a shared creative experience that allows for non-linear ideas to emerge and for interesting tangential conversation. It was our way into
the collaborative process, working independently while sharing material and often contributing to each other’s work. Coming from independent creative practices and disciplinary backgrounds, the common territory of cut and paste was a leveler in the early phase of the creative process.

Collage became a significant visual element of the canvas graphic in the final installation, working with dozens of photographs taken across Sydney. Drifting through urban and suburban sites, we captured an eclectic portrait of the city, from west to east, bush to coast. Using the process of collage, we played with a vast number of variations and configurations of the urban environment, and combined photographic images to create unexpected reconfigurations, exaggerations, and juxtapositions. The design incorporated scaled-up images of local Sydney-siders, which dwarf the urban montage and give a face and identity to the environments and to the text (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 2. Encouraging individual and collective agency is a focus in the text. Photo: W. McDougall.

The text was inspired by the work of leaders in sustainability, design, and urban renewal. We wanted to distill some of the ‘big’ ideas and significant principles of sustainability into simple idioms that people would read and think about as they moved across the site. The text encouraged a sense of individual and collective agency as well as social and ecological connectivity across the city. We drew together the ideas of international leaders in sustainable design solutions (i.e., Enzo Manzini, Buckminster Fuller, William McDonough) and urban agriculture pioneers (i.e., Alice Waters, Stephanie Alexander, Fritz
Haeg) and put them across a backdrop of the city of Sydney (see Figure 2). With a lot of vacant land in Sydney, there are opportunities to cultivate green spaces of many kinds. Cultivating food either within the city or close to the city has significant benefits, reducing food-miles and transport-related pressures, building community, and contributing to health, education, and increased mental and physical well-being.

The project integrated a ‘growing landscape’ on temporary hoardings, through green wall innovation. Research into the viability of green walls reveals their potential to lower energy consumption in urban buildings, mitigate the urban heat island effect, reduce pollutants, renew public spaces, restore diverse ecology to urban areas, and incorporate recycled water (Holloway, Ho and Boxshall, 2003). Green walls and roofs have captured the imagination of many architects and landscapers. There are many variations ranging from expensive, high-end, and high-maintenance designs to low-tech, simpler versions for domestic application on balconies, terraces, and rooftops.

The challenge with green wall technology is to gauge the negative environmental impacts, particularly water and energy use. This design was low impact and took into consideration material lifecycles. We worked with a local green wall/roof company, Junglefy, who supplied a simple, strong, and lightweight system. The panels were made from recycled industrial plastic. Water use was minimal, connected to the main water supply, and the plants were watered with a small pump, irrigation piping, and drippers. The guttering system caught the water and directed it back to the plants in a continuous cycle. After the project was de-installed, the plants were installed and maintained elsewhere in the university. The canvas was locally printed and, after removal, was recycled into bike panniers.

**Final thoughts on the outcomes and impact of the project**

We did not have the resources to conduct evaluative research, except to collect anecdotal feedback. There was a measurable decrease in graffiti after the work was installed and the plants were never vandalized. The site is particularly vulnerable at night when there is no security and, prior to installation, the construction company was investing time and money to remove graffiti from the hoarding wall at least once a week. After the install, graffiti was removed every 8-10 weeks – a significant decrease. In the early design phase, we were resigned to the possibility of losing the work through deliberate destructive damage to the canvas or the plants. We were glad to
get the respect of graffiti artists and to be saving the construction company money on their cleaning bill.

As a temporary design installation, we knew our project would not have the scope to permanently transform the site, but we believed it had potential to activate this otherwise difficult space. We wanted to design something that would ‘grow ideas’. In researching the site and the local area, we found there are a number of planned initiatives which may begin to breathe a new and greener life into this part of the city, including a major green wall installation designed by Patrick Blanc as part of a new residential and commercial project, a proposed city farm and a major public pedestrian link, of which the Ultimo Pedestrian Network site is a part. Large-scale changes like these need committed and visionary leadership, support, and planning. We are hopeful these will come about, although recognize they are often contested, expensive, and need a critical mass of public support, a groundswell across Sydney that embraces sustainability as a new paradigm.

The potential impact of short-term artistic interventions in the public realm is to catalyze new ways for people to engage with each other and with urban space. Introducing an unexpected element into the daily routine, the project aimed to contribute to a broad kind of cultural change by stimulating thinking and action, and inspiring the creation of more enjoyable, livable and sustainable cities.

Figure 3. The installation, incorporating 110 m of canvas graphic and green wall sections. Photo: W. McDougall.
References
PROFILE

FROM UNOCCUPIED TERRITORY TO INHABITED VOID

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a merging of thoughts and readings focused on my personal experience as part of the building team for artist Tadashi Kawamata’s Walkway, a public art commission by the French Ministry of Culture executed in 2009 within the context of the second edition of the Estuaire biennial, an artistic path on the Loire’s estuary in north-western France.

RESUMO: Este ensaio é uma síntese de pensamentos e leituras centrados na minha experiência pessoal como participante da equipa de construção da obra Walkway, do artista Tadashi Kawamata, uma encomenda do ministério francês da Cultura, executada em 2009 no contexto da segunda edição da bienal Estuaire, que consiste num passadiço artístico no estuário do Loire, no noroeste de França.

During the late 1960s, earth artists in continuity with the beat generation movement denounced the overwhelming reality of the commercial and industrial architecture and its devastating impact on the contemporary landscape. Catalyzed by Robert Smithson in his essay, “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic” where, confronted to the disrupted reality of Passaic in the suburbs of New Jersey, he transforms this city into an emblem of artificiality and of the entropic condition of contemporary spaces. Published in 1966, this photographic essay, sort of nihilistic topography of the relicts of the oversized and desolate industrial culture in suburbs, can be considered, with “Homes for America”!, a major antecedent formulation of the entropic state of American society.

Founded on the dialectic relation between the site (earthwork) and the non-site (indoor earthwork), Smithson’s practice departs from the energy that emanates from the sites he exploits to reveal, through the outcoming apathy represented in those non-sites, a landscape that appears as “a white film where an irreversible fading of the past announces the continuous vanishing of the
present into the future” (Lussac, 1997: 6). In this non-historical context, Passaic could be considered as a sign of the initiation of the future America’s nightmare, an image of the society’s self-destructive behaviour. However, Smithson’s strong interest for industrial landscape was, as writer Mitchell Rasor (1994) notes, “more akin to a geologist’s zeal than a temperamental, self-obsessed artist’s melancholia” (p. 2). He continues: “Smithson equated our industrial destructive capacities with that of volcanoes, earthquakes and the full range of natural disasters. Smithson wrote, ‘(t)he farmer’s, miner’s, or the artist’s treatment of the land depends on how aware he is of himself as nature...’” (p. 2).

What position is adopted by artists regarding industrialized landscapes when, today, 45 years later, the so-called entropic state seems to have reached its apogee?

Located at Lavau-sur-Loire, midway between the two French northeastern cities of Nantes and Saint Nazaire, Tadashi Kawamata’s Observatoire (Figure 1) was produced as a public art commission by the French Ministry of Culture, and was destined to be part of the permanent artworks within the context of the landscape and art Biennial Estuaire. Taking place along the estuary of the Loire River that connects the two cities, the Observatoire – the first phase of Kawamata’s piece – was executed in 2007, followed in 2009 by its second phase, Walkway. This site-specific piece is a concrete sign of the reconstruction of the village’s buried memory, an ancient small harbour pushed away from the riverside by the intense surrounding industrial activity. For eight weeks, I was part of the team in charge of its wood deck installation, an almost one-kilometer-long progression that aimed to connect the village to the river through the wetlands filled with reed beds. At its end, the Observatoire, a three-stories-high light structure of chestnut wood, offers a splendid panoramic view of this particular landscape. Through the shelter’s openings at the top, we discover the coexistence of the neighbouring heavy industry with the vulnerable activity.
of the wetland-nesting birds. In her article, “Green Utopias,” author Mai Tran notes that Walkway tends to be more of an environment itself rather than an artistic installation. She writes that its conception and perception has more to do with the tactile and the sensible rather than with concept; it is a laboratory in progress dedicated to the impermanence of things, offering at the same time a hold on space and landscape (Tran, 2009).

Like a phrase devoid of verb, the segment of territory where Walkway is included is not punctuated by the presence of ‘monuments’ in classical terms, emblems of the past meant to mark a memorable moment of human history. On the other hand, the river’s power fluidifies all notions of the past represented by the monument to become a unity of space and time where action is the present. The river delivers us from the idea that the being is, only and always, a human nature, leading us in its course toward the only immutable thing in existence, change.

If the monuments of Passaic could be perceived as “memory traces of abandoned set of futures,” as Smithson named them, the experience of Walkway arises as a seizing of the present that reveals the sublime aspects of an environment inaccessible until then. Moreover, if Passaic is the expression of a “void center that constantly expels us towards the edge, the periphery” (Aubin-Lam, 2007), Walkway flows through the void, this protected space surrounded by two industrial titans – Donges, Total group’s second biggest oil refinery in France, and Cordemais, Electricity of France’s thermal power plant that provides one-third of thermal production of the country – restoring its ontological value as a *medium*. In this perspective, I adopt Jacques Rancière’s view of a medium as a milieu:

The tension between the medium as a neutral mean and the medium as a specific substance, or yet between the medium as an instrument towards achievement of an art’s idea and the medium as what resists to an idea and to art itself, can be resolved in a third term, a third idea, the medium as a milieu: the milieu where the performances being part of an artistic device take place, and the milieu that those performances configure as well. (2008: no page)

Comparable to Smithson’s subject, Tadashi Kawamata frequently works on urban and rurban space *accidents* where he assembles scaffoldings, bridges, or suspended paths, generating an updated perception of the usually damaged or deserted contexts where his interventions take place. Ranging from revealing other realities of the sites to restructuring local identity, many of his artwork workshops, including Walkway, are carried out with the strong participation of
architecture, design, and landscape students as well as local residents. The art work becomes the paradoxical figure that contains both the tangible process of the construction of a collective memory and an intentional weakening of the piece from the concrete building process – by using non-treated wood for example – in order to emphasize a questioning of the relationship between architecture and time. Suspended from movement, those ‘parasitic’ structures seem to graft onto the ruin and most of the time are designed to disappear, leaving a persisting trace in memory of another feature of the places they nestle in.

The context for Walkway, Lavau’s wetlands, is a ‘forsaken’ land from the perspective of the industrial activity in the estuary. It is not a wasteland like those the artist used to activate in his early works, but a site transformed into a haven – since its acquisition by the French coastal protection agency in the 1970s – where the work in progress notion (see Figure 2) performs, through the milieu’s clear vulnerability, a reciprocal and lasting transformation both of the site and of those who take part in the work.

![Image of Walkway](image_url)

Figure 2. Immersed in the repeated gestures for the piece fashioning – to screw, to strike, to move around – we move away paradoxically by action, from the impermanent character of things, to find ourselves within a wordless comprehension of the Walkway silent essence, a phrase whispering to the elements.

How can a vulnerable environment subsist surrounded by such hostile presences? By its perilous situation, the Lavau’s wetlands make reference to the ecological island notion, a phenomena provoked by natural or artificial means, where an isolated portion of territory embraces a natural micro-habitat within a larger different system. It could be claimed that, in this case, the entropic state that Smithson denounced in the 1960s becomes integrated homeostasis in
Kawamata’s work. The Walkway site’s ecological situation allows an unusual view of autoregulation phenomena occurring in the environmental sphere when the human intervention is temperate. Author and landscape architect Bruce K. Ferguson (1994) explains the issue of landscape health very well:

Each aspect of a landscape, when disturbed, undergoes succession, morphologic adjustments and other processes to re-establish equilibrium. Care of landscape sites must be founded on analysis of conditions both within the limits of the site, and in the larger landscape systems of which on-site phenomena are part. Landscape design and management, while accommodating human use, should aim not to tip a healthy landscape out of its homeostatic equilibrium, not to restrict the operation of natural homeostatic adjustment mechanisms, and, when necessary, actively to support the landscape in its effort to seek equilibrium in response to stress. (p. 129)

Thus, the Walkway appears as a niche where a durable interaction never fails to surprise us due to its disconcerting openness (see Figure 3). A symbiotic relation makes it the more enveloping, starting from the piece’s implementation until our assertive quiet steps on an afternoon at a high tide. In reference to the earlier designation of medium as a milieu, Walkway moves away indeed from a definition as a piece of art to become an intrinsic function of the autoregulation process, where humans seek new essential forms of harmony. Walkway is essential architecture where all elements, including us humble tightrope walkers, subtly outline a passage to quiet change.

Figure 3. Second Platform’s view under a clear daylight, where the thermal power plant is perfectly visible, becoming an almost harmless feature, an industrial cathedral pointing to the sky.
Notes
1. Conceptual artist Dan Graham’s “Homes for America” (1966-1967) is a photo-essay where photographs of tract-housing developments in New Jersey are interspersed with blocks of text to address the issue of row houses as a new form of urban living.
2. The traditional qualitative description of entropy is that it refers to changes in the status quo of the system and is a measure of “molecular disorder” and the amount of wasted energy in a dynamical energy transformation from one state or form to another (Wikipedia). The entropy described in Smithson’s writings concerns the isolated system where there is a considerable energy loss.
3. Permanency is rare in Kawamata’s body of work, which gives priority to ephemeral creations.

References
的空间，承诺，运动

查尔斯·马瑟·布鲁内尔
《生命空间，蒙特利尔，加拿大》

摘要：蒙特利尔生命空间是一个价值1.89亿加元的项目，它把城市的生物圈、昆虫馆、植物园和天文馆聚集在一个地方，提供一个集成的体验，促进沉浸、连接和参与；和一个公共广场，创造新的聚会方式，居住空间，建设和体验日常生活。加拿大最大的自然科学博物馆群正在被转变为第一个致力于人类和自然的空间。

RESUMO: O Espaço para a Vida, de Montreal, é um projeto no valor de 189 milhões de dólares canadenses que reúne o Biodôme, o Insectarium, o Jardim Botânico e o Planetário da cidade num lugar que oferece uma experiência integradora que fomenta a imersão, a ligação e a participação; e uma praça pública que cria novas formas de reunião, de habitação de um espaço e de construção e experiência da vida quotidiana. O maior complexo museológico de ciências naturais do Canadá está a ser transformado no primeiro espaço dedicado à humanidade e à natureza.

生物多样性是指地球上所有生物的形式。我们知道25%到50%的物种将在本世纪末消失。我们也知道我们的生存取决于生物多样性，它为我们提供了无数的服务。它喂养我们，照顾我们，甚至决定了我们呼吸的空气的质量。事实上，生物多样性为我们提供了如此多的服务，以至于很难将其经济价值进行分配。这是由经济学家帕文·苏克德夫撰写的报告《生态系统和生物多样性的经济学》所建议的，帕文·苏克德夫是德意志银行在孟买的全球市场业务负责人。例如，蜜蜂和其他传粉昆虫每年估计为世界农业产出贡献1900亿美元。从25%到50%的制药市场，大致相当于3000亿美元的等值，依赖于遗传资源。2007年有机食品和饮料市场价值460亿美元，过去十年增长了300%。
A record 18,000 individuals, politicians, and experts gathered at the Nagoya Summit on Biodiversity, held in 2010 under the aegis of the United Nations, to discuss biodiversity-related issues. At that event, 193 countries signed an agreement that observers described as historic. Most of the governments represented agreed to act to preserve world biological diversity. We are convinced that what is needed now is a vast movement rallying all members of society to ensure that these official efforts have a lasting impact.

We need to bring humankind closer to nature. That is the key message of Space for Life, which consists of the Montréal Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden, and Planetarium: four prestigious institutions whose outreach, conservation, research, and educational activities help people enjoy nature to the fullest.

Space for Life draws on the expertise and collections of the four institutions and their popularity with nearly two million visitors every year. It represents their commitment to speaking with one voice as a way of amplifying their message. It embodies their efforts to foster a unifying, authentic, participatory movement aimed at bringing humankind closer to the natural world and encouraging close contact to show people that they are physically part of nature.

This sort of informed contact teaches people through experiences of all kinds – immersive, festive, and entertaining ones. During the Butterflies Go Free event presented by the Insectarium, for instance, visitors walk among thousands of butterflies from various species. Sometimes one lands on a child’s shoulder – a priceless souvenir to last a lifetime. At the Botanical Garden, the Courtyard of the Senses also offers an unusual experience: visitors discover the smell, taste, and texture of plants without seeing them as they tour the garden blindfolded. Several times a year, the public is invited for an exclusive look behind the scenes of the Biodôme to learn how the machinery that keeps the ecosystems going works, to help prepare meals for the animals, and to watch the veterinarians perform their jobs. The goal is to make such ongoing contact part of Montrealers’ daily lives, their concerns, rituals, and leisure activities. Space for Life invites visitors to look at nature in a new light, and stresses nature’s intelligence, ingenuity, and creative and participatory wisdom.

In this respect, Space for Life utilizes creativity and talents of all kinds. By urging us to rethink our bonds with nature and to strengthen our ties with plants, insects, and animals, it is undertaking a tremendous co-operative project – bringing citizens together with experts, and with one another.

Simply put, Space for Life is inviting us all to cultivate a new way of living. Space for Life is a living space that is inspired by nature in its operations and
that evolves with its milieu – its visitors, its neighbourhood, its city, and the whole world. This philosophy is evident throughout the organization, from the visitor experience to the buildings, their layout, services, programming, communications, and even management. It also translates into an ambitious C$189 million project whose development principles are environmental, economic, and social sustainability, and include coexistence, experience, participation, transparency, and a joyful approach to life. The largest natural science museum complex in Canada is in the process of becoming the first space in the world dedicated to humankind and nature.

This brings me to our future plans. With the arrival of the new Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium on the Olympic Park site, Space for Life will physically bring together all four institutions (see Figure 1). They will be linked by a vast public square, the Grande Place, where we will demonstrate how getting closer to nature can play a central role in our daily experience, and how we can incorporate it into every aspect of our lives.

We have so many ideas! Solar stations for recharging laptops and cellphones; windmill-powered lighting; alternative means of transportation for getting from one institution to another; inviting street furniture; a treetop restaurant built from bamboo; toboggan runs on the new Planetarium’s roof; Ted-talks-style lectures where people share their most innovative and inspiring thoughts for the future; moveable trees, for creating your own shady spot; and why not a landing stage for migrating butterflies ... Both summer and winter, night
and day, the Grande place will evolve along with those who use and make it their own.

Work on the infrastructure for the Grande Place is planned to begin in 2014 and continue until 2017. However, we have already started to occupy the space by holding activities here to encourage the community's feeling of ownership. For example, the first symbolic gesture, in May 2010, was the launching of seed balls to mark the International Day for Biological Diversity; the Space for Life team, along with 4,200 students from Quebec alternative schools, tossed seed balls onto the path linking the Insectarium and Biodôme, to fill it with colourful flowers. The Ephemeral Forest, another symbolic gesture for life, took shape for the first time in early 2011. It has become an annual ritual. This temporary creation near the Biodôme and the Olympic Stadium consists entirely of Christmas trees collected from the homes of citizens after the holidays that then ‘take root’ in the concrete as a symbol of life. The artistic and ecological gesture involves the public directly. In the spring, the trees are transformed into wood chips, which are handed out to Montrealers to use as mulch for their gardens.

The Biodiversity Centre, officially opened in March 2011 on the Botanical Garden site, houses over 2 million species of insects, plants, and fungi. These collections are shared with 18 universities and botanical gardens across Canada via the Canadensys database network. More than 50 researchers work at the Biodiversity Centre. In addition, it has a public exhibition space that, starting in March 2012 and for the next three years, will be the base camp for Jean Lemire's 1000 Days for the Planet international sailing mission. Issues related to biodiversity, as well as the players involved (including our own institutions' researchers), are presented here via artistic installations and direct communications with Jean Lemire's crew, among whose members are Space for Life science guides. People are able to experience the voyage as though they are part of the mission themselves; for instance, they can visit the ‘seventh continent’. Imagine – thousands of kilometres of garbage from our planet, floating in the middle of the ocean. 1000 Days will also be an opportunity to focus on this issue; visitors are invited to participate by bringing in laundry detergent bottle caps to create a monumental work producing the sensation of swimming in a sea of plastic. This approach gives the general public the chance to come into direct contact with leading-edge research (see Figure 2).
The Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium, the result of an international architecture competition won by the Montréal firm of Cardin Ramirez Julien, opened its doors in April 2013. Built to meet LEED Platinum environmental certification standards, the Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium is Montréal's most environmentally friendly public building. Bathed in natural light, with clean lines and a welcoming atmosphere, it is designed to enhance visitors’ experiences as they discover the Universe in a totally new way through immersive experiences. The Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium is positioning itself as a leader on the international scene by giving creativity a permanent role in a scientific institution. It combines cutting-edge technology, scientific knowledge, and creativity in two complementary immersive theatres (see Figure 3). This creative approach is evident in the Multimedia Theatre, where the first original production by the internationally renowned Montréal duo of multidisciplinary artists Victor Pilon and Michel Lemieux is presented. The technical wizardry employed in the Astronomical Theatre, for its part, will make it possible to present a clear starry sky in Montréal and carry visitors off on a thrilling virtual journey taking them light-years from Earth. The permanent exhibition, on the other hand, explores exobiology – a rather bold topic for this type of institution.
The scientific and artistic approach that has guided us in carrying out this project pushes the boundaries of the field. But we feel that we have taken traditional ways of doing things as far as we can. In May 2012, a number of eminent experts on biodiversity, along with artists, set designers, renowned architects, and experts in cultural practices generously agreed to come to Montréal to discuss one question: How can our institutions devoted to the natural sciences truly fulfil their mission and reconnect humankind with nature? Underlying this day of intense brainstorming and co-creation on the Insectarium Metamorphosis was our desire to rethink our spaces and experiences so as to encourage closer bonds between humans and nature – through insects. We want to create an emotional link that is indispensable to a new awareness and to taking action. For instance, if bees were to disappear – and they are at risk – the consequences for humanity would be irreparable. How can we appeal to people’s emotions effectively enough so that everyone grasps the true importance of this information and makes a commitment to biodiversity? These accomplished scientists looked at the questions being asked by Space for Life and saw a real desire to reinvent ways of doing things and to reconnect humankind with nature – something they had not really seen anywhere else. One recurring idea emerged from this high-level multidisciplinary exchange: that of a museum that would be constantly evolving. A living museum. A porous museum, open to nature, with no distinct boundaries.
between indoors and outdoors. Visitors would move from inside the museum to outside without really noticing. While we know the starting point for this transformation, we have no idea where it will end up – in terms of architecture or the visitor experience. We do know that visitors will become true actors in this setting. All in all, it will be an organic experience. The co-design process continues, and we expect to have a good idea of the building’s architecture by the end of 2013. This is the direction in which the Space for Life is headed.

In the same spirit, the Biodôme is working on the urban ecosystem concept. In addition to a new habitat, the entire visitor experience is being rethought so as to emphasize the building’s engineering and allow visitors to rediscover the Olympic Velodrome. It will surround them with the fruits of human ingenuity, demonstrating the challenge of how we have to put our intelligence to work as we rethink our lifestyles (opening in 2016).

The Botanical Garden, meanwhile, is designing an all-new phytotechnology garden. From green roofs to plant walls, filtering marshes and phytoremediation, technologies that draw on plants’ properties are a fascinating alternative to traditional approaches for solving environmental problems (opening in 2014). The Botanical Garden also has a number of other plans that should be completed by 2017: a refurbished Main Exhibition Greenhouse and a spectacular new glass house to accommodate special events and major horticultural exhibitions.

Space for Life is a partnership between the different levels of government and the private sector, through our Foundation. It will make it possible to significantly boost the institutions’ attendance from 1.7 million visitors today to a predicted 2.4 million by 2017. Moreover, Space for Life will generate major economic spin-offs. It is estimated that between now and 2017, it will contribute C$622 million to Quebec GDP, in addition to supporting 8,300 jobs.

Space for Life is a strategic asset, firmly anchored on its site. It is like Montréal itself: authentic, inventive, committed, and open to the world. A gift for Montréal’s 375th anniversary in 2017, it will allow the city of Montréal to stand out on the international scene and will bring well-deserved recognition for its daring and its innovative approach to urban life, its creativity, and its commitment to biodiversity and sustainable development. Space for Life is more than an infrastructure project – it is a vast movement directly involving all players in our society. It will allow Montréal to make its mark as a standard bearer for cities of the future, where citizens, the planet, and the economy all converge.

For more information: www.montrealspaceforlife.ca.
Public Art: Catalyzing Social Connections and Public Action
COLLECTIVE RECEPTION OF ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

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Abstract: This article looks at the meeting between contemporary art, the public, urban realm as context for art experiences, and the viewers. It introduces and investigates the concepts of relational aesthetics and collective reception in order to better understand the potential of fine art in public space. Taking its departure in two works by the Danish artist Jeppe Hein, it discusses the relationship between viewer and artwork in contemporary art in public spaces. Hein’s art focuses on themes such as playfulness, humour, and the participation of the viewers as a way of commenting on human behaviour in public space, and the article discusses whether art with such characteristics can contribute to the creation of a diverse and well-functioning public domain. In Hein’s works, the viewers are addressed as a collective and the art works strive to generate social situations where meetings between strangers and cultural exchange can take place. Hein operates with highly aesthetic objects inserted into the urban landscape in order to create new places, stage new experiences, and, most importantly, to make the viewer interact with the city.

Resumo: Este artigo aborda a associação entre a arte contemporânea, o público, o mundo urbano como contexto para experiências artísticas e os espetadores. Introduz e analisa os conceitos de estética relacional e de receção coletiva a fim de compreender melhor o potencial das belas-artes no espaço público. Tomando como ponto de partida duas obras do artista dinamarquês Jeppe Hein, discute a relação entre o espetador e a obra artística na arte contemporânea em espaços públicos. A arte de Hein concentra-se em temas como o divertimento, o humor e a participação dos espetadores como forma de refletir sobre o comportamento humano no espaço público, e o artigo questiona se a arte, com estas características, pode contribuir para um domínio público diverso e funcional. Nas obras de Hein, os espetadores são vistos como um coletivo e as obras de arte tentam produzir situações sociais nas quais podem ocorrer encontros entre estranhos e diálogos culturais. Hein opera com objetos altamente estéticos introduzidos na paisagem urbana a fim de criar novos lugares, apresentar novas experiências e, mais importante, levar o espetador a interagir com a cidade.
Collective reception of art in public space

The role of art in public space has attracted renewed interest from artists, urban designers, and planners. While the city and urban culture have been important themes in art since the mid-nineteenth century in terms of finding inspiration, symbols, experiences, and knowledge, and also as the physical context and medium for art, these themes seem even more salient for contemporary art (Nipper, 2009: 15). Public space, and urban space in particular, is an intriguing and attractive context for contemporary art in all its different forms, and ‘the urban’ is a recurrent theme in most aspects of contemporary culture.

Appearing Rooms and Modified Social Benches are works by Jeppe Heins and both works exemplify how contemporary art can explore the relations between site and installation and the relations between installation and viewers. In this article, the concepts of relational aesthetics and collective reception will be applied to art that has the urban as both theme and context in order to discuss art’s potential contribution to the urban landscape and urban life.

In public space, art meets a more diverse audience than that of typical art gallery visitors. People cross the city in order to commute to work, to shop, or to get to other daily activities. A variety of leisure activities also bring people into public space: walking the dog, meeting friends in cafés, and taking the children out to play. Since the primary reason for being in urban spaces is not usually to experience art, the chance meeting between art and everyday life creates a set of challenges when art is placed in urban space. The city is quite the opposite of the ‘white cube’ and every urban space represents a specific context filled with functions, flow, social relations, and history. Above all, urban spaces are dominated by the functionalities of everyday life. Art in public space must be able to reach an audience and attract its attention in the strict attention economy of the city. The role of the art work viewer is a particularly interesting subject in this complex context.

Relational aesthetics and collective reception

Nicolas Bourriaud’s collection of essays, Relational Aesthetics (2002), is one of the defining books in the field of art concerned with the social situation and the social as a medium for art. Bourriaud takes departure in examples of art from the 1990s where he detects a tendency in art focussing on dialogue and social relations (pp. 7-8). He interprets this as a response to consumer culture, where even social relations are centred on consumption. Bourriaud understands relational aesthetics as art as social interstice (pp. 13-17). Critical voices have
asked if relational aesthetics actually has the potential to connect people in this way. As an example, Peter Brix Søndergaard (2006) is critical toward the social content of relational aesthetics. His point is that the art audience is rather homogeneous: those who choose to show up at the gallery to experience an art Thai dinner by Rirkrit Tiravanija in his work *Untitled (Free)* from 1992 will possibly meet strangers who are very much like themselves and do not represent alternative lifestyles or unfamiliar worldviews. Moreover, Bourriaud writes about art that takes place within the art institution: in the galleries, museums, or in the collector’s home. The critique of the limitations of Bourriaud’s validity in relation to a broader art audience is valuable input to the discussion of relational aesthetics in public art. By using the concept of relational aesthetics in the public realm, Søndergaard’s critical question becomes relevant: Can art in public space actually connect people?

The second theoretical concept this article wants to discuss in relation to public art is collective reception, which describes a communal experience of art. Collective reception is derived from the article “Chat Aesthetics at the Heart of Sculpture” (2009), written by Christine Macel, art critic and curator at Centre Pompidou, Paris, in which she explores the social aspect of Jeppe Hein’s art. Christine Macel develops the term to describe a special characteristic feature present in most of Jeppe Hein’s art, with the full potential of collective reception best realized in Hein’s installations for public space. Macel writes:

> Jeppe Hein belongs to ... a generation of artists who do not believe that art can be reduced to intersubjective relationships as described by Nicolas Bourriaud [1998], nor indeed to the aesthetics of social practices in which ethics eventually replace aesthetics, as analysed by Claire Bishop [2006]. He does, however, touch upon all these ideas by bending them, by subtly perverting them, even insulting them with a caustic sense of humour, yet without any kind of cynicism as he embraces contemporaneity with a playfulness that saves him from any regrets; an ethics is developed for collective reception which goes beyond the simple sculptural form. In effect, Jeppe Hein’s spectators are not isolated in their reception, but part of a collective game, which also consists in watching others interact with the work and play with it. Hein changes the relationship with the work radically by generating interaction between the spectators ... (p. 85)

Macel describes how Hein’s art calls for and stages collective reception, which means that the experience of his installations is intended to be a communal
experience shared by a group of viewers. The intended viewer is expected to be in plural, so the art experience is turned into a social situation, where the presence of the audience plays a central part on multiple levels. Some installations by Hein are interactive, some are active, kinetic installations, and some are static installations, but in all of them, the presence of the audience and the reactions among the audience are key elements in the installations. The social games around Hein’s installations cannot be described as purely taking place in the subject–object relation between installation and viewer(s), but also in the relations created among the audience; the installation generates social interaction around the work, as part of the work. The social exchange that takes place in Appearing Rooms might not have the same emancipating and empowering content as the relational art as described by Bourriaud, but it manages to create a meeting point in the urban landscape where social interaction between different types of viewers takes place in a form that is detached from the consumerist logic of the inner city.

**Appearing Rooms in Cordoba, Spain**

In the summer of 2009, Appearing Rooms was shown in Cordoba, Spain. Appearing Rooms is one of Hein’s water pavilions. It is similar to a fountain where pre-programmed walls of water rise and fall in random patterns, creating enclosed spaces and openings for the audience to pass through (see Figures 1 and 2). The water pavilion consists of a low base and has the shape of a square that is subdivided by four. The water walls are approximately two metres high and, when seen from a distance, the water pavilion has a distinct architectural character. The infinite combinations of appearing and disappearing walls and the splashing and glittering of the water have both auditive and visual appeal, as known from traditional fountains, but when the audience enters the pavilion the whole scene becomes even more animated and dynamic.

Hein’s water pavilions stage a “situation” (Jalving, 2011) where the viewers become part of the work and where the social situation is the most important aspect of the work – the pavilion as an object is secondary. The water pavilion creates spaces for the audience to enter, and the risk of getting wet or the risk of getting trapped in one of the spaces for an unspecified period of time and maybe even together with strangers, creates a thrilling and ‘playful’ interaction with the work. When observing Appearing Rooms, it soon becomes evident that the piece has a remarkable ability to generate a crowd in the urban space it occupies. Appearing Rooms makes people stop either to engage actively with the
Figure 1. *Appearing Rooms*, Cordoba. A group of teenagers are waiting for the water walls to appear and close the room. Photo: Line Marie Bruun Jespersen.

Figure 2. *Appearing Rooms*, Cordoba. Pure joy. Young children invent their own games and play with each other and the water. It gets extremely hot in Cordoba in July, so the chance to get wet is welcome. Photo: Line Marie Bruun Jespersen.
pavilion or just to enjoy the spectacle. It is attractive to experience the water pavilion in smaller groups. Children and adults enter the pavilion together and soon a negotiation about where and when to go is initiated. Children are quick to invent games like jumping over the rising walls, touching the walls in different manners, etc. These games generate a lot of movement and sound. Typically, the adults, parents, or grandparents leave the pavilion after a short while, wait by the side, and look at the children playing. The “situation” consists of the audience playing in the pavilion and of groups of spectators who stand on the side talking to each other and commenting on the action in the pavilion, taking photographs, or just watching the whole scenario.

The distance of the audience to the inner spaces of the pavilion determines which senses are activated. Inside the pavilion, you get a full sensory experience where the sound, feel, look, smell, and taste of the waterdrops and mist affect your moving body. The further away from the pavilion you move, the more the bodily experience diminishes, but the social experience stays intact within a rather large area surrounding the pavilion. Appearing Rooms transforms the urban space it is placed in. The dynamic and playful staging of the interaction between audience and installation becomes the centre of attention of the site. The ‘viewer’ becomes a participant in Appearing Rooms. The dynamic flow in and out of the installation and the active participation binds the art experience in time and space. It is insufficient to think of the viewer as a passive onlooker – everyone becomes viewer-participant in the situation.

The dynamic water walls make Appearing Rooms change over time and the installation is meant to be experienced over time by our moving and sensing body. In this way, Appearing Rooms engages the audience in a playful presentness similar to what Gadamer describes as “play” in Truth and Method (2005). Gadamer writes that in order to get the full experience, the participants have to submit to the rules of the game and play along. In most games and play, Gadamer explains, the movements are repetitive and have no end-goal. Still, they have an appeal due to their ability to capture the players in the moment and to pull them into the game’s domain, thus creating a presentness. Submitting to the rules of the game is very important; no one likes a Spielverderber or killjoy who does not accept the rules of the game and spoils the game for the other players. In Appearing Rooms, there are no well-defined rules to submit to. The artwork presents the audience with the invitation to move from room to room when the walls open up. The work can be approached in an endless number of ways ranging from very cautious and controlled behaviour to ecstatic and wild
play. Everyone is welcome to invent their own rules to be freely applied to the experience or reception mode of the work. The children who do not submit to the ‘rule’ of the open door and get wet are not considered *Spielverderbers*, but adventurous explorers of the pavilion. *Appearing Rooms*’ open-mindedness toward its use makes it accessible to a very broad audience. *Appearing Rooms* is not intimidating or challenging, but inviting and fun. The role of play and the relative openness of the work are key to understanding why so many different people engage in the collective reception of this particular work. *Appearing Rooms* establishes a loosely choreographed experience where the audience members can move freely in whatever speed and route they prefer. The experience is open toward different modes of experiencing art, and leaves room for different tempers and approaches. Hein gives the viewers full access to his work and allows them to use it in any way they like. He does not, however, include the viewers in a collaborative process of creating the work. He, as artist, has developed the concept of the pavilion and chosen what he thought was an appropriate site for the work, hoping that the viewers would respond to the work, preferably by experiencing the work and the social situation surrounding the work through active participation.

*Modified Social Benches in Aarhus, Denmark*

A second example of collective reception, although in a smaller format, is found around Hein’s *Modified Social Benches* (see Figure 3). In 2009 ten *Modified Social Benches* were put up in the periphery of the city centre in Aarhus, Denmark. The work is a series of white benches modified in different humorous shapes. They are easily recognizable as benches but due to the altered shapes their functionality might be lost, that is, the new forms challenge the audience’s creativity and inventiveness when they use the benches. Benches, as an essential part of most city design, represent a relaxed way of being present in public space and are social pieces of furniture where dialogue and discussion can take place.

The relation between bench and site generates new meaning, from bench to bench and from city to city. *Modified Social Benches* are not site-specific; they function as a visual ‘exclamation mark’ in any urban space. Their extraordinary and surprising shapes attract attention, and the combination of a strange bench and the surrounding space will start reflections on the character of the site. The benches do not create large social situations but when couples, small groups of friends, or families experience the *Modified Social Benches* together,
their interaction with the benches creates a small spectacle for bypassers to look at. Thus, the benches can generate visual contact between strangers, which is a diminutive form of ‘meeting’ or ‘cultural exchange’.

The experience of Modified Social Benches is not expanded in time in the same way as Appearing Rooms. The benches are static, and the experience is shorter. They do not alter the site they are placed in, but instead they direct attention to their actual surroundings and make the audience more aware of everyday spaces. As a starting point, the works invite viewers and users to wonder and speculate about the usual characteristics of a bench and the functions and behaviour we associate with a bench. More broadly, Modified Social Benches invites the audience to reflect on issues related to the design and use of public space.

Modified Social Benches and Appearing Rooms share the ambition to create social interaction or question social life in public space, and both works approach these rather serious issues in the same humorous and playful manner. In Aarhus, a number of Modified Social Benches were placed in sites that lacked social life, on the outskirts of what can be defined as ‘inner city’. The sites were non-places and in this context they were not able to create actual social interaction between larger groups of strangers; however, the benches staged the occasional users in ways an ordinary bench would not do. When people engaged with the benches, they were exposed in a way rarely seen in public space. The strange-looking art bench attracted attention, and passersby were allowed to look at the whole ensemble of bench and users, thus establishing visible contact and awareness between strangers. Figure 3 illustrates an example of some of the marginalized users of city spaces; the alcoholics on the bench represent one of the groups of citizens often unwanted and ignored in most inner city planning.

An exhibition of the ten Modified Social Benches was part of a large solo show of Hein's work at ARoS Museum of Modern Art. The benches were installed in the city prior to the solo show, as a public event. ARoS published a pamphlet about the benches with a short catalogue text, a map of the locations of the benches, and ten questions about the role of the bench and the design of cities today, which was distributed from the museum. The pamphlet had multiple purposes: it worked as an invitation to expand the museum visit to the city and to find all the benches, and the text added a layer of interpretation to the benches. The list of ten questions in the pamphlet had a direct and critical approach to life in public space:
Why have 2/3 of the city benches been removed over the course of the last twenty years?
What role do benches play for life in the city?
Is the public space a space for everyone?
Who should decide how the urban space is designed?
Does the planning and design of urban space involve an attempt at controlling human behaviour?
Should the public space be a space for discussion?
Do we all experience the city in the same way?
Are you allowed privacy in the public space?
Have the city’s spontaneity, flexibility, and ability to surprise disappeared in planning, order and control?
Should the public space be a place of lingering or of transit?

These questions relate to many current debates on life in public space, and Hein’s concerns about the public realm touches on the same worries with which urban sociologists are concerned. To the broader population in Aarhus, who
did not visit the museum first and maybe did not know of the pamphlet, had never heard of Jeppe Hein, or did not know that the benches were part of an art show, the meeting between audience, city space, and benches became a more intimate experience taking departure in the individual viewer’s knowledge and perception of the urban spaces in their city. An underlying premise for this article is the idea that art possesses the ability to present new, unseen, and maybe utopian scenarios, which can make the audience reflect upon and reconsider the world around them. In this way, art can facilitate experiences that challenge the audience and ask more questions than deliver answers. Both Appearing Rooms and Modified Social Benches resemble well-known typologies of the city – the fountain and the bench – and they aim at making performative comments on urban life. Appearing Rooms and Modified Social Benches are examples of how art can translate the complex relationship between art, city, and audience into art works that create new types of experiences and sites in the city while, at the same time, accentuate important aspects of urban life and the urban landscape.

Art + city

Urban sociologists and philosophers frequently discuss the ‘urban condition’ and the importance of a diverse and open public domain. They stress the need for a public domain where different cultures and lifestyles can be present together, and all parts of society can meet. Richard Sennett (2008) divides modern thinking about the public realm into three ‘schools’. Hannah Arendt and her political approach to the public realm represent the first school where the public realm is considered a place for discussion and freedom of speech. Arendt’s thoughts on democratic spaces in the public realm have roots in the Greek agora where public life and debate constituted the city centre. The second school of thinking is represented by Jürgen Habermas, who does not link the public realm to a physical place – the city – but to “any medium, occasion or event, which prompts an open discussion between strangers” (Sennett, 2008: no page). The third school is associated with Sennett himself and Erving Goffmann and has a performative and anthropological approach to understanding the public realm as cultural processes expressed through human behaviour, for instance, in our greeting rituals and how we dress. All three schools are interested in what happens in the public realm when strangers meet, as opposed to what happens in the private realm between individuals who know each other well. Sennett stresses that democratic government needs a public realm where strangers can
actually meet and exchange opinions and knowledge. The public realm is thus a place for learning, education, and development in the meeting with strangers and their culture and views of the world.

The Dutch writers Hajer and Rejndorp (2001) follow this line of thinking in their essay “In Search of New Public Domain,” in which they define the public domain as “those places where an exchange between different social groups is possible and also actually occurs” (p. 11). They argue for the combination of the public domain with public space in form of design projects and city planning. The need for such projects increases when traditional public spaces are privatized; when shopping no longer takes place in the market square but in indoor, private shopping centres; and when a highly mobile body of citizens is transporting itself from lifestyle domain to lifestyle domain, where the number of strangers we meet is kept to a minimum.

Artists, designers, architects, and art institutions approach this complex problem in different ways, and a great diversity in forms of expression are continuously presenting themselves in our cities in recent years. Jeppe Hein’s works are examples of fine art that contribute to and take part in this discussion, but a wide range of other artistic and creative agents are also present in this field. Subcultural manifestations, such as street art and experimental temporary architecture, are widespread and popular. Process-based and performativ works such as flash mobs and other activism-related events stress the urge and will to engage and act in the public sphere. This has resulted in developments within the commissioning process as well. In Denmark, the National Arts Foundation started a process in 2009 by making an open call for projects for public space. The purpose of the call was to expand the scope of projects for public space that the foundation would and could fund. In the Netherlands, the SKOR Foundation for Art and Public Domain, founded in 1999, focuses on creating art and spaces with artistic quality in public spaces and institutions that ”react to socio-political changes in society and new developments in contemporary art, urban design and landscape architecture” (SKOR, 2012: no page). In the U.K., Artangel is a product of the same idea.

**Public art and urban (social) life**

In 1995, Suzanne Lacy wrote about “new genre public art,” such as politically relevant performance art, as works which stage social processes and the involvement of locals as co-producers of the site-specific works. Claire Bishop includes a similar type of art in her article on “The Social Turn” (2006). The
emphasis on the social processes in these collective projects is so strong that the authorial role of the artist is sacrificed in order to redistribute ownership and empowerment to the co-producing participants.

In the case of Jeppe Hein, it is the physical object that functions as the mediator for the experience. This object bears a clear mark of Hein’s style: a minimalist aesthetics dominated by the colour white, mirrors, chrome, water, steel, and neon light, all executed in objects in human scale. Hein, as authorial artist, is very present in his works, and in the way he stages a certain “modality of experience” for the viewer, to use a term from Claire Bishop. In Installation Art: A Critical History (2005), Bishop divides installation art into four “modalities of experience,” which means that she organizes the history of installation art in relation to the type of experience the installations offer the viewers (p. 10). The four chapters each tell the story of an experiential mode in installation art: dream scene, heightened perception, mimetic engulfment, and activated spectatorship. Hard as it is to fit art into predefined boxes, there are overlaps between the categories, and Hein’s works for public space illustrate how different aspects of the same work can relate to the different experience types.

The critical comments about society formulated in Hein’s ten questions and discreetly put into play in Appearing Rooms and Modified Social Benches connect Hein to the theoretical inspiration of “activated spectatorship,” where the critical potential of art is in focus when the viewers are confronted with political and ethical dilemmas. The theoretical framework behind Bishop’s category of “activated spectatorship” is, among others, the idea of radical, antagonistic democracy (Bishop, 2005: 119). Rosalind Deutsche in Evictions (1998) and Bishop in “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” (2004) have developed this idea further in relation to art in the public realm. Hein’s works share some of these features but, at the same time, they are rather abstract and focused on ‘harmless’ play, so the immediate reception of the work is not considered highly political and critical. The experimental and hands-on interaction between artefact and viewer/participant in Hein’s works places him also in Bishop’s category of “heightened perception,” where the viewer’s presence and perception are addressed.

This study of Hein’s installations in public space reveals that there are multiple recipient roles within the term collective reception and that works of art, different in scale and effects, can establish different types of collective reception in public space. Appearing Rooms stages the interaction between art
and audience, and this meeting is a collective experience; it involves multiple participating recipients at the same time, and both participants and spectators come away with an experience. The ability of Appearing Rooms to generate a crowd creates a meeting place, an actual public realm, where strangers are present and have a communal experience. The audience in the pavilion can be enclosed in one of the rooms with a group of strangers and the unusual experience generates communication or at least raised awareness of ‘the other’. The public realm of Appearing Rooms is similar to Sennett and Goffmann’s performative public realm, where the presence of the crowd and the invitation to act, play, and have a bodily experience in public space challenges the usual behaviour of the audience.

Conclusion
As we have seen in the examples of Hein’s work, art in public space can, to varying degrees and according to the scale and the extension in time, create meeting places with cultural exchange, reflection, and awareness of the presence of ‘others’, of ‘strangers’ in the city. Moreover, these meeting places are ‘social interstices’ and represent an alternative type of space, a counter-space freed from consumer-discourse. Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics and Marcel’s collective reception describes precisely the potential of and challenge to contemporary art in public space. Counter-spaces are important if we accept the sociologists’ arguments. This does not mean that art should be used as a tool for creating new public domains, but the examples tell us that art can inspire and explore how to create inviting spaces, open enough to attract a broad variety of audience, and that these counter-spaces actually appeal to people in the city.

The aesthetics of Hein’s works can also be described as being relational, despite his clear presence as author-artist in his works. Hein’s works are smaller interventions which function as acupuncture for a short period of time, but hopefully have a longer-lasting effect on the viewer-participants and affect their view of their city. The art works are bound in time and space, and rely on the particular audience or participants present. The works open up a renegotiation of the understanding of time and space, and the role of the viewer-participant. Hein uses humour and playfulness to invite the broadest possible audience to perform socially. In this way, art comments on city spaces and city life in an enjoyable way.
References
PERFORMING COMMUNITY ACTION IN THE SMALL CITY: THE REDRESS PROJECT IN KAMLOOPS

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Abstract: Is an artistic performance of community action more likely to succeed in a small city? Are there aspects of contemporary artistic performance particularly suited to the milieu of the small city? In this article the writer examines some of the qualities of the small city and the characteristics of recent artistic performance to discover ways in which the two seem to productively fit as well as ways in which they do not. A case study is considered: The REDress Project, performed in Kamloops, British Columbia, in 2011, in which performance artist Jaime Black hung red dresses in various locations around the city as a memorialization of the hundreds of Canadian aboriginal women missing or murdered over the past few decades. Along with the display of dresses, there were allied events such as a community banquet, the showing of film documentaries, panel discussions, and an artist’s talk. The author concludes that while the goals of effective social exchange were possible, the project had a reduced impact due to limitations of the artistic genre itself.

I want to discuss an artistic performance event that took place in 2011 in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. This is *The REDress Project*¹, instigated by Métis performance artist Jaime Black, in which dozens of red dresses were hung in various locations around the city of Kamloops as a memorialization of the 600 missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada over the past few decades, an event that has caused much public debate and led to an ongoing Commission of Inquiry.² *The REDress Project* took place over four days, including tours of the dress sites, a community banquet, the performance of aboriginal drumming and singing, the showing of two film documentaries³, a panel discussion, and an artist’s talk (see Figure 1). As a work of performing community action, it is clearly in line with much recent artistic activity and critical theory. At the same time, there is also a growing literature on the topic of small cities. It is the conjunction of these new areas of study that I wish to examine.

I want to ask: Is the small city receptive to the artistic performance of community action? Are there aspects of the performance of community action that are especially suited to people living in the small city? At the same time, are there inherent problems limiting the efficacy of interventionist performance in the small city? To address these questions, I will use the example of Kamloops and the performance of *The REDress Project*, focussing on two areas of dynamic change and convergence: that of the re-orientation of Kamloops as a post-industrial city and that of artistic creation as a social form.

At first glance, the fit between small cities and recent artistic performance looks very strong, with the likelihood of success for *The REDress Project* very high. According to their commentators, both are firmly grounded in rhetoric of urban identity and regeneration. Bell and Jayne, in their book, *Small Cities* (2006), list some of the central qualities, citing the “strong sense of place and the ‘human scale’ of small cities ... [they are] less busy, more walkable ... do not exhibit the problems of big cities ... aren’t dominated by corporate presence...[have] independent retailing ... are closely linked to nearby residential neighbourhoods” (p. 8). They remind us that “smallness is in the urban habitus; it’s about ways of acting, self image, the sedimented structures of feeling, sense of place and aspiration” (p. 5). In Kamloops there is a feeling of not needing to emulate or become a big city, a pitfall that Bell calls “mundanization” (p. 1). Garrett-Petts and Dubinsky, in *The Small Cities Book: On the Cultural Future of Small Cities* (2005), state that “now is the time for small cities to make the case for smaller-scale cultural development ... to tell their own stories ... [to localize] questions of globalization and cultural identity at the municipal level” (p. 1).
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Figure 1. The REDeSS Project poster, designed by Emily Hope.
Kamloops is content to establish its identity as a vital small city, finding operational and strategic ways to balance local and global forces. There is, for example, a growing sense of co-opting big city culture: surveys have shown that when they experience local artistic culture, the people of Kamloops would like to think that it is as good as any other city, whether in terms of content, venue, or production values; they like it even better when it has some local inflection. This emphasis on the local and vernacular, on a specific scale of relationships, amounts to a developing discourse, one that accords well with key art world practices of the past decade – where the city figures as a prime driving force and “the collective elaboration of meaning” (Bourriaud, 1998: 15) is a central activity. Indeed, just as the small city wants to tell its collective story independent from national or big city meta-narratives, a number of contemporary artists are well prepared to enable this.

Nicolas Bourriaud perhaps best summarizes the ‘turn’ in the visual arts in his book, *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), where he discusses the “sociology” of recent art as grounded in “the birth of a world-wide urban culture, and from the extension of this city model to more or less all cultural phenomena” (p. 14). Describing a “growing urbanization of the artistic experiment” (p. 4), Bourriaud sees a de-privileging of “aristocratic” forms of art replaced by the local and the human over the global and the anonymous, even turning the tables on the art world’s traditional privileging of representation. In response to today’s over-stimulated, consumerist world, where “the social bond has turned into a standardised artefact” (p. 9), art faces its biggest challenge: “the most burning issue to do with art today: is it still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field art-history traditionally earmarked for their ‘representation’?” (p. 9). The key to relational art is “social exchanges … an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context” (p. 14). The city, Bourriaud says, has “ushered in … the hands-on experience” (p. 15).

Others, notably Claire Bishop (2004) discussing the turn from “detached opticality” (p. 61), have picked up this theme. In her book, *Participation* (2006), she discusses the “social dimension of participation – rather than activation of the individual viewer in so-called interactive art and installation” (p. 10). She further (2012) describes a major shift: “[today’s artists] engage in strategies of mediation that include delegation, re-enactment, and collaboration … in the works of these artists, performance is delegated – or, to use more managerial language, ‘outsourced’ – to other performers” (p. 111). In sum, in this model of artistic performance, ordinary people (understood as a collective) are asked
to perform themselves, acting as both medium and receptors, thus giving a kind of powerful authenticity to the work, especially when the performers are grounded as an ideological other. The artist, now seen as democratic and egalitarian, gives the participants a large measure of authorial control in order to maximize the active subject, now no longer in any sense a passive receptor but existing now in what Bishop calls “the new category of viveur (one who lives)” (Bishop, 2006: 13).

In *The REDress Project*, authorial control was supplied mainly by delegation. Under Jaime Black’s guidance, red dresses – some in large groups, some in small groups – were hung in various locations, from the Tk’emlups Indian Band former residential school (see Figure 2), to the storefront of the downtown Indian Friendship Centre, to various locations around the campus of Thompson Rivers University. The community of Kamloops was invited to participate in various ways. A small committee of a dozen people representing eight socially active groups steered the project under the inspiration of Jaime Black. Members of each of these groups co-ordinated the collection of dresses from the community. One representative First Nations woman acted as a tour guide at the various locations along with Jaime Black.

Figure 2. One of the dozen or so red dresses strung along the front of the former Indian Residential School in Kamloops. Each dress contained the name of the donor, the name of a beloved relation who suffered domestic violence, or an inspirational quote or drawing. Photo: Laura Michel.
Every community group engaged with *The REDress Project* is socially active; many have as their goal the amelioration or eradication of a troubling social situation. Under the guidance of the tour guides, visitors to the red dress sites were asked in a group setting to verbally address the community of missing women; at least part of this discussion involved the situation of Kamloops and its possible roles in both the creation and the solution to the problem. The guides at each site utilized a specially made fact sheet to foment communal, open-ended discourse. All visitors performed themselves: aside from the positioning of the red dresses, there was no intentional, aesthetic performance, thus lending a strong element of authenticity and believability. Whether they directly participated or not, it is unlikely many in the Kamloops community were uninvolved in the four days of discussions and other activities, given the attendant publicity and debate in the local media (Younds, 2011a, 2011b; “Violence...,” 2011): I can imagine that few in the city did not experience at least a moment of serious reflection on the issues surrounding the community of missing women. This was more likely to occur in a small city similarly reflecting on its role and its place as a specific, changing community.

Because Kamloops is located far away enough from large cities such as Vancouver or Calgary; is situated on an area of striking geography – a meeting place of rolling mountains and two powerful rivers; has one of the oldest histories of settlement in the province; consists of pockets of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples living side by side; and maintains its long-standing mining, forestry, and cattle industries even as these evolve, the city has a unique character: that of a strong working class, as well as a middle class and even a creative class. It is now a city also strongly affirming its quality of life.

Urban geographer Ross Nelson (2005) has documented what he calls Kamloops’ “significant structural change” from an economic base of resource and allied industries to that of “education, government services, tourism, [where] cultural functions are now the city’s most dynamic sectors” (p. 85). He cites the city’s recent approval of $37 million for sporting facilities, along with the opening of the largest municipal park in British Columbia, numerous walking and biking trails along the two rivers intersecting the city, and the approval of a cultural strategic plan. Citing Richard Florida, Ross argues that, in Kamloops, “place and community are more critical factors than ever before” (p. 86). The emphasis on quality of life is confirmed in cultural critic Lon Dubinsky’s (2005) narrative of what he calls the city’s “culture of participation,” in which “the magnitude of cultural activity is considerable in Kamloops relative to the
population of the city and the availability and use of resources” (p. 73). He cites several key factors at work in the city: “municipal structure and leadership and the close proximity of people, organizations, and events …” (p. 81). In Kamloops, there is strong municipal support for the many cultural organizations in close proximity. With almost three dozen arts and heritage organizations, “in a city of 80,000 [this] translates into one organization for approximately every 2,300 people” (p. 73). There exists very strong leadership – artistic directors at the three major professional organizations – the theatre company, the art gallery, and the symphony – have been at their posts for an exceptionally long time, while the city’s cultural strategic plan finds that “one-third of the Kamloops population is actively engaged in artistic events, education, or practices” (cited in Garrett-Petts and Dubinsky, 2005: 10). The municipality’s contribution of $15 per capita is “significant and proportionally well above the national average” (Dubinsky, 2005: 79). The recent move of BC Theatre’s headquarters to the city’s heritage arts centre attests to the city’s willingness to encourage not only sporting but also cultural events.

Given this brief background, what might we say about the people of Kamloops as audience participants for The REDress Project? First, they are widely seen as receptive and involved in the cultural experience, one writer asking, “Why is the situation different in Kamloops? Is there something particular about it as a small city?” (Dubinsky, 2005: 65). One characteristic is strong interest in the local: “there is engagement with arts and heritage that stretches beyond the expected, [with] enthusiasm for the local and the vernacular,” writes the same critic (p. 68). This is borne out in an increasing number of artistic works with local content and/or modes of production. Western Canada Theatre’s most staged playwright is Ian Weir, a local writer, some of whose works have recounted local history. Major performances or exhibitions by the professional organizations have typically centred on local or regional works, such as Tomson Highway’s play Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout or photographic artist Victor Hamm’s Sublime Moments, both heavily committed to local creation.

The people of Kamloops thus see their city as an increasingly coherent and understood locale; if there is a civic impetus, it is toward a growing sense of a community in harmony with itself and its surroundings; if there is a goal, it is to become an urban success on its own terms. In short, whether inspired by global or local narratives, people of Kamloops are increasingly focussed on the immediate realities of their living space understood as distinct, seen less as a globally imagined and more as a dynamic, lived, and possibly utopian experience.
If art has a role to play, it is to offer at least a modicum of agency in the growing articulation of and activism toward a community in positive formation. Any legitimate art practice – whether conventional or avant-garde – will be seen as primary evidence of the city’s communal maturation, a sign of small city accomplishment in possessing significant artistic culture, and only secondarily as a means of dealing with socio-political relations. Nonetheless, an important part of this artistic sophistication is the acceptance of non-traditional art forms such as The REDress Project, where the balance of artistic and social practice is drastically revised.

Kamloops is comfortable with, indeed anticipates, experimental art forms where traditional values are suppressed; it is also familiar with different forms of cultural action, some only loosely linked to an art aesthetic, some exclusively operating as social activism. The REDress Project uniquely offered the city an opportunity to experience the two forms in one activity. As outlined by Miwon Kwon (1997), relational art practice offers exactly this. Describing what she calls the “de-aestheticization,” even the “antivisual” in many current and vital art projects, she writes about how site-specific practices are “concerned to integrate art more directly into the realm of the social, either in order to redress (in an activist sense) urgent social problems ... or more generally in order to relativize art as one among many forms of cultural work” (p. 91).

This mode of artistic practice would appear to be perfectly suited to the small city where we can imagine large numbers of people eager to take part in activities that are grounded in a freely open manner and that give them such a degree of agency. Indeed, there has been a persistent activist presence in the city: not the strident, noisily ideological or widely divisive kind, but an increasingly aggressive stance taken both by the city itself and a number of individuals and organizations to reshape the city’s direction and identity. Former mayor Mel Rothenburger (2005) discusses how “cities are fighting back, demanding and getting more authority in determining their own destinies ... only recently have we started to appreciate the strength of such a diverse city...” (p. 349). Kamloops has recently and radically re-branded itself as the Tournament Capital of Canada, an investment, according to Garrett-Petts and Dubinsky (2005), that “[creates] a strong case for compensatory funding in the arts” (p. 11). It also creates, I would add, an increased concern for quality of life and social culture. If, as Bourriaud (1998) claims, the form (now fairly formless) offers people an artwork “presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion” (p. 15), then surely this applies especially well to residents of the small city?
The fact that *The REDress Project* was site-specific and, indeed, took place in ten sites in the city also plays into the small city’s special sense of location. Place is particularly important in Kamloops: a major aspect of people’s happiness with the city, and a major attraction for living here, is the locale itself (LeBlanc, 2001: 3). *The REDress Project* placed its participants in specific, known, and mostly unaltered (except for a line of red dresses) locations: this offered an opportunity to address and possibly redress (as the title of the project suggests) the situation of the missing Aboriginal women – in relation to similar problems and possible solutions in Kamloops.

So far, the fit between small city ethos and artistic performance seems very good, but there are potential problems with *The REDress Project*. Much of it lies in the nature of a performance genre that courts a high degree of risk. Certainly, unpredictability and failure are important elements in such a loosely constructed environment with minimum controls where unrehearsed and largely unprepared people were asked to respond to the horrific ordeal of hundreds of Aboriginal women. Some participants, particularly those who have known or experienced a similar fate, might respond in the extreme: there could be out-of-control emotion, frustrated cries for immediate action, anger at the perceived impassivity of others or at the lack of civic or legal action; others might simply experience growing confusion, frustration, helplessness, even boredom. While all or few of these might have occurred, anything could be a sign of success. Claire Bishop (2008) argues that such a “constructed situation” (as opposed to the “live installation”) is at its best when it “knowingly courts the risk of failure. As an outsourced performance, it finds its most vital authenticity in permitting the subject performers to become fully engaged, passionate, fragile, complex, within situations of intense artificiality” (p. 120).

This will be viewed as a special challenge in the small city where ‘art’ production, now proudly seen in its three central institutions, is expected to achieve normative conventional results, usually understood as aesthetic and constitutive of community building, far less as instilling a high degree of “activated spectatorship” (Bishop, 2005: 128) where the performers are expected to “surpass the artist’s expectations” (p. 121). At present, artistic endeavour as seen through the city’s theatre, gallery, and music institutions represents a stabilizing and centralizing sense of community. *The REDress Project*, in asking people to address the problems of a troubled marginal community, one that could be perceived as existing largely outside the city, may be seen only as a sign of the city’s artistic sophistication, ironically figuring it as an art
work of big city issues and format (the original REDress Project took place in Winnipeg, a Canadian city with a population of 700,000). The question whether the media would pick up on brief items of highly selective, atypical occurrences such as individual, emotional actions or outbursts, or whether it would resort to deep reflections of the missing women is an important indicator of the direction of the Project. As Bishop (2008) warns, the project must not become a “mere spectacle of participation: [a] staged reality designed for the media” (p. 123). Would participants understand that the actual sites were in reality less geographical, less an art experience, less a civic triumph, than a social problem to be seriously addressed?

Further, would a community activity also positioned as an art performance such as The REDress Project weaken the social aspect? With Shannon Jackson (2011), we might ask about the role of aesthetics in social inquiry. As a work of what she calls “socially engaged art” she might question its allegiances, many of them positive, with other fields of social practice such as “activist art ... performance ethnography, community [based] theatre” (p. 17). That these have so far little artistic presence in Kamloops will likely estrange participants unused to the form. Then, the de-centering of the aesthetic may further distance those expecting at least a minimum conventional art experience. Jackson warns of this, seeing negative linkages such as “dumbed-down art, social realist art, victim art” (p. 17) and the like. Similarly, Miwon Kwon (1997), noting the exceptional “fluid mobility and nomadism” (p. 96) of current site-specific art, questions the existence of any “aesthetic values such as originality, authenticity, and uniqueness” (p. 96) given the current “unhinging” of site specificity where the artist relegates authorship to the conditions of the site. As a de-aestheticized art work, would The REDress Project appear too weak as a work of art, or as social work weakened by its claim as an art work? This work would likely disappoint traditional arts patrons who do not appreciate the revision of normative art forms, just as others will positively see the co-opting of art in addressing issues with current, local immediacy, happy to join Black in exploring social, political change: that is, justice for the missing women.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is the very idea of community. Certainly, major art critics are questioning the nature, even the existence of, community, which, as we’ve seen, represents the holy grail for many writers involved in the rhetorical construction of the small city. Perhaps chief among them is Jean-Luc Nancy, who proposes in The Inoperative Community (1991) an endlessly negotiated and mutating sense of community based on our common lack of identity in
a “community without essence (the community that is neither ‘people’ nor ‘nation’, neither ‘destiny’ nor ‘generic humanity’, etc.)” (cited in Kester, 2004: 154). Claire Bishop, along with Rosalyn Deutsche, argues for an understanding of the public sphere of community, not as Bourriaud would have it as a place of relational harmony, but one where “relations of conflict are sustained, not erased” (2004: 66). Building on the notions of the de-centred subject and the concept of a conflicted democratic urbanism (p. 67), Bishop proposes “a tougher, more disruptive approach to ‘relations’ than that proposed by Bourriaud ... [partly because] ... today, political, moral, and ethical judgments have come to fill the vacuum of aesthetic judgment in a way that was unthinkable forty years ago” (p. 77). She calls this relational antagonism.

Did Kamloops take The REDress Project in this light? Did the performers understand the project as essentially a feel-good work in which one community comes warmly together to empathize with another, or was there the tougher, more disruptive approach Bishop calls for? Earlier I argued that Kamloops’ people, conditioned to behave passively and therefore uncertainly at art events, valuing them chiefly as community achievements, would tend to the former position. To the degree that non-specialist, non-regular arts audiences could or would attend, there would be a tendency to the latter. That the sites themselves were de-territorialized additionally complicated reception in the small city, where it is assumed that outside perspectives are being replaced by local place discovery. The various sites selected for The REDress Project were assigned a context beyond the city, that of the national group of missing women. As Kwon (1997) warns us, discussing the “deterritorialization of the site” (p. 109), while site-specificity can reveal hitherto repressed histories including that of marginalized groups such as the missing women, it can also “extract the social and historical dimensions out of places to ... serve the thematic drive of the artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfill the fiscal needs of a city” (p. 105). The choices made by the community of Kamloops would say much about its conception of itself as a maturing small city.

The REDress Project took place in early October 2011. Groups of people came together in an artistic work of community action; the nature of their formation as a functioning community was tested in Kamloops, as well as the parameters and operations of a particular artistic work in the small city. Overall, how well did The REDress Project seem to go?

As anticipated, the community was receptive, notably in the willingness of a variety of community groups to participate, although in limited ways. While
there was good discussion in the news media, direct public participation during the four-day event was low. Indeed, few people turned out for the site tours, Laura Michel reporting only eight participants for the four site tours she conducted (personal communication, November 22, 2011), and with the exception of the community banquet and candlelight vigil on the first day, active involvement at most events was subdued, especially by non-Aboriginal persons, thus bringing into question both the operation and the nature of the artistic genre of *The REDress Project*. Jaime Black, while feeling that the project was generally “very successful” (personal communication, November 13, 2011), nonetheless felt that more could have been done to build connections between the university and the Tk’umlups Indian Band, such as holding workshops before the event, organizing site tours for specific groups (e.g., women, youth), and encouraging more volunteers to participate. Clearly, some of the advantages of Kamloops as a small city, with its more human scale; its interests in local heritage, place, and volunteerism; and its recent successes in valuing and promoting the arts as community building could have been utilized more systematically in many of the events.

The widest discussion took place in the local newspaper, *The Daily News*, which brought both local and national considerations to its readership. As the project started, arts reporter Mike Youds demonstrated the local need for raising awareness of the missing women (many local band members have missing women in their families). He interviewed Jaime Black as well as an Aboriginal social worker, then outlined the activities of the four-day event (Youds, 2011a). Several days later, reporting on the community dinner and candlelight vigil (see Figure 3), he recounted the story of a Tk’emlups Indian Band family grieving for a young sister who went missing a decade ago from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. He also admitted that the attempt to halt violence “is a daunting one” (Youds, 2011b: A3).

Four days after *The REDress Project* was over, an unsigned editorial in the same newspaper described the situation of the missing women as “a crisis of national proportions,” adding further details to the local story of the missing sister, along with reference to the Pickton trial in Vancouver, and the Highway of Tears (a highway in northern British Columbia where an estimated 40 women have been murdered or have disappeared). The editorial praised *The REDress Project* for helping to “spark wider dialogue,” concluding: “What *The REDress Project* says is that the silent majority must join hands to create the necessary momentum” (“Violence…,” 2011: C1).
Nonetheless, despite the participation of eight community groups, including the university and two art galleries, the event was seen as only minimally community building. Except for Mike Youds’ article (2011b), rather than localizing the problem or solutions of the missing women, the series of events seemed operationally to locate the issue beyond the city. The art genre itself, with its focus on de-aestheticization and de-territorialization, seems to have resulted in too little context and too little provocation for meaningful conversation or action to take place.

Interestingly, there was no commentary in the media or elsewhere of The REDress Project as an effective art event. While it was understood that the project as a social endeavour was valuable and necessary, there was little critique of it as an art work intended to foment social change. It might have been noted, for example, that the aesthetic of displaying many of the dresses, each cleaned, neatly pressed, and hung inside neutral, ‘safe’ institutions such as art galleries and university sites seemed to weaken their impact as metonyms for the missing women. Then, too, only a small number of dresses were hung away from the galleries and university: the only dresses hung on the city’s north shore (where the Aboriginal population primarily resides) were available mainly to clients...
accessing the Interior Indian Friendship Centre or the former Indian Residential School, now the Tk’emlups Band office. Anecdotal evidence indicates that it was largely a presentation of feel-good togetherness; responses during the site tours and the panels tended to be low-key, more toward feelings of uncertainty and helplessness than of concrete solutions or actions.

The highly valued development of social exchange was therefore limited as participants were positioned mainly as observers and listeners, as they might be at a more conventional art exhibition. Thus, potential relations of conflict were not sustained but lessened, leading not to relational antagonism but to relational aesthetics, to the reduction of conflict. Of course, there was – there had to be – an increased awareness of the missing women, at least temporarily, but *The REDress Project*, while proving to materialize a powerful symbol of the missing women and while bringing together certain key segments of the community, nonetheless faced specific limitations of genre implementation in a small city.
Notes

1. *The REDress Project*, created by Winnipeg artist Jaime Black, was staged in various locations in Kamloops, British Columbia, from October 4 to 7, 2011. The author, as co-director of the Thompson Rivers University CURA (community-university research alliance) research centre, was actively involved in the organizing committee of the project. Besides the ongoing display of red dresses in various inside and outside locations, there was a community dinner and candlelight vigil hosted by the Tk'emlups Indian Band (October 4), an artist's talk with film director Jessica Lee at the screening of her film, *Building a Highway of Hope*, at the First Nations Gathering Place at Thompson Rivers University (October 5), a screening of *Finding Dawn* and a panel discussion at the Irving K. Barber Pithouse at Thompson Rivers University (October 6), and a panel discussion with artists Jaime Black, Alex Janvier, and Jamie Isaac at the Pithouse (October 7). *The REDress Project* had earlier been displayed at the University of Winnipeg during March 7–12, 2011, with dresses displayed (indoors and outdoors) in eight locations on the campus and five in community-based agencies. At the time of writing, the various community groups involved with *The REDress Project* in Kamloops have expressed a desire – but have yet to meet – to discuss and critique the project.

2. In September 2010, the British Columbia provincial government, by order in council, formed the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, with Wally Oppal, QC, appointed as commissioner. Among its terms of reference, the commission was mandated to inquire into the conduct of police investigations of women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver, and to recommend changes in procedures regarding investigations of missing women and multiple homicides. A major impetus was the trial of notorious serial killer Robert Pickton, convicted in 2007 of the murder of six women; with lingering further charges and statements made by the accused, the number might be as high as 49.

3. On October 5, 2011, the film *Building a Highway of Hope*, by film director Jessica Yee, was shown at the University First Nations Gathering Place; the following day, *Finding Dawn*, by filmmaker Christine Welsh, was shown at the Irving K. Barber Pithouse at Thompson Rivers University, followed by a panel discussion. Both films address the impact and issues surrounding missing Aboriginal women in British Columbia.

4. In the 2001 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, *Final Report*, prepared for the City of Kamloops, respondents, in listing the city’s “greatest attributes,” most highly valued climate, scenery, and location, part of which was “proximity to other cities.” In an informal survey of Western Canada Theatre attenders, in *It's Your Cue: The Audience Show*, a common response was that the professional theatre company helped identify Kamloops as a city of authentic artistic culture, somewhat equivalent to that of a big city, and also contributed to the city’s unique character.

5. Tk'emlups Indian Band, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre, Kamloops Art Gallery, The Interior Indian Friendship
Society, Thompson Rivers University, TRU Small Cities Community-University Research Alliance, and TRU Centre for Innovation in Culture and in the Arts in Canada.

6. David Ross was artistic director of Western Canada Theatre from 1983 until 2009; Jann Bailey continues her tenure as executive director of the Kamloops Art Gallery, a position she assumed in 1987; Bruce Dunn, continuing music director and conductor of the Kamloops Symphony, started in 1990.

7. *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* was commissioned and staged by Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops during January 2004; Victor Hamm’s photographic show *Sublime Moments* was exhibited at the Kamloops Art Gallery from June to September 2011.

8. The Kamloops Art Gallery describes its mission as one that “boldly addresses and contextualizes the urgent and often-contentious issues inherent in the politics of representation, identity, gender, commodity culture, and global communications” (see Permanent Collection on its website: www.kag.bc.ca).

References


CITIZENSHIP AND THE ARTISTIC PRACTICE: ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND THEIR SOCIAL ROLE

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Abstract: This article explores the significance of citizenship in the contemporary world, suggesting a new approach to its realization, where artistic practice and the development of cultural awareness combine to produce the creative citizen. This research uses case studies from three Boston, Massachusetts, neighbourhoods to reflect on arts and culture as platforms to re-address citizenship at the community level. In this context, the relationship between urban public space, community, and culture is understood as a platform that may offer new strategies for urban space revivification, while specific strategies of civic engagement and leadership in these communities provide impetus for the development of creative citizenship. In turn, this appropriation of creative citizenship provides personal and collective avenues for developing and advancing attachments to place, intercultural dialogue, and local development and sustainability.

Resumo: Este artigo explora o significado de cidadania no mundo contemporâneo, sugerindo uma nova abordagem à sua realização, em que a prática artística e o desenvolvimento da consciencialização cultural se combinam para produzir o cidadão criativo. Esta pesquisa usa estudos de caso de três bairros de Boston, Massachusetts, para refletir nas artes e na cultura como plataformas para repensar a cidadania no nível da comunidade. Neste contexto, a relação entre o espaço público urbano, a comunidade e a cultura é vista como uma plataforma que pode oferecer novas estratégias para a reanimação do espaço urbano, enquanto algumas estratégias de envolvimento cívico e liderança nessas comunidades impulsionam o desenvolvimento de cidadanias criativas. Esta apropriação de cidadania criativa, por seu lado, fornece vias pessoais e coletivas para desenvolver e promover as ligações ao lugar, o diálogo intercultural, o desenvolvimento e a sustentabilidade locais.

Introduction
New types of citizenship, such as cultural citizenship (Duxbury, 2008; Stevenson, 2007), multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 2000), or differentiated citizenship (Young, 1990, 1995) have fuelled the challenge to identify new frameworks
in which to understand this concept. Theoretical debates in the area share the common feature of trying to go beyond the ideas of T.H. Marshall and his theoretical debates around legal, political, and social rights (Marshall, 1950). Focussing on the contexts of social processes that shape relationships between individuals, groups, and communities, influencing the concept of citizenship and contributing to democratic practices in the contemporary world, this paper aims to reframe the significance of citizenship in the contemporary world. The overarching goal is a better practical understanding of what it could mean to be a creative citizen in contemporary urban settings, promoting a process of exploration that expands the concept of citizenship through analyzing it from the vantage point of arts-oriented creativity.

The paper suggests a new approach that devotes more attention to individual relationships within communities of practice and gives specific attention to work conducted with communities of youth that have few opportunities and are experiencing episodes of street violence. Artistic and culture-related projects may offer innovative channels to rethink citizenship (in relation to civic participation) and suggest new venues to enhance democratic practice in contemporary urban societies, giving youth an enhanced role in building an active voice in urban communities. The research aims to identify tools based on artistic and cultural activities that may generate creative approaches to issues of social conflict and division and help differentiated community groups create spaces of inter-ethnic dialogue. Specific artistic and cultural endeavors are presented as strategies of civic engagement, resulting ideally in diminished social divisions and exclusion. Can we envision cultural exchange activities as innovative platforms for the recognition of specific groups’ identities and for the acknowledgement of difference?

Developments in three metropolitan Boston area neighbourhoods are analyzed – Jamaica Plain, Union Square, and Villa Victoria (in the city’s South End). In these three urban neighbourhoods, I examine how community and place, when appropriated through arts and culture-based initiatives, propose new venues for democratic practice and offer new ingredients for the creation of creative citizens/citizenship at the community level. The research investigates: What is the potential of arts and culture to be effective platforms in promoting civic participation and citizenship, specifically among youth, but also among other community members? What are the connections between artistic and cultural interventions and the urban public spaces in which they are held? How can community and culture activities offer new strategies for community-building
initiatives and revitalization of urban spaces, enabling us to consider possible new formats of citizenship building?

The paper begins by presenting a theoretical frame for this investigation, then outlines the overall methodology of the study and briefly sketches out the urban contexts and key neighbourhood agents and activities examined. It discusses the key findings and insights emerging from the study’s contextualized comparisons and analyses. In closing, it reflects on processes and patterns of culturalizing citizenship, civic engagement, and urban space.

Framing citizenship: The creation of cultural knowledgeable communities

Re-socializing the citizen

One of the striking features of the contemporary world is the existence of social divisions, which often lead to conflicts between groups of citizens. The citizen has been characterized as an individual, with a focus on self-development, which promotes an independent character and a loss of contact with the public domain (Sennett, 1977: 5-16). The end result can be alienation from others and society at large, and an increase in social divisions. A significant consequence of this view, coupled with the decline of shared public space in contemporary urban settings, is that the nature of the processes of relationships among different social groups often results in group isolation, intolerant behaviors, and divisions. The nature of these divisions warrants analysis that takes into account the question of urban diversity, which scholars of urban anthropology have explored through an ethnographic approach to urban life (Costa and Cordeiro, 1999, 2003; Cordeiro et al., 2003; Frugóli, 2007; Cordeiro, 2008; Cordeiro and Vidal, 2008; Costa, 2008). The scope of analysis around the themes of cultural diversity and difference in urban communities suggests the need to consider possible strategies to overcome those divisions, implement intercultural dialogue, work toward emancipation and social change, and contribute to the reconciliation of the individual with the different other.

In order to counter the current dissolution of the public realm, as analyzed by authors like John Clarke (2004), direct involvement of minorities and immigrants becomes an important feature of democratic practice and citizenship participation. However, the development of interventionist strategies requires the existence of a civic order principle, which suggests that social life is organized around and is an outcome of the individual as a citizen. This citizen, by belonging to a community of rights and duties, is more than a member of a community. The civic bond results from a shared sense of belonging. According
to David Selbourne (2001), community historically precedes civic order, and a *sense of community* constitutes a powerful tool of civic consciousness to maintain the civic bond.

There is a need to reframe the concept of citizenship to one based on the potential of civil society to construct new models of engagement. On one hand, citizenship must be included in the analysis of social interventions of civil society in the public realm (Lofland, 1973, 1998). The public sphere may present the context that could reinvigorate the concept of citizenship through civic endeavors in which the individual can examine and express personal and social identity. On the other hand, a new approach to civil society is needed that eschews an exclusivist economic perspective and, instead, capitalizes on the cultural assets of people and urban sites and promotes relationships between individuals based on social affinities. Further, this reframing must also incorporate the physical urban space in which socio-cultural life occurs.

*Re-territorializing/re-grounding community practices*

The sense of indifference, alienation, and anomie that authors like Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth observed during their twentieth-century urban research (Simmel, [1903] 1995; Wirth, 1938) was reexamined by Richard Sennett (1977), who called attention to the way this conceptualization of urban life changed the relationship of the individual with the public realm, encouraging a retreat into private life. In the same vein, Jane Jacobs (1961) identified the importance of mixed activities in the streets as a way to promote movement and encounter. More recently, there has been a significant amount of literature in urban studies concerned with the end of public space (e.g., Sorkin, 1992; Mitchell, 1995).

A second layer must be added to this ‘re-territorialization’ of public space. Urban spaces in the contemporary city are often socially, economically, and culturally dissonant. With their multicultural characteristics, these sites reflect and articulate the symbolic and physical divisions between different ethnic communities living in and using the urban public space. The ways different ethnicities interact in common space can be a source of conflict and division. When social conflicts between different groups are rampant, the idea of citizenship is put at risk and there is a need for innovative and creative intervention strategies.

One of the main insights derived from the research noted above is the hypothesis that the promotion of artistic and culture-related activities in urban public spaces may have a positive effect over the loss of the public realm.
Can strategies to revivify the city represent efforts to culturalize the public realm? Might this type of participation and engagement represent an alternative to new shopping centers and atria in the reconfiguration of public areas?

**Adding artistic and cultural practices**

This paper explores the hypothesis that specific artistic and cultural practices may cultivate a deeper experience of citizenship, one that is capable of vaulting social and cultural divisions. The case studies presented here emerge, on one hand, in the context of *third way* thinking and its critics (Amin, 2005) and, on the other hand, within recent reflections about the social function of the ‘creative class’. Creativity, when associated with citizenship practices, may offer innovative strategies to address social divisions that lead to disenfranchised communities and persistent community isolation. At the intersection of cultural/artistic resources and urban spaces, exciting possibilities may emerge.

A new type of democratic community can be generated by the intersection of affirmative action in the public space and the use of artistic and cultural initiatives. Carefully constructed arts initiatives may offer citizens the possibility of building a new mental model that promotes the consideration of divergent views and new strategies of action drawn from dialogue among individuals and groups with diverse perspectives. By their very nature, arts and culture may introduce methodological innovation to the theoretical and practical discussion on dealing with difference, and specifically cultural difference, in urban contexts. Richard Sennett, in *Respect in a World of Inequality* (2003), corroborates this view when he refers to the performing arts as integrating collaborative elements, which are essential to generate mutual respect. Artistic activities that include collaboration of culturally differentiated groups may create a sense of equality that, ideally, inspires the individual to reflect on the divisions of the social world with greater insight and imagination.

The generation of creative citizenship requires the creation of cultural knowledgeable communities, defined as communities that congregate political knowledge, expressivity and cultural awareness components. This type of community focusses its development on nurturing cultural factors, recognizing difference, and motivating individual and group involvement.

The creative citizen, living in this type of community, is a producer of political knowledge, expressivity, and cultural awareness (see Table 1; Carvalho, 2010). First and foremost, he or she is a political knowledge creator because s/he is directly responsible for the state of his local society and may also be the driving
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Social reflection and critical rationality</td>
<td>Promotion of a critical attitude in relation to the local issues that affect residents and the community at large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacitating for action</td>
<td>Development of personal and social capacities related to event organizing, production and specific techniques of the artistic celebration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community participation</td>
<td>Generation of individual and group mobilization as active promoter in the organization of artistic and cultural events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Political intervention and project-oriented work</td>
<td>Incentive to local efforts of intervention, such as rallies, community meetings, locally based projects, that may affect the political agenda (related to residential, environmental, migration issues, etc.) of communities’ cultural life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressivity</strong></td>
<td>Identity formation</td>
<td>Creation of individual and group identifications both through the use of artistic activities and through the acknowledgment of local, immigrant and other ethnic cultural traditions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Promotion of dialogue among social groups from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and generations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Ethnic composition</td>
<td>Ability to perceive and understand the social and cultural composition of the neighbourhoods in terms of their ethnic composition, political (critical attitude) preference, religious orientation, and generational sense of belonging</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Political preference</td>
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Table 1. Creative citizenship: Categories and dimensions
force behind social intervention and civic engagement initiatives that strengthen the community. In this context, political knowledge includes the ability to generate community participation in the organization of cultural and artistic initiatives. The expressive character of this individual requires the development of artistic capacities and an authentic self and group identity in order to develop more effective tools of dialogue with different groups. Finally, the individual’s cultural awareness means s/he is attuned to the differentiated cultural composition of contemporary society. Altogether, the creative citizen is an active agent creating spaces for interrelations between sectors of society that are often separated and socially excluded.

We cannot ignore the possible negative role that culture can play through accentuating differences inside the community, and the potential of cultural difference to build resistance and intolerant behaviours toward other cultural groups. This dynamic is seen in many urban contexts. However, the focus here is on the potential of creative activity to bridge cultural chasms. The key to effective dialogue between different social groups can be found at the intersection of knowledge, expressivity, and culture – the structural components of creative citizenship. This intersection can produce the preconditions for the development of creative initiatives in alternative spaces, initiatives designed to deal with difference and conflict. The initiatives in the case studies examined here focus on the development of strong identities that, bolstered with cultural resources, can create spaces for creative interrelations between sectors of society previously separated by social and ethnic schisms.

As Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini (1995) state, creativity involves basic procedures like thinking a problem afresh, a certain degree of experimentation and originality, and the capacity to look at situations with flexibility. Furthermore, when Landry investigates urban creativity in the city in *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (2000), he connects the creative component of cities with their growth and identifies the characteristics of urban activists, which he asserts have the ability to listen, reflect, and learn; the ability to communicate across diversity; and the capacity to work within distinct cultural environments. Thus, the creative citizen relies on the same elements that define the “creative city” (Landry, 2000: 3): knowledge, free expression, and culture – all of which are essential to promote effective platforms to work against divisions. The promotion of spaces that combine knowledge production, expressivity, and the appreciation of cultural variety can be adapted to different social realities where cultural and social differences can create an antagonistic environment.
Methodology

The study began with an initial three-month phase that included a series of exploratory interviews with privileged informants in the city of Boston (local governors, community activists, directors of community arts projects, and academics) and specialized readings on the cultural and artistic dynamics of the city. Three neighbourhoods were then selected as case studies based on the community projects’ emphasis on revitalizing the urban space and on the importance given to strategies of civic engagement of residents within the initiatives. Fieldwork took place between January 2005 and June 2007.

The project collected data related to local arts events, preparations for neighbourhood initiatives, various organizations’ community outreach programs, community meetings, and overall cultural and artistic activities. The methodology employed was primarily qualitative and multidimensional, and generated a variety of photographs, videos, audio, and written materials including: in-depth audio-recorded interviews and video interviews with community leaders, residents, artists, and citizens in general; videos from community cultural events and public gatherings; community-grounded fieldnotes; and neighbourhood and community photographs. The materials generated were combined with published newspaper articles and other existent supporting materials, generating profiles for the urban neighbourhoods and offering specific approaches to understand citizenship in these areas. Interviews were collected based on a purposive sampling technique; the characteristics of the individuals were used as the basis of selection in order to express the diversity of people involved directly and indirectly in the community projects. Interview scripts were open-ended and reflected a balance between individual biographies and individual connections with the specific project.

Since analysis involved multiple sources and types of information, multiple methodological approaches were used: grounded analysis, where theory was drawn from the phenomenon being studied; mining analysis, focusing on the research questions and searching for answers to those questions in the fieldwork materials; and visual analysis, generating ethnographic knowledge from videos, photographs, and other images. Overall, the analysis focused on illuminating what kind of communities citizens are creating in these areas, and how.

The three neighbourhoods chosen for the study represent geographically different urban contexts of the Boston area. Consequently, they offer a broad perspective on the influence of the arts and culture in urban spaces, offering different ways to analyze the relationship between cultural projects and community involvement through the arts.
The urban context: The Boston metropolitan area

Over the last two decades, the city of Boston (Massachusetts, U.S.A.) has undergone an urban cultural and artistic transformation, a ‘cultural renaissance’ reflected in the contemporary influence of arts and culture in the revitalization of urban social space. The number of arts organizations has grown significantly, reflecting the city’s cultural dynamism, opportunities for self-expression, and artistic creativity. Despite the need for greater efficiency in tight economic times, the number of nonprofit arts organization in Greater Boston has steadily increased in recent years. Almost 600 new arts nonprofits registered with the IRS between 2000 and 2011 (The Boston Indicators Report, 2012). Innovative organizations founded or revived in recent decades have largely triumphed over fiscal challenges and become best-practice models since the Great Recession. Many have deepened and broadened their impact as central to the fabric of Boston’s community. These include such resources as the Strand Theater, Villa Victoria Center for the Arts, Hibernian Hall, Design Studio 4 Social Intervention, the Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts (DotArt), The Theatre Offensive, Project Hip-Hop, and the Urbano Project.

The region’s multitude of ethnic-specific grocery stores and restaurants, and its multicultural celebrations and spectacles express Greater Boston’s growing racial/ethnic diversity and enliven daily life. The recent influx of immigrants has greatly expanded the region’s range of cultural offerings – from Taiko drumming and Cambodian puppetry to Greek, African, and Latin dancing. The cultural vitality of the city reflects its growing population diversity and strong civic mobilization at the local level. The evolution of social change in the ethnically diverse local communities is facilitated by these local organizations, which help preserve traditional values and identities as well as create new connections. Boston’s cultural organizations and institutions are catalysts for both economic growth and a robust civic cultural life. As Jackson and Herranz (2002) argue, community building is linked to the importance of participation, with participation spanning a wide array of ways in which people (adults and children) engage in arts, culture, and creative expression.

But ethnic diversity is also associated with issues of segregation and, in particular, residential segregation in the city. Ethnic isolation in residential urban settings, which may result in the development of ethnic enclaves, is a prominent characteristic of Boston. In these contexts, communities have been trying to deal with the issue of cultural division, understood as physical, symbolic, and political urban separation.
Community and organizational profiles

Jamaica Plain: Activism and the natural environment

The way cities relate to their natural environment is often problematic. Contemporary cities are increasingly an amalgamation of buildings, services, and commercial areas and, in the hustle of urban activity, natural urban environments are often disregarded. When we speak of civic participation, we cannot ignore the importance of public support in the promotion of spaces of dialogue and social intervention. But there is more to add to this democratizing character of the public space. The urban natural environments – parks, community gardens, lakes, and rivers – may represent, as public spaces, a platform to stimulate processes of active citizenship while also yielding added value in the promotion of a city’s attractions and contributing to residents’ awareness of environmental issues. From this perspective, the community arts organization Spontaneous Celebrations (in Jamaica Plain) has been working to strengthen the association between active citizenship and the urban natural environments in Jamaica Plain.

The Jamaica Plain neighbourhood has always been known for its vibrant arts community. An example of this is the cultural organization Spontaneous Celebrations, which stages several arts-oriented events in the neighbourhood. Spontaneous Celebrations is a community and arts-based organization with more than 30 years of experience in social intervention and community organizing through arts and cultural activities. Consistent with its grassroots principles, it combines artistic expression and open-air festivals with extensive community mobilization and committed social engagement, highlighting social issues such as youth street violence, racial discrimination (especially among youth), environmental issues, and global terrorism. The bottom-up work of this non-profit organization is a good example of how it is possible to empower community residents (with empowerment represented here by people engaging as active participants in cultural events), focusing special attention here on the continuous work of leadership building among participants of the Spontaneous Celebrations’ youth group, Beantown Society. One of the main strategies to promote public involvement in community events is to use urban public green spaces as settings for festivals, neighbourhood parades, and musical rehearsals so that passersby can be easily integrated in the activity, either as spectators or as active participants. By bringing the festivity to the public arena of the park, the garden, the street, and the lake, the events are not only made accessible to everyone but also may reconfigure urban identity and inquire about its possible connections with the natural urban environments. This reflection oriented the analysis of this case.
Villa Victoria/South End: A minority housing complex in a gentrified neighbourhood

One of the most complex social issues that underscores the contemporary metropolis is the divisions that result from everyday cohabitation, in the same neighbourhood, of socially, economically, and culturally different groups. In multicultural societies with constant migration fluxes, the urban context itself can be subjected to ongoing economic, physical, and historical transformations. The South End is an example of an inner city area where several minority housing complexes co-exist side-by-side with an affluent community. One of these housing complexes is situated in the Villa Victoria community, which deals with permanent issues related with difference, conflict, and integration.

Since its beginnings, the community-based agency Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA – Borícusa \(^3\) Tenants in Action), situated in the Villa Victoria community, has had a deep commitment to artistic and cultural practices in socially integrating communities through the Villa Victoria Center for the Arts. The promotion of Latino culture through many arts-related programs and events is part of Villa Victoria’s mission. For example, the arts component of the Cacique Youth Learning Center for Teens is deeply rooted in this community. The community arts program attempts to reach out to youth-at-risk in Villa Victoria and surrounding communities, focusing on a variety of artistic and educational activities like Latin percussion, banner painting, Hip Hop, spoken word, martial arts, theatre, dance, and community education. The key objective is to involve youth from different ethnic communities in order to create spaces of connection and prevent isolation and intolerant behaviours.

In the 1980s, arts-based innovation in the community took a leap forward when a century-old church was transformed into a performance centre, the Jorge Hernandez Cultural Center (JHCC), which became a Latino cultural landmark serving all of Boston. Today, the cultural centre is open to cultural events organized by IBA and the Villa Victoria community, providing a performance, exhibition, and learning space for community artists. The IBA cultural centre conducts outreach to an ethnically mixed audience through the promotion of Latino culture. One of the benefits of having a performance centre was that in the late 1980s IBA could launch a performing arts series, Café Teatro, to introduce renowned Latin American artists (in the areas of Latin Jazz and traditional Latin American music) to the American public. Adjacent to the JHCC, IBA repurposed an historic church parish house into a community arts center, the Center for Latino Arts (CLA), a multifunctional community arts complex. As with the JHCC, the main goals of CLA are to nurture Latino
art and artists, offer affordable arts education for at-risk youth, serve as an incubator for artists and arts organizations, provide spaces for rehearsals and exhibitions, and develop opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration between Latinos and other ethnic populations. The combination of the performance and community cultural centre provides support and visibility for Latino culture and artists, while also serving as a venue for the promotion of the Villa Victoria community in the region.

**Union Square/Somerville: An historic and commercial urban space**
A common issue of many urban areas is difficulty in establishing a specific identity. Somerville was, in the past, an industrial centre in Greater Boston and, apart from its recent residential and commercial growth spurt, has had to cope with the fact that some of the neighbourhoods have remained nondescript and have become, as in the case of Union Square, simply an entranceway to the centre of Boston. The challenge for the neighbourhood's ArtsUnion project was how to deploy the ethnic, cultural, artistic, historical, and economic resources of the area to transform the indistinct non place (Augé, 1995) into a lively commercial, historic, ethnically diverse, and artistic neighbourhood.

In Union Square, the ArtsUnion project is designed to promote the cultural and economic development of the area. The initiative’s primary goal is to create new economic opportunities for local artists and strengthen the regional identity of the area by designating Union Square as an arts district. The project includes an assortment of cultural activities, which include open-air performances in different urban public spaces, local product markets, ethnic markets, historic tours, public space exhibitions, and community meetings among ArtsUnion partners. These initiatives seek to mobilize artists, residents, local vendors, local stores, associations, and political personalities for a social, cultural, and economic mobilization effort designed to realize the dormant potential of Union Square. Some of the more salient questions that arise from this initiative are: Is a pattern of activities over time sufficient for the successful implementation of an Arts District? Is cultural diversity an essential element of ArtsUnion project? If so, will the initiative ensure that the Arts District reflects the ethnic diversity of Union Square? Is the local cultural dynamic of ArtsUnion a reflection of local social, cultural, and economic local diversity or is it, rather, an imposed and selected cultural sample, chosen by the local creative elite?
Citizenship, civic engagement, and urban space culturalization

Culturalized public space as context of intervention

The connections between artistic and cultural interventions and urban public spaces transform them into culturalized urban environments. This transformation occurs through the organization of street celebrations that involve residents in the community in various artistic performances initiatives (e.g., ArtsUnion Festival and Wake Up the Earth Festival) and/or intend to celebrate the articulation of different cultural traditions (e.g., Jamaica Pond Lantern Parade). Arts and culture also have the potential to be effective platforms in promoting civic participation and citizenship, specifically among youth, but also among other community members.

In order for mixed encounters to happen, different types of initiatives – such as those promoted by ArtsUnion (like the ArtsUnion street performance festival that takes place during the summer months), Spontaneous Celebrations’ festivals (like the Wake Up the Earth, which takes place every year in May, or Lantern Parade, in October), and the Villa Victoria urban interventions (like Festival Bétances, which takes place in July) – were created in the everyday spaces of the city (e.g., streets, parks, plazas) in direct articulation with and for different social and cultural groups, many of them youth arts education groups, but also the community at large (e.g., in the case of the Wake Up the Earth Festival and Festival Bétances). Local residents (which include both immigrants and locally born people) and youth groups involve themselves in all stages of event organization, becoming producers and evaluators of the initiatives in collaboration with organizational staff.

In the case of Spontaneous Celebrations, a variety of urban spaces were used to stage artistic and cultural events, with the goal of building the cultural identities of the sites by mobilizing the community to organize and attend these events. This was specially the case of the youth arts intervention projects, which mobilize dozens of youth in the organization and presentation of youth arts public projects like the ‘Youth Stage’ in the Wake Up the Earth Festival or the presence of Beantown Society at the Immigrant Rally, which took place in 2005. This was also the case of the community outreach done through the ArtsUnion project in Union Square. Every endeavor to mobilize citizens for cultural intervention in the urban site culminated in a series of public events such as the Street Furniture Project, the Windows Art Project, the Union Square Art Tour, the Crafts and Farmers Markets, or the ArtsUnion open air performances. Each of these events resulted from a collaboration between
the local municipality and different groups of urban agents that became civic intermediaries in the organization and presentation of the initiatives. Likewise, in Villa Victoria, civic engagement is simultaneously promoted by a focus on the social issues of concern to the residents and the creation of a strong Puerto Rican cultural identity. On occasion, there are even cases where community initiatives combine interventions in the public space with raising awareness of local social issues like street violence among youth gangs and the issue of the survival of Puerto Rican culture in an ever more multicultural urban context. For example, journalist Chris Orchard (2006) reported:

In an effort to curb escalating violence [specially among youth gangs] ... IBA has proposed a series of events to take place at O’Day Park ... [activities include] outdoor movie nights to attract families; host intergenerational ‘family days’ where people can play games like dominoes and bingo ... These strategies use the urban space as a context of intervention to promote social reconnection in order to think collectively about issues that affect the local community. The civic order principle must be understood and analyzed alongside strategies of cultural revivification of urban spaces, as civic engagement is fostered through a re-conceptualization of the relationship between the individual/citizen and the urban space that s/he inhabits.

The unconventional use of appropriated space can promote meaningful face-to-face interaction during the preparation and realization of artistic events. Community actors like neighbours, local businesses, and artists are encouraged to intervene as active participants in the production and preparation of the events. In the Wake Up the Earth Festival, in Jamaica Plain, youth are responsible for many tasks and acquire substantial production and organizational skills, and they develop a sense of belonging that is reproduced in their relations as part of the organizational structure of Spontaneous Celebrations. As one community organizer stated,

This festival represents a platform to learn about the world of business and performance production. There’s a kid who is going help to set up the electronics and hire the groups for the pop stage.... It really is a great exercise for a lot of people to learn about how the world works by setting up an event. (Semi-structured video interview, February 17, 2005)

In this case, the civic bond results from a joint community interest in organizing and producing the festival, which is understood as a tool to build Jamaica Plain’s identity. People from the community are urged to meet in advance and take the
lead in organizing an event like the Wake Up the Earth Festival. This is also the case with the Beantown Society, which has organized itself as a group to create specific activities in the Festival Bétances, including the thematic contextualization of the festival among the theme of ‘non-violence in Boston streets’. When community meetings (Figure 1) and festival preparations (Figure 2) take place, community members participate in the committees that oversee children’s activities, volunteers, performances, and all of the different venues at the event.

Figure 1. Beantown Society Group community meeting. Photo: C. Carvalho.

Figure 2. Preparations for Festival Bétances. Photo: C. Carvalho.
**Building civic networks**

In Spontaneous Celebrations’ context of action, civic networks are created by promoting social capital at the neighbourhood level. The work is based on two different types of strategies that show a holistic approach to the concept of community. The first strategy relates to the urgent need to create spaces of socialization, not only for the youth, but also for people of different ages. According to one community organizer who has been working with Spontaneous Celebrations,

> *Wake Up the Earth Festival* is basically an expression about what this community is all about, which is bringing people together to share musical and artistic experiences ... Festival for me is really the preparation for it because many people in the community come together to work on the Festival ... for several months. (Semi-structured interview, February 17, 2005)

In a society where socialization increasingly means online- and media-based relationships, it is extremely valuable to offer places for face-to-face and collaborative community participation and interaction. These are essential ingredients for civic participation and to create innovative strategies of citizenship building at the community level.

The second strategy focuses on the value of the place’s ethnic diversity, concentrating all organizing efforts on building culturally based local knowledge by developing opportunities for collaborative inter-ethnic and intergenerational work. This type of knowledge requires an understanding of the traditions and social behaviours of the different cultures that inhabit the same neighbourhood and encouragement to use the public arena as a place for dynamic cultural interchange. Artistic and cultural events may represent a good opportunity to develop cultural interconnections between different ethnic groups residing in the same locale.

Along these same lines, the ArtsUnion project aims to reach out to different arts-related partners in order to create a civic network of involved citizens and organizations. As one of the main ArtsUnion coordinators stated:

> The main objective of the project is to try to get better publicity for Union Square, try to get more people down to the square to learn about cultural and historical aspects of the Square and also to get [partners and residents] engaged in the activities. (Community meeting, March 22, 2005)

Each of the various activities included in the ArtsUnion project – crafts and farmers markets (Figure 3), outdoor performances (Figure 4), window art exhibitions (Figure 5), public art efforts, and historic tours – express the civic
dynamics of the neighbourhood and contribute to building social capital at the community level. Collective clustered endeavours develop each initiative. For example, outdoor performances result from the collaboration between local producers, the Somerville Arts Council (SAC), and local artists. As one of the producers of an ArtsUnion performance event stated, “We have worked in collaboration since the beginning: SAC, myself and the West African artists” (semi-structured interview, October 8, 2005).

Beyond the positive effect of strengthening civic relations during the preparations and duration of the initiative, what, if any, are the long-term effects on the development of other types of collective endeavours? Is there an escalating effect, generated by these artistic endeavors, on the neighbourhoods’ involvement in civic culture? This will no doubt depend on the continued existence of these types of initiatives over the years, as well as a capacity for re-adaptation to neighbourhood social and cultural changes.

The need to provide outreach to different ethnic and immigrant communities, allowing them to experience the potential of Union Square, creates networks of collaboration among local performers, immigrant artists, and community-based groups. As stated by one of the ArtsUnion local organizers:

In the outreach that we did for participation in the ArtsUnion event, we got this Latino beat player, we got this guy who is Brazilian and works at an insurance company, we got this woman who works in a New Asia restaurant who brought a Chinese group of dancers! So we ... had to coordinate a lot of people in the community. (Semi-structured interview, October 4, 2005)

The outdoor performances are designed to reproduce traditions from the diverse ethnic populations within Union Square, which are mainly Haitian,
Indian, and Brazilian. Therefore, strategies to create social capital are based on cultural outreach efforts with the surrounding community.

In the case of Villa Victoria, strong ties among civically involved individuals are promoted and individual self-help relationships (Williams, 2005) are developed between the residents. Community residents collaborate with the community agency Inquilinos Boricuas en Action (IBA) to organize community events like Festival Bétances and other neighbourhood events, such as domino tournaments, weddings, and artistic opportunities for youth, like Critical Breakdown or Youth Truth, where youth had the opportunity to share their reflective thinking with their peers and work on artistic creation pieces based on that reflection. According to an IBA staff person:

The community participation is pretty much committees from residents working hand in hand with IBA ... Festival Bétances is planned months in advance, and we pretty much make a call to the board and to the residents to try to form committees. So there are people working on every different task. (Semi-structured interview, June 30, 2005)

These dynamics develop from a partnership between IBA and Villa Victoria residents. They are the result of several months of collaborative work and involve many community meetings, thereby increasing ties between people in the communities. By strengthening these social relationships, a civic network is created based on a culture of pride and cultural resilience. Typical Puerto Rican activities are organized through which the community celebrates its cultural identity with the South End neighbourhood and the greater Boston area. During

Figures 6 and 7. Youth participation at Festival Bétances. Photo: C. Carvalho.
the festival, where Puerto Rican food is prepared by the Villa Victoria residents, traditional celebrations co-exist with urban Hip-Hop, as a younger generation of residents develops activities which express urban lifestyles associated with contemporary music, dance, and spoken word.

Concluding reflections: Patterns of citizenship-building in the three case studies
All three cases offer insights on strategies that use artistic and cultural practices to create more socially integrated communities. The innovative quality of the work in these communities represents various ways that artistic and cultural practices can contribute to creative strategies of civic engagement and leadership. These examples open pathways for further exploration of the different forms that socio-cultural innovation in communities may take, and on what citizenship may represent in practice at the community level.

The three case studies illustrate different ways citizenship can be innovatively practiced. Each corresponds to a different stage in the maturation process of citizenship building, each leading to the next phase in the process of knowledge production at the community level. The first phase, here identified with the ArtsUnion/Somerville example, focuses on identifying the main community actors in the local context and the kinds of associations possible, to take advantage of all local synergies. After the acquisition of thorough knowledge of the social context, the next phase includes the process of building a community identity in relation to others and the reinforcement of that identity, both in physical and symbolic space, as represented here by the example of Villa Victoria. This process includes differentiation in relation to other people and groups. Finally, the mature exercise of citizenship involves the creation of a community of practice, as exemplified by the Jamaica Plain case study, which goes beyond differentiation to collective actions involving ethnically and socially diverse communities, which interact in order to build a shared, place-based community identity. The interdependent variables of urban space, community, arts, and culture produce unique patterns of citizenship building in the three urban neighbourhoods.

In the ArtsUnion/Somerville case, the creation of strong ties with local community agents is essential to get to know the field of work and to create synergies among different social groups (businesses, ethnic communities, artists, community organizers, etc.). The creation of local networks that can elicit community participation sets the process of citizenship in motion. The establishment of these community networks includes locally based efforts
focused on attracting diverse community members. A far-reaching campaign of community socialization is necessary to become better acquainted with the social context and to identify allies for the social intervention projects.

In the Villa Victoria case, citizenship is directly related to the appropriation of a physical space in the city as a strategy of cultural resistance to reinforce Puerto Rican cultural identity. Over the years, the survival of this immigrant cultural identity has been dependent on how well this Puerto Rican community exercises influence over both the physical space and the symbolic space of the city. Thus, the most important component of the expression of citizenship in this social context is its direct relation with identity formation. The main tool used to reinforce immigrant cultural identity is the arts event, Festival Betances, which mobilizes residents through many forms of community participation. The festival highlights Puerto Rican culture and fosters neighbour-to-neighbour sociability. In this situation, citizenship expresses itself in the direct relation of the public space with the mobilization of immigrant cultural traditions.

In the Jamaica Plain situation, the work of Spontaneous Celebrations is focused on the creation of a community of practice. In this case, a community of practice is a web of social relationships in a locale that integrates as many community members as possible through joint efforts to enhance local society. Every community member is understood to be a potential agent and active citizen. In this way, the generation of innovative approaches to the concept of citizenship requires the development of a strategy of action both at the organizational and the community levels. Both levels operate simultaneously and are interdependent. A network of social support is then created between community members through day-to-day relationships. Artistic activities are, on one hand, the tool for outreach to community members, involving different community groups (youth, immigrants, families, and children) in the organization of activities. On the other hand, arts also represent a tool to share with society at large to address social inequalities.

A theme that seems to be surfacing in local communities, and with those who work with them, is how to gain new perspectives, ideas, and innovative practices related to citizenship building and community intervention through the arts. The answer appears to be found in concentrating efforts around designing toward the periphery rather than toward the mean. This means creating paradigm-shifting methods that work outside of the box. Instead of standard programming and doing what has always been done, alternative methods of organizing can breathe new life into communities.
The case studies presented here indicate three different approaches on how that can be done. The Jamaica Plain case study presents an holistic view of how community participation may represent an aggregation strategy between different community sectors, which have been working throughout the years in joint articulation toward a common end. In the case of Sommerville’s ArtsUnion event, the cultural initiative is in itself a reason that interrelates differentiated agents and communities in a pluralized and diversified urban zone, commercially, spatially, and culturally. Villa Victoria is an example of a self-sufficient culturally resistant community, where citizenship and the civic bond reproduce an enclosed cultural identity in an ever more multicultural urban space.

In these cases, artistic initiatives offer innovative strategies to deal with community struggles like youth violence, urban rivalry, and racial and ethnic divisions. Innovation presents itself in different ways in the three situations to help disadvantaged communities connect knowledge and experience to actively participate in the development of new methods of cultural revivification and citizenship building. Further, they also envision and embody artistic practice as an indispensable learning tool in promoting self-empowerment for the development of creative citizens. Artistic creativity represents the driving force that nourishes community cultural development and creates new opportunities and possibilities. The development of the creative citizen is a long process that includes both the development of civic engagement and leadership efforts, and the establishment of a direct relationship with the urban space. Individual civic participation through artistic practices and the culturalization of public space are processes that help us define the framework to rethink citizenship. This framework addresses the contemporary urban citizen from a cultural point of view where political knowledge, expressivity, and cultural awareness are the salient attributes.

Notes
1. Further, Nancy Fraser (1990) studied how the different groups constitute different public realms and called attention to the need to balance a politics of representation and recognition of these groups.
2. According to data from 2000, the most isolated group is whites living in Boston's suburbs: on average, they live on blocks that are more than 90% white. On average, whites living in cities resided on blocks that were 70% white. In the city of Boston, African Americans reside on blocks that are on average 60% African-American (The Boston Indicators Project, 2004).
References


FROM KAYELITSHA TO MAISON TROPICALE: LOOKING AT ÂNGELA FERREIRA’S SPACE METAPHORS ON MEMORY, REIFICATION, AND BELONGING

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Abstract: I propose a reading of a group of art works produced by Ângela Ferreira between 1991 and 2007 in order to understand the development of a critical and nonaligned account of public space as art medium; an account that connects cultural memory, physical and virtual experience on built space, space as archive, and art as a total work on entropy and nostalgic transcendence. These works explore an extensive collection of visual techniques that go from photography to video, from scenic montage to three-dimensional constructs, from ur-architecture to formalist sculpture, and through this multimedia space-time setting, Ângela Ferreira’s artistic production posits the need to assess the qualitative variance between public space as theory and public space as practice.

Resumo: Proponho a leitura de um conjunto de obras de arte produzidas por Ângela Ferreira, entre 1991 e 2007, a fim de compreender o desenvolvimento de uma visão crítica e não alinhada do espaço público como medium da arte; uma visão que interliga memória cultural, experiência física e virtual em espaço construído, o espaço como arquivo, e a arte como obra total sobre a entropia e a transcendência nostálgica. Estas obras exploram um extenso conjunto de técnicas visuais, desde a fotografia ao vídeo, da montagem cénica às construções tridimensionais, da ur-arquitetura à escultura formalista; e, através desta disposição multimédia do espaço-tempo, a produção artística de Ângela Ferreira afirma a necessidade de se levar em conta a variação qualitativa entre o espaço público como teoria e o espaço público como prática.

Introduction and research context
In recent years, I have been examining a set of works from advanced contemporary art that highlights the colonization of the symbolic and the aesthetic by dominant economic forms, and recognizes lived and organized space as the encasement of different and struggling forces. I have been interested in how works like Gordon Matta-Clark’s Conical Intersect or Etant donné pour locataire (Paris, 1975); Victor Burgin’s Minnesota Abstract (Minneapolis-St. Paul, 1983);
Hans Haacke’s *So You Were Victorious After All* (Graz, Austria, 1988); Jeff Wall’s *Eviction Struggle* (Vancouver, 1988); James Casabere’s *Panopticon* (1993), *Monticello*’s series (2001), and *Georgian Jail Cages* (2003); Mike Kelley’s *Educational Complex* (1995); and Ângela Ferreira’s series from *Khayelitsha* (1991) to *Maison Tropicale* (2007) screen and explore in a creative sense the risks of the simulacrum and the ornament, and take a critical balance to the drift of all aspects of human relations into the realm of commodity.

I have been interested in how they put into artistic form recurrent questions that affect the survival of the individual and of whole communities. What remains to be said in an artistic code about the presence of myths, of technology, of reification, of banality on our daily routines? How has the image of space and the aesthetic of the photogenic and the fixed become a surrogate for the transient and contradictory condition of real space? How does the aesthetic representation of a plural and democratic space disguise the holy alliance between bureaucracy and property in the takeover of the few remaining spots of citizenship, of political use of space (in a sense of belonging and differentiation) that have not yet become consumer artifacts, that haven’t yet become superficial, deprived of dialogue, and predetermined? I read (and value) these artistic objects as active dissenters, as counter-monuments\(^1\) and as ruinment\(^2\), where the processes of dematerialization–rematerialization and of presentation and re-representation go beyond the social depletion of art creation, the apparent ideological hegemony of decentred subjectivity, an aesthetic labeled as indifferent to the violence of historical processes.

The conflicting nature of these objects also reflects upon the role of art in a society where image has both become a purveyor of myth and also of fact, and where free territory (spaces where representation can be an action, whether direct or deferred, and not just a qualifier\(^3\)) and tolled territory have become undifferentiated. Many of these artists explore the post-architectural nature of the built environment, opposing the wishful dreams of modern architecture with its production of space and order in a capitalist society, and return to the house/city duality to create strong visual analogies of postindustrial, neo-liberal, and ethnocentric cultural frameworks. In their different modes of expression and production, these artists characterize the imperfect, the unattended, the incomplete, and the empirical *cul de sac* (the useless) as important assets of modernist tradition.

In these specific artistic productions, where work and process are intertwined, hierarchical oppositions between repetition and difference, ordinary and
extraordinary, surface and depth, banality and difficulty, have dissipated and become secondary. The artists recognize perceptual difficulty and conceptual depth – the need to question and learn – not just as exclusive categories of scientific work but as prerogatives of artistic production, active agents of the ‘mix and match’ through which advanced art turns theory into practice.

This paper is a means to reiterate the transgressive nature of art, to scope art, in the discourse of sustainability, as a perceiver of social contradictions and cultural bashings and a prime instrument to fire fight the naturalization of injustice and to disclose and deplore the unspoken prejudices and fears embedded in everyday protocols of human and community relations.

Ângela Ferreira
In this paper, I present a reading of three art works produced by Ângela Ferreira between 1991 and 2007. In these art works, the historical, anthropological, and architectural realms are worked as symbolic and cultural signifiers of naturalization and dissent, of inclusiveness and separation. The works involve an extensive collection of visual techniques that go from photography to video, from scenic montage to three-dimensional constructs, from ur-architecture to formalist sculpture. Although her work remains somewhat unexamined by academic research, she belongs to that artistic and heterodox genealogy that considers that art can introduce a new set of phenomenon into public, naturalized images/symbols of power.

Art may reaffirm or contradict the instrumental presentation of progress as the only available ‘Being in Time’. The organization of space, the positional class mapping of individuals, is a symbol of power and of urban ideology. The art works presented in this paper differentiate and, at the same time, coordinate with the techniques that turn the city, the urban field, into a centre of power and a crossroads of relationships. They rework and undo the blank and normative aesthetization of public space by exploring the ‘heretic’ and poetic tropism of agit-monuments, by downsizing the concept of artistic autonomy to its insufficiencies and contradictions and repressing from their own mind/content the ‘window dresser’ and ‘entertainer’ identities that in contemporary societies stereotype artistic creation as an orderly beauty and ‘shamanistic’ distraction.

The works of art are addressed as strong, unfamiliar and cognitive images that through procedures of visual analogy (of an identity of relation) take possession of fragmented and dissociated expertise embedded in modern culture: the political economy of urban space production, the ideological
input on public and private space and their associations through the concepts of bureaucracy and property, the architectural and technical accommodation of lived space.

All along Ângela Ferreira’s artistic path one can sense what Thomas Crow (1993) describes as a feature of advanced contemporary art, that it has become “a crossover between the seminar room and the art studio” (p. 63). In the nameless –ism of advanced contemporary art, this pervasive cooperation between the dynamics and inertias of theoretical scoping and the practical endeavors of form-making is no longer biased by judicious and post-Hegelian utopias such as Nikolai Taraboukin’s early 1920s final countdown for artform and art-making, or Situationist critique of modernist art as the institutionalization of the transgressive, but it is also no longer embedded in the utopia of the autonomy of the artistic form built by Clement Greenberg’s Eliotic Trotskyism.5

Faced with a needed critique of the demise of the artistic field into the realm of mass culture, serious and advanced contemporary artists go through modernist remnants (whether architectonic, artistic, or literary) looking for untouched ‘archival’ material and, above all, looking for signs of gender and cross-cultural pioneering. This has become an important reference in the way artists like Ângela Ferreira have been dealing with historical conceptions of space and dwelling, pointing out their time-bomb operationality and useful visual and semantic resources when treated as artistic prime-matter.

Her own condition as an African Portuguese born and raised in Mozambique in the period prior to Independence (1975) and of an émigré studying sculpture in the apartheid regime of South Africa fostered her need to rebuild and understand her identity through a recollection of lived and surely traumatic experience in colonial and postcolonial Mozambique and in hard core South African Apartheid. These contexts run parallel to her efforts to read with an aesthetical but also socio-critical scope the alienation of space by time6, the racial and ideological ethos of urban planning, the vertical decision making that pushes human communities into a culture of isolation and indifference, and the economic and social processes where humanized and lived space becomes a non-real commodity utility – in short, the overlapping of the anthropological by the economic. I argue that she also signals in her visual analogies how individuals position and react against the given, for instance, how vernacular and prosthetic constructs fill handicapped low-income dwellings and give them a sense of place (Marquises, 1994) and how urban agriculture shows up in expressway territories (Hortas, 2007).
She treats selected objects—sanitary facilities in Khayelitsha, the marquees in Oporto Ilhas, the doorstep and the entrance of the Kiefhoek building, the platform that once hold Henri Prouvé’s Maison Tropicale in Niamey, Niger, and even the container that shuttled it back to Europe in a neo-cubist profile—as raw material for her own sculpture research, as if her three-dimensional constructs were a landscape-depicting process (with strong autobiographical features) exploring issues of space in movement and architecture as a psychic mechanism (as Anthony Vidler (2007) states on recent installation art embracing architectural themes).

In general, her work inquires about given history: How were racism and segregation core to Portuguese colonialism but have been hidden and misrepresented throughout media culture? How do you use your own childhood memories to debate cosmopolitan lifestyles, modern building and consumer habits in a society based on colonial and anti-democratic perceptions of civic life? How do you come to terms with a society that no longer exists? How do you look at history not from the point of view of the victorious but of the defeated, knowing that those who lost were blind to change? Through a kind of ‘harvesting’, her work tries to look through collective and individual processes of remembrance, through the human need to give a present tense to nostalgia.

She wants to find flaws in the larger picture of human dwelling and contemporary society but rather than expose them in a doctrinal way, she proposes to question them. Like Vancouver-based photographer and post-conceptual artist Jeff Wall, one can argue that she is not looking for the big disaster or the king-size crater in human history as an artistic theme; instead, she depicts the comings and goings of history’s smaller but continuous handicaps.

Three of Ferreira’s works—Khayelitsha: Sites and Services, Duas Casas/Two Houses, and Maison Tropicale—are briefly examined here to illuminate how this type of artistic practice and inquiry can contribute to revealing and rethinking the real-life practices of the organization and design of urban form and architecture, and to exposing the underlying political and socio-cultural currents that propel these occurrences and trajectories.

**Khayelitsha: Sites and Services**

*Khayelitsha: Sites and Services* (see Figure 1) refers to a particular place in time and in space: an urban phenomenon that has become a reified object. We look at the images of an almost formless field; we learn through some ‘literature’, which
always outlines Ferreira’s visual interventions, that this landscape is located in the township suburban rings of Capetown, South Africa.

The word Khayelitsha comes from Xhosa, meaning ‘New Home’. One cannot avoid the cynical overtone of this labeling if one considers the fact that under apartheid, South Africa urban organization was based on the racist Group Areas Act. ‘New Home’ becomes a metaphor for segregation, pass books, limited urban circulation for non-whites, curfew, displacement, forced removal, tribalization of the non-white education system, racist leveling of the non-white curriculae and criminalization of non-white working skills. The area was originally built and prepared in 1985 in the western outskirts of Capetown, which was then one of the most segregated cities of South Africa. Its main function was to redirect, through compulsory measures, the Xhosa migration into Capetown. The area was provided with a rudimentary water supply infrastructure and with some sanitary facilities localized at strategic points. In 1991, Khayelitsha stood in the pictures depicted by Ângela Ferreira as an empty, stilled territory; today, it stands as one of the fastest growing and poorest suburbs of Capetown, with almost half a million residents.

The installation Khayelitsha: Sites and Services has a dualist presentation: there is a group of documental photography, almost laconic, reduced to a post-human, austere,
and anti-narrative perception, and small-scale, portable, and composed three-dimensional built objects (see Figure 2). *Khayelitsha*’s monosemic discourse and low-cost industrial-built materiality becomes the object-subject of a sculpture experience. In the small floor objects there is clearly a reasoning between Khayelitsha as place and as a discernible social reality, and Khayelitsha as pure physicality, as a built, unconscious, and unexpected statement. Concreteness and behavioural response to the phenomenological and syntactic features of the artistic object becomes a primary outline.

When Ferreira’s intervention/assertion was first mediatized in Lisbon’s Contemporary Art Museum exhibition of her then-recent works, *Em Sítio Algum*/*No Place at All* (2003), this ‘ready-made’ township surface grilled by austere sanitary modules transmitted a *less is incompleteness* sensation. One would fall into the photography’s two-dimensional silence, perceiving that in the depicted environment there was no human presence, no complexity, only repetition. Then one would turn around in the exhibition room and realize that these pictures, these devices of ambiguity and incompleteness had lost their grip on the vividness of historical facts, and they had metabolized into small, horizontal, somatic sculptures. Yet if phenomena, if the bodily firmness of this empty and unsaid space becomes an abstraction, if a segregated form becomes its being at the same time, Khayelitsha in the state of expectancy (a community yet to be born long after its demographic occupation) in which Ângela Ferreira took her pictures strangely becomes a place, a place of the unsaid. Khayelitsha becomes a urbanscape and its visuality unlocks a discourse on mimesis and unrooted repetition, on the aesthetics of the built environment where the words of Saint Just gain new strength: “The present order is the disorder of the future” (Dean and Millar, 2005: 18).8

![Figure 2. Ângela Ferreira, *Khayelitsha: Sites and Services*, sculptures, 1991-92. Photograph taken and edited by P. Pousada at the 2008 exhibition “Hard Rain Show” in Berardo Museum, Lisbon.](image)
Duas Casas/Two Houses

Both Duas Casas/Two Houses and Maison Tropicale explore the theme of sleeping beauty (modern architecture) nurtured and kept alive by an old and ugly society (the global market and its “accumulation by dispossession process”) that remains intact in its contradictions and insufficiencies. Ferreira developed the installation Duas Casas/Two Houses (J.J.P. Oud) (2001) in the framework of the exhibition Squatters #1 produced in 2001 at the Witte de With’s Contemporary Art Center in Rotterdam and later that year at Fundação de Serralves in Oporto. The installation makes a biography (Jacob J.P. Oud, 1890-1963) jump out of a period (Der Stijl modernism in the Dutch 1920s) and out of that biography a work (the Kiefhoek urban project, Existenzminimum, 1925/30).

Ferreira rediscovers this prototype of architectonic heroism, a case study of the ideological partnership dreamt by The Stijl neo-plasticists between the claim of life and the aesthetic ordering of chaos. She rediscovers it in its rightist drift when the building and the issues it addressed – its cubomorphic codification of human dwellings, and its presence as a visual and concrete booster of hope and belief in an egalitarian and participative society of productive efficiency – had been ‘captured’ by consumer society, by neighbourhood gentrification, and by architectural tourism. The building’s use value had been turned into the museum framing/cultural protection of a place that no longer existed (and that apparently no longer made sense). To relate and question that subtext on the intranscendency of human products that surrounds the Kiefhoek neighborhood, she built a fac-simile of one of its twin entrances. This strange plywood and plastic construction (Figure 3) is a reflection about the phenomenology of the urban condition,
that is, the alienation of space by time, the estrangement of place and identity, and the perception of native land as a foreign country. The disembodiment of utilitarian beauty becomes the prime matter: function displaced from form and form no longer following function but looking for a new meaning.

*Maison Tropicale*

In *Maison Tropicale* (2007), the “clean-drawn” and “good design” (Greenberg, 1995: 180, 184) theatrical mannerism of Minimal art opens its Monist window to sociological and (auto) biographical issues. Ângela Ferreira again takes the misadventures of an architectonic object as the material base to her work; in this particular case, the nomadism *fin de siècle* of three replicas of a one-family prototype dwelling developed by the talented master of pre-fabricated constructions Jean Prouvé (*Maisons Portiques*, Issoire, 1939-40; *Maison Standard*, Meudon, 1949-50) and his brother Henri Prouvé. These replicas were designed to be sited in tropical and subtropical regions still under French colonial administration, respectively in Niamey, the capital of Niger, and in Brazzaville, Congo’s capital. Migration flow and speculative rescue (Judith Rodenbeck [2010] calls it “neocolonial repatriation”) done by a French businessman would transform these buildings, already in a post-mortem state, into newly found super-valued architectural treasures to be exhibited in Paris and New York (see Figures 3, 4, and 5).

*Maison Tropicale*, the art project, comprises two parts. The first part, with anthropological features, is the audiovisual and photographic documentation of the visit that Ângela Ferreira made to the old settings of Prouvé’s prototypes. In this travel and inquiry, she went together with filmmaker Manthia Diawara. In their promenade on architectural absence, presented as a film documentary entitled “Maison Tropicale,” they disclose everyday routine in the historical and spatial epilogues of the Prouvé Maisons: what remained of the Niamey house, the cement platform, occupied and used as a working facility for Tuareg refugees; the memories of one of the past owners of the Congolese Maison, Mireille Ngatsé, a slum landlady as Diawara describes her. This part also posits a critical assessment on the posthumous importance of these objects as historical artifacts that have been defunctionalized and levitated to European grounds. A built ghost carved in the modernist fiction of the Other becomes cinematic through economics; it moves and, in its containment as a commodity, it gains a ludic walkthrough ambivalence. In Le Corbusier’s *Le dehors est le dedans* proposition, what was a void filled with anthropological memories has become an optical and
Through the inertia of a modern artifact’s passing, a place in the world is rediscovered. Photograph taken and edited by P. Pousada from a video produced by Ângela Ferreira and presented at her 2008 exhibition “Hard Rain Show” in Berardo Museum, Lisbon.

Figure 5. The Prouvé Prototype assembled in Long Island City, Queens, 2008. Ruin becomes treasure. Photograph taken and edited by P. Pousada from a video produced by Ângela Ferreira and presented at her 2008 exhibition “Hard Rain Show” in Berardo Museum, Lisbon.
moving playground (if not an anatomical lesson on Mecanno’s constructivism); you no longer possess it or live on it, yet you can become more than a viewer, a morbid voyeur.

The second part of the project materializes into an object with neocubist vibrations, the corridor/container (Figure 3) with which Ângela Ferreira poetically represents the thingness of the maisons tropicales, disassembled and numb, resting, waiting to become conceptual bait for the relation between truth and power, authenticity and disguise.

The Prouvé project essentializes an experience on mechanical construction (the operational relation between static frameworks and climate control), on transport logistics (the maisons were fabricated in France and travelled by air to Africa), and on a business opportunity, to promote the French metallurgical industry of aluminum. But opposite to the words uttered by Albert Sarraut at the first French congress on colonial urbanism in 1931 – “for now on the European building will be supported by colonial pilotis!” – functionalism adapted to the tropics never came around, becoming a picture of an era’s collapse and a ‘hunting’ trophy. The undoing and the packaging mimicking the construction/composition dualism of European easel abstraction as well as the cement platform (Figure 4) are, probably in an unplanned way, ruinments that whisper the sinister word Françafrique, the code name that shadows the neocolonial policies that Quai d’Orsay has been staging ever since French colonies became independent. The magnetic emptiness of that cement platform, iced in the illo tempore of the Niamey cliché, reminds us that “colonial pilotis” are well buried and fixed in the Western representation of the Other.

Post-script
In discussing the subject of advanced art in the animation of public space, one must consider that artists – at least those with a proactive and non-aligned agenda concerning the problems of post-Fordist urban spaces, the recurrent problem of dwelling, and poetics in lived space – tend to shortcut, mine, and reverse socialized accounts on the role of art in social transformation, and to demonstrate how allegory, perceptual estrangement, and aesthetic difference are essential in the perseverance of utopia in the map of our living space. Throughout their long history of belonging and separation with and within the built environment, the visual arts (pictorial, graphic, sculptural art forms) strived to place in its core the conscience of the tragic (of suffering and destiny) as well as the desire for a unified aesthetically organized world. Harmony and
chaos, pain and joy, reality and fiction, briefness and transcendence were always prevailing polarities in art-making.

Yet this duality also means that art endures for a longer time when it does not reiterate the naturalized and the socially accepted, when it does not comply with the conveniences of either friends or foes, when it specifically hangs between its Icarian desire to be autonomous and carefree of the incongruences of history and its utopian desire to embed itself into political transformation. Good and enduring art is not opportunistic, though its artists may fall into the charms of the status quo. Great art commits itself against common places, stereotypes, and systems of beliefs; it goes on strike, it confronts social passiveness and conformism, and it strives to be a ‘public nuisance’, to be something which is difficult to insert in the public space, which is resistant to interpretation, which is in a permanent estrangement, fighting against cultural commodification, that is, against style. Art is always in the business of opening gaps, reverting, and resizing social and cultural objects so that the impossibility of change (conformism) does not become the impossibility of living (nihilism), or, as Robert Filliou remarked, “Art reminds us that life is worth living.”

Notes
1. The term counter-monument was originally coined by German conceptual artists Jochen and Esther Gerz to describe the memorial against fascism (Hamburg-Harburg, 1986), a 12-metre-square steel column slowly receding into the ground (1986–1993) where public agency and participation was articulated as a way to engage and deplete the didactic and rhetorical traits of the conventional monument. The artists claimed that by excluding from the work of historical remembrance its primal and historical focus, the hero or individual agent, and by refusing the abstraction of the human condition into a totality, they managed to short-circuit all the aesthetic procedures in a conventional monument that were far too close to the fascist conception of the monument as a “keeper of national fiction” (Tompkins, 2006: 83). With their metaphor of the haunting past of the German people they “foreground the play with absence” (Tompkins, 2006: 83) where the social function is less about sanctioned history or the memory of specific demographics and more about social and civic responsibility and the idea that counter-monuments are positional space-time views against collective amnesia. For further work on this concept, see Young (1993) and Buchloh (2006).

2. The concept of ruinment focuses on the perception that the myth of progress, of a teleological impulse defining human activities, is a symbolic and cultural construct that hides (through a lack of image) the non-productive, unplanned dimension of modernity and, at the same time, aesthetically represents as rationality the capitalist
processes of destitution, the premature archaisms of the built environment, and the urban space as a cycle of production and consumption. Gordon Matta Clark applied this word play (ruin + monument, amnesia + epic memory) as a corollary to the urban effects of entropy, specifically, the sense of irreversibility perceived on objects and sites that become the image of their own de-valuation and alienation, of their own inaccessibility as lived spaces. The impossibility of built modern space as monument and the sense of impermanence and place unmaking are intrinsic to Gordon Matta-Clark’s proposed concept (see Graham 1985/2003).

3. See Lefebvre (1972) and Harvey (2000, especially Chap. 1, “The Difference a Generation Makes”). More recently, Alejandro Zaera Polo (2008) has become an important and somewhat alternative sequel (with a liberal touch) to the public space critical reading developed by these two Marxist authors.

4. The agit-monument concept proceeds from Nikolay Punin’s (1920) reading of Tatlin’s Tower (1919-20) in which he claims: “A monument must live the social and political life of the city and the city must live in it. It must be necessary and dynamic, then it will be modern. The forms of contemporary, agitational plastic arts lie beyond the depiction of man as an individual.” Punin’s main argument is that in modern times the monument has to become a real life experience and a social want made out of the entente between “purely creative form” and “utilitarian form.” Monuments have to become aesthetic displayers of social dynamics, have to be as immersive, and through that immersion the city must be contained within.

5. This oxymoron was devised by T.J. Clark (1983) to describe Clement Greenberg’s critical thought on Modernism. It highlights a dialectical bind between a partisan fight against kitsch and ornament (the derision of art into style), an effort to restore the bond between pleasure and work that was disrupted by Fordism, and an historical (and nostalgic) perception of advanced (contemporary) art as a moving forward and a looking backwards process where the essence of art, its landmark, remains in the realm of art-making (its conventions, traditions, and specificities give positional and methodological directions and insights to newcomers), that is, the subject of art is art and its undoing, transformation, and reinvention is historically charged. See also Criqui (1987).

6. In the context of an invitation from the De Witte Institute, Ferreira’s work Duas Casas/Two Houses (J.P.P. Oud) addresses the failed gentrified urbanism of the Kiefhoek neighborhood in Rotterdam. In this work, the dead labour architectural and urban artifacts give way to new processes of accumulation.

7. A similar kind of ‘harvesting’ can also be denoted in art works like Mining the Museum (1992) by Fred Wilson, Metromobilitan (1985) by Hans Haacke, and Minnesota Abstract (1983) by Victor Burgin.

8. The words of Saint Just, the French revolutionary leader of the Jacobins and close ally to Robespierre, are inscribed upon large plates of masonry in Ian Hamilton Finlay’s poetic garden and artistic environment of Little Sparta (West Edinburgh, Scotland).
9. Surpassing the dualism between mind and body knowledge of space (i.e., space and body interactions) through variety of phenomena and of structure, ABC/Minimal artists propose a realism of the art object in clear disagreement with Modernist tradition, arguing that the real substance of art is the material and sensorial phenomenology produced by its artistic substance. Literalism is the Fountainhead.

References


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Up until the 1990s, the Emancipation Proclamation was celebrated in France in May, as a result of the April 27, 1848, decree setting the slaves free in all the colonies. In the national discourse, Victor Schoelcher, who in 1848 was appointed undersecretary of state in charge of the navy and the colonies and president of the Emancipation Commission, and also introduced the bill that became law, was credited in France with the liberation of people of colour. Consequently, to this day he has enjoyed a larger-than-life persona in the French territories.1 In the local psyche, the man has been considered as le père de l’abolition (literally, ‘the father of the emancipation of the slaves’) for the longest time.2 Either way, it is striking that in Schoelcher and Grégoire’s cases, regarding French historiography, a white man is credited with the abolition of slavery, as further exemplified by the official visual archiving.3 No mention is made of the slaves as being the architects of their own freedom.

This Eurocentric posture on the part of the French government came under attack in 1998. On May 23, answering the call of many public figures and advocacy organizations for a unified celebration of the 150th anniversary
of the Emancipation Proclamation, some 40,000 people, mainly natives of Guadeloupe and Martinique, marched through the streets of Paris. Many of the participants signed a petition urging that slavery be recognized as a crime against humanity. At the core of the advocacy movement that took shape in 1998 was the need to de-emphasize the celebration of the emancipation and, rather, to commemorate the ancestry of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, and French Guyana nationals. Consequently, since 1998 the communities on the various French islands and territories have embarked on large-scale commemorative programs.

Year after year, the celebratory plans put together by the different branches of the local governing bodies have invited more input from the population and taken a community-based approach. Civic Edupreneurship and the City is one such example within a program of festivities. For the May 2011 celebrations, the city of Abymes on the island of Guadeloupe partnered with several organizations, among which the authors’ organization, which is conversant in social entrepreneurship in the field of education, participated. The project centred on creative ways the city could engage its constituents and most specifically the youth in (re)claiming their historical past to better negotiate the present.

To limit the carbon emission footprint, the centrally located city hall plaza was turned into a maroon quilombo of sorts, with different recreational stations where the children were occupied at sharpening their critical consciousness skills through the execution of mini projects. Using the battles of 1802 between the French troops sent by Napoleon to re-establish slavery on the island and the Guadeloupean rebels as a backdrop, the didactic activities promoted role playing, public speaking, leadership, team spirit, and artistic practices.

The commemorative venture the city invited its constituents to participate in should be viewed as a civic endeavour in line with the social economy approach articulated by the French government. Through the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the city hall sent out a call for projects to all its constituents. As the convenor, the objectives of the municipal government were as follows:

– Develop a civic mindset in the constituents
– Encourage residents to get involved in the life of the city and become active participants in the policies of the town
– Encourage activism versus passivism
– Urge people to earn authorship and enactment of their history
– Teach a sense of responsibility
– Put in place a practice of shared governance regarding cultural affairs
– Invite as many people as possible to understand and commemorate their history
– Encourage citizens to share their strengths and ideas in an effort to:
  (1) contribute to the success of the city; and (2) help in the process of group identity formation around an undertaking, namely one’s cultural identity
– Transform the urban enclave into a more walker-friendly environment which in turn fosters civic social networking

The town government purposely decided to concentrate on its youth with the goal of developing a winning spirit within them. With that objective in mind, the program of celebration concentrated on five activities designed to achieve the targeted goal:

– A drawing contest – the best one was awarded a prize and used in designing the official poster;
– A treasure hunt;
– A daytime and a torchlight procession – these took place along the Boulevard des héros, the main thoroughfare where sculptures of the leaders of the resistance movement to slavery are erected;
– A film screening – Suzane Palcy’s Rue Cases-Nègres was shown.

What was the overall success of the event? How does one measure its accomplishments? Did it have the intended impact on the target audience? Overall, there was some significant interaction between the city and the school community. The pupils were called upon to act as constituents with a civic sense of responsibility in joining in a commemorative effort. In so doing, they left the enclave of the brick-and-mortar learning environment and laid claim to the city landscape. They ‘occupied’ the town’s public square, the church’s road to Calvary, and one of the main commercial arteries, the Boulevard des héros.
Under normal circumstances, all these spaces are used by cars and stand for a commercial and mercantile value system. By walking/gathering around, on, and through those routes, the citizens put the emphasis on the artistic and historic significance that they convey to the metropolis. The monument commemorating soldiers and civilians who died for the country during the different wars sits at the centre of the public square. The treasure hunt took the pupils to the Twelve Stations of the Cross designed by a local artist. The Boulevard of the heroes for its part, celebrates the freedom fighters Delgrès, Ignace, and Solitude as their sculptures are strategically erected along the way.

The street was the focal point of the celebration. Since the schools are located in close proximity, the environmentally friendly educands convened on foot to the central station (see Figure 1). Under the guidance of their instructors and elders from the community, they paid tribute to the historic figures in some artistically elaborate rituals. Engaging in the practice of detour like their ancestors, they transformed the street from a business-oriented area into a ceremonial setting. Traffic, which was off limits, gave way to the raising of the colours in front of the statues – in this case, it was the red flag of resistance. Several speakers, young and old, took turns delivering the litany of commemoration. Some offered poems and songs in a Western format, while others used the artistic genre native to the island, gowka (see Figure 2). The children and adults laid a wreath in front of each monument, before marching

Figure 1. The procession of pupils, teachers, and elected officials walked from the schools to the Boulevard des héros. Photo: Simone Pierre.
back to city hall, followed by the crowd of onlookers (see Figure 3). In the end, the animation of the public spaces met the following goals:

- It helped fight ageism and ableism as young and old collaborated together
- From an educational point of view, it promoted collaboration at several levels:
  - Across institutions of learning
  - Across disciplines within the schools
  - Between the department of education and the schools

Figure 2. Under the guidance of their elders, the youth worked at claiming their history while honouring the past. Photo: Simone Pierre.
It fostered the design of an educational project that took into consideration local experiences at the intersection of national history

- It put forth team work
- It tightened social links
- It helped protect and highlight the intangible heritage of the island (its history and multiple identities)
- It was cathartic because:
  - It fostered a winning and creative spirit
  - It encouraged the youth of the island to be twenty-first century leaders
  - It helped address some of the silenced taboos
  - It helped pupils talk about their history by giving it meaning and using it to build critical thinking and a positive attitude
  - It generated a social dialogue in the constituency

Sharing in Paulo Freire’s approach to pedagogy, the experience was an innovative attempt at providing young Guadeloupeans an opportunity to critically envision themselves in their relation to the world and not just learning the word (see Freire, 1996).
Notes
1. Victor Schoelcher’s presence is noticeable everywhere one travels in the French Departments of the Americas. On the island of Guadeloupe, a museum in the capital city is dedicated to his memory, while his bust sits atop a monument prominently displayed on the main square of another town. A city also bears his name.
2. It is worth mentioning that slavery was first abolished during the French Revolution by the Commune through the efforts of an abbot named Henri Grégoire.
4. The solemn march was meant to honour the memory of their enslaved ancestors.
5. This became a reality in 2001, when Congresswoman Christiane Taubira, a representative of French Guyana, introduced the bill that was voted into law and bears her name, Loi Taubira.
6. The May Collective, as they are formally known, enjoin their fellow slave-descended kinsmen to make it their business to never forget or display ‘un devoir de mémoire’, as they put it in French.
7. In Guadeloupe, visual artists were commissioned to paint a 150 metre-long mural encapsulating the historical period. Guadeloupean film director Christian Lara released two epic movies on the subject, *Sucre Amer* in 1998, and *1802 l’Épopée guadeloupéenne* in 2005.
8. For their previous project, they teamed up with World Relief, an Atlanta-based non-profit organization that provides services to international refugees who resettle in the United States.
9. They were elementary school children to be specific.
10. Independent communities created by the runaway slaves who fled the plantations never to return. Depending on the islands or territories, those communities were, by design, inaccessible to the masters or law enforcement and located in the marshes, hills, or mountains.
11. The Bureau set up a planning committee made up of elected city officials and constituents. Their task was to review the proposals submitted and discuss their feasibility. From the submissions, the committee put together a general project, drafted a budget, decided on the program, and assigned specific roles to all parties concerned relative to the execution of the event.

References
PROFILE

**ILLUMINATE – COMMUNITY INTERACTIVE: HOW ARTISTIC COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS BUILD FELLOWSHIP AMONG DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY VITALITY**

Melinda Spooner  
NSCAD University, Canada

**Abstract:** *Illuminate* did more than provide a series of safe and nurturing art programs for the at-risk youth it served: it aimed to address the needs of the neighbourhood by empowering its youth. The project forged connections among diverse population groups through art programming and mentorship to enhance community vitality, and catalyzed ongoing connections and additional projects with the youth.

*Resumo:* *Iluminar* fez mais do que fornecer uma série de programas de arte seguros e estimulantes para os jovens em risco a que se destinavam: tinha o objetivo de acudir às necessidades do bairro através da capacitação dos seus jovens. O projeto criou laços entre diversos grupos da população através de programas artísticas e de formação orientada para fomentar a vitalidade da comunidade, e criou novas relações e projetos adicionais com os jovens.

> Sustainable societies cannot be built if children are not given the opportunity to develop a strong foundation for development, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

*Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson and Yoshie Kaga* (2008)

> How may art engage a community to stimulate social and economic change?

NSCAD University’s Community Service Learning program, launched in 2010, allows students to make meaningful contributions to society by applying their critical and creative thinking skills to targeted community needs within the context of the opportunities provided by community-based arts practice. During the summer of 2011, NSCAD University students combined their learning with experiences working with the children of St. George’s Church.
YouthNet in the North End neighbourhood of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Through this collaboration, and with the support of a grant from the 4Cs Foundation, NSCAD and St. George’s aimed to expand upon the children’s connections to the community through workshops in storytelling, bookmaking, mural painting, theatre, and lantern-making. The Illuminate project aimed to stimulate conversations involving a broad range of individuals and community organizations throughout Halifax’s north end that would not normally work together to create social change.

It is important to note the central role that YouthNet plays within the community and the great need that it serves. The organization was started after local children started a fire in the church and burned down the 44-tonne dome originally built by royal navy shipwrights in 1801. A team of architects, timber framers, engineers, and local craftsmen were brought together with historians, heritage groups, and members of the church congregation to rebuild it. At the same time that the congregation rebuilt their church, they also recognized the importance of creating an environment that provided programs to support the at-risk children in the community. YouthNet’s goal is “to work with the children both individually and as a group to increase their personal and group skills as well as build new talents and explore engaging and fun activities. We are committed to creating a safe, consistent environment where children can explore and grow.”¹ They provide essential services free of charge including lunch, after school programs, and summer camps to those children and families that need it most.

YouthNet aims to strengthen a community disadvantaged by material poverty and social struggles by creating a youth-net or a network of support for youth within their community. This is achieved through three main elements: mentoring relationships, community partnerships, and programs targeted to the needs and aspirations of its youth.² What distinguishes it from other youth organizations in the neighbourhood is its emphasis on visual art, theatre, and music as being of primary importance in realizing goals of transformation, growth, confidence building and developing freedom of choice.

The community that we worked with is one with a great deal of pride but which has endured many injustices, starting with the expropriation of Black Nova Scotians living in Africville to a notorious housing project. Africville was founded in 1840 after former American slaves escaped to Canada following the War of 1812. It was a tight-knit law-abiding community with a strong Baptist church, and did its best with the situations it faced. The city denied them many
basic services such as garbage removal, lights, sewage services, and police and fire protection. Many of the city’s unsightly, dirty industries such as the city dump were located next to Africville. Consequently, many viewed this community – denied so many essential services – to be a slum. In the 1960s, the citizens of Africville were involuntarily moved and bulldozers leveled homes, the church, and businesses. The former residents were moved to Uniacke Square, a notorious housing development built in the 1960s wave of urban renewal to move people from urban poverty to urban prosperity. But this came at a huge cost as they lost their sense of community, their church, their circle of support, and the place where they had a sense of belonging. Many of the people in Uniacke Square still suffer from socio-economic hardships and live in crowded public housing with over 60% of residents unemployed. But as we learned over the summer, there is great pride within this community and Africville has become a symbol of the link between social well-being and community heritage (Ward, 2002).

The children of YouthNet are at the core of their community and how they grow and develop will shape the community for years to come. Children worked with NSCAD artists to document their own experiences of their neighbourhood, using elements of storytelling and lived experience as it relates to their personal history and family roots. Long-time residents, theatre companies, and storytellers from the neighbourhood conducted workshops with the children to teach them about important people and places in their area. The children then created artwork in response to their own connections to place and community. These various forms of storytelling emphasize that stories are told in many forms, not just book form, and that through holistic learning, including audio and visual interpretations of a story, we live and breathe our history.

Drawing on the culmination of experiences and discussions generated by the local storytellers, local artists, and performers, the children were able to focus their work on a deeper level. For instance:

- Working with the local theatre company, The Bus Stop, the children participated in a workshop based on Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed methodology. They role played through games that emphasized creativity and freedom. The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature: among men and women, races, families, groups, and nations, dialogue should prevail.

- At the North End Public Library, participants heard from two local storytellers, Marcus James and Shawn Mantley, about the history of the north
end neighbourhood and its famous residents. This experience helped the children expand their understanding of their community and prepared them to communicate a vision of their neighborhood through photo and video.

- The children worked with local photographers to document their community with photo and video footage. While taking photos, the children were asked to consider questions about themselves and their community. They then made handmade books at NSCAD’s Dawson Printshop incorporating the photos and writing they had generated over the course of the summer. As illustrated in Figure 1, the children’s photos of their neighbourhood include an image of their elementary school (recently closed by the school board due to overwhelming social problems in the area), the housing project in Uniacke Square, the children’s favourite graffiti, and one of 12 churches that has closed in the North End. Their video and photos were showcased to family and friends during a workshop with prominent international filmmaker Andrea Dorfman.

- Within the North End Community Garden, the children met with The Art Bikers to create illuminated paper drawings and sculptures. The Art Bikers are young artists on bicycles who transport trailers full of art supplies to create free, spontaneous art on streets to inspire community involvement. The Garden was a familiar aspect of their neighbourhood. Many of the children have learned to grow their own food within the North End Garden. Visits to the garden allowed the youth to focus their creative skills on aspects of their community where they feel a great deal of pride and ownership. Their stewardship of the land, plants, animals, and insects form both an emotional and intellectual connection to place that is made that much stronger through the expression of their feelings about their garden through their art.

- Several workshops in mural painting, clay, laser-cut drawing, video, lantern-making, and printmaking were held in the studios of NSCAD to include a program of creative experiences and exploratory activities within a higher education setting. Children are sensitive, interested, and curious within their art-making, so having them work in these classrooms alongside university students forms long-lasting positive explorations in learning. The children learned many transferable skills such as filming and video editing and showcased their videos alongside their artwork at a community celebration (see Figure 2)
Figure 1. The YouthNet children worked with local photographers to document their community with photo and video footage. The children’s photos of their neighbourhood include an image of their elementary school, the housing project in Uniacke Square, the children’s favourite graffiti, and one of 12 churches that has closed in the North End.

Figure 2. Through workshops with NSCAD students, the children learned many transferable skills such as filming and video editing. They showcased their videos alongside their artwork at a community celebration.
One of the questions asked of the students enrolled in the Community Collaborations course was, “How might artists work to achieve dialogue to stimulate conversations between individuals and communities that would not normally work together to create social change?”

Our goal was to connect the children to their community by setting up workshops in which the children and their community members could create art and share stories and ideas in an open dialogue of giving. The artwork became the social reality itself, of giving through dialogue and exchange. The process of giving is central to the artwork as it is a reciprocal exchange in which both the adults and children learned from one another. When provided the opportunity to express themselves, the children took great pride in the work they created. The values, attitudes, behaviours, and skills acquired at a young age can have a long-lasting impact on later life and can lead to more sustainable communities as families and children celebrate their stories and achievements. Awards were given to the children for their work to encourage them to continue to foster relationships, to relate personally to the course experience, and to pass it along so it would reoccur through young people teaching young people. YouthNet played a central role in establishing these transferable skills as their long-term sustained relationship with the community’s children allowed for the dialogue and trust necessary for co-participation. It is through these prolonged, established relationships that true change is possible.

Under the guidance of their professor, art students were asked: How do they contextualize engaged, communicative public art? How may we grasp as a work of art these communicative actions4, these performed conversations between community members? If there are no permanent objects to be judged as artworks – but instead a project that changes the perceptions of its participants through conversation and collaboration (Kester, 2004) – how are these actions not simply cultural services? Where is the aesthetic experience?

The process of collaborative, socially engaged, interactive art resulted in the exchange of knowledge, skills, and support – between the community’s professionals (photographers, filmmakers, actors, librarians, gardeners, and artists), the university students, the youth junior leaders, and the youngest children. All groups learned from one another: the students gained professional experience, the children learned valuable skills while developing their voice, and everyone learned about the richness of a neighbourhood all too often marginalized within media reports of violence and poverty. The unique characteristics, traditions, personalities, and strong social bonds within this
community challenged these preconceptions and brought about new insights through the collaborative nature of this project.

Each group offered role modeling and mentoring to the next while opening up and developing links between organizations within the community and beyond that previously had not existed (Leeson, 2003). In their introduction to *The Contribution of Early Childhood Education to a Sustainable Society*, Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson and Yoshie Kaga state: “In creating a more sustainable community, networking and forging alliances was identified as a crucial exercise in mobilizing effective advocacy as well as sharing and building knowledge” (p. 15). New genre public art calls for an integrative critical language through which ethical action and socio-cultural values may be discussed in terms of art along with aesthetics, invention, intent, and meaning. Media appearances, courses, art shows, and community discussions all become an integral part of the artwork (Lacey, 1995). This history was celebrated in an exhibition in which all levels of work were displayed, from the children’s artwork, to that of the university students, to artworks created by members of the community that mentored them. Members of the community celebrated the children’s art and achievements within an annually occurring banquet titled *Extravagam* that culminated with an illuminated procession of lanterns. These lanterns were later symbolically placed in the shop windows along Gottingen Street, the area’s urban centre, downcast within media stories of crime but home to many of the district’s community organizations, co-operatives, and artist-run centres.

As part of the course, students were also asked the question: How do we evaluate the success of a project? Grant Kester (2004) argues that, “criticism of dialogical practices should, in my view, be less concerned with arranging a canonical hierarchy of works than with analyzing as closely as possible, the interrelated moments of discursive interaction within a given project” (p. 189). How we attempt to understand the effects of our intervention in the public sphere is linked to how we continue to build community and create connections. If community-engaged art is about *engagement*, how do we continue to remain involved with a community long after a project is finished?

Sustained commitment is about actively listening and sharing to allow for an experience to emerge over a period of time across generations and socio-political geographies. These projects are most effective when they can continue to grow over a long period of time. Since the *Illuminate* project began, many of the same community members, artists, NSCAD students and faculty have continued to volunteer to create artwork with the children of YouthNet. Many new projects
have evolved through artist-led initiatives that have expanded youth involvement with broader networks of community members (see Table 1). YouthNet has drawn together the people around the organization to build dreams that integrate art forms and community collaboration with both shared decision-making and shared results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Urban Project:</em> Collaborative video</td>
<td>Summer 2012 (3 months)</td>
<td>Documentary filmmaker and video artist Ariella Pahlke, (in partnership with Ann Verrall, the Community Access Program, and the Centre for Art Tapes)</td>
<td>To create a series of short videos of varying genres that centred on the children's own stories, and to learn about all aspects of video creation. They showcased these videos at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as part of National Youth and Art Week, 2012. For more information, see: <a href="http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/?page_id=274">http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/?page_id=274</a></td>
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<td>production projects with youth</td>
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<td><em>Moving Images:</em> Hybrid art collaborations</td>
<td>September 2012 to March 2013</td>
<td>Artists Melinda Spooner and Ariella Pahlke. Sponsor: Inter-Arts Office of the Canada Council for the Arts.</td>
<td>Moving Images brings together musicians, actors, dancers, storytellers, spoken word, video, and visual artists from the North End of Halifax in collaborative partnerships with youth. The project aims to create new experimental hybrid art forms that focus on youth and the role of the arts in strengthening communities. For more information, see: <a href="http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/movingimages">http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/movingimages</a></td>
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Table 1. Examples of follow-up projects

**Acknowledgements**

The financial and organizational support of the 4Cs Foundation and the Inter-Arts Office of the Canada Council for the Arts made these projects possible and allowed them to grow. The 4Cs Foundation provides grants, education, and other opportunities for community arts projects that inspire, empower, and connect children and their communities in Halifax, Nova Scotia. For more information, see: www.4csfoundation.com. The Inter-Arts Office of the Canada Council supports creative diversity and excellence in integrated arts, contemporary circus arts, and artist and community collaborative arts in these fields. For more information, see: www.canadacouncil.ca/interarts.
Notes
2. First, YouthNet builds a network of individual support by facilitating the development of mentoring relationships between volunteers, staff, youth, and junior leaders. Volunteers are asked to make a strong and regular commitment to YouthNet in order to focus on building friendships and mentoring relationships with the youth. Second, to ensure that youth are supported in all aspects of their lives, YouthNet collaborates with organizations and individuals throughout the neighbourhood, fostering a network between schools, community centers, teachers, parents, and other resources. Thirdly, YouthNet offers a wide range activities purposed to teach youth life-skills, to build confidence, and to inspire personal growth. These activities are primarily led by volunteers and volunteers are indispensable to the running of all YouthNet programs (YouthNet website: http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/?page_id=29).
3. The children’s garden, recently constructed greenhouse, and a salad dressing business, Hope Blooms, are under the North End Community Health Center’s registered charity, and all profits go into a scholarship fund for inner-city youth (North End Community Health Centre website homepage, 2012 [14 June 2010]).
4. Communicative action was first coined by J. Habermas: “communicative actions (occur) when social interactions are co-ordinated not through the egocentric calculations of success of every individual but through co-operative achievements of understanding among participants” (Jurgen Habermas, cited by Barber, 2000: no page).

References
PROFILE

STORIES FROM HOME: AN ART-RESEARCH INTERVENTION AT BELL BARDIA SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATE

Marnie Badham and James Oliver
Centre for Cultural Partnerships, University of Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT: Stories from HOME, an art-research intervention, explored new arts-based methodologies with the potential to reduce the effects of social research on vulnerable communities. The resulting artist residency, social connections, and art exhibition all contributed to the development of a more situated art-based and ethnographic approach to participatory and generative research.

Resumo: Histórias de CASA, uma intervenção de arte/investigação, explorou novas metodologias baseadas na arte com o potencial de reduzirem os efeitos da pesquisa social sobre comunidades vulneráveis. A residência artística, as relações sociais e a exposição artística resultantes contribuíram para o desenvolvimento de uma abordagem mais artística e etnográfica à investigação participativa e generativa.

While it is common for a work of art to provoke dialogue among viewers this typically occurs in response to a finished object. In these projects conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. It is re-framed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse.

Grant Kester (1985: 71)

There is a long history of creative interventions focused on social relationships to the built environment and, increasingly in Australian cities, exploring concerns located at public housing sites (Pitts, 2004; Kwon, 2004; Lacy, 1995). From community choirs to digital projections, community art and public art can play a role in neighbourhood transformation in ways that exceed mere decoration. These types of creative collaborations can assist residents through dialogue: by articulating their own voice and aesthetics, while drawing attention to and affecting local issues, they can also mobilize action and strengthen social fabric.
Stories from HOME grew out of the site of the Bell Bardia estate in Heidelberg West, a suburb of Melbourne which experiences significant disadvantage (Oliver et al., 2011). This intervention was not solely restricted to an arts project; it also set out to explore arts-based methodologies as a means to reduce potential negative impacts of social research on vulnerable communities. As an interdisciplinary research project, it aimed to challenge representations of place-based stigma. Through the development of participatory and generative methodologies, the theme of ‘home’ prompted residents by asking: Where you are from? Where are you now? and Where are you going? Competing understandings of place were drawn out regarding Bell Bardia: as contested and dangerous, as a site of refuge, but also later as a place to re-imagine the potential for belonging and community.

Artist-researchers Marnie Badham and James Oliver were located at the Bell Bardia estate for over four months, initially engaging residents in flexible social and participatory arts activity before shifting toward generative art outcomes. Multiple custom-designed and decorated ‘house cut-outs’ were installed by residents in the shared yard, artist-designed postcards with prepaid overseas postage triggered storytelling and nostalgia, and other place-based activities drew attention to overlooked physical aspects of the estate. For instance, a ‘photography walk’, a group photo exercise, extended a dialogue on themes of
‘home’ through a detailed exploration and discussion of the grounds at Bell Bardia. One resident photographed the overhead airplane sky writing, while others documented a neighbour’s garden, a dangerous play apparatus, and even a child looking at us through a window. As photo elicitation, these images were then used as source material for social exchange and when realizing many images were not familiar to everyone, activated a ‘scavenger hunt’. Children explored the estate by searching for the images; when they could not find the imaged object (e.g., a particular flower), they approached other residents sitting outside nearby for assistance. Many reported these activities “were a good excuse to meet their neighbours” and even suggested we target some residents as they “wanted to get to know the people living upstairs.”

Figure 2. “It is not like it used to be,” Stories from HOME: Bell Bardia Estate, 2011. Photo: Marnie Badham.

Together, these participatory activities generated a large repository of place-based images and became a site of dialogue, gathering more of these ambivalent descriptions regarding the resident’s feelings toward the estate such as, “It is not like it used to be” (see Figure 2). Over the tenure of the project, there was a marked shift from naming problems – “we need a place for peace and quiet” – to a more positive reframing: “we are making this place popular” (see Figure 1) and “its good to hear children laughing” (see Figure 3). Putting forward the theme of ‘home’ was an intentionally open-ended creative research
approach to explore what life was like on the estate, inviting residents to offer their own representations. The intervention culminated in a contemporary arts presentation, again for continued reflection by residents and now the broader public. The resulting images and text were co-curated into a collaborative festival-like projection event and, later, an art exhibition at the local community health centre.

Because there were, initially, few existing social networks amongst residents, barriers to participation were not only about limited creative ability and technical skill but more about apprehension in social engagement and use of public space. It was not surprising that not all residents were interested in participating in arts activities; however, many appreciated opportunities for developing social connections with neighbours. Residents even shared that they had been discouraged by housing officers to get to know their neighbours because it was feared this would heighten the potential for conflict between residents.

Intertwined with the art outcomes, *Stories from HOME* explored a new methodological approach to research that may have less impact on vulnerable communities experiencing the effects of stigma. What followed was the articulation of a situated and practice-led approach to art-research starting with participatory arts engagement, followed by a more generative approach to residents representing themselves and their interests. As Kester (1985) explains, a more active generative process “can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse” (p. 71). Following the role of artist-researchers who “construct experiential starting points from which practice follows” (Haseman, 2006: 103), community-based art can be explained as “any form or work of art that merges from a community and consciously seeks to increase the social economic and political power of that community” (Knight and Schwarzman, 2005: xvi).

Aligned with this practice of community-based art, the artist-researchers employed what John Creswell (2003) defines as a participatory/advocacy approach:

> These researchers believe that inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. Thus, the research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which the individuals work or live and the researchers life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed such as empowerment inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. (p. 9)
Haseman and Mafe (2009) believe the term *practice-led* is “the most appropriate term to capture the dynamics of a powerful and distinctive research strategy which meets the needs of the artist-researcher and the expectation of the research industry” (p. 212). To this end, the creative practice-led approach at Bell Bardia was also tied up in the politics of community-based arts and participatory advocacy research, which considers things “such as empowerment inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation” (Creswell, 2003: 10).

Both art and research are powerful representational practices in which there is the danger “to speak on behalf of” or the potential to facilitate discussion with communities (Foster, 1995: 308). Theorized as dialogic art, *Stories from HOME* generated dialogue through the process of participatory art-making. *Stories from HOME* focused on the relational qualities of process-driven practice, facilitated dialogue amongst the diversity of residents, re-animating their shared public space. Like many community-based arts projects, this art-research project was only short-term; however, shared public space and the animation of it through artistic process-driven practices create a platform for coming together and creating bonds. Residents and artist-researchers created a space to draw attention to and explore local place, in turn stimulating the social fabric at Bell Bardia Social Housing Estate.

![Children laughing – that’s good to hear.](image)

*Figure 3. “Children laughing – that’s good to hear,” Stories from HOME: Bell Bardia Estate, 2011. Photo: Marnie Badham.*
For more information:
Stories from HOME: an art-research intervention at Bell Bardia Social Housing Estate was a short-term interdisciplinary research project led by Dr. Deborah Warr at the University of Melbourne with a team of researchers: Marnie Badham, James Oliver, Lachlan MacDowall, and Rosemary Mann. For more information, contact the author: m.badham@unimelb.edu.au.

References
PROFILE

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY: THEATRES AND COMMUNITIES IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF (NON)ABUNDANCE

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ABSTRACT: It is often assumed that animating public space involves bypassing existing cultural institutions. However, the Lisbon-based Maria Matos theatre illustrates how such institutions also can promote initiatives that transform public space and create venues for social interaction. This profile explores two of the theatre’s recent initiatives that question conventional notions of theatrical space and theatrical audiences.

Since taking over as Artistic Director of the Maria Matos municipal theatre in Lisbon in 2008, Mark Deputter and his team have made a concerted attempt to build both a sustainable theatre and local audiences for the theatre. This notion of sustainability has included both an ecological and a social component. The contribution that follows focuses on two events organized by the theatre that illustrate how this notion of social and environmental sustainability has operated in practice. The first of these, the ‘Day of Abundance,’ (2011), combined workshops and performances with an open-air meal. The second, Atlas (2011), was a community-based performance that strongly criticized the impact of austerity measures in Portugal. Both events questioned the boundaries associated with theatre spaces and moved away from notions of theatrical audiences as passive consumers toward their empowerment as active social agents.
Themes: Abundance and belonging
The success of both events was anchored in coherent artistic programming around themes of particular social tension. The season on the theme of abundance, which included the Day of Abundance, keyed into the way in which the term had shifted from being an overwhelmingly positive term with biblical resonances into an ecologically suspect one in a period of finite resources. *Atlas* was integrated within a season on belonging that highlighted the increasing gap between those who ‘belong’ in Portuguese society and those marginalized or excluded from it. Nevertheless, the impetus behind programming around themes is not to compel artists to produce work on these particular themes, but for the themes to resonate in some way with their work. This safeguards an important space of artistic autonomy and avoids the pitfalls of worthy but ultimately unimaginative work on complex subjects.

Performance and public space
One of the major reasons more people do not go to theatres has to do with a lack of a sense of cultural entitlement. Just walking through the doors of a theatre can often be a frightening and confusing experience. The Day of Abundance provided an opportunity for audiences to see performances in a variety of locations that integrated the theatre building within the wider space of the local community. Even events within the theatre challenged the building’s separation from the surrounding area. Jacob Kierkegaard’s ambient performance *Plethora*, for instance, mixed recordings of the theatre’s electricity and water systems, the sounds of the nearby metro, and of birdsong within the same musical composition. The open-air meal was particularly important in breaking down spatial and social barriers, for it enabled a form of unscripted conviviality very different from the conventions that govern the behaviour of audiences inside theatres to take over the space adjacent to the building (Figure 1).

*Atlas* extended this invitation to redefine theatrical space to include the stage space itself, as 100 volunteer performers stood up on stage to give voice to their experiences of employment and unemployment. Under the direction of community artists Ana Barralho and João Galante, each of the 100 volunteers advanced in turn toward the front of the stage with personalized variations on the following phrase: “If (one/ten/twenty) (hairdressers/shepherds/technicians) upset many people, then (two/eleven/twenty-one) (hairdressers/shepherds/technicians) upset them even more.” The second part of the phrase was spoken in chorus, emphasizing the social
dimension of these individual testimonies. The occupation of the stage space by the local community transformed the event into a public forum for voices that are increasingly silenced. Midway through the performance, for instance, a man stepped forward with: “if fifty unemployed upset many people,” to which the others echoed: “555,000 unemployed upset them even more” (see Figure 2).
Audiences and communities
Transforming audiences into participants is a vital part of extending cultural citizenship and creating cultural forms that value risk over repetition. The Day of Abundance experimented with a variety of reconfigured relationships between performers and audiences. Forced Entertainment’s six-hour Quizoola, for instance, allowed audiences to come and go as they pleased, encouraging them to make their own decisions about how they wished to relate to the performance. During the open-air meal, audiences became performers for curious local residents as they engaged in delicate social negotiations around sharing tables. Indeed, the local community assumed equal responsibility in the success or failure of the event as each participant was asked to bring an ingredient to the event and professional chefs cooking the evening meal relied only on the ingredients brought by the community.³

Atlas’ foregrounding of local community experience transformed relationships between performers and audiences more fundamentally, for there was little effective distinction between those onstage and those in the audience. This changed the relational dynamic of the performance, as many in the audience were themselves friends and family of the performers, as well as the composition of the audience, replacing the invariably white, young, middle-class audiences with a far more heterogeneous audience in terms of race, age, and class.

Public art and theatrical sustainability
It is often assumed erroneously that public art is inherently more radical when it is created outside the spaces of cultural institutions. However, the two initiatives discussed here suggest a more complex picture where existing theatres like the Maria Matos play an equally important role in the development of challenging public art in and for public spaces. Their consistent attempt to rethink theatre-making and theatre audiences in the twenty-first century indicates how theatres can work more closely with local communities to widen access to theatre in ways that also ensure the theatre’s own sustainability in the long-term. Nevertheless, it is also the case that these initiatives differ substantially from the traditional approach of cultural institutions. The promotion of forms of non-directed social encounter outside conventional theatrical routines promoted a more socially aware, integrated local sustainability based on experiment and informal discussion, where the artistic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainability were raised simultaneously rather than isolated in separate initiatives.

For more information on the work of the theatre, see: www.teatromariamatos.pt
Notes
1. This performance is discussed in more detail in Rayner (2011).
2. It is difficult to convey in English some of the semantic diversity of the Portuguese verb *incomodar*, which carries with it connotations of to annoy, to upset, to disturb, to unsettle and to trouble. In the performance’s evocation of the phrase, several of these connotations would have been mobilized for the audience. Similarly, while I have translated the second part of the phrase as “upset them even more,” it can also convey the idea of “upset even more (people).”
3. The open-air meal recovered a tradition of community canteens where communal meals would be prepared and shared by the local community in times of economic hardship.

References
PROFILE

KIOSKXIAOMAIBU

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Abstract: kioskxiaomaibu is a site-specific art project. For six months, a group of artists worked as a collective by inserting themselves weekly into a working kiosk in different locations and opening up a Skype link to each other. Kiosk proprietors and their customers were invited to make use of the platform as they saw fit.

Resumo: kioskxiaomaibu é um projeto artístico baseado num sitio específico. Durante 6 meses, um grupo de artistas trabalhou como um coletivo, introduzindo-se semanalmente num quiosque funcional em diferentes locais e abrindo uma ligação Skype entre eles. Os donos dos quiosques e os seus clientes eram convidados a utilizar a plataforma da maneira que desejassem.

The project kioskxiaomaibu was conceived and developed in response to the changes EXPO 2010 brought to Shanghai from 2004 onwards. Both authors of the initial concept draft, French artist Alexandre Ouairy and myself, Petra Johnson, had lived in Shanghai at the time and had observed and been affected by the marked increase in construction work that took place downtown in the name of EXPO. This was as minor as giving existing facades a fresh layer of paint and it was as dramatic as taking down an entire lilong – a low-rise, ground-related housing pattern typical for Shanghai, consisting of 100 to 300 houses with numerous lanes, walled in from the street (Guan, 1996) – in one’s neighbourhood. Suddenly streets were emptier. Even in protected areas, lilongs had to make way for the new and very effective subway system.

In early 2009, I had moved to Cologne and was invited to submit a concept that would link the cities of Cologne, Liverpool, and Shanghai within the context of EXPO. Alexandre and I had been inspired by an article by independent curator Carol Yinghua Lu entitled, “Don’t Stop: Doing Art Potluck Style.” The article described a new development in the Chinese art scene: the establishment of alternative artist-run spaces that act as platforms rather than galleries,
that exist on minimal budgets, and that offer space for free experimentation. Independently from each other, we came up with the *kiosk* as a venue for artistic explorations. Seeking a space of commonality in China and Europe, the kiosk was the common ground we shared. A kiosk is a small shop – sometimes a free-standing pavilion, sometimes inserted into the fabric of existing buildings – that sells cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, sweets and basic groceries. In Cologne, a kiosk is also the place where newspapers are distributed. In Germany, the image of China – once a much-admired nation – had changed dramatically in recent years. Reporting on China had taken on a pre-dominantly economic focus and was guided by a competitive perspective. The media incessantly reinforced stereotypes (Richter and Gebauer, 2009).

So why not go to the place where the source of much misunderstanding is distributed and offer another view?

What in fact we would do with the kiosks was in flux. Initially our thinking remained object-bound. One proposal was to offer artist-made objects for exchange. Any objects brought in by the public in exchange for an artist-made object needed to come with the assurance that it had given joy to the person handing it over. The element of trust that builds on strips of paper and coins and around which a global economy functions was to be transferred to a more intimate and a less quantifiable quality. Simultaneously, the interior of this kiosk would transform continually over time, filling up with objects that were not made for consumption.

Another ambition of the project was to work with sound by capturing local dialects as well as local knowledge. This remains an ambition waiting to be materialized.

During studio workshops in Shanghai with urban planners, artists, and architects, the idea developed further and with the assistance from U.K.-based e-space lab, offering an unmediated view of China became possible by simply setting up Skype stations in a kiosk in Cologne and one in Shanghai.

Once we had reached this stage, we could begin to look at a practice that eschewed materiality whilst simultaneously embedding itself into it. The object-based aspect of *kioskxiaomaibu* went onto the backburner.

After a number of open workshops, a team of interested participants stepped forward and the project opened on May 1st, 2010, simultaneously with EXPO 2010 in Shanghai and Cologne. This first event was almost overwhelmed by interest from the press, the public, and well-wishers. At some point, the exchange took on a sudden momentum and hands searched for sausages in either kiosk, then hands searched for Coke, for sweets, for Baijiu (hard liquor)
and for cigarettes: ‘We have this.’, ‘Ah, sausage, where are the sausages – we are in Germany and there are no sausages? – ah, there you are: sausage!’, ‘Sausage’, and ‘This is very famous cigarette in China, in Shanghai it is called Double Happiness’ and ‘Here is the cigarette of Cologne’ ‘What is it called?’ ‘Overstolz’ ‘What?’ ‘Overstolz’ and so on (see Figure 1).

During the following weeks and months until October 2010, I would take my computer on Saturday mornings and arrive at Kiosk Babylon in the Koernerstrasse, Koeln, at 11:00 in the morning local time. Meanwhile, Xu Zhifeng would be travelling across Shanghai with his computer in order to arrive at Yang Ayi’s kiosk at 17:00 in the early evening local time.

In Cologne, Mahira Yigit Hahn had already cleared a table for me and in Shanghai Yang Ayi’s neighbours had already gathered on a bench outside her kiosk. Mahira often invited musicians to play for the Shanghai audience – she even squeezed an entire choir into the kiosk! (see Figure 2).

In Shanghai, a local historian recalled the 1980s when the whole neighbourhood bought one TV and gathered, just like now, around the screen. “Only now,” he continued, “the screen speaks back to you.” There were instances when we invited performance artists to work within the lilong in Shanghai.

In late July, we were invited to present kioskxiaomaibu at the German Pavillon and we brought a reconstruction of a Shanghai kiosk and live broadcasts from the Cologne kiosk to the stage (see Figures 3 and 4).
Figure 2. Yang Ayi with neighbours in Shanghai listening to musicians playing in the kiosk in Cologne.

Figure 3. Mahira Yigit Hahn interacting live with the EXPO audience.

Figure 4. A reconstruction of a Shanghai kiosk offers a moment of solace to exhausted visitors at EXPO.
Meanwhile in Weimar, another kiosk had joined us: worldkioskweimar was a typical East German kiosk. Now redundant, it had become available for artist projects. Esther Blodau Konick, Therese Dietl, and Hjoerdis Hoffmann filled the kiosk with stock from Yang Ayi’s kiosk and invited passing pedestrians to find German equivalents for these items. A lively trade ensued, commented on by the Shanghainese audience who watched proceedings via a Skype-link (see Figure 5).

The kioskxiaomaibu links ended in October 2010. This very ambitious project demanded a high level of commitment and the wealth of archive material still remains to be explored in greater depth.

The practice that emerged out of this experience is a practice of giving oneself over. There are too many people, too many unknowns, too many seemingly banal but-on-closer-look miniscule events of profoundly human dimensions, which make control futile as well as counterproductive. All that can be done is to set a stage. All that should be done once the stage is set, is to retreat. Giving oneself over is not an artistic posture of emotional enthusiasm, as writer and curator Simon Kirby explains in an article titled “Pieces.” “It is,” he writes, “more crucially a subtle and disciplined response which combines sophistication and empathy in equal measure.”

kioskxiaomaibu continues to receive a considerable amount of interest. Documentation of the project is currently on display at the Shanghai Biennale. In my experience, the opportunity for non-mediated connectivity is, more often than not, welcomed. In China, particularly, the project continues to reverberate because it offered an alternative to the media presentation of China and ‘the Chinese’ by providing a platform to compare and contrast daily life across
cultures. The ensuing conversations made visible that, for example, government regulations, though identical, are perceived differently: what is seen by one community as a protective measure to safeguard privacy, like the need for official permission to have a street market, is experienced as a restriction of local rights by another community.

Unfortunately, due to the pressures of running a kiosk, the objective that the project would continue without our mediation could not be realized.

As part of my concurrent research work, which is led by the question ‘What practices help value and emerge when engaging with the hidden life of a locality?’ I produced the following year a sequence of links between neighbourhoods in Istanbul, Cologne, and Shanghai. My objective was to present a chorography of other neighbourhoods specifically for a German audience. This work was very much indebted to Mike Pearson’s text, In Comes I.

By 2013, my focus began to move from seeking to make visible communalities to exploring difference. ‘Walk with me’ – currently on show at the Power Station of Art in Shanghai – is an interactive, durational artwork consisting of three equidistant walks in Cologne, Beijing and Shanghai. The walks – literal and metaphorical – explore the distance between the world of daily life (a kiosk embedded in a local neighbourhood) and the world of culture (an iconic building: the Cathedral in Cologne and the Imperial Palace in Beijing) by producing spaces of affect. Each walk is an intimate one: the artist and one companion. The routes are divided into 15 passages. In every city, each walking companion receives identical prompts for each passage. These prompts guide the capturing of small acts that we encounter as we walk down the street. Observations and fragments of memory combine to form a direct response to natural conditions mediated by cultural tradition. By discussing and reflecting upon each prompt, we not only share but co-create a joined sense of space – something that had been missing in kioskxiaomaibu.

For more information: www.kioskxiaomaibu.org

**Note**

1. See YouTube or, if in China, youku: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-4_SWmMvQ; http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjg2NTE0OTQ0.html.
References
PROFILE

WHEN GUESTS BECOME HOST/PORTO: ARTISTIC STRATEGIES FOR FINDING HOSPITALITY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Danielle van Zuijlen
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ABSTRACT: When Guests Become Host is a curatorial research project looking into artistic strategies for ‘finding hospitality’ in the public domain. What strategies are developed by artists to turn their critical ideals into a relevant part of the public domain? To date, editions of the project have taken place in Haarlem, The Netherlands (2009) and Porto, Portugal (2010).

In both editions of When Guests Become Host, artists from divergent fields were invited to develop new work in the public domain of a specific city, making it possible to research and compare their respective strategies. The project started from the observation that architects who intervene critically in the public domain use comparable methods to those developed by artists. In the first edition (Haarlem, 2009) an architect collective, theatre-makers, a filmmaker/anthropologist, and a visual artist took part. In the second edition in Porto, an architect collective and two artist collectives were invited.

For the When Guests Become Host project in Porto (see Figure 1), which ran from July 24 to October 16, 2010, curator Danielle van Zuijlen invited three collectives to use Culturgest as a base to propose and realize projects in the city of Porto: the architect collective Supersudaca (Latin America) and the art collectives Freee (United Kingdom) and WochenKlausur (Austria). The architects of Supersudaca and the artists of WochenKlausur installed their offices in the exhibition space of Culturgest, developing proposals for Porto in close collaboration with local participants. The U.K. art collective Freee worked with
local shop owners to install provocative slogans in shop windows. By inviting these three collectives in one project, three very different positions in dealing critically with the public domain were shown next to each other.

**WHEN GUESTS BECOME HOST**

**ARTISTIC STRATEGIES FOR FINDING HOSPITALITY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**

Figure 1. Logo for 'When Guests Become Host'.

The projects:

**WochenKlausur**

*Porto: A Vacant House for Students*

Location: Rua de António Cândido 218/220/222, Porto

WochenKlausur works at the invitation of art institutions on developing and implementing small but very concrete proposals for improving socio-political shortcomings. In keeping with the work of many twentieth-century artists who understood how to actively take part in the shaping of society, WochenKlausur sees art as an opportunity for achieving long-term improvements in human coexistence.
In Porto, WochenKlausur discussed the reasons behind the many empty and run-down houses in the city centre, introducing a model for low-budget renovation by students, who are rewarded with the right to free housing.

Looking at Porto’s amazing historical structure and architecture, it is impossible not to notice that a lot of its beautiful buildings and houses are uninhabited. At the same time, students (who amount to more than 10% of Porto’s resident population) are in need of affordable housing opportunities.

Since many of these vacant buildings are owned by Porto City Council, WochenKlausur contacted the official responsible for this area and presented him with a proposal: the city council could commission a couple of students to renovate one of these empty buildings and, in return, they would be given permission to stay and live there for an agreed period amounting to several years without paying any rent. After this time, the refurbished house would be handed back to the owner in good condition (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Wochenklausur, *A Vacant House for Students*, 2010.
Of course, a number of important issues had to be considered. For example, the building could not be in an overly run-down state, since the students do not have licences for undertaking professional work. But they could improve and repair floors, walls, windows, and, most importantly of all, they would agree to keep ‘their’ building in a good state of repair.

Taking all of these considerations into account, WochenKlausur drew up a contract to be signed between the students and the city council. In addition to this, based on the condition of the building, a detailed plan for the refurbishment of the house was worked out in collaboration with the students. Potential sponsors also had to be found to donate the expensive building materials. This project operates as a model, since it results in a ‘win-win situation’ for all those taking part in the project.

A group of students have started renovation of the building, naming their project ‘Casa Antonio’, while planning a program of artistic and social activities for it. Since the signing of the contract, the group has been ‘in flux’ – people left and new people joined, working on both the building and its garden. They have also invited other artists and art collectives to intervene in Casa Antonio with the aim of rethinking possibilities for regeneration of dilapidated houses.

**Supersudaca**  
*Too Late!* 100 places of Porto you will not see anymore, because they already disappeared

In an almost stubborn way, the Latin-American architect collective Supersudaca refuses to believe that the only area left for architects to work in is to build villas for rich people. Supersudaca connects the architectural arena with critical research and actions directly related to public perception, often using a workshop format to work with students from universities all over the world.

In Porto, Supersudaca researched 100 places, events, and rituals that have already disappeared from the city, to be brought together as an alternative guidebook. Entitled *Too Late!*, this guide resists the way cities are branded, sold, and consumed as merely tourist products. This guide does not present ‘The 100 places you have to see before you die’ nor ‘The 100 best spots in Porto 2010’ nor ‘What you definitely should not miss’, but instead a non-coherent and non-exhaustive presentation of ‘100 places of Porto you will not see anymore, because they already disappeared’ (see Figure 3).
The research was carried out in collaboration with local artists, architects, students, and a variety of local storytellers. "Too Late!" is the result of three weeks of residence in Culturgest in Porto, where Supersudaca installed a temporary office, organizing discussions, lectures, and work sessions with a large group of local collaborators. Since it was decided to work on the city’s memory, this
project could only be realized with people who know the city. Within the overall project umbrella of ‘When guests become host’, Supersudaca, as foreigner, as guest, could invite the owners of the cities’ memory during this residency to write about and express themselves on their own city, thereby realizing a very interactive collaborative project.

Too late! brings together 100 places, events, and rituals that have already disappeared from the (visible) city of Porto, in stories, photographs, collages, drawings, models and clippings. Since all the places and/or events have already disappeared (it’s too late, you missed it!), there is no hurry anymore, no tickets to rush and buy, no crowds anymore to wade through to take a single picture. An abundance of small stories were collected, the stories which make a city real. A selection was published in the architecture magazine Volume (no. 27, April 2011).

**Freee**

*You Can’t Buy a New World*

Porto, 2010

Freee (United Kingdom) is a collective composed of three artists (Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt, and Mel Jordan) who work together on slogans, billboards, and publications that challenge the commercial and bureaucratic colonization of the public sphere of opinion-making. Freee occupies the public sphere with works that take sides, speak their minds, and divide opinions.

Working with local shop owners in Porto, Freee installed provocative slogans on the windows of a shopping street, Rua Fernandes Tomás, Porto. The shop owners could choose two slogans: one addressing the reader/viewer (for example, ‘You are not afraid’) and another one stating something about the place where the slogans are installed (like ‘This is Utopia’). The shop owners could choose whether they wanted the slogans in English or in Portuguese, and chose a font as well as the colours of the lettering. Freee then made a digital mock-up to propose how the slogans would be installed. After discussing these with the owners, the final slogans were produced and installed.

The 10 shops were photographed with the artists playing a role in the image, and reproduced in the gallery on large-scale billboards. The slogans aim to make people think critically and reconsider the status quo of the world we live in, in this case addressing small commercial shops in one street. The shop owners used the slogans creatively, for example by attaching a green-and-red football shawl to the slogan ‘You are not lost’ after Portugal lost the match against Spain in the
2010 football World Championships. Freee’s slogans call for critical action. The collective always acts in their photographs as rebellious protagonists, reinforcing the statements with a personal presence (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Freee, You Can’t Buy a New World, 2010.

You are not afraid
Tu não tens medo
You are not misled
Tu não estás enganado
You are not alone
Tu não estás sozinho
You are not compromised
Tu não estás comprometido
You are not a passerby
Tu não és um transeunte
You are not trapped
Tu não está preso
You are not poor
Tu não és pobre
You are not exploited
Tu não és explorado
You are not lost
Tu não está perdido
You are not manipulated
Tu não és manipulado

This is Utopia
Isto é Utopia
This is paradise
Isto é o Paraíso
This is happiness
Isto é a Felicidade
This is a miracle
Isto é um Milagre
This is an oasis
Isto é um Oásis
This is a playground
Isto é um Recreio
This is the whole world reunited
Isto é o Mundo Inteiro Reunido
This is Eden
Isto é o Éden
This is a refuge
Isto é um Refúgio
This is ours
Isto é Nosso

Figure 5. Slogans used in Freee’s You can’t buy a new world, 2010.
Concluding reflections
In the Porto edition of *When Guests Become Host*, an architect collective and two artist collectives were invited to participate. The collectives, all foreigners to Portugal and guests of Culturgest, were asked to make themselves at home in Porto. “Being at home is being where you can be the host, where you can offer hospitality,” says Mireille Rosello in her book *Postcolonial Hospitality* (2001). “Does ‘integration’ mean that the stranger, after accepting a nation’s hospitality, can finally offer hospitality, that is, not reciprocate, but lengthen the chain of possibly incommensurable hospitable gestures?” (pp. 17, 18).

The aim of the overall project was to ‘find hospitality’, to lengthen the chain of hospitality and for the collectives to become a host through their respective interventions. The artistic strategies through which they succeeded in this greatly diverged.

The overall strategy for the project has been the decision to turn the invitation to make an exhibition inside an art institution (Culturgest Porto) into one using the exhibition space and institutional infrastructure as a base for interventions in the public domain. This is a common way of working for WochenKlausur: in their projects, they make use of the exhibition time and means in order to solve a social issue in the surroundings of the gallery. In this way, they put the capital of the gallery to work in the public domain. WochenKlausur literally means ‘weeks of closure’, referring to the ‘exhibition’ itself being in use as office space, while the work happens elsewhere.

In *A Vacant House for Students*, WochenKlausur employed a formal and political strategy. Their project can be seen as political action, comparable to a citizen’s initiative for change, identified as necessary because action is not being taken by the city itself. The aim was to arrive at an officially recognized model contract for the regeneration and renewed use of dilapidated housing. To achieve this goal and inspire the city to deal with its heritage housing in a more productive way (and, on the other hand, help students in need of space), it was vital to follow an official route in dialogue with the city council.

The architects of Supersudaca, on the other hand, employed a largely informal strategy in order to mobilize the memory, imagination, and commitment of local people. In their projects, they often employ a workshop format with architecture students to realize informal interventions. In Porto, they also started with addressing art and architecture schools. In a relatively short time span, they succeeded in making many people enthusiastic to contribute to a collection of places and events in Porto for which it is ‘too late’ to be experienced.
Freee generally makes use of slogans in their work: “Slogans call for things to change. ... Slogans do not describe the world, they call for a new world to take its place” (Freee, 2010, from exhibition statement). This is a political, even activist approach: Freee acts with words. In Porto, shop windows hosted slogans that were chosen and produced in collaboration with the shopowners. Their appearance as rebellious (or just cheerful) protagonists in the photographs taken on site reinforces the connection with activist slogans.

To conclude, where WochenKlausur aimed to make a real change through a socio-political intervention, Supersudaca reactivated the memory of the city, and Freee called for action through slogans. All three approaches created an open space in which the chain of hospitality could be lengthened.

For more information:
WochenKlausur – www.wochenklausur.at
Freee – http://freee.org.uk

Note
1. Michel de Certeau distinguishes between strategies and tactics: he speaks of strategy when there is an institutional place to operate from, whereas we turn to tactics when “the space of the other” is entered, i.e., the space that is not our property (De Certeau, 1984: 37). Outside of the gallery, we are entering this “space of the other,” so we could also speak of artistic tactics.

References
PROFILE

STUT THEATER: (RE)CREATING COMMUNITIES THROUGH TEMPORARY ART

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Stut Theater, The Netherlands

Abstract: Stut Theater is a community-based theatre company from Utrecht, The Netherlands. Over the years, Stut has gradually built a community of spectators that visit performances made outside their own milieu, by connecting various people and groups. The company is able to (re)create and sustain communities through creating imaginative, socially engaged experiences and stimulating a willing suspension of forgetting.

In March 2012, Stut Theater celebrated its 35th anniversary with a surprise party, a theatrical dinner in Utrecht, The Netherlands. For the event, 80 people visited a fairy-tale-like place and were seated on tables made from trees in the neighbourhood where Stut is based. The tables varied in height from 80 to 190 cm. In the middle of the room stood a tall tree with coloured funfair lights. Suddenly one of the people in the room starts to sing, and in half a minute, 20 or more people are singing a welcome song, and this choir introduces you to Stut. A host invites you to take a seat on one of the tables and through the words written on your plate you introduce yourself to your table companions: your favourite ‘tree’, ‘food’, or ‘city’ is written on your plate in saffron mayonnaise. An egg slicer, a ladle, or a tea cosy is placed next to the plates. A golden egg is served with turnip tips, announcing the spring.

Stut Theater
Stut Theater is a community-based theatre company from Utrecht with a grand history. In 1977, the company was founded by a group of socially engaged artists...
who wished for people from working class areas in Utrecht to be able to raise their voices and be heard. Over the years, Stut has created some 93 original plays in which hundreds of residents in the Utrecht quarters have played roles, and many more of them have contributed their stories. To the present day, approximately 1400 performances have been seen by audiences.

The early years could be characterized by activist, emancipatory theatre. The very first performance was made with residents protesting against rent increases. In the 1980s, when many factories in the city of Utrecht were shut down, Stut created performances with the workers. This situation changed one of Stut’s strategies. Instead of working in one specific neighbourhood, Stut started to work with communities. In 1992, one of the founders of Stut, Marlies Hautvast, invited immigrants on stage. The 1990s were a period in which Stut made various multicultural performances. Theatre is a great place for people to get to know each other, either as actors or as spectators. It can show both parallels and differences. In 2005, the piece *De Geur van Kruidnagel (The Scent of Cloves)* was created in which Stut looks back to the 1970s through the eyes of a girl from Utrecht and an immigrant from Morocco. The piece connects the multicultural present to the activist past (see Figure 1).

In 2001, Donna Risa, the current artistic leader, directed her first performance for Stut. Currently, Stut works with an artistic team of four directors and a dramaturg and works with young and talented playwrights and designers. Stut

![Figure 1. *De Geur van Kruidnagel (The Scent of Cloves)* (2005). Photo © Rob Huibers.](image-url)
focuses on the future and on new (or alternative) forms of drama, theatre-design, and performance. In the early years, working with text seemed like the best way of giving a voice. Now Stut also looks at other forms of performance, like music and location-based theatre and installations, since the strength of the actor is not always in speech. Additionally, Stut opened its archives in 2012. Its new website will gradually be filled with texts, photos, and video’s of Stut’s pieces – material from over 50 performances of *Houtplein* (the name of a square in Utrecht), which premiered in 1978, to *Stut’s Surprise Party* (2012).

**Creating communities**

The performances made by Stut with a specific community are made for this specific community and for others. By connecting various communities, Stut managed to gradually build a community of spectators that visit performances made outside their own neighbourhood, with people from other backgrounds or with people of another generation. Stut has a large group of active volunteers helping with all sorts of things: building sets, sending newsletters, selling tickets, preparing meals, etc. A smaller group of former actors have formed the Stut Koor (Stut Choir). This choir started as a way of keeping in contact and staying active in the performing arts. In 2010, the Stut Koor premiered its first show, *Er is een huis* (*There is a House*). In 2012, the choir – representing an important part of Stut’s history – played a major role in Stut’s anniversary. They acted and sang in *Stut’s Surprise Party*, and their stories were used for various songs in the event.

Stut aims to maintain more sustainable contact not only with actors, but also with spectators. As with many other pieces, *Rimpelingen (Ripples)* (2011) was followed by an after talk with the spectators under the guidance of professionals. This piece, which is concerned with the art of getting older, addresses subjects like falling in love again and enjoying retirement, but also loneliness, physical and mental problems, and loss of a partner. Stut, working together with healthcare organizations, assures that these subjects are discussed. The common experience of seeing the piece serves as a starting point for this discussion.

In 2011, one of the directors of Stut, Güner Güven, started Jong Stut (Young Stut). With Jong Stut the company aims to introduce the performing arts to urban youth. Instead of working on a piece, which takes Stut about a year on average, the adolescents of Jong Stut follow a series of workshops for nine weeks. Starting from scratch and using their own stories to explore dance, theatre,
spoken word, and music, they are encouraged to take the stage and express themselves. By presenting this opportunity, Stut hopes not only to stimulate creative expression, but also to connect a community of adolescents with other communities with which Stut works. The participants of Jong Stut in 2012 comprised the second group of performers in *Stut’s Surprise Party*. Together with the Stut Choir, they sang and acted in the event. Following this initial encounter between the two groups, Stut decided to have them both perform in the new piece *Verwacht!* (*Expected!*), which premiered in September 2012. This music theatre performance deals with memories and dreams and with the confrontation of young and old.

**Connecting communities**

The main focus of Stut is to extract and share stories of specific communities like young mothers (*Meisjesstad* [*Girls’ City*], 2008), Turkish immigrants and their children (*Familie à la Turca*, 2007), or the elderly (*Rimpelingen*, 2011). The people interviewed for these stories are asked to come on stage and perform their own stories. This not only shows a community, it also strengthens the community and creates a feeling of a new community between actors and spectators. In a study on the “effects of a community-based performance on intended audiences in terms of enhanced empathy and intercultural and intracultural understanding,” which focussed on *Familie à la Turca*, Vuyk et al. (2010) conclude:

Our ... survey indicated that almost half the respondents indicated immediately after being exposed to the performance that it had changed their opinion and that they had learned from it. And although a year later this figure had decreased, 25% still indicated that they continued to feel changed by having seen the play. Another indicator of how important they found the play is how frequently they have thought about it since their original exposure (60%) and whether they have spoken about it to others (40%). (p. 13)

*Familie à la Turca* not only showed an existing community in Utrecht and The Netherlands (388,967 people with Turkish origin lived in the Netherlands in 2011 [*Centraal bureau voor de Statistiek*]), but also created a ‘community’ of spectators, of people who once visited the performance and took it with them to let it sink in and to share it with others. It stimulated a dialogue and stimulated “an increased understanding about the intracultural complexities and tensions within Turkish families” (Vuyk et al., 2010: 15).
Sustaining communities

After the main course and a short break outside, the rhythmic percussion with pots, pans, and other kitchen utilities directs you back to the room you were in before. The choir sings and the archive of Stut is getting bigger and bigger. The archivist who started carrying maps with Stut’s history two hours ago is still busy but he is close to 2012 now. When you are seated again, dessert is served along with tiny stories. In the three hours of Stut’s Surprise Party, you were introduced to the history and the future of Stut through music, singing, dance, food, film, and design (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Stut’s Surprise Party (2012). Photo © Rob Huibers.

Stut is able to (re)create and sustain communities. The liveness of theatre creates a direct connection between spectator and performer. Connecting people through temporary art is a means to (re)create a community. This community is temporary, but holds a more sustainable potential as well. The aspect of experience is of major importance, and is something that Stut consciously addresses.

The experience of actually meeting someone in person is interconnected with theatre. Both the actor(s) and the spectator(s) need to be physically present. Through this, you not only experience theatre as an art form, but also theatre as a form of being together. Furthermore, community theatre can be seen, from a social constructionist perspective, as a form of theatre that offers various perspectives, as Margreet Zwart puts it in her research on Stut for
CAL-XL (2011: 15). Or as dialogical art, as Jasmina Ibrahimovic describes it in her thesis, in which the great, abstract themes in society are nuanced by offering the personal point of view (2010: 40). Stut starts a dialogue in the theatre that continues after the moment of showing. The theatre of Stut stimulates an active remembering and, through that, an open dialogue. And, possibly, a sustainable public discourse that is based on an ephemeral experience.

Seeing the story, being together with people you know, or do not know, and sharing that experience: It is the activity of remembering and sharing this experience that creates a community. Something happened and you wish to re-live it by talking about it, by trying to sketch out what happened to you while watching, while listening. You want to talk about it with people who were there or translate the experience for people who were not. But you will not see or hear it again, not in the same way as back then. Instead of a forced remembering by seeing a statue or a mural in your street, or a DVD or book on your bookshelf, over and over again, temporary art like theatre stimulates a willing suspension of forgetting.

For more information: www.stut.nl.

Notes
1. There is pun in the title: rimpeling means ripple, but rimpel means wrinkle.
2. Meisjesstad is not only the title of the theatre piece, but is also the name of a shelter for (homeless) women with children.

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Giovanni Allegretti, PhD, is an architect and senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. From 2001 to 2006, he was assistant professor in Town Management at the University of Florence, Italy, where he received his PhD in town and territorial planning. He studied in Brazil, Denmark, and Japan with scholarships from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 1997, his main research topics have been participatory budgets and techniques for citizens’ participation in urban planning, topics on which he has published several articles, essays, and books. He has been scientific director of two EU projects in the field of participation: ‘Participando’ and ‘INCLUIR – Participatory Budget as a tool for fighting social exclusion’. He is co-director of the PhD program ‘Democracy in the XXI century’ and coordinator of the PEOPLES’ Observatory on Participation, Innovation and Local Powers. He also coordinates the ‘Planning and Social Policies Group’ of the Portuguese Network of Urban Agriculture (RAU).

Emma Arnold is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo in Norway. She researches street art and graffiti using visual and psychogeographic methodologies. She is also the founder of The Institute for Art & Environment, a think-tank promoting holistic approaches to environmental and sustainability challenges.

Marnie Badham, PhD, Centre for Cultural Partnerships, University of Melbourne, Australia: Originally from Canada, Marnie is an artist-researcher exploring representational practice (art, policy, research) and collaboration with communities in the margins. At the University of Melbourne, she researches the politics of cultural measurement, participatory and practice-led approaches to research, and socially engaged arts practice.
Stefania Barca, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra, where she co-coordinates the PhD program ‘Democracy in the XXI century’, the Social Policies, Labour and Inequalities research group, and the Ecology and Society Workshop – among the promoters of the Rede Portuguesa de Agricultura Urbana (RAU). An historian by training, she is especially devoted to the interdisciplinary research fields of environmental history and political ecology. Her research interests cover issues in energy and water history, and the history of the commons/enclosures in Mediterranean Europe. Her last book is entitled *Enclosing Water: Nature and Political Economy in a Mediterranean Valley, 1796-1918* (White Horse Press, 2010). Broadly speaking, her teaching and research interests cover global ecological relations, sustainability and environmental politics, and the connections between labour and environmental justice in comparative perspective.

Kendra Besanger holds a MA in Media Studies from Concordia University in Montréal. Her interdisciplinary work brings together place-studies, urbanism, food security and urban agriculture, public space, politics, public art, and community engagement. Her work has been presented at various conferences, including *Cities Fit for Children* (Kamloops, BC, 2012), *Under Western Skies II* (Calgary, AB, 2012), *Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Victoria, BC, 2013), and *Urban Ecologies* (Toronto, ON, 2013). In 2011, she was the project coordinator for the Kamloops Public Produce Project and she continues to work with the Kamloops Food Policy Council to encourage local food sovereignty. Currently, she is working as a research assistant at the Mobile Media Lab at Concordia University and as an instructor at the McGill Writing Centre.

Charles-Mathieu Brunelle has extensive experience and expertise in managing cultural organizations. He has been the Executive Director of Montréal’s *Espace pour la vie* (Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden, and Planetarium) since August 2008, charged by the City of Montréal with reinvigorating this prestigious group of institutions. He was Vice-chair of the Board of directors of TOHU from 1999 to 2008, an organization he helped to found and of which he was the first executive director. Mr. Brunelle has also been part of many achievements that have shaped Montréal’s cultural scene in recent years (Cinémathèque Québécoise, Compagnie Marie Chouinard, etc.). Over the years, Mr. Brunelle has been a guest speaker at many conferences all around the world. He is a member of the boards of directors of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Sedna Foundation.
**Claudia Carvalho**, PhD, is currently a post-doctorate fellow at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, and is also responsible for the coordination of Bando à Parte: Youth Cultures, Arts and Social Integration, a project of arts education at Teatrão (Oficina Municipal do Teatro) in Coimbra (since September 2009). She received her PhD in sociology, with a specialization in sociology of culture, knowledge and communication, from the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra, in October 2010 (supervisor: Professor Carlos Fortuna). The empirical work of her PhD was conducted during her stay as a visiting researcher at the Center for Reflective Community Practice (now Community Innovators Lab, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology), under the supervision of Cesar McDowell.

**Nancy Duxbury**, PhD, is a senior researcher and Co-coordinator of the Cities, Cultures and Architecture research group of the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra. She is chair of the working group on policies within the European COST Action on 'Investigating Cultural Sustainability' and was principal investigator of the project ‘Culture in Sustainable Communities: Improving the Integration of Culture in Community Sustainability Policy and Planning in Canada and Europe’, funded by the Government of Canada. She is also an adjunct professor of the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her research interests include culture and sustainable development, cultural planning and policy, and the integration of cultural considerations within broader planning initiatives.

**Lúcia Fernandes**, PhD, is currently a post-doctorate fellow at the Research Centre in Economic and Organizational Sociology (Technical University of Lisbon) and at the Centre for Social Studies (University of Coimbra). She has a PhD in sociology from the University of Coimbra. She currently collaborates in a research project of the University of Minho and the Technical University of Lisbon about political engagement in climate change issues. She has co-authored articles in the journals *Safety Science* and *Science and Collective Health*, and has presented her research at conferences, panels, and events that pertain to environment and society and to science and technology studies. Her research themes cover contaminated communities, transition and degrowth movements, environmental justice, and citizens’ engagement.

**Javier Fraga Cadorniga**, Raons Públiques, is an architect and urban planner. He holds a master’s degree in Cooperation, and is pursuing a master’s degree in
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**W.F. Garrett-Petts**, PhD, is professor and Associate Vice-President, Research, at Thompson Rivers University, Canada, where he is also principal investigator and co-director for the Mapping Quality of Life and the Culture of Small Cities CURA (a national community-university research alliance). He has published widely on small cities research, cultural studies, and interarts practices. He is currently engaged as a member of a research group exploring cultural capital, artistic inquiry, memory mapping, and oral histories in small cities. His recent books include *Whose Culture Is It Anyway*? (2013); *The Last Best West: An Exploration of Myth, Identity, and Quality of Life in Western Canada* (2009); *Imaging Place* (2009); *Artists’ Statements and the Nature of Artistic Inquiry* (2007); *The Small Cities Book: On the Cultural Future of Small Cities* (2005); *Relocating the Homeless Mind: Memory, Landscape, The Small City and Rural Community* (2004); and *PhotoGraphic Encounters: The Edges and Edginess of Reading Prose Pictures and Visual Fictions* (2000).

**Sara Giddens** is a choreographer and creative consultant. She has extensive professional and academic experience in dance and performance within a wide range of interdisciplinary and pedagogical contexts. Sara facilitates workshops for students of all ages, arts-practitioners, and creative and cultural industries. She has choreographed and co-directed 17 performance works with Bodies in Flight (www.bodiesinflight.co.uk), touring throughout the U.K. and abroad, and has contributed to significant developments in performance documentation, including a CD-ROM archive *Flesh and Text* (*Bodies in Flight*) as well as writing several chapters and articles. Her work has featured in Jo Machon’s (*Syn)aesthetics (2009), and by Morwenna Griffiths in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (2010). From 1998 to 2005 Sara collaborated with ethnographer Maggie O’Neill developing *Renewed Methodologies: Not all the time... but mostly...* and in 2005 was awarded a research bursary from The Choreographic Lab. Sara is currently a research artist at Dance4 (Nottingham, U.K.) and in her final year of an AHRC studentship hosted by Dance4 and Middlesex University.

**Ailsa Grieve** is currently studying for her doctorate at the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts at The University of Western Australia.
where she teaches and practices design ecology, collaborating on the artful, scientific, and designed explorations and expressions of place. Her doctorate explores phenomenological and interdisciplinary mapping approaches to spaces of high cultural, spiritual, and historical complexity.

**James Hoffman**, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia, where he was co-director of the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA). He is editor of the CURA Imprint Series, an online refereed journal focused on urban culture and development (http://smallcities.tru.ca/).

**Line Marie Bruun Jespersen** holds a MA in art history and classical studies and a PhD in art and urbanism. She is an assistant professor at AD:MT (Department for Architecture and Media Technology) at Aalborg University, Denmark. Her PhD dissertation, *Urbane Installationer (Urban Art Installations)*, analyzes art in urban space as a means to develop new social spaces and new public domains. Line Bruun Jespersen teaches art history, architecture history, and theory of science in relation to studies of art, architecture, and design at AD:MT and ArT (Department for Art and Technology) at Aalborg University.

**Petra Johnson** is an independent artist with a background in crafts (wood). She has lectured at the College of Fine Arts at Shanghai University and acted as artist mentor for visiting artists to Shanghai. Since 2006 she has been working on collaborative projects across disciplines and cultures. In 2010, she devised and implemented the KIOSK/Xiaomaibu project (with Xu Zhifeng in Shanghai and Esther Blodau-Konick in Weimar), which was invited to the German Pavillon at EXPO 2010 in Shanghai. In 2011 she devised *Through the Looking Glass*, a project linking neighbourhoods in Istanbul, Shanghai, and Cologne. Whilst the duration of these projects varies (from six months to six days), their purpose – to open windows to daily life activities in (dis)-similar worlds – remains the same. In 2012 she launched a new participatory project at the Shanghai Biennale. *Walk with me* sets up intimate platforms for ‘human writings’ in different cities in Asia and Europe.

**Simon Jones**, professor of Performance, University of Bristol, is a writer and scholar, founder and co-director of Bodies in Flight, which has to date produced 17 works and numerous documents of performance that have at their heart the
encounter between flesh and text, where words move and flesh utters, most recently a chapter on their performance-walk Dream-work in Archaeologies of Presence (2012). He has been visiting scholar at Amsterdam University (2001) and a visiting artist at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2002) and Banff Arts Centre (2008). He has published in Contemporary Theatre Review, Entropy Magazine, Liveartmagazine, Shattered Anatomies, The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Performance Research: on Beckett, co-edited Practice as Research in Performance and Screen (2009) and his work with Bodies in Flight features in Josephine Machon’s (Syn)aesthetics? Towards a Definition of Visceral Performance (2009). He is currently leading two major projects into the accessibility, preservation, and creative re-use of live art archives – Into the Future and Performing Documents.

Bonnie Klohn is a research assistant with the Small Cities CURA and Thompson Rivers University’s Department of Environment and Sustainability, Canada. She has presented her research at conferences, panels, and events that pertain to urban agriculture and edible landscapes, including Produce; Produce (2010), TRU International Days (2009), and the 2008 Campus Sustainability Conference. She has co-authored an article about genetically engineered meat with Michael Mehta (published in The Mark), and continues her research on urban hens and community gardens. She is interested in how community gardens, urban agriculture, and micro-livestock increase sustainability and can provide a visual and mental oasis for people in a city. She is also very involved in the student sustainability movement, clean energy planning, and learning more about engaging the public in environmental action through video design and visual data representation.

Donald Lawrence is a professor of Visual Arts at Thompson Rivers University, Canada. He is working with an interdisciplinary team of researchers exploring how mapping and related drawing practices may be used in workshop and other settings to enhance individuals’ sense of place and identity. An artist-researcher whose work on the interface of urban and wilderness environments has been exhibited nationally and internationally, he is interested in how artistic and community practices may foster greater community engagement. In 2011, Lawrence attended a residency at the University of Tasmania, where he created ‘Kepler’s Klepper’: A Camera Obscura on the Tamar, a body of work shaped around a water-borne camera obscura. This was exhibited in River Effects, the Waterways of Tasmania, at the Academy
and Plimsoll Galleries in association with Tasmania’s 2011 biannual Ten Days on the Island festival. Lawrence is currently the principal researcher of the SSHRC-funded Camera Obscura Project.

Tania Leimbach is completing a doctoral thesis at the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. She also works as a museum educator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and teaches inter-disciplinary design at UTS. Her interests are across visual art, inter-disciplinary design, and education and she has written for exhibitions and art publications. She continues to develop her own print-media art practice, with interests that also include working in the public domain on projects to animate and enliven public urban space. She’s passionate about sustainability and perceives it as a cultural change process that needs creative as well as technical expertise. Her thesis looks at the possible contributions of progressive institutions in this process, asking how these sites contribute in provoking and catalyzing audiences.

Alys Longley, PhD, is a senior lecturer in Dance Studies at the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland, New Zealand. She was a co-principal investigator on the art-science-education collaboration ‘Water in the Sustainable City’. Her research and teaching areas include practice-led research, writing out of dance practice, inclusive approaches to teaching and choreography, interdisciplinary studies, and performance and ecology.

Jochem Naafs is a researcher and dramaturge based in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He studied theatre studies and new media studies at Utrecht University. In his work, he merges theory and practice. As a dramaturge he is connected to Stut Theater where he is focussing on the visual language of the work and a more sustainable future for the company. In previous years, he worked as a dramaturge with the theatre collective Powerboat, live artist Michael Pinchbeck, choreographer Jack Gallagher, and with the participants of Choreoroom. Currently, he is working as a researcher and lecturer for the Utrecht School of the Arts. The focus of his research is on the transdisciplinary making process of theatre and dance. He has written articles for various organizations and magazines. He has also co-organized a community art festival in Utrecht and various symposia.
António Olaio, PhD, is a professor in the Architecture programme and Director of the Colégio das Artes at the University of Coimbra. He is also a visual artist, performer, and musician. Recent solo exhibitions: 2010 – La Prospettiva is sucking reality, Museum of Neo-Realism, Vila Franca de Xira; Na cátedra de S. Pedro, Museum Grão Vasco, Viseu; 2009 – La prospettiva, Mario Mauroner, Vienna, Austria; Brrrrain, Culturgest, Lisbon; Crying my brains out, gallery Filomena Soares, Lisbon; 2007 – I think differently now that I can paint, Cultural Centre Vila Flôr, Guimarães; 2006 – Under the stars, ZDB, Lisbon; 2005 – Pictures are not movies, gallery Filomena Soares, Lisbon; 2004 – 40 years in a plane – Kenny Schachter; conTEMPorary, New York; I’m growing heads in my head, Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra; 2003 – You are what you eat, Cultural Centre Andratx, Palma de Maiorca; 2002 – Telepathic agriculture, Galerie Schuster, Berlin and Frankfurt. He is a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, and his main research interest is the relationship between self and space in contemporary art.

James Oliver, PhD, Centre for Cultural Partnerships, University of Melbourne, Australia: James is an artist-researcher and anthropologist. He has a particular interest in participation and collaboration (including community-based art), identity and belonging, and investigations of ‘practice-as-research’ in the creative arts. His creative practice intersects ethnography with spatial theory and performativity as a form of Situational Practice.

Alix Pierre, PhD, is an assistant professor at Spelman College in the departments of African Diaspora and the World and World Languages and Literature. His research interest is in the artistic response of people of African descent to the state of diglossia in a (neo)colonial context. He recently taught a seminar on the Transnational Diasporic West African Griot Tradition at the Bahia State University of Santa Cruz, Brazil, and collaborated with the Balé Folclorico da Bahia. He is on the editorial board of Caribbean Vistas Journal and Négritud: Review of Afro and Latin American Studies. His latest publications have appeared in the CLA Journal and Caribbean Studies.

Simone Pierre, MA, is a consultant in business, marketing, public relations, management, and leadership. She has an extensive consultancy experience at the national and international level where she works with the French government and the European Community. She possesses ten years of teaching and coaching
practice, and operated a tutoring business. An expert in non-profit management and social entrepreneurship, she runs an Organizational Leadership and Management consulting firm. She currently sits on the board of Abymes city planning committee.

**Pedro Pousada**, PhD, is an auxiliary professor at the Architecture Department of FCTUC. His current research interests deal with a set of works from advanced contemporary art (specifically works developed by Gordon Matta-Clark, Victor Burgin, Hans Haacke, Jeff Wall, Mike Kelley, James Casabere and, in the Portuguese artistic context, Ângela Ferreira) that have highlighted the colonization of the symbolic and the aesthetic by dominant economic forms. He is a visual artist with extensive experience in the field of contemporary drawing and an advisor of the Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC). His artistic work is regularly shown and he has participated in individual and collective exhibitions in Lisbon, Oporto, Elvas, Viseu, Coimbra and Glasgow. He graduated in 1993 from the Curso Superior de Artes Plásticas/Pintura at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon and studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris with Serbian painter Vladimir Velicovick (1995-1996). He concluded his PhD in 2010 with the dissertation, *A arquitectura na sua ausência*.

**Francesca Rayner**, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Universidade do Minho where she teaches theatre and performance at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She is a member of the international research project, ‘La presencia de Shakespeare en España en el marco de su recepción europea’, coordinated by the University of Murcia, and a member of the European Shakespeare Research Association. Her research centres on the cultural politics of Shakespearean performance in Portugal, with a particular interest in questions of gender and sexuality. She has published articles in national and international journals and has co-edited a Portuguese anthology on *Gender, Visual Culture and Performance* with Ana Gabriela Macedo (2011, Húmus). She is currently working on a book about Shakespearean performance in the post-revolutionary period and editing two books for the national theatre, the Dona Maria II.

**Robin Reid** is an assistant professor in the School of Tourism at Thompson Rivers University (TRU), Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, and a co-investigator for the Small Cities CURA (a national community–university
As a member of the CURA research group, Robin is mapping and exploring the role of community and public gardens as a space for public engagement, sustainability, and connection to place. Robin’s academic background and teaching experience in sustainability and tourism have guided her research interests in community sustainability, authenticity, cultural narrative and sense of place in urban, rural and wilderness landscapes. She has also been engaged in research on value-added tourism practices in fostering sense of place. She has presented her research at the CURA Research Alliance (2011) and at the Travel and Tourism Research Association conference in Quebec City (2010). Robin is a member of TRU’s Environmental Advisory Committee and is working on sustainability curriculum and sustainability research at TRU.

**Grant Revell** is a practicing landscape architect in both Australia and the United States. He is currently Associate Professor in Design Ecology at the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts, and Director-Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) at the School of Indigenous Studies, The University of Western Australia.

**Melinda Spooner** received a MFA at NSCAD and an honours degree in fine arts at the University of Guelph, Canada. She currently teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD University), Halifax, and has taught at The University of Lethbridge and Thompson Rivers University. She is actively engaged in new genre/public art and painting practices that address issues of community, collaboration, site specificity, and artist as cultural worker. In 2013 she and Ariella Pahlke coordinated the *Moving Images* project, [http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/movingimages/](http://stgeorgesyouthnet.ca/movingimages/). The project aimed to create new experimental hybrid art forms that focus on ‘at risk’ youth and the role of the arts in strengthening communities.

**Charlotte Šunde**, PhD, is a research fellow at the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland, New Zealand, and a research development manager of the *Transforming Cities* urban research initiative. As part of *Transforming Cities*, she was co-principal investigator of ‘Water in the Sustainable City’; an art-science-education collaboration that involved university researchers and practitioners from diverse disciplinary backgrounds across the sciences, performing arts, planning, architecture,
and education. With an academic background in environmental planning, her research enquiry has focused on the need for genuine cross-cultural understanding across different worldviews through dialogue and shared experiences, particularly in relation to the environment. This has developed over 15 years of research work, principally in New Zealand, Canada, and France.

**Catalina Trujillo** is an architect by training. After a master’s degree in Cultural Projects in Public Spaces at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, her architectural practice has featured an interdisciplinary approach including urbanism, urban arts, and land art projects. She joined the production of diverse public environmental art pieces commissioned to artists such as Tadashi Kawamata and Yona Friedman, as well as collective urban art projects like Petites Urbanités Libres led by K-tha Theater Company. Her personal endeavor looks forward to interrogating today’s architectural/spatial field of the possible. She currently works as an independent spatial practitioner based in France.

**Nelly van der Geest** is a sociologist and theatre maker, and leads the program Art-education in Context of the Centre of Educational Expertise at the Utrecht School of the Arts, Netherlands. She researches and leads innovative projects that focus on the interaction between art and society, and lectures in the MA program on arts education on (ethnic) diversity and social sustainability. In 2010, she hosted the seminar *The Role of Artists in Social Participation*, which contributed to the start of this platform on *Animation of Public Space through the Arts: Innovation and Sustainability*.

**Annelieke van der Sluijs**, MSc, is a founding member of Coimbra em Transição (Coimbra in Transition) and co-creator of the Awakened Life Project, a movement based on the principles of conscious evolution and integral ecology. The central theme in her work is how to catalyze and support individual and collective transformation that will capacitate us to more adequately respond to the challenges we are facing in modern society. Her main areas of interest are food sovereignty and alternative economies. Recent projects she is involved in include: social rehabilitation through urban art and food culture in close cooperation with the municipality of Coimbra and AJUDADA, and a community transformation process exploring the potential of a gift economy to improve local resilience and prosperity in Portalegre, a small town in the interior of Portugal.
Danielle van Zuijlen, an independent artist-curator from the Netherlands, works internationally on research-based curatorial projects in the public domain, with a focus on hospitality – since 2009 under the title When Guests Become Host. After graduating from the Master of Fine Art program at Glasgow School of Art, Scotland in 2002, she co-founded Hotel Mariakapel, an artist-led residency and exhibition institution in Hoorn, NL, under her direction until 2008. Other exhibitions and curatorial projects include Tramway Glasgow, U.K.; ACCA Melbourne, Australia; IBB Curacao, Dutch Caribbean; and Culturgest Porto, Portugal. She works as an advisor for various art institutions in The Netherlands and Belgium, has been a board member of TransArtists, NL (2003-2008), and is currently on the board of 1646 art space in Den Haag, NL. In 2010 and 2013, she undertook a six-month residency at Capacete, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with Dutch artist Bart Lodewijks. She is currently based in Ghent, Belgium.
COVER PHOTOS

Front cover (clockwise from top):

Tumbleweed, a student wire project based in York, Western Australia. Photo: Craig Silver.

The three ‘wandering reservoirs’ of the fluid city project, Auckland City, New Zealand. Reservoirs designed by Kathy Waghorn. Photo: James Hutchinson.

Ruined Piano Sanctuary, near York, Western Australia, in Autumn 2013. Photo: Antoinette Carrier. The Ruined Piano Sanctuary is featured in The University of Western Australia’s Rural Design Studio.

Wake Up the Earth Festival, organized by Spontaneous Celebrations, Jamaica Plains neighbourhood, Boston, U.S.A. Photo: Claudia Carvalho.

Back cover:

A procession of pupils, teachers, and elected officials during the Civic Edupreneurship and the City program, Guadeloupe. Photo: Simone Pierre/ Paul Quellery-Selbonne.